Strategy
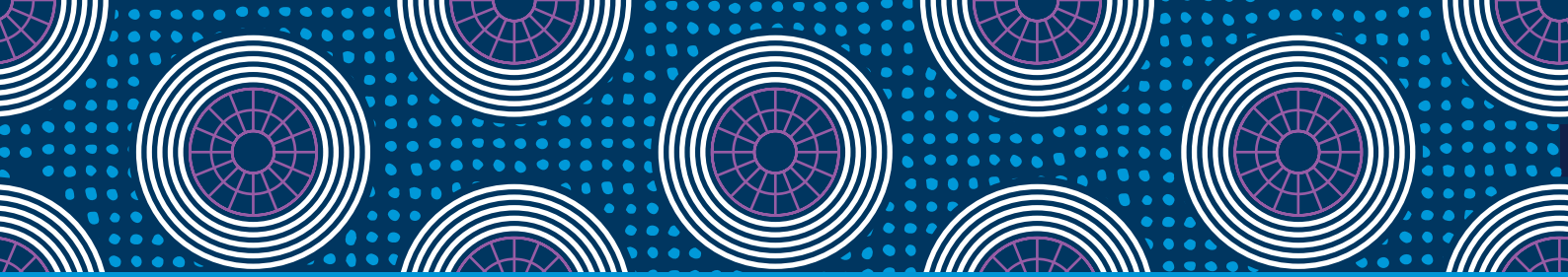## 2030

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Introduction

You have often heard me share the proverb *'if you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together'*. I invite you to hold this proverb in your hearts and minds as we share with you Strategy 2030 for the University of Cape Town (UCT). With Strategy 2030, we seek to provide strategic guidance to the UCT community for the next five years – 2026 to 2030.
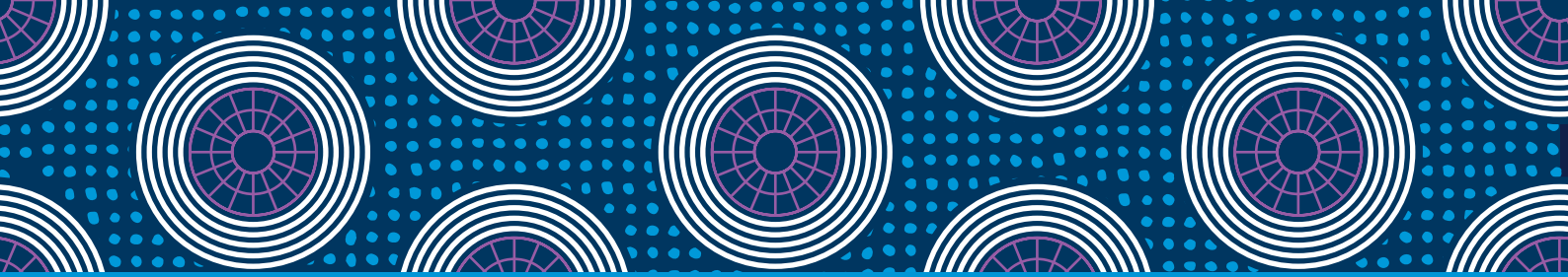
UCT's Vision 2030 states our core purpose of unleashing human potential for a fair and just society. Its three pillars – excellence, sustainability and transformation – have been well adopted. Several faculties and departments have strategies or strategic frameworks aligned with the pillars of Vision 2030.

As a new Vice-Chancellor (VC), it's natural that I would need to assess the strategic position and advantage of the university, in order to steer UCT on a course towards the successful realisation of our aspirations, values, goals, missions and vision.

Over the past year, I have had the privilege of conversing with many diverse stakeholders both within the UCT community and externally. These stakeholders included: staff and students; funders; donors and partners; alumni, former UCT VC's and executives; Council members; and our Chancellor.

I am therefore mindful of the fact that our reality has changed since the adoption of Vision 2030 back in 2020 and that UCT needs to remain agile, adaptive and relevant despite the volatile environment in which we operate, both locally and globally.

One thing is clear to me though, that in order for us to overcome our current challenges, and to continue to fulfil our missions and realise our vision, we will need to work together, because together we are UCT.

I therefore invite you all to join us in shaping the future of our university. Once adopted by Council, Strategy 2030 will have its own implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as shown below. The strategy will also require alignment with faculty and department strategies, faculty and department implementation plans, as well as faculty and department monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

I look forward to receiving your feedback.

Vision 2030

Strategy 2030

Implementation Plans 2026 – 2030

Monitoring & Evaluation 2026 – 2030

Annual Performance Plans & Reports

Contents

1.
Reflection

In order to chart a new path and to ensure we are on the right path, we had to reflect on where we come from, and what informed past strategic choices. Several sources, reports and events were considered.

Vision 2030 is a ten-year road map. When it was launched in 2021 (its launch delayed due to COVID-19) it reimagined UCT's vision and mission statements as a single massive transformative purpose statement: 'to unleash human potential for a just and fair society'. Vision 2030 also has transformation, sustainability and excellence as pillars on which all strategic choices were made. Later in the Evaluation section we share details on our progress made towards achieving Vision 2030.

Together these — the purpose statement and three pillars — are the foundational elements referred to which we will retain as part of strategy 2030. Vision 2030 had several 'UCT will' aspirations from which four goals were committed to. These goals were to:

- develop a holistic, innovative, future-oriented education;
- (produce) research that solves Africa's problems;
- develop an organisational ethos that supports new ways of thinking, being and doing; and
- (demonstrate) thought leadership on social justice.

These goals have been monitored and evaluated annually against the three pillars, key performance areas and indicators. Our comprehensive 2025 evaluation against these goals, areas and indicators also informed this Strategy 2030.

While our vision and mission statements were reimagined

into a succinct purpose statement, our Statement of Values remain unchanged since its adoption in 2016. Our values will become a core part of Strategy 2030 therefore we will be reviewing them, because we recognise that values inform culture, social contracts, accountability and contribute to a sense of belonging.

It should be acknowledged that the strategic choices made at any time in the life of a university are also informed and shaped to some degree by student and staff activism. At UCT whether it was the Rhodes Must Fall, Fees Must Fall, Shackville or insourcing protests of 2015 and 2016, or the academic and employee union protests of 2023 and 2024, these painful periods of disharmony led to transformative dialogues which enabled the university to listen and learn. Often this activism results in disruption and trauma, but it can also lead to a shared of understanding of concerns and help to co-create solutions.

We have also been able to reflect on strategies from as far back as 2001 (Vision 2001) and have reflected on institutional evaluations conducted by our Institutional Planning Department (IPD), in particular on strategies implemented from 2010-2014; as well as the annual evaluations completed for the period 2016-2020.

Everyone and every experience from our past has made us the institution we are today, and every person currently at UCT, or associated with UCT and every strategic decision we take going forward is going to shape who and what we become.

2.
Context

Our world and the context in which we operate has changed in unexpected and dramatic ways since Vision 2030 was launched in 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a painful and traumatic period for many in our community, but it also showed us how innovative and resilient we can be. Today our world faces unique and complex challenges.

Academics, experts and analysts say that we are in polycrisis, that we are facing a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) future. Strategy 2030 seeks to enable UCT to balance strategic choices, to navigate and mitigate the effects of this polycrisis.

We face several challenges. These include the defunding by the US Federal Government, ongoing and tragic wars across continents, the adoption and utilisation of Artificial Intelligence in higher education and beyond, the devastating impact of climate change, and closer to closer to home crime, corruption, the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the stubborn unemployment and inequality. These challenges demand of us to have a clear strategy, one that will not only be able to respond meaningfully to these challenges but will also steadily and, over time, minimise the effects of these challenges on our country, continent and the world.

The education we deliver at UCT, the research we produce must contribute to the kind of society we all want to live in, a society characterised by fairness and justice.

South Africa has enjoyed more than 30 years of democracy, and while racial democracy and freedom have been attained, economic freedom is yet to be realised for the majority of South Africans. We have to ask ourselves, how might UCT contribute to achieving this economically free and just South Africa?

At UCT our context has also changed significantly over the last few years. Not only has government funding slowly been declining year-on-year, but student debt has also been increasing from under R200 million in 2014 to over R864 million in 2024. Since 2020 our student throughput rate has languished and we need to work determinately to get this back to pre-COVID-19 levels. Staffing costs have steadily been increasing since 2016.

These global and local challenges have meant that UCT has been operating on a deficit budget for at least three years. This is both undesirable and unsustainable, and because of this we had to be resolute about budget choices made from 2025 onwards. Our financial sustainability, as with all organisations, is inextricably linked to our institutional sustainability.

In this context then what should we prioritise to get right over the next five years? How do we ensure that UCT in 2030 will be more resilient, more impactful and that it can contribute to society's economic development? What do we need to do to ensure that all staff and students experience a welcoming environment at UCT? Strategy 2030 starts to address these complex questions.

3.
Evaluation

Vision 2030 goals, signed off by Council in 2021, were committed to by the four Executives who reported to the Vice-Chancellor at that time. These goals were:

- In teaching and learning, to develop a holistic, innovative, future-oriented education.
- In research and internationalisation, to produce research that will solve Africa's problems.
- In transformation, student affairs and social responsiveness, to demonstrate thought leadership on social justice.
- In the portfolio previously held by the Chief Operating Officer [which included Finance, Human Resources, Information and Communication Technology Services (ICTS) and Properties and Services], to develop an organisational ethos that supports new ways of thinking, being and doing.

To this end the Institutional Planning Department (IPD) prepared an evaluation of Vision 2030 for the period 2021 to 2024. These four goals had 113 objectives. By the end of 2024, 73% of these objectives had either been achieved, partially achieved or progress had been made towards achieving them. It is important to recognise that some objectives are multi-year and would not have been able to be achieved within the first four years of Vision 2030. These multi-year objectives will continue to be monitored and evaluated. An additional point to take into consideration reg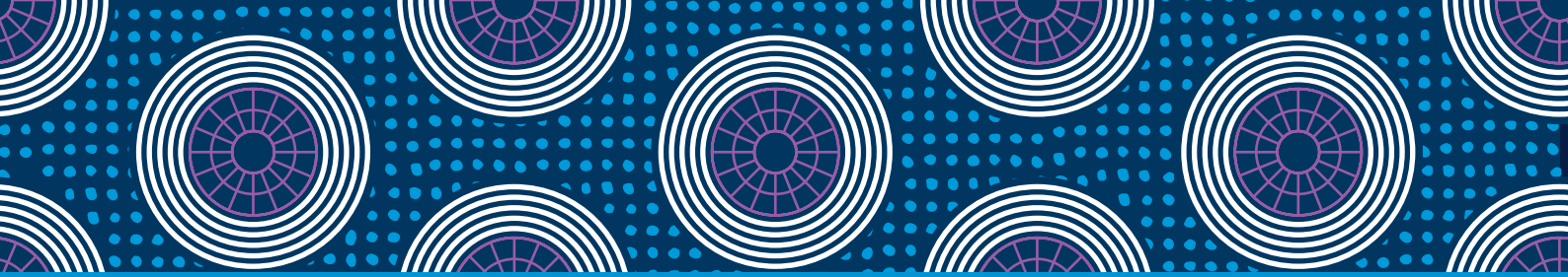arding these objectives was the instability experienced between 2022 and 2023 which also had an impact on the progress made on some objectives.

Further, some objectives are no longer relevant to our changed context, and so those will be updated to more accurately address our priorities. We also reflected on IPD's prior evaluations, especially for the period 2010-2014 strategy. The evaluations for 2016-2020 were completed per annum and were considered.

While the IPD evaluation monitors and collects critical data and information that we report on to the Department of Higher Education and Training, there are additional metrics which we will start to more intentionally monitor and evaluate as part of strategy 2030.

In order for UCT to become more sustainable and to improve our societal legitimacy, we need to align our efforts and resources, share our knowledge, and improve our efficiencies. Now, more than ever, UCT's sustainability and legacy requires all of us to work through any discomforts which may exist that relate to our diversity and differences, and to work to leverage these for UCT's success.

We wish to acknowledge and thank staff, students, alumni, donors, partners who have already demonstrated their generosity of spirit, commitment and passion for UCT's success. We look forward to continued collaboration in the future.

4.
Strategy

Vision statement

Our vision and purpose remains 'to unleash human potential for a fair and just society.'

Mission statement

UCT will continue to grow as the bedrock of talent, hallmark of excellence and home of innovation in Africa.

UCT will bring together the most gifted of minds, challenge them with the most pressing and complex of problems, enable them to test the most promising of solutions, and do so with urgency and precision of time, then share these lessons and solutions with the country, the continent and the world at large for greater societal impact.
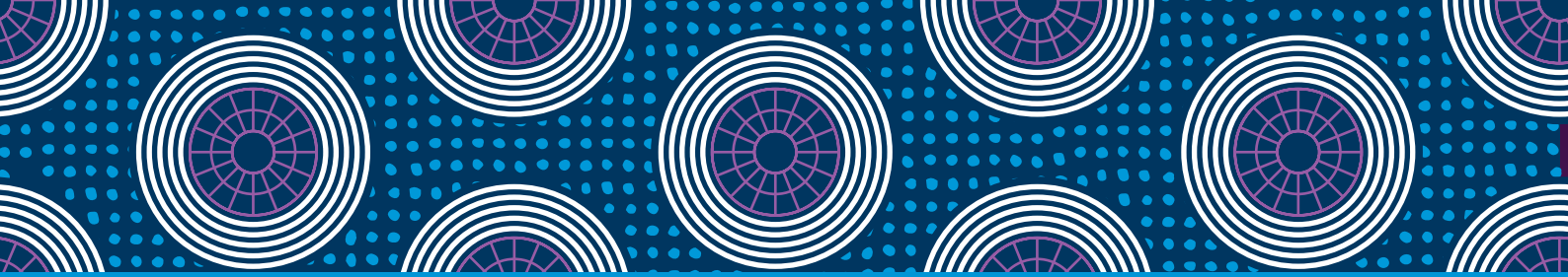
There is a saying 'the day you plant the seed; is not the day you eat the fruit.' This is why in the next five years we will need to nurture multiple seeds, some will bear fruit in the short-term, some in the medium-term and others beyond 2030 and we should be comfortable and confident in this.

In 2029 we will commemorate 200 years of academic excellence and societal impact, and while we look forward to the celebrations and joyous memories, our responsibility now is to ensure UCT's sustainability, to leave UCT in a better position than when we each joined it so that generations to come can benefit from it.

UCT Strategy 2030 will continue to inspire and drive our teaching, research and societal missions. In order to ensure UCT's sustainability we needed to add a fourth mission, that of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Over the last 196 years UCT has continually adapted and responded to the context and environment in which it was operating, this is why we believe it is an opportune time to prioritise a culture and commitment to innovation at UCT because this will contribute to UCT's sustainability and societal impact. This new mission is also informed by the valuable work conducted by our Entrepreneurship

Steering Committee. Their report documents the impact and relevance of our entrepreneurship and innovation work across the institution dating back to as early as the mid-1990s.

The Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Report 2024 is available on request.

In developing Strategy 2030, we also benchmarked against global and local higher education institutions how best to communicate it to enable alignment, shared understanding and accountability. For clarity our missions have goals and, our priorities have objectives. Each executive member has committed to leading on and working towards certain priorities and objectives, and their strategies and implementation plans will be aligned to Strategy 2030. Our monitoring and evaluation will inform the refinement of objectives towards making significant progress in our priorities.

We hope that you see yourselves in this strategy in relation to how your functions and roles will enable and contribute to our success, and that it will unleash within our community a renewed sense of commitment to and for UCT.

5.
Missions

A mission is any important task or duty that is assigned, agreed to, or self-imposed.

In developing strategy, we recognised that our language would enable a shared understanding of it, this is why there is an emphasis on understanding the link between our purpose statement, and ultimately the several objectives the VC and executive have committed to. And as shared during the stakeholder updates, it is our hope that faculties and departments will make use of some of this language to demonstrate institutional alignment.

Our missions have been assigned because we are a higher education institution and registered as such in South Africa. Our missions have been agreed to amongst our executive and with support from Council and with stakeholders from across the institution. In some way they are self-imposed because we have to remain relevant in society. Our understanding of UCT's missions' evolution and history is informed by the work of Emeritus Professor Howard Phillips. We thank him for his work in understanding the history of our institution.

Our missions speak to UCT's evolution over the last nearly 200 years (since 1829), and they articulate our approach and commitment towards achieving our purpose. They demonstrate how we have transformed as a university to meet the needs of each new era we found ourselves in. Not only that, but they also build on our strengths and what we are known to do with excellence. As shared three missions have defined our success, enabled our sustainability and built our global reputation over the last 196 years, these missions are our:
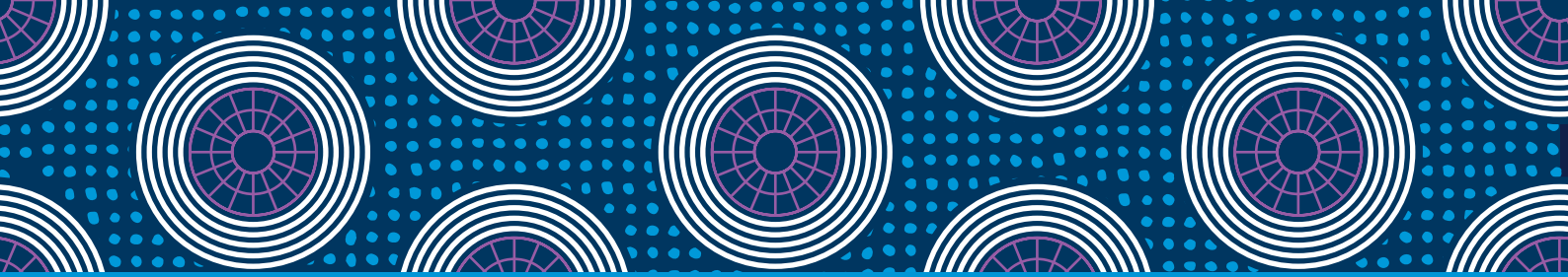
1. Teaching and Learning,
2. Research and Internationalisation,
3. Societal and Social Responsiveness.

Our history and past commitments clarify and explain why we have one Deputy Vice-Chancellor committed to each of these three missions. Now as we stand at the dawn of entering our third century of delivering academic excellence and meaningfully contributing to a fair and just society, we believe that adding a fourth mission is both strategic and timely. This fourth mission is:

4. To harness and build on our Innovation & Entrepreneurship ecosystem and capabilities.

Each mission is explained in more detail next. While our missions indicate how UCT has evolved and transformed over the last two centuries, they should neither be seen nor be considered in isolation. Over the next five years we must be more explicit about how our four missions interact. For example, our teaching and learning mission finds expression in our societal mission, our research and internationalisation mission will inform our innovation and entrepreneurship mission, and our innovation and entrepreneurship mission will transform our teaching and learning mission and so on.

Each mission will have a goal which will articulate what we believe success will look like. Then our priorities through a set of specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based (SMART) objectives will focus our actions and choices to make considerable progress in our priority areas. The priorities are what we believe our pressing challenges are that we need to address in order to in some cases improve and in other instances accelerate the positive trajectory we are on. Before we focus on our priorities and objectives, it is worthwhile reflecting on and creating a shared understanding of our missions. Everything we do within our missions, towards achieving our goals, is about UCT's sustainability into 2030 and beyond.

5.1 Mission
Teaching and Learning 1829 to date

Goal: Developing a holistic, innovative, future orientated education.

UCT was established in 1829, originally as a teaching and learning institution. This foundational mission remains central to our identity today. Teaching and learning are not only the core of what we do; they are the reason we exist. It is this commitment that underpins our registration and operation under the Higher Education Act of 1997.

Each year we enrol, teach, and graduate thousands of students. We continuously strive to enhance the quality of their academic experience by carefully considering a wide range of factors: the curriculum, the diversity and relevance of research integrated into teaching,

the diversity and calibre of our educators, the learning environment, institutional culture, infrastructure, and the support systems we build around our students. These elements are all part of our ongoing effort to deliver world-class teaching and learning experiences.

This mission primarily addresses the needs and experiences of our undergraduate students and academic staff. In parallel, our research and internationalisation mission focuses on postgraduate and international students, as well as our researchers.
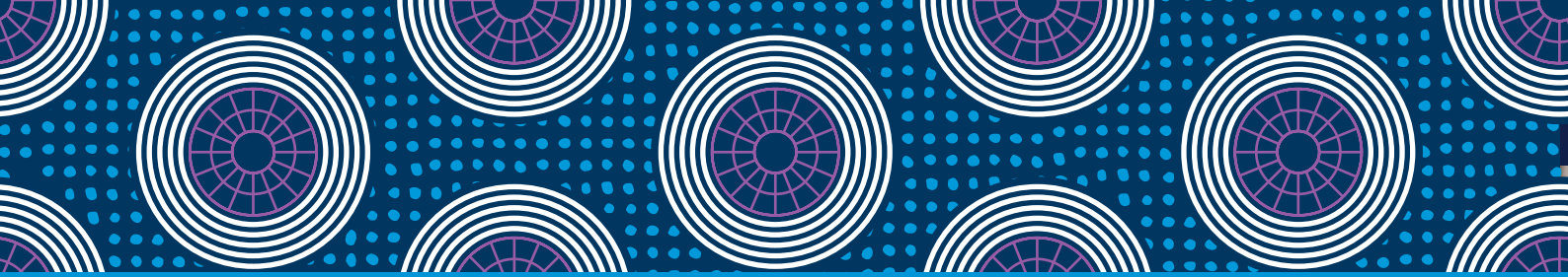
Progress towards Vision 2030 (2021–2024)

As part of Vision 2030, we have made significant strides in advancing our teaching and learning mission. Key achievements from 2021 to the end of 2024 include:

1. **Digital Transformation:** Nearly 80% of our courses have been successfully migrated from Vula to our new learning management system, Amathuba. The remaining courses are scheduled for migration by the end of 2025.
2. **Strategic Planning:** Our "Size and Shape" plan for 2030-2035 was approved by Council in December 2023. This draft strategy aims to maintain optimal staff-to-student ratios, improve student success and completion rates, and position UCT as a global leader in areas relevant to the Global South.
3. **Curriculum Renewal:** We have made substantial progress in curriculum transformation. This includes:
   - reviewing staff workload models, completed by four of our six faculties by the end of 2024;
   - developing a quality assurance framework for academic departments; and
   - launching curriculum change initiatives, now underway in five of our six faculties.

To explore our progress in greater detail, we invite you to read our annual Teaching and Learning Reports, which document developments over the past decade.

In demonstrating our commitment to offering digitally enabled education, the teaching and learning mission is committed to embedding digital innovation in ways that enhance, rather than replace, the university's distinctive on-campus, in-person residential experience. This approach ensures that UCT retains the affordances of a vibrant, in-person campus while advancing a future-oriented, inclusive, and responsive approach to teaching and learning in a digitally enriched higher education landscape.

Looking Ahead: Strategy 2030

As part of Strategy 2030, we have identified key objectives for the next five years under our Academic Excellence Priority. These objectives will guide our efforts to further elevate the quality and impact of teaching and learning at UCT. This mission is intrinsic to everything we do. Every faculty, department, and individual at UCT plays a role in advancing our teaching and learning agenda. It is through this shared commitment to this mission that we aim to unleash human potential — developing our graduates who will contribute to a more fair and just society.

A Legacy of Excellence

Until around 1948, teaching and learning was UCT's sole mission. As our context evolved, so have our missions. We have since built a globally recognised, research-intensive ecosystem that attracts top postgraduate students, emerging researchers, and early-career academics from across South Africa, the continent, and the world.

Mission
Research and Internationalisation

Goal: Building an ecosystem that enables deep research, bold innovation, and inclusive knowledge creation to serve Africa and the world.

During apartheid and the early years of democracy, UCT embraced a second core mission: to become a research-intensive university. Today, our global reputation is shaped by international rankings that place considerable weight on research excellence — a domain in which UCT has consistently excelled. We are committed to leveraging this strength to elevate the quality and impact of our broader institutional missions.

We acknowledge that this mission has come under pressure in the past year, particularly due to shifts in U.S. federal funding policy, and the termination by the National Research Foundation of two of its primary funding instruments i.e. the incentive funding for rated researchers and both of their competitive funding programmes. The latter will have seismic effects on the South African research landscape.

In response, UCT has taken a proactive and multifaceted approach to mitigate the impact of this reduction in funding. This includes robust engagements with the South African government to increase national investment in research and development. Currently, the country allocates just 0.61% of its Gross Domestic Product to Research and Development — well below the 1.5% target. We are also working to secure comparable support from alternative funders.

UCT will continue to advocate, both independently and through collective action with higher education partners, for the government to meet its commitment.

Progress Towards Vision 2030 (2021–2024)
In alignment with Vision 2030, we have made significant progress in advancing our research and internationalisation mission. Notable achievements from 2021 to 2024 include:

1. **Growing Research Capacity:** We have increased both the number of active researchers and the value of internal funding secured by research-active academics, achieving an average annual growth of 5%.
2. **Expanding African Partnerships:** We have deepened collaborations across the continent, establishing 27 formal partnerships by the end of 2024. Our aim is to add at least two new substantive agreements annually.
3. **SDG focused research initiatives:** Our performance improved in four of the six SDG's submitted to the THE Impact Rankings in 2022.

For a detailed account of these developments, we invite you to explore our annual Research Reports, which document a decade of accomplishments and ongoing challenges.

Looking Ahead: Strategy 2030
Strategy 2030 reaffirms our commitment to research and internationalisation through key objectives embedded in UCT's broader priorities: academic excellence, financial and institutional sustainability, and strategic partnerships in Africa and the world.

UCT stands as one of the continent's leading research-intensive universities, with growing influence on the global stage. Our research will continue to be academically rigorous, socially relevant, and policy-informing — contributing to a more equitable, sustainable and just society.

Towards the Future
We will continue to consolidate our research strengths while confronting head-on the structural and systemic challenges facing the research enterprise. Through purposeful strategy and collective commitment, we will advance the goals of Strategy 2030 and ensure that UCT research remains a force for transformative impact.

5.3 Mission
Societal and Social Responsiveness

Goal: Demonstrating thought leadership and praxis on social justice and responsiveness through a redress and humanising lens.

UCT admitted its first small group of Black students in 1920—more than a century ago—at a time when few universities in South Africa demonstrated such a commitment to equality and inclusivity.

Building on this progressive foundation, UCT's transformation journey gained momentum in the late 1980s and especially after 1994, as the university began to more fully embrace its societal mission for redress and equity. This mission includes ensuring that our research contributes meaningfully to the advancement of all people; that our curriculum reflects the rich histories and contributions of diverse scholars—particularly those of African descent; and that our student and staff bodies are representative of the society we serve. These commitments are embedded in our institutional Statement of Values.

This mission is not only about how we transform, but also about how socially responsive we are, and how we prioritise the experiences and wellbeing of our students. Going forward, this focus will extend more intentionally to the experiences, needs, and wellbeing of our staff, as Human Resources now will report into the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People, Culture and Society.

To track our progress, we invite you to explore our annual Transformation Reports (since 2017) and Social Responsiveness Reports (since 2003), which document our efforts and achievements in these areas.

Progress towards Vision 2030 (2021–2024)
Under Vision 2030, from 2021 to the end of 2024, we have made notable strides in advancing this mission. These include:

1. The approval of our updated Anti-Racism Policy by Council in June 2022, with a further review underway (as of August 2024) in response to institutional feedback.
2. The expansion of formal partnerships with key institutions to advance social justice.
3. The hosting of the Anti-Racism Conversation Series in 2022 and the Humanising Think Tank Series in 2023, as well as the approval of a special edition on Transformation for the *Higher Education Journal*, scheduled for publication in 2025.

Looking Ahead: Strategy 2030
We also recognise that our societal mission must first be lived internally—through the ways we engage with one another as a university community. This requires honest reflection on our institutional culture, acknowledgment of the pain that exists within our community, and a shared commitment to healing and transformation. It is in this spirit that we launched the Campus-wide Conversation series in 2024 and will conduct another institutional culture survey in 2025. Insights from these initiatives will inform the objectives of our People, Culture and Society priority area.

UCT was once known as the university on top of the mountain, and later as the university at the bottom of the hill. Today, we strive to be the university within and for our communities, our country, and our continent. As part of Strategy 2030, the key objectives of this mission are articulated in our people, culture and society priority.

5.4 Mission
Innovation and Entrepreneurship 2026 onwards

Goal: Position UCT as the leading African university for innovation-led inclusive development and entrepreneurship.

In South Africa, the richest 10% hold 71% of the country's wealth, while the poorest 60% hold just 7%, a stark illustration of inequality, as reflected in the Gini Coefficient. A statistic such as this, should cause us to pause and reflect and to ask ourselves how we might address this. Coupled with the high and unacceptable unemployment rate in South Africa, recent national debates notwithstanding, we must agree that these statistics are not indicative of a fair and just society. This is why we believe it is both timely and urgent to add this fourth mission to the work we do at UCT.

By leveraging UCT's depth and excellence in academia — which include inter alia, disciplines such as the social sciences, humanities, science, engineering, and technology — the university will aim to develop an appropriate global South innovation model to solve real-world challenges and advance socio-economic growth. This is a call for developing revised innovation models which have a deliberate bias towards innovation that will, for example, transform entire industries if they do not benefit society. For example, UCT could help transform import-dependent industries to locally innovative ones; or leverage our strengths in health innovation, particularly in pharmaceuticals and medical technologies to develop a healthier society.
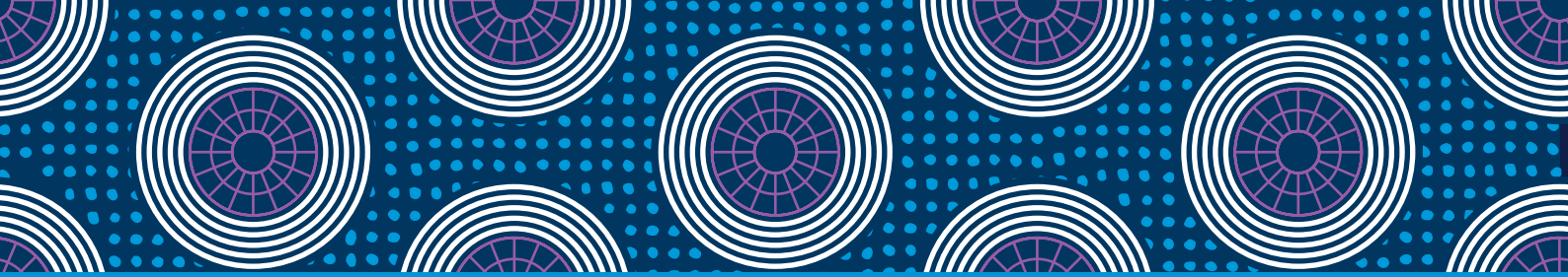
Our innovation must be centred around value creation, whether social and/or commercial. By combining our dynamic internal capabilities, we can create appropriate and context-specific innovation models and draw from our innovation and entrepreneurship institutional strategy, to guide product development and commercialisation. On these aspects, UCT has deep skills that can create value.

Further appropriate innovation models can lead to high-quality employment. Coupled with entrepreneurship this will create employment opportunities for our innovators and position UCT as a global destination for innovation-led inclusive development. We must leverage the fact that UCT has been involved in entrepreneurship in some form since the mid-1990s.

We will demonstrate the value of innovation and entrepreneurship to the other missions and priorities. This will be done through the development of a comprehensive innovation and entrepreneurship institutional strategy. This strategy will include details on how our infrastructural assets can contribute to a more sustainable innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem. This work is already underway as our Executive Director for Properties and Services together with other executive members are fundraising for non-General Operating Budget for our Innovation District.

Historically UCT is known to change slowly, a phenomenon many higher education institutions contend with. And yet, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck agility and innovation demanded that we change the way we operated. These challenges were met by leveraging and reorienting internal knowledge assets, research, and intellectual infrastructure to address the crisis through innovation. This is a classic case of mobilising dynamic capabilities to deliver strategic value to the institution and society. It demonstrates that
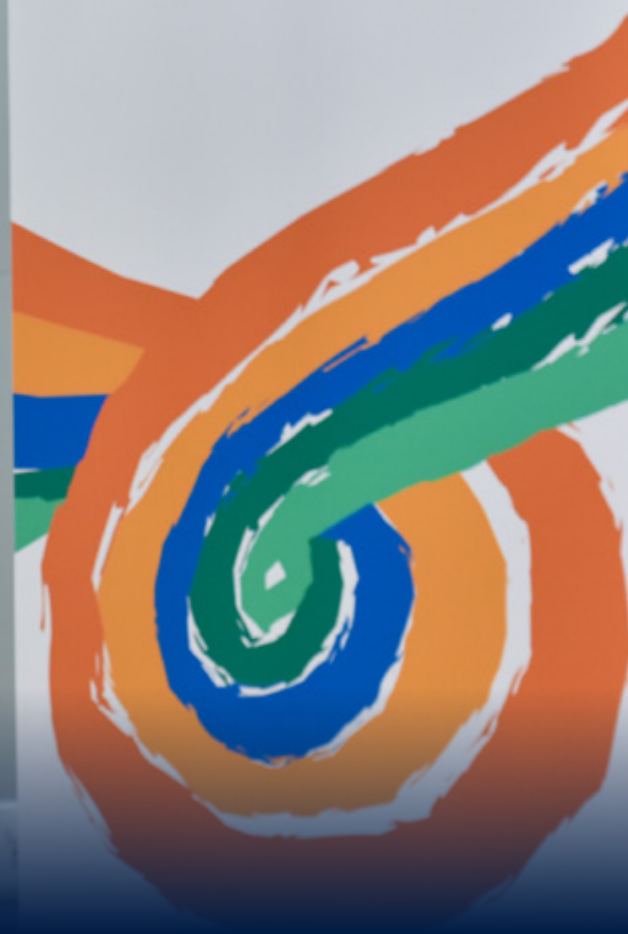
with a shared goal this can be repeated. It forms part of the rationale for advocating for a deliberate approach to consolidate our innovation and entrepreneurship portfolio.

This mission will contribute to our graduate employability, innovation culture, entrepreneurial thinking, and institutional sustainability, among many other tangible outcomes. By incorporating the innovation and entrepreneurship mission into our strategy, we can streamline, sustain, and scale the impact of the work already being done across the institution.

Building on a past goal of developing an organisational ethos that supports new ways of thinking, being and doing we must also stress that this mission will not only focus on external innovation and entrepreneurship, but it will also focus our efforts and resources on internal innovation and intrapreneurship. We acknowledge that there are inefficiencies in our own internal ecosystem that we need to address in order to unleash the talent of our own people.

This mission will be driven more intentionally from an executive level, as we believe it will enable us to deepen our impact in the other missions as well as for UCT, for our country and continent.
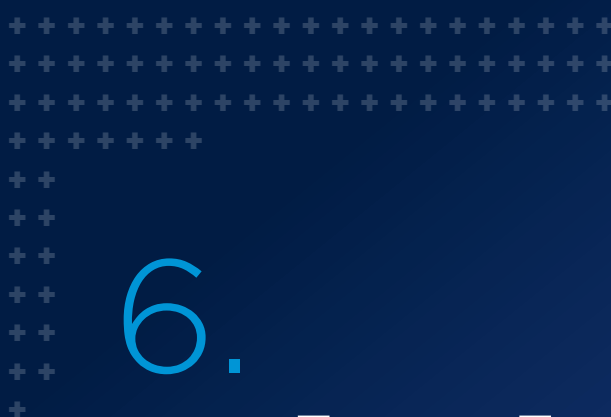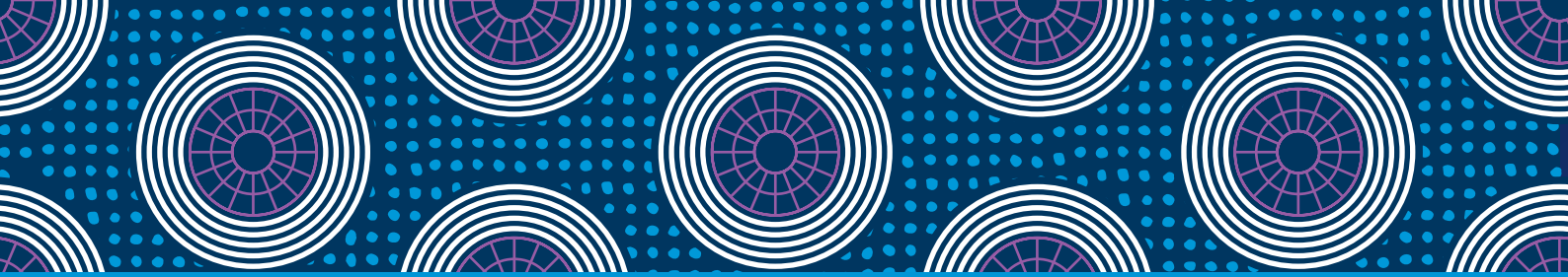
6.

Priorities 2026 – 2030

Our missions and goals alone are not specific enough to drive our strategic choices. This is why another layer of strategic levers, our priorities, have been developed to ensure that all our resources are working in unison towards achieving specific objectives.

Three priorities were initially identified by the VC as part of his preparation work during his recruitment and selection process. Those three initial priorities were: financial sustainability; research support and impact, and stakeholder relations.

Now one year later and numerous consultations and stakeholder engagements later, combined with feedback from executive members, those priorities have been fleshed out and added to.

Strategy 2030 has six priorities:

1. Maintaining and improving **Academic Excellence** in our teaching, learning and research
2. Securing our **Financial and Institutional Sustainability**
3. Investing in **People**, and improving our **Culture and Societal impact**
4. Enhancing all **Stakeholder** experiences, **Brand and**

Reputation Management and nurturing a culture of **Ambassadorship**
5. Improving our **Governance, Management and Leadership** structures and systems
6. Developing multilayered **Strategic Partnerships in Africa and the World**

Each priority has objectives, and each objective has corresponding SMART measures for the next three to five years which the executive — with guidance from Human Resources and IPD — has committed to. The objectives the VC and executive have identified are linked to the context in which the university finds itself today. These objectives also emanate from data sets and reports colleagues have presented to the executive. The objectives the executive have committed to, will be cascaded into the faculties and departments.

Through our Financial Sustainability project, a 360-degree Value Meter has been developed, see below. This together with the SMART measures will be applied to all strategic choices and our priorities to ensure that we consider the holistic impact of our choices on our institutional sustainability. All priorities will be led by an executive who will have the full support of the VC, the rest of the executive, Leadership Lekgotla and we hope all of you too.

The 360° Value Meter:

Academic Excellence
Maintaining our excellence in teaching, learning, and research to ensure the university's reputation as a leading institution of higher learning is upheld and is improved on.

Stakeholders, Brand, Reputation & Ambassadorship
Creating transformative user experiences that drive engagement and satisfaction. Developing a culture of ambassadorship to defend and champion UCT's brand and reputation.

(wheel labels)
Teaching & Research
Innovation & Society
Capex & Opex
Environmental
Non-Core Revenue
Traditional Revenue
Team Performance
Culture
Development
Academic Excellence
Financial & Institutional Sustainability
People, Culture & Society
Brand & Reputation Management
Internal stakeholders
External stakeholders
Reputation
Brand
Audit Action plans
Risk mitigationl
Govern-ance
Govt & Academic.
Industry
Civil Society
Governance & Leadership
Partners hip in Africa & the world

360° value

Financial & Institutional Sustainability
Ensuring the long-term financial and institutional health and growth of UCT by driving efficiencies, innovations and exploring new revenue streams. Committing to practices that positively impact the environment and society. The E in Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG)

Governance, Management, Leadership
Creating a culture of adherence, accountability, and agility throughout UCT. (G in ESG)

People, Culture & Society
Promoting an inclusive environment that values diversity among students, staff, and partners (our talent), and seeks to create a vibrant and connected culture. Demonstrating UCT's societal impact. (S in ESG)
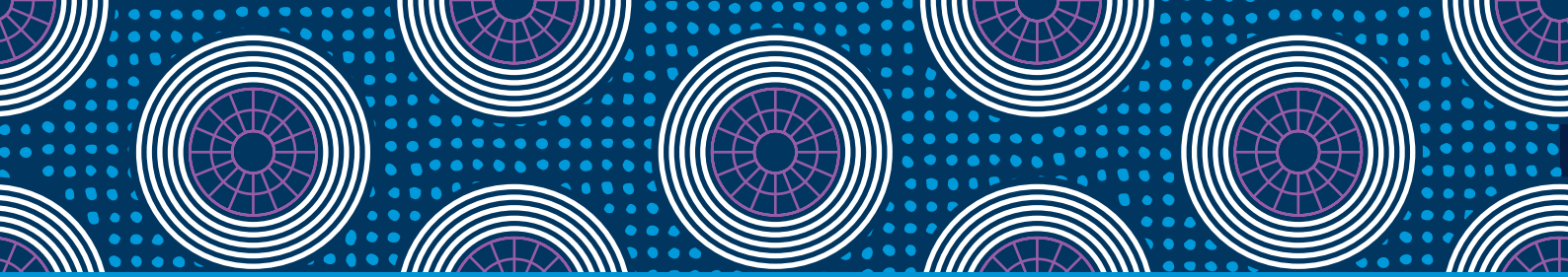
Partnership in Africa & the World
Nurturing purposeful and multidimensional partnerships for shared value and to enhance UCT's continental and global impact.
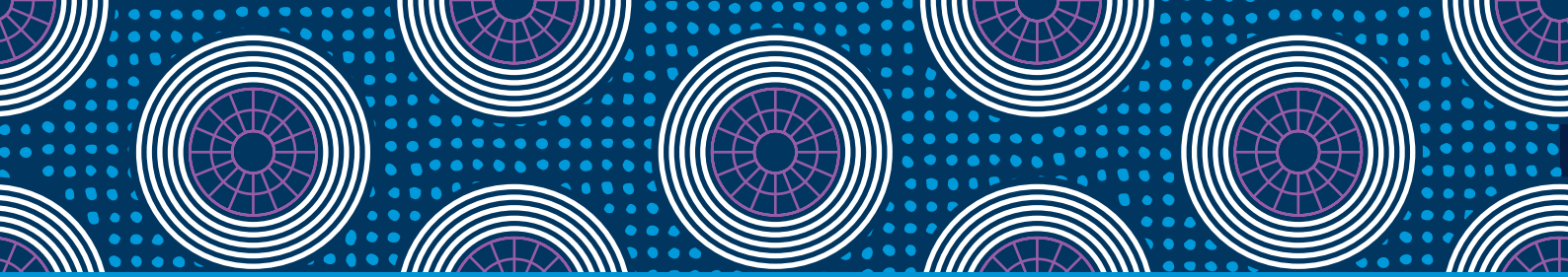
6.1
Priority
Academic Excellence

UCT prepares leaders for South Africa, the continent, and the world. To remain true to this priority, academic excellence must remain our primary focus. This commitment will be led by the DVC for Teaching and Learning and the DVC for Research and Internationalisation, in collaboration with our Deans.

UCT continues to be recognised as the top university in Africa across multiple global rankings. While rankings are a valuable indicator of performance, they are not our sole measure of success. Our academic excellence is rooted in nurturing African scholarship, advancing innovative and digital learning, and enhancing the quality and

impact of our teaching and research. We are committed to continuously improving across all academic domains. Achieving this will require the collective and sustained effort of our entire academic community.

Strategic Academic Objectives

To advance this priority, we will focus on the following objectives:

6.1.1 Enable our students to complete their programmes in minimum time.

6.1.2 Ensure we achieve our annual first-time entering enrolment targets.

6.1.3 Annually increase our number of graduates.

6.1.4 Enhance research outputs, with a focus on inter-, trans-, multi-, and cross-disciplinary scholarship.

6.1.5 Attract top students from both local and international contexts, reinforcing our global reputation.

6.1.6 Provide tangible support to researchers, especially from the executive.

6.1.7 Invest annually in academic staff development, with a focus on increasing the number of PhD-qualified staff.

6.1.8 Strengthen research infrastructure and ecosystems to support collaborative and interdisciplinary research.

6.1.9 Articulate our UCT graduate attributes in a clearer manner.

Advancing African Scholarship

A recent initiative by our Research Office — the Collective Conversations on Science for Society series — exemplifies our commitment to impactful scholarship. This four-part series convenes experts across disciplines to address real-world challenges, particularly those relevant to the African context. It showcases high-impact research and explores its potential to benefit our cities, country, and continent.

We remain committed to enhancing our science communication with the aim of ensuring our communities understand, will engage with, and value the research produced at UCT in service of society.

Looking Ahead

Over the next five years, UCT will remain a leading institution, welcoming and supporting 30,000 students annually. We are committed to delivering an exceptional higher education experience, both on campus and through innovative platforms. The crafts of teaching, learning, and research will continuously be advanced, rooted in academic excellence and responsive to a changing world.

From the moment a prospective student applies to study at UCT, to the day they graduate and become alumni, we will strive to make every step of their journey with us excellent and transformative. Let us, as a university community, affirm our shared commitment to these strategic academic objectives and to this priority.

6.2 Priority
Financial and Institutional Sustainability

Sustainability has always been a core component of Vision 2030. Since 2021, our focus sharpened particularly on environmental sustainability, guided by a long-term strategy that extends beyond 2030. One of our key environmental goals for example is to become a net-zero-water university by 2050, reflecting our commitment to responsible resource management and being climate resilient.

In recent years though, our financial sustainability has come under significant pressure, demanding urgent and strategic intervention. In response, UCT launched the Financial Sustainability project in 2023. This initiative is conducting in-depth assessments and generating recommendations that will soon translate into targeted efficiency measures and innovative solutions to restore financial stability.

Recognising that institutional sustainability is inseparable from financial sustainability, this priority is being led by our Chief Financial Officer (CFO). To meet objective 6.2.1, the CFO will be working in collaboration with the DVC Research & Internationalisation. Similarly for objectives 6.2.2, 6.2.3 and 6.2.4, he will be working with the Executive Director (ED) Development and Alumni Department. And to meet objective 6.2.8, the CFO will be working with our DVCs for Teaching and Learning, and Research and Internationalisation.

Strategic objectives for Financial Sustainability

As part of this priority, UCT has identified several key objectives:

6.2.1   Establish a self-sustaining research enterprise by the end of 2028.

6.2.2   Undertake strategic fundraising and secure transformational gifts, supported by the Council-mandated University Funding Priorities Committee.

6.2.3   Encourage students to reduce their debt through financial literacy and support initiatives.

6.2.4   Expand third-stream revenue channels to diversify income sources.

6.2.5   Stabilise operating and staffing costs to ensure long-term viability.

6.2.6   Build and strengthen long-term donor relationships through consistent engagement.

6.2.7   Foster a philanthropic institutional culture across the university community.

6.2.8   Achieve annual undergraduate and postgraduate enrolment targets to maintain academic and financial balance.

For more detailed insights into our financial performance and planning, we encourage you to consult our Annual Financial Reports.

Supporting Students and Reducing Debt

We are acutely aware that many students require financial support to break the cycle of poverty that persists in South Africa. Reducing the financial burden on students is a moral and strategic imperative. UCT remains committed to fundraising for academically deserving students, with the goal of returning student debt levels to acceptable levels.

University of the Future

One of the major initiatives that will contribute to our long-term institutional sustainability is the University of the Future project. The work that this project catalysed in 2023, will be incorporated into this priority.

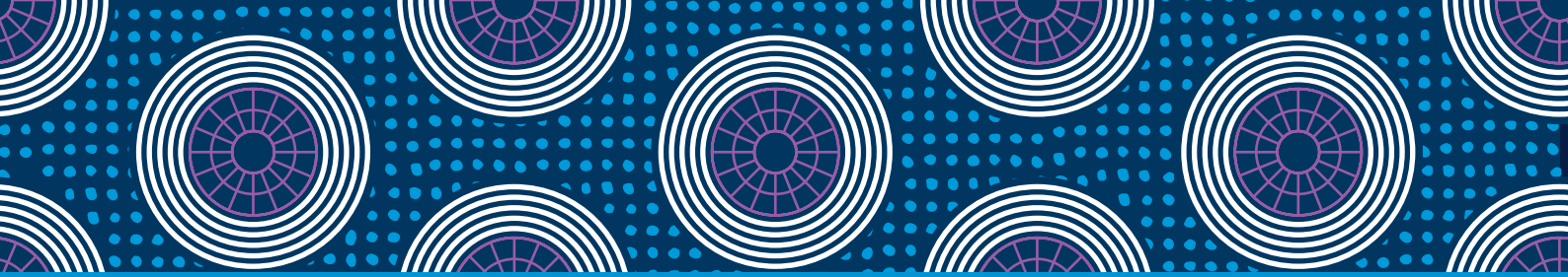## Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Commitments

Beyond financial and environmental sustainability, UCT is also committed to social and governance sustainability. These dimensions are addressed through our:

- Societal mission
- People, culture and society priority (6.3)
- Governance, management & leadership priority (6.5)

Together, these form the foundation of our broader ESG commitments, towards institutional sustainability.

Collective Responsibility

Achieving institutional sustainability requires the collective effort of all stakeholders—students, parents, guardians, staff, corporates, civil society, and government. While financial sustainability is our most immediate concern, it is only one of several indicators we will track as we work towards a resilient UCT.

6.3 ~~Priority~~
People, Culture and Society

UCT is its people. Our students and staff are the heart of our institution, and this priority recognises the need to nurture, celebrate and unleash their full potential. Led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People, Culture and Society, and the Executive Director: Human Resources, this priority is foundational to our ability to sustain our societal relevance, impact, excellence, transformation, sustainability and success.

We will not be able to achieve our strategic goals without a cohesive, healthy, respectful and compassionate institutional culture, one grounded in ubuntu and built on trust. Advancing this priority will require intentional efforts to foster belonging, inclusivity, and transformation across our campuses, where people feel heard, respected and connected.

Strategic Objectives

To strengthen our people and culture, we are committed to the following objectives:

6.3.1 **Implement talent management and development initiatives** as financial resources allow, to support staff growth and retention.
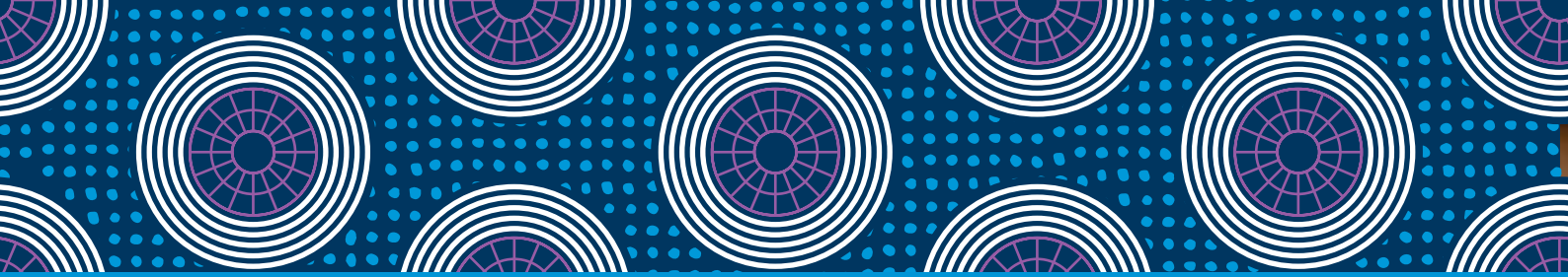
6.3.2 **Develop a fit-for-purpose performance management system** aligned with institutional priorities, values, remuneration policies, and HR systems.

6.3.3 **Enhance engagement for well-being and flourishing**, ensuring staff and student voices inform systemic approaches for work and study fulfilment and effective delivery and accessibility of wellness programmes.

6.3.4 **Invest in ICTS systems for interoperability**, improving student success and people practices through integrated digital platforms.

6.3.5 **Shift to a more integrated and efficient people operating model** – one that leverages digital tools, simplifies processes and enhances service delivery across the institution.

6.3.6 **Introduce digital tools to assess and track employment equity**, enabling data-driven transformation.

6.3.7 **Improve the sense of belonging, inclusivity and transformation** for all members of our community. This includes bridging the divide between academic and professional administrative support staff and building a unified "One UCT".

6.3.8 **Strengthen our institutional culture** rooted in shared values, trust, accountability, and compassion. This includes rolling out a culture survey to track progress.

The Office for Inclusivity and Change is currently reassessing how transformation, inclusivity and diversity are measured, following five years of reporting against established benchmarks in our Transformation Reports up to 2024. This review will inform a reimagined approach to tracking our progress and impact.

Values

As part of this priority, we will revisit and update our institutional values, last approved by Council in 2016. These values will shape our daily engagements, guide policy development, and support the cultural transformation we seek. Insights from the Campus-wide Conversation series and the University of the Future (UoF) project have highlighted the need for new relational engagement avenues and psychologically safe environments. All leaders across UCT must play a role in creating and fostering these spaces.

A Call to Unity

Strategy 2030 envisions a shift from stability to unity. Achieving this requires that we trust, listen to, and respect one another. Every person in our community has value. Every individual's story contributes to our collective success and sustainability. This priority calls on all of us to fully acknowledge and honour the humanity of each member of the UCT community.

6.4 Priority
Stakeholder, Brand and Reputation and Ambassadorship

UCT has a strong brand and global reputation — both have been built and protected by many over the last two centuries. UCT's brand contributes to many top students choosing to study here, many incredibly talented staff choosing UCT as their employer of choice, many highly regarded universities choosing to partner with us in research endeavours, and graduates and alumni professing their pride and association with the university. UCT's reputation also makes a positive contribution to our international rankings and ratings.

We should not take our reputation and brand for granted. If we are honest, some of us have done so in the past. And while the UCT brand is widely recognised and respected, its full equity is yet to be strategically leveraged. Through this priority, which will be led by our Executive Directors for the Communication and Marketing Department, and the Development and Alumni Department, we will encourage all stakeholders to consider how we are building, investing in and protecting brand UCT.

Additionally, we wish to do better in delivering excellent stakeholder experiences. Whether you are a first-time applicant, or an alumnus seeking ways to be more engaged, we want to ensure that you experience communication that is clear and consistent, excellent service, and care and compassion in all your interactions with the university.

Some of the main objectives we are committed to are to:
6.4.1 Ensure positive external messaging and positioning.
6.4.2 Build and contribute towards a positive internal culture.
6.4.3 Develop centralised communication protocols.

6.4.4 Engage with key stakeholders, especially alumni and donors, to attract support for UCT.
6.4.5 Enhance UCT's brand health and reputation.
6.4.6 Invest in UCT's brand marketing and commercialisation especially through driving UCT merchandise sales.
6.4.7 Ensure the retention of UCT's number one ranking in Africa, and to contribute to the university's improved global ranking.

With staff and students added to our alumni network, UCT commands a brand ambassador base of over 250,000 people — an immense and influential community. Beyond this, our reach extends even further through research partners, parents, and countless other stakeholders who contribute to the strength and visibility of the UCT brand. We will spend as much time investing in and improving the experiences of our internal stakeholders, as much as we will for our external stakeholders, because we know a good reputation and strong brand begins with harnessing the support of one's internal stakeholder base.

To enhance all our stakeholder experiences, and to build a strong brand and reputation, will require us to actively listen to stakeholders' needs and to diligently work to address those needs. We will continue to create spaces where our UCT stories can be shared, and to do everything we can to ensure that all stakeholders feel valued throughout their engagements with UCT.

As we enter this next century, we have the opportunity to collaborate with brand UCT and to contribute to our institutional sustainability.
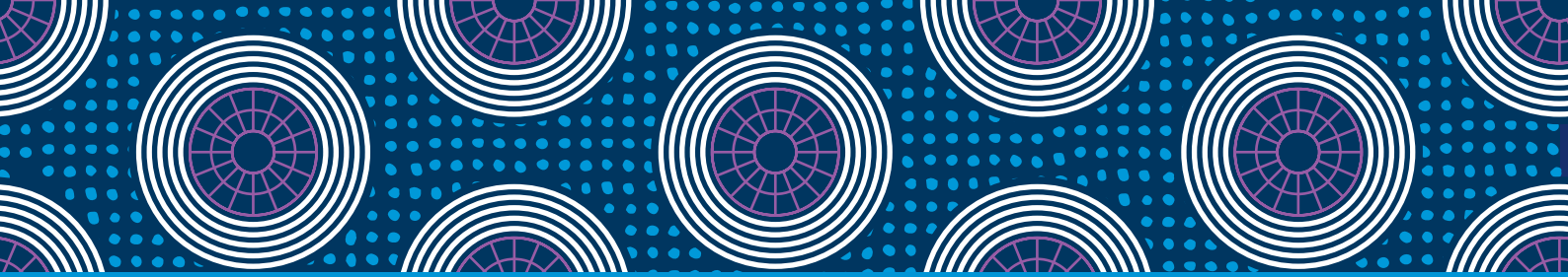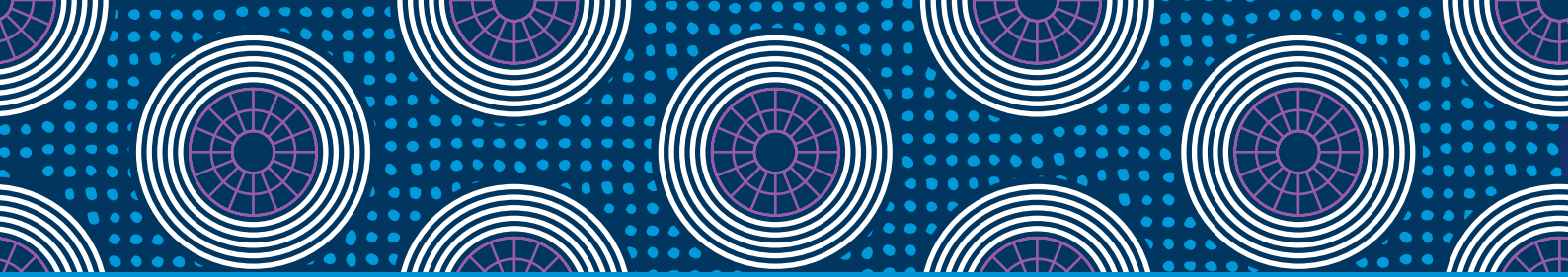
6.5 Priority

Governance, Management and Leadership

In this priority we want to work to instil a culture of leadership across the institution. We want to encourage a deep commitment to holding each other accountable to daily do what is best for UCT to ensure the effective running of the university.

This priority is also informed by the need to stabilise and rebuild a strong executive and management layer of leadership across the university.

Governance especially in relation to how Council, Senate and the Institutional Forum engages and operates, as well as management and leadership which is regarding how the executive, Leadership Lekgotla, senior management within the institution functions for the institution, must continuously be monitored and improved, honestly debated and discussed, and diligently protected to ensure the effective and efficient running of UCT.

Through this priority we will work to ensure that colleagues understand the impact of their decisions, for example, when being assigned delegation of authority. We will focus our efforts to update and streamline our committees, working groups, forums etc. Our governance, management and leadership structures and systems must ensure that information and communication flows meaningfully across and within the institution.

Some of the objectives we are committed to, is to:

6.5.1 Ensure the effective servicing of Council and all its related committees. We need to review committee structures and their terms of reference to ensure that relevant matters are discussed so that they are placed for input at the correct levels across the institution.

6.5.2 Ensure leadership accountability at the appropriate levels across the institution. We must empower colleagues to make decisions at their level, trust their judgement and experience, and, when needed, also hold them accountable.

6.5.3 Identify, assess and develop appropriate mitigations for risks which may affect UCT through our structured risk management processes. These include quarterly discussions and the updating our Strategic Risk Register, as well as updating and discussing various Operational Risk Registers annually.

6.5.4 Ensure the adherence by the UCT Executive to UCT governance frameworks and policies. We will be embarking on a rigorous process of reviewing and where needed updating policies, where policy gaps exist. Executives have already commenced work to develop either standards, guidelines or policies.

6.5.5 Ensure the effective management of all UCT resources.

6.5.6 Prioritise addressing all internal audit as well as Ombud findings, and to develop appropriate action plans to address the findings timeously.

Through this priority we want to ensure that our systems are well developed to sound the alarm early on any inappropriate actions and behaviours which go against our policies and values. Making the meaningful changes we need in this priority will create a culture of responsiveness, transparency and alignment across all levels of the university.

Each of us has a set of accountabilities and responsibilities to UCT, if we do not take these seriously, we will be jeopardising not only the impact of our missions, but also our institutional sustainability.
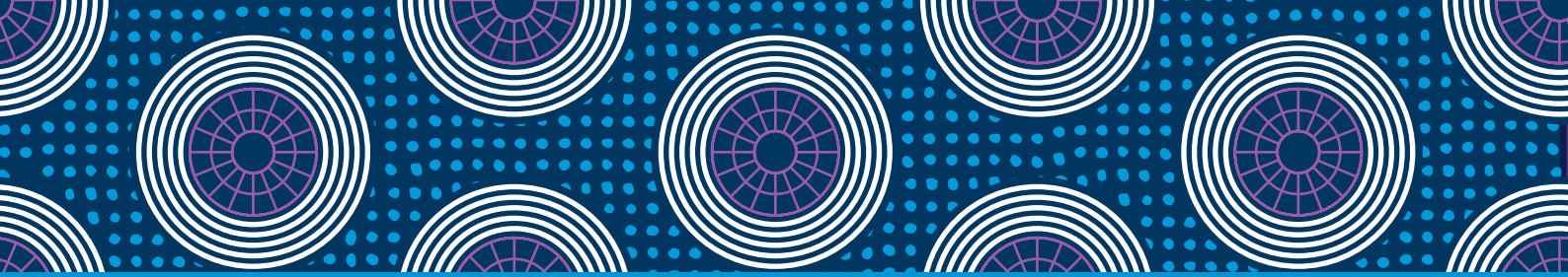
6.6 Strategic Partnerships in Africa and the world

From early on in his tenure as VC Prof Moshabela shared his belief that collaboration is more important than competition. This is a value we should strive to embody in both our internal and external strategic partnerships.

Many of our global and local partnerships especially those with other higher education institutions and bodies are in an excellent and healthy state. We do not take this for granted and understand that we need to continuously cultivate strategic partnerships based on shared values, and a commitment to shared success.

By making this a priority we are acknowledging that we can, and must, work with more intentionality and coordination on all forms of strategic partnerships — especially if we expand our definition of a strategic partner for example to include governments; unions; communities; guardians and parents; our alumni and their families; donors and funders; the private sector; civil society organisations; secondary schools; networks; associations; alliances; media etc. to name a few.
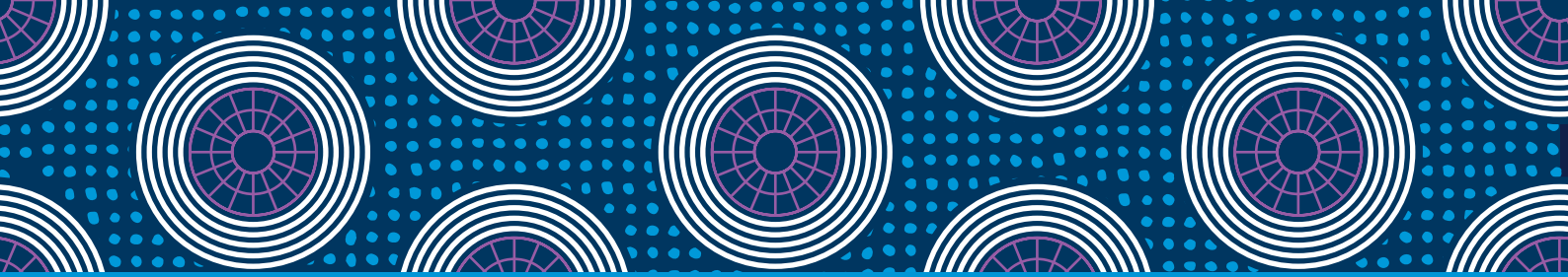
We spend a significant amount of our resources identifying, investing in and nurturing strategic partnerships. These partnerships which are grounded in trust, and achieving shared impact and success must meaningfully contribute to each of our missions, goals, priorities and towards us achieving our objectives. Success in this priority will not only be measured by the number of strategic partnerships, but by the impact of these, especially on our staff and students.

Some of our objectives in this priority area are:

6.6.1 Position UCT as a hub for African scholarship, innovation and entrepreneurship through regional networks and initiatives, to specifically enable the launch UCT's Innovation District and AI Institute.

6.6.2 Build and nurture multidimensional partnerships to advance UCT's missions that enhance UCT's continental and global impact.

6.6.3 Develop and invest in a single digital platform to monitor and evaluate our strategic partnerships.

6.6.4 Define types of existing partnerships and types of new partnerships UCT needs to develop.

6.6.5 Develop an annual strategic engagement strategy with all levels of government in SA.

6.6.6 Develop strategic partnerships with the private sector, and especially corporates operating across the African continent.

We believe that strategic partnerships both internal and external will unlock intergenerational knowledge and exchanges, continental solidarity, social and economic capital and contribute to our institutional impact, relevance and sustainability. Partnering towards shared success, will model our generosity and ubuntu.

7.
Shaping UCT's future

As we look ahead to 2030, we stand at a pivotal moment in our history. Strategy 2030 is a call to action for every member of the UCT community to contribute to a future that is inclusive, innovative, and impactful.

Strategy 2030 embraces a long-term view, ensuring that our efforts are not only responsive to current challenges and objectives within the six priority areas, but also resilient enough to serve our future needs. Strategy 2030 will further harness our efforts towards achieving our goals and making societally relevant and meaningful progress in our missions.

This strategy underscores the urgency of preparing UCT for a future we cannot yet see, but must actively shape through the decisions we make today, because these decisions will echo across generations.

Central to Strategy 2030 is the recognition that UCT's greatest asset is its people. We must create an institutional culture which fosters ubuntu, kindness, empathy and collaboration. Creating an enabling environment where talent is nurtured, psychological safety is prioritised, and diversity is celebrated is essential to our academic enterprise.

Strategy 2030 represents our institutional level priorities and objectives, missions and goals. Faculties' and departments' strategies will either be developed or aligned to ensure that consistent strategic choices can be made across the institution.

Strategy 2030 will be open for UCT community consultation and feedback until 30 September 2025. Feedback, in any form, may be sent to strategy@uct.ac.za.

Faculties, departments and all stakeholder groups are encouraged to arrange either their own in-person, hybrid, or virtual consultation sessions, or to email strategy@uct.ac.za.

Feedback from this consultation period will be considered during October and November 2025. Strategy 2030 will then be updated and be prepared for Council's consideration at their final meeting of 2025.

Values
Our values were adopted in 2016. We want to commence a consultative community process to review our value statement because we appreciate that values inform our choices and our ways of interaction, as well as help to determine our responsibilities and accountabilities to each other and to UCT. Once we have revised values, we will develop a comprehensive plan to socialise them into our daily working lives.

Vision 2050
The final element of reviewing our strategic direction and planning for UCT's sustainability, will be to commence work on developing a Vision 2050 roadmap.

Ultimately, Strategy 2030 is about legacy. It is about ensuring that the future of UCT is defined by courage, compassion, and excellence. It is about making selfless decisions today that will benefit generations to come.

As we move forward, let us do so with bold thinking and open hearts ready to transform, ready to lead and ready to shape a future worthy of our shared aspirations, because together we are UCT.

Resources

Annual Finance Reports

Annual Performance Plans

Bongani Mayosi Report 2020

Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Report 2024

Existing faculty & department strategies

Financial Sustainability project updates

Institutional Reconciliation and Transformation Commission (IRTC) Report 2019

Mpati Report 2023

Research Reports

Size and Shape Plan for 2030 - 2035

Strategic Framework 2016 – 2020

Strategy Evaluation of 2010 – 2014

Strategy 2010 – 2014

Strategy 2001 - 2008

Teaching and Learning Reports

Transformation Reports

University of the Future project updates

VC Campus-wide Conversation Series

Vision 2030

Acronyms

CFO   Chief Financial Officer

DVC   Deputy Vice-Chancellor

ED   Executive Director

ESG   Environmental, Social, Governance

HR   Human Resources

ICTS   Information and Communication Technology Services

IPD   Institutional Planning Department

PhD   Doctor of Philosophy

SDG   Sustainable Development Goals

SMART   Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based

THE   Times Higher Education

UCT   University of Cape Town

UoF   University of the Future

US   United States

VC   Vice-Chancellor

VUCA   Volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous