



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

THE CONVOCATION

Minutes of the
Annual General meeting of Convocation
held in Economics LT 1 on Thursday 17 December 2015 at 08h00.

Present: The President of Convocation (Professor Dr NB Pityana), the Vice-Chancellor (Dr M R Price), the Secretary of Convocation (H T Amoore) and 46 members who signed the roll, and whose names are recorded in the minute book.

Apologies: 8 members whose names are recorded in the minute book.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2014, which had been published on the website, and were tabled, were put and adopted.

The minutes of the special meeting held on 7 April 2015 which had been published on the website were put and adopted.

2. Matters arising from the minutes

The Secretary informed Convocation in general meeting that the Council had not reached a decision on the resolution of Convocation in regard to 'JP Duminy Residence'; the Secretary explained that the Council had set up a task team to review all names of buildings, rooms and spaces in the wake of the *RhodesMustFall* protests and had referred the Convocation's proposal to this task team for a recommendation.

3. Report of the President of Convocation

Professor Pityana presented his report as President of Convocation.

He described 2015 as a Kairos time for UCT and for universities in South Africa. The Universities had done well in 2015, and its achievements were notable. But the year would be remembered for the student protest movement and in particular for the national support for the *FeesMustFall* demand. All higher education institutions would have to make major adjustments, and he was confident that the University was in a strong position to deal with the challenges that it faced in 2016.

The report of the President was adopted.

4. Address by the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor gave a brief address.

He began by referring to record numbers of postgraduate degrees that UCT would confer in 2015, to UCT's position in world and BRICS ratings of world universities. He suggested that the year had been one of substantial success as evidenced by

- UCT's position in the rankings (UCT remained at the top of the continent: in some rankings UCT was up and in others down but all showed that the University remained competitive internationally);
- The record number of postgraduate students who would graduate during the graduation week, and the record number of PhDs that would be awarded;
- Significant achievements in the fields of research, teaching and social engagement;
- Successful academic programmes: he made the point that there had been no disruption to any teaching activities AT UCT until the *FeesMustFall* campaign of 19 to 30 October 2015;
- More funding was raised from foundations and donors than ever before, exceeding previous records by about 30%.
- The growth of research grants and publications had sustained our international recognition.
- Several new initiatives, institutes and programmes were launched, many with a strong African focus. These include the Hasso Plattner School of Design Thinking, the Inter-university Institute for Data Analytics linked to the Square Kilometre Array, and the links with the University of Basle that had led to three new chairs in urban studies, environmental health and medicine discoveries.
- Five new Research Chairs were awarded to leading women scientists at UCT by the National Research Foundation. These were in the fields of Biomedical Engineering and Innovation, Plant Desiccation Tolerance for Food Security, Dermatology and Toxicology, Mineral Law in Africa, and Physical Cosmology.
- UCT was set to be the first African university to become part of the [International Alliance of Research Universities](#) (IARU); from January 2016, UCT would become the 11th member in the strategic partnership and the first new member since the formation of the alliance 10 years before.
- New discoveries, start-up companies, social impact projects, improved pass rates, and increasingly competitive applications processes, as well as post-graduation employment rates of 94% all pointed to UCT's ongoing success and reputation.

He noted that these were evidence of the success of the University's work, and noted that these achievements did not always make headlines or news in the print or digital media.

The Vice-Chancellor went on to outline the succession planning challenges that the University had faced with the retirement at the end of 2015 of the class of 1950, and four deanships that had to be filled. All these had been filled for 2016. Two posts of Deputy Vice-Chancellor remained to be filled: to replace Professor Soudien who had left to take up a position as CEO of the HSRC and to replace Professor Visser who would retire at the end of 2016.

The Vice-Chancellor then went on to deal with transformation issues. He dealt with

- The *RhodesMustFall* campaign, suggesting that the eruption of sentiment on the question of the statue of Rhodes (who represented for staff and students in 2015 a valorisation of "empire" and a symbol of the dissatisfaction experienced by black

staff who were able to express through the protest action a sense of what it felt like to be a black person – staff or student – on a campus where there was no evidence that their histories were recognised or valued) represented for him a failure of the transformation project, and a call for more and visible action on transformation;

- The adoption of a new employment equity plan (for 2015 to 2020) in which context he addressed the question of the race profile of professors and the steps the University was taking to meet the challenge of changing this;
- The new undergraduate admissions policy, which he described as a move towards redress based both on race and socio-economic disadvantage;
- The University's expanded final aid programmes that were designed to ensure that a UCT place was affordable;
- The *FeesMustFall* campaign of October 20-15 that had taken both UCT and the country by surprise, and which had come after UCT had, with the support of the then SRC, already agreed fee increases for 2016, and had led to national decisions not to increase fees in 2016, but leaving both the government and universities with the challenge of how the institutions were to be funded in future; and
- The decision to insource six outsourced campus services in 2016, a decision that he described as a move towards social justice in that it would remove inequalities in pay and conditions of service.

The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged that the year had been a very difficult one for many, and in particular for many staff. He told Convocation that he expected the campaigns to continue in 2016.

The Vice-Chancellor took questions.

Professor Christie asked what steps were being taken to increase the proportion of foreign professors, a measure that Professor Christie suggested was important in assessing a university's ability to position itself as a world leader.

The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged the importance of an internationally diverse academic staff but said that this proportion was not likely to grow given the imperatives of increasing the proportion of black academic staff, given the changes to employment equity legislation, and given the continuous weakening of the rand.

Professor Lloyd commended the University for the excellence of its research and asked the Vice-Chancellor why it was that UCT was to disestablish the post occupied by the editor of an outstanding energy journal published under UCT's auspices and retrench the incumbent at the end of 2015.

The Vice-Chancellor indicated that he was not aware of this, and would look into it.

The President of Convocation thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his address and suggested that the University might do more to communicate the extent to which it was meeting the transformation challenges. The Vice-Chancellor's report was adopted.

5. Motions:

(a) *Vandalism of the cenotaph*

Dr Rodney Warwick had given notice of the following motion

“That Convocation express its views on the vandalism of the cenotaph on the campus during 2015 and the use of the slogan “one settler one bullet” during the RhodesMustFall campaign.”

Dr Warwick was not present and as no member of Convocation who was present wished to move the motion it fell away.

The Vice-Chancellor asked to make a statement, which the President allowed. The Vice-Chancellor said that the University leadership and the Council strongly condemned vandalism of any sort. He noted that the cenotaph was not understood by many and that he was looking for ways of making it more meaningful and of educating students about its significance. And he told Convocation that he condemned the use of the slogan One settler one bullet as it created a hostile environment.

(b) *Police and private security*

Ms Haysom seconded by Mr Hodgson moved

“That Convocation ask the relevant UCT structure to devise and publicly release a policy on the use of private security and the police in response to protests on campus. “

Ms Haysom told Convocation that she was motivated by events around the country in October 2015, by the fact that the Police had a poor track record of dealing with protest and by her sense that the campus should be a place where young people are able to express their anger about their sense of the failure of greater transformation in our society.

The motion was debated.

Dr Elsworth supported the motion, and added that rights to protest and responsibilities to preserve the structures of the University had to go together.

Mr Chikane supported the motion and argued that people underestimated how brutal the Police had been in dealing with students during the protests especially at the University of Johannesburg. He hoped that the motion would lead to clear guidelines as to what circumstances would require police presence on the campus.

Ms Houston supported the motion and told Convocation that she had been present at the protests outside Parliament and was concerned about the high levels of trauma experienced by the protesting students as a result of the police action on that day...

Mr Siddel asked Convocation to take note of the trauma experienced by those who had been threatened by protesting students, who had been prevented from going to the campus, who had been chased out of the library by protesting students and who had been forced to abandon an exam by protesting students. He fully supported the motion and deplored all use of violence.

The Vice-Chancellor spoke to the motion which he supported. He told Convocation that on 19 October 2015 protesting students had erected barricades at campus entry points, had prevented a large class of over 350 final year students from writing a final exam, and had taken four senior officers of the University hostage. The University's normal security staff were not equipped to deal with such situations, and an interdict had been obtained on which the police had acted both at Bremner after it had been occupied that night.. The interdict had been abandoned and the University would review how to handle future situations of this kind. He added that University management had decided not to allow exams to be disrupted and had engaged private security to ensure that exams were not disrupted.

The motion was put and adopted, *nem con*, with seven members abstaining.

6. President of Convocation Medal for 2015

The President announced that he would award the President of Convocation Medal (awarded annually to an alumnus or alumna who had made a contribution to the common good) for 2016 to Mr Mda Mda at the graduation congregation on 19 December 2015.

In the year 1923, Mr. Mda Mda was born to parents Simeon and Leah (nee Mzimba) in the rural village of Ncambedlana, Mthatha in the Eastern Cape. He matriculated from Lovedale College in 1940 and completed his BA degree at Fort Hare, where he also obtained a Diploma in Education. In 1944, he enrolled at the University of Cape Town's Law Faculty for an LLB degree. However he was unable to complete this qualification and ended up leaving the City in 1946, giving up his dream of becoming an Advocate. Two years later, Mda joined the law firm, Gush Muggleston & Heathcore as an articled clerk in Mthatha and with six years' experience, started practising as an attorney in Mqanduli, a small town close to Mthatha. Through a series of challenges and successes, he practised as an attorney until 2001, when he retired. At the ripe age of 92, Mda Mda remained active in the law fraternity as an advisor and mentor and was a well-respected member of his community of Mthatha, where he currently resides with his daughter.

7. Address

Mr Amoores addressed the Convocation on transformation at UCT.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 10.15.

Confirmed at the AGM held on _____ 2016_____ (President)



Hugh Amoores,
Secretary of Convocation
28 December 2015

Note: The AGM of Convocation was followed by the AGM of the Alumni Association.