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

The Renaissance of the
University of the Western Cape

2001 – 2014

Editors

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Phoenix: The UWC I left and the University I returned to

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In Ancient Greek folklore a Phoenix is a long-lived bird that cyclically regenerates or is otherwise born again. Associated with the sun, a Phoenix obtains new life by arising from the ashes of its predecessor (Van der Broek, 1972).

Introduction

I left UWC as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) in 2005 and returned after almost 10 years as the 7th Vice-Chancellor. This absence of 10 years did not imply distance. I watched UWC's development with keen interest over the years, given my formative years spent at this Institution – as student and then rising through the ranks as administrative assistant, lecturer, senior lecturer, professor, Dean and finally Deputy Vice-Chancellor. However, distance cannot adequately capture the dynamism of an institution 'on the march'. In my inaugural address as Vice-Chancellor I reflected on the institution I returned to:

Under Brian O'Connell's inspiring leadership, it has forged ahead to become one of the nation's acknowledged research-intensive universities and a formidable intellectual powerhouse. UWC's research impact in fields from genetics and biotechnology to nanoscience, from renewable energy to space science, places it in the leading position or among the leaders in South Africa (Pretorius, 2015a).

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At the same time, I expressed my awareness of the daunting challenges that I would personally face in succeeding Brian O'Connell and building on his remarkable legacy in a rapidly changing context.

This then is my view on the rise of the Phoenix, or the UWC story. Underpinning it is my own disciplinary background as a psychologist with a keen interest in the study of the origins of strengths associated not only with the overcoming of adversity, but flourishing and growing despite adversity. UWC has a proud intellectual tradition of overcoming adversity, which is metaphorically the subtext of this chapter, namely that "your origin does not define your destiny".

The pre-recapitalisation context

It was a near perfect storm that almost led to the demise of the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The first element of this perfect storm was the loss of significant intellectual leadership in the aftermath of the 1994 election of South Africa's first democratic government. In part, because of its role in the anti-apartheid struggle and its stance as a progressive institution, UWC was dubbed the "intellectual home for the left" (Gerwel, 1987), and as such attracted many activist scholars who wanted to be part of the UWC project. After the unbanning of the ANC, the PAC and the SACP in February 1990, many academics that were living in exile also joined UWC. After the first democratic elections in 1994, scores of these academics and scholars left the University, the most notable being the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Jakes Gerwel, who became the Director-General in the office of the new President, Nelson Mandela. Some became Ministers and Deputy Ministers in the new cabinet, some became Members of Parliament, many joined the new civil service as Director-Generals and in other key posts, while others joined the judiciary (including the Constitutional Court of South Africa).

The second element in this perfect storm was the dwindling student numbers. At its peak in 1994 the University's enrolment stood at 14 241 and subsequently numbers declined every year after that. By 2000 enrolments had reduced to 9,675. While the reasons for this decline have never been empirically investigated, there were suggestions in University circles that the advent of the new democracy also signalled the end of the 'formal' legal constraints that apartheid placed on institutions designated for one race group from enrolling students from another race group. In

exploring the reasons for the increased enrolments of African students at historically white Technikons, Cooper (2015) refers to “the agency of African student choices that had historically been blocked by apartheid legislation but, after 1990, could be freely acted upon”. One could argue that a similar mechanism was at work with respect to the decline in student numbers at UWC and the consequent increase in black student numbers (African, Indian and Coloured) at historically white institutions.

In the 1980s UWC firmly rejected the ideological grounds of its origins and started to admit students from all race groups. Thus, in the 1990s, while regarded by the state as a Coloured ‘own affairs’ university, it had a Coloured enrolment of only 55% (Bunting, 2006). Largely due to its demographic enrolment, but also its active participation in the resistance to apartheid, UWC was seen as having transcended its apartheid origins (Davies, 1996) and was described as “South Africa’s University of the future” (Gwala, 1988).

However, the “agency of black student choices” during the period 1994-2000 and its impact on overall student enrolments at UWC is starkly demonstrated in Figure 26.1 (Cooper, 2015; Department of Education, 2002a):

Figure 26.1 Black student enrolments 1994 versus 2000 at Afrikaans- and English-medium white universities, contrasted with UWC.

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Figure 26.1 reflects the percentage of black student enrolments (Indian, Coloured and African) in historically Afrikaans- and English-medium white universities and at UWC in 1994 and 2000. Not only did the volume of students increase in historically white institutions during this period (125 643 in 1994 to 215 120 in 2000), but the demographics of the student population changed significantly with increased black enrolments. At UWC, however, both the volume and proportion of black students declined. This implies that there was a slight increase of white and international students (with a sizeable complement of Chinese students) by 2000.

This decline in student numbers was in part responsible for the third element of the perfect storm, namely the precarious financial sustainability of the institution. A decline of more than 35% in student numbers in the first instance meant a significant decline in tuition fees and subsidies from the state. In addition, UWC suffered from years of significant underfunding in terms of state subsidy. While many within the institution believed that this underfunding represented state retribution for UWC's active role in the mass democratic movement, they were only partly correct. The then Director of Finance, André De Wet, pointed to a number of other factors that contributed both to the low income and the underfunding in terms of subsidy. These include the relatively low base of tuition fees, the spread and range of programmes offered at UWC that were limited under apartheid (typically low-cost and limited programme offerings, whilst professional programmes such as medicine and engineering were denied to UWC and other historically black universities) and the impact of a subsidy formula that was cost-driven (De Wet, 2020).

The cost-driven subsidy methodology used by the state was called the SAPSE formula and was implemented in 1984. Apart from taking into consideration input parameters such as student enrolment, it also focused on institutional output, namely course completion and research output. An important aspect of this formula that had severe implications for UWC was the so-called '*a-factor*', which represented the capacity of the state to fund the subsidy formula (Steyn & De Villiers, 2005). In the absence of a national enrolment plan there was a realisation that student enrolment had increased to such an extent annually that the fiscus was not able to cover the full subsidy of a university. Thus, for example, an institution with an '*a-factor*' of 0.70 would receive only about 70% of its subsidy. This paved the way for unequal '*a-values*' for institutions. Hay and Monnapula-Mapesela (2009) contend that a significant distortion of the

higher education system before 1994 was the lack of equity in distribution of resources to institutions. This is reflected in the average '*a-values*' of institutions over the period 1989 to 1994 as shown in Figure 26.2.

Figure 26.2 The '*a-factor*' of some of the white universities from 1989 to 1994 contrasted with that of UWC (Recalculation based on Steyn and De Villiers (2005)).

From 1994 the same '*a-factor*' was applied to all institutions, with a few exceptions, and it was generally below 0.66 with the lowest at 0.63 in 2000. Figure 26.2 illustrates that during the period 1989-1994 the 5 'big' historically white institutions received on average 71% of their subsidy, whereas UWC over the same period received on average 57% of its subsidy. The lowest '*a-factor*' for UWC was in the year 1989, when it only received 49% of its subsidy.

During this period the University could only survive with the help of an overdraft facility from the bank. The period from December to March, when the subsidy was received, salaries and operating costs were funded from this overdraft facility.¹ At its peak the overdraft facility stood at R140 m which is R393 m in today's terms. At the same time the University faced a deficit of R160 m and was technically insolvent since its liabilities exceeded its assets by at least a factor of three. This dire financial situation led to one of the saddest episodes in the history of the University. In 1998 the University took the unprecedented decision to retrench 41 academic staff and 300 professional staff. In addition, as part of restructuring,

¹ Note that whilst the University's financial year runs from January to December, Government's financial year runs from April of one year to March of the next year.

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significant departments such as Philosophy and Music were closed down, while the Faculty of Theology was downscaled to a department within the Faculty of Arts.

The future looked bleak for UWC at this historical juncture. Apart from the financial realities, the dwindling student numbers and demoralised staff severely traumatised by the retrenchments, and less than ideal working conditions, it also faced a growing lack of public confidence in the institution. For many public commentators (and often society at large) it was a case of the chickens coming home to roost for UWC. For many of them the 'protest university' and the 'university of anarchy' was the antithesis of the notion of detached scholarship and the quiet pursuit of knowledge in leafy and comfortable surroundings. A report by the Helen Suzman Foundation (HSF) entitled *Report from UWC: "Radical rhetoric gives way to bitter reality"* (Helen Suzman Foundation, 1999), reflects much of this negative perception of UWC. For example, it states: "With [...] the adoption of a conventional university ethos, the ever-present gap between rhetoric and reality has become acutely evident".

The implication is obvious, namely that UWC's difficulties arose out of not adopting a 'conventional university ethos'. The University was also in the public domain and so the press, especially the Afrikaans media, had a field day talking about the woes of UWC, with complete disregard for the facts. A reference to *Die Burger* in the HSF report aptly illustrates this: "In 1988 *Die Burger* with its **usual relish for UWC horror stories** [my emphasis] reported that student debt in that year had rocketed to R17 million" – a false statement for which they were duly rebuked by the Media Council.

Not being a university with a 'conventional ethos' was also linked in the public domain to poor or low academic standards. There is ample demonstration of this in the HSF report. For example: "The overriding imperatives of the struggle led to much rationalisation of the pervasive incivility and incompetence of both students and staff. To be progressive was all".

It was indeed a vicious circle, because there is no doubt that the 'fake news' negative publicity and the resultant reputational damage contributed significantly to the decline in student numbers, which further exacerbated the financial difficulties of UWC. It is in this context that the 2002 report from the National Working Group (NWG), set up to advise the Minister of Education on the restructuring of the higher education landscape, came

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as no surprise. However, it plunged the University into new depths of despair and uncertainty, since the NWG recommended to the Minister that the University of the Western Cape and Peninsula Technikon should merge to form one unitary comprehensive institution (Department of Education, 2002b).

Despite the conditions prevailing at UWC, there were still dedicated, resilient and committed academic and professional staff, who believed in the UWC project and kept the wheels turning. This remained my inspiration as a student and scholar of 'fortology' or the overcoming of adversity through an emphasis on human wellness and strength, namely that the institution could rely on the passion, commitment and sense of purpose to overcome its difficulties. In his inaugural address Prof O'Connell explicitly pays tribute to this commitment and dedication of UWC staff when he stated that "UWC is a family of a special kind", acknowledging that the necessary building blocks for a future UWC were its people (O'Connell, 2002).

The Birth of the Phoenix

Prof Brian Percival O'Connell was appointed as UWC Rector and Vice-Chancellor in the midst of this crisis in 2001. He faced the unenviable task of i) dealing with the political lobbying needed to secure the existence of UWC in the light of the NWG recommendation, and ii) leading UWC to take its rightful place as a reputable national and international university in the areas of research, teaching and learning, and community engagement. With respect to the first challenge, that of ensuring UWC's continued existence as an independent institution, he was very successful, since the Ministry did not accept the recommendation of the NWG that UWC should merge with the Technikon and cease to exist as UWC. With regard to his second leadership challenge of leading UWC to academic greatness, only time would tell how successful he would be.

In June 2002 the Ministry of Education released its final recommendations with regard to the report of the NWG. With respect to UWC, it contained two key recommendations, namely that the two dental faculties of UWC and Stellenbosch should be merged² and that the undergraduate degree in Nursing should be offered only by UWC (Ministry of Education, 2002). Recognising the unique opportunity to make some early gains in building

² The exact wording in the report refers to 'incorporation'. We approached it as a merger (not without difficulty) to ensure that a unified Dentistry faculty emerged.

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new academic areas of strength, Brian O'Connell instructed me as his DVC Academic to prioritise and project-manage the implementation of these two recommendations. This was difficult in the extreme, as Stellenbosch appointed a friend and former colleague, the late Prof Russel Botman, as their chief negotiator, while creating the new Nursing Platform³ involved not only the four universities in the Western Cape but also the Provincial Department of Health. Today these two programmes stand as testimony to the visionary leadership of Brian O'Connell.

In this regard, Prof O'Connell realised that delivering on a vision is not an instant overnight task, but an incremental process and requires visible evidence that things are changing and it's not business as usual. Another such opportunity presented itself in early 2000s, when a professor in Chemistry, Prof Vladimir Linkov, who was the SASOL Research Chair for Applied Chemistry, solicited my support to establish a research institute separate from the Chemistry Department that would focus on advanced materials utilising South Africa's natural resources. When I presented it to the Executive, Prof O'Connell enthusiastically embraced it largely on the envisaged significant relations with industry – an area that he knew was going to be vital in building UWC. Today the South African Institute for Advanced Materials Chemistry (SAIAMC) specialises in novel energy generation technologies as well as the production, separation, extraction and storage of hydrogen gas and enjoys significant relationships with industry.

UWC was recapitalised by the Ministry in 2005 on the basis of a 5-year Institutional Operating Plan (IOP: 2005-2009). This plan was comprehensive in its approach and framed a number of key strategies in all of the important areas of the University, namely teaching and learning, research, human resources and employment equity, student development and support, infrastructure projects as well as finances. The IOP would be the bedrock of the future transformation of UWC and clearly articulates the desired future scenario that could be realised through the implementation of this IOP. In the introductory chapter it outlines three possible future scenarios (University of the Western Cape, 2004):

³ So called on the basis of the concept that students would be enrolled at UWC, but expertise from Stellenbosch and UCT would be brought in.

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1. **The Historically Disadvantaged University** “that traps UWC anachronistically in its past”;
2. The **Global Market-Driven University** that is “unconstrained by past inequities, with an inaccessible fee structure and alienated from surrounding communities”; and
3. The **Engaged University** that “envision[s] a favourable future that transcends past glories [and where] the university’s associational engagement puts the individual student-in-community at the centre of its concerns for local and global issues, particularly issues pertaining to the African continent”.

The IOP is quite explicit that the engaged university scenario “is most probable, plausible and is favoured” – a strong signal about the underlying foundations and aspirations of the IOP.

Having at least secured a new financial base for the University, Prof O’Connell set out to shape his institutional leadership team that would support him in giving content to this IOP. While most positions were already in place – such as Prof Lullu Tshiwula (DVC: Student Development and Support), Amanda Glaeser (Executive Director: Human Resources) and Manie Regal (Executive Director: Finance and Infrastructure) – the critical position of DVC: Academic, who was supposed to lead the charge with regard to revitalising the academic project, was not yet on board. With the existing leadership the prime goal was to develop a shared commitment to an idealised UWC future as spelt out in the IOP. The final piece of the leadership puzzle was the appointment of Prof Ramesh Bharuthram in 2007. The filling of this position took almost three years because as Prof O’Connell explained:

It took some time, yes, because I was scouting for someone specific. Someone that would not only look at UWC now, but would buy into the vision of what could be, someone who would recognise the potential of UWC. I definitely wanted someone with a significant standing in the Science community. This was important to me as the Sciences at UWC at the time was somewhat underdeveloped. Several sources pointed me in his direction and I arranged to meet him at the airport hotel in Johannesburg. My initial reaction was that here was someone that could buy into the vision, that has the drive and focus to help the team accomplish our goals. I encouraged him to apply and during the interview process my initial impressions of his standing and accomplishments was confirmed. While listening to him in the interview I could, in my mind’s eye, see him leading the academic project to the promised land (O’Connell, 2020).

The rise of the Phoenix: Summary of achievements within the Academic Project at UWC during the O'Connell era

This section is in no way trying to suggest that UWC has arrived or has achieved what it set out to achieve. It is merely trying to describe the ongoing evolution and development of UWC, an evolution that often leads officials from the Department of Higher Education (and successive Ministers of Higher Education) to proclaim that UWC can no longer be considered a historically disadvantaged institution (HDI), based on its academic performance and not on the historical factors that defined HDIs.

In 2015 the most visible evidence that UWC was 'on the march' was what I call the changing 'skyline' of UWC. There was the new Life Sciences building (anecdotally described as the largest Life Sciences building on the African continent) visible from Robert Sobukwe road, the new Chemical Sciences building and the new School of Public Health building, to name a few. Some of the campus development initiatives could be traced directly to the IOP. In the Bellville CBD, work was at an advanced stage to repurpose the old Jan S Marais Hospital into a state-of-the-art facility for Health Sciences at UWC – a development that can be directly linked to the 'engaged university' future scenario spelt out in the IOP. Health Sciences would eventually occupy this new facility in 2018.

With a sequence of 5-year Institutional Strategic Plans, each carefully crafted and implemented to take the institution to the next identified level, UWC started to flourish as its academic enterprise scaled successive new heights under the inspiring and visionary leadership of Prof Brian O'Connell. In a positive environment full of energy, enthusiasm and self-belief, with expanding academic offerings, visible enhancements to the infrastructure and growing student numbers, the University was braced to face the future with confidence and optimism. With the IOP: 2010-2014 designed to escalate UWC into a research-led university and to embed scholarship across the academic project, the fruits did, indeed, begin to bear.

Teaching and Learning

The following are the highlights emanating from the comprehensive Strategic Plan for Teaching and Learning implemented as part of the IOP: 2010-2014, during Brian O'Connell's term as Rector and Vice-Chancellor at UWC.

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- o UWC was one of the first higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa, following a recommendation from the HEQC audit, to develop a charter of graduate attributes at institutional, faculty and departmental level, and to develop an institutional process for embedding the attributes in curricula and assessment tasks. Because of this, the UWC Director of Teaching and Learning, Prof Vivienne Bozalek, was invited to a number of regional and national HEIs in South Africa to co-facilitate workshops on embedding graduate attributes in those institutions.
- o The institutional approach that UWC adopted for its focus on teaching and learning, and which has been discussed at length in Chapter 7 by Prof Bozalek and Prof Marshall on the Strategic Plan for Teaching and Learning, was a conscious decision which involved a number of strategies, which included the establishment of a Directorate for Teaching and Learning.
- o The University put a comprehensive infrastructure into place for ensuring that the Strategic Plan was implemented at institutional, faculty and departmental levels through the establishment of a Senate Teaching and Learning Committee and Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees, and with the appointment of Deputy Deans of Teaching and Learning and Faculty Teaching and Learning specialists. These committees reported on a quarterly basis on the enablement and constraints in achieving the identified goals of the Strategic Plan for Teaching and Learning.
- o As part of the University-wide engagement, the approach was to, firstly, engage with heads of academic departments (HoDs) in teaching and learning residential retreats to assist them to review their own teaching and embed graduate attributes. This was recognised as a novel approach in the South African higher education system towards getting academics on board with teaching and learning, and the embedding of graduate attributes. Generally, the focus in many HEIs is on working with individual academics to get them to change their practices. Secondly, the retreat for HoDs was followed up by one for Faculty teaching and learning specialists, who worked together with HoDs and all academics in the different departments to align the curriculum as a whole with graduate attributes. This approach was commended by the Council on Higher Education and consequently the UWC Director of Teaching and Learning was asked to give a presentation on what was learnt from this process to all the HEIs at a national meeting.
- o To promote the scholarship of Teaching and Learning both on a national and an international level, UWC also started an open-source, online journal entitled *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning (CRiStAL)*, which is now accredited both by Scopus and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

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- o Together with other HEIs in the Western Cape, UWC initiated regional short courses on teaching and learning in higher education through the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC). A set of short courses was collaboratively designed and taught by teaching and learning specialists across the four HEIs in the Western Cape, and these were attended by academics from across the four HEIs. UWC, CPUT and Stellenbosch University also developed a joint Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (PG Dip T&L HE), which has been running since 2014 and is taught collaboratively across the three institutions, although students register for the programme at one of the HEIs. These are the only co-taught short courses and PG Dip T&L HE that exist in the South African higher education system.
- o As part of their induction to UWC, new academic staff members are also required to attend a three day off-campus induction workshop on teaching and learning in their first year, and in the second year of their probation period they attend a six-month course *Towards Professionalisation of Teaching and Learning*, which enables them to develop a teaching and learning ePortfolio which they can then build upon during their academic careers. These requirements are written into their employment contracts.
- o With regard to the scholarship of teaching and learning, outputs in the form of doctoral degrees in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, journal publications, books and book chapters increased substantially during the period 2010-2019. Moreover, workshops are held on how to develop funding proposals for research into teaching and learning, as well as writing for publication, and sharing best practices both institutionally and regionally.

Research and innovation

In 2012 the DST/NRF issued a call for 60 new SARChI Research Chairs. The Executive Management's approach was to ask each of the Faculties to focus on their established and emerging research niche areas as identified in their Faculty Operating Plans, which were developed in response to, and to be in synergy with, the University's IOP: 2010-2014. Through an internal review process drawing on external expertise that used excellence and impact as ranking criteria, the number of UWC submissions in the eight areas stipulated by the NRF/DST was reduced from 26 to 22 (within our target maximum of 3 proposals per stipulated area). Feedback was provided by the review panel on strengthening the proposals prior to submission. When the outcomes were announced by the DST/NRF, the higher education sector and government departments and agencies were taken by surprise. UWC was awarded the largest number of SARChI Research Chairs, a total of seven. Was UWC surprised?

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No. Each of the University’s submissions was accompanied by the highly crafted Institutional Operating Plan: IOP: 2010-2014, together with a contextualisation of the submission within the IOP and the Faculty Strategic Plan. UWC left no doubt about the thoroughness of its process in selecting and developing its proposals. Some of the benefits from the strategies, investments and interventions, underpinned by the IOP: 2010-2014, and a reimagined UWC’s Academic Project were as follows:

- o A research capacity development initiative to increase the number of staff with doctoral qualifications introduced in 2009, resulting in 46 staff members completing their doctorates by the end of 2012;
- o From 1 DST/NRF SARCHI Research Chair in 2008 to 12 SARCHI Research Chairs plus 1 UCT/UWC/SKA Research Chair in Astronomy in 2015;
- o From 56 NRF-rated researchers in 2008 to 103 in 2014; and
- o A 5-fold increase in institutional research outputs from 2002 to 2014 as measured by the Department of Higher Education and Training (see Fig. 26.3 below);

Figure 26.3 UWC DHET Accredited Research Output Units 2002-2014. In terms of the weighting, a doctoral graduate is accredited 3 units while a master’s by research graduate receives 1 unit.

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- o During this period UWC's leading research units and centres grew in stature and, in so doing, gained national and international prominence. For example, the Centre for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies was elevated to an Institute and the Community Law Centre was elevated to the Dullah Omar Institute for Constitutional Law, Governance and Human Rights;
- o In 2015 UWC was the first HDI awarded the hosting of a National Centre of Excellence (COE), in Food Security together with the University of Pretoria;
- o In 2015 UWC was the first institution to be awarded a DST/NRF flagship grant, the Flagship on Critical Thought in African Humanities;
- o One of UWC's greatest research achievements under the inspirational and innovative leadership of Prof Brian O'Connell was when UWC become the first historically disadvantaged institution to join the Tier 1 rank of research-led universities in South Africa in 2011 – a remarkable achievement for an institution with a low-income base.

Community engagement

Community engagement is strongly represented in UWC's vision and mission and in its academic and staffing policies. Being connected to community has always been one of the core pillars of the intellectual project at UWC. The IOP: 2005-2009 recognised that this would continue to be part of the identity of the University when it favoured the 'engaged university' future scenario, and this remains an embedded feature. Some areas of achievement include:

- o Placing the CE Unit within the portfolio of the DVC Academic and the appointment of a full-time Director of CE in 2010 embedded the importance and relevance of community engagement to the institution's academic project. The emphasis on scholarship and graduate attributes in CE programmes straddles the entire academic project as well as in the sphere of quality of student life. Therefore, community engagement is now institutionalised within the University's academic, cultural and historical spheres; and
- o The development of a comprehensive CE database and accompanying reports facilitate an interdisciplinary approach to community engagement, allowing for a holistic institutional approach through partnerships within the institution as well as outside. As an example, the Community Workers Substance Abuse training programme has produced two substance abuse research reports, and two case study manuals developed through a co-creation process with participants from the community in the training programme. As a result, UWC's CE Unit has developed a niche area in the field of substance misuse, which is recognised across the province.

Summative Assessment

Finally, a summative assessment of university performance (against Ministerial performance indicators) for the period that I was away (2004-2015) indicates amongst other things:

- o Headcount enrolments increased in this 10-year period by almost 6 000, in other words on average by 600 per year. This represents an overall increase of 43%; and
- o Despite the increase in student numbers in absolute terms (14 225 to 20 382), the retention rate of students increased by almost 7% from 81.2% to 88%. In addition, the student success rate increased from 76% to 84%.

With respect to postgraduate enrolment and graduation, there appear to be minimal shifts from 2004 to 2015, if one considers only proportions/percentages. However, the percentages mask the real gains in absolute terms, given the 43% increase in overall student numbers. Thus, in absolute terms:

- o From 2004 to 2015 postgraduate enrolments increased in absolute terms from 2 973 (20.9% of 14 225) to 4 076 (20% of 20 382) – a real increase of 37%;
- o Masters and doctoral enrolments similarly increased in real terms from 1,735 (12.2% of 14,225) to 2,559 (12.5% of 20,382) – an increase of 47% in real terms;
- o Graduation rates for doctoral students showed an increase both in percentage terms (from 8% to 12%) as well as absolute terms (from 23 to 96), representing an increase of 317% in real terms;
- o Weighted research output (publications, doctoral and research master's output increased by 195% from 355 in 2004 to 1 050 in 2015;
- o Publication units to permanent academic staff doubled from 0.32 per academic staff member to 0.67 per academic staff member;
- o The percentage of academic staff with doctorates increased from 39% to 56%. This reflects the emphasis on staff development during this period, but also laid a foundation for even better research performance as more than half of the academic staff have completed their doctorates.

External assessment of UWC

This section reflects, firstly, on some external evaluations of UWC by higher education researchers and, secondly describes UWC's relative international standing as highlighted by various ranking systems.

The SciStip Report

In 2015, as part of refining the research strategy of UWC, Johan Mouton of SciStip was commissioned to do a bibliometric analysis of the state of research at UWC. In the summary assessment he states:

UWC's comparative research performance within the South African higher education systems can be described as nothing but impressive. As a former historically disadvantaged institution its more recent performance has been excellent (Mouton, 2015: p. 24).

The report then compares UWC's performance over the period 1990 to 2013 with ten other 'traditional research universities' and comments on the achievements as follows: "These are no mean feats and clearly indicate that UWC has come of age as a research-based University".

High-level findings of this report for the period 2005-2013 include:

- o The growth in overall research output from 2005-2013 (59%) was the third highest of the top 11 universities included in the report;
- o UWC recorded the third highest overall growth in research article production (54%);
- o The growth in books and book chapters was only 48%, which was the third lowest of the 11 universities;
- o However, there was a '*spectacular*' increase in conference proceedings of 90% over nine years;
- o In terms of per capita output, UWC is placed in the 10th position; and
- o In terms of weighted knowledge production,⁴ UWC is placed in 7th position.

The Mouton report to a large extent confirms the growth trajectory of UWC over the last 9-10 years as found in the internal assessments as reflected in the annual performance reports. In addition, it provides a comparative perspective in relation to 10 other traditional universities.

The CHET Report

In June 2015 the Centre for Higher Education and Transformation (CHET) produced a discussion report for UWC titled "An overview of the University of the Western Cape: Mandates and Performance" (Cloete & Bunting, 2015). This report is based on the notion that:

⁴ Weighted research output: combining all research outputs that qualify for DHET subsidy and normalising this by the size of the permanent academic staff.

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1. Government sets different mandates for traditional universities, universities of technology and comprehensive universities;
2. These mandates can be expressed as a set of goals which can be linked to quantitative targets; and
3. The performance of institutions may then be assessed in terms of the extent to which they comply with the goals and targets of the category of institutions to which they belong.

They further describe the academic core of traditional universities as consisting of inputs (the qualifications and fields of study the university offers, enrolments and academic staffing) and outputs (graduates and research products) and derive a number of targets for a range of input and output goals. These targets are reflected in the radar graph (Figure 26.4).

In this radar graph:

1. The outer rim (4.0) represents the target;
2. The dotted line represents the average performance of the traditional universities; and
3. The solid line represents UWC's average performance for 2011-2013.

Figure 26.4 Radar graph for average performance of traditional universities 2011-2013.

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It is seen from Figure 26.4 that the input and output mandated targets in which UWC met the targets were (numbering as in graph):

1. Academic structure: percentage of programmes in general academic and professional fields;
4. Doctoral enrolments as a percentage of total enrolments;
5. Percentage of professors, associate professors and senior lecturers;
6. Percentage of academic staff with doctorates;
9. Average pass rate in SET undergraduate courses
12. Ratio of SET graduates to SET enrolments; and
16. Ratio of doctoral graduates to permanent academic staff.

The targets in which UWC received scores of 3 and above were:

2. Percentage of total head count enrolments in SET;
3. Master's and doctoral enrolments as a percentage of total enrolments;
7. SET ratio of FTE students to FTE academics;
8. Humanities and Social Science ratio of FTE students to FTE academics;
10. Average pass rate in other undergraduate courses;
11. Total graduates as a percentage of total enrolments;
13. Master's graduates as a percentage of master's enrolment; and
14. Doctoral graduates as a percentage of doctoral enrolment.

UWC had one score below 3, namely ratio of research publications to permanent academic staff. The radar graph further shows that over the 3-year period UWC had performed above the average for the 11 traditional universities in a number of areas.

While the CHET methodology is unique in terms of deriving mandated targets for different university types, many of its targets correspond to those contained in the annual performance plan templates of the DHET. When read together with the 2015 Annual Performance Report of UWC and the SciStip report, it confirms that in 2013 already there was evidence for the assertion that UWC was 'on the move'.

UWC and ranking systems

At the outset it must be stated that UWC is not driven by rankings. Our scholarly practices are not focused on improving our rankings. We believe that if we do the 'right things' in terms of teaching and research, rankings would inevitably reflect that. We are aware of the controversy

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around participating in global rankings and the arguments in support of it (Marwala, 2018) as well as the objections to it (Essop, 2018; Pretorius, 2015b). In this regard we agree with Essop (2018) that rankings are biased in favour of the developed world and that achieving higher rankings should not be South African universities' *raison d'être*. In using rankings, we therefore let ourselves be guided by principles for the responsible use of scientometric tools such as the Leiden Manifesto (Hicks, Wouters, Waltman, De Rijcke & Rafols, 2015) and the more recently issued principles provided by the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (Waltman, Wouters & Van Eck, 2017). We believe that there are many aspects of university intellectual life and scholarship that are not reflected in rankings and hence our most important principle vis-à-vis rankings is: "Dimensions of university performance not covered by university rankings should not be overlooked" (Waltman, Wouters & Van Eck, 2017).

Within this context, we therefore offer the UWC rankings merely as another snapshot of the growth and development of UWC.

The different ranking systems that UWC has appeared in over the years all use different methodologies and indicators, which obviously leads to different results. Most use a combination of bibliometric analysis and reputational surveys (QS, *Times Higher Education* (THE), Best Global Universities), but the weighting assigned to the indicators differs. For example, in the QS ranking 50% is assigned to reputation surveys. Only one ranking system, The University Ranking by Academic Performance (URAP), relies exclusively on a bibliometric analysis using Web of Science and InsCites as sources. The ranking systems also differs on the extent to which they rely on institutional submissions. THE and, to a lesser extent QS, depend largely on institutional submissions. Best Global Universities and URAP do not require any submissions from institutions. Furthermore, whereas THE, QS, URAP and Best Global Universities are worldwide rankings, there are also rankings that focus on a subset of universities, such as THE Emerging Economies, QS Brics ranking, and THE African Pacemakers. One of the latest ranking systems, namely THE University Impact Rankings, attempts to go beyond the traditional indicators of academic performance and tries to assess an institution's contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

UWC ranking in the various ranking systems is reflected in Table 26.1.

Table 26.1 UWC rankings within Global Ranking Systems

Name of Ranking System	UWC Ranking	Year
2020 THE World University Rankings	601-800	2020
University Ranking by Academic Performance	902	2019
Best Global Universities	722	2020
QS	801-1000	2019
THE University Impact Rankings	101-200	2019
THE Emerging Economies	115	2020
QS BRICS Ranking	139	2018
THE African Pacemakers	7	2014-2015

The above table shows the latest ranking data available. UWC appeared in the global rankings only in 2016 (QS). Prior to this global ranking, THE released a ranking of the top 30 African universities in 2014-2015. While UWC did not make it into the THE global rankings in that year, it was ranked 7th in Africa. In some of the rankings UWC has dropped somewhat, since it was originally included in the rankings. In the case of the QS, UWC was ranked in the 700+ band when it was first included in the rankings in 2016. In the case of the URAP, UWC improved its standing since its first inclusion (919 in 2017). The ranking in the THE World University Rankings has remained consistently at 601-800.

The various global rankings appear fairly consistent with regards to UWC, with two ranking UWC below 800 and two ranking UWC above 800. In its release of UWC's 2018 results, QS made the following statement in its fact file: "Considering there are approximately 26 000 universities globally, this makes University of the Western Cape one of the top 3% of universities in the world" (QS World University Rankings, 2018).

The various global rankings also provide a ranking of the broad fields/discipline that universities are strong in. For UWC the various subject rankings by the four global university ranking systems are shown in Figure 26.5.

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Figure 26.5 UWC discipline rankings by global ranking systems.

The discipline rankings in Figure 26.5 show two disciplines ranked by QS and Best Global Universities respectively and five disciplines ranked by THE and URAP respectively. These disciplines are spread over all fields, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, Education and Health Sciences. It should be noted that these are broad fields and include a range of subjects. For example, although UWC does not have a School of Medicine, it is ranked by three ranking systems as being in the 301 to 844 range in the world in the Medical and Health Sciences. It would therefore include, for example, Public Health, Allied Health Sciences, Nursing, Biomedical Sciences and Bioinformatics. Given Prof O'Connell's view at the time of searching for a DVC: Academic that "the Sciences at UWC at the time was somewhat underdeveloped", it would have pleased him to note that at least four areas within Science are in the rankings, with a very strong showing of 150-157 in the world in Space Science/Astrophysics.

Conclusion

Documenting the qualitative and quantitative changes at UWC is not meant to be self-congratulatory. Rather, it is meant to demonstrate that leadership, and indeed collective leadership, matters. Brian O'Connell has been appropriately and deservedly recognised through awards such as the NRF Lifetime Achievement Award, an Honorary Doctorate from the

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University of Missouri and the Flemish Order of Leopold. However, both personally and institutionally, we honour him for living the ideal that “it is our duty to future generations to pass on the gift we have received in an even better state than it was in when we received it”. He has certainly passed on this gift of UWC in a better state than when he received it. I salute and honour him for that.

Furthermore, it also demonstrates that UWC has not yet arrived, but that a solid foundation has been laid and the potential to develop further is self-evident. If anything, the University of the Western Cape is still ‘becoming’. Like the mythical Phoenix it is an enduring symbol of hope, redemption and renewal.

Brian O’Connell was and remains passionate about education and strongly believed in the transformative power of education as a project of hope. However, his defining attribute was to channel this passion with vision and judgement. It is therefore appropriate to quote Kahlil Gibran on reason and passion:

Therefore, let your soul exalt your reason to the height of passion, that it may sing; And let it direct your passion with reason, that your passion may live through its own daily resurrection and like the phoenix rise above its own ashes.

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