

## NEWS RELEASE

### New VC gives a vision for the future of UP



*Prof Francis Petersen, UP's newly appointed Vice-Chancellor and Principal.*

PRETORIA – The University of Pretoria (UP) recently welcomed Prof Francis Petersen as its new Vice-Chancellor and Principal, during a special event attended by UP's senior management. In his response, Prof Francis Petersen acknowledged the important role UP plays both locally and globally, while also outlining a path toward continuous improvement and enhanced academic excellence. "The University of Pretoria is an excellent academic institution, adding so much to our country, the continent, and the globe."

In his message, he acknowledged that, like any organisation, UP has areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. He emphasised that the key to progress lies in consistent reflection and the pursuit of excellence. "In both of these cases, we will assess and reflect, and we will enhance and improve – continuous improvement

should be the basis of our approach,” he noted.

Central to Prof Petersen’s vision is the “Academic Project,” which he described as the heart of the university’s mission. This project encompasses teaching and learning, research and innovation, and societal engagement. It is a collective effort, involving all 6,085 staff members at UP. “All our staff must be part of delivering an effective and quality Academic Project,” he stated.

To achieve this, Prof Petersen highlighted three essential pillars: execution, support, and enablement. Execution will be driven by UP’s faculties, support will come from all staff members, and enablement will be provided by the executive and senior management teams.

Beyond the academic mission, he stressed the importance of people. “The University of Pretoria is her people – we must focus on our staff and students, we must care about staff and students, we must create an environment where our staff feel valued,” he said, emphasising a commitment to fostering a caring and inclusive culture across the institution.

While the university is set to embark on the development of a new strategic plan, Prof Petersen shared key strategic perspectives that will guide the future direction of UP:

1. Enhancing a people-centric approach to university operations and culture, which he called “human centredness”.
2. Actively working to elevate UP’s global standing and influence.
3. Positioning UP as a global intellectual leader on African matters, for Africa and the world.
4. Leveraging technology in all aspects of the university’s work.
5. Increasing UP’s contributions to societal development and community engagement.

In closing, he humbly underscored his role in this ambitious journey. “Although I am the Vice-Chancellor and Principal and the leader of UP, and I will play that role to the best of my ability, my key focus will be to assist and enable our staff so that we can collectively build an even better UP for the future.”

With this clear and inclusive vision, UP’s new Vice-Chancellor and Principal has set the stage for a future defined by academic excellence, digital innovation, global leadership, and a deep commitment to both staff and students. His leadership promises to steer the university toward new heights while strengthening its foundational values of care, collaboration, and societal impact.

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## **ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their 2024 World University Rankings (WUR). UP was the only South African university featured in the 2023 World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

For more information, please go to [www.up.ac.za](http://www.up.ac.za)