



**PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA
WELCOME AND OPENING: ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL
SENATE HALL, MUCKLENEUK CAMPUS
23 May 2019**

- Prof GM Nkondo Chair of ASACoC and other Council members present
- Members of the ASACoC
- Prof Veronica McKay: Acting Vice-Principal: Teaching, Learning, Community Engagement and Student Support
- Prof Thenjiwe Meyiwa, Vice-Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation and other VPs present
- Our Executive Deans

- Colleagues from the Department of Leadership and Transformation
- Unisa academic and support members of staff
- Our institutional stakeholders and representatives from the SRC and labour formations
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning to you all.

Transformation was never going to be easy, quick or simple. Even when we have a planned and methodical approach to transformation, as is the case with ourselves and which you will learn more of today, the deeper we get into the project, the more we realise just how complex and multifaceted it is. That is why we established the Department of Leadership and Transformation to support the entire university and to hold you colleagues by the hand in this noble work.

So today I thought I'd just share a few thoughts on the transformation project at Unisa, so that we can all bear them in mind as we move from one phase to the next.

The first aspect is, of course, monitoring and evaluation of what is being implemented to ensure that it is aligned with our KPAs and the APP and to ensure that we are in fact delivering on our commitments (not to

mention adhering to our budgets). Now that seems self-evident, but it is a fact that as a nation and as a University we are usually pretty good at the conceptualisation and planning part, but not as good at the implementation, monitoring and evaluation part. I would like us all to ensure that we hold our staff accountable for their performance in implementation, but also, and perhaps more importantly, that we are able to expose ourselves to the same levels of scrutiny by our peers. Have we genuinely taken ownership of the institutional transformation projects - and what is the *quality* of this critical work we are doing?

When, for example, we speak of “Decolonisation and repositioning the University of South Africa: Vision and practice”, are we in fact supremely confident that we are doing the right thing? Let me remind all of you that we are not operating in isolation, colleagues – we are under the national, continental and global gaze and scrutiny, so we have to bring our *A game*, as they say.

Secondly, colleagues, just a note about *context*, which is becoming an increasingly powerful determinant of university strategies the world over. We note a growing shift in focus to issues of decoloniality, social justice and equity. There is a growing body of research across disciplines that is addressing these and their implications, extrapolation and impact

on course development, research, student support, innovation and community engagement. We also note a refocus on the strategic development goals (SDGs). There are a growing number of research articles, opinion pieces and essays on these topics. Quite ironically, though, it was this very university, Unisa, and our country South Africa, that first legislated and framed in policy our commitment to social justice, equity and redress in education. Quite sadly, I'm afraid to say, there does not seem to be much on these critical aspects of transformation emanating from our shores or our university that is finding its way into the global conversation. Either we are promoting it well enough or we are not producing enough. That, I trust, will change. Context dictates both institutional *and* global relevance and positioning. Our commitment to an alternative knowledge canon and to inimically African courseware must be backed up by products and research that will ensure that we can insert and assert the African voice with confidence, sure in the knowledge that others will be learning something from us.

Finally, and this is an issue that is becoming increasingly evident as we move more concertedly into 2019, our transformation has 8 dimensions and 5 pillars. I am seeing too many colleagues focusing on *a* dimension or *a* pillar to the exclusion of everything else. Dr Bopape will delve into this when he makes his presentation later today.

As the leaders and shapers of Unisa, you all agreed, along with the rest of our staff, to a set of values: Ethical and Collective Responsibility; Integrity, Innovation and Excellence; Responsive Student Centredness; and Dignity in Diversity. These *must* inform our thinking and conduct as we drive our various institutional transformation projects. I will, in fact, be interested to see if these values are included implicitly or explicitly in our presentations today, given their centrality in our institutional culture and ethos and their deliberate link to ubuntu/botho.

Today's workshop will provide some of the answers. We will be receiving updates on what is being done, by whom and how successfully. New members of Executive and Extended Management, Council and our stakeholders will be brought up to date on the huge transformation projects that are underway at our University. As we do so, I would like us all to engage in a process of constructive critique. I have said repeatedly that academic spaces must be safe space in which all should feel free to share their views. Equally it is incumbent on all attendees to receive critique with an open mindset, and not an automatic knee jerk response or denial. If we want genuine transformation, we must be open to all views. No one knows it all. We are here to produce, of course, but also to learn and improve.

I wish you well and I trust that you will all leave more informed, enthused and committed to this key institutional project.