Unisa 2015 Revisited

UNISA | university of south africa

1. OUR CONTEXT

Five years into the implementation of its strategy - *Unisa 2015: an Agenda for Transformation* - Unisa has paused to reflect on progress, to reprioritize, and if necessary, to reformulate aspects of its strategic plan in the light of the changing institutional and higher education context.

The challenges of transformation, which pervade *Unisa 2015*, remain in large measure. The central transformational challenge is to revitalize the capabilities of the University concerning social development, the production of human capital, knowledge creation, and promotion of innovation. In so doing, the sustainability of society is assured through future generations of highly capable, critical and ethical citizens, and knowledge entrepreneurs. The graduates we produce are being equipped to address the multitude of challenges confronting our society – including the promotion of equity, the sustainable use of resources, tolerance of difference, enhancing public health, and the development of indigenous knowledge.

Unisa is revisiting its strategy at a time when there is worldwide concern about higher education as a public good and as the centre for research, innovation and creativity. Intense demands are increasingly made on higher education as a resource to support economic development, especially in the light of the global economic downturn. The downturn, and the spectacular collapses of major financial institutions which precipitated it, suggests to many that our knowledge systems have failed us in identifying the gathering storm clouds, and in devising appropriate counter-measures. As an economy on a steep developmental trajectory, South Africa is in dire need of high level capacity in a number of fields.

There are pressures from within the higher education sector as well. Even though national systems of higher education must be developed to the optimum, the increasing internationalization of higher education and cross-border mobility, means that regional and international cooperation is required to promote quality assurance, authentication of qualifications, and student mobility.

The challenge of access remains a priority in most of the developing world, even though several developing countries, including South Africa, have made major strides in widening participation and enhancing quality. The promise of Open Distance Learning to increase access, widen participation and promote quality is now widely recognized, and is influencing higher education policy in many developing countries. However, better endowed and developed countries and institutions continue to have an obligation to support the development of those less privileged, especially on the African continent.

Society continues to look to higher education institutions to undertake research that helps eradicate poverty, promotes sustainable development, advances cultural development, and uplifts communities economically, while fulfilling their traditional roles in scientific inquiry and human development. Addressing these challenges will demand mobilization of institutional and individual capacities.

International cooperation between institutions must help ameliorate the brain drain from developing countries. It must also help narrow the development gap between the well off and the marginalized in the global economy through knowledge transfer and the sharing of resources and capacities, even as it helps build vibrant and diversified national knowledge capabilities in collaborating countries. A corollary to increased demands and expectations from higher education is the need to reaffirm institutional autonomy and academic freedom so that higher education institutions retain their independence and remain unconstrained in their pursuit of truth and social justice. Higher education still sustains society though its timeless values of critical thinking, research, teaching and community engagement – all of which drive society towards betterment.

2. OUR VISION

TOWARDS *THE* AFRICAN UNIVERSITY IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY

> *Unisa's vision remains as compelling and valid today as it was when initially conceived. It is a signifier of our uniqueness and is deeply embedded in the consciousness of staff and students , as well as that of our stakeholders, and society in general through the shared value of ubuntu.*
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> *'**Towards'** indicates that the vision sets the University on a developmental journey – signifying dynamism, inquisitiveness, a sense of adventure, and boldness. It also points to clarity of purpose and destiny, constantly transforming and innovating in pursuit of its vision.*
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> *The emphatic '**the'** in the vision statement refers to the excellence that the University will continually strive for globally. The boldness of the statement is therefore intended to reflect our aspirations as a university.*
>
> *`**Service of humanity'** underscores the traditional ideals of a university to promote universality, to produce and disseminate knowledge, promote culture, and serve causes which advance society and humanity. Elaborated from the perspective of an African University, it means that the University is one located and rooted in the African context, developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for the development of the African continent.*

3. THE ROLE UNISA WILL PLAY IN SOCIETY – OUR MISSION

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA IS A COMPREHENSIVE,
OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTION THAT PRODUCES EXCELLENT
SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH, PROVIDES QUALITY TUITION,
AND FOSTERS ACTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

WE ARE GUIDED BY THE PRINCIPLES OF LIFELONG LEARNING,
STUDENT-CENTREDNESS, INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY.

OUR EFFORTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE KNOWLEDGE AND
INFORMATION SOCIETY, ADVANCE DEVELOPMENT,
NURTURE A CRITICAL CITIZENRY,
AND ENSURE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY.

4. OUR VALUES

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS

EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY

Inspired by the foundational precepts of our transforming society, social justice and fairness remain the values that animate our strategy, guide our efforts and influence our imagined future.

Upon further reflection, it is felt that pursuit of excellence for its own sake could be sterile. Excellence and integrity are therefore combined to suggest that excellence cannot be pursued as an end in itself and aloof from the major challenges confronting higher education. Therefore, excellence must be pursued with integrity to have value.

Finally, ethical conduct is viewed as a critical element of integrity. In practice, it requires correct action and decision-making even in the absence of direct oversight and scrutiny.

5. OUR VALUE PROPOSITION

ACCESSIBLE, FLEXIBLE, AND GLOBALLY RECOGNIZED

While the vision statement of the University captures the essence of our aspirational journey, our value proposition states concisely what value our students will find at Unisa that distinguishes us from other higher education providers.

In providing affordable access with success, Unisa offers a relevant range of quality programmes from certificate to doctoral levels in a wide range of fields, thereby giving expression to its identity as a comprehensive ODL institution. Moreover, integral to our programmes of learning is intensive ICT enhanced learner support, which caters for diverse student needs.

The rich learning experiences of our students at Unisa ensure that with corresponding effort on their part, their chances of success are enhanced considerably. This means not only that they graduate with a breadth of knowledge and skills necessary for the workplace and for critical citizenship, but also with the self-knowledge, confidence and realization of potential necessary for lifelong learning, creativity, and a fulfilling life.

Finally, Unisa is an internationally recognized university with an extensive geographical footprint, giving our students recognition and employability in many countries the world over.

6. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goals	Strategies
1. Revitalize the PQM, teaching and learning.	1. Simplify and streamline PQM. 2. Review/ develop relevant curricula to promote innovation, and renew 'graduateness.' 3. Develop an integrated student support model 4. Revise assessment processes for greater balance between formative and summative assessment 5. Conceptualise and implement an ODL teaching and learning model.
2. Increase innovative research and research capacity.	1. Inculcate Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary (MIT) research, epistemologies, methods and programmes. 2. Cultivate ODL research. 3. Sustain a supportive, enabling research environment.
3. Grow community engagement initiatives	1. Redefine the scope and extent of community engagement in the context of ODL. 2. Build an enabling environment for community engagement.
4. Position Unisa as a leading ODL institution	1. Advance ODL on the African continent and internationally. 2. Position the IODL at the cutting edge in ODL research and training. 3. Leverage strategic partnerships to increase staff capacity.

5. Create an enabling environment for persons with disabilities	1. Elevate interests and concerns of disabled in policy formulation, planning and management practices. 2. Review infrastructural facilities, registration, and educational processes to ensure a barrier-free environment.
6. Establish Unisa as a leader in sound corporate governance and the promotion of sustainability	1. Develop an integrated strategy for corporate social responsibility in respect of economic, social and environmental areas in line with King III and UNGC principles.
7. Redesign organizational architecture in line with institutional strategy and the ODL model.	1. Develop an organisational architecture framework that charts synergies between technology, human capacities, processes, and organizational culture. 2. Align technological capabilities with ODL model and OA requirements. 3. Devise a re-engineering plan based on design, redesign or improvement imperatives. 4. Foster a culture of continuous improvement in all institutional processes and systems through a 'learning organization' paradigm.

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