



Introduction

Univen Strategic Plan

The Executive Management Committee has listened to your concerns, comments and questions regarding the implementation process of the operating model together with the proposed structure in the recently conducted Staff Change Readiness Survey. It is for this reason that we needed to reflect on some of the frequently asked questions that when answered could aid better understanding and your support in ensuring the effective roll-out of the strategy and subsequent structure.

Who Are We ?

The University of Venda, situated in Thohoyandou in the scenic Vhembe district of the Limpopo Province of South Africa was established in 1982.

The university has ever experienced tremendous growth and change. From its early years, staff members were drawn from various backgrounds in South Africa but by 1994 staff members were increasingly recruited from other African countries and over seas.



Q What are we changing?

A. With the University's Strategy 2016-2020, having lived its course and coming to an end in December 2020, the University of Venda is changing its institutional strategic focus from output orientation to more of ensuring impact and relevance of its strategic deliverables.

The new Strategy 2021-2025 of the University was approved by Council for implementation effective from January 2021 until December 2025. The renewed strategy is centred on the ARISE (Admission, Retention, Instruction, Scholarship and Enablement) Value Chain Model, which is meant to facilitate the rejuvenation and positioning of Univen for competitive advantage and comparability with other universities in the region that demonstrate best practice in quality of student experience, technologies in pedagogy, institutional research and institutional governance. Compared to the outgoing strategy, the new Strategy 2021-2025 is designed not only to improve the quality of academic provisioning and student success, but to also strengthen the business and financial viability and sustainability of the institution.

It is inevitable that the change of strategy will bring about a corresponding change in the business operating model, which describes the architecture and framework for University's operations in terms of the systems and structures designed to enable the execution of the strategy and value creation thereof in line with the objectives of the new strategy. The new business operating model considers DHET funding imperatives which are fundamental to the business, and financial viability and sustainability of Higher Education, particularly the Programme Qualification Mix (PQM), the differential subsidy allocation according to the different CESM categories and research and scholarship funding.

Q When are we changing?

A. The Council approved new Strategy 2021-2025 will be implemented with effect from the beginning of 2021 through the Annual Performance Plan (APP) 2021. As can be expected, the operating organisational structure has also been appropriately reconfigured, aligned and capacitated in line with the objectives of the new strategy, and only once it has been fully consulted upon and benchmarked against best practices in the sector, will the reconfigured structure be implemented through a phased-in approach starting from 2021. In a nutshell, the timelines for all these changes should be expected starting from 2021 until the next review.



Q Why are we changing?

A. To ensure that public institutions do not deviate from their expected contribution towards executing the mandate of the Ministry and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the revised Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions (2014) as published in terms of sections 41 and 69 of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997) establish that a public higher education institution must prepare a strategic plan to clearly set out its vision, mission, priorities and strategic goals and objectives for at least a five-year period.

The review of the University's Strategy every five years allows the University an op-

portunity to re-prioritise its plans in alignment with its mandate to remain relevant to the higher education's strategic and performance imperatives.

The new strategy establishes the common focus for all institutional stakeholders to collectively work towards a shared vision, well-defined common goals, refining operations and describing actions needed to attain the desired outcomes/results. The imminent change is informed and necessitated mainly by increasingly changing higher education landscape which is characterised by renewed policy demands that continuously need to be met.

Q What are risks of not changing?

A. Change is the only constant phenomenon in life, it takes place when we want it and even when we do not want it. In other words, change is inevitable and inherent in the University's business practices. The resistance to change, has a potential to rob the university of an opportunity to become better, do better and make a mark in both its internal and external operating environment.

The risk of not changing as a University far outweighs the benefits of change, as it most unlikely becomes better at what it does and achieve better results. The precedent years of the University's existence have proven that putting more effort in ensuring our own change as a University,

we can ultimately be counted among the best universities, not only in the country, but also the continent and world at large. More importantly, if our business practice does not consider the higher education business model and funding imperatives, we run a significant risk of not being solidly positioned for strategic competitive advantage and for business and financial viability and sustainability.

Failure to embrace change has the potential to rigidly confine the University to inefficient and ineffective ways of conducting business which may not be beneficial to the University in terms of achieving the essential objects of its renewed strategy.

Q What's in it for me?

A. As the University of Venda Strategy changes, its operating model and organisational structure changes too to ensure proper alignment and support for the achievement of organisational objectives enshrined in the strategy 2021-2025.

The change in the organisational structure necessitates a corresponding change in people's skills aptitudes and competencies as prerequisites for adaptation. Changing the way we do things as individual employees of the University of Venda requires change in our attitudes towards work, and rendering of a service. Organisational change also benefits the individual employees, as this will translate into better jobs, smart ways of doing the work, ability to achieve individual results, ability to belong to a family of high performance team, better rewards in recognition of the work done, and work-life balance.

Most importantly, the acceptance and embrace of a need for change will create an enabling environment for the University to visibly feature prominently in the global space in terms of University rankings based on research outputs. The impact and relevance that the University seeks to position itself for, through its renewed strategy, will find expression in and resonate with its readiness and willingness to change. In other words, by properly adapting to and effectively managing change, the University will be in a better position to achieve the desired organisational and individual strategic results.

Q How will I be impacted?

A. When the University of Venda becomes better in the design and implementation of business systems and processes, the impact on the employees becomes positive in relation to efficiency. Change often translates into good business support systems, smart ways of carrying out business assignments, interactive platforms of blended teaching and learning as well as a stimulating working environment that encourage a positive mental attitude.

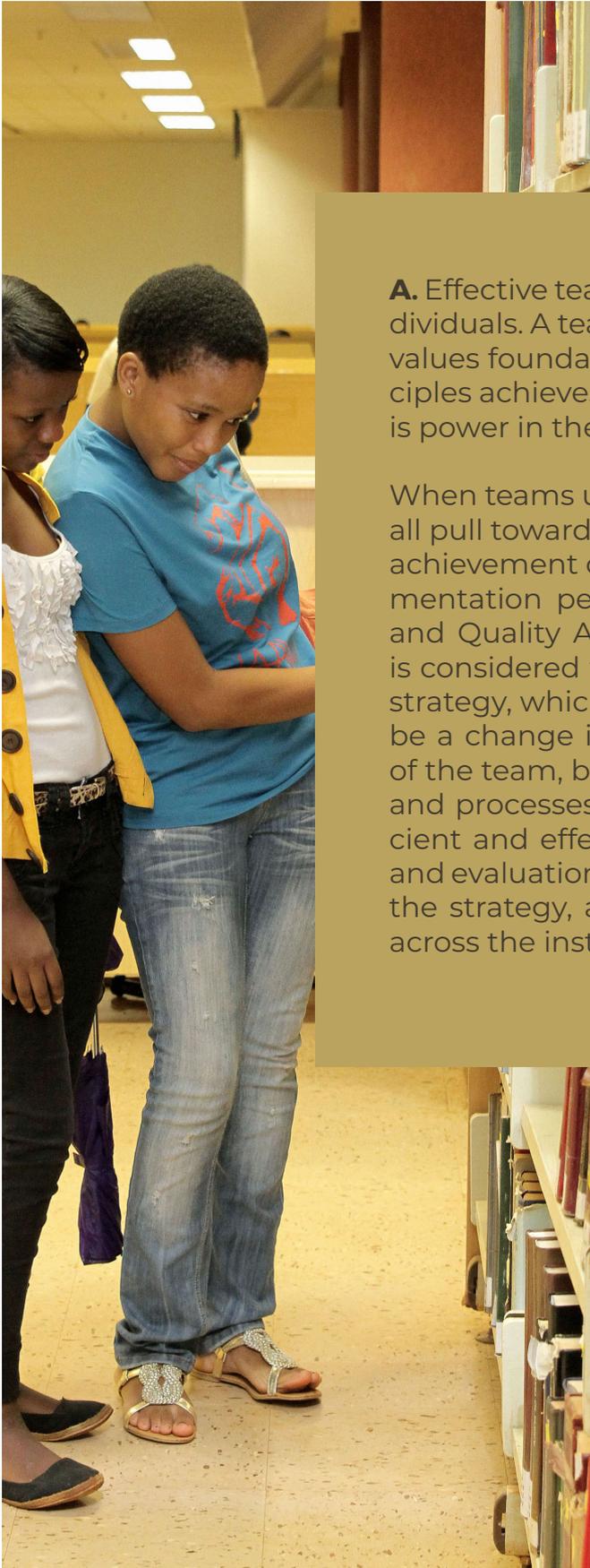
Better career prospects through continuous learning and development, and transition between Academia and Administrative streams are considered the inherent outcomes of change. Belonging to an institution which is characterised by good reputation of achieving results paves a way for individual growth and continuous career development for all members of the University of Venda family.



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How will my team be impacted?



A. Effective teams are comprised of effective individuals. A team that is grounded on the same values foundation and adopted the same principles achieves results as a collective, and there is power in the collective.

When teams understand the strategy, they will all pull towards the same direction towards the achievement of such. From the strategy implementation perspective, Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance team of the university is considered to be the main driver of the new strategy, which simply means that there has to be a change in terms of not only the attitude of the team, but most importantly the systems and processes that are in place to ensure efficient and effective measurement (monitoring and evaluation) of desired performance against the strategy, and to communicate the results across the institution thereof.



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