

From the office of the interim Vice-Chancellor

16 March 2004

Dear Colleague/Student

It is a pleasure to send you my (almost monthly) e-mail again. As you might expect, the past month was not boring at all.

- Several important events and processes took place over the past few months [\[Read more\]](#)
- The official opening of the campuses were festive occasions [\[Read more\]](#)
- The Council Meetings will be quite unique [\[Read more\]](#)
- Matters on the Council's agenda [\[Read more\]](#)
- I believe that the information meetings with staff were experienced very positively [\[Read more\]](#)

Several important events and processes have taken place over the past few months:

- The Interim Management met in Mafikeng on 2 February
- The Mafikeng and Mankwe Campuses were officially opened for the year on 3 February
- The first Council Meeting took place on 12 February
- A meeting with the Minister took place on 13 February regarding the Vista incorporation and progress with the merger.
- The newly elected Executive Committee of the Council met on 19 February.
- Information meetings with staff on the various campuses took place on 24-25 February (Potchefstroom Campus), 1 March (Vaal Triangle Campus) and 4 March (Mafikeng Campus). Mankwe will get its turn on 23 March.
- The Interim Management met on 2 March.
- The Council held its first workshop and second meeting on 11 and 12 March.

The official opening of the campuses were festive occasions

Although it's been a while since the opening, I would still like to share some of my impressions with you. What struck me was the underlying excitement about the merger and the determination to make it work - on all four campuses. And, secondly, the wonderful diversity during the opening ceremonies: Potchefstroom's formality and stateliness, Vaal Triangle's "vibe", Mafikeng 's energy and participation and Mankwe's commitment and community involvement. I realised yet again that we truly have diversity in the one new university - and that it is good and it can make us strong if we channel it into one vision and an overarching framework of values.

The Council Meetings will be quite unique

Much has been said about the meetings in the various information meetings. You can also read the Council's newsletter. Let me just add this: the Council Meetings will be quite unique and nothing like those of the former universities. The Council will have to develop its own culture and style, as well as mutual trust and cooperation. In this the management (and the internal members of the Council) will make its contribution.

The elected Executive Committee is constituted in a balanced way and will be able to function well. To refresh your memory:

- Chairperson: Litha Nyhonyha
- Deputy Chairperson: Lydia Sebego
- Additional members: Leon Wessels and Johan van Zyl
- Interim Vice-Chancellor: Theuns Eloff
- Interim Vice-Principal: Ngoato Takalo.

Matters on the Council's agenda:

- On 12 March 2004 the statute was approved by the Council and will now be forwarded to the Minister for his approval.
- Committees of the Council were finalised on 12 March and the members elected. You can read more in the Council's newsletter.

- The process to appoint the new Chancellor was approved. The Chancellor will be appointed in June.
- The process to appoint the permanent Vice-Chancellor has been determined. The position will soon be advertised in the media and the target date for an appointment is in May.
- The focus of the Council's workshop was to bring all the Council members on the same level of information with regards to the merger, to determine the governance of the Council and to distinguish it from management's task, and to foster mutual trust and cooperation.

I believe that the information meetings with staff were experienced very positively

These sessions were attended by almost a thousand staff members! We consider repeating the process at least once later this year. The matters that were raised were wide-ranging, but I am satisfied that the Interim Institutional Management and Campus Managements have already started to address most (if not all) of these issues. This list is as follows:

Staff requires more information about the challenges that lie ahead in terms of permanent appointments and other institutional processes.

Other matters that raised questions were the management and structure of faculties, research, performance management and promotions, basic conditions of service and especially medical aid membership (the latter of these mainly on the Mafikeng Campus).

Specific campus needs, especially with regard to infrastructure and staff, were also raised.

Personally I enjoyed making contact with staff on ground level to gain first-hand experience about the concerns. My feeling is that if we can get the basic things right (such as conditions of service and medical aid) we will be able to concentrate even more on the core business. The different management task teams are working hard on this and other issues.

In conclusion

I will write to you again in April, with more detail on what happened at the Council workshop and an update on what lies ahead for the rest of the year.

I think it is important to point out that our merger is considered to be the most effective (and definitively the fastest!). We want to maintain this momentum and would therefore like to thank all staff members who, in spite of a degree of uncertainty that they may experience, make an effort to keep our core business on a high level. One of these days things will return to normal - or at least as normal as you can be in the twenty-first century in South Africa!

Until then, hang in there with me and the rest of management...and thank you for what you have already accomplished. I can always speak with pride of the determination and commitment of the North-West staff!

Kind regards



Theuns Eloff
Interim Vice-Chancellor