

**END OF THE YEAR MESSAGE BY THE VICE-
CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL OF THE VAAL
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, PROF GORDON N. ZIDE**

DESMOND TUTU HALL

8 DECEMBER 2017

**“Finally, brethren whatsoever things are honest,
whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,
whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of
good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any
praise, think on these things” (Phillipians 4:8)**

1. INTRODUCTION

May I take this opportunity to express my sincere and profound gratitude to all of you herein present. This is indeed a moment we have all been waiting for as we transition from the year 2017 to the year 2018. So many things have happened this year – some good and some not so good, for us as individuals, as a collective but above all to our University. The end of the year is a time for taking stock of our successes and failures and where we have recorded successes and achievements, we need to build on those and strengthen them and where we

have failed and not achieved, we need to learn from our past mistakes and not to repeat” them, hence my address is on

“Think on these things”

This is an exciting as it is an exhilarating moment. It is exciting because the Year 2017 is coming to an end but it is equally a sad moment when we look back with a sigh of relief and say to ourselves:

“Thank God Almighty, You have carried us through the trials and tribulations of the year 2017, You have carried us through the pains and gains of the year 2017 and thus in unison we are able to say:

Hitherto you have been with us”

I am not here to preach, but I am here to deliver an end of the Year Message but it would be a disservice to my calling if I fail to disclose who I am and what this calling means to me.

2. “THINK ON THESE THINGS!”

I will be failing in my duty if I don't pay tribute to my predecessors, the men and the woman who worked so

tirelessly with you to make VUT what it is today. For those of you, who may not have any idea who my predecessors are, allow me to recognise them chronologically as I do:

1. Mr SAJ Borman (Principal)
2. Dr Isak Steyl (1st Rector of the Intuition – 20 years)
3. Professor Attie Buitendacht (Technikon Rector)
4. Dr Peter Du Plessis (Rector)
5. Professor Aubrey Mokadi
6. Professor Pieter Swanepoel (Interim)
7. Professor Theo Shippy (Interim – Appointed by the Department)
8. Professor Roy du Prè
9. Professor Irene Moutlana

These are the men and woman on whose shoulders I stand. As the 10th Vice-Chancellor of this Institution, I certainly have a big role to play and I feel humbled and magnanimous by the confidence some of you had displayed in having endorsed my candidature for this position – This is not a task I am taking lightly! I think over the last seven months and seven days I have displayed the seriousness with which I have taken the task. It is and has not been easy but if this has been a lonely journey, I can assure you now, that I would have thrown in the towel but

working and recognising the following structures and colleagues has made my task a little more bearable. “Thinking on these things”, I therefore want to recognise and applaud the following for their support:

1. Council
2. Members of the EMC
3. Senate
4. Members of the Academic Staff
5. Institutional Forum
6. Members of the Non-Academic Staff
7. The Organised Labour –NTEU and NEHAWU
8. The Student Body and the Student Leadership in particular
9. The Service Employees
10. The Members of the Convocation and the Alumni
11. Members of Staff of the Science-Park
12. Members of the Sites of Delivery - Ekurhuleni
 - Secunda
 - Uppington

These structures and the individuals which constitute them have strengthened my resolve to carry on, carrying on even in the midst of adversities. It is for these reasons that I find the Philosophy of the late King Sobhuza II of Swaziland pertinent, when he would always say:

“Akusiko kwami Kwebantfu”

[It is not about me – it is about the people]

May it be recorded that everything that I do, is not for my personal aggrandisement but for the goodwill of the People of VUT, hence my message to you says:

“Think on these things”

If we fail or ignore to think on these things, we will run the risk of slipping back into the quicksand and get swallowed up and never to rise again.

It is that time of the year during which we should re-assess the past, re-examine the present and then re-imagine the future. This kind of trajectory requires men and women of selfless zeal and gumption who do not run with the hares and chase with the hounds in order to benefit themselves from whatever the spoils of VUT are. To re-imagine the future requires selflessness, commitment and dedication and not what one can get out of VUT, with no little or very minimal effort to give it his or her all.

3. THE PAST

This has been a tumultuous year and in my first address to all structures of this University, I enumerated a tapestry of the following challenges, which regrettably still rear their ugly heads:

- **THE SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

Conducted was informed by what constitutes a University of Technology. This is based on the Six (6) pillars which drive and promote a University of Technology and these, as quoted by du Pre (2013 : 13 – 14), are the following:

- Excellence in Teaching and Learning
- Promoting Applied Research
- Developing Leadership in Technology
- Promoting Technology Transfer and Innovation
- Establishing Partnership
- Internationalisation.

These pillars dictate the future direction of the University and we as VUT, have no choice but to follow suit and we are going to craft a New VUT based on these pillars.

- **MULTIPLE ORGAN FAILURE OF THE INSTITUTION**

Created by instability and insecurity – quite a number of people acting in positions for some time and with no assurance of regulating their appointments. The EMC is addressing this challenge through the re-engineering process which will be taking place very early next year.

- **FINANCIAL CRISES**

This is the truth that we cannot hide at all. To be transparent in the manner in which the University is operating and performing we have agreed to have a Budget Speech very early next year when we shall have received our first Block Grant from the DHET. If Government can do it at three (3) levels – National, Provincial and Local, why can't we do it? This is an attempt of opening ourselves to public scrutiny and say this is how funds have been allocated and so use them frugally!

- **THE STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS**

We do not want to lose sight of this commitment. In the same manner in which a Budget speech will be held, we are also going to have a state of the University Address by the Vice-Chancellor. We hope to invite dignitaries, Business and Industry, the DHET, the local Government as well as members of the Media. This is an attempt of profiling the Institution.

- **LISTENING SESSIONS**

We shall be opening ourselves to public scrutiny where all stakeholders will have an opportunity to tell us where we are going wrong and where we are doing good.

- **HIGH STUDENT DEBT**

This currently stands at about R500 000 and we hope that the Recommendations of the Heher Report on #Free Education will be implemented, even though these do not mirror a rosy picture for the Universities as yet. The only positive indication is that Universities will probably get 8% more into their 2018 Budget, which % would cushion the “No Fee Increase” conundrum. An official announcement has not been made on this one as it is still speculation but we are looking forward to the Budget Speech of the

Finance Minister, Malusi Gigaba as to what he will be allocating to Higher Education in 2018.

Another conundrum which faces Higher Education and which is equally linked to student debt is Outstanding Student Debt. This too is a very serious concern for the University as it affects its financial viability. We are on a journey of thinking on these things and your responsibility and our responsibility is to ensure that the titanic ship does not sink with us on board. We cannot dance on board the sinking titanic and pretend that things are normal when we know that they are not.

The implementation of the Student Debt Reduction Strategy will hopefully save this institution from sinking to its lowest ebb and therefore reaching an abysmal level of no return. The ember lights are already flickering and so we had better watch!

- **CONFLICTS AND CONSTESTATION**

I have on many occasions appealed and beseeched you as members of the VUT Community to move away from unnecessary conflicts and contestations as these two giants of evil do not augur well for an institution which has the potential to be the best in Southern Gauteng. As we

round off the year, I want to appeal to you once again that whatever your differences may have been, let the month of December 2017, be a month of cleansing and purification as we are transitioning to the month of January 2018, so that those things which belong to the past should not be carried over to the New Year. Let By-gones be by-gones and we start re-building, reconstructing and re-imagining a New VUT together. This cannot happen if we continue fighting and insulting one another over anonymous emails and Facebooks. If one is a true-leader and feels very strongly about his or her position, let him or her come out and address the concern openly and frankly because our intention is to build and not to destroy, and hence, my message is:

“Think on these things”

The founding father of our Democracy is Oliver Reginald Tambo the longest serving President of the ANC who put it succinctly as he spoke about unity when he said:

“It is our responsibility to break down the barriers of division and create a country where there will be neither Whites nor Blacks, just South Africans, free and united in diversity.”

This too is the vision which I have for this University. Let there be no division, especially based on Race, and may I also add on Gender. We cannot always talk unity and not practise it. Let us live and breathe unity in diversity.

- **SLATES/CAMPS AND CABALS AND THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPTURE**

I have said it before and I want to repeat myself on this one. The Institution is larger than anyone of us and therefore if we want to leave a positive legacy for ourselves and for our children and a host of generations which come after us, let us move away from belonging to cliques and cabals whose intensions are to sow seeds of discontent and dissension, strife and tension and driven by greed, power and selfishness. Above all when a person belongs to a clique and a cabal, he or she loses his or her sense of independence and self-respect as he or she is manipulated by what the clique and/or cabal dictates. The Institution cannot be captured by such individuals as theirs is to grab and grab as best they can without thinking about those that come after them!

“Think on these things!

4. THE PRESENT

Charles Dickens (1959: 1), in his masterpiece book, **A TALE OF TWO CITIES**, opens by juxtapositioning conundrums, and complexities, paradigms ad perplexities, as he opines:

“It was the best of times;

It was the worst of times;

It was an epoch of belief;

It was an epoch of incredulity”

I find these words most fitting for today’s End of the Year Message from the Vice-Chancellor for these are a warning not to be so much steeped and indebted to the past but rather to approach and to contend with the contextual opportunities and possibilities. In doing so, I would wish to advise that the present, can, if we work together as a team, be exciting and exhilarating as it challenges us to think outside the box and to think on these things.

WHAT THEN ARE THE THINGS WHICH WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT?

On to August 2017, the Senior Management Forum went on a Break-Away in Parys and after a rigorous and robust engagement came out with the following themes:

- Academic Project – under the Leadership of the DVC: Academic and Research, Professor Kuzvinetsa Dzvimbo.
- Governance and Leadership – under the Leadership of the registrar, Dr Dan Mokoena.
- Financial Sustainability – under the Leadership of the Chief Financial Officer, Mr Les Coetzee.
- Technology Transfer and Innovation – under the Leadership of the Executive Director: TTI, Dr Joe Molete.
- Human Capital Management – under the Leadership of the Acting Executive Director: HR, Professor Patrick Radebe.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THESE THEMES

These will help to provide a diagnostic prognosis of the University in order to help us prepare a fertile ground for our Strategy Review. It is only after we shall have gone through a

Strategy Review that we can talk about a New Structure or Restructuring or Reengineering if you like. As you are aware and we have alluded to this point earlier is whether or not our Human Capital is commensurate with the challenges faced by the University? This is a probing question we shall have to respond to and we shall ignore it only at our own peril.

Ghost Posts

You will recall that we had earlier on informed the University Community about the alleged existence of Ghost Posts. Following the allegations, we commissioned the HR, IT and the Salaries Department to conduct a thorough investigation on the said allegations. I am happy to report to you that we received a Comprehensive Report compiled by the three Portfolios and the outcome of the Report is that we do not have Ghost Posts. After I had gone through the Report, I was then able to sleep at night because there was nothing to worry about this matter. I think the three Portfolios deserve a big round of applause.

Forensic investigation

This is an ongoing process. We had advised that people should not worry unduly if their hands are clean. Those who are sending us anonymous emails, posting on Facebook, sending

anonymous calls have reason to worry because we have touched a raw nerve and unfortunately we cannot retreat.

It is our intention to rid the Institution of any vestiges of corruption and tender-driven selfish motives and to this end, I invite you all to help me fight the scourge because this Institution does not belong to one individual but belongs to all of us. Example, 21 computers got lost from a Computer Laboratory when there are guards at the gate who are supposed to search all cars but the car carrying such computers just got through? How is that possible? Should we then not investigate such acts of theft, immorality and criminality? By stealing computers, the future and the quality of education of our students is put at risk. I think I have made the point! By the way the Forensic Investigation we are talking about is not targeting certain Departments or Individuals as it has been alleged, EVERY DEPARTMENT, will be subjected to it as we would equally like to identify gaps and risks in order to come up with preventative measures to mitigate the rampant corruption and looting, which are going on.

Lifestyle Audit

The EMC has taken the initiative of subjecting itself to this process which will investigate the following:

- The authenticity of our Academic Qualifications;
- Whether our lifestyle is commensurate to our income
- Whether we do have any other sources of income and if so whether such sources of income are legitimate.

We are on a move of instilling good Governance Procedures at this University and as the EMC alone we cannot achieve it and so we call for your help, assistance and co-operation.

Capacity Building and Staff Development

An Academic Institution is a place of Intellectual stimulation and Knowledge Production and by extension it is an oasis of Knowledge Economy. It is therefore right and appropriate to encourage staff (at all levels) to improve their academic qualifications in order to remove the schism of two levels of economy. There is no moral justification for one to join VUT with a Matric Certificate or an Undergraduate Diploma or a Junior Degree and retire after some years still having the same qualifications. I do know that we have processes and procedures in this regard but HR is requested to fast-track these in order to prove to the VUT Community that we mean business and that it cannot be business as usual.

Elitism and Class differentiation

It is a myth to argue that South Africa is a classless society. The mere fact that there are two levels of economy is a demonstration of South Africa's elitist and class differentiation society. The levels of inequality have regrettably found their space at the operations of the University.

Why do I say this?

I say this because quite often "we" the Intellectuals will go on "Break-Away" and "Retreats" to strategize and come up with proposals regarding the future direction of the University, which is fine but have we ever thought of engaging the Service Employees on the same trajectory and call for their views and suggestions as a University strategy has to be embraced by all? In 2018, we shall have a "Break-Away" session with the HODs of the service employees and Service Employees nominated by them to represent them with a view to reporting back to them. This is a process of inclusivity at its best.

Living and Breathing the Values of the Institution:

I have consistently been challenging the VUT Community to live up to the values which we as a University have embraced viz:

- Honesty and Integrity
- Excellence
- Mutual Respect
- Diversity
- Creativity
- Tolerance
- Collegiality, etc

But I regret to announce that there has been no movement on any of these. I requested Departments to have discussions on each one of these so that we can have an institutional understanding of what these mean to us so that we can live and breathe them but this has not happened. We shall now have to enforce the directive as we have values hanging on the wall of our corridors and offices without living them.

Recognizing our Staff

In the absence of a Performance Management System, I have requested HR to develop a system which would help to

recognize our staff, especially those at the lower levels of our operations. This is one of the ways in which we can incentivize our staff.

Salary Increase for PL5- 16

The outstanding 1.5% has now been paid in, to make the agreed upon 5.5%. This is for the last time for the University to tap into its Reserves as this approach is not sustainable.

Salary Increase for PL1-4

These have not been realized as yet as Council need justification for the figures. So far, the PL1-4 have regrettably not enjoyed the benefits of the salary increases.

Academic Profile of the Institution

As far as curriculum renewal and transformation are concerned, the VUT has made tremendous strides in our bid to ensure that Africanisation and the transformation of our PQM is in synch with our quest to ensure that the programs we offer prepare students for their future world of work, entrepreneurship and the

Fourth Industrial revolution in particular. Just to give you a brief sneak preview into our quantitative achievements in ensuring that our programs have been approved by the DHET and accredited by the CHE, the VUT so far:

1. Between 2016 and 2017, 48 programs which we refer to as Category C nonaligned programs which will not to be offered after 2019 and new applications for new programs were approved by the DHET. This is a phenomenal figure within higher education curriculum development and approvals.
2. We have submitted to the CHE for approval in 2016 and 2017 thirty-eight new programs. This is a feat of no mean magnitude within higher education for those of us who know how difficult this process is.
3. As a UOT, in our efforts to meet the March 30th 2018 deadline set by the CHE for the HEQSF aligned programs (Category C Programs) we are only left with ten programs which should be aligned and sent to the CHE before March 2018.
4. At the moment we have more than 20 new applications in the pipeline for approvals by the DHET.

Ladies and gentlemen this shows that, the VUT as UOT with a particular focus on STEM in its programs and PQM we are continually being informed by a transformative agenda in which we have infused the major tenets of Africanisation and a de-

colonial epistemology and philosophy as we re-imagine and re-invent our curriculum. The VUT is in the fore front of having developed a BEd with a particular focus on STEM. This program was approved last year, and we will be enrolling close to two hundred students in January 2018 in this very unique program which will enable the VUT to assist our TVET colleges with a program for the continuing and professional development of their staff who did not have the professional qualifications to teach STEM disciplines. In the process we are also enhancing access to higher education in STEM related disciplines.

Student Growth- Decline

The graph which was shown by the CFO when he made his presentation on the Financial Sustainability and viability of the Institution sketched a very gloomy picture for VUT. We are at the bottom of the 26 Universities and this picture is not sustainable.

This is recipe for disaster as the situation will catch up with us in two years' time. The information was confirmed on 6 December 2017 at a meeting we had with the Representatives of the DHET.

To work smarter on the matter we have commissioned the following Departments to double their efforts in turning things around:

- Student Recruitment; and
- Marketing.

We cannot be at the bottom end of the ladder when we have a potential to grow. The survey being conducted by Mr Khuboni and his team will tell us exactly as to why students prefer not to come to VUT but choose other Institutions. Could some of these be caused by negative reporting i.e. being in the news for wrong reasons. Let us do some introspection ourselves in order to get to the bottom of this quagmire.

5. THE TRANSFORMATION TRAJECTORY OF THE VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

VUT is on an exciting journey of transformation, i.e. a journey of re-imagining the future. This is not a journey to be embarked upon only by the Transformation Unit. The Buzz-words used today are

- (i) Africanization and
- (ii) Decoloniality.

Our Social Justice and Transformation Unit needs to find space of engagement on these critical terms so that VUT can equally be counted amongst the best Academic Institutions which engage on issues of Public importance and interest. We are also envisaging constructing a VUT African-Cultural Village which will help our students not to lose touch of their cultural and traditional roots. The import of this vision finds expression in the argument captured by Ayi Kwezi Armah (1999 : 1), in an Introduction to the book on African Renaissance wherein he posits:

**“A people losing sight of origins are dead,
a people deaf to purpose are lost.
Under the fertile rain in scorching sunshine,
there is no difference;
their bodies are mere corpses,
awaiting final burial.”**

By constructing an African Cultural Village we would wish to preserve our culture and our identity.

6. A CALL FOR THE VOICE OF PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS

Quite often our Public Intellectuals have retreated into their small shells and are no longer vocal on topical issues as they

should. We need to re-energize our Public Intellectuals by creating a space of public engagement and discourse. We need to have some vibrancy on campus and this is a call, I am directing to our Academics and Public Intellectuals. The role of Public Intellectuals in South Africa is that which is aptly captured by Gumede and Dikeni (2011 :1), as they argue:

“The debate on what constitutes the role and responsibility of the intellectuals in South Africa generates much acrimony. We believe that it is appropriate to revisit this debate at this point in the life of our democracy. Our starting point is that, active and engaged public intellectuals play a crucial part in the ongoing life of democratic societies, perhaps even more so in new democracies like ours. As Barney Pityana has said, the capacity of a nation to conduct public debates is an important foundation in building a democratic society. “In such debates the nation examines its shortcomings and strengths, surveys the infinite variety of views ad opinions and treats everyone with respect, excersing tolerance and promoting meaningful communication. But instead of active engagement, intellectuals in South Africa have increasingly since 1994 beaten a retreat.”

Against the backdrop of this quotation, I am calling upon our own Public Intellectuals at this University to come on board and take the centre stage of critiquing and engaging on issues of public interest – the Connie Moloi's, the Biki Pitso's, the Bobby Naidoo's, the Kingsley Boloang's of this world and many others I have not mentioned. Please come forward and do not retreat as the Institution cannot afford to have a poverty and a paucity of ideas in the midst of such a pool of Public Intellectuals.

You could consider yourselves as the Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement Task Team and Mpho Diago will be the co-ordinator.

7. INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

There are many Buildings which are taking shape and the Disability and the CAD Building has now been completed as well as the 300 Bed Residence in Sebokeng for Teacher Education and we are looking forward to the first intake in 2018.

The Life Science Building is equally taking shape even though we had experienced some delays as a result of work stoppages.

The purchasing of Quest will relieve some pressure on our already stretched facilities on campus.

8. WATER-CHALLENGES

As you would recall, on two occasions since my assumption of duty we had serious water challenges. In one instance we have had to order mobile latrines and during the last few weeks after Exams had started we have had to suspend the operations of the University for half a day. The fault is not with the University but with the Emfuleni Local Municipality as it is the one which owes Rand Water millions of rands. We are currently in discussion with Rand Water to see if we cannot get water supply directly from them and also pay them directly without going via our Local Government. However, we also want to thank our member of Council, Mr Ikaneng Maphalane whose assistance in sorting out our challenges was helpful.

9. SECURITY

This still remains a big challenge and we need to come up with a Turn-Around strategy as changing Security Companies like a pair of socks seems not to be helpful.

10. 48 HR TURN-AROUND TIME

Our response time is very poor. Prospective students don't get a response from us on time and thus end up going to other Universities. I have requested Sanjay, the Acting ED: IPU to draw up a 48 HR Turn-Around Strategy for us.

11. OTHER ACTIVITIES

11.1. SIGNIFICANT BRANDING BUILDING PROJECT 2017

Vaal University of Technology (VUT), an institution that aspires to take the lead in innovative knowledge and quality technology education, has appointed Boomtown to carry out a brand audit and create a strategy for the brand.

We've been established as VUT for a little over 10 years, and we wanted to understand our current position in the market place and where we sit amongst our competitors. We want to ensure we remain aligned with the needs and preferences of prospective students, and that we sustain our credibility.”

A brand audit provides an analysis of a brand and its marketing effectiveness. It assesses its strengths and weaknesses, and identifies opportunities for growth, as well as areas or potential areas which are inhibiting or counteracting what the brand has set out to achieve.

From the discoveries in the audit, Boomtown will make recommendations to VUT to improve the brand positioning, messaging, creative expressions as well as the marketing effectiveness.” The strategy they create will then lead to the development of a re-energised and refreshed brand and marketing strategy to position VUT accordingly amongst its stakeholders.”

Boomtown managed to identify two specific brand directions for VUT, of which the VUT internal stakeholders must choose one. Only internal stakeholders are identified for this extremely important step, seeing that brand loyalty and owning the brand personality begins internally. Staff and students must live the brand to sell it externally. Mr Stuart Innell, Lead Strategy, presented the two directions to the VUT Brand’ors during a *Brand’ors Connect* session on 30 March 2017.

Once a brand direction has been selected, they will further develop the brand tools i.e. refining core brand and messaging systems. Thereafter the integrated Marketing Communication Strategy will follow.

11.2. Brand Direction Voting

11.2.1. Staff

The Marketing & Brand Manager's office will commence with roadshows and have focus group discussions to inform all staff of the two brand directions, the interpretation of each one, and how they should vote when the time is right. This will take place at the beginning of 2018. Details will be communicated to all staff.

11.2.2. Students

The Marketing & Brand Manager's office will commence with the awareness and in-house training for the newly elected SRC at the beginning of 2018. A workshop will be arranged where

Boomtown and the CA department will inform them of the Brand Audit and the voting that should take place. Hopefully we will be getting their buy-in soon enough to arrange the Voting Activation for all students. A formal request for approval of the week-long activation will be submitted to EMC through the Director: Marketing & PR.

11.2.3. 50TH Anniversary History Book

VUT has appointed Troika to do a thorough research on its history and compile a coffee table book which contains all the history of VUT (i.e from 1966-2016). The Curator has already conducted interviews with a diverse group of internal and external stakeholders. This process required a careful selection of interviewees, as it was necessary to capture both pre- and post-apartheid era and the significant time of transformation at VUT. The project will be finalised in March 2018.

11.2.4. 50th Time-line at Reception Area

The 50th time-line exhibition is directly linked to the additional research and findings by the Curator. A separate wall namely **SINCE 1966**, has been allocated specifically for images of buildings since VUT's inception in 1966 until 2016. This wall will tell its own story as one will be able to clearly follow the growth of the university in terms of its infrastructure. The Sites of Delivery will also be included.

The curved wall will be used to display significant events and milestones of VUT since 1966 until 2016. The purpose of the time-line is to capture and share the diverse story of VUT's 50th anniversary, and leave a legacy for the next generations to appreciate. The **SINCE 1966** wall will be used to display all the Vice-Chancellors & Principals of the last 50 years.

The rest of the wall with the broad aluminium strip will be used to install 2 screens and one touch screen with various frames where images of buildings, unveiling of the stadium, laboratories, sites of delivery, historic events and milestones of the past 50 years will be displayed. The touch screen will have a drop-down menu where a person can choose what he/she wants to read first on the history of VUT.

Applications to the wall will take place in accordance to the coffee table book that will be produced by the Curator.

12. WORLD AIDS DAY 2017 THEME: “LET OUR ACTIONS COUNT”: IT IS MY RIGHT TO KNOW MY STATUS.

On the 1st of December, the whole world celebrated World AIDS day. A day which the world has dedicated to ensure that all people in need have access to safe, effective, quality and affordable medicines, including diagnostics and other health commodities as well as health care services while also ensuring that they are protected against financial risks.

This year's theme reminds us that the interventions should target an HIV/AIDS free generation. This is achievable if each of us plays their role in the HIV interventions.

It is estimated that overall HIV prevalence rate of the total South African population is approximately 12, 7%.

The total number of people living with HIV is estimated at approximately 7, 03 million in 2016.

For adults aged **15 – 49 years**, an estimated **18, 9%** of the population is HIV positive. **This is the age bracket for majority of the university students and most of the University work force.**

It is also a day to commemorate those who have passed on, but mostly it should be a day where we celebrate victories over

this dreaded disease, it should be a day where we measure, assess, and report on progress achieved on measures taken to mitigate the scourge and the spread of HIV.

It should be a day where it cannot be accepted or be regarded as normal when there are people who still do not know about their HIV Status.

It should also be a day when institutions such as VUT not only celebrate victories such as increased access to treatment and prevention services but also the efficacy in showing support and solidarity for people living with HIV.

Vaal University of Technology, Institutional HIV/AIDS Unit is dedicated to coordinate, facilitate and implement quality HIV/AIDS Programmes in alignment with the VUT HIV and AIDS Policy, National Strategic Plan on HIV, STIs and TB (2017–2022), Policy and Strategic Framework on HIV and AIDS for Higher Education in South Africa (HEAIDS 2012).

Our vision is to be a university that leads in implementing effective and innovative HIV and AIDS and Wellness Programmes with the mission to produce employable graduates that are physically, emotionally and socially healthy.

The Unit continuously endeavors to reach a stage where all personnel and students must know their HIV Status and have access to safe, effective, quality and affordable care.

This year, over 4000 students and staff were tested and screened inclusive of Satellite Campuses for various diseases through HIV Counselling and Testing Programme and over 400 000 condoms were distributed.

We continue to encourage more staff and students to undergo health screenings so as to know their health status and be able to have access to professional, safe, effective, quality and affordable care, such services are available within the Institution and district health services for further management.

“KNOWING YOUR STATUS IS IN YOUR HANDS NOW”.

“NO ONE SHOULD BE LEFT BEHIND”.

13. THE NAMING POLICY

A Naming Policy has been drafted by the office of the Vice-Chancellor for consultation purposes. Once the same shall have been through the various structures of the University and Council endorses it, it shall then be implemented and we shall then begin to see the new names of the Buildings. The new Names will come from the VUT Community and there will not be a top-down approach as there will also be a Naming Committee which will be a Broad-Based Representative Committee.

14. IMPROVING OUR WI-FI AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

We are painfully aware of the frustrations we are going through because of the unavailability of the internet as a result of the poor Wi-Fi system and to this end David Ramasodi, the Executive Director: IT has been tasked to look into the matter and likewise with the Solar-Panel system as an Alternative Energy, there is a Project led by Professor Christo Pienaar and we hope to implement these in 2018.

15. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

The Institution held two International Conferences with success and for these we would wish to pay tribute to the DVC: Academic and Research, Prof Peter Dzvimbo and his team. The Conferences held were on:

15.1 Learning Experiences of 1st Year Students at University (CAD)

15.2 Tissue Engineering – Faculty of Engineering

These two were indeed the flagship of the Year.

16. INSTITUTIONAL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUBMIT

In 2018, we are planning to hold an Institutional Public Engagement Summit which will have to respond to the following:

- What type of a University do we want VUT to be-in other words what is the identity we would wish VUT to be?
- Once we shall have sketched the kind of an identity we want VUT to assume, then we will own and embrace the new identity. The ownership process is important on a project of this nature.
- When we shall have responded to the above, then the idea is to come up with an Institutional Charter/Declaration.

We hope we shall embark on this journey together.

17. CONCLUSION

I have said quite a lot but allow me to wish you all everything of the best for the festive season of 2017, and for you to come back in 2018 fresh and invigorated. As we all know, the year 2017 has been full of surprises and prizes and we hope that the year 2018 will only be full of excitement and exhilaration.

Whilst the levels of our performance for 2017 were wide and varied, fact of the matter is that every member of the VUT Community tried to pull his or her weight and for this you are all thanked as we think on these things!

I know that the months of December and January are difficult months. Some of the challenges we encounter are occasioned by our inability to spend frugally and so, without dictating to you on how you should spend your hard-earned salary, please do remember that in your spending spree, January will be a very long, long month before you get your next salary advice and so whatever you do, think on these things.

Thank you all for having been such a wonderful “Bunch of People” and I want to re-commit myself in serving this institution to the best of my ability and capability, because of the words of wisdom I always get from the Philosophy of King Sobhuza II, as he would always say:

“Akusiko kwami kwebantfu”

[It is not about me-it is about the People]

As we shall be starting the year 2018, on a note of unity and strength and on a note of mutual respect and humaneness, allow me to conclude by taking a leaf from the words of Robert

Sobukwe as he addressed the Graduating Class of 1949 at Fort Hare where he said:

**“Let me plead with you, Lovers of my Africa to carry with you into the world the vision of a new Africa, an Africa reborn, an Africa rejuvenated, an Africa recrafted, and young Africa. We are the first glimmers of a new dawn”,
(Pogrund, B.2015:36).**

As the final words of serenity let me quote Sir Winston Churchill, the late Prime Minister of the United Kingdom when he motivated the British Soldiers during the Second World War II, and I find these words quite appropriate, as I am also asking you to consider them as well, he said:

“To every man there comes in his lifetime that special moment when he is figuratively tapped on the shoulder and offered the chance to do a very special thing, unique to him and fitted to his talent, what a tragedy if the moment finds him unprepared or unqualified for the work which would be his finest hour”, (Hickman and Silva, 1986:34-35).

“Think on these things” and I wish you everything of the Best for the Festive Season and God Bless you and your Families, and God Bless our University!

I THANK YOU!