



Central University of
Technology, Free State

■ CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL

7 April 2024

OPEN COMMUNICATION FROM COUNCIL

Cllr. R Mahabeer, Chairperson of Council

Dear CUT Community

On behalf of Council and as Chairperson of Council, I write to you with a deep sense of responsibility and commitment to the continued success of our esteemed institution, the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT). Our journey has been one of progress and resilience. As we have just wrapped up the first quarter, I would like to take this opportunity to update you on key developments and achievements; the challenges we must navigate; and the steadfast leadership of Council in steering our institution forward.

It is my privilege to connect with you on behalf of Council following our Council committee meetings and, subsequently, the first Council meeting of the year, which was held on 18 March 2025. We engaged in critical discussions aimed at strengthening governance, ensuring academic excellence, and fostering a thriving university community.

2025 graduation ceremonies

Council extends its heartfelt congratulations to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, and the entire executive leadership team, for the successful completion of yet another graduation season. The seamless execution of these ceremonies is a testament to the dedication and hard work of faculty and support staff. We take great pride in witnessing our graduates embark on the next phase of their journeys, equipped with the knowledge and values instilled by CUT. These achievements reflect the institution's unwavering commitment to academic excellence and student success.

Engagement with the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education

On 25 March 2025, the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education conducted an oversight visit to assess CUT's readiness for the academic year. Various stakeholders, including Council; the Vice-Chancellor and Principal; Nehawu; the Institutional Forum (IF); and the Students' Representative Council (SRC), presented reports highlighting achievements and challenges. Council has since reflected on this visit, and is preparing detailed responses to the Portfolio Committee, to address concerns raised. Executive Management is working diligently to ensure that all necessary information and evidence are compiled.

Despite a rapidly evolving higher education landscape, Council has remained unwavering in its mission to uphold the academic and institutional integrity of CUT through collective effort and strategic oversight. Whilst we celebrate our achievements, we acknowledge the complex challenges that require our resolve as a collective, and invite all our stakeholders to journey with us, in the best interest of CUT.

Strengthened governance and oversight

A significant milestone in our institutional journey is the official publication of the revised CUT Statute in the *Government Gazette* on 14 February 2025. This statute ensures a smooth transition, with the current Council serving until 31 July 2025, after which the newly constituted Council will take office on 1 August 2025. We have enhanced governance structures to ensure greater transparency, accountability, and strategic decision-making that aligns with our core values. Notably, Council has approved the review of the governance structure, which has been implemented, and which is aimed at improving institutional effectiveness and operational efficiency.

Furthermore, we are pleased to announce the establishment of the Nominations Committee of Council, which will oversee and manage the process of identifying and recommending suitable candidates for key governance positions.

Strategic institutional matters

Council received a comprehensive report from the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. PZ Dube, covering key institutional activities, as well as a thought-provoking presentation from the Welkom Campus Principal on reimagining the Welkom Campus. These insights reaffirm our commitment to excellence and innovation.

Key discussions and approvals by Council included the following:

- A review of the assessor's report for the fourth quarter of 2024, with directives for a detailed investigation into the purchasing of the Toyota Building.
- Strengthening controls on Protection of Personal Information (PoPIA) compliance risks.
- Updates on CUT Innovation Services (CUTIS) liquidation and forensic investigations.
- Approval of the Executive Summary Report on the 2024 Annual Performance Plan (APP), with a focus on action plans to meet targets.
- Endorsement of financial reports, and approval of the revised Headline Budget for 2025-2027.
- Progress on the recruitment of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Research, Innovation and Engagement.

Institutional regulatory documents

Council approved several institutional regulatory documents, which will be placed on the Institutional Regulatory Code (IRC) once signed, namely:

- various committees' terms of reference;
- the information and communication technology (ICT) security policy;
- the Institutional Policy Framework;
- the policy and procedure on naming and renaming;
- the revised supply chain management policy and procedure; and
- the short learning programmes (SLP) policy.

All staff members are requested to familiarise themselves with these documents.

Council composition

Council is pleased to welcome the following new members who have recently joined Council from various statutory groups. Their diverse perspectives and expertise will further enrich our governance and decision-making processes:

- Prof. N Malebo, Senate representative on Council;
- Ms J Mokoena, SRC President: Bloemfontein Campus; and
- Mr TT Zungu, SRC President: Welkom Campus.

Additionally, Council approved the transfer of Cllr Moshao to the Audit, Risk and ICT Governance Committee (ARIC), where she will serve as the Interim Chairperson, pending the constitution of the new Council as per the 2025 CUT Statute.

Stakeholder engagement

Council received a report from Senate, presented by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, outlining critical academic matters for consideration. We value the academic leadership and insight of Senate, and these contributions will play a central role in shaping Council's strategic priorities and informed decision-making in academic and research excellence.

We also welcomed the report from the IF, presented by the Chairperson, Dr M Molete. The IF has given substantial advice to Council on various transformational and other related matters and, notably, the current recruitment process of the DVC: Research, Innovation and Engagement, which is underway. These engagements are indicative of our continued effort to strengthen relations with the IF as an advisory body, in accordance with the Higher Education Act, further ensuring participatory governance and inclusive dialogue.

Looking ahead

Council remains resolute in its responsibility to lead with vision, integrity, and unwavering dedication. We will therefore:

- continue to refine and implement strategic initiatives that safeguard the institution's long-term viability;
- engage transparently with all stakeholders, to ensure open dialogue and collaborative decision-making; and
- champion excellence, innovation and inclusivity in every aspect of institutional governance.

We remain confident in the strength and potential of CUT. With your support and commitment, we will navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead, and will continue to build an institution that stands as a beacon of knowledge, progress and innovation.

Thank you for your dedication to our shared mission. Together, we will forge ahead with confidence and determination.

As we navigate the second quarter and the year ahead, I encourage each member of our CUT community to continue contributing to the good reputation, success and vibrancy of our institution. Your dedication, collaboration and commitment to excellence are what makes CUT a leading university in South Africa.

Thank you for your unwavering support. Let us move forward with a shared vision of success, innovation and inclusivity.

Warm regards

Cllr R Mahabeer
Chairperson of Council
Central University of Technology, Free State
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