

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

**DATE: Friday, 24 July 2020**

**TO: All media**

**ATTENTION: News Editors/ Reports**

**For Immediate use:**

### **MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION APPOINTS MINISTERIAL TASK -TEAM TO REVIEW UNISA**

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, appointed a Ministerial Task Team (MTT) to conduct an Independent Review of the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Minister Nzimande held two consultative meetings with the UNISA Council Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and the Vice Chancellor as well as a full UNISA Council Exco to discuss the details of the review.

“Given the size of UNISA, not only in South Africa, but on the entire African continent – having 407 759 students in 2020 and growing – it is clearly too big to fail as too many people depend on its success,” said the Minister.

Since the merger, it appears that there has not been sufficient attention on addressing the underlying drivers of institutional coherence and sustainability.

Minister Nzimande said that UNISA is gradually experiencing 'mission-drift' by becoming more 'full-time' yet there has never been a plan supported by the national Government, in favour of such a move.

“The issue of ‘mission drift’ – has massive implications for the financial sustainability and future of UNISA. It also has materially-significant implications for Government for both subsidy and student financial aid support – as we have seen at the start of the 2020 academic year when segments of the student community made demands for near full-time equivalent NSFAS support from Government. Similarly, mission drift will impose major pressures on infrastructure, teaching staff and a host of other concerns,” said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande also raised the importance of making a rigorous assessment of how the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its associative disruptions and shifts will affect many aspects of the academic mission, academic programmes, markets and operating model of all of our universities and especially a UNISA of the mid-21st century.

Amongst other concerns that the Minister raised are the following:

There has been no comprehensive reflection on implications of new technologies on the operations of the university;  
There has been concerns raised regarding the quality of offerings/programmes;  
The persistent problem of UNISA's unacceptably high student failure rates, as well as de-accreditation of some of its academic programmes; and the  
The instability in the senior Management is also a matter of great concern.

Minister Nzimande therefore appointed the following persons as members of the MTT.

Dr Vincent Maphai (Chairperson)  
Professor John Volmink  
Professor Louis Molamu  
Ms Nonkululeko Gobodo  
Professor Brenda Gourley

The Task Team will commence with its work immediately.

There is consensus between UNISA Council and the Ministry (and DHET) about very serious concerns about the future of UNISA.

“I am requesting members of the University community, including and specifically, Council and Management, including the Vice Chancellor, to provide the fullest support for, and cooperation with, the MTT,” said Minister Nzimande.

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