



**SOL PLAATJE  
UNIVERSITY**

**Strategic Plan  
2015 - 2019**

**13 February 2015**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

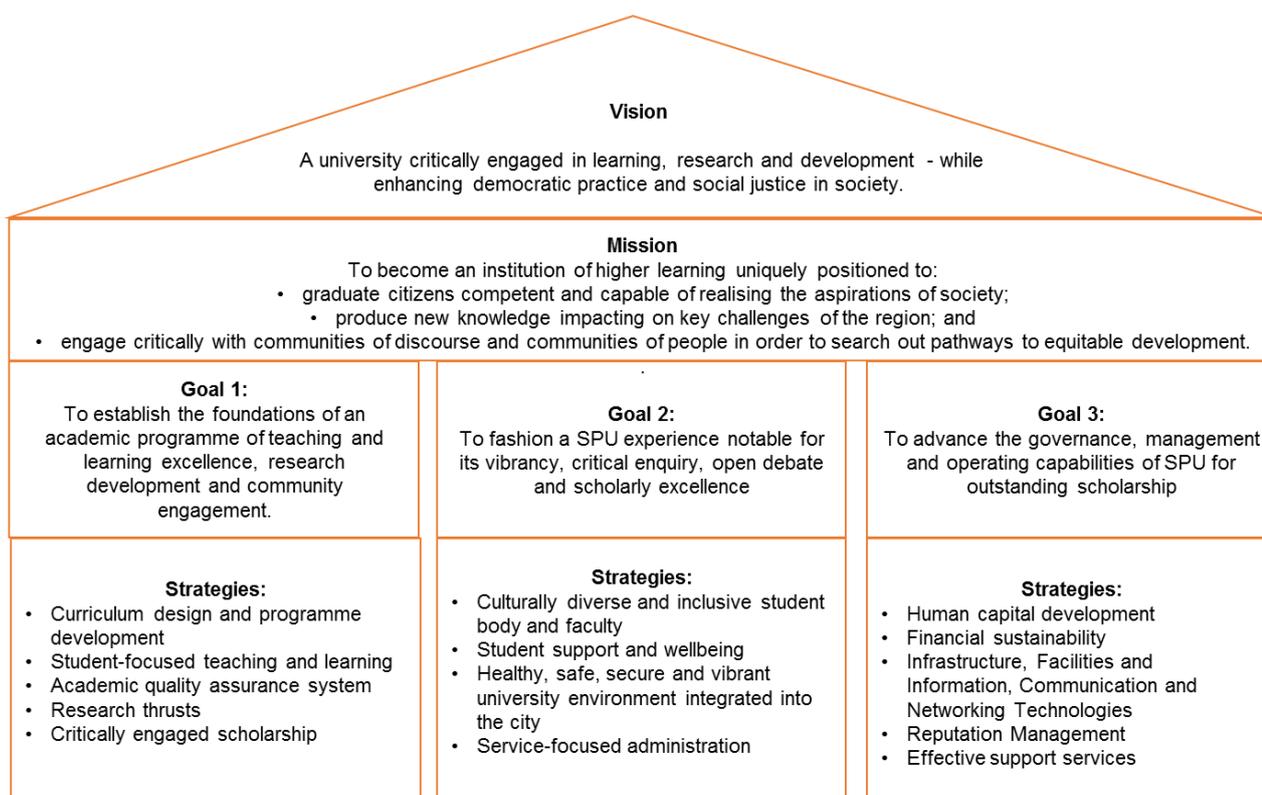
ASMs	-	Assignable Square Meters
CHE	-	Council for Higher Education
DHET	-	Department of Higher Education and Training
HEMIS	-	Higher Education Management Information System
ICTs	-	Information and Communication Technologies
IPPs	-	Independent Power Producers
NDP	-	National Development Plan
NRF	-	National Research Foundation
REIPP	-	Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer
SALT	-	Southern African Large Telescope
SKA	-	Square Kilometre Array
SPU	-	Sol Plaatje University
TOWS	-	Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Strengths

## Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan covers the period 2015 – 2019 and represents the founding strategy of the Sol Plaatje University (SPU).

A background to the establishment of the Sol Plaatje University is provided, and a situational analysis, in terms of opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses is set out. Key opportunities and threats include the need for qualified managers, professionals, and technicians to manage, operate and maintain such initiatives as the regional renewable energy projects and scientific facility infrastructures, and the potential to play the role of knowledge partner to a range of stakeholders. The main threats are possible delays in the completion of the required infrastructure to accommodate the planned student numbers and an inability to attract appropriately qualified staff. Important strengths that the University need to build on include the establishment of the governance and leadership capacity to oversee the development of the university through this initial period of its development, and a well-considered academic plan to guide the evolution of the institution's academic programme. The weaknesses that need to be addressed include the embryonic form of the existing management systems in use and the need to establish its reputation in order to attract high quality students and staff.

A number of reference points constitute a guide for the development of the University. The University should aspire to be a site of learning, research and culture; an engaged social participant; a knowledge economy leader; an innovative 21st Century institution; and be a globally relevant university in Africa that is integrally connected to African issues, while projecting knowledge globally. This document sets out the strategic response by the University to its environment and its aspirations. The broad structure, content and direction of the resultant strategy is graphically summarized as below:-



## 1. Introduction

Strategy by its very nature is constituted through an iterative cycle of learning by doing, and learning from doing. Institutional strategy involves the thorough thinking through of the principal environmental contexts in which an institution is to operate in order to fulfil its vision and mission. The positioning of the institution and its planning processes must accommodate the manifold complexity of each aspect of such contexts, to the extent that key current and future trends can be discerned and must factor in the specific ways in which the institution will itself impact on, shape and transform its environment.

Thus strategy involves disciplined thinking and analysis, institutional positioning and direction within the complexity of its environment and astute planning processes geared to deliver feasible plans for implementation and action. The synergistic combining of these various activities into a coherent strategic cycle is critical, and demands committed and competent leadership. This is particularly important in the case of a new institution that is in the very process of being established, formed and realised out of intentions, visions, decisions and ideas.

This document sets out the very first strategy of a new university, and is therefore crucial in establishing what will be the genetic code that will define the fundamental identity, the intellectual trajectory and academic patterns of the University for many years to come. Of course the strategy initiated here will need to be regularly reviewed, robustly critiqued and further developed. However, this particular strategic formulation will always remain unique through being the first and consequently the founding strategy of the Sol Plaatje University (SPU).

It is therefore important that an appropriate tone is set in terms of what the University should aspire to become, and what initial direction the journey of the institution should take. The initial vision and mission of the University must be well-articulated and understood by major players and key stake-holders, the core values must be sound and durable, and the initial actions and activities embarked upon must give the University immediate traction into a favourable future. In other words, this initial founding strategy needs to be sufficiently visionary and future-fit, but also sufficiently grounded and practical in order to give the University every chance of progress and success.

In this context, a new University will need to be both academically innovative and relevant. The virtues, qualities and usefulness of the institution will need to be well demonstrated, even at an early stage, in terms of winning the confidence of multiple social actors, including academic and support staff, students, parents and sponsors, business, communities, collaborators, donors, media, spheres of government, a variety of local, “glocal” and global partners, and society at large.

Risks will need to be managed, whether in embarking on being the first university in the region to offer a data science qualification, or in dealing with the difficulties of attracting high quality staff to work at a still-unknown SPU in the sparsely-populated Northern Cape. One failed academic undertaking in an established university would hardly cause a ripple in such an institution, whereas Sol Plaatje University will be on the “bleeding edge” for some time to come. Thus the leading edge of this new and exciting undertaking must balance innovation with cool calculation and sensible use of precious resources. Sol Plaatje University must steam ahead confident in the strategic plans and priorities adopted, but with careful and consistent monitoring and evaluation of its ongoing practice and performance, lest it fails to heed warning signals or concerned voices.

The expectation is that SPU will emerge in the tradition of a critical and critically-engaged humanist university. Such tradition will need to be re-imagined and re-invented in terms of the social and developmental context, of local and regional needs and aspirations, and in terms of the various

knowledge vocations and niches open and available to this new University as it flourishes and takes flight.

## 2. Background to the Establishment of Sol Plaatje University

The National Development Plan (NDP) envisages an increase in higher education participation from 17.9% in 2012 to 25% by 2030. In the last decade there has been growth of over 50% in university enrolments from 603 000 students in 2001 to 935 000 in 2012. Meeting the NDP targets will require further growth in the enrolments of students at higher education institutions. The primary motivation for the establishment of the Sol Plaatje University (SPU) is to significantly contribute to the acceleration and expansion of access to university education in South Africa, in addition to building additional academic capacity in niche disciplines and specialisations.

It is against this backdrop that the Minister of Higher Education and Training announced the establishment of two task teams in 2010 to explore appropriate models for new universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape. The Task Team Report was submitted at the end of 2011 for consideration by the Minister.<sup>1</sup> Although the Task Team Report did not recommend the establishment of a university in the Northern Cape Province, the Minister nevertheless, after consultation with the Council for Higher Education (CHE), decided to proceed with the establishment of such a university.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) subsequently established a project management team to take forward the planning process under the guidance of a project steering committee. Since then, a number of milestones have been achieved that have paved the way for the first intake of students and the start of construction, including:

- the announcement on the 5th July 2012 by President Zuma that the university will be located in the inner-city of Kimberley following the thorough assessment of a number of candidate sites across the province;
- the publication by government, on August 2012, of the Development Framework for New Universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces, in order to guide the conceptualisation, design and development of such institutions;
- the submission of detailed feasibility studies for the new universities in September 2012 and the subsequent confirmation by National Treasury of an allocation of over R2 billion for the 2013/14 – 2015/16 MTEF period;
- the signing of a Record of Intention to facilitate the rapid establishment of a Northern Cape University and the transfer and development of publicly owned land to facilitate the required land assembly process between the Minister of Higher Education and Training, the Minister of Public Works, the Premier of the province and the Mayors of the Frances Baard and Sol Plaatje Municipalities in March 2013;
- the announcement of the Interim Council and the name of the new university by President Zuma in July 2013;
- the formal establishment as a public university in terms of Section 20 of the Higher Education Act of 1997 in August 2013;
- the formal launch occasion of the University in September 2013
- the start of the first academic year in January 2014;
- the appointment of the full Council in August 2014; and

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Higher Education and Training. (2011). Final Report on the Establishment of new Universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces. Republic of South Africa.

- the issuing of a statement by the Minister of Higher Education in October 2014 announcing the start of the new works construction programme for Sol Plaatje University.

### 3. Situational Analysis

We are living in 21<sup>st</sup> Century times that are witnessing the rise of a global networked information society connected by means of modern information and communication technologies (ICTs). This era values knowledge as the primary source of competitiveness and wellbeing. This historical conjuncture informs and structures the conditions under which the Sol Plaatje University was born, and into which it will grow and develop. However, whilst the development of higher education institutions are influenced in profound ways by the key trends of globalisation, the proliferation of ICTs and the central contribution of knowledge to social and economic progress, these institutions are also significant contributors to such processes.

Higher education is itself a major driver of globalisation and the knowledge economy.<sup>2</sup> Universities are responsible for educating and training highly skilled workers who animate and sustain the processes of social development and contribute to the research base underpinning the innovations that shape the emergence of knowledge societies, economies and systems of governance. In addition universities facilitate the global flow of ideas through multifarious faculty collaborations and exchange. Universities, in the higher education landscape in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, have become global institutions in an elaborate network of interconnected knowledge and informational nodes.

The potential impact of ICTs in higher education is significant. The adoption of ICTs has led to changes in the modes of teaching and learning, research, collaboration and administration. ICTs are used in different ways in the development of course material (courseware), delivering and sharing content (audio or video streaming), and collaborative learning (collaborative problem-based learning). The storage and computational capacity now available to support research enable new ways of posing research questions and data analysis.

Knowledge has become the most important factor of production and requisite access to information and knowledge together with the capacity to process and apply it is a pre-condition for economic growth and development. The ability to produce, assimilate and use knowledge is closely correlated with the levels of education realised by societies. The ability of nations to compete in the knowledge economy is based on a virtuous cycle in which educational development conditions technological development, which promotes social development and in turn stimulates educational development once more<sup>3</sup>. Universities, as knowledge partners to society, are key institutions in the context of the local, the regional and the global knowledge economy.

These global trends interact with the specific conditions pertaining to higher education in South Africa. The National Development Plan recognises the importance of higher education in providing opportunities for social mobility that can strengthen equity, social justice and democracy, in addition to developing the high level skills which crucially contribute to the development of knowledge in society.<sup>4</sup> The drive for equity, social justice and democracy is a particularly significant policy focus in the South

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<sup>2</sup> OECD. (2009). *Higher Education to 2030. Volume 2. Globalisation*. Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. Paris: OECD Publishing.

<sup>3</sup> Castells, M. (1996). *The Rise of the Network Society*. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I. Cambridge, MA, USA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

<sup>4</sup> National Planning Commission. (2011). *National Development Plan, Vision for 2030*. Available: <http://www.npconline.co.za/medialib/downloads/home/NPC%20National%20Development%20Plan%20Vision%202030%20-lo-res.pdf> Accessed: 11 November 2014.

African higher education context, given the high levels of poverty and inequality that remain endemic in the society. This stems from an acknowledgement that the “system continues to produce and reproduce gender, class, racial and other inequalities of access to education opportunities and success”.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the main goals for the period leading to 2030 is to expand the provision of education and training in South Africa, to improve the quality thereof and to integrate the various strands of the post-school system into a single, coordinated education and training system.<sup>6</sup>

An important strategic challenge for an emerging SPU will be the need to positively respond to the key international trends in higher education in the context of the social and economic conditions prevailing in the country, in such a way as to take advantages of the opportunities and avoid the threats - while at the same time building on strengths and minimising weaknesses.

### **3.1. Opportunities**

A number of recent national developments in renewable energy and international scientific collaborative programmes have significant implications for the Northern Cape Province, locale of the newly-founded SPU.

The development of renewable energy is a priority of the South African Government’s global change mitigation and green economy strategies. The roll-out of renewable energy initiatives such as large-scale grid-connected projects are integral to the country’s transition to a greener economy by altering the structure of the energy sector. The government has developed an extensive policy framework to shape and support renewable energy-based power generation and provide conditions for the introduction of independent power producers (IPPs) into the electricity market. The Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer (REIPP) procurement programme has been successfully introduced to facilitate the generation of renewable energy-based electricity by the private sector. The first three rounds of the programme have been largely oversubscribed and have resulted in committed investment of ZAR 150 billion.<sup>7</sup> The Northern Cape Province has been a prime beneficiary of the renewable energy liberalisation process with the implementation of twenty-one projects in the province.<sup>8</sup>

The province has also been catapulted to the foreground of modern science due to being the home of the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT), the largest facility of its type in the southern hemisphere and one of the top 10 such complexes in the world. This scientific facility enables astronomers to investigate the earliest galaxies, the birth and death of stars, and the scale and age of the universe. More recently, South Africa and Australia were jointly awarded the bid to host the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope which will be one of the premier scientific research facilities in the world, and positions South Africa to become a major international hub for astronomy and associated cutting-edge technology.

There is a manifest need for competent managers, qualified professionals and skilled technicians to organize, operate and maintain the increasing renewable energy projects, as well as the facilities and

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Higher education and Training. (2012). *Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training*. Republic of South Africa. Pretoria. P7.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Higher education and Training. (2013). *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training*. Republic of South Africa.

<sup>7</sup> Montmasson-Clair, G. (2014). Commissioning Renewable Energy: A Review of South Africa’s Regulatory and Procurement Experience. *Journal of Economics and Financial Sciences*, JSI 7-Special Issue.

<sup>8</sup> Mabilo, S. (2013). Provincial Growth and Development Strategy, 2004 – 2014. Presentation made to the Interim Council of the Sol Plaatje University. Kimberley, 15 August 2013. Department of Economic Development and Tourism. Northern Cape Provincial Government.

scientific infrastructures that will be developed as part of the SKA initiative. This conjuncture provides scope for an appropriate menu of SPU educational and training activities. SPU is further positioned to significantly contribute to the development of the intellectual and technical capacity that will be capable of adding value to the SKA data mission. SPU's intended focus on data science will develop the capacity not only to engage with the storage and management of the data, but also the actual analysis and interpretation of very large quantities of unstructured data sets.

The SPU is already regarded as a knowledge partner to a number of stakeholders, including provincial and local government departments and agencies, as well as a number of general educational institutions. In these engagements the SPU seeks to leverage its knowledge resources and academic capital in the interests of enhancing relevant social, economic and institutional outcomes. The SPU will seek to deepen this scholarship of engagement through focused development of this rapidly evolving role as a credible knowledge partner - as its capacity to do so increases over the next several years.

The SPU, as a unique newcomer in the regional landscape of public institutions, is being seen in a very favourable light. Such sentiment has been expressed in a number of different ways by various important stakeholders. For example the Northern Cape Provincial Government played an important role in clearing away various obstacles during the land assembly process that might otherwise have delayed the establishment of the institution. The Sol Plaatje Municipality has been unequivocal in its support for the development of the University.

The private sector has also welcomed the inauguration of SPU, and already the institution has benefited from a significant donation from business. Strong potential exists for synergies related to the areas of agriculture, retail, services, and medium and small business in general.

The prevailing favourable sentiment manifest in the overall environment provides strong potential for exploring and forging mutually beneficial partnership in the short, medium and long terms.

### **3.2. Threats**

The SPU faces a number of sustainability challenges as it proceeds to navigate its way through the inception phase towards the creation of a firm foundation for future growth and development. Significant difficulties include managing the physical construction simultaneously with the academic and institutional development; challenges associated with attracting high calibre academic staff; pressure on its financial resources; and the pioneering of untested and newly curriculated programmes.

It is estimated that a total of 190 000 m<sup>2</sup> of physical plant will be needed for the SPU to accommodate the targeted 7 500 student body. It is envisaged that the initial development of the University will take place over a period of twelve years in order to enable the phasing in of all programmes and the achievement of optimal capacity. The first phase of construction has therefore commenced in order to ensure that the infrastructure requirements for 2016 and 2017 are met. In total, the construction of more than 50 000m<sup>2</sup> of new buildings will accommodate the planned 2017 student intake. Any non-completion of infrastructure projects poses a serious threat to the ability of the SPU to achieve expanded enrolments in support of its future growth and development trajectory.

SPU will need to compete with other higher education institutions within the same limited pool of academics in order to staff the institution. Attracting appropriate and high calibre academics to the institution will therefore constitute a significant pre-requisite to attaining quality academic outcomes. A number of key issues currently influence the academic capacity and supply in the country including, the number of academics lost to retirement; death and immigration; and the difficulties in attracting

intellectual talent to the profession. The qualifications levels of many practicing academics within the system are below what is required. The projected expansion of the post-school system carries with it the market demand for scarce academic practitioners.

All these factors will influence the ability of SPU to attract and to retain a core of academics at the institution. In addition, the employability for spouses, schooling for children, the very different social, cultural and intellectual contexts of life in Kimberley, may all act as limitations on the ability to attract the necessary academic capacity that ensures suitable levels of teaching, learning and research activities. The stringent and often inconsistent requirements of Home Affairs, as well as long and unexplained delays in processing, have traditionally obstructed the recruitment of international, and especially African, academic talent. It will be essential that these various hurdles are surmounted if the SPU is to achieve the necessary academic staffing conditions that will ensure the sustainable attraction and retention of such crucial academic cadre.

The availability of the funding required to maintain the current levels of capital expenditure, in order to support the physical expansion of the University, as well as to continuously increase its academic capacity, poses one of the most serious threats. At present, the national fiscus is under pressure due to weak economic performance, rising debt levels and falling commodity prices. Government has provided earmarked funding to 2018 and it is uncertain what approach will be taken to ensure the sustainability of the University beyond this point, most especially in regard to special bridging arrangements within the transition from ear-marked to block-grant funding.

All the current and planned academic programmes offered at SPU are new or newly curriculated within the South African context. While this marks the University with a positive character of innovation and inventiveness, there is the serious risk of over-exposure to the untried and untested.

### **3.3. Strengths**

The SPU has developed core strengths in a number of areas that bode well for its future development and positioning. It has established significant governance and leadership capacity to oversee the development of the University; developed and approved the institution's academic plan; built up the required social capital to support its development; and has put in place a framework to roll-out an ambitious infrastructure programme.

The full University Council was appointed in August 2014 and the necessary sub-committees of Council have been established in line with best corporate governance practice to support the work of Council. This represents a significant milestone at this early stage of the development of the University which now has requisite leadership in place to govern and advance the mission of the institution. The appointment of an Interim Head, Chief Operating Officer, Registrar and senior academic leaders, has constituted a capacitated management team - which has set about developing the policies and procedures for administering the academic programmes, as well as the associated student teaching and learning systems.

The SPU has an approved academic plan for the period 2014 – 2018 that sets out the broad principles and processes to guide the development, support and strengthening of academic activities at the university. A thorough analysis of the academic context, taking into account both local and national needs and opportunities, has identified a range of suitable programme areas to be developed over the next period. Priority areas include Teacher Education; Information and Communication Technologies; Management Sciences; Heritage Studies; Earth Sciences; Creative Writing in African Languages; and Therapeutic Sciences.

The SPU's commitment to a scholarship of engagement has already resulted in active participation in several stakeholder fora, as well as bilateral engagements, in order to represent the SPU as a viable knowledge partner. This approach is aimed at facilitating the integration of the University into the relevant social, economic and cultural environments and communities, in order to engage, contribute and benefit from such knowledge engagements as a fully-fledged participant within local, regional and international developmental networks.

The governance systems and project management procedures have been developed, and a project manager and contractors have been appointed to commence the construction of new works. The project manager and contractor(s) will work under the auspices of the university, but liaise closely with provincial and local government structures to mobilise participation in the construction programme. The project management team has developed a multi-year Infrastructure Implementation Plan for the University based on the established space requirements. These set out the phasing of the physical development in relation to the space requirements; and include the phasing of land acquisition, town planning and environmental processes, bulk and connector infrastructure services, as well as the land parcel building development phases. The approach adopted aims to achieve a significant leap forward by 2016, thereby enabling the construction process to stay ahead of the planned enrolment numbers. It further envisages the subsequent handover, approximately every three years, of completed self-contained portions of the different campuses. With this three-year delivery cycle, the construction programme consistently stays ahead of operational space requirements, in order to reduce the huge disruption factor of having ongoing building activity in and around existing academic and administration buildings.

Furthermore, specific social and economic development objectives have been integrated into the construction procurement strategy and process. This integration has been achieved through two mechanisms; *firstly*, the development objectives have been translated into specific key performance indicators and targets in the procurement and construction process; and *secondly*, the institutional arrangements and project management processes involve the establishment of dedicated oversight capacity to monitor and report on the achievement of these targets.

In the short period since its inception the SPU has also been able to establish an uncompromising commitment to academic excellence and a strong work ethic. The results of the first academic year at SPU reflect this commitment. The average course-pass rate among the 124 students accepted into the first year was 87% (compared to the target of 80%) with 102 students passing all their first-year courses, so enabling them to proceed to a full second year of study. Seven students are expected to return to complete one or more first-year courses.

These strengths, as outlined above, constitute the foundations of an emerging institutional culture characterised by hard work and productivity - within an overall environment of clear and open governance, honesty and integrity and a resolute commitment to the academic mission.

### **3.4. Weaknesses**

As a new institution, the SPU is faced with a number of internal weaknesses which this strategy aims to address over the next few years. The University has no reputation as yet to attract high quality staff and students, and branding, marketing and communication capacity is still rudimentary. SPU currently has only fledgling management systems in place that will require ongoing strengthening and improvement to support its future growth. Fit for purpose ICT structures, systems and capacity for internal administration, as well as for teaching, learning and research will need to be rapidly established.

The SPU will require time to develop its reputation for academic excellence in general, and for having looked for specialisations in specific academic fields. The reputation of the institution is a key consideration when top students apply for university entry. In turn, attracting smart students, in addition to high-quality academics, contributes to establishing the reputation of an institution - and in fact good students constitute a significant attractor of academic talent. This virtuous cycle can only be established over time with the right mix of students, academics and institutional leadership.

At this point in time, there is little SPU research output and only rudimentary institutional research planning. Since credible universities are expected to not only transfer knowledge, but also create new knowledge, this issue will need to be given time and dedicated attention.

As stated, the SPU is in the early stages of developing its management systems, especially the financial, human resource, student, and facilities management systems. The existing management systems will in all likelihood not be able to cope with the requirements for growth and expansion unless there is a dedicated focus and effort within the University to continuously strengthen, expand and adapt such systems.

### 3.5. Summary of Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Strengths

The table below provides a brief summary of the Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Strengths (TOWS):

**Table 1: Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Strengths**

External Environment	
Threats	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delays in completion of infrastructure projects</li> <li>• Inability to attract appropriate and high calibre academic staff</li> <li>• Lack of funding to maintain requisite levels of expenditure; especially during transition from earmarked to block grants</li> <li>• Over-exposure to the untried and untested, especially in terms of investment in unique “niche” academic programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for qualified managers, professionals and technicians to manage, operate and maintain the regional renewable energy projects and scientific facility infrastructures</li> <li>• Potential knowledge services to government and to business, eg. agriculture, retail, SMME’s</li> <li>• Establish a scholarship of engagement through SPU’s role as a knowledge partner</li> <li>• Establish mutually beneficial partnerships premised on favourable sentiment</li> </ul>
Internal Environment	
Weaknesses	Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University has no reputation as yet to attract high quality students</li> <li>• Embryonic management systems</li> <li>• Underdeveloped ICT environment</li> <li>• Research plan and capacity still rudimentary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance and leadership capacity to oversee the development of the University</li> <li>• Approved academic plan</li> <li>• Social capital to support SPU development</li> <li>• Framework and required capacity to roll-out the infrastructure programme.</li> <li>• Uncompromising commitment to academic excellence</li> </ul>

## 4. Envisioning 2025

The primary purpose of this document is to set out a five year strategy to guide the course of the SPU from the beginning of 2015 to the end of 2019. This is good and well as five years is a reasonable period in which to undertake and pursue a particular set of strategic objectives, orientated towards specific goals and objectives needing to be achieved.

However, in the case of most established institutions, such five-year strategic plans are influenced by their historical trajectories in ways that are difficult to predict. This implies that whatever new starting points are identified or new environmental insights are fed into the strategy process, the actually existing trajectory of the institution will inevitably loom large and strongly influence strategic outcomes. In the case of the SPU, as a 21st century knowledge organisation still in flux and in formation, the weight of such institutional culture, direction and 'baggage' sits only lightly in our strategic deliberations.

This is not to say there are not clear parameters, regulatory frameworks, bench-marks, global standards and accepted practices that a South African university should consider in its planning for the operation of excellent higher education. However, even in terms of these various guiding and/or limiting national and global paradigms and parameters, there remains available multiple and complex strategic options, alternatives and combinations.

Although the above scenario is conducive to an agile strategic approach, there are also potential dangers in terms of carrying out strategic planning with a completely new or incomplete framework of reference. In this context it might be considered useful to set out some longer-term aims and intentions, in envisioning where the University might wish to be, or be positioned, in twenty years from now. Such a broad envisioning could prove useful in ensuring that the five-year strategy planning process, as well as the annual performance plans, are situated within a broader vision of the kind of university the SPU might well wish to become in the fullness of time, through the expression of much energy, inspiration and effort.

Accordingly, the following broad positioning points of reference could collectively constitute the guiding principles for a flourishing, productive and socially contributing SPU over the next 20 years:

- **A site of learning, research and culture** - endeavouring towards excellence and embedded in quality academic process;
- **An engaged social participant** - giving expression to democratic practice, seized with the challenges facing society, and enabling participation in social, cultural and economic life;
- **A knowledge economy leader** - facilitating knowledge for development and economic advancement locally, regionally, nationally & globally;
- **An innovative 21<sup>st</sup> Century institution** - creative & inventive in teaching & learning, research, funding & community engagement, characterised by the presence of state-of-the-art ICT;
- **A university in Africa** - integrally connected to African issues, projecting knowledge globally.

## 5. Vision and Values

The SPU draft vision is:

***A university critically engaged in learning, research and development - while enhancing democratic practice and social justice in society.***

As a site of learning, the SPU is envisaged as an intellectual space for the production of ideas and knowledge that facilitate and enrich participation in, and democratic transformation of political, social, cultural and economic life. As a functional symbol of the new South African order, the SPU is unencumbered by the history of advantage and disadvantage pertaining to the institutions of higher learning established during the previous political dispensation. As a 21st century social institution, the SPU will be adept at developing innovative governance, funding, teaching, research, as well as civic engagement modalities able to respond to rapidly changing social, cultural, political, environmental and economic conditions. As a house of culture, the SPU will be a platform for open debate and intellectual enquiry, while offering learning and living environments that enable a constant flow of interaction between its various constituent communities.

The SPU will over the next five years strive towards embedding a set of values into the fabric of the University, so that these values will, over time, come to define the very essence of the institution. Operationalizing and realizing these values will, from a stakeholder perspective, represent the value proposition of the SPU. The values are:

- ***Academic freedom*** – we value the right to participate in academic issues, affairs and communities without fear or favour; autonomously decide the content and methods of teaching; freely determine the topic, themes and methods of research; seek, receive, obtain, discuss and impart knowledge, information and ideas of all kinds and from all quarters; and co-operate freely with colleagues in all parts of the world.
- ***Independent intellectual endeavour*** – we value individual, group, and institutional academic enquiry which is innovative, ground-breaking and committed, whether or not such endeavour may be regarded by some as heretical or iconoclastic.
- ***Depth and breadth of knowledge and critical thinking*** – we value the quality of academic process, especially when intense in focus, and/or ambitious in scope, and/or complex in analytical thrust.
- ***Academic citizenship*** – we value the progressive and constructive participation in the affairs and issues of society by the University, by academic and other staff, and by students. We value when knowledge residing in the University node is articulated and extended to assist in the resolution of social problems or used to facilitate the improvement of the life and circumstances of individuals, groups or communities. We also value the participation of academics, students and other staff in the civic life of the University itself, including within its governance structures and committees, its review and assurance processes, its improvement campaigns, its internal debates, and within its ongoing transformation towards achieving its strategic objectives.
- ***National and international comparability of academic quality*** – we value our place among the community and fellowship of universities - nationally, regionally and globally. We take seriously such knowledge and performance bench-marks, peer review processes, scientific surveys, and comparative techniques prevalent and credible within such higher education community.
- ***Community engagement and social responsiveness*** – we value the fact that our University would structure and facilitate community engagement and social responsiveness activities as a functional principle and strategic aspect of our institutional character. Our approach to knowledge

will be cognizant at all times of opportunities for productive social engagement, and beneficial community engagements will be guaranteed in terms of our operational style of work.

- **Intellectual integrity** – we value the pursuit of truth, knowledge and wisdom honestly and without the interference of conflicted interests or hidden agendas. All commercial interests, consultancy engagements and funding conditions should be transparently disclosed and properly regulated in terms of the policy of the University. Corruption and/or fraud of any kind, whether primarily academic or primarily financial in nature shall not be tolerated at SPU, now or into the future.

## 6. Mission and Positioning

The SPU mission is:

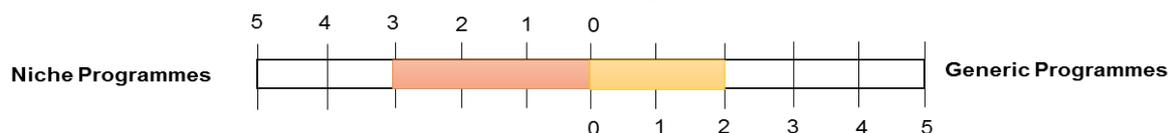
**To become an institution of higher learning uniquely positioned to:**

- **graduate citizens competent and capable of realising the aspirations of society;**
- **produce new knowledge impacting on key challenges of the region;**
- **engage critically with communities of discourse and communities of people in order to search out pathways to equitable development.**

The mission serves as a lodestar for the positioning of the University relative to its stakeholders and other universities in the higher education landscape. Strategic polarities were used as a conceptual device in charting the future positioning of the SPU. These polarities consist of conceptual topographies that serve as strategic markers that appear to represent contradictory strategic priorities - yet are integrally connected. These abstract priority typographies exert tension on the positioning of the University so that the resolution of such conceptual polarities represents the intended strategic positioning of the SPU.

### 6.1. Niche versus Generic Programmes

The current and planned academic programmes offered at SPU are mainly new and newly curriculated in the country. Whilst this innovative approach is a character that distinguishes the University from other higher learning institutions there are risks in this approach that need to be mediated with the introduction of universally useful formative generic programmes. A cautious approach is required in the process of introducing niche or specialist programmes in order that they are not introduced too early at a point when the University is yet to establish the core disciplines from which these specialisations are to be developed, or from which they need to be serviced. Therefore, programmes offered at National Qualifications Framework Levels 5 – 6 should be predominantly generic in character, while the various pioneering specialisations should be predominantly offered at Levels 7 – 10. The positioning of the University relative to its programmes is illustrated in the figure below (note that these diagrams are intended to indicate the relative extent of SPU's engagement within the two strategic polarities).



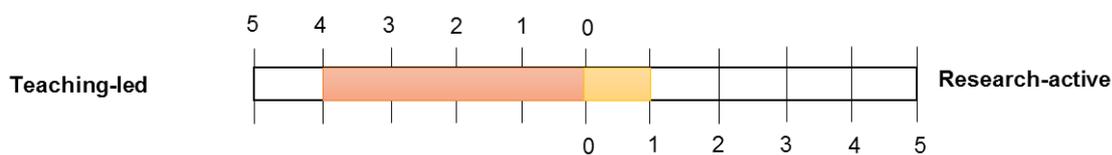
### 6.2. Teaching-led versus Research-active

Conceptually, teaching and research are often regarded as two separate missions and processes of universities. In practice however, good teaching is informed by research so that the research and

teaching are apparent conceptually and organisationally separate processes with profound actual overlaps. The balance the SPU aims to strike within the antinomy of being teaching-led or research-active must decisively address the extent to which key teaching and research modalities will be prioritised and resourced by the University.

Over the next five years the SPU should become known for its excellence in teaching and the care with which it constructs the learning experience at the institution. To this end, we expect that 85% of students will be registered at the undergraduate level, while the remainder will be postgraduate students. It will thus become a research-active, rather than a research-intensive institution, with pockets of research excellence in specialisations. The SPU will aim to maintain its current excellent level of academic staff holding a PhD (50%), particularly since this metric is crucial for establishing the necessary supervisory capacity.

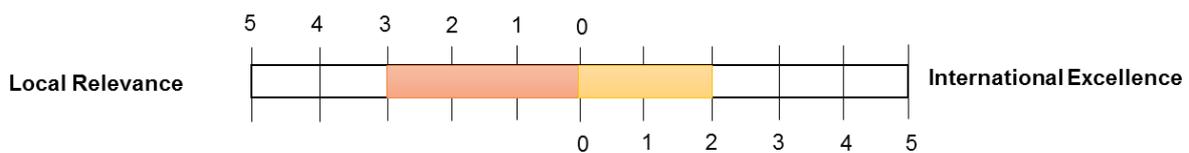
The positioning of the University relative to its teaching and research focus is illustrated in the figure below.



### 6.3. Local Relevance versus International Excellence

The approach adopted by the SPU to bridge the perceived contestation between local relevance and international excellence is one in which international excellence is primarily achieved through local relevance. This means that the academic output of the University must be relevant and high-quality in addressing key local development challenges. The SPU will consequently be well-placed to achieve international excellence through the recognised quality of this output, especially in terms of the wider interest and further applications so generated.

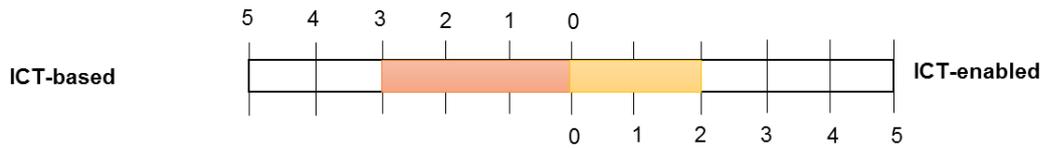
The positioning of the University in this regard is illustrated in the figure below.



### ICT-based versus ICT-enabled

ICT-enabled refers to the use of ICTs to facilitate enhanced academic outcomes and university performance. IT-based refers to the situation in which ICTs are fundamentally coded into the academic processes and management of the institution, providing it with exceptional capabilities to drive performance. The SPU will position itself as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century ICT-based institution that embeds the use of technology not only in the operations of the University (learning management, document management, room/ timetable scheduling, maintenance, etc.), but also in the teaching and learning, research and community engagement processes, culture and style-of-work.

The positioning of the University relative to being ICT-based and ICT-enabled is illustrated below.



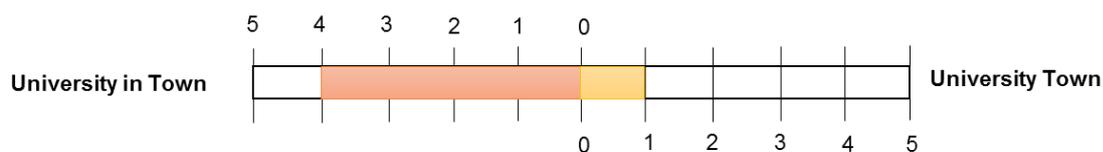
#### 6.4. University in Town vs University Town

SPU cannot expect Kimberley to develop into a classic “university town”, in which a town or city, develops around and as a result of the location of the university institution. Kimberley has a character and identity as a city that will always be more than SPU. However there cannot be any doubt that the founding and placement of the SPU within the Kimberly inner-city will have a profound impact on the economic prospects and development trajectory of this city.

The University will consequently need to position itself as an institution that will profoundly contribute to and co-shape the future developmental evolution of Kimberley. Therefore a strategic focus on close co-operation and integration with the urban planning processes of the city is of great significance. The spatial plan for the University is simultaneously the urban re-generation plan of the city, and the plan of the city needs to be constantly strategically cognizant in regard to the requirements of a successful university - these mutual planning processes need constant strategic attention, implying that the new campus footprint will ingrain itself into the city fabric in a mutually beneficial way.

Hence whilst we cannot characterise Kimberley, in the context of the burgeoning SPU, as a reverse-engineered “university town”, we can and must perceive the vital and long-term strategic importance of the co-dependence of the two parties in terms of the SPU’s existence as a “University in the City”, and the exciting socio-economic and cultural potential created within such relationship.

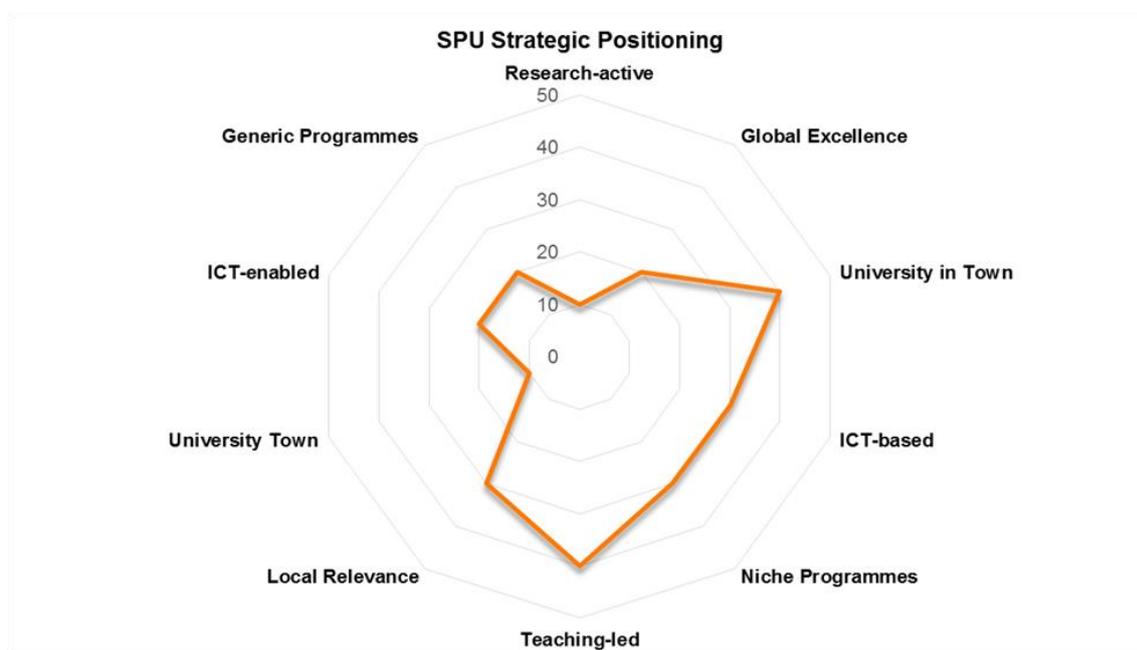
The positioning of the SPU in terms of its location within Kimberley as a University in the City is illustrated in the figure below.



In summary, the SPU will develop a reputation for the delivery of niche programmes, based on formative generic programmes and core disciplines from which the specialisations will be developed and serviced. The University will be predominantly teaching-led with a limited range of niches in research excellence. The institution's local relevance should enable it to achieve international excellence and recognition. The use of ICTs will permeate the institution and will be embedded in the academic programme and administrative processes to enable and enhance the University's performance. The University will integrate into the social, cultural and economic fabric of Kimberley as a University in Town and will co-shape the future evolution of the city.

The diagram below illustrates the future positioning which the SPU aims to achieve.

**Figure 1: Future strategic positioning of the SPU**



## 7. Goals and Strategies

Core Goals are pathways to animating the mission of the SPU and drawing the institution closer to its vision. Pathways towards the realization of strategic objectives via purposeful action.

### 7.1. Goal 1: Academic Design, Development and Delivery

*To establish the foundations of an academic programme of teaching and learning excellence, research development and community engagement.*

Much of the University's efforts over the next five years will be focused on laying a solid foundation for the type of scholarship that will emerge at the SPU in the longer term. This will primarily be done through the design and approval of the relevant academic programmes; the development of the enabling policies, capabilities, facilities and infrastructure to ensure good teaching practice; and the delivery of programmes in ways that provide a challenging learning experience and high levels of intellectual achievement. Furthermore, this period will be used to define and develop a number of research thrusts

in specific niche areas, thereby forming an integral part of the academic programme of the future. In turn, the teaching and research activities will provide the basis for the development of a range of partnerships with stakeholders, aimed at the mutually rewarding exchange of knowledge and intellectual resources. A number of strategic interventions will be implemented to ensure that the solid foundations are established for the growth and development of the University's medium- and long-term academic programme:

### **7.1.1. Curriculum design, programme development and delivery**

The Academic Plan for the University sets out an academic posture that is modest in the range of subject areas and disciplines, while being ambitious about the depth that needs to be achieved in these fields. The designation of the SPU as a Comprehensive University further enables it to introduce the full range of qualifications from Higher Certificates to Doctoral Degrees. The Academic Plan sets out the programme priorities following an assessment of the development needs nationally and locally as well as the available capacity to deliver quality programmes.

In developing the academic programme and qualification priorities for this early, developmental phase of SPU up to 2019, the following factors and issues were considered:

- While the first two years have seen implementation of specific niche programmes such as a Diploma in ICT in Applications Development or a BSc in Data Science, it will be necessary to develop more generic qualifications such as the BA, BSc or BComm in the near future. DHET and Council on Higher Education (CHE) approval of such generic programmes will allow SPU the flexibility to develop the specific foci of such qualifications as it deems appropriate and as resources become available. This approach also reduces the need to refer to the DHET and CHE each time a variation of emphasis in a formative degree is introduced.
- While all academic disciplines are planned to offer qualifications to the doctoral level, it is expected that, by 2019, the PhD will only be offered in the Education programme. It can realistically be expected that, in this early 5-year phase, the other disciplines will have developed and consolidated their capacity to a level where they will offer masters and doctoral programmes in the following 5-year cycle.
- The programmes and qualifications indicated in Table 2 for implementation over the next 5 years are drawn from the Academic Plan but do not encompass all the academic disciplines envisaged for SPU in the Academic Plan. Instead, Table 2 indicates the incremental development of strategic priority programmes based on consideration of the expected growth of enrolments and the availability of infrastructure and facilities. Consideration was also given to the availability of necessary financial and human resources to develop, implement and deliver the programmes. Planning for the other academic intentions of the Academic Plan, such as in Health Sciences, African Languages, Mining and Agriculture, will continue over this period but it is not expected that fully fledged qualifications will have been developed and implemented in this first 5-year planning period.

**Table 2: Academic Programme Priorities up to 2019**

Fields	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Science, Engineering and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BSc in Data Science</li> <li>Diploma: ICT (Application Development)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BSc in Data Science</li> <li>Diploma: ICT (Application Development)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BSc in Data Science</li> <li>Diploma: ICT (Application Development)</li> <li>BSc<sup>1</sup></li> <li>Diploma: ICT</li> <li>Advanced Diploma: ICT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BSc in Data Science</li> <li>Diploma: ICT (Application Development)</li> <li>BSc</li> <li>Diploma: ICT</li> <li>Advanced Diploma: ICT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BSc in Data Science</li> <li>Diploma: ICT (Application Development)</li> <li>BSc</li> <li>Diploma: ICT</li> <li>Advanced Diploma: ICT</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial and Management Sciences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma (Retail Business Management)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma (Retail Business Management)</li> <li>B. Comm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma (Retail Business Management)</li> <li>Postgraduate Diploma in Public Management</li> <li>Diploma in Management</li> <li>B. Comm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma (Retail Business Management)</li> <li>Postgraduate Diploma in Public Management</li> <li>Diploma in Management</li> <li>B. Comm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma (Retail Business Management)</li> <li>Postgraduate Diploma in Public Management</li> <li>Diploma in Management</li> <li>B. Comm</li> <li>B. Comm (Hons)</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B Ed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B Ed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B Ed</li> <li>Postgraduate Diploma in Education</li> <li>B. Ed (Honours)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B Ed</li> <li>Postgraduate Diploma in Education</li> <li>B. Ed (Honours)</li> <li>M. Ed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B Ed</li> <li>Postgraduate Diploma in Education</li> <li>B. Ed (Honours)</li> <li>M. Ed</li> <li>PhD</li> </ul>
<b>Humanities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H-Certificate: Heritage Studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H-Certificate: Heritage Studies</li> <li>BA<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H-Certificate: Heritage Studies</li> <li>BA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H-Certificate: Heritage Studies</li> <li>BA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H-Certificate: Heritage Studies</li> <li>BA</li> <li>BA (Hons)</li> </ul>

**Notes:**

1. While a generic BSc Programme is to be introduced in 2016, the initial focus of the degree will be in Earth Sciences
2. Similarly, the focus of the initial implementation of a generic BA degree in 2015 will be in Heritage Studies, mainly to provide an articulation route for successful students in the Higher Certificate programme

Ensuring the design, development and approval of these programmes through the necessary Faculty, Senate and Council for Higher Education (CHE) processes will require the development of detailed plans so that such programmes are approved on time and in line with the enrolment plan. The following indicators will be used to monitor the delivery of this strategic intervention:

- Number of newly curriculated programmes approved
- Number of accredited programmes offered by the University

**7.1.2. Student-focused teaching and learning**

A series of policies need to be finalised to ensure that a student-focused framework for teaching and learning is established. These policies should cover curriculum design and programme development, student evaluation and assessment, assessment of academic programmes and lecturers by students, personal and psychological counselling, tutor and mentor support, student residences as centres of

learning and the integration of technologically mediated learning with physical face-to-face contact learning.

The SPU will adopt a developmental approach to enhancing the teaching competence of staff. A programme will be designed and implemented that adopts an integrated approach comprising of learning exchange visits to observe good teaching practice, structured programmes, and mentorship by experienced academics. The introduction of a Teaching Excellence award will serve to motivate staff and recognise innovation and creativity. The University will ensure that the newly developed infrastructure, facilities and technologies establish an effective platform to ensure high quality teaching and learning.

The student-centred teaching and learning environment should be geared towards encouraging intellectual curiosity and stimulating critical thinking. The following indicators will be used to track the implementation of this strategic intervention:

- Student success and graduation rates
- Number of policies approved and implemented in support of quality teaching and learning
- Academic teaching competency programme established
- Teaching Excellence Award introduced
- Percentage of academics with teaching responsibilities participating in the programme
- Number of programmes with components of ICT-mediated learning

### **7.1.3. Academic quality assurance system**

Academic programme quality assurance happens at different levels of in the institution, including feedback provided by students, institutional evaluation of programmes, external programme evaluations and the assessment of programmes by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). In addition, different role players including Senate play an important role in the overall functioning of the quality assurance system. This period will be used to fully establish and elaborate the quality assurance system of the SPU. The indicators for tracking progress include:

- Academic quality assurance system operationalised
- Number of internal programme evaluations
- Number of external programme evaluations

### **7.1.4. Research thrusts**

SPU regards itself a knowledge partner to human development in the region and globally. In the long term the University will encourage both curiosity-driven research and knowledge generation that draws on its relationship with the community. Five identifiable research thrusts will be identified and developed over the next five years. Research in the disciplines and fields of earth sciences, sustainable energy use, heritage and ICTs should be considered priority areas for the establishment of research thrusts. The approach to the development of these research thrusts will include the establishment of research chairs to provide impetus for leading the development of research niches in specific areas; the development of a few long-term research programmes; implementation of a research capacity development programmes; and the launch of targeted international research collaborations and partnerships. The indicators for tracking progress in this regards include:

- Number of research thrusts defined and established
- NRF rating of academic staff

- Number of researchers (academic staff and postgraduate students) participating in research development programme
- Research chairs and fellowships
- University-wide research programmes established
- Number of university research partnerships established

#### **7.1.5. Critically engaged scholarship**

The SPU is positioning itself as a credible knowledge partner in human development. The teaching and research work of the University will provide the opportunity and basis for critical engagement with a range of different communities. This implies an active process of engagement that seeks to deepen and promote scholarship that is relevant, responsive and contributes to shared and mutual learning and growth. Opportunities will be identified to structure service-learning opportunities and partnerships as integral aspects of the curriculum of different academic programmes. The SPU will initiate research projects where desirable, in collaboration with identified communities and geared towards shared problem solving and learning. Indicators for tracking progress include:

- Number of university-community partnerships established
- Number of formally structured service-learning programmes established
- Number of community oriented projects initiated

#### **7.2. Goal 2: Cultivating the Sol Plaatje University Experience**

*To fashion a SPU experience notable for its caring approach to its community as well as its vibrancy, critical enquiry, open debate and scholarly excellence*

Students, staff and stakeholders alike should experience SPU as a vibrant higher learning institution that supports critical enquiry, encourages open debate and strives for the attainment of excellence in all its scholarly endeavours while at the same time engendering a sense of caring, belonging and ownership of the institution in its students and staff. The development of an environment in which such an experience can be cultivated starts with promoting and diffusing the values of the University - not merely in abstract terms, but in the actual way the institution takes decisions, defines priorities, allocates resources and engages with stakeholders. This would involve implementing programmes and interventions designed to support the student learning experience, as well as the development of academics. It requires fostering a university environment that is safe and secure on the one hand, but open and intellectually exciting on the other. It would be defined by a service-focused administration in which the needs of the university community constitute the point of departure for the way in which the university should be organized and governed.

##### **7.2.1. Culturally diverse and inclusive student body and faculty**

SPU regards diversity as a notable strength, because varied staff and student backgrounds enrich the university culture, contribute to the emergence of intellectual dynamism and increase the breadth of ideas. The experiences gained as a result of a functioning cultural and intellectual diversity should serve to inculcate a deep appreciation for the socially transformative intentions of the University, as well as for a better understanding of the requirements of various communities. The University will therefore design and implement such recruitment and selection policies and mechanisms that promote such diversity and attract students from across a wide spectrum of social strata, with high academic achievement as a coherent thread. Indicators for tracking progress include:

- Level of diversity of the student body and academic community
- Policies implemented to promote diversity and inclusion in staff recruitment and student selection
- Strength-in-diversity thematic programmes implemented for students and staff
- Number of students and staff participating in strength-in-diversity programmes

### **7.2.2. Student support and wellbeing**

Student support is a key priority of the University, and a wide range of services will be offered to improve the learning environment and promote student wellbeing. Proactive mechanisms for identifying 'at risk' (both from an academic and wellbeing perspective) students should be embedded in academic and other programmes of the University to serve as early warning systems. Specialised services will be developed that focus on enhancing learning outcomes, while psycho-social services will be introduced to promote and fortify wellbeing from the social, emotional and health perspectives.

Student sports and sporting events, both representative and social, will form an integral part of student support directed at their overall wellbeing. The following indicators will be used to track progress:

- Number of academic support programmes implemented
- Number of psychosocial and student wellbeing programmes implemented
- Number of students participating in academic support programmes
- Number of students participating in psychosocial and student wellbeing programmes
- Student participation in sports and sporting events

### **7.2.3 Developing students as future alumni**

It is important that graduating students leave SPU with a positive sense of their experience of the institutional culture of the University. In addition to other considerations, this is also necessary to ensure that graduates sustain a lifelong connectedness with SPU as their alma mater and take pride in considering themselves as our alumni, willing to defend, support and critically engage with future growth and development of SPU.

Developing students as future alumni cannot be left to happenstance and requires deliberate and directed initiatives before and after an individual student graduates, even at this early stage in the life of SPU. While very few graduates are expected to emerge from the university during the period of influence of this strategic plan, SPU should give track progress on the following initiatives:

- The number of events that raise student awareness on the role of alumni, especially when students enter their final years of study
- Establishment and maintenance of a contact database of graduating students
- The number of recorded individual and group exit interviews with students at the time of graduation, to inform improvement plans for the student experience
- The number of formal contacts with graduates

### **7.2.4. Healthy, safe, secure and vibrant university environment integrated into the city**

A key principle underpinning the spatial design is the intention to establish networks of common spaces in a way that connects and integrates the University with the city. The planned spatial configuration aspires for social and cultural cohesion through open public spaces and access to shared amenities.

These spaces and approach should create a city-campus handshake that facilitates flux, flow and ongoing interaction between the University and its surrounds.

Safety and security considerations are also embedded in the spatial design through the use of building edges as effective boundaries between the public and the private spheres, along which various security measures will be implemented in order to ensure a safe and secure environment for staff and students. Indicators on the health, safety, security and vibrancy of the university environment include:

- Student satisfaction levels
- Increase/ Decrease in incidents related to the safety and security of staff and students
- Use of shared amenities

#### **7.2.5. Service-focused administration**

A service-focused administration cannot be achieved by declaration. Specific measures need to be implemented to promote, integrate and sustain a focus on the end-user of the services provided by the University administration. This should be the case for students from the time when they apply to study through to graduation, and even beyond to when they become alumni of the SPU. The same applies to staff from when they are recruited to when they depart. The development of a service charter based on specified service standards must form the bedrock on which a service-focused ethos is built. The following indicators will be tracked to assess performance:

- Service charter adopted and implemented
- Participation by university staff in customer service training programmes
- Measurement of performance against service standards
- Range and type of end-user feedback channels established to deal with enquiries complaints and issues
- Number of corrective action projects implemented to continuously improve service levels

### **7.3. Goal 3: University Governance, Management and Operation**

*To advance the governance, management and operating capabilities of SPU towards outstanding scholarship*

As a newly established University, the SPU has an opportunity to establish and develop the very best practices in governance, management and operations for higher learning institutions. The SPU has the opportunity to learn from the best practices of the past and the present in terms of how universities in South Africa and the world are designing, developing and growing their governance, management and operational capabilities. As a 21st Century social institution, the SPU needs to be adept at responding to the ever-changing social, cultural, political, environmental and economic requirements of its stakeholders and surroundings. In so doing, the emerging University will need to produce a range of innovative governance, funding, teaching, research and civic engagement modalities. As part of this process the SPU will need to build the human resource capabilities, financial sustainability capacity, well-functioning facilities and infrastructure, as well as a reputation for good governance, effective management and efficient operations.

#### **7.3.1. Human capital development**

The growth and expansion of South African higher education enrolments at an annual average rate of 4.7% over the last decade has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in the number of

academic staff in the sector.<sup>9</sup> This challenge is set to become more acute with close to 20% of academics reaching retirement age in less than a decade.<sup>10</sup> Attracting academics to SPU and retaining staff at the scale required constitutes a formidable challenge, especially given the intense competition in the sector for high caliber academics. This situation may well increasingly apply in respect of skilled administrative and technical support staff. The SPU will need to embark on a focused and proactive recruitment programme in which staffing needs are anticipated well in advance and requisite measures taken early to recruit the required staff. The University must take advantage of its unique value proposition by presenting such as a one-time opportunity for academics and administrative staff to contribute, in a very tangible way, to the development of one of the first new universities since the birth of democracy in the country. Employment at SPU over the next few years would accordingly provide suitable individuals with a unique window of opportunity to influence, shape and inform the ethos, culture and identity of the University.

Moreover, staff development should be viewed as an integral part of a holistic staff retention strategy. Specific staff development measures should include study support, capacity development and mentoring. Capacity development interventions aimed at exposing academic staff to quality intellectual debate, national and global exchange programmes, and the development of practical skills to support their teaching practice should be key priorities. Support for staff participation in appropriate conferences, seminars and workshops should be provided to the extent that the University resources allow. Furthermore, prominent national and global scholars should be invited to SPU to participate in thematic workshops addressing specific aspects of teaching, research and academic career development. Experienced academics should be approached to mentor academics at the SPU, not only to address specific academic and personal challenges identified through a thorough individual needs analysis, but also to challenge, stimulate and expose them to the full range of academic and professional networks. Progress in such human capital development will be tracked against the following indicators:

- Percentage staff with higher degrees (Masters and PhDs)
- Number of NRF-rated academics appointed
- Diversity of staff composition
- Student/staff ratios
- Number of academics and support staff trained
- Performance management system implemented
- Targeted staff recruitment strategy implemented

### **7.3.2. Financial sustainability**

The SPU will be funded through the DHET by means of an ear-marked grant until 2018. This funding is critically important for the inception of the University, as income from teaching input and output as calculated through the higher education funding formula linked to the block-grant system is directly dependant on the growth in student enrolments and the production of graduates - the full benefit of which can only be derived from growing student numbers and graduates. (And which is calculated two years retrospectively). Student fees constitute a second income stream, but the quantum of what can be charged is circumscribed by the socio-economic realities of the society, and the budget of the

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<sup>9</sup> Department of Higher Education and Training. (2011). *Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training*. Republic of South Africa.

<sup>10</sup> Higher Education South Africa. (2011). *Proposal for a National Programme to Develop the Next Generation of Academics for South African Higher Education*. Available: [http://www.hesa.org.za/sites/hesa.org.za/files/Building%20the%20Next%20Generation%20of%20Academics\\_March%202011.pdf](http://www.hesa.org.za/sites/hesa.org.za/files/Building%20the%20Next%20Generation%20of%20Academics_March%202011.pdf). Accessed: 22 May 2013.

National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). A deliberate strategy to diversify the revenue mix through contract research funding, philanthropic and donor funding, short course programmes and other “third stream” income sources must be developed and implemented. Furthermore, a business case is required that models the funding needs of the University. This business case must then form the basis of engagement with the DHET to extend ear-marked grant arrangements beyond 2018, given that insufficient time is available for the SPU to develop and generate the numbers of students, graduates and research units needed to survive on subsidy income determined from a national funding formula and generic block-grant arrangements. Alternatively full entrance into the block-grant system must be phased-in through transitional financing arrangements. These various factors determining the SPU financial sustainability challenge imply the most urgent development and strengthening of the financial management system and all concomitant financial practices, in order to ensure transparent and prudent management of scarce financial resources. Progress towards financial sustainability will be tracked by virtue of the following indicators:

- Percentage increase in third stream income
- Percentage increase in research funding
- Sustainability strategy developed and implemented
- Financial management capacity
- Unqualified audits

### **7.3.3. Infrastructure, facilities and information, communication and networking technologies**

The first phase of construction was launched in October 2014 and forms part of an initial construction programme that will continue over a 10 to 12 year period, ultimately providing state-of-the-art facilities for 7 500 students at the SPU. This phase of construction will establish the University’s central campus, completing 6 of the envisaged 8 new multi-story buildings at an estimated construction cost of over R900m. The buildings include laboratories, lecture auditoria and teaching facilities, academic offices, libraries, residences and student facilities. The rapid construction of around 50 000 square meters of new space will accommodate the planned 2017 student numbers.

The campuses will provide quality learning and living environments for students that will take advantage of the benefits of improved communication platforms and processes resulting from the latest information and communication technologies (ICTs). In order to support excellent scholarship SPU must provide access to state-of-the-art facilities, instructional technologies, well-equipped libraries, knowledge resources and laboratories. Progress in the physical expansion and provision of facilities will be tracked against the following indicators:

- Growth in assignable square meters
- Zero maintenance backlogs maintained
- Construction programme development targets met (local participation, broad-based black economic empowerment spend, direct employment created, skills development opportunities facilitated)
- Growth in laboratory space
- Number of students per library seat
- Number of electronic databases accessible

#### 7.3.4. Reputation management

The reputation of a University has become increasingly important in a globally connected world. A reputation for excellence helps to attract good staff and students, enables collaborations with the best partners, and can assist in generating income and other resources for a University. Building a reputation takes time and requires a strong commitment to scholarly excellence. Reputations are rarely derived from branding and marketing only. Rather, universities have to produce consistently high quality academic outcomes. Reputations grow by virtue of the quality of the graduates the University produces, the impact of the research delivered and the benefits derived from its strategic engagements. A thriving university, can in turn leverage its growing reputation to attract the best academics, students and funding opportunities in a virtuous cycle in which success begets success.<sup>11</sup> Effective communication, media engagement and publicity is useful, if not essential, for making known the successes of the University and continuously building its profile. The following indicators will be tracked to assess progress in the University's capacity to develop its brand and reputation:

- Social media strategy developed and implemented
- Marketing and brand development plan formulated and implemented
- Communication, public relations and marketing platform established.

#### 7.3.5. Effective support services

The effectiveness of support functions are central to ensuring scholarly excellence. Robust institutional planning, efficient academic administration and streamlined policies and processes are essential preconditions for attaining academic excellence. The types of policies, processes and systems developed in this early phase of the University's establishment will have long-term implications for how well the institution is organized and managed. The performance of the university support services will be subject to regular reviews as the basis for identifying opportunities for continuous learning and improvement. The indicators to track progress are as follows:

- Accurate information on staff, students, finance and space
- Good record, information and knowledge management
- End-user satisfaction levels

### 8. Implementation Approach

The SPU is very much an organisation in formation, emerging out of policy decision-making, imaginative planning, intensive stake-holder consultation, visionary ideas and dreams. Academic and institutional operations in 2014 have proceeded via a skeleton staff, preliminary systems and intuitive strategic leadership, under a strong and supportive governance mechanism led initially by the Interim Council and then by the full Council.

This document formalizes strategic intent and high-level integrated planning for a period of five years, starting in 2015. Implementation in terms of the goals, objectives, activities and indicators, as set out above, cannot simply be delegated to a pre-existent and capacitated apparatus for execution - since the very construction of such organizational capacity and machinery is an integral part of the strategy needing to be enacted.

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<sup>11</sup> See for example Merton, R.K. (1968). The Matthew Effect in Science. *Science* 159 (3810), 56–63.

Given the early development state of SPU as an institution, particularly in respect of the need to consolidate a range of key processes and systems, it is almost certainly the case that a strong element of “progressive evolution” will be needed for effective strategic application and implementation. Such progressive evolution implies an approach whereby the overall plan is being constantly scrutinised, modified, detailed and enriched as feed-back is processed and improved informational data become available. This approach will depend on the diligent and iterative attention by management and academic leadership to the monitoring of strategic progress and a willingness to adjust the detail of the strategy as necessary.

The primary instruments, in terms of this process of progressive testing, improvement and evolution of the SPU strategy, will be the annual performance plans, starting with the 2015 Performance Plan document. Such performance plans should systematically reflect and embed the specific aspects of the overall strategy that need to be prioritized and/or completed during a particular annual iteration. Executive management should further break-down the various performance plans in terms of detailed operational plans, which allocate specific responsibilities to divisions, units and individuals and set out clear time-tables for completion of plans or completion of particular project phases.

Over the 5-year period of this strategic plan the institution will constantly be expanding on all fronts, including student numbers, academic and support staff recruitment, academic programme delivery, infrastructure and facilities, administrative and financial policies and procedures, ICT systems and research. This will not take the form of simple linear enlargement or expansion, but will be driven by distinct and effective responses to the challenges presented. In this sense there will be only limited strategic implementation on the basis of a business-as-usual continuation between annual performance plans - necessitating a strong stance of vigilance, alertness and strategic readiness on the part of senior management.

Within this environment of iterative and progressive evolution, rapid expansion, system development, significant priority shifts between annual performance plans and constant operational challenges, there will inevitably develop an element of uneven strategic implementation. Since longer-term strategy depends on integration of factors, such uneven development will need to be subject to early warning through monitoring and risk analysis procedures and handled through remedial management approaches.

Institution-building is a tough and testing discipline but is also exhilarating in the range of issues and challenges needing to be tackled and surmounted. Governance structures need to remain calm, steady and considered during periods of turbulence and or extreme challenge. Executive leadership needs to be strong, confident and inventive. A culture of innovation needs to pervade the emerging institution but this needs to be balanced through proper experimentation and adaptation of established good practice.

If effective strategic implementation is to take place, in terms of the emergence of a coherent, values-driven and socially-useful institution, then there is no room for the agreed strategy to be treated as purely a compliance instrument. It is therefore recommended that mechanisms for regular strategic monitoring and review are firmly built into formal governance and executive management agendas.

## 9. Financial Projections 2016 and 2017

A detailed Financial Projections process has been followed in consultation with the relevant stakeholder units and in line with the draft Strategic Plan.

### High level summary of the Financial Expenditure Projections costs 2016 & 2017

<b>Expense category</b>	<b>Financial Projections for 2016 R'000</b>	<b>% of Total Financial Projections</b>	<b>Financial Projections for 2017 R'000</b>	<b>% of Total Financial Projections</b>
<b>Personnel: Remuneration HR</b>	<b>68 082</b>	<b>46.64%</b>	<b>100 348</b>	<b>46.44%</b>
<b>Building and Utilities</b>	<b>26 851</b>	<b>18.40%</b>	<b>41 763</b>	<b>19.33%</b>
<b>Student related expenses</b>	<b>12 606</b>	<b>8.64%</b>	<b>21 719</b>	<b>10.05%</b>
<b>Information Technology</b>	<b>8 589</b>	<b>5.88%</b>	<b>12 681</b>	<b>5.87%</b>
<b>Consultancy and Outsourcing</b>	<b>6 787</b>	<b>4.65%</b>	<b>8 012</b>	<b>3.71%</b>
<b>Travel</b>	<b>5 593</b>	<b>3.83%</b>	<b>6 487</b>	<b>3.00%</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>	<b>4 407</b>	<b>3.02%</b>	<b>10 165</b>	<b>4.70%</b>
<b>Other Corporate expenses</b>	<b>4 240</b>	<b>2.90%</b>	<b>5 016</b>	<b>2.32%</b>
<b>Other project and Admin</b>	<b>3 023</b>	<b>2.07%</b>	<b>3 262</b>	<b>1.51%</b>
<b>Programme Direct Costs</b>	<b>2 287</b>	<b>1.57%</b>	<b>2526</b>	<b>1.17%</b>
<b>Licence, Media</b>	<b>1 592</b>	<b>1.09%</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>.93%</b>
<b>Development</b>	<b>1 155</b>	<b>.79%</b>	<b>1 271</b>	<b>.59%</b>
<b>Venue and catering</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>.38%</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>.28%</b>
<b>Vehicles</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>.09%</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>.07%</b>
<b>Finance charges</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>.04%</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>.03%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>145 958</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>216 077</b>	<b>100%</b>

### High level summary of the Financial Income Projections costs 2016 & 2017

Income category	Financial Projections for 2016 R'000	% of Total Financial Projections	Financial Projections for 2017 R'000	% of Total Financial Projections
Requested DHET Grant	94 000	64.24%	121 000	55.93%
Student fees	22 413	15.32%	45 956	21.24%
Residence fees	25 520	17.44%	48 195	22.28%
Management NIHE	3 300	2.26%	0	0%
Third Stream	1 100	.75%	1 210	.56%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>146 333</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>216 361</b>	<b>100%</b>

Projections	2016	2017
Student numbers	798	1386
Total expenditure (R'000)	145 958	216077
Cost per student (R'000)	183	156
Academic staff number	69	103
Administration staff number	51	52

#### Commentary on the proposed Financial Projections.

1. The state subsidy is calculated based on the shortfall required to cover operational expenditure. SPU will therefore expect to be funded through the DHET by means of an earmarked grant until 2018. This funding is critical for the inception of the University, as income from teaching input and output as calculated through the higher education funding formula linked to the block-grant system is directly dependent on the growth in student enrolments and the production of graduates - the full benefit of which can only be derived from growing student numbers and graduates (which is calculated two years in retrospect).
2. An 8% increase has been applied annually with regards to student fees and other fees e.g. laptop fees, meals...

3. Residence fees have been increased by R 5000 per student annually. Currently SPU is cross subsidising residence costs. SPU needs to increase these fees at a rate above 8% per annum until a break even position is reached.
4. SPU will, with effect from 2016, only be liable for meals provided to students occupying University residences as agreed with the service provider. SPU will therefore not run the risk of subsidising meals of non-residence students as the related transactions will be directly between students and the service provider.
5. 80% of enrolled students are, for planning and budget purposes, deemed to be in the residences.
6. Salaries are projected to be increased by 8% annually in line with the approved 2015 salary increase percentage.
7. In 2017 all student related expenditure is increase by 20% due to the significant increase in student numbers in line with enrolment plan.
8. All other expenditure is anticipated to increase by 10% in 2016 and 2017.
9. It should be noted that the surplus from Council Controlled funds will, in terms of a deliberate Council-approved strategy in the short to medium terms, cross subsidise the residences 'operations/activities for 2016 and 2017.

The following have not been included in the 2016 and 2017 Financial Projections:

10. Expenditure relating to the termination of National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE) is excluded from the operational Financial Projections, as earmarked funding will be received from the DHET for this particular project. Earmarked funding is not part of Council Controlled discretionary funding and is therefore required to be ring-fenced for its designated purpose.
11. The Financial Projections exclude any costs relating to the Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant, including services of professionals e.g. architects, engineers and traveling costs. The DHET has allocated earmarked funding (the Infrastructure and Efficiency grant) to the SPU for the cost of construction of the new University.

### **Approval by Council**

1. The proposed Financial Projections for 2016 and 2017 were submitted to Council for consideration as an integral component of the Strategic Plan submission to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Council approved the submission.
2. Council approved the requested **DHET grant of R 94 Million for 2016 and R 121 Million for 2017**

## 10. Strategic Risks

Due to the situation of rapid institutional development of an entirely new institution the diligent management of risk and identified risk factors will be crucial.

Detailed annual risks need to be clearly identified for monitoring and mitigation and clearly specified within Annual Performance Plans.

Council and executive management should immediately establish risk management protocols, procedures and structures capable of managing and mitigating both traditional (insurable) and strategic risks. A risk register should be drawn up which should be considered by Executive management on at least a quarterly basis and formally tabled at Council annually.

The table below sets out key high-level strategic risks that need to be managed:

**Table 3: Strategic Risks**

Risk Number	Strategic Risks	Detailed Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Mitigation Measures
1	Failure to complete the buildings and other infrastructure on time for various academic phases	Failure by contractors to complete construction modules on time	Medium	High	Implement critical path planning, daily monitoring, blockages identification, and contingency planning. Include steep penalties in contract for non-performance and delays/ changes in planned construction work.
		Failure to effective liaise with relevant stakeholders concerning local benefits that might accrue as a result off job and other opportunities within the renovation process	Medium	Medium	Monitor the achievement of development targets closely and communicate to the relevant stakeholders.

Risk Number	Strategic Risks	Detailed Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Mitigation Measures
2	Failure to manage high rate of growth & expansion	Inability to finance the rapid growth of the Campus	Medium	High	Ensure Treasury commitment to funding the capital and operating costs through earmarked funding. Diversifying revenue base through third stream income activities.
		Failure to put in place the required management systems to manage the growth of the university	Medium	Medium	Develop and implement management policies, procedures and systems. Secure external technical and management support from sponsor universities.
3	Failure to effectively build key stakeholder relations and engagements	Failure to effectively analyse community and stakeholder groups	Medium	Medium	Develop, review and update stakeholder analysis plan on a quarterly basis.
		Failure to communicate & effectively liaise with key stakeholder institutions	Medium	Medium	Regular stakeholder engagement to assist in identifying and analyzing the various institutions & interest groups relevant to the SPU
		Failure to manage unrealistic expectations	Medium	High	Establish and maintain community engagement. Provide regular feedback sessions on progress and opportunities.
4	Failure to facilitate sufficient bursaries for students	Failure to identify and facilitate access to bursaries for students.	Medium	High	Establish MoA with Funza Lushaka, NSFAS and international and private donors to secure bursaries.

Risk Number	Strategic Risks	Detailed Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Mitigation Measures
5	Failure to attract and retain the required human resource capacity	Failure to recruit/appoint appropriate academic and senior management staff and/or mobilize requisite institutional expertise	Medium	Medium	Implement recruitment strategy and capacity building programme