

Dear Colleagues and Students

We have passed the half year mark of 2006, and I believe we can feel proud of our achievements for the first half of the year. We have been able to get our Institutional Plan approved by the Ministry, we have all but completed the implementation of the Statute and we have formally started the process of programme alignment. In the merger context, these milestones represent the final stage of the merger process. In the meantime, while we are attending to this phase of the merger, we are preparing for the fast-approaching institutional audit of the NWU by the Higher Education Quality Committee which is scheduled for 2008. The core business of teaching-learning, research and implementation of expertise are going ahead full steam.

This newsletter focuses on these aspects and more:

1. Institutional Plan

The Minister of Education indicated that she has scrutinised our **Institutional Plan** and that she is "satisfied with the steps being taken by the University to ensure viable and sustainable outcomes for the new institution." She did however raise a number of questions that will be addressed in the annual review cycle due for September and October, which will be finalised by the Council in November 2006.

2. Implementation of the Statute

With regard to the implementation of the Statute, all structures has to comply with the Statute by 8 August 2006 which meant, inter alia, that the new Council designees from the Senate, Convocation and the Board of Donors had to be elected before that date. The processes have now been concluded and the outcome is as follows:

2.1 The Senate

The Senate was duly constituted on 10 May 2006, and on the 1 August 2006 the following person were elected to Council:

Prof. A le R du Plooy
Prof. NL Mahao
Prof. TC Rabali
Prof. F Venter

2.2 The Board of Donors

In accordance with the rules, the Council recognised 62 companies/ institutions as donors of the NWU (including the NWU Foundation, recognised by the Council as a "donor in kind". A constituent meeting of donors of the NWU was held on 24 July 2006. At the meeting, the NWU Board of Donors was constituted as follows:

ABSA, Willie van Zyl
Dagbreek Trust, Carools Reinecke
DM Kisch Incorporated, Andre van der Merwe
Engen, Zukiswa Mpati
Eskom, Sam Tshabalala
First National Bank, Peet van der Walt (Chairperson)
Mittal SA, Carol Ferguson
PBMR, Thabang Makubire
SASOL, Chris Reinecke
Telkom SA, Stephen Fourie
Co-opted, The NWU Foundation (contribution in kind), Polly Modiko
NWU, Theuns Eloff, Vice-Chancellor (ex-officio)
NWU, Johan Rost, Institutional Director: Finance and Facilities (ex-officio)
NWU, Mickey Gordon, Institutional Director: Fundraising

The Board of Donors elected the following persons from the ranks of the donors to serve on Council:

Mr Flip Buys
Adv Jan Henning SC
Ms Laetitia van Dyk
Dr Fritz Kok

Following these processes, seven Council members including the Chairperson, Mr Litha Nyhonya's membership came to an end. The deputy chairperson of Council is currently performing the duties of the chairperson of Council and the Executive Committee is considering options to thank the outgoing members in an appropriate way.

On behalf of management I would like to thank those outgoing Council members for their commitment during the transitional period.

3. Academic alignment

The last major phase of the merger-integration process is the process of academic alignment. The constituent meetings of the "CARs" (groups of academics discussing the co-ordination, alignment and rationalisation of academic programmes) were held on 11 August 2006. The most important decision taken at the meeting was the appointment of a convenor as well as a representative steering team for each CAR. The following CARs were established:

3.1 CAR: Economic and Management Sciences:

Prof. LJ Jansen van Rensburg (Convenor); Ms FP Lembede (Mafikeng campus); Prof. SJ van der Merwe (Potchefstroom campus); Prof. Christo van Wyk (Vaal Triangle campus).

3.2 CAR: Educational Sciences:

Prof. E Mentz (Convenor/ Potchefstroom campus); Prof. EJ Spamer (Mafikeng campus) and Prof. LM Vermeulen (Vaal Triangle campus).

3.3 CAR: Humanities

Mr MQ Temane (Convenor); Dr R Manyane (Mafikeng campus); Prof PJ Schutte (Potchefstroom campus); Prof DB Jordaan (Vaal Triangle campus).

Each of these CARs will now focus on establishing smaller sub-divisions where the actual detailed programme alignment discussion will be held.

4. Unrest at the Mafikeng campus

Unfortunately we had a labour unrest at the Mafikeng campus led by the Staff Association. Some members of staff embarked on an unprotected industrial action on Monday, 7 August 2006.

Management handed over a memorandum to the Staff Association pointing out that the industrial action was unprotected and that in terms of the Recognition Agreement, the Union and its officials had a duty to persuade its members to return to work.

A policy of "no work, no pay" was implemented, and management is also considering specific disciplinary action against certain members of staff who engaged in the unprotected action. Fortunately, very few staff members took part in the strike. Unfortunately, students were told that there would be no classes which meant that they did not turn up for lectures.

This action was unnecessary and once more thrust our University into an unfavourable limelight. Unfortunately, the Mafikeng campus is also specifically portrayed in the media "as an unstable campus where good education is impossible." We will have to work hard to rectify this situation...

5. HEQC Institutional Audit

It is by now a well known that the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) will conduct an institutional audit on the university in August 2008. The university must prepare a prescribed portfolio to be available to the HEQC in April 2008. We have decided to manage the preparation process for the audit via the Institutional Quality Directorate under the auspices of Vice-Principal, Dr Ngoato Takalo. The process will be assisted with project management discipline from Dr Maarten Venter and the Institutional Project Office.

We plan to involve many staff members, either as task team members or through information distribution activities. You will be notified in advance of such activities. The project started with briefings to the team leader of some 15 task teams. This will be followed by constituting the task teams and sharing information on the creation of the portfolio with them. We will keep you updated on the progress throughout the project.

6. Internationalisation

As part of a strategy to improve our international standing, Prof Deian Hopkin, Vice-Chancellor of the London South Bank University (LSBU) and Dr Edward Tinley, head of Research and Business Development will visit the North-West University in the week of 21-27 August. We will sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) outlining a process to, inter alia, promote and seek opportunities in areas such as exchange of academic and administrative staff and students, collaboration on research projects, co-operation on academic, administrative and curriculum matters; joint events and conferences and cultural exchanges.

It is envisaged that we will in October this year sign a comprehensive co-operation agreement in London.

7. SRC elections

SRC elections have been completed at two of the three university campuses. The third elections must be done by end of August. (All names of the new SRC candidates will be announced by end of the month).

8. Sport-yet another milestone

An intercampus soccer team recently participated in the annual intervarsity between the Potchefstroom campus and the university of Free State. This is another milestone on the way to increased unity.

As usual, I want to pay tribute to those staff members and students who have gone "the extra mile" to make the first half of 2006 a success. Your efforts do not go by unnoticed. You are the true heroes in our struggle to make the merger a success!

Dr Theuns Eloff (Vice-Chancellor- North-West University)