



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 – 2026

Destination 2026 and beyond

October 2021

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1.0 Introduction

The University of Pretoria's approach to strategic planning is framed by the approved 15-year long-term strategy (UP 2025), which serves as a blueprint for the University's role as a national asset, and guides its responses to national, regional, continental and global challenges and priorities. The implementation of UP 2025 is enabled through a nested approach, with three sequential five-year planning horizons to guide and support the attainment of set aspirations. Within each five-year horizon, annual performance plans identify the more detailed and specific actions needed to realise the overall goals.

Although each five-year implementation plan is shaped by the direction and principles outlined in UP 2025, they are sufficiently versatile to be responsive to changing landscape dynamics that prevail within the respective planning horizons. This five-year plan (2022 – 2026) is the third and final phase of implementing UP 2025. In addition to furthering our UP 2025 agenda, it presents an opportunity to prepare our pathway beyond 2025 and for a step change towards re-imagining and re-positioning UP as “a leading research-intensive university in Africa, recognised internationally for its quality, relevance and impact, and also for developing people, creating knowledge and making a difference locally and globally”.¹

A hallmark of the contexts in which we exist is uncertainty and complexity. This was evident during preparation of the 2016 – 2021 five-year plan, with the national *#FeesMustFall* student protests beginning in October 2015 and persisting through 2016, and the subsequent compact on fee increases for 2016. Weakness of the national economy was evident at the time, and its impact on levels of indebtedness and all sources of university funding has persisted. Through 2020 and to date, the already challenging milieu was dramatically aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, driving upheaval through multiple pathways. The national economy was severely impacted; universities were compelled to make fundamental changes to teaching delivery models; and pre-existing societal fault-lines of poverty and inequality were aggravated, with vulnerable groups being most severely affected.

In this context, it is clear that the shifts and disruptions we currently experience are not temporary and will persist in the long-term. Conducting “business as usual” is not an option: new and innovative ways of thinking and functioning are needed for our continued existence, relevance, competitiveness and sustainability. Timely acknowledgement of the challenges, navigating and responding to them proactively and innovatively, and increasing our positive societal impact, are the essence of this new five-year plan. Our quest to embed resilience within the University, has enabled us to navigate the manifold headwinds and complexities we exist in, while at the same time continuing to meet current and future societal needs.

The University boldly pursues the public good. Accordingly, this plan is congruent with the intent of the National Development Plan (NDP), the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is also aligned with the White Papers for Post-School Education and Training, and Science and Technology, and the Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (HRD-SA). Our vision, strategic goals, and associated priorities (see Sections 5.0 and 6.3) deliberately position UP as an engaged university; a central player in the advancement of our country and society at large. We are

¹ University of Pretoria (2011). Strategic plan: the vision, mission and plan of the University for 2025

not an ‘ivory tower’; as a public university, we are responsive to national priorities and global challenges, and engage productively with our communities, industry, governmental and non-governmental entities and other partners, while also learning from them.

Overall, the plan re-affirms our commitment to impacting society positively. It seeks to guide a creative re-imagining of UP over the next five years by, amongst others, transforming teaching, learning, and research, engendering a resilient, sustainable and future-focused UP, embracing digital transformation, revitalising partnerships and collaborations locally, across the continent and globally, breaking down bureaucratic silos that inhibit cross-functional teamwork and operational efficiency, fostering substantive transformation and inclusivity, and ensuring the well-being of staff and students.

2.0 Pathway to developing the 2022 – 2026 plan

Two key aspects of developing the 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan were efforts to engage all constituencies of the University community and applying a design-thinking approach to formulating strategy.

At the outset, leadership conversations at various levels began in 2020 and progressed through 2021. The Senate Conference in January 2020 adopted a futuristic outlook, with a focus on transdisciplinarity as a key means to understanding and responding to complexity and uncertainty. The idea of re-imagining the human extended to re-imagining UP, with further conversations unfolding through the year. The concept of re-imagining UP was explored in more detail at the Council Workshop on Transformation in September 2020. Subsequently, dedicated strategic sessions with the Executive Team and Senior Management in February and April 2021 focused on establishing a common understanding of a re-imagined UP, along with the actions needed to not only survive, but also to thrive and excel in turbulent times.

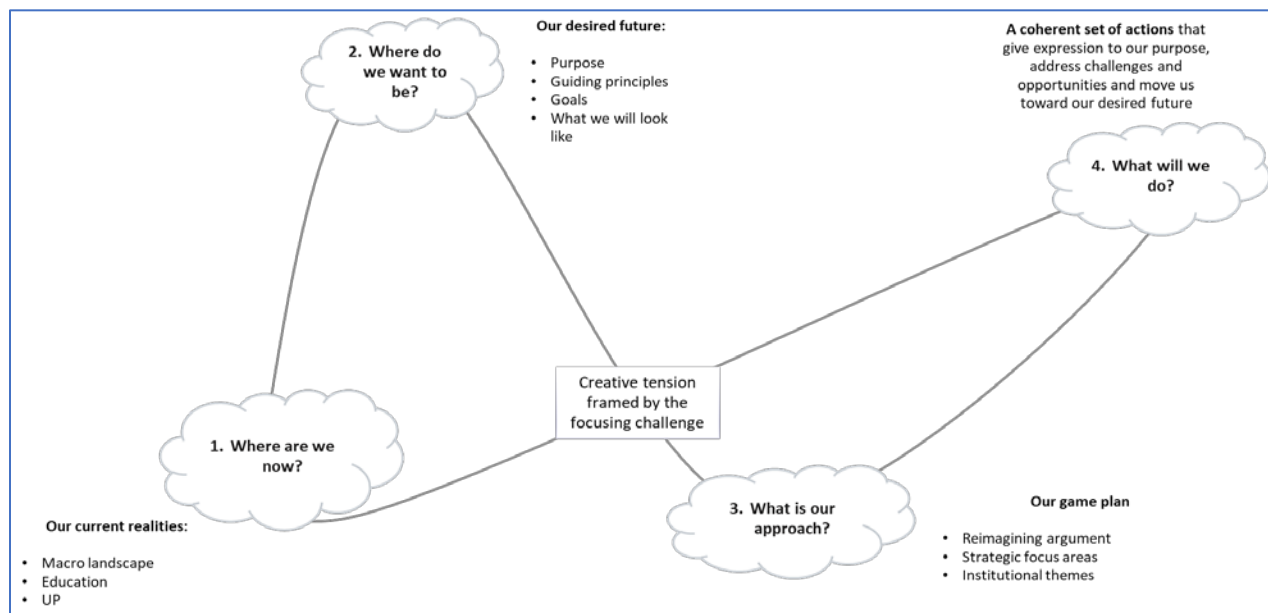
Consolidating the series of conversations held, and drawing from UP 2025 and the five-year plan 2016 – 2021, a strategic framework was developed as an integrated guide to turn the creativity and ideas put forward into reality.

The framework formed the basic input to the 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan. It addressed four questions sequentially:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- What is our approach?
- What will we do?

In describing our current reality, we reflect on the challenges we face and the opportunities at hand in a way that seeks to demystify their complexity, yet represent interrelationships between the multiple issues we need to address. We then step out of the problem and craft a compelling picture of our desired future. The gap between our current state and our desired future generates creative tension, which shapes our approach to bridging it. This approach frames a set of actions and can be translated across all functions in the University. The high-level framework for developing the Plan is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Design-thinking approach to formulating strategy



Collectively, the components of the framework seek to synthesise a shared understanding of a re-imagined UP; craft and frame our pathways towards its realisation – building on our existing strengths and areas of excellence – and mobilising the entire University community and relevant stakeholders for coherent and aligned efforts.

Subsequent to developing the framework, consultations were held with deans, directors, academic and professional services staff and representatives of the student body and organised labour. These consultations clarified the details of the framework and created an opportunity for early inputs. Additionally, an internal webpage, open to the entire University community, was set up to share information and to enable further input as the plan evolved. Through the webpage, a survey focusing on important aspects of the strategic framework was conducted, and the information obtained was incorporated into the plan. Additional inputs to the plan were sourced from established working groups addressing strategic issues, such as curricular transformation and infrastructure planning.

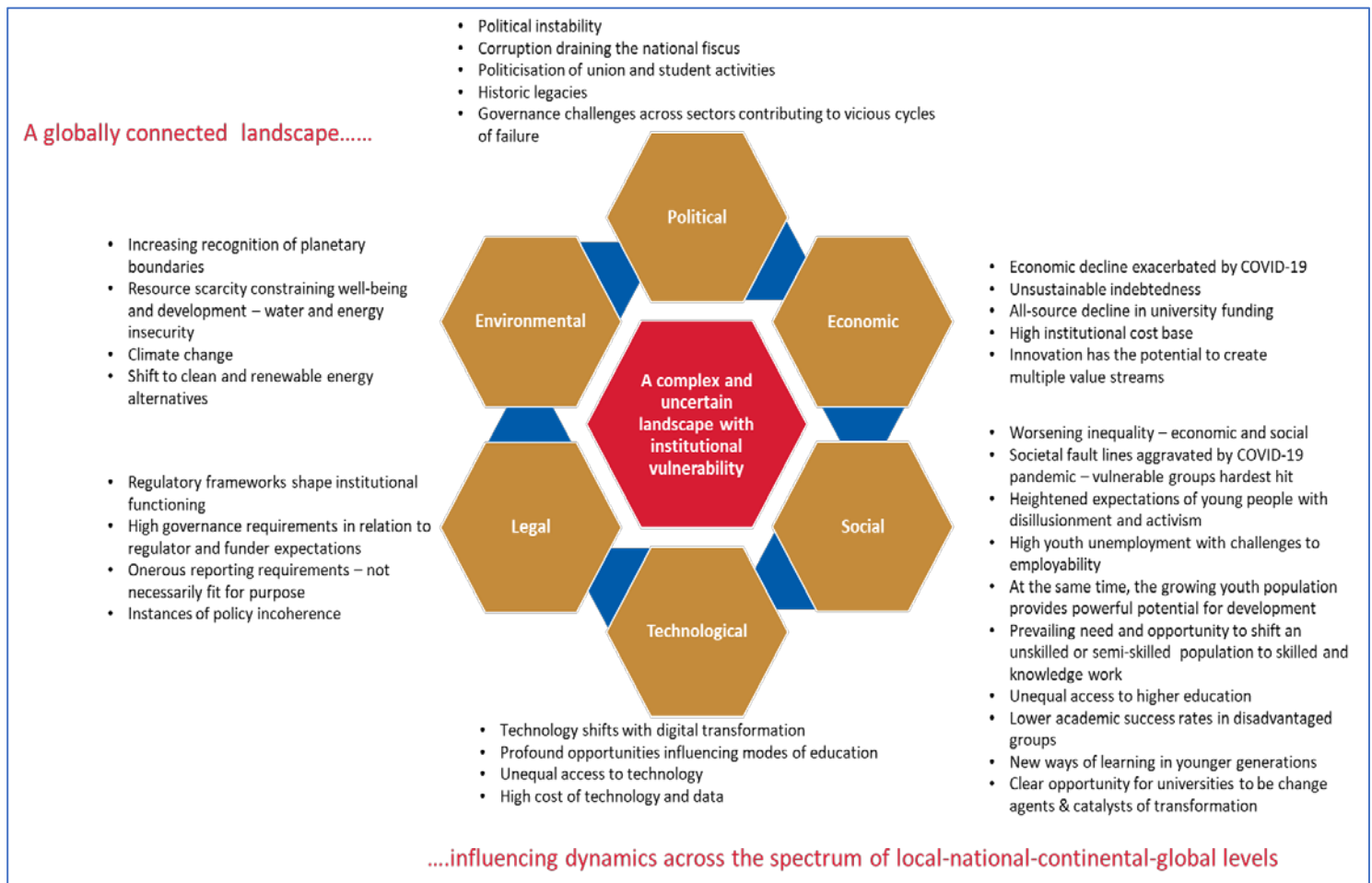
3.0 Understanding the challenge

To clarify the challenges, along with the opportunities we could capitalise on, three levels of complexity were considered: the landscape at a macro level; issues facing the education sector and higher education in particular; and an internal look at UP.

3.1 Our landscape at a macro level

We play in a globally connected world, with dynamics translating and influencing circumstances across the spectrum of local-national-continental-global domains. Details of landscape forces and shifts have been discussed in our various strategic documents and are summarised in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3. 1: Key factors characterising the macro landscape



Interrelated challenges and opportunities are evident across the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental (PESTLE) dimensions – driving complexity, uncertainty and institutional vulnerability, while at the same time creating opportunities for our re-imagining.

The historical legacy of apartheid, associated with profound inequalities and high levels of poverty in our country, remains a major challenge. Inequality is shaped along racial, gender and class lines, and includes vast disparities in the human condition, economic inequality and unequal access to resources and services. In many ways, these challenges appear intractable, with vulnerable groups and those with the most need facing the greatest obstacles to their socio-economic development and meaningful existence. Unmet

expectations of a large young population drive disillusionment, with escalating activism toward changing the status quo and creating conditions for all young people to reach their full potential.

The country's economic decline has exacerbated the challenges along multiple pathways. A decline in all sources of funding to universities increases their vulnerability and undermines their ability to fulfil their societal mandate. More broadly, unsustainable indebtedness in the general population is an important and growing impediment to individual development and to disrupting the spiral of worsening inequality.

Notwithstanding the magnitude and complexity of the challenges at hand, clear opportunities are evident. Addressing corruption at all levels is likely to reduce a significant drain on the national fiscus, freeing up resources for fairer and more effective use. Similarly, all forms of innovation – social, technical or economic – have the potential to create multiple value streams and to respond to the complexity of the challenges faced.

Our large and growing youth population is an untapped asset. By creating the right conditions for their development, they have the potential to dramatically shift the country's trajectory toward inclusivity, justice and shared prosperity. Technology shifts and digital transformation also have profound potential to shift dynamics. Capitalising on these opportunities requires that unequal access to technology – and its associated high costs – should be addressed. Technology should also be leveraged to shift an unskilled or semi-skilled population to skilled and knowledge work.

These broad landscape dynamics play out in more specific ways across both the higher education sector and at UP, influencing the internal issues that we must address to ensure high performance and continued existence. In this interconnected system, while challenges will need to be navigated carefully, there are real opportunities for universities, including UP, to be catalysts and change agents for transformation.

3.2 The education landscape

The South African education landscape comprises of a range of education sectors, including early childhood education development (ECD), basic education (BE) and post-school education and training (PSET). Large disparities exist across institutions in terms of both access and quality:

- ECD foundations are not accessible to all, with only 69% of children aged 3-5 accessing an ECD learning centre. 27% of children under 5 years of age are stunted owing to poor nutrition².
- In BE schools, learners from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to drop out of school early. About 40% of a grade 1 cohort will drop out before reaching grade 12, with only 14% passing the National Senior Certificate with a bachelor's pass and 12% with a diploma pass. Approximately 12% will access a university, with only 4% achieving an undergraduate degree within 6 years of entry.³

² Hall K, Sambu W, Almeleh C, Mabaso K, Giese S and Proudlock P (2019) South African Early Childhood Review 2019. Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town and Ilifa Labantwana.

³ van Broekhuizen, H; van der Berg, S; Hofmeyr, Heleen (2016): Higher Education Access and Outcomes for the 2008 South African National Matric Cohort; A Labour Market Intelligence Project (LMIP) working paper <http://www.lmip.org.za/lmippublications>.

- The PSET sector comprises Community Education and Training (CET); Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); and Higher Education (HE). Enrolments in PSET are skewed towards HE, accounting for approximately 1.2 million students. This is followed by TVET enrolments of around 700 000, and CET in the order of 300 000. To meet South Africa's needs and effectively provide opportunities to youth for skilled work, TVET and CET need to grow and improve in quality.

Faced with the challenge of needing to play a role in strengthening the quality of education across the various education sectors, universities function in an increasingly complex and uncertain world. Short- and medium-term economic adversity threatens their very existence, with recent cuts in government funding in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and a decline in third stream income, and the likely implementation of fee regulation.

Notwithstanding the threat to their financial sustainability, universities are called upon to play an increasingly prominent role in shaping society at large – as responsive institutions for the public good. Such a role includes influencing societal transformation, redressing historical legacies and enabling society to navigate the manifold headwinds that characterise this age of disruption and uncertainty.

Central to fulfilling this role, is to meet the need for high-quality education, through research and developing capable teachers, across all education sectors. Additionally, expanding access to quality higher education equips a critical mass of the populace with the necessary knowledge, capabilities and high-level skills to respond to the challenges and uncertainty at hand.

4.0 Review of UP's performance: 2012 – 2020

UP has a strong foundation that serves as a springboard to managing the dilemma of surviving and thriving in adversity, and contributing meaningfully to the public good. At the same time, barriers, constraints and areas of weakness need to be addressed for us to reach our full institutional potential.

The University's performance is reviewed in relation to its strategic goals, viz.

- I. To enhance access and successful student learning
- II. To strengthen the University's research and international profile
- III. To foster and sustain a transformed, inclusive, and equitable University community
- IV. To optimise resources and enhance institutional sustainability
- V. To strengthen the University's social responsiveness and impact in society

Student numbers have grown per approved enrolment plans, and access by previously excluded groups has progressively improved, with the percentage of black undergraduate (UG) contact students increasing from 45.2% in 2012 to 61.5% in 2021. Similarly, for the same period, the proportion of black postgraduate (PG) students increased from 53.1% to 65.6%, respectively. The percentage of black first-time entering

UG students increased from 44.8% in 2012 to 63.1% in 2021, and enrolments in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) study fields for black students increased from 48.1% to 59.0% respectively.

Successful Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students compared to total FTE contact students increased from 81.7% in 2012 to 86.8% in 2020, representing an increase of 5.1 percentage points in the student success rate. The UG module pass rate improved by 9.5 percentage points, increasing from 78.7% in 2012 to 88.1% in 2020. An increase in the throughput rate has been observed in the various study programmes. For example, for 3-year degrees 45% of the students graduated in minimum time (2018 cohort), an improvement from 43% for the 2015 cohort. For 4-year degrees, the throughput rate has remained stable at 41% for both the 2017 cohort and the 2014 cohort.

The University has implemented various innovations in its teaching and learning model, epitomised mainly by the *Teach and Learn: The UP Way* model. The model includes hybrid flipped-learning, inquiry-led teaching and learning, integration of technology into teaching and learning and the integration of descriptive and predictive data systems into the teaching and learning ecosystem.

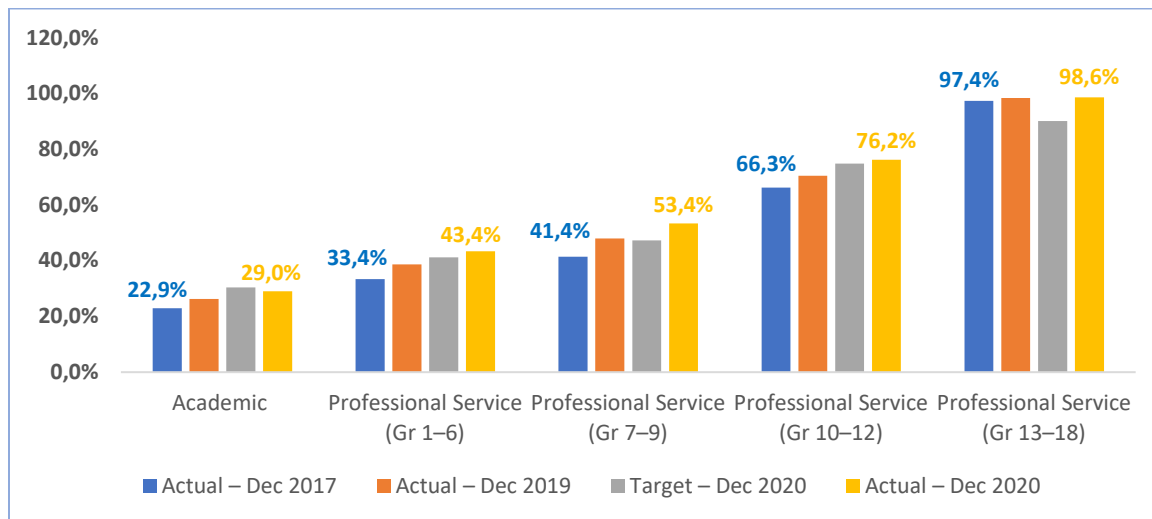
In 2017, the University Senate approved a curriculum transformation framework titled “Reimagining Curricula for a Just University in a Vibrant Democracy”. This framework has guided curriculum transformation across all the faculties. A relaunch of the University’s curriculum transformation drive took place in May 2021.

Whilst UP has made significant strides with regard to student access and success, a number of challenges remain, which the University will continue to address. These challenges include achievement gaps based on gender, race and socio-economic background (see the next section), a declining graduate employability rate (the proportion of graduates who had employment (full-time or part-time) six months after graduation declined from 94% in 2012 to 85% in 2018) and high student to academic staff ratios.

The University is committed to ensuring that transformation permeates every aspect of UP: ensuring that UP is home to student and staff populations that represent South Africa’s rich diversity; providing the conditions necessary for our diverse campus community to feel welcomed, supported, included and valued, and to thrive academically and as researchers.

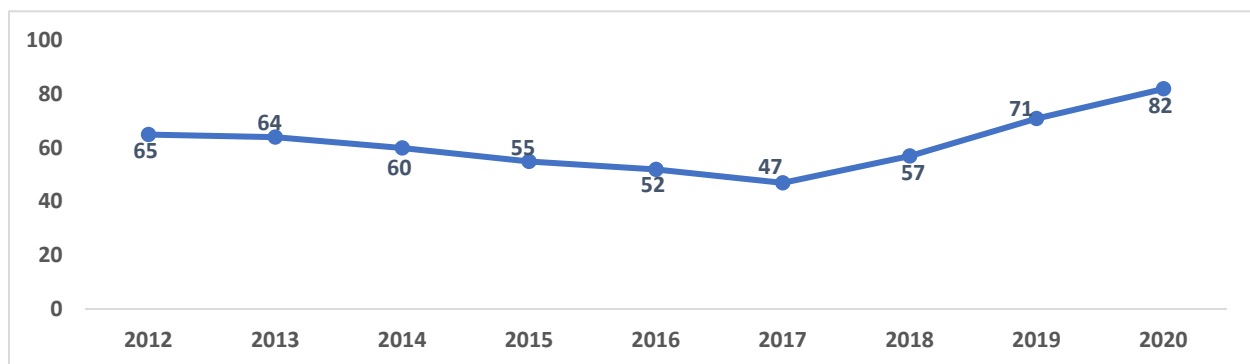
For the period 2017 – 2020, Employment Equity (EE) targets for senior levels of professional and service staff were largely met or exceeded. The exception was for academic staff, where the 2020 actual percentage of 29.0% did not meet the 30.4% target (see Figure 4.1). It is acknowledged that further efforts are required in this area, including the development of innovative solutions to accelerate transformation in our core functions. These would include developing and mentoring young black talent, and supporting their success.

Figure 4.1: Employment equity targets (%) against performance, 2017 – 2020



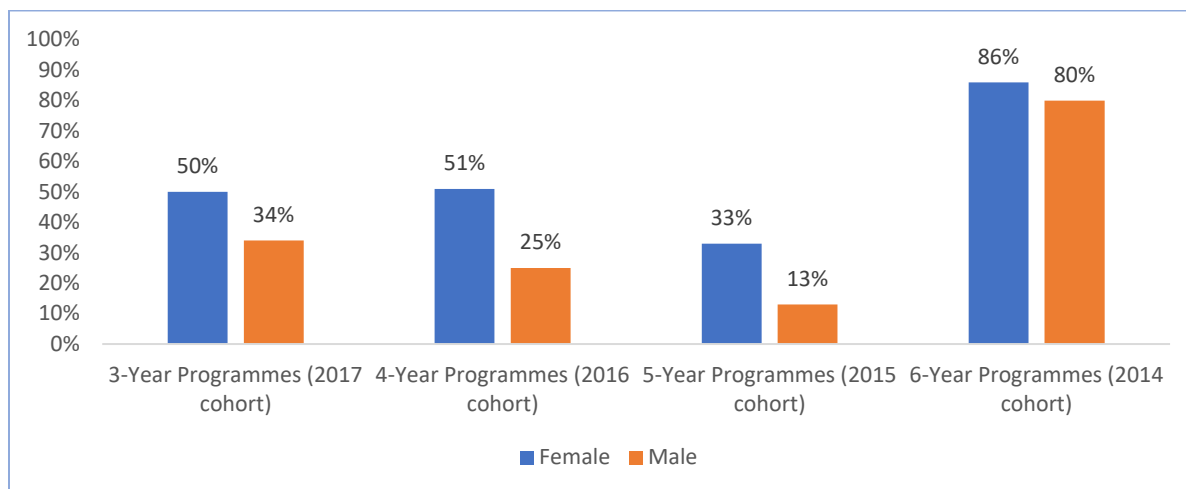
An important aspect of inclusivity is embracing the disadvantaged and most vulnerable in our community. One such indicator is the number of staff with disabilities. Despite a decline in numbers from 2012 – 2017 (see Figure 4.2), over the past four years the trend has been reversed with a significant increase in the number of employees with disabilities.

Figure 4.2: Total number of staff with disabilities, 2012 - 2020



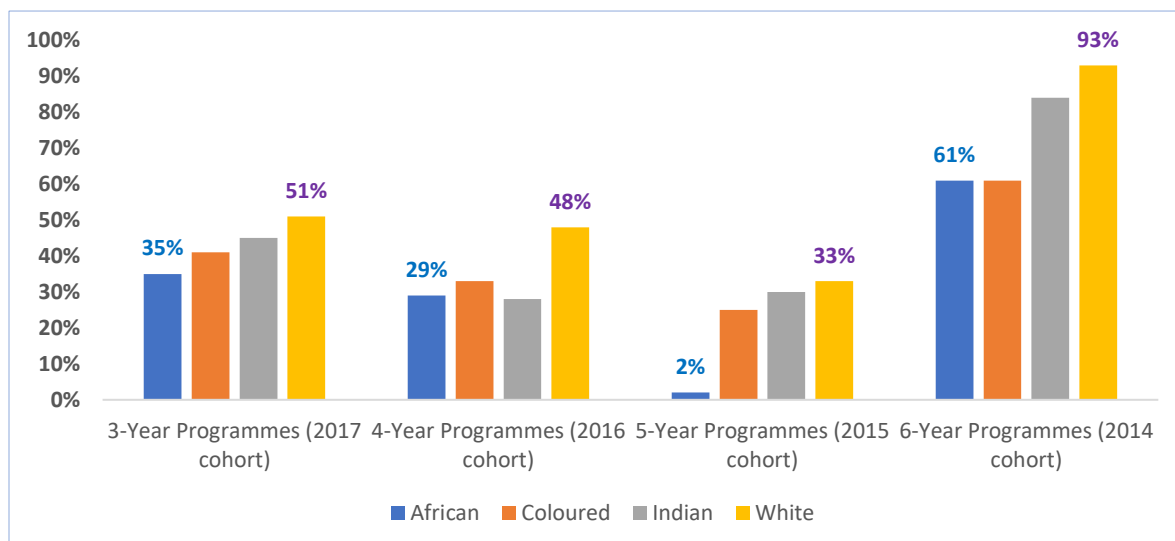
Considering the student community, addressing societal gender imbalances is a critical requirement for our future success and sustainability. The consistently high pass rates of female students across various programmes, as shown in Figure 4.3, supports the contention that we are creating the conditions for enabling women to thrive academically and professionally. The lower pass rates of male students is a concern that the University is addressing.

Figure 4.3: Graduation in minimum time in 2020 by gender



While an increase in the overall throughput rate has been observed in the various study programmes, differential success rates across the various racial groups are evident (see Figure 4.4). While there are multiple factors contributing to this, often driven by issues arising before entry into university, the data shines a light on the hurdles we face in pursuit of a transformed society.

Figure 4. 4: Graduation in minimum time in 2020 by race

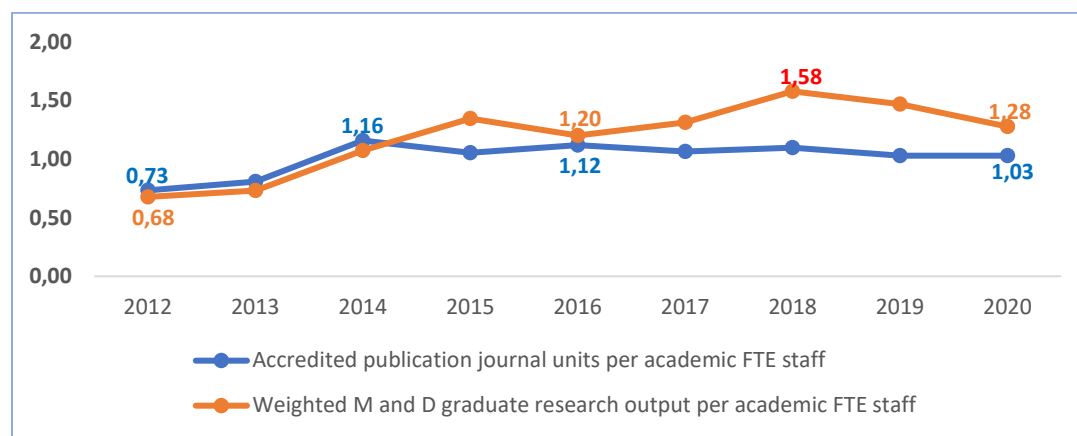


A critical foundation of our positioning as a research-intensive university is attracting and retaining the requisite staff with the highest level of qualification. The proportion of academic staff with PhDs has increased by 14 percentage points over the past decade to the current level of 69.4%.

UP is one of the highest producers of research compared to South African peers. However, after peaking at 1.58 accredited journal publication units per FTE (full time equivalent) staff, it declined to 1.28 in 2020.

A similar pattern was observed with regard to weighted master's and doctoral (M and D) output per FTE staff as shown in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5: Research output, 2012 – 2020



The University is renowned for research breakthroughs that hold significant benefits to society. Recent major scientific breakthroughs by the University's researchers include the restoration of hearing using a 3-D printed middle ear, participating in the imaging of a black hole for the first time, carrying out artificial insemination on a lioness resulting in the birth of healthy cubs, discovery of new compounds that could treat and eliminate malaria, sequencing of the first fungal genome in Africa, discovery of a number of medicinal plants, and the development of a mobile application for screening hearing.

The University is currently rated among the top 1% globally in 13 of the 22 Essential Science Indicator (ESI) fields compared to 10 in 2017. These fields are Plant & Animal Science, Clinical Medicine, Environment/Ecology, Engineering, Molecular Biology & Genetics, Microbiology, Chemistry, Biology & Biochemistry, Social Sciences, Immunology, Economics & Business, Agricultural Sciences and Pharmacology & Toxicology.

As expertise from a range of disciplines is required to foster innovation and address complex scientific and societal challenges, UP has continued to develop as an inspiring place where scientists, scholars and students from different disciplinary backgrounds and different parts of the world, meet and interact in pursuit of research that matters. Over the past five years, the University developed four new major transdisciplinary platforms: the Future Africa Institute and Campus, the Javett-UP Art Centre, Engineering 4.0 and Innovation Africa @UP. These platforms foster a transdisciplinary research culture across the University community and will help create a critical mass of researchers for new knowledge generation to address current and future challenges.

UP is in a satisfactory financial position, despite the numerous cuts to its funding support and the negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the University's income has grown, in the current economic conditions this is under threat. External sources of funding, which have remained static over the past few years, will need to be grown to counter the decline in government funding and the capping of tuition fees. The University launched successful fundraising campaigns for bursaries and for buying

laptops for students. In 2020, UP raised funds to procure 3000 laptops and devices for economically challenged students.

The University is committed to providing staff and students with an environment that is conducive to social cohesion and achieving success in the core functions and activities of the institution. To this end, the University has developed new facilities, for example, the transdisciplinary platforms mentioned above, refurbished student residences, and upgraded lecture halls and laboratories.

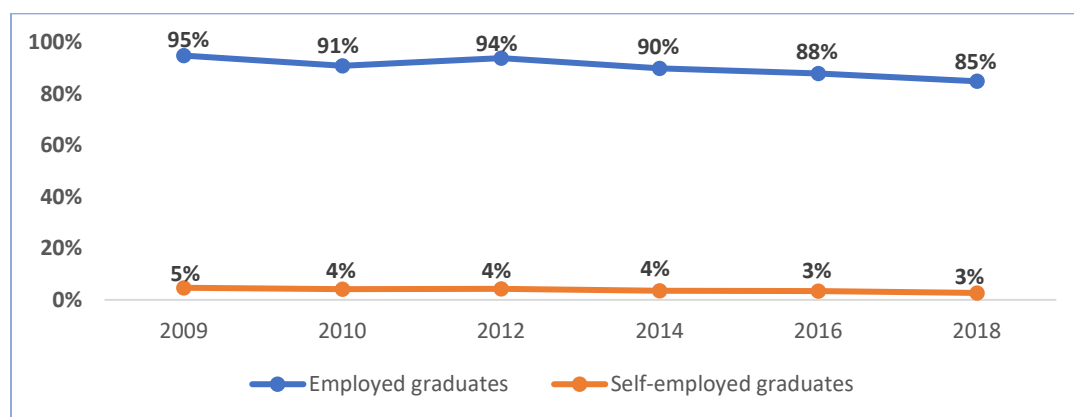
UP has embraced environmental sustainability as an institutional imperative and has implemented various strategies related to carbon management, energy, water and waste management, recycling, and ecologically sustainable infrastructure. The University published its first integrated Sustainable Development Report in 2020, showing the progress towards integrating sustainability into all aspects of the institution, and the various gains that UP has made across the different dimensions of sustainability.

UP is one of the country's largest producers of graduates. According to 2019 data, 11.7% of 3-year UG degrees awarded by the 13 SA traditional universities were UP degrees, with Engineering and Veterinary Science accounting for 26.7% and 100% of the pool, respectively. Considering postgraduate qualifications, the University produced 19.5% of all master's degrees, and 15.4% of all doctoral degrees.

Doctoral graduate numbers increased from 200 in 2012 to 374 in 2020. The number of master's graduates increased from 1 392 in 2012 to 1 787 in 2020. During the same period, the number of black graduates in scarce skills fields increased from 1818 to 2665. Collectively, these skills make a significant contribution to the country's socio-economic development.

We face the challenge, however, of ensuring that we not only develop people for current societal needs, but also for future contexts. The decline seen in graduate employability (see Figure 4.6), and in the number of graduates who are self-employed, calls for us to understand and address this trend.

Figure 4. 6: Graduate employability, 2009 – 2018



A 2018 study commissioned by the University on the economic impact of UP in Tshwane, Gauteng and South Africa, found that, based on the data used at the time, the University and its value chain contributed

significantly to the local, regional and national economy. Its employment constituted 0.5% of total employment in Tshwane, while the University, its suppliers and their suppliers added R7.6 billion (or 7%) to Tshwane's GDP. Furthermore, the University made a significant contribution to the national economy through its capital expenditure, the payment of taxes, employment of staff, the use of suppliers and employment creation, as well as the consumption expenditure by students and staff, leading to an ultimate contribution of R39 billion to the South African economy. UP graduates represented 13.7% of the highly skilled workforce in Gauteng and 7.7% of the highly skilled workforce in South Africa.

Overall, UP enjoys strong leadership, management and skills – albeit uneven across the University – as shown by rising institutional visibility, broadened global engagement and a growing pool of enduring partnerships. In our pursuit of excellence, and seeking to make meaningful contributions to societal evolution, we recognise that re-imagining the University requires fundamental changes to the way we do things – across both core and support functions. Notwithstanding the magnitude of the challenge, by successfully leveraging the disruptive shifts underway and driving innovation, we will navigate the complexity and uncertainty better, continue fulfilling our purpose as an institution of higher education, and enhance our competitive positioning relative to our peers.

5.0 Crafting our desired future

A clearly articulated and compelling desired future serves to mobilise the entire University community, providing a line of sight for coherent and collective action. Our desired future is underpinned by our vision, strategic goals, key guiding principles and desired outcomes.

The University's vision, as set out in UP 2025, "captures the cornerstones of a common vision and understanding of the University's role and identity in the context of multiple and changing circumstances – nationally, regionally and in an increasingly interconnected global world."⁴ It positions UP as a central player in the advancement of South Africa, Africa and the world, through cutting-edge research, the formation of critical skills and impacting communities.

Following the processes described in Section 2, it was determined that the University's vision as spelled out in UP 2025 sufficiently characterises our core purpose and the future the University strives towards. Thus, the implementation of our strategic imperatives will continue to be guided by the following vision:

To be a leading research-intensive university in Africa, recognised internationally for its quality, relevance and impact, and also for developing people, creating knowledge and making a difference locally and globally.

⁴ University of Pretoria (2011). Strategic plan: the vision, mission and plan of the University for 2025.

Strategic goals

Our strategic goals articulate our aspirations and allow the University community to align their collective efforts towards the achievement thereof. The strategic goals that underpinned the University's vision in the 2017 – 2021 period capture our primary purpose as a public university. The continued implementation of these goals will position UP as an adaptive, responsive, resilient and sustainable university that leads impactful change. The goals are:

- I. To enhance access and successful student learning
- II. To strengthen the University's research, international profile, and global engagement
- III. To foster and sustain a transformed, inclusive, and equitable University community
- IV. To enhance institutional sustainability
- V. To strengthen the University's social responsiveness and impact in society

Guiding principles

In fulfilling our vision we:

- Consistently seek transformational approaches and solutions for broad societal interest and the public good – grounded in diversity, inclusivity, and social justice.
- Nurture collaboration, transdisciplinarity, and innovation as the primary means to deal with complexity.
- Mobilise and harness partnerships for greater leverage, innovation, and impact.
- Co-create initiatives, valuing the different perspectives and talents others bring to bear.
- Leverage technology, ICT and Big Data as critical enablers for development, and as sources of next-generation practices.
- Continually renew and reinvent our approaches in the pursuit of excellence, ensuring agility, relevance and resilience, as we navigate current and future challenges.

Our envisioned future

- We have a dynamic institutional culture, fostering diversity and inclusion, with all students and staff striving for excellence. Curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit abound, infused with the ideals of citizenship. Legacy inequalities have been addressed and are a distant memory.
- Excellence in education, research, and practice is evident, initiatives are well resourced, and there is a healthy pipeline of talent for our future success – we have diversified and stable sources of income. Our cutting-edge research is at the frontier of knowledge, and we attract the continent's best talent.
- Our facilities are world-class and we readily adapt and repurpose them as we develop new approaches to teaching and learning, and research.

- We are adept at navigating uncertainty, turning threats into opportunities, and introducing innovations and disruptive ideas or technologies in pursuit of our vision.
- Our influence shapes policy reform, creating the conditions for peace and prosperity, allowing people to thrive and reach their full potential.
- Through the capability we build and the knowledge we create, we are recognised as a catalyst and lead agent for South Africa's and Africa's social and economic development and transformation. The impact is self-sustaining, as we generate multiple streams of value, while at the same time protecting our planet and heritage.
- We are deeply engaged with stakeholders at local, national, and global levels, and are respected and valued as a key partner for influence and impact.

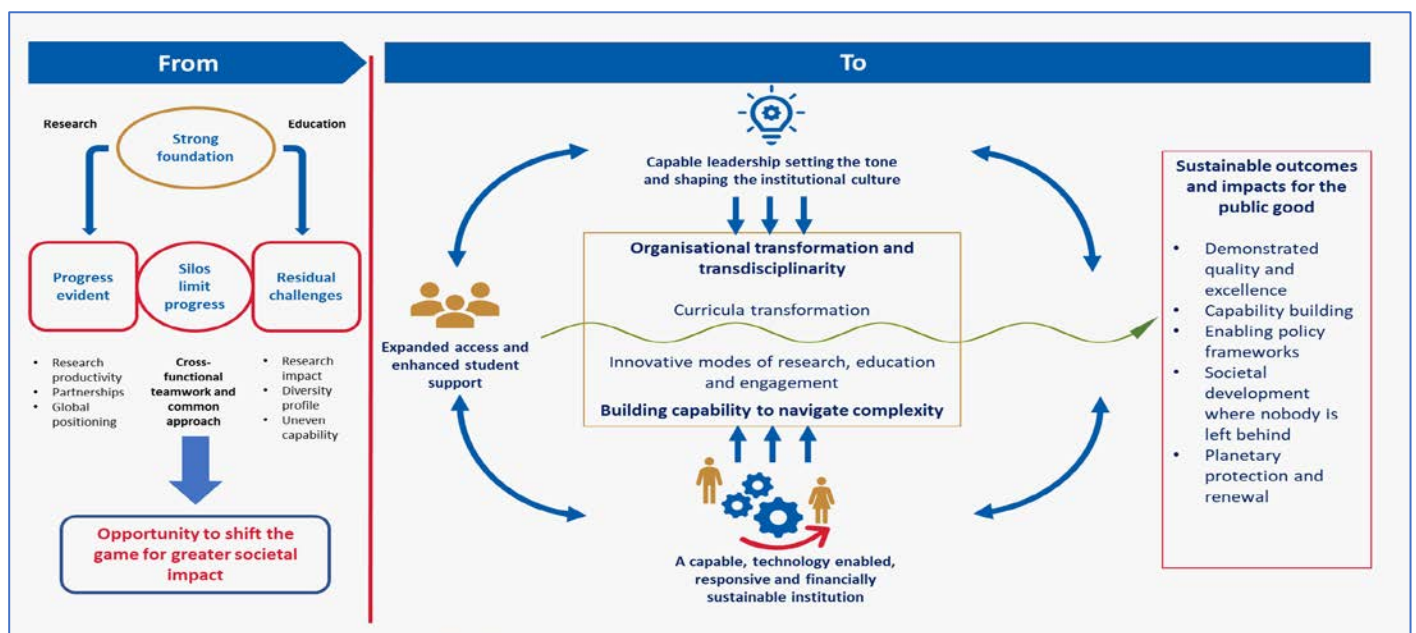
6.0 Our approach to achieving the strategic Intent

As indicated above, this plan describes our approach to bridging the gap that arises as a result of the creative tension between our current reality and the better future we aspire to.

6.1 Our re-imagining argument

Our re-imagining argument is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Our re-imagining argument



As outlined earlier, UP has a strong foundation in its core functions of research, teaching, learning and engagement. Significant progress is evident, such as in the areas of research productivity; our contribution

to the provision of professionals to the country and continent; and the strategic partnerships we are establishing. Notwithstanding the progress, residual and important challenges remain: capability across the institution is uneven; there is uneven success of students from different backgrounds; the diversity of academic staff is limited, especially at the higher levels; and the societal impact of our research needs to be more palpable. A clear opportunity exists to shift the game, differentiate ourselves from our peers and increase our positive societal impact.

In a re-imagined UP, capable leaders set the direction and tone of the institution, shaping the institutional culture. They also ensure that institutional systems – comprising of people, processes and infrastructure – are capable and fit for purpose. These systems enable us to be agile and responsive to societal needs, to transform as an institution and be financially secure and sustainable. With expanded access and enhanced support, undergraduate and postgraduate students from all walks of life successfully progress through the University, building capability by way of a transformed curriculum, and innovative modes of research, education and engagement. They are able to navigate complexity, and as active citizens and future leaders, their contributions to society are readily seen and felt. Collectively, the University and those coming through it, drive sustainable outcomes and impacts for the public good.

Fundamental to the shift from our current to our re-imagined state, is understanding the University as a complex system in itself and as part of the complex landscape it exists in. In this re-imagined state, we are mindful of and fully understand the linkages and dependencies between the issues we face and the way we address them for meaningful and enduring contributions to society. To optimise our performance in a complex system, key levers include:

- Strengthening an integrated approach;
- Relentlessly driving a transdisciplinary agenda; and
- Establishing a culture of innovation across all University functions.

Leveraging these areas enables us to address the diverse dimensions of institutional transformation better and moves us closer to our aspiration of sustainable outcomes and impacts.

6.2 Working towards our desired future

In shifting to our re-imagined state, we aim to build on our current strengths; address issues that may limit our ability to respond to, or shape, the complex and dynamic environments the university exists in; and to make and prioritise the right choices for actions that will fulfil our purpose to transform society.

In this regard, and flowing from the re-imagining argument, three perspectives represent the primary dimensions of the change process, shaping and coordinating the work needed to turn our intentions into reality:

- Strengthening the foundation for transformation and success;
- Building capability to navigate complexity through our core functions; and
- Positioning the University and creating greater leverage for societal impact.

Strengthening the foundation and ensuring we have the requisite institutional focus and capability (people, processes and infrastructure) are the necessary starting point. They enable our core functions of research, teaching, learning and engagement to respond to complex societal challenges and build capability that is sustainable and can function in uncertainty. Our institutional foundation and our contributions to society through our core functions set us up to be well positioned and to create leverage with other stakeholders.

These three perspectives are embedded in the strategic focus areas that we have identified for each strategic goal.

6.3 Goals and key priorities

For each strategic goal, we have determined a set of strategic priorities that define the work that needs to be done towards re-imagining UP. They collectively address the concepts in our re-imagining argument, respond to our challenges and move us towards our vision.

Recognising that we exist in a complex system, there are horizontal and vertical linkages and dependencies between the different strategic focus areas. For instance, leadership capability with a pipeline of future leaders, is a prerequisite for optimal institutional design and effective processes, as well as for creating the conditions for effective staff functioning and their development. Similarly, the extent to which we develop innovative research and teaching modes, and translate these into practice, is determined by the appropriateness and effectiveness of activities in our foundational strategic focus areas, *inter alia*, technology and infrastructure, staffing, capability and development and financial sustainability.

Student access and success

Providing educational opportunities to students from diverse backgrounds and undoing the regressive effects of socio-economic background on educational achievement, are important national imperatives which UP will continue to address. The high levels of inequality in the country, which are linked with lower skill levels among marginalised communities, behove us to narrow unequal student representation across racial and socio-economic groups. By creating a skilled labour force, developing scarce skills and a critical citizenry we will be contributing to the fulfilment of national goals as informed by the National Development Plan. We have for many years been providing funding support to enable access for financially disadvantaged students. Similarly, we have several programmes with high schools in disadvantaged areas aimed at enhancing the academic preparation of students and encouraging their attendance at UP. We will continue building stronger connections with schools serving marginalised communities, strengthening mechanisms to recognise talent and potential, and enhancing student success.

The success of our students is paramount. The ongoing disruptive challenges – economic crises, rapid technological transformations, widening inequalities, COVID-19, graduate unemployment, amongst

others – have put an even greater premium on student success. The outbreak of COVID-19 and its disruption of business, supply chains, manufacturing, education, travel, workplace, amongst others, has spurred technological responses aimed at managing the disruption caused by the health crisis. These responses, predominantly characterised by the use of digital technologies, communication platforms, and information systems and technologies, have resulted in the proliferation, rapid adoption and maturation of new technologies across all sectors. They have also accelerated trends such as hybrid remote work, e-commerce, automation and artificial intelligence and online learning, which will persist after the pandemic.

In addition to strengthening our various initiatives to increase the throughput rates of both our undergraduate and postgraduate students, we will strengthen initiatives aimed at preparing our students to thrive and succeed in the evolving complex landscape. Our ultimate goal is to future-proof our graduates through curriculum transformation initiatives, student-centred pedagogies, transdisciplinary education, work-integrated learning, career development initiatives, lifelong learning opportunities and entrepreneurship development.

Key priorities:

- Implement the University's Digital Strategy for Teaching, Learning and Student Success.
- Implement the UP Teaching and Learning Resourcing Plan (2022 – 2026).
- Enrolment growth and diversification, in particular, growing student numbers from disadvantaged communities, international students and postgraduate students, in line with the University's Enrolment Plan.
- Continue building stronger connections with schools serving marginalised communities.
- Strengthen student data analytics and early warning systems.
- Expand university-led funding initiatives for students in need of financial support.
- Address mental well-being by providing emotional and psychological support to staff and students.
- Increase the number of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered in hybrid/blended learning mode.
- Drive transdisciplinarity in learning and teaching.
- Embed the spectrum of inquiry-led learning modes into the curriculum, reflected in teaching, assessment and research processes.
- Enhance programmes aimed at building the capacity of academic staff in blended learning approaches.
- Curriculum transformation.
- Implement initiatives to sustain and enhance high levels of graduate employability.
- Expand lifelong learning opportunities including short courses, expanding and strengthening hyflex learning opportunities and developing partnerships with industry, governmental and non-governmental entities and communities to provide relevant programmes.

Strengthened research, international profile, and global engagement

Central to our research strategy is the commitment to pursue “research that matters”, that is, research that transforms lives and communities, and addresses complex societal challenges. Such challenges include health, the environment, climate change, food security, poverty alleviation and all the challenges related to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals. By focusing on these challenges, we aspire to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and to make a positive impact on the world by focusing on areas of significant societal need, where creative and innovative responses to major challenges can provide new solutions in a rapidly changing environment.

In addition to aligning our research with national and international imperatives, we will also develop the practice of co-production of research. We have a range of partner communities, including industry, the City of Tshwane, local and regional communities, with whom we will engage in developing research programmes. This consultative approach will provide a wider scope for more rapid translation of research results into applications, with increased potential for commercialisation of the research in some cases. The current approach of creating platforms such as Innovation Africa @UP and Engineering 4.0 where new ideas can be advanced, leading to translation and innovation through entrepreneurship, will be continued.

The inherent complexity of societal challenges such as COVID-19, has given great impetus to transdisciplinary research. We recognise that the narrow scope of individual disciplines is inadequate to address complex societal challenges, especially those such as COVID-19 that are characterised by uncertainty, complexity and unpredictability. UP has over the past several years, been advancing transdisciplinary research as attested to by, amongst others, the pursuit of research themes that require multiple disciplinary perspectives and the development of the Future Africa Institute and Campus, Javett-UP Arts Centre, Engineering 4.0 and Innovation Africa @UP as transdisciplinary research platforms.

The key to UP becoming the leading research-intensive University in Africa, is identifying and sustaining key international partners and knowledge networks to strengthen our research capacity and linkages – ultimately strengthening our profile and visibility. We will strengthen our position as a continental hub for research and consolidate and strengthen partnerships in Africa and globally. The primary focus will be on building and strengthening strategic and productive research partnerships with research universities in the fields that UP has prioritised, and on developing regional and international partnerships focussing on teaching and learning, postgraduate training, and research.

Key priorities

- Create a nurturing and enabling environment for research and researchers at all levels to thrive.
- Attract leading researchers and research associates.
- Identify and consolidate transdisciplinary research priorities linked to societal challenges and crises.
- Leverage current areas of strength for high-impact research and develop mechanisms for identifying emerging fields where we should develop capability.
- Create a critical mass of well-funded and sustainable research entities.

- Invest in research infrastructure, including modern, well-maintained laboratories and research facilities.
- Implement the Strategic Framework for UP's Transdisciplinary Research Platforms.
- Substantially increase external research funding.
- Increase research productivity and impact.
- Develop and implement "quality research champions" and "postgraduate supervision champions" programme to improve UP's research culture and provide quality supervision across all faculties.
- Develop and implement a plan to promote accelerated postgraduate completion.
- Implement the research visibility and impact project.
- Strengthen mentorship programmes for early career researchers.
- Increase the number of post-doctoral research fellows.
- Increase the number of rated researchers in the A, B and P categories.
- Revitalise the recruitment strategy for postgraduate and international students.
- Provide holistic academic support to postgraduate students throughout the postgraduate student lifecycle in order to improve retention and throughput rates, and shorten the average degree completion period.
- Expand the commercialisation of UP innovations.
- Join and participate in the leading continental and global research networks and associations
- Implement the African Global University Project (AGUP) to strengthen internationalisation and global engagement.
- Strengthen UP's positioning in institutional networks – national, continental and global.
- Align international partnerships and collaborations with identified research themes.
- Leverage global partnerships to increase joint grant applications, publication outputs, staff and student exchange, and joint degrees.
- Leverage networks to strengthen UP's position as the leading Higher Education strategic convenor in Africa.

Transformed, inclusive, and equitable University community

Transformation is integral to everything we do and to our core mission of teaching and learning, research and societal engagement. At UP, demographic transformation seeks to achieve two interrelated aims – diversity and inclusion. It is important that we become a more diverse and inclusive knowledge community, to enable us to contribute to building a new society that is non-racist, non-sexist, democratic, just, equal, equitable and prosperous.

Diversity and inclusion at UP are not limited to demographics, especially narrowed down to just race which, given our history, is central and important in transformation, but also extend to gender, disability, sexual orientation, different beliefs, intellectual ideas, as well as embracing of people from our continent, Africa, and the rest of the world. Our transformation programme is integral to our academic programmes and curriculum, research agendas, language, spaces and sport and recreation. In other words, while it is

very important and central to achieve demographic diversity and inclusion, if we do not transform teaching and learning, research and social engagement as well as our spaces and the languages we use, we will not achieve substantive transformation. Integral to our substantive transformation agenda is the pursuit of solutions to society's wicked problems and crises through the creation of new knowledge, innovation and transformation.

Accordingly, transformation is an overarching imperative at UP with multiple dimensions, amongst them:

- Creating a thoroughly inclusive institution with a diverse student body, taught by a diverse, qualified academic staff cohort.
- Producing impactful, high quality, research that matters and that contributes to solving complex issues.
- Promoting a transdisciplinary approach to research and deploying knowledge for social, economic and environmental change.
- Eliminating gender-based violence, sexism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia and all kinds of discrimination and prejudice.
- Creating a University that is welcoming, enabling and future oriented.
- Pursuing continuous curriculum renewal, reform and transformation.
- Achieving excellence and innovation in teaching and learning to achieve higher access and success rates.
- Offering hybrid modes of teaching, learning and assessment that are relevant to a 21st century world where ubiquitous access to information is a given.
- Ensuring our financial sustainability to achieve our goals.

Key priorities

- Implement the Employment Equity Plan (2021 – 2025).
- Implement recommendations of the Institutional Culture Survey.
- Co-create with all stakeholders an institutional culture that values diversity and practices inclusivity.
- Address all the cultures, practices and processes, covert and overt, which alienate and inhibit transformation.
- Transform, diversify and expand UP's research base.
- Develop and strengthen local, national and international transdisciplinary collaborations.
- Strengthen academic, technological, physical and psychosocial support to students with disabilities.
- Ensure the safety and security of staff and students.
- Continue to invest in strategic programmes that promote the wellbeing of students.
- Strengthen the supply chain with increased procurement from historically disadvantaged entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Institutional sustainability

We face multiple disruptive challenges that have been aggravated by COVID-19; economic challenges that have widened societal inequalities and worsened resource scarcity; ecological challenges which, as an engaged university, we must contribute to addressing; and technological innovations which we must embrace to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our operations, teaching and learning, research and impact in society. Our ability to fulfill our critical role of transforming society through high quality education, impactful research and engagement with communities, is dependent on our sustainability and our contribution to a sustainable world.

Sustainability at UP is about building a robust present and future, both for UP and society at large. Our commitment to sustainability permeates all aspects of UP's institutional life, student success and retention, organisational performance across all domains, diversification of revenue streams, third-stream income, transformation, resource utilisation, procurement, campus services, the built environment, energy and water utilisation, waste management, information and communication technology, staff and student well-being, and institutional leadership.

The University has a Financial Sustainability Plan for the period 2019 - 2025. The key focus areas of the Plan are the maximisation of operational efficiencies, cost-containment, as well as the optimisation of all income streams. The plan acknowledges that creating a sustainable university strengthens our core mission of teaching, research and impacting society, and recognises that the challenges confronting the University are complex and interconnected, demanding an ever-evolving approach to sustainability.

The upholding of environmental sustainability (energy and water conservation, waste reduction, etc.) and smart campus principles are key elements of our approach to sustainability. For all newly designed buildings and refurbishment projects, the approach has been to focus on energy efficient designs with regard to power and water usage, waste handling as well as ventilation and air conditioning.

We are committed to developing people and communities, ensuring the well-being of our staff and students, fostering diversity and inclusivity, and enhancing equity and social justice.

Key priorities:

- Continue implementing the institutional Financial Sustainability Plan (2019 – 2025).
- Develop and implement a Digital Transformation Strategy for the University.
- Improve structures and processes at faculty level and in professional service departments for appropriateness, effectiveness and agility.
- Establish a culture of innovation across all University functions.
- Contingency and continuity planning to proactively navigate disruptions.
- Strengthen strategic human resources capabilities including talent management and leadership development.
- Implement and strengthen student programmes that build resilience, self-reliance and citizenship.

- Re-imagine sport at UP, explore innovative and sustainable operating models, and strengthen participation by many students.
- Continuously improve access to comprehensive health services, including counselling and support, expanding access and availability through advanced technology; ensure dedicated services for students and staff with disabilities.
- Review and optimise the residential experience as a nurturing and supporting environment.
- Intensify programmes focused on helping staff to cope with stress and promoting physical and mental well-being.
- Undertake a space utilisation and efficiency audit and update the Spatial Development Plan linked to new academic and managerial requirements, and address existing and planned infrastructure – adapt, upgrade or repurpose.
- Develop and implement comprehensive carbon reduction strategies.
- Develop policies geared towards a more agile and flexible University.
- Break down the silos within the University and other bureaucratic barriers to enhance cross-functional teamwork and operational efficiency.
- Launch a Giving Campaign to diversify and strengthen revenue sources.

Social responsiveness and impact on society

At UP, we engage directly with the significant challenges facing society, ensuring that we contribute to the advancement of South Africa, Africa and the world. We pursue research that transforms lives and communities, and addresses complex societal challenges. Our innovative pedagogies and curricula are adapted to the needs of our students, ensuring quality and relevance. We prepare our students for the opportunities and challenges they will face after graduation.

We are a pioneer of innovations, through which we seek to transform lives and communities, contribute to economic advancement, social justice and sustainable development. We contribute to securing the country's future through the development of highly skilled human capital in diverse fields. We are one of the main developers of human capital in a broad range of fields that are critical to the advancement of South Africa, such as engineering, life and physical sciences, teacher education, and health and animal sciences.

One of our overarching identities is that we are an engaged university that is responsive to our multiple contexts. We are an anchor institution in our communities, with a direct effect on the local economy, the safety and security, well-being and sustainability of our people and environment. UP is one of the largest employers in the City of Tshwane, generates jobs, purchases large amounts of goods and services, attracts businesses and highly skilled individuals to the City, and makes a significant contribution to the City's economic development.

We have strong partnerships with industry, communities, governmental and non-governmental entities as well as academic and research partnerships with leading institutions nationally and globally. We have run a successful community engagement programme for more than fifteen years. In 2020, 32 841 of our

students were directly involved in community projects as part of their curriculum. In addition, more than 126 of our student organisations are involved in voluntary social responsibility projects. For us, community engagement and social responsibility is not an “add on”; it is an integral part of our public mission.

Key priorities:

- Extend community engagement components of academic programme requirements.
- Promote, amplify and celebrate social engagement and citizenship initiatives at all levels to improve visibility of UP’s social responsibility initiatives and achievements.
- Strengthen co-existence and anchor institution initiatives – e.g. Hatfield Precinct, Prinshof and Mamelodi.
- Stakeholder mapping and engagement planning to strengthen the UP profile as an important, inclusive and integral institution of society.
- Establish models to measure societal impact.
- Enhance graduate output in scarce-skills areas.
- Extend the impact of our research through innovation and commercialisation.
- Utilise the University’s expertise to address critical societal issues through research, the arts, sport, community and public policy engagement.
- Develop an integrated knowledge management system with analytic capability.
- Strengthen and leverage internal capability in data science and impact measurement.

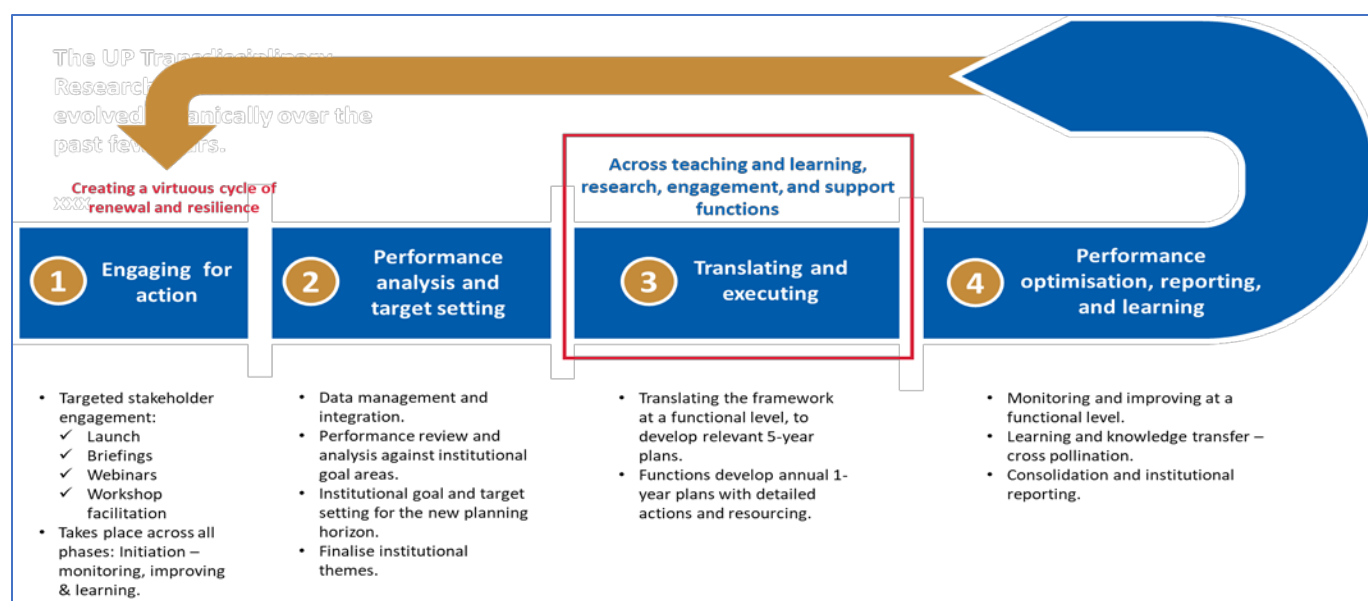
7.0 Implementing the Plan

Re-imagining UP represents a major change management initiative, and its success will require deep engagement with the University community, from design through implementation and performance monitoring. A continuous cycle consisting of four broad phases comprising of discrete activities are envisaged:

- Engaging in design for action;
- Performance analysis and target setting;
- Translating and executing across research, teaching and learning, engagement and professional support functions; and
- Performance optimisation, reporting and learning.

These phases and their high-level components are shown in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: High-level design and implementation pathway



Stakeholder engagement takes place across all phases of the initiative: from initiation through to monitoring, improving and learning. At initiation, engagement will focus on clarifying the strategy, creating a shared understanding and commitment and mobilising the energy, talents and creativity of the UP community, for a collective effort towards achieving challenging aspirations. Through the iterative cycle of implementation and improvement, engagements will include facilitation, monitoring, providing feedback and the sharing of learning and experiences.

Retrospective analysis of our performance is an important feature of setting goals and institutional expectations. In this way, goals and targets are stretched, yet realistic. They also provide a line of sight to ensure that activities are appropriately prioritised and that they support goal achievement. Balancing expectations and capability is also important for setting subsidiary targets at functional levels.

Cascading the plan through functions in the institution will need a facilitated process. Discrete functions review their relevant challenges and opportunities and set aspirations supportive of, and consistent with, UP's desired future. The institutional strategic focus areas are reviewed for clarity and relevance for application within a particular function, and locally relevant activities are determined in order to achieve both functional and institutional aspirations. Discretion in reshaping or sharpening strategic focus areas during translation will retain a consistent institutional approach yet enable locally relevant application. It will also provide useful input into continuously refining and improving the framework.

Within the nested approach, 1-year plans are developed annually and these contain more granular and specific actions that drive progress towards achieving the goals. They also reflect the required resources for the year.

Performance review, optimisation and reporting will occur through existing institutional mechanisms and channels, and enhancing these where necessary. The plan will be monitored institutionally on an annual basis using the indicators in Table 7.1 as well as the Institutional Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation. The targets for several of the performance indicators, for example, the proportion of academics with doctoral degrees, proportion of black academic staff, research outputs, and academic staff to student ratio, represent minimum achievement levels. The intention is to exceed the set targets. Key to accelerated transformation is the strengthening of cross-functional interaction for cross-pollination of ideas and experiences with rapid institutional learning. This will contribute to strengthening a culture of adopting and adapting successful initiatives for implementation in different contexts and of using failures as learning opportunities.

Table 7.1: UP performance indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS		Target 2022	Target 2026
1	% Academic staff with doctoral degrees (excluding joint appointments)	69.41	72.32
2	% Black staff (Department of Labour EE definitions).	67.5	71.0
3	Total weighted research outputs per academic FTE staff*	2.7	3.0
4	First-time entering undergraduate headcount enrolments*	7 903	8 223
5	Total undergraduate headcount enrolments*	37 186	39 461
6	Master's headcount enrolments*	6 719	7 420
7	Doctoral headcount enrolments*	2 593	2 873
8	Number of graduates in scarce skills areas (excluding distance education) *	5 850	5 898
9	% of black contact students to total contact students*	62.88	68.20
10	% registrations in SET (contact students) *	54.0	54.1
11	% successful FTE students to total FTE enrolments*	85.36	86.65
12	FTE contact students per FTE teaching staff member*	26.20	24.0

*HEMIS

8.0 Concluding remarks

At the core of this five-year strategic plan 2022 - 2026 is the aspiration to re-imagine the University of Pretoria within a challenging and fast-changing environment and in the aftermath of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

A re-imagined UP will be a resilient institution, adept at navigating uncertainty, turning threats into opportunities and introducing innovations and disruptive ideas or technologies that will benefit the University and society at large.

As we continue to fulfil our purpose, we will be known for our meaningful contributions to society and will play a significant role in South Africa's and Africa's social and economic development and transformation through our production of skilled graduates and relevant research.