FROM **HOPE** TO **ACTION** THROUGH **KNOWLEDGE**

The Renaissance of the
University of the Western Cape

2001 – 2014

Editors

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Realigning Human Resources to support the O'Connell Vision

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Introduction

Explaining changes that have taken place requires a diagnostic approach to deal with the past and the present, whilst at the same time taking into account the complexity of trends and events that eventually shaped that future – always at a point of starting again to ensure continuous improvements. As a leader, Rector and Vice-Chancellor Prof Brian O'Connell was positioned to move the system (UWC) to 'order' and to decide who may be the right people to do this. This chapter is essentially about the leaders who found ways of collaborating and of inspiring their teams to achieve new heights at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) under the leadership of Prof Brian O'Connell.

The most important factor that impacted on the changes to emerge was that of leadership: the notion that "people experience the culture through the person they report to" (Barrett, 2005) became very significant because of the rapid institutional decline of UWC prior to the arrival of Brian O'Connell in November 2001, especially the effects of the staff retrenchment exercise in 1998/1999 that destroyed staff morale and gave rise to mistrust of the executive management, exacerbated by financial and other insecurities.

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In Prof O'Connell the University had a Rector and Vice-Chancellor who displayed compassion and a steadfast focus on improving the University. His profile complemented those of two colleagues: first, the DVC Academic, Prof Ramesh Bharuthram, who was goal-oriented with a clear understanding of the set of criteria that define the scholarly performance and impact of a university, and who evinced the dedicated, hardworking passion for high-end academic achievements that the O'Connell Vision demanded; and second, the DVC for Student Development and Support, Prof Lullu Tshiwula, who introduced a paradigm shift in the approach to student development and enhancing the quality of student life. These three senior leaders, together with the support of fellow members of the Executive Management team who embraced the O'Connell Vision, created the stable, cohesive and collaborative climate for achieving the strategic goals. Consequently, the significant shifts that took place within the UWC community led to the development of a culture where all were encouraged to bring their share; this resulted in a collective momentum going forward with ever-increasing success becoming the norm.

Firstly, the discussion focuses on the significance of the three successive 5-year Institutional Operating Plans (IOPs) from 2000 to 2014 and their impact on the evolution of Human Resources (HR) at UWC. Secondly, the chapter will reflect on some of the key strategic HR policy changes and interventions which supported the objectives and advancement of the academic project.

The key to success at UWC was manifested not only in good systems and processes, but was also underpinned by a firm belief in "collective responsibilities for success"; this was followed by the establishment of a climate of camaraderie which established a high quality of work life which included opportunities to grow and learn. This in turn led to the kinds of contributions surpassing the normal everyday standards of work. Thus this chapter reflects on how the successes were achieved as a result of people (UWC staff) at all levels and of different capabilities executing their leadership roles within their circles of influence. New work values emerged and existing values became more nuanced under the pervasive value-based leadership, which included supportive staff union leaders. A general people-oriented mindset shift took collaboration to new levels, taking UWC to a place of action, with a workforce that chose to improve continuously. Nick Udall claims that the ability to adapt to emerging changes is the magic formula for success: "leadership is the act of leading people on a journey – how we make meaning" (Udall, 2014: p. 146). It needs to be appreciated that at UWC leadership was manifested at all levels.

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The first challenge put forward by Prof Brian O'Connell was the notion of sense-making. Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1 was always his defining presentation of the contrasting reality of the South African situation, the scenario where 85 % of the population lives in a severely disadvantaged context, whilst the other 15% find themselves in first-world conditions with all the accompanying benefits and privileges. HR had to consider this sense-making concept carefully; it represented an inherent part of UWC and embodied the role individuals could play in a community where the University itself, a significant number of our staff members and the vast majority of our students were confronted with economic and other challenges. HR had to move from an HR content function to include an HR context function (Nel, Werner, Poisant, Ngalo & Du Plessis, 2011). UWC needed transformation and the journey was being mapped on a continuous basis. The situation called for new ways of thinking and the creation of seemingly magical ways whereby some processes, ways of behaving and innovative ideas would shift UWC towards a tipping point (Gladwell, 2000) to achieve the goals of the IOP.

In analysing the development of the HR function one could view the progress made over 15 years (2000-2014) through the lenses of HR's purpose statements and the changing of standard operating practices that contributed to the high levels of success for UWC.

Institutional Operating Plans and the HR shifts to align with the workplace shifts

The shift in the purpose statements of HR in the three IOPs stretching from 2000 to 2014 progressed as indicated below.

The primary purpose of the IOPs 2000-2004 and 2005-2009 was: *To select, retain and develop staff contributing to UWC's mission.* This statement captures the basic premise of HR being expected to be mainly an administrative function. However, towards the end of 2009 there was a realisation that the focus of HR needed to change in order to advance the institution. Goal 4 of the IOP 2010-2014 reads:

EXCELLENT TALENT: *To attract, retain, diversify and develop excellent talent to enable UWC to realise its vision and achieve its strategic goals.*

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The remit of this purpose statement was extended until the end of 2015 to allow for the development of the next 5-year IOP to coincide with the changeover to the new Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Tyrone Pretorius and his Executive Management Team.

The shift in the HR statement was significant, indicating a changed view that people represent talent and have much to contribute – people represented capability for UWC and not only competence. Appropriate talent and capability were essential to realise Brian O’Connell’s vision of UWC “playing alongside and competing with the best”.

The transition from the one IOP to the next embodied continuous change and transformation. This reflected the messages received from staff through the staff surveys undertaken (UWC Cultural and Strategic surveys 2008/2009, 2011 and 2014), namely that UWC is effective on transformation and we want this to continue. The survey results were also evidence of the workplace starting to function at level 5 of the Capability Maturity Model (CMM) model (Figure 6.1) (Humphrey, 1989; Curtis, Hefley & Miller, 2009), reflecting a workplace embracing continuous improvements.

Figure 6.1 Maturity levels of the People CMM (Capability Maturity Model) (Adapted from Humphrey, 1989; Curtis, Hefley & Miller, 2009).

A comparison of the shift in the HR IOP statements from 2000-2005 to 2010-2014 with the People CMM continuum model in Figure 6.1 illustrates the upward progression over this time period:

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The People CMM (Capability Maturity Model) stages the implementation of increasingly sophisticated people practices through these maturity levels. With the exception of the initial level, each maturity level is characterised by a set of interrelated practices in critical areas. When institutionalised and performed with appropriate regularity, these practices create new capabilities within the organisation for leading and developing its people (adapted from Curtis, Hefley & Miller, 2009).

The emphasis in HR initially was on creating consistency of practice; then implementing a strategy towards achieving a higher degree of competence management, also applying 'competence at work' principles (Spencer & Spencer, 1993), which was followed by reinforcement through measurement and empowerment, noting that the Performance Development System (PDS) was implemented for senior leadership in 2004 to embed competence management. This emphasised the need for continuous improvement practices; the progression represents a 15-year growth pattern in a system where the focus moved from focusing mainly on individual achievements to creating a climate of collaboration and team spirit towards reaching higher-level goals. This entailed directing effort towards the achievement of the University's overarching strategic goals in its IOP: 2010-2014, which also embraced individual achievements.

The initial IOP: 2000-2004 prioritised goals for HR towards producing the following key deliverables: HR Policy for Remuneration and Benefits, People Planning, Recruitment and Selection, and Employment Equity. The evolving UWC HR strategic goals required increasingly more advanced people-oriented practices such as a Talent Programme, detailed Employment Equity Plans, Improved Employee Relations practices, Wellness Strategies, Staff and Cultural Surveys and Enhancement of Policies and Processes. This led to further organisational developments within UWC with a focus on effectiveness and efficiency, and with greater emphasis on excellence, higher impact and transformational goals for faculties, administrative and support divisions, teams and individuals; this shifted the UWC system towards a culture of continuous improvement (UWC Cultural Survey, 2011).

The HR challenge to assist in maintaining sustainable change was to help influence behaviours by facilitating incremental and lasting changes aligned with the Institutional Goals and Strategies to bring about the needed transformation. This included deliberate facilitation of change, leadership development, assisting with conflict resolution and the continuation of team building and performance development efforts -

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Gladwell (2000) posits that “behaviour is a function of social context”. He notes that the power of context is that it entails getting the little things right, which then in turn leads to recovery from previous neglect and problems such as social injustices. Examples of this was that when Prof O’Connell took office he started with: i) a focus on creating a clean and tidy campus – litter was no longer permitted to be part of the workplace; ii) punctuality (for example, meetings starting on time) and respect for timelines were set as a norm; iii) always engaging – when people are listened to attentively, they respond positively; iv) ensuring emerging problems are addressed – when problems are resolved, people see and experience increasingly higher standards of efficiency and effectiveness at the University; all these actions paved the way for dealing with the bigger changes. The existing working environment served as the baseline for initiating change; the changes the system wanted to experience were motivated and understood within the broader O’Connell Vision; this facilitated shifts to a new way of thinking whereby the purpose of being together was to advance as a collective. The concept of transformation in this context depicts the need for far-reaching changes which focus on strategy, culture and leadership, with supportive and properly aligned management practices to influence processes, policies, attitudes and behaviours. Consequently, small actions aligned with the institutional strategies resulted in positive differences being made and assisted in bringing about major shifts (Gladwell, 2000).

Strategic Human Resourcing

As indicated in the earlier chapters, on taking office in November 2001 Prof O’Connell encountered a financially bankrupt institution with disillusioned staff and a depleted student population. The University’s academic staff union was no longer in existence and the staff union NEHAWU, which mainly represented the administrative and professional support staff, had a strong presence. Even though Prof O’Connell initially encountered a tense relationship, his immediate response was to firmly define the rules and boundaries for engagement. After that he remained transparent about the huge challenges facing the University and emphasised the need for the stakeholders to act as a collective if UWC was to survive, and went on to lead with charisma, care and firmness. Future engagements with the union, stakeholders and other staff were constructive in nature with the collective rebuilding of UWC set as a priority.

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The starting point in HR was to communicate widely the creation of a people-oriented strategy within the overall HR strategy that was aligned to the IOP. This introduced the principle that the people-oriented strategy was owned by the UWC community and that the HR Department played a driving and facilitating role in enabling people-driven success.

To follow was a review and establishment of appropriate HR policies and practices to realise Brian O'Connell's vision through the accompanying standard operating processes (SOPs). This allowed the institution to achieve an increased consistency in HR practices. What made this challenging was the need for flexibility, considering that the workplace existed to realise the academic project, which was in turn dependent on knowledge workers who are mainly independent thinkers functioning within the conceptual frameworks of 'freedom of speech' and 'academic freedom'. Consequently, effecting changes in an academic institution has its own complexities. In response, Prof O'Connell reminded his Executive Management colleagues that it is in the nature of an academic to challenge changes. Therefore, any proposed changes in policies and practices needed to be carefully thought out and motivated so that they could stand up to interrogation and acceptance after further engagement. This resulted in the principle being accepted at Executive Management level that proposed changes had to be clearly enunciated and motivated, before consulting with stakeholders. This required patience when attempting to implement changes at the University so as to ensure stakeholder contributions and buy-in.

The first strategic HR challenge was reasonably clear and already identified in the IOP: 2000-2004 as well as in the demands articulated by staff – the rewards and benefits practices were an overwhelming source of discontent and needed to be addressed. This critical need had to be considered in the context of many other HR issues that required attention. HR therefore had to adopt a more strategic orientation and an analysis of the then HR landscape represented by the needs and key deliverables as shown in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 Human Resources: strategic approach towards partnering with leaders

Operationally reactive	Operationally proactive	Strategically reactive	Strategically proactive	Contextual awareness
1. Benefits 2. Administration 3. Record keeping 4. Employee services	1. Service orientation (towards achieving efficiency) 2. Performance Management 3. Recruitment and Selection 4. Industrial Relations	1. Remuneration and benefits 2. Staff development 3. Organisational leadership partnering	1. Strategic planning of HR to support the vision and mission of the University 2. Talent stewardship processes 3. Change management projects 4. Employee relations (shifting to relationships to create cohesion for common goals and effectiveness) 5. Organisational excellence (OE) interventions	1. Digitisation 2. Innovation 3. Ethics 4. Social value add 5. Service centeredness 6. Work values 7. Leadership Profile 8. Student Centeredness

Before the first set of strategies above were implemented in 2006 and the other components being continuously phased in until 2014, HR's role in 2004/2005 was merely operationally reactive. As a step forward, one of the first strategic implementations was to re-examine staff remuneration and benefits.

HR Staff Rewards and Benefits linked to the Staffing Budget

A Remuneration and Benefits Policy and Rewards Philosophy: Staffing Budget

Building trust in a system starts with the basic premise of addressing what people are unhappiest about. At UWC, firstly, there was unhappiness with the fact that staff salaries were not perceived as equitable – both internal and external equity needed attention. To restore confidence in

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the University Executive Management, following the example set by Prof O'Connell, open communication was necessary in engaging with staff on the nature of future plans related to rewards and benefits.

The first project was thus to establish an acceptable foundational rewards philosophy and strategy in consultation with stakeholders with the intention of restoring trust and belief in the system as fair and equitable. Secondly, HR established that some faculties were overspending on their staffing cost, whilst other faculties and divisions were underspending. Furthermore, since staff cost containment was a major issue, firm standard operating procedures (SOPs) needed to be established to create order and prevent unbudgeted new posts being added to the staffing budget, as well as to manage vacancies effectively. HR together with other members of the Executive Management Team, led by the DVC Academic, adopted a holistic approach in addressing the challenges. This required a concomitant review of budget approval processes, including the establishment of a system for review of staffing requests well in advance of the Executive Management meeting for the approval of the budget for the following academic year.

A zero-based budgeting approach was adopted, whereby a vacancy arising from retirement or resignation was not automatically advertised and filled. The continuation of the post had to be motivated in terms of the school/department staff/student lecturer equivalent (LE) ratio. The level at which the post was approved was determined by the profile of emerging and established academics in the particular department or school so as to ensure succession planning. Moreover, the creation of new posts considered to be of strategic importance to the academic project within the framework of the IOP was part of the agenda for discussion and decision making. Simultaneously, the composition and terms of reference of appointment committees were reviewed. Some committees were made obsolete; whilst new committees and processes emerged, within a framework that focused on streamlining operations to promote efficiency and effectiveness without compromising accountability. A good example was the disestablishment of the central Subcommittee of the Joint Appointment Committee of Senate and Council (overseeing the appointment of lecturers and senior lecturers, as well as administrative and support posts in faculties), which was replaced by a faculty-based appointments committee system. This was a deliberate move towards ensuring that ownership, budget management and accountability were taken at faculty level, and also promoted efficiency by expediting the filling of vacancies.

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At the higher academic levels, a professorial appointments committee was created as a faculty-based committee but chaired by the DVC Academic with selected deans from other faculties also being part of the committees. This approach allowed for consistency across the University in assessing the scholarly profiles of candidates for professorial appointments and promotions. In parallel, there was a revision of the processes and criteria for academic appointments and promotions, including honorary appointments, mandated by Prof O'Connell to a committee chaired by the DVC Academic a short while after he took office in 2008, towards achieving the higher scholarly levels necessary at UWC as part of the next phase of the O'Connell Vision.

Implementation of the rewards strategy proved to be a challenge; it was finalised with sound processes for managing change in 2003, but was only approved by the University Council in 2006. The "Rewards Foundation Document" proved to be the vehicle that tested the University leadership and the shifting of the status quo to new ways of thinking about HR. Achieving equity was a huge undertaking and without it no trust could be established. Following a series of intense change management engagements with most staff – and not without initial challenges and resistance – gradually an understanding and acceptance of where the University was heading emerged and success was eventually achieved.

Once the rewards strategy, based on a rewards philosophy, was approved by the University Council in 2006 as the baseline guiding framework, implementation without additional costs was the next challenging task. The purpose of the reward strategy was to:

- o Provide a consistent framework and establish principles for remuneration in the organisation;
- o Introduce a total reward model reflecting the full value a staff member's achievements at UWC;
- o Be fair, credible and equitable, and not prone to distortion or manipulation that could advantage some individuals or groups and disadvantage others;
- o Manage rewards towards maintaining internal and external equity;
- o Position UWC as a caring facilitator of benefits, not as a provider;
- o Recognise and encourage continuous growth in staff capacity to contribute to success;
- o Develop a unique approach to rewards which is styled to complement and reinforce the culture of accountability, quality and growth;

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- o Achieve a measurable and defensible approach to reward management; and
- o Create a simple, understandable approach to reward management and administration.

Remuneration Criteria

Four standard criteria were adopted in implementing the rewards strategy – internal equity, external equity, personally satisfying and financially effective (Spargo, 2003). This was to be accompanied by a well-defined process for the University's staffing budget to contain staffing costs in all sectors of the University. This motivated the creation of a specialist position in HR for a Rewards and Benefits Manager. Fortunately for UWC, this was a smooth step forward as HR had individuals with the required competence and accounting skills, as well as a deep understanding of the UWC workplace and its history. Consequently, the budgeting process was aligned with the needs of the University relative to the “fit for purpose” and “purpose to fit” requirements in the IOPs. The process was implemented in collaboration with UWC's Finance Department, which played a consistently engaged and supportive role in the management of the payroll. The overall result was the introduction of a simple but very effective process to establish order in staff spending practices.

The importance of this system was not only its effectiveness in managing staffing cost, an area on which 60% of the University's annual income was spent; but it also instilled the discipline of being cost-conscious and adopting a zero-based practice which continuously reviewed departmental/sectorial effectiveness and efficiency by reassessing role design and structure before decisions are taken to motivate for the filling of vacancies or appointing additional staff. This was followed by an annual staff budgeting process which was tightly managed by the Executive Management and deans aligned to a people-oriented planning process in accordance with the strategic goals of the IOP, giving due consideration to contextual factors. For example, additional funds required to meet the salary increases of staff recommended at the end of a particular year for promotion to a higher position at the start of the following academic year had to be incorporated in advance within the budget planning process for the next year – this was another detailed action adding to the small changes to lead up to the tipping point towards bigger achievements.

Aligning and advancing HR policies and practices

Further stability was created by developing and implementing effective relevant policies and processes; this brought consistency because workflow was no longer dependent on individuals but rested on a foundation of process flow charts that supported adherence to policies. Consequently, concurrent with the changes to create a new rewards strategy, HR commenced a process to review existing policies and establish enhanced HR policies, practices and processes in response to the new culture starting to take shape at UWC. The enthusiastic and eager HR teams and individuals, inspired by the new directions being forged by Prof O'Connell and his Executive Management Team, took ownership of selected policies and accepted accountability for sponsoring and driving policies, practices and processes to a renewed level of application and in so doing created a more orderly function for dealing with people.

In order to embed this as an ongoing process, a decision was made to motivate for the appointment of a dedicated policy specialist within HR. The premise was that each HR policy, practice and process will have a specialist HR owner, but the management, assessments and monitoring of the policy application would be the responsibility of the policy specialist. This role had to ensure ongoing reviews and alignment of policies and practices in the HR system in consultation with the Executive Management, which in turn necessitated regular analysis and diagnosis so as to enable and implement continuous improvements. Consequently, policy meetings became a norm for the HR team. With the basic rewards system and key policies in place, supported by congruent SOPs, the workplace became ready for deeper focus on contextual HR work.

Relationship Building, Leadership Development and Service Centeredness

With a clear indication that HR was starting to rebuild trust in the UWC workplace, more interventions were needed to profile HR as a significant contributor to and competent service provider for realising Prof O'Connell's vision. Firstly, cognisance had to be taken of the fact that the University workplace represented a diverse range of employees. For example, HR had to work across four, later five generations, with different work values in a time of high demand for consistency, fairness and equity. The diversity challenge was amplified by the unique nature of the different disciplines, each of which represented 'pocket cultures'. The need to have

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a higher degree of collaboration in the workplace required sensitisation and awareness of how people experienced the workplace, as well as the need to unpack how an individual and a unit/division/department could be part of a cohesive UWC and a collective mindset, without sacrificing one's desired identity.

A deliberate effort was made to embrace diversity – for example, creating more insight into the value systems of the different generations at UWC by researching this topic to support HR's Talent Programme (Twenge, Stacy, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010; Francis & Hoefler, 2017). In addition, the different disciplines with their unique profiles needed to be considered to include diversity optimally. This is illustrated with the incident when a professor from Sociology and Anthropology reminded HR that it was 'natural' for scholars in the humanities to contest change, before we could expect them to accept new interventions, such as the creation of a new position of a faculty manager that was designed to strengthen faculty management and operations. These are some examples of the sense-making factors at the University that Prof O'Connell constantly reminded us of, and which needed to be understood and appreciated for success in moving forward.

The staff development programme introduced to upskill staff with new competencies, as part of the mandate stipulated in the IOP, played a significant role in generating a unifying energy. This was achieved by conducting appropriate learning needs analyses (LNAs), scheduling developmental workshops and establishing community of practice groups (COPs). The latter meetings were held across hierarchies and hence also integrated the academic and professional staff to think, learn and advance together. The leadership development initiatives and the follow through with COPs brought people together; there have been several success stories of individuals who went through this process at UWC and today hold senior leadership positions – several of whom made personal paradigm shifts to become leaders who add great value. This programme served as a catalyst for a united UWC workforce that took collective responsibility for advancing the institution.

An important component of the staff development programme was the talent stewardship programme. This programme was introduced as a strategic initiative to plan for future competency and capability requirements to meet the University's IOP strategic goals towards realizing UWC's long-term vision. For the academic sector, the focus was on young academic staff and senior postgraduate students serving

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as tutors and showing promise and a passion to reach higher levels in academia. There was a parallel programme in place for administrative and support divisions.

Cultural Survey, Organisational Development/Excellence and Engagements

A number of staff surveys were conducted during the process to prepare for implementing the IOP: 2004 to 2009. A strategic survey measuring the alignment and commitment of staff to the goals of the University delivered mainly positive results. This was followed by a cultural survey designed to assess the dominant personal values of employees, their desired workplace values and also how they experienced the current workplace values. The model created by Richard Barrett (2005) called the Seven Levels of Consciousness (Figure 6.2) was applied and proved to be easily accepted by most of our colleagues.

Change + Transformation

We **transform** in order to shift from one level of consciousness to the next. Transformation is vertical.

We **change** in order to master a specific level of consciousness. Change is horizontal.

Figure 6.2 The Seven Levels Of Consciousness model (Barrett, 2005).

Interventions that were implemented towards maintaining continuity in improvement of the HR Department towards the realisation of the goals of the successive IOPs included:

- o The adoption of a service-centred dimensional model (Seth et al, 2005, p. 919) which focused on optimal service provision by adhering to identified and co-created (by HR staff) service dimensions;
- o Cultural and other staff surveys. Using the Barret model, these were undertaken to assess staff alignment to the IOP and surface issues of concern.

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The two shifts this brought about were, firstly, an understanding that people experience the culture through the leader they report to, and secondly, the way we behave at work is evidence of the values we deem to be important for the workplace. The set of values selected by the staff in the surveys were then categorised into the different levels indicated in Figure 6.2. The positive values for the workplace which featured as the most voted for were: *accountability, commitment, honesty, integrity, continuous learning, continuous improvement, leadership development, teamwork and community involvement*. The four work values deemed to be prevalent at UWC at the time of the survey and also selected in the desired set of values were *continuous improvement, accountability, teamwork, and leadership development*. This indicated support for the University leadership and the direction the University was taking.

Within the development of the new IOP: 2010-2014 attention was now also devoted to strengthening the work culture and the work climate towards achieving the University's strategic goals. Figure 6.2 reflects how the University strove to function along the full spectrum at all seven levels of awareness and also how the transformational level featured strongly in the staff feedback, merging individual needs with collective achievements.

The potentially limiting work values represented entropy (potentially negative energy in the system); the three most selected features were *bureaucracy, control and hierarchy*. In spite of this identification, which was viewed by senior and middle managers as indicating opportunities for improvement, the survey indicated that ample positive energy was available to do work.

It is important to note that apart from the University-wide study, the outcomes of this survey were also specifically focused on each faculty and division. This provided the leadership at the different levels with insights into how their work culture is perceived. HR embarked on communication sessions to share the results with the stakeholders and to offer interventions to effect positive changes based on the information from the survey.

The HR policies, procedures, strategies and interventions developed and implemented during Prof Brian O'Connell's term of office were instrumental in mobilising UWC staff to embrace and commit to the O'Connell Vision as a collective, and placed UWC's HR function on a very solid and stable platform.

Conclusion

UWC valued people for achieving results but also worked at building social capital for which sound relationships are integral. This strong legacy left at the end of 2014 can be attributed to leadership of Prof Brian O'Connell. He was an interactive and engaging leader with collaborative work values, who understood diversity and was steadfast on inclusivity, always maintaining a strategic decisiveness on where the University was headed. He also embraced the art of working sensitively with the contextual intangibles. Consequently, he succeeded in inspiring the University community to share his vision and move forward together.

It needs to be mentioned that then DVC Academic, Prof Ramesh Bharuthram, who had a different but complementary profile to Prof O'Connell's, drove the academic project to new heights with a focus on excellence, impact and accountability, in so doing delivering on the tangible results which placed UWC in an elevated academic category as a research-led university. DVC for Student Development and Support, Prof Lullu Tshiwula, elevated the function of student development, support and quality of life at UWC to the levels articulated in Prof O'Connell's vision through innovative approaches and strategies. Together with fellow members of the Executive Management, Prof O'Connell lead a team that pursued a common set of goals and cohesively delivered a succession of positive results in an era of transformational challenges.

As an inspirational and inspired leader, Prof O'Connell displayed an exceptional work ethic. He possesses the ability to meaningfully engage staff at all levels of the organisation, a true example of how passion, drive and commitment can transform a workplace. He left an indelible legacy that inspired many to work tirelessly to continue to build this great institution.

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