



**MINUTES OF THE UJ CONVOCATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) 2023, HELD ON TUESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2023, AT THE UBUNTU CHAMBERS, SECOND FLOOR, MADIBENG BUILDING, APK AND VIA MS TEAMS, AT 18:00**

**1. WELCOME AND ATTENDANCE**

The Chairperson welcomed all present to the meeting.

**1.1 Apologies**

Mr M Magoro (Convocation Exco)  
Dr M Ralephata (MEC)

**2. DOCUMENT FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES**

**Received and noted:**

The Constitution of the Convocation, as set out in CONV.12/2023(AGM1).

**3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

**4. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda was adopted as submitted.

**5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the previous minutes of the AGM held on 2 September 2022, as set out in CONV.13/2023(AGM1), be approved.**

**6. ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONVOCATION**

**Noted:**

That the President highlighted the following during his address:

- a) The Convocation Exco 2023 Strategic Plan was to identify projects and determine which ones to adopt from the previous Convocation Exco.
- b) The Vice-Chancellor's vision in pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and introducing the Global Excellence and Stature (GES) 4.0 Strategy for Societal Impact.
- c) The Exco identified the following priority focus areas:

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- i. Levitating the profile of the University: Collaboration with Alumni.
  - ii. Fundraising: Assist the University with fundraising initiatives.
  - iii. Student welfare/support: Contribute towards student welfare/support.
  - iv. SDGs and Societal Impact: Identify partnerships and programmes for implementation with the potential to uplift communities.
- d) Levitating the profile of the University:
- i. Marketing of fundraising initiatives/events.
  - ii. Arranging several events at faculties/college.
  - iii. Successfully launching numerous affinity groups.
  - iv. The launch of the UJ Sports Alumni Affinity Group.
  - v. The Convocation newsletter and an award-winning magazine. A bi-monthly newsletter would be introduced in 2024.
  - vi. Intention to visit all faculty and college boards to introduce the Exco and promote active participation from academic staff.
  - vii. Identify nominations for the Alumni Dignitas Award (i.e. recognition of Alumni's achievements).
- e) Fundraising:
- i. Approach key stakeholders to partner with for fundraising initiatives.
  - ii. Fundraising initiatives should be considered to assist with the University's financial sustainability, given the reduction in subsidy/third-stream income.
  - iii. Make provision for food parcels for students in need.
  - iv. Partnering with UJ Sports and the Development Office to raise funds for missing middle students.
  - v. Participation in the UJ Future Walk scheduled for 30 September 2023.
  - vi. In 2022, the missing middle students' campaign raised nearly R2m in funding. Approx. 13 000 students were assisted with bursaries.
  - vii. Since the inception of the UJ missing middle student campaign in 2016, R916m was raised by various stakeholders.
  - viii. UJ was commended for the Double Our Future campaign, which assisted academically deserving students. Nearly R3m was raised thus far this year. Appreciation was extended to staff members, stakeholders, donors, and alumni who had supported this initiative.
  - ix. Fundraising plans to assist students with historical debt were in the pipeline.
- f) Student welfare/support:
- i. UJ developed a strong commitment towards attaining the SDGs.
  - ii. UJ expanded its feeding schemes by establishing food gardens at two campuses targeted at zero hunger and food security.
  - iii. Regarding the Feed a Student Campaign, almost 5 000 students were assisted per day.
  - iv. The Exco and the Community Engagement Office participated in the Nelson Mandela Day by volunteering at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital.
  - v. Safety and security of students and staff remained high on the agenda of the Exco. They closely monitored and observed issues with potential threats that could destabilise institutions. Concern was expressed about the fatal attacks on staff at the University of Fort Hare, among others.
  - vi. The Exco embarked on an initiative to establish a national Convocation Exco Association across universities to enhance benchmarking and expanding footprint.

- vii. Regarding the recent bus accident involving UJ students near the APK entrance, sympathy was expressed to those injured, and appreciation was extended to the University for their support and prompt assistance towards the affected students.
  - viii. Risk factors of road accidents were emphasised. Road safety awareness should be promoted.
  - ix. Regarding graduate unemployment, it remained a critical issue, and the Exco would endeavour to contribute positively towards unemployment. Together with the University, the employability of students needed to be ensured.
  - x. To upskill students, the University established free online courses in Artificial Intelligence relating to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- g) SDGs and societal impact:
- i. UJ displayed an upward trajectory in its Global Rankings.
  - ii. UJ was ranked first in Africa regarding its contributions to SDGs.
  - iii. UJ was ranked first globally in SDG 1: No poverty.
  - iv. Academic programmes remained on par with international standards.
  - v. UJ should maintain this momentum in becoming the leading University in Africa.
  - vi. Additionally, many UJ students and staff were winning awards. The University was doing well in terms of sports and transformation.
  - vii. UJ was committed to producing highly sought-after graduates in their career of choice. The University strived to unlock the potential of the next generation of leaders.
  - viii. 15% of UJ's electricity demand was sustained through solar. Earlier in the year, two electrical buses were launched, demonstrating UJ's remarkable reduction in carbon footprint.
- h) Conclusion:
- i. Students were encouraged to remain focused while preparing for their year-end examinations.
  - ii. Gratitude was expressed to donors, sponsors, staff, and all Convocation members.
  - iii. Convocation members were encouraged to participate in fundraising initiatives.

## 7. ADDRESS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL

### Noted:

That the VC highlighted the following during his address:

- a) Reflection on the year thus far and the changes the University had to embrace in a short amount of time.
- b) UJ's history and legacy.
- c) UJ's accessibility and resources compared to peer institutions.
- d) UJ demonstrated the transformative power of education.
- e) In recent years, UJ emerged as the 4IR University. Emphasis had been placed on research that addresses the various United Nations (UN) SDGs and contributed to policy development.
- f) UJ's learning revolution was one defined by societal impact. UJ demonstrated its ability to respond to shifting contexts as dynamic and active participants in 4IR alongside its commitment to transformation, equity, access, and Africanism. This would remain the focus and ethos of the University going forward.

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- g) Retrospectively, the global context should not be ignored, and the following concerns were highlighted:
    - i. Inflation rate increase.
    - ii. Pandemics.
    - iii. Climate change.
    - iv. Leadership crisis.
    - v. Global crisis that reflected an impact in South Africa (SA).
  - h) In a post-pandemic setting, leadership was inseparable from SDGs for sustainable development. Leaders had a duty to create a just, fair, and equitable future.
  - i) UJ's vision emphasised continuity, innovation, humanity, inclusivity, and purposeful progress as prerequisite guiding principles for societal impact.
  - j) The emphasis on societal impact was not only confined to the UJ community.
  - k) The University continued to make strides in technology for societal impact. The following projects that UJ embarked on were highlighted:
    - i. The Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, in partnership with Schneider Electrical, adopted a village in Limpopo called Gwakwani to assist with environmental sustainability (i.e. solar power) and set up a preschool and clinic.
    - ii. The recent 3D Printing Project rolled out at UJ was a prime example of 4IR technology that could be leveraged for societal impact and sustainable solutions that would benefit local communities.
    - iii. The technologies available could address some challenges faced in communities. During the launch of the 3D Printing Project, some concerns were expressed that it might reduce employment; however, the project could also upskill and create more employment for plumbers and electricians. Additionally, the project demonstrated the ability of technology to address some gaps, particularly in response to homelessness in the city.
    - iv. The fleet of electric buses produced a lower carbon footprint.
  - l) UJ improved its ranking in the *2023 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings* at position 46 globally.
  - m) The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) announced that UJ was the top producer of research outputs in SA (out of 26 universities).
  - n) Researchers and PDRFs were thanked for their quality research and contribution towards UJ's research outputs achievement.
  - o) In terms of the U.S. News and *World Report Best Global Universities Rankings (BGUR)* amongst the top 500 universities in the world, UJ was ranked at position 421.
  - p) Regarding the new *Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings*, UJ ranked in the 171 and 180 categories and number two in SA.
  - q) The UJ Strategic Plan 2035 was currently under development.
  - r) Conclusion:
    - i. Members were encouraged to participate in the UJ Future Walk on 30 September 2023.
    - ii. Members of the Exco were thanked for their collaboration with UJ management.

## 8. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

### Noted:

That members of the Exco and MEC addressed questions from Alumni who sent their questions via the online platforms. The following questions were addressed:

- a) Registrar:

- i. When would the Alumni House be ready?

*Response:*

- ii. The possible premises for an Alumni House were identified at the Johannesburg Business School (JBS). Scoping for the project was undertaken, and the anticipated cost for the project was approximately R4m. Considering the current economic climate, campuses' sustainability took priority; thus, a decision was made not to proceed with the Alumni House at this stage.

- b) Academic and Research:

- i. What was UJ doing to make education more accessible and affordable for students?
- ii. Regarding existing free courses, could the communication issue be tackled as certain communication elements hindered alumni from expressing their ideas after leaving the University?
- iii. Was there a programme that ensured/allowed alumni to extend their research?
- iv. Could online library services (i.e. journals) be made available for Alumni?

*Responses:*

- v. UJ prided itself in being an accessible university without compromising on excellence. Regarding affordability, UJ provided an environment of support where students could complete their studies. Almost 60% of students were NSFAS funded, but beyond that, UJ had a Trust Fund that provided bursaries to some students. Other aspects, such as fundraising, were also done through faculties.
- vi. There were two free online courses, with a further eight in the pipeline. The 10 free courses would be available in 2024. Additionally, short learning programmes related to communication were available.
- vii. The provision of access to journals could have financial implications. If access to journals was essentially required, alumni could contact the Library and Information Centre (LIC) for assistance. A request would be made for the Executive Director, LIC, to provide the Exco with feedback on the issues regarding provision of access to journals.
- viii. There was no central programme for research to be extended; however, all faculties/college should approach master's students to continue with PhD's. Additionally, the Postgraduate School offered many courses on writing articles, improving ratings, etc.

- c) Exco:

- i. What plans, measures, and skills development initiatives were in place to assist upcoming entrepreneurs?
- ii. Was the Exco's vision aligned with the VC's?

*Responses:*

- iii. Affinity Groups were established to assist entrepreneurs in interacting with alumni on their needs and challenges.
- iv. The Exco worked closely with the VC and management on fundraising initiatives.

- d) Finance:

- i. How was UJ doing in terms of fundraising returns?

*Responses:*

- ii. The strain of the economic crisis had an impact on returns.
- iii. The University was doing well regarding fundraising initiatives, and fundraising achievements had improved.
- iv. In 2021, a new external fundraising strategy was approved by the Council. As part of the fundraising strategy, the following key priority projects were identified:
- 1) Student support (bursaries, allowances).

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- 2) Projects targeting both historical and current debt of students.
  - 3) Research.
  - 4) Infrastructure sourcing projects.
- e) Closing remarks:
- i. It was suggested that the following wording should be used instead:
    - 1) Student support instead of student welfare.
    - 2) Student meal assistance programme instead of feeding scheme.
  - ii. The President was congratulated for his contributions to the Convocation.
  - iii. The recruitment process for the DVC: Research and Internationalisation as well as the Executive Dean of Health Science positions were underway. Executive recruitment was progressing well.
  - iv. Regarding the lack of proper communication, it was essential to reflect on what higher education institutions were doing to enhance communication.
  - v. The University was congratulated for a seamless transition in its leadership.

## 9. INTRODUCTION OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF CONVOCATION

### Noted:

That a word of welcome<sup>1</sup> was extended to the members of the Convocation Executive Committee.

## 10. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS

None.

## 11. CLOSING

Appreciation was extended to all who participated in the 2023 AGM and the Alumni Office for their valuable contributions in making the meeting a success.

The Exco members were thanked for their dedication and professionalism.

Appreciation was extended to the UJ Council for always ensuring that the University grew.

The meeting closed at 19:40.

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Chairperson  
2024

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<sup>1</sup> The welcoming was done at the beginning of the meeting but recorded at this point.