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GENERAL NOTICE

NOTICE 136 OF 2009

REPORT OF THE MINISTERIAL TASK TEAM,

**Dr. Joe Phaahla
Dr. Nico Cloete
Dr. Jon Lewis
Dr. Yvonne Dladla
Dr. Mashupye Kgaphola
Ms. L Vilakazi-Tselane**

**TO THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF EDUCATION
GNM PANDOR, M.P.**

**INVESTIGATION BY THE MINISTERIAL TASK TEAM INTO THE NORTH-
WEST UNIVERSITY**

DECEMBER 2008

**REPORT ON THE INVESTIGATION
BY THE MINISTERIAL TASK TEAM
INTO THE NORTH-WEST
UNIVERSITY**

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

The North-West University came into being as a single university in 2004 through the merger between the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PUCHE) and the University of the North-West (UniWest), and the incorporation of staff and students of the Sebokeng campus of Vista University with the Vaal Triangle campus of the former Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (Institutional Plan 2008–2010, p.1).

The University consists of three campuses, namely, Potchefstroom, Mafikeng and the Vaal Triangle, spread over a geographic distance of over 330 km. The three campuses differ not only in terms of their history, but also in other important dimensions such as the numbers of enrolled students, the diversity of academic programmes, their language policies, their institutional practices, and so on. The Potchefstroom campus is the largest of the three, followed by Mafikeng. Each campus is headed by a rector who is accountable to the Vice-Chancellor for the management of his or her site.

The merger that gave rise to the North-West University was part of a broader government initiative to restructure the higher education system in South Africa. This merger was aimed at achieving the following strategic goals as per Government Gazette No. 1689, 14 November 2003:

- Overcoming the apartheid-induced divide between historically white and historically black institutions;
- Promoting a more equitable staff and student body;
- Enabling the development and provision of a wider and more comprehensive range of vocational, in particular technikon-type, professional and general programmes, in line with regional and national needs;
- Building administrative, management, governance and academic capacity;
- Consolidating the deployment and use of academic personnel;
- Building research capacity; and
- Enhancing sustainability through increased size.

The merger came into effect on 1 January 2004, establishing the North-West University, with the seat of the institution being in Potchefstroom.

2. Background to the Ministerial Task Team investigation

The Minister of Education observed that the North-West University (NWU) has been experiencing a number of problems as it continues to grow and become consolidated as a merged institution. These problems have surfaced and are most prominently illustrated by several disruptions of academic activities that have occurred at the Mafikeng campus over since merger. This resulted in the closure of the Mafikeng campus on at least three occasions in 2008 alone. The Minister further noted that there has been an apparent lack of academic integration within the University, as well as some staff discontent on the Vaal Triangle campus.

Against this background, the Minister appointed a Task Team of Dr J. Phaahla (Chairperson), Dr M. Kgaphola, Dr N. Cloete, Dr J. Lewis, Dr E Dladla and Ms L. Vilakazi-Tselane on 10 October 2008 to carry out an investigation with a view to finding a sustainable solution to the problems that have plagued the Mafikeng campus in particular, but critically with a view to locating these problems within a holistic institutional context. The broad brief of the Task Team was to identify the cause of the ongoing problems in the University and to propose solutions thereto, and to evaluate the extent to which the NWU has achieved the intended objectives of the merger and the processes it has followed towards this end.

3. Terms of reference for the Task Team

The specific terms of reference for the Task Team were to report on the following:

- (i) The causes of disruptions, instability and discontent at all the NWU campuses, especially the Mafikeng campus, in the context of the goals and objectives of the merger and the National Plan for Higher Education, with a view to enhancing the efficacy of the merger and identifying and proposing a resolution to the ongoing problems at the University.
- (ii) The extent, manner, success and efficacy of integrating institutional policies and practices, across all campuses, in such matters as academic structures, governance and management, including financial management, resource allocation and human resources in the context of the objectives of the merger.
- (iii) The extent, manner and success of enhancing social cohesion and a new institutional culture across all campuses that overcomes the apartheid-induced divide between historically white and historically black institutions.
- (iv) The measures and actions necessary to enhance the efficacy of the merger.

4. Process

The Task Team was initially provided with background documentation on the NWU, specifically documentation that was germane to the disruptions that had besieged the Mafikeng campus. Further documentation was subsequently provided that covered a wider spectrum of aspects of the University, dealing with management and processes at the institutional level, including annual reports, strategic plans, and communiqués and memoranda relating to the immediate and past events at the Mafikeng campus. Documents that captured the activities of and relevant developments on individual campuses were submitted to the Task Team during its various site visits.

For the purpose of gathering oral submissions and any appropriate supporting documents, the Task Team met with various stakeholders at the three NWU campuses. At the institutional level, separate meetings were held with the institutional management, the university Council and the institutional forum. Separate meetings were held at each campus with the following categories of internal stakeholders:

- Campus management
- Staff unions operating on the campus
- Academic and support staff in their professional context outside of union representation
- The Student Representative Council (SRC)
- Organised student formations
- Other persons or groups on campus who felt a need to make separate submissions
- Meetings were held at the Mafikeng campus on 15 and 16 October, at the Vaal Triangle campus on 20 and 21 October, and at the Potchefstroom campus on 22 and 23 October 2008. The Task Team collected from a number of stakeholders a range of documents as part of or in support of their respective submissions, in addition to listening to oral arguments by the parties. In some instances, these supporting documents were submitted in the period following the formal sittings of the Task Team, by mutual agreement between the Task Team and the parties concerned.

In undertaking the investigation the Task Team set out to listen and observe and to peruse various documents and then compile a report to the Minister. This report uses the terms of reference as a starting point and additionally provides insight into some of the complexities of the debates and the submissions made to the Task Team by the various parties.

PART TWO

OVERVIEW OF THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY, AND SUBMISSIONS MADE TO THE TASK TEAM

5. Overview of the North-West University

5.1 Institutional Office and institutional management

The NWU operates a two-tier business model which comprises a centralised Institutional Office and three campuses that operate as separate business units. The Institutional Office, headed by the Vice-Chancellor, is responsible for implementing strategies, plans, budgets, policies and rules approved by Council. It is further tasked with ensuring that there is university-wide consistency in its areas of responsibility. Other members of the Institutional Office include the Institutional Registrar and a number of executive directors. The Institutional Office is currently located in Potchefstroom, close to the campus.

Members of the Institutional Office together with the three campus rectors constitute the institutional management, which is the executive arm of the institution. Campus rectors are the executive heads of their respective campuses and are responsible for the strategic, functional and operational management of each campus.

5.2 Mafikeng campus

The Mafikeng campus is the second largest of the NWU's three campuses. In 2007 it had a student population of 8,702, comprising 7,891 undergraduate, 662 master's, and 149 doctoral students. The overall enrolment figure included 1,400 students who were enrolled in distance programmes. The campus has five faculties: Agriculture, Science and Technology; Human and Social Sciences; Education; Commerce and Administration; and Law.

In 2007 the campus conferred a total of 1,176 certificates and diplomas, 926 bachelor's degrees, 208 honours degrees, 62 master's degrees and 5 doctorates. The highest proportion (1,275) of the graduates were from the Faculty of Education, followed by the Faculty of Commerce and Administration (462).

The Mafikeng campus has the lowest research productivity of the three campuses. In 2007 it generated a total of 10.08 research article equivalents, compared to 13.03 in 2006, with more than 50% of these outputs being from the Faculty of Agriculture, Science and Technology.

The Institutional Office has run a number of capacity building workshops at Mafikeng on various topics related to research, in an effort to increase academics' research output.

5.3 Potchefstroom campus

The Potchefstroom campus is the largest of the NWU's three campuses. In 2007 it had a student population of 32,723 students, comprising 30,382 undergraduate, 1,773 master's, and 568 doctoral students. The overall enrolment figure included 16,000 students enrolled in distance programmes. The campus has eight faculties: Arts; Natural Sciences; Theology; Educational Sciences; Economic and Management Sciences; Law; Engineering; and Health Sciences. In addition, it has 13 research units/focus areas, as well as many academic and research centres of excellence.

In 2007 the campus conferred a total of 3,942 certificates and diplomas, 2,346 bachelor's degrees, 1,272 honours degrees, 516 master's degrees and 108 doctorates. The majority of the graduates (4694) were from the Faculty of Educational Sciences, followed by the Faculty of Commerce and Administration (1,279).

The Potchefstroom campus accounts for the majority of the NWU's research output and researchers rated by the National Research Foundation (NRF). In 2007 the campus generated 320.80 research article equivalents, compared to 313 articles in 2006. The number of NRF-rated researchers increased from 78 to 91 in the same period.

5.4 Vaal Triangle campus

The Vaal Triangle campus is the smallest of the NWU's campuses. In 2007 it had a student population of 3,325, comprising 3,022 undergraduate, 194 master's and 109 doctoral students. The campus has two faculties: the Faculty of Humanities, with four schools, and the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Information Technology, with three schools.

In 2007 the campus conferred a total of 149 certificates and diplomas, 375 bachelor's degrees, 210 honours degrees, 40 master's degrees (including MBAs), and 11 doctorates.

The Vaal Triangle campus has recently recorded a modest improvement in research productivity within the NWU configuration. In 2007 it generated 27.34 research article equivalents, compared to 25.1 in 2006. The campus attributes its improving research output to two specific in-house strategic initiatives. The first strategy involves a management system whereby academic staff members have to allocate a set amount (40%) of their time to research activity. The second entails a programme for improving academics' overall academic qualifications. With regard to this second strategy, it is noted that the number of academics with master's and doctoral qualifications increased from 25 and 38 to 31 and 40 respectively during the period 2006 to 2007. In all, 83% of the academics on the Vaal Triangle campus hold either a master's or a doctoral degree.

6. Submissions made to the Task Team at the institutional level

6.1 Institutional management

6.1.1 *Institution-wide progress and developments on the merger*

The institutional management made a presentation to the Task Team that covered a wide range of areas pertaining to the institution, including its history, evolution, strategic and operational imperatives, performance updates in terms of the core business, transformation achievements and challenges, and so on. In terms of history and strategic direction, it was mentioned that the new University had from the onset decided firstly to 'secure' its core business and secondly to undertake a '*sustainable transformation*', including employment equity, '*the fruits of which would only be clearly visible after ten years*'. In the course of this presentation, the Vice-Chancellor observed that other merged universities had apparently opted for a different approach as far as the process of transformation is concerned.

The presentation highlighted important milestones in the evolution and the shaping of the NWU following the merger. Illustrative aspects in this regard include an accelerated process that saw the installation within the first year (2004) of the substantive Council, the Vice-Chancellor and the institutional management, and the adoption of essential new policies and the institutional statute. These were followed by an integration phase in 2005 in which various critical operational decisions were taken with respect to policies, rules and regulations, planning, maintenance, and the overall shape of the institution. The NWU institutional statute was published in the Government Gazette in August 2005.

The integration phase was further given impetus through the adoption of an institutional plan 2006–2008 whose focus was to 'move towards becoming an effective, transformed and balanced tuition-research institution'. In 2006 Council established a committee to oversee the University's transformation agenda. In the period up to 2007, the University has shown a steady increase in a number of areas, such as student enrolment (40,145 in 2004 and 44,750 in 2007), the undergraduate pass rate (75.2% in 2004 and 79.5% in 2007), and research articles published (275 in 2004 and approximately 375 in 2007). The institution's total budget has meanwhile grown from R953 million in 2004 to R1,420 million in 2007. In the same period, the University has increased its self-generated income from R311 million to R578 million, while decreasing its percentage of state income by 2.37%.

Some of the achievements highlighted by the University for this period include being voted joint best governed university in the country in a PricewaterhouseCoopers survey, and being joint second best in graduation rates for undergraduate and master's students and fourth best for doctoral students. Subsequently, the University added to its accolades an award from the Pan South African Language Board (Panslab) for contributing to multilingualism.

Overall, the institutional management considers the following to be key challenges in the next phase of consolidating the NWU merger:

- Improving performance in the core business and maintaining financial viability,

- Increasing the pace of transformation on redress and equity, and 'normalising' student experience on all campuses,
- Improving internationalisation,
- Improving quality assurance processes after the HEQC audit, and
- Continuing to balance unity and diversity, centralisation and decentralisation in the management of the University.

6.1.2 Developments and events at the Mafikeng campus

The Vice-Chancellor and the institutional management team made a number of statements and responded to some questions raised by the Task Team about developments at the Mafikeng campus. The main issues the management raised can be summarised as follows:

Lack of academic activity: The Vice-Chancellor in particular was emphatic that a key challenge for the Mafikeng campus was that there was very little academic activity on the site. He cited as a contributing factor to this the low base of qualifications amongst academic staff on the campus. He stated that this in turn led to a low capacity for creating and sustaining a research culture on the campus. The University has adopted a strategy to address this, by creating a strategic fund to enable academic staff to improve their qualifications. The same fund is also used to attract visiting professors to the campus. Part of the strategy for uplifting Mafikeng has been the creation or identification of niche areas, for example radiation science technology, animal health science, and accounting.

Poor discipline and communication culture: Management questions the bona fides of the Staff Association at Mafikeng. The Vice-Chancellor argues that the Staff Association was not willing to accept the institutional discipline that has come about following the merger. Further, it was claimed that staff at Mafikeng conveniently 'chose' to be ignorant of new developments that were taking place in the University; an apparent failure by staff to read internal communication was cited as an illustration of this claim. The Vice-Chancellor also said that in 2006 the University had taken a decision to derecognise the Staff Association after the Association breached the terms of their recognition agreement.

Student related matters: The Mafikeng campus experienced incidents of student unrest in 2004, 2006 and 2008. The causes of these events were varied, and included discontent with accommodation, fees, NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) grants and the SRC constitution. With regard to acts of violence, management has been lenient towards offenders in the past, but it has now decided to show little tolerance for such acts. It was management's view that the drawn-out strikes of 2008 were the result of students being unwilling to accept management's resolution not to compromise on the enforcement of university rules and policies on student discipline. In the same vein, though, management acknowledged that there might indeed be some inconsistency in the application of its disciplinary codes across the three NWU campuses, and that there was a need to improve communication with staff and students. Management also expressed a need to improve security on campus, including the installation of cameras in strategic areas.

6.2 The NWU Council

In his opening statement about the disruptions at Mafikeng campus, the chairperson of Council remarked that Council has called on everybody to work together for a speedy resolution. He observed that unfortunately there was no mechanism in place for resolving disputes between students and management. He stated that Council has in turn mandated management to seek solutions to the ongoing problems.

Members of Council felt strongly that the problems at Mafikeng campus were caused by some 'unreasonable' elements who were not willing to abide by standard or university norms. It was even suggested that staff at Mafikeng were 'afraid of transformation'. There was also a pervasive belief in Council that the problems at Mafikeng were linked to or otherwise influenced by some 'forces' outside the University. In essence, the views expressed by Council regarding Mafikeng were very similar to the analysis presented by the institutional management. It is significant that in both instances there was no immediate suggestion of a way to engage with the alleged 'external forces'.

Against the backdrop of this belief in Council, there were some dissenting voices that called for a less confrontational approach by the university authorities. On the one hand, they called for a more sensitive and unified approach by the University, particularly when it engages with students. On the other, they proposed that the University enlist the intervention of 'experts' to help it engage with the vexed matter of the supposed 'outside forces'. In acknowledgement of these sentiments, there was a suggestion that the University, and the Mafeking campus in particular, perhaps needed to hold an indaba to look into the full spectrum of issues that had been raised and to seek ways to build a new culture.

6.3 The institutional forum

The current institutional forum (IF) has been operational only since early 2007. It was decided at inception that there would be only one institutional IF and no campus-based equivalents. At present the position of chairperson of the IF rotates on a yearly basis between the three campuses. It was reported that Mafikeng staff and students have only fairly recently started participating in the IF, for various reasons including, it seems, logistics. The IF submits quarterly reports to Council on its activities.

In terms of activities, the IF has been operating mostly on a reactive basis. Indeed, this observation is supported by the IF's statement to the Task Team that Council has not been asking them for advice, thus effectively limiting the IF's usefulness. So far the IF has not formally discussed the problems of the Mafikeng campus, because the 'affected' stakeholders have not tabled the matter for this purpose. However, it is worth noting that one IF office bearer ventured the opinion that in his experience the situation at Mafikeng campus had been influenced by external factors, although he did not elaborate on this.

7. Submissions made to the Task Team at the Mafikeng campus

7.1 Mafikeng campus management

7.1.1 General developments on campus

Mafikeng campus management submitted that the current problems here have a historical context. In terms of staff profile and overall capacity, including research capacity, management argues that some adverse decisions had been made by the Council of the former University of the North-West (UniWest), which ultimately had a negative impact on the Mafikeng campus.

Firstly, the campus had experienced a debilitating loss of experienced and productive academics in terms of teaching but especially research capability in the period predating the merger. The Vice-Rector: Quality and Planning sums up the situation thus:

In 1994 it was found that the University of the North-West was overstaffed and to remedy the situation staff members were offered lucrative retrenchment packages in 1996. The most productive people left because they knew that they would find employment elsewhere. This process was repeated in 1998 leaving the university with very few active researchers and very few academic staff with doctoral qualifications. A decision was taken to fill the vacant positions left by those who took retrenchment packages by redeploying the remaining staff. However, nothing was done to retrain the redeployed staff to enable them to deal with the demands of their new positions. This had a major negative impact on research productivity and throughput-rate as well as the morale of staff members.

Furthermore, very important positions and crucial committees in the university establishment were frozen or left vacant for many years, for example, University Planner and Planning Committee, Quality Assurance Officer and Quality Assurance Committee, Research Committee, and Curriculum Committee. In addition, the positions of Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic were not permanently filled and people were appointed in an acting capacity. Research administration and management including research funds were devolved to the faculties. Each faculty created a research committee to decide on the distribution of the funds. From 2003 the Deans were required to report on how research funds were spent in the previous year before receiving their allocation for the next year. At the end of 2003, two Deans did not submit such reports with the result that they did not receive funding for the following year. Eventually the reports were delivered towards the end of 2004 and research funds were released for 2005. The rationale was that Deans of Faculties are accountable for the research funds and not the faculty research committee.

As a result of lack of leadership, the management of the university deteriorated and the systems collapsed or became dysfunctional. The IT system was replaced by one that could not generate the necessary management information. The University could not even print student results, but had to request the software owners, University of

Stellenbosch, to initiate the printing process – obviously for a fee. The academic promotion policy was non-existent.

Secondly, the campus has suffered from a low staff morale caused by a combination of factors including governance and systems dysfunctionality, as already suggested above. This state of affairs has apparently not changed much in the wake of the merger. In turn, the low staff morale has fed into a generally poor staff work ethic at the Mafikeng campus. The situation was not helped by a decline in the general maintenance of infrastructure on the campus, coupled with an unplanned increased student enrolment.

Thirdly, a combination of the aforementioned factors created a situation in which at the time of the merger the former UniWest found itself at a huge disadvantage relative to its merger partner, the former PUCHE. This disadvantage was expressed visibly and immediately in the inability of Mafikeng campus to field enough candidates to contest positions that later arose at the Institutional Office.

A further and equally significant manifestation of the differences in capacity between the campuses has been that Mafikeng has generally been unable to match its two counterparts at the level of technical competence in the course of implementing the merger. This development seems to have left Mafikeng staff feeling marginalised or being overridden by their counterparts. These factors cumulatively have led to what staff, and also students, at Mafikeng commonly and indignantly refer to as the 'Potchification' of the NWU. According to management, this perception seems to account to a large extent for the Mafikeng staff and students' general feeling of disenchantment with the merger.

Management submitted that there have been some new developments to support an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning at Mafikeng; examples cited include a new academic complex that has just been completed, a facility for animal health science, and four new student residential units. The University has also apparently developed a comprehensive ten-year maintenance plan that covers all the campuses.

7.1.2 Student-related matters including disruptions of academic activity

Management states that student services have generally improved since the merger. On a substantive note, it was highlighted that students at Mafikeng campus receive more tuition than their counterparts at Potchefstroom, as these students generally need much more academic support on account of their background. The University claims to have improved its management of financial aid, including most importantly the NSFAS funds.

Management attributes the recurring disruptions at the campus to a number of factors. It traces the origin of the student unrest of 2008 ultimately to a dispute about fee increments. Management had negotiated tuition fees for 2008 with the SRC in the latter half of 2007. In spite of this agreement, some students under the banner of Sasco (South African Students Congress) approached management in early 2008 seeking to renegotiate the same fees. When management did not grant the request, these students initiated a class boycott that was accompanied by some acts of violence and damage to university property. Following these events, some students were charged for breaching the university code of conduct. The

outcome of the disciplinary hearings was that some students were suspended while others were expelled from the University. This outcome in turn sparked a new round of student protests which culminated in the six-week-long class suspension in September/October 2008. It was this development that prompted the Minister to initiate the current investigation.

In general, management painted a bleak picture of the relationship between itself and the student body, or at least the organised student formations, including the SRC. A telling anecdote is that management and the SRC had previously already had to seek the intervention of a court of law to settle a dispute about the validity of the SRC constitution. By management's own account, they have generally tended to establish a working relationship with the SRC only towards the end of the organisation's term.

As to the causes of the recurring disruptions at Mafikeng, management pointed to two main factors or trends. On the one hand, management asserts that internally Sasco has been the main culprit, as it consistently refuses to acknowledge the authority of the SRC unless Sasco itself is the dominant party in the SRC. In seeking to make the case, management presented a historical outline of student unrest at the campus over a period of nearly ten years. Management, however, failed to use this opportunity to present a breakdown of the specific issues that students had raised in each of the listed unrest episodes, even after the Task Team specifically asked for this. On the other hand, the other cause of the disruptions was said to be some 'outside interests'. Management feels that the University's problems have been strongly influenced by external parties, in particular political parties, trade unions and business interests. Significantly, management expressed a sense of desperation with these 'external' influences on the University, but seemed to have no plan or mechanism to deal with them. Indeed, on this matter the same can be said of both the Council and the NWU institutional management as a whole.

7.2 Student leaders

The student delegation that met with the Task Team consisted of representatives from the SRC, student political formations, the student sports council, student faculty councils, and the student religious fraternity.

In their opening statements about the crisis that has engulfed the Mafikeng campus, many of the students who spoke distinctly expressed a loss of confidence in the campus management, as well as a loss of trust in the institutional management. The students cited a number of incidents in support of their views.

According to the students, the events that led to the disruption of normal business at Mafikeng arose out of a dispute initially about fee increments and poor service delivery at the campus. They argue that the decision that was taken by Council in 2005 to equalise fees between the various NWU campuses by 2011 was fundamentally flawed. They contend that it is unfair and unjustifiable for Mafikeng students to pay the same fees as their counterparts in, for example, Potchefstroom, while they do not enjoy the same levels of service. They argue that Mafikeng has not yet benefited from the merger.

Earlier, in March 2008, students had embarked on a protest in pursuit of their demands against fee increments, which led ultimately to some students being prosecuted and variously sanctioned by the University. Students have contested the validity of the whole disciplinary process, arguing that it was procedurally flawed up to the level of the appeal board. One of the contentious issues they have repeatedly raised is that in their view the disciplinary code of the University was being applied selectively and inconsistently across the institution. In their view, Mafikeng students have thus far been treated more harshly than students at Potchefstroom campus for the same level of offences. To illustrate, it was alleged that the Vice-Chancellor treated offending students at Potchefstroom with some compassion, while Mafikeng students enjoyed none of this indulgence.

The student leaders contradicted the statements made by management about progress made in the merger. Their verdict is that the merger is merely 'an alliance of campuses'. Further, there was an allegation that Potchefstroom campus is dictating terms in the University, and that stakeholders at Mafikeng, including the SRC, are hardly ever consulted about key decisions. Students suspect that there is an undisclosed plan by the institutional management, presumably with the connivance of the campus management, to ultimately close down the Mafikeng campus. They cited as evidence in this regard the relocation of some service departments, for example finance, from Mafikeng to Potchefstroom. The decision by the University to limit the number of postgraduate offerings at Mafikeng, notwithstanding management's explanation about this, was also cited as a further indication of this alleged intent.

Students submit that the Institutional Director of Student Affairs was not at all involved during the crisis that has erupted at Mafikeng campus. This statement came as rather surprising to the Task Team, admittedly because it flowed against the Team's assumptions about the functioning of the Institutional Office in general. Apparently the Vice-Chancellor has been the only member of the Institutional Office who was directly involved with the problems at Mafikeng campus. Students have called for the removal of the Campus Rector as one of the measures needed to stabilise the situation at Mafikeng.

7.3 Staff Association and Nehawu

The staff unions presented mostly a picture of a fractured relationship between management and themselves. They submitted a list of grievances and allegations they claimed was proof that there was a problem with both the campus management and the institutional management. These included the following:

- Management has failed to prevent the crisis that has erupted on campus. One of the problems cited in this regard was an alleged 'divide and rule' approach driven by campus management.
- Institutional management is hostile towards union activity on campus. This is exemplified by the decision taken by management in 2006 to 'derecognise' the Staff Association; this action was seen as a way of punishing the Association. In a move to

bolster its position, the Staff Association has enjoined external stakeholders such as Nehawu (National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union), Cosatu (Congress of South African Trade Unions), and others into the problems of the campus.

- The management style of the Campus Rector, and even that of the Vice-Chancellor, leaves much to be desired. Apparently the Campus Rector has been dictatorial and impervious in his dealings with staff generally. It was alleged that there have been many staff resignations in the recent past, most of which were presumably linked to the management culture in the institution. According to staff, three executive deans had resigned from the faculties of Agriculture, Science and Technology; Human and Social Sciences; and Law in the past year after they had voiced certain concerns with management.
- The Institutional Office is dominated by whites from the Potchefstroom campus, and is not aligned with the expectations of employment equity. In addition, it was alleged that the employment process at the office has not been transparent.
- Management has imposed limits on the number of postgraduate students that academics at Mafikeng can supervise, which is in contrast to the situation at Potchefstroom where no such restrictions are in place. This move, coupled with the fact that student numbers at Mafikeng have recently been declining, is seen as part of a strategy to ultimately close down the Mafikeng campus.
- The Staff Association generally perceives its members to be underpaid, compared with their counterparts in Potchefstroom.

The Staff Union has called for these grievances to be properly addressed. Further, they have called for the resignation of both the Campus Rector and the Vice-Chancellor, as they argue these two officials have failed in their respective mandates.

7.4 Academic and support staff

In their submission, the combined sample of academic and support staff members covered a number of issues. There was a strong sentiment expressed by the staff that met with the Tasks Team during the visit that the Institutional Office was essentially not interested in resolving the issues of Mafikeng, as it is primarily a black campus. This sentiment was coupled with a related claim, namely, that the NWU was like a 'marriage of convenience' and not an effective merger, or alternatively that it was more of an acquisition of one (Mafikeng) by another (Potchefstroom). For one thing, staff insisted that there was neither academic nor cultural integration evident in the University; however, some staff said there has been some academic programme alignment in their faculties. In their view, Potchefstroom campus simply preferred to have a federal model of a merger.

Staff cited a few issues to illustrate their claim that integration was lacking in the merger. These included the following:

- Students of the NWU who intended to undertake postgraduate studies at a campus other than their 'home' campus were required to apply as if they were external students, with no special provision being made for their status.
- Mafikeng students could not automatically use their student cards to access facilities, such as the library, at Potchefstroom. However, students from Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom can easily access amenities at either campus. A case was mentioned where a master's student who lives in Potchefstroom but was registered at Mafikeng was at first denied access to the Potchefstroom library and then had to obtain written permission from Mafikeng before he could enter the Potchefstroom library. Such an episode, if indeed true, would seem to negate the sense of a 'merged' institution.
- Setswana language was taught partly in Afrikaans at Potchefstroom, but the Potchefstroom staff would not request assistance from Mafikeng. When temporary vacancies occurred in this area at Potchefstroom, the campus preferred to recruit part-time staff from Johannesburg rather than use existing expertise from Mafikeng, despite the fact that African Languages are overstaffed at Mafikeng because of dwindling student numbers, while at Potchefstroom there is an increasing demand for African languages in service courses.
- When a Task Team member enquired about cooperation between Potchefstroom and Mafikeng in terms of programmes for public servants (Potchefstroom is well known for Public Administration but the provincial government is in Mafikeng), he was told that Potchefstroom had made a bid for a training course for public servants, but had only approached Mafikeng when the Public Administration and Leadership Development Academy (Palama) insisted that they must have a partner from a historically black institution.
- Postgraduate admissions at Mafikeng have been curtailed officially because of inadequate staff capacity. This move is considered prejudicial to the future prospects of the campus and also to the immediate interests of staff, including income generation.

Staff evidently did not share the enthusiasm of institutional management regarding the apparent successes of the merger and the way it has been managed to date. One of the issues raised as an indicator was that, while management believed it had a good communication strategy in place, staff by contrast felt that most time they were being talked down to, and they clearly resented this.

Staff had a problem with the University's procurement policy, under which procurement has allegedly been moved to Potchefstroom. This policy was said to bode ill for local businesses that were now being deprived of the opportunity to render services to the Mafikeng campus. A related aspect was that apparently local business was somehow implicated in student politics at Mafikeng campus, a factor that manifests in the SRC demanding to sit on tender committees. The substantive allegation is that students in turn would sit on these committees as fronts or lobbyists for business interests.

A pervasive view expressed was that Potchefstroom was 'suffocating Mafikeng', and that the good programmes, such as Accounting and Nuclear Radiation, were being taken to Potchefstroom, although this was denied the institutional management. Some of the academic staff members present claimed that they had never seen the institutional plan or the composition of the Council – and there was a strong conviction that the Council was predominantly white Afrikaner men, which is empirically not the case. The 'nominated' academic staff members seemed largely uninformed about broader institutional developments: previously they had had very poor information technology connections and it appears that many of them were not using their computers to visit the institutional website.

Several issues were also raised regarding the governance and management of the campus and the University in general. These included, for example, an allegation that the Institutional Office was dominated by ex-Potchefstroom staff, with only one staff member originating from Mafikeng; that local management engages in irregular practices, including the use of coercive tactics in its dealings with staff; and that there was poor communication of critical decisions that affected the interests and welfare of staff. The Task Team was informed that there was a campus senate which was a sub-committee of the institutional senate in terms of the NWU statute. Staff mentioned that the campus senate did not have clear terms of reference, and also that it was not consulted at all during the course of the ongoing crisis at the campus. No consultation was reported on the negotiations and the resolution regarding the extension of the teaching time to compensate for time lost during the student strike.

The stringent criticism by the general staff at Mafikeng of the merger and management was a rather ironic turn of events. The Staff Association had, during its session, initially expressed a concern that non-aligned staff were nominated to meet with the Task Team and would be hand-picked (and presumably also primed) by management. The outcome of this session with non-aligned staff signals the depth of the suspicions that pervade the Mafikeng campus.

The depth of alienation at Mafikeng campus is further signified by the hostility to the new NWU logo expressed in the meeting of the same non-aligned staff. The logo is seen as symbolic of the federal structure of the NWU, with the Potchefstroom campus permanently on top, in a dominant position. This submission stands in stark contrast to the claim made by the institutional management that the new branding exercise, including the adoption of the logo, was successful and was an inclusive and participatory process to ensure buy-in from the university community.

The Task Team also received other submissions that addressed various aspects of its terms of reference. Some of the more pertinent points in these submissions on the crisis at the Mafikeng campus include the following:

- There was a fundamental structural problem in the NWU merger that is rooted in a number of elements including the distance between the constituent campuses, and their culture, values, resource base, language, and so on. One of the problems for the Mafikeng campus is that prior to the merger the Staff Association and the SRC had wielded undue influence and power on the campus. These role players' loss of status post-merger is one of the causes of the instability on campus.

- Stakeholders at Mafikeng had great expectations about the improvements that would take place after the merger. The perceived slow pace of improvements on the campus has thus led to a crisis of expectations.
- The adoption of higher standards and thresholds for appointments after the merger has made those at Mafikeng who are excluded feel resentful. This issue and similarly well-intentioned initiatives and policies tend to become rallying grounds for some 'disgruntled' people on the campus. But the situation is not helped by what is at times perceived as indifferent campus management that does not attend to the issues of capacity in its ranks.
- The issue of differentiated fees between the NWU campuses complicates the processes of academic alignment.

8. Submissions made to the Task Team at the Vaal Triangle campus

8.1 Vaal Triangle campus management

The Vaal Triangle (Vaal) campus was historically a satellite campus of the former PUCHE. In the merger process two things happened for the campus. Firstly, it incorporated the Sebokeng campus of the former Vista University. Secondly, it became more autonomous from the Potchefstroom campus, to the extent that it is currently administratively a stand-alone campus equal in terms of statute to the other two campuses of the NWU. In addition the campus has expanded since the merger/incorporation took effect in 2004.

Management's view is that the incorporation of Vista Sebokeng has generally gone well. The matter of salary disparities between the former PUCHE and former Vista staff is about the only substantive matter that is outstanding in this regard. This issue is, however, not likely to be resolved very soon, as it has wider financial implications within the NWU. On average, former Vista staff members are on higher salary levels than their counterparts.

The Vaal campus has initiated a number of programmes as part of its transformation process. The campus had earlier appointed a Transformation Manager, who has since resigned (in 2008). So far this position has not been filled, but management did not make its strategic intent clear regarding the future of the portfolio in question. Management pointed to the dual language policy of the campus as one indicator of its transformation. However, the campus has a very low count of black academics, totalling only 22% as of October 2008. Management in its submission does not comment at all on this specific aspect of the institutional portfolio. The low equity score of the campus is equally reflected at the level of campus management, which consists exclusively of white staff.

Nearly one third of the 3,325 registered students at Vaal stay in residences. Of these, 400 are housed on campus and about 900 in university residences off campus. Lately, many white students have opted out of the residences. In terms of student governance, the campus model provides for SRC elections to be contested only by individual students and not organised

formations. In addition, students must meet a set minimum academic performance standard to stand for the SRC elections.

There is currently only one recognised staff union on campus, namely, the South African Parastatal and Tertiary Institutions Union (Saptu). Other staff unions have failed to meet a 30% membership threshold which was set for recognition. Non-recognised groups are not represented in the workplace consultative forum.

8.2 Recognised union: Saptu

Saptu, as the only recognised union, has about 38% membership on this campus. The union claims to have a cordial, and even fraternal, relationship with the Staff Union at Mafikeng. It views the merger/incorporation as having gone well in general, but has a few concerns, including the following:

- Management shows a reluctance to share certain information, such as the budget, or Council minutes.
- There is a perception that white staff members experience poor access to the office of the Campus Rector.
- Saptu is excluded from all decision-making.

8.3 SRC, house committees, student organisations and others

The SRC faces a challenge with regard to the management of organised student formations. The substance of the problem is that the SRC insists that these formations should align their constitutions with the SRC constitution.

In terms of the general student matters, the SRC perceives the Potchefstroom campus to be receiving more privileges than their own constituency. A number of local issues were raised that are of concern to the SRC delegation:

- They allege that Afrikaans-speaking students are given an undue advantage in their studies over others through an unfair application of the dual language policy.
- There are some problems with the residences. One issue is that some residences do not have house parents, while there is apparently a pattern that African students are assigned to the off-campus residences while other race groups are allocated places on campus.
- Management does not consult students on disciplinary cases.

In a meeting with organised student formations, a number of other issues and concerns were submitted. These included the following:

- The general student affairs portfolio was being run along racial lines: the student affairs division was staffed by black people, while the student development division consisted of white staff. Students complained that this pattern is unacceptable, especially against the backdrop of a further claim they made that there were still some racist tendencies on campus. For example a white lecturer is alleged to have told some black students in class that they were not university material, and that they should have been somewhere else instead of being on the campus. Management has apparently not dealt with this matter to the satisfaction of the students.
- A related matter is a claim that management somehow unofficially sets quotas for the admission of black students in order to keep a certain racial and cultural profile on campus. It is said that, to implement this alleged 'policy', academically deserving but financially disadvantaged black students are simply not given enough information or assistance when they come to the campus. As a result, such students do not register on the campus.
- The Campus Rector was accused of interfering in student matters. Specifically, the Rector was accused of undermining due process to the extent of stalling or alternatively frustrating an investigation that was under way regarding the 2008 SRC and house committee elections. The student formations claim that at least one student was allowed to contest elections even though he did not meet the academic requirements for participating.
- The alleged interference by the Rector has led the student formations across the political spectrum to conclude that the SRC has become a tool that is being manipulated by the management.
- A matter that was clearly of concern was that some students expressed the fear that they might be victimised for having talked to the Task Team.

A general observation as regards the demeanour of the students is that they generally seemed to appreciate the value of the education they were getting on the campus, notwithstanding the complaints around the language policy. Students were insisting on using the university policies to settle disputes, including the dispute in which they implicated the Campus Rector. The collective of student leaders stated that the institution provided some opportunities for leadership participation and training, even though they underlined their general unhappiness that organised formations, and in particular political organisations, were excluded from this opportunity.

Other submissions received pointed to a very slow transformation process on the campus, including in the area of employment equity, equal opportunities and generally fair and equitable treatment of staff, including allocation of offices. As far as equity is concerned, it was alleged that the campus was consistently employing white women ahead of black candidates. The continued exclusion of Nehawu and Ntesu (National Tertiary Education Staff

Union) from any institutional forums was seen as an issue of concern. An allegation was again made that there was an atmosphere of intimidation on campus, and that some staff were afraid of being victimised.

8.2 Academic and support staff

Academics mentioned that there has been some programme alignment in the University. However, this has not been accompanied by a closer formal collaboration among staff across campuses on sharing teaching expertise. It was claimed that staff from Mafikeng have in some instances stalled when it came to making a direct contribution to compiling study manuals. There was a view that the Mafikeng colleagues lacked the confidence or the competence to contribute at this level.

Overall, academic staff felt the merger has gone well, and that attempts were being made at the institutional level to create a platform for social cohesion in the University. Former Vista staff, though, expressed a view that more could be done to enhance social cohesion at the campus level, inasmuch as this was needed at the inter-campus level. In general, staff welcomed the increased autonomy the campus has acquired in the wake of the merger, but noted, however, that the campus currently has very few academic programmes to offer.

The campus has been adjusting its academic delivery model to accommodate the realities in its environment, for example by introducing evening classes in appropriate modules or programmes. Other local strategies and initiatives include the adoption of a dual medium teaching model, which is seen by the staff as being a progressive step.

As far as operations are concerned, staff at Vaal generally felt at ease with the way things have been managed. The Student Affairs division pointed to the problem they are still grappling with concerning the exclusion of political organisations from SRC processes. The division conducts leadership programmes with students, and this seems to have helped so far in reducing the tensions on campus.

It was mentioned that staff in general have various avenues through which they can approach the University with their problems or concerns.

9. Submissions made to the Task Team at the Potchefstroom campus

9.1 Potchefstroom campus management

The Potchefstroom Campus management gave a presentation on how the campus has pursued the seven strategic objectives of the merger. The presentation also touched on how the campus was helping to realise the NWU's vision and mission. Its strategic contributions to the NWU merger transformational agenda include the following:

- *Participation in creating a new culture, through cross-campus activities.* When asked about the 'Facebook' incident that has been widely reported on in the media, in which some Potchefstroom campus students were alleged to have published what amounted

to hate speech on the internet, management said the institution was dealing with the matter. It was mentioned that eventually seven students were positively identified as being involved in the incident, and that they would be facing a disciplinary hearing soon. Management made an unsolicited declaration to the Task Team that three of the culprits implicated in the Facebook incident had been previously identified as being in need of counselling, to deal with their racial attitudes. These students would be counselled even before they went for a disciplinary hearing for the recent offence.

- *Promoting realistic equity and redress, and embarking on capacity building.* Management acknowledged that the campus faced a significant challenge in terms of its current staff equity standing. One of the factors that apparently counted against achieving accelerated equity was that after the merger the retirement age at Potchefstroom campus had been increased from 60 years to 65 years, to be in line with Mafikeng. It was noted that the annual staff attrition rate was about 7 to 8%, but it was not clear to what extent the institution is taking advantage of this outlet to strengthen its equity agenda.
- *Promoting integration on social and academic levels.* To this end, social days are organised for staff from the different campuses to meet on a social level, and inter-campus sports competitions are arranged for students. Management argued that one sign of a growing social cohesion among students was that recently black and white students have marched together in protest against the publication of racist statements on the internet by some fellow students.
- *Promoting access* through recruitment actions and providing appropriate services, including the introduction of simultaneous translation in class as part of a multilingual policy, and running special programmes such as the Chartered Accountancy programme. At present, the campus has about 25% enrolled black contact students, and black students constitute about 18% of the residences' population.
- *Allocation of special funds for equity appointments* and monitoring and capacity building for equity candidates. The institution has adopted a programme of 'growing own timber', through which it uses a special fund to appoint targeted equity candidates initially on a three-year contract, after which these persons are apparently offered permanent positions. It may, however, still be too early to assess the efficacy of this strategy.
- *Creation of and participation in various forums and function-specific inter-campus committees*, for example the Registrar's Forum, as a means to building administrative, management, governance and academic portfolios.
- Using the Academic Development Support and the Research support model at Potchefstroom campus to support capacity building on the other campuses.
- Using some academic staff to teach courses at Mafikeng, for example Sport Sciences, Physical Chemistry, and Accountancy (the Thuthuka Programme).

The Potchefstroom campus houses most of the research activity of the NWU, with 91 out of 95 NRF-rated researchers of the University being based at this campus. The campus has gradually increased its research output since the merger in 2004. In terms of teaching and learning, the campus sees opportunities for valued-added effects from expertise that is specific to the other two NWU campuses, for example the Centre for Applied Radiation Science and Technology (CARST) and Agriculture at Mafikeng. Financially, the campus is the main contributor to the NWU budget.

9.2 Staff unions (Saptu and Nehawu)

The Task Team met with representatives of two staff unions, Saptu and Nehawu.

While both unions raised some common issues, they came across, however, as being at different levels in terms of their engagement with the University. It soon became evident that indeed this difference was merited, in the sense that the two unions enjoyed different formal status in the institution. Saptu was the only recognised union at the campus in terms of participation in the Institutional Bargaining Forum, while Nehawu had lost its status after it failed to meet the stipulated membership threshold of 30% of staff.

The main issues raised by union representatives are summarised below:

- The merger seems to have increased the disparities at the University, while the demographics of the various campuses have so far not changed.
- Support staff members at the Potchefstroom campus no longer have access to learning at the NWU, as evening classes have been terminated.
- There were incidents of black staff being attacked by students; two incidents were cited in both of which black security officers were allegedly assaulted by white students.
- Management should communicate with all staff regarding medical aid and not simply send information to those staff members who are already on medical aid.
- Nehawu specifically complained that there were irregularities in the application of university disciplinary policies, especially at the departmental level. In this regard, the union blamed the labour relations unit for not performing its duties properly. Saptu supported this accusation.

9.3 Students

The Task Team met with a group of over 60 students, which included representatives from the SRC, house committees, clubs, societies and student political formations.

A number of black students in the group raised some concerns about specific institutional practices, including the following:

- Cultural practices in the residences were racially biased. Some students said the orientation of first-year students included some unacceptable practices. In a separate submission, the Task Team was told of some archaic practices being allowed in the residences. A number of such practices are specifically highlighted here, which apply to a residence named Oor de Voor. The first practice is the so-called 'grass licence', in which first-year students are apparently forced to crawl in a contorted position over some piece of lawn in front of the residence. Seemingly students get hurt, sometimes quite seriously so, in the process of performing this ritual. The second ritual involves students being given thirty lashes with a cricket bat 'on the bottom' to qualify for a place on the third floor of this residence. This floor is only open for students in their third year of study or higher. As in the first ritual, apparently this practice has also resulted in gruesome injuries being inflicted on students. Other practices include students being prevented from wearing jewellery in the residences, and also sometimes being coerced into participating in 'culturally' offensive activities.
- There have been incidents of some student organisations using 'hate speech' on campus, but receiving a very light sanction from the authorities. A case of an organisation called the 'GK267' was cited as an example in this regard. The only punishment was being disaffiliated from the SRC.
- African students alleged that there is a quota system that is effective in the residences, according to which the number of African students in the residences is capped at 15%. Also, the students claim that once they are in residences they are pressurised into participating in some activities against their preferences, otherwise they lose their places.
- There was an accusation that applications to the Potchefstroom campus by African students are selectively referred or routed to Mafikeng, in an effort to limit their numbers on the former. Also, black students feel they are discouraged from complaining about language at Potchefstroom, as they get told that the language of instruction on campus is Afrikaans, and that they can opt for the other campuses if they prefer otherwise. Some students said there were problems with the translation services in their courses, as sometimes the translators found it difficult to translate technical concepts.
- The campus did not allow student political formations to contest SRC elections.

A number of white students contested some of the statements made by the black students. Almost all the white students who spoke were unanimous in their view that there was nothing wrong with the University's residence policies and practices. The complaint by black students was interpreted by the white students as an inability to adjust to 'our culture on campus'. In short, the white students saw their black counterparts almost as guests, and not as equals. The language used was unbecoming as some of them continually referred to 'non-white' students.

9.4 Academic and support staff

A number of speakers ventured opinions on the events at Mafikeng. Some argued that the student protests at Mafikeng had nothing to do with the merger, while others condemned the tactics that Mafikeng students employed in pursuing their demands, such as burning buildings. Other voices suggested that Mafikeng campus was faced with a capacity problem, and also a lack of willingness on the part of staff there to engage with democratic processes at the University. It was observed that in some areas Mafikeng was genuinely understaffed, and that this limited their staff's capacity to engage with their colleagues at Potchefstroom. This lack of capacity is ultimately what leads to the cry of 'Potchification' of the NWU.

The sentiment was also expressed that the events at Mafikeng had external, and probably political, dimensions. Staff generally felt that the management of the University had handled the situation at Mafikeng as best as they could, especially by not giving in to student demands to reinstate those who were expelled for committing serious offences. There was a call for people to stop thinking from the perspective of their individual campuses, and instead to focus on strengthening academic discipline across the University.

Given a number of constraints that Mafikeng campus faces, a call was made for the Minister of Education to consider a special dispensation for the campus, to help train young black academics.

On student matters, some staff admitted there were some problems, especially with cultural issues. Strikingly, some staff echoed the language of the white students by referring to black students as 'non-whites'. Addressing the challenges that are faced by black students in residences in particular, a senior staff member stated that 'these non-white groups are trying to fit into our culture'. Also, it was mentioned that one of the challenges for the blacks was that 'there are no recreational facilities for non-whites in the vicinity of the University'. It was further reported that a black female lecturer had been forcefully hauled by white students into a shower in the Oor de Voor residence for walking on 'forbidden grass' was confirmed by a staff member who was familiar with the case and the disciplinary processes in the university. He added that those implicated had been appropriately sanctioned.

There was an indication that some interaction is taking place between the campuses at the level of academics but that this was not systematic. There was a need for capacity building, especially at Mafikeng. Some staff declared that they were proud products of a capacity building programme of the NWU, even though one went on to say that this programme, at least in his faculty, lacked proper monitoring and mentoring.

PART THREE

10. Synthesis and findings on disruptions at the Mafikeng campus

10.1 The decline of the academic project at Mafikeng campus

During the Task Team 'hearings' at Mafikeng three themes emerged regarding the academic programme at the campus, namely, (i) the decline of academic project, (ii) a lack of academic cooperation between the NWU campuses, and (iii) the academic programmes at Mafikeng being dominated by, and supposedly transferred to, Potchefstroom.

In its submission, the Mafikeng campus management outlined the historic context of the situation on the campus, and focused mainly on the decline of the academic project. This decline can be traced to both internal and external factors, for example the unique history of the campus as a former university of the then 'independent' homeland, under which regime it enjoyed special privileges, for example in terms of funding. This privileged position would, ironically, later become the University's own undoing as it was unable to disentangle itself in time from a collapsing homeland system when democracy was ushered into South Africa in 1994.

The internal causes of the historic decline include the decisions taken by both the management and Council of the former UniWest, culminating in a much weakened and functionally fragile institution on the eve of the merger that resulted in the current NWU. Further to this, the Task Team found that Mafikeng continues to suffer a lack of institutional memory, due to a continuing high attrition rate in its academic core. The Task Team was informed that, for example, the longest serving members in the current executive team had been in office for only five years to date. This observation is in stark contrast to the situation at Potchefstroom, where the Task Team met staff who have been with the institution for anything up to 40 or 45 years, and also the Vaal campus where we found some senior staff with up to 20 years' experience in the institution.

Management described how the loss of staff, and particularly senior academics, has contributed to the current crisis on the campus. In the same vein, it was observed that the Mafikeng campus has experienced an unusually high attrition rate among its executive deans in the post-merger period. Given its history and context, this campus cannot afford a recurring loss of senior academics, as this will inevitably further undermine its core business. The Task Team finds it unfortunate that management did not specifically highlight this aspect of institutional experience in its presentations or share any retention and risk management strategies that are in place to counteract these negative trends.

The students at Mafikeng campus were most surprising and disconcerting in their submission. As mentioned in an earlier section of this report, the student delegation that met with the Task Team consisted of representatives from the SRC, student political formations, the student sports council, student faculty councils, and the student religious fraternity. The students,

unlike management and the Staff Association, were animated, extremely articulate and well-informed about legal issues. They were in possession of a number of different Acts, the University Statute, and several court rulings, and quoted from them.

In brief, the following could be listed as key issues and grievances emanating from the students: maladministration (centred on the Rector), living in fear of the Rector, victimisation, decisions about the campus being made 'elsewhere', management negotiating in bad faith, inconsistent disciplinary actions and procedures, the rule of law not applied equitably, fees inappropriately high when services on different campuses are unequal, poor general conditions ('RDP hostels' in contrast to the solid, spacious buildings of the Mangope era) and lack of 'service delivery'.

What was most astounding about the above was that the students did not talk about the academic programme as a major issue. It was mentioned in passing that lectures were often cancelled and staff underqualified. It had to be assumed that 'lack of service delivery' perhaps also referred to the academic programme and not only to hostels and other physical amenities. Poor library facilities were also referred to and though detailed examples were given of poor administration of student discipline, no such specifics were provided about problems with the academic programme. After the meeting with the students, one of the Task Team members approached a student who had spoken very articulately about the contradiction of wanting to equalise fees with Potchefstroom without providing equal services, and asked the student to put his argument on paper. The next day the same student informed the Task Team member that he 'found it very difficult to write about it'.

The level of antipathy of student leaders towards management was perhaps best illustrated by the fact that they were not willing to acknowledge that any progress or development was taking place on Mafikeng campus, whether it was with regard to the academic or support functions. It was curious that the students would not even explicitly acknowledge the initiatives that the University has made on a number of fronts, including the new facilities for animal health sciences, the academic complex with computer facilities, the new student residences, and so on. In fact, it was interesting that students went to the extent of deriding the new student residences that were recently built on campus as 'RDP houses'.

The Staff Association, representing both administrative and academic staff, identified the merger as the main cause of problems. They also showed and expressed a total lack of trust in the management of the University in general. Their main concern about the academic programme was the legal actions taken by the University against academics and the high turnover of academics, particularly of deans, with at least three and in some faculties even five occupants of the position since the merger in 2004. There were concerns about the pace of transformation in the University, including its rollout of employment equity. Staff Association representatives also seemed convinced that the undeclared strategy of management was to eventually close the Mafikeng campus, as had happened to the Mankwe campus.

The academics and support staff who met with the Task Team in their respective operational roles, and not representing any organised formations, were nominated by their faculties, although they were not clear as to how that process worked. These staff members also blamed

the merger for the problems that have erupted at the Mafikeng campus. Their issues could be clustered around alleged victimisation of staff by the management (and they were unsure as to whether it was the campus or the institutional management), inequality and lack of integration in academic programmes, lack of real cooperation with other campuses, and the 'systematic suffocation' of the Mafikeng campus.

The one joint activity, namely curriculum equalisation, that was much lauded by institutional management was severely criticised by the Mafikeng academics as being dominated by Potchefstroom, to the extent that some new curricula even arrived at Mafikeng by truck and printed in Afrikaans. With the exception of the Law Faculty, it did not seem that the Mafikeng campus felt like an equal partner in the process. It was also pointed out that despite the equalised curriculum statements, in many cases the textbooks used were not the same, nor the exam papers, nor even the examination marking protocols.

Apart from the curriculum statements, the overriding impression given was one of an astounding astonishing lack of collaboration. None of the staff present had co-taught a course at Potchefstroom or Vaal campuses, nor had anybody from Potchefstroom come to their department in Mafikeng. The Task Team was not told about any plans or funds for staff or student exchanges between the campuses.

Running through the conversation was a deep sense of inequality: the students at Mafikeng are not as well prepared as at Potchefstroom, research and library facilities are far inferior to those at Potchefstroom, the Institutional Office is staffed by people from Potchefstroom, which privileges the Potchefstroom campus ('If you have a problem at Potch you just walk across the lawn, while from Mafikeng you have to drive hundreds of kilometres') and Potchefstroom has vastly superior access to funding. Staff members who were present were noticeably silent about the Vaal campus, which they seem to regard as simply an extension of Potchefstroom.

10.2 The role of the University Council

The Task Team observes that the Council of the NWU seems to have underplayed or even overlooked the problems at the Mafikeng campus in 2008, or at least in the initial stages. To illustrate, by the time Council held its 20th meeting on 24 June 2008, three significant and interrelated developments had already happened at Mafikeng. Firstly, the campus was closed to students during the period 7 to 24 March 2008 following student protests. Secondly, normal teaching and learning activity was interfered with from 22 to 27 May 2008, again because of protest related activities. Thirdly, the start of mid-year examinations was delayed by a week to 9 June 2008. Given these developments, it is remarkable that the minutes of the Council meeting of 24 June 2008 are absolutely silent on the problems at the campus.

One weakness the Task Team wishes to highlight in Council's approach to the crisis at Mafikeng is that the body seems to have relied totally on the management to find solutions, even at a time when management was unable to make meaningful progress on the matter. On the surface, and from its own submission, it seems that Council was mainly concerned with

issues of disciplinary processes and procedures, and not so much with the totality of the situation at the campus. On another level, it appears that some members of Council have mainly been interested in securing the interests of some, and not necessarily all, 'constituencies' and campuses of the NWU.

10.3 Findings on the situation at Mafikeng

10.3.1 There seems to be no dispute even among internal stakeholders at Mafikeng campus about the general historical factors that led to the weakened state of the academic programme on the campus. The Task Team finds that most of the facts and factors in this regard are objectively verifiable or can be logically inferred, up to the point of the merger.

10.3.2 Notwithstanding the above 'consensus' about the problems in the pre-merger phase, the Task Team finds that management has, however, not been as forthcoming as it should have been about staff turnover in the post-merger era. To illustrate, it was earlier noted that the campus has experienced a high staff turnover, including particularly at the level of executive deans, but the management has not highlighted this among its current key challenges. The Task Team regards what appears to be a higher than average turnover of deans as a significant enough trend to warrant special attention, and recommends that management should address the matter as a strategic focus, rather than merely as an incidental occurrence. Any perceived indifference to this matter can only serve to deepen the suspicion on the part of stakeholders that management has some reprehensible agenda about the fate of the Mafikeng campus.

10.3.3 Neither the students nor the Staff Association raised the issue of political contestation and possible 'external interference' as an issue in the overall dispute at Mafikeng, but the university management and the Council listed this as 'the main' factor on the campus. The campus management even reported that businesspeople were sponsoring "braais" and beer for SRC candidates, leading to considerable interest from the SRC in relation to the upcoming renewal of a campus security contract.

In a review of student politics in post-liberation Africa, Leuscher (www.chet.org.za) shows that student protests are affected by the presence on campus of national political parties who are recruiting new leadership and advancing their agendas, business groupings with 'business interests' in the University, fundamentalist religious groupings expanding their membership, and poor conditions, such as food, accommodation and class room space. But the protests in general are seldom directly about the poor quality, or lack of delivery, of the academic programme.

It appears that the Mafikeng campus is following a well-reported trend in countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana and Nigeria. In situations of poverty, where the University has lost sight of its academic project, it is not an agent for development and innovation, but a site for resource contestation. In Mafikeng the two main sources of wealth are arguably the provincial government and the University, and it certainly seems that the Mafikeng campus

has become a site for resource contestation among groups with vested national and/or local interests.

The Task Team therefore finds that the claim by University authorities that student protests at Mafikeng are externally influenced is not necessarily without foundation.

10.3.4 The Task Team does not, however, agree with the view of management that the existence of such an external influence can be the only explanation for the persistence of the student protests, or for the fractured nature of relationships within the campus. Further, it is not clear how such external influence can account for the extent of the violence that has accompanied some of these protests. The Task Team contends that this focus on a singular causal factor is simplistic, bordering almost on denial, and that this perspective potentially deprives the University of an opportunity for self-reflection. It would seem, partly on the basis of the analysis presented in the previous finding, that management has not dealt effectively with the implications of the weakened academic project for the social, sociological and psychological personae of the campus, or alternatively that management may have underestimated the extent of the collapse itself.

10.2.5 The Task Team did not find any evidence that the University has departed from its policy and procedures in prosecuting the students implicated in the violent protests which took place in March 2008. It is further noted that, in terms of due process, the affected students had legal representation during the course of the hearings and in the subsequent appeals against the sanctions imposed. However, what appear to be varying applications of the disciplinary policy framework across the campuses have merely exacerbated the situation. A typical example cited in this regard was the case involving a group of students at the Potchefstroom campus who were implicated in a racist internet incident (the Facebook incident). The implicated students were allowed time to write examinations before they had to appear before a disciplinary committee, while some of their number were even offered counselling ahead of the hearings. These concessions have cumulatively served to further support the Mafikeng students' claims about 'unfair' or 'preferential' treatment as they have alleged that they are generally not afforded any compassionate treatment by management when they are being charged for various transgressions.

10.2.6 The University's policy decision to equalise tuition fees for the three campuses by the year 2011 arguably creates a very delicate and even controversial situation. In the case of Mafikeng, this decision effectively makes current students liable upfront for the cost of improving the facilities to a level that is fairly comparable to Potchefstroom or Vaal, even though many of these students are unlikely to enjoy the full benefits of the improvements during their tenure in the institution. This finding nonetheless takes into account the reality that fee increments are generally unavoidable in the current policy context in South Africa, and also that student fees at Mafikeng have historically been set below the median for the higher education sector.

10.2.7 The Task Team finds that the general charge by staff and students at Mafikeng that management is deliberately keeping them uninformed about developments at the University is not substantially supported by the facts. The Task Team was struck by the fact that some staff members even went on to suggest that management was somehow hiding information that is

otherwise public knowledge, e.g. the composition of Council. This observation seems to give credence to a claim made by management that (some) staff at Mafikeng 'chose' to be ignorant of new developments at the University. But, even more fundamentally, this observation suggests that the affected constituencies feel a sense of disengagement and/or alienation from general university processes.

10.2.8 The Task Team finds that, based on the various submissions by a range of stakeholders, there is evidence of a near terminal loss of trust, common vision and even sense of decorum between the management, students in organised formations, organised labour and general academic and support staff at Mafikeng campus. This pervasive lack of trust is best illustrated by the fact that staff and students at Mafikeng continue to harbour a suspicion that management is planning to close the campus even as the University continues to make visible investments in new residences and academic facilities.

10.2.9 In the light of the observations and findings made above, the Task Team finds the current predominantly 'legalistic' and 'security' oriented approach by management to the problems at Mafikeng unlikely to yield lasting solutions for the campus. If anything, the approach, if pursued on its own, can only alienate an already aggrieved campus community and risk further collapsing the human fabric of the campus. (This observation does not detract from the fact that management has an obligation to ensure the safety and security of members of the university community, as well as generally to secure the property of the institution).

PART FOUR

11. Terms of reference (ii): The extent, manner, success and efficacy of integrating institutional policies and practices, across all campuses, in such matters as academic structures, governance and management, including financial management, resource allocation and human resources in the context of the objectives of the merger

This is not a comprehensive review and analysis of the institutional policies and practices of the NWU. The task here is more limited, focusing on the degree to which these policies and practices effectively support or do not support the original objectives of the merger.

11.1 Governance and management model at the NWU

The current situation at the Mafikeng campus must be understood, among other things, in the context of the governance and management model adopted by the NWU. The most succinct way to describe this is to refer to a report by Dr Rolf Stumpf,¹ who evaluated the NWU Management Model in September 2008. Stumpf wrote as follows, in different sections of the report:

As part of its immediate merger related challenges the new University adopted a management model which was unique in South African higher education and which it felt was best suited to its specific merger characteristics. The model is best understood in the context of institutional autonomy. In South Africa universities would generally be regarded as autonomous institutions ... It is in this context – a context of autonomy limited and circumscribed by institutionally accepted policies – that the management model of NWU must be understood. (p. 4)

The management model chosen for NWU is based on the premise of NWU being a single, integrated institution made up of three separate and operationally autonomous, but not independent, campuses together with an Institutional Office which is responsible for matters such as strategic planning, policy development, allocation of resources to the campuses, design of institutional processes, overall quality assurance, and institutional branding and positioning. The campuses obviously are not free to do as they wish but operate within the bounds of institutionally set policies, processes and procedures. Similarly, the Institutional Office develops its strategies, policies, processes etc. in consultation with the campuses. (p. 23)

At the risk of over simplification, the basic elements of this model (with the exception of the shared services component of the Institutional Office) are:

¹ Former Vice-Chancellor of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and ex-President of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

- *The Institutional Office represents the reflective, conceptualising, and analytical component of NWU on a macro or system level in which the international, national and local environment affecting NWU is interpreted and appropriate institutional strategies, plans and processes are developed to assist the campuses in positioning and organising themselves for the fulfilment of their academic and other tasks.*
- *The three campuses, while obviously also engaging in the above activities in relation to their campuses, are the providers of academic services (teaching and learning, research, and transfer of knowledge) and are thus the operational and income generating entities of NWU. Campuses have students but not so the Institutional Office. (p. 23)*

The Stumpf review included interviews with 40 senior management staff and the SRC. One of its conclusions was that, with the exception of two people,

Every single other interviewee was of the view that no other management model would suit the specific circumstances of NWU as well as this one did. This group of interviewees felt that the advantages which were inherent to this model by far outweighed any of its disadvantages. (p. 50)

However, some important 'challenges' were flagged in the report:

- *The implementation of this model is costly – it leads to unnecessary duplication of structures and services. (p. 30)*
- *The Institutional Office was bloated and getting bigger by the day – interestingly this view was shared by some managers in the Institutional Office. (p. 33)*
- *It creates communication uncertainties and indecision. A strongly held opposite view felt that the management model, through its provision of autonomy, promoted academic fragmentation, rather than unification. (p. 29)*
- *An unfortunate side-effect was of campuses 'watching' each other in an attempt to outdo one another achieving extreme levels of self sufficiency. (p. 30)*
- *A large number of senior managers on the Mafikeng campus felt that the management model had not yet resulted in an equitable distribution of funding across the campuses.*
- *There was too large a distance between academics and the university's academic enterprise on the one hand and the Vice-Chancellor on the other hand. (p. 30)*
- *The functioning of the research model supporting research entities was lauded as well as singled out for criticism. Some felt that the reason for the unsatisfactory functioning of this model could be attributed to the extreme emphasis on the autonomy of campuses in the management model which made it difficult for heads of research focus areas (who are all, or nearly all, members of the Potchefstroom campus) to*

function in the interest of the University as a whole by leading focus area research across campuses while at the same time advancing the interests of their own campus as well. (p. 37)

- *Some on the latter two campuses (Vaal and Mafikeng) were quite outspoken about perceived attitudes of superiority experienced from staff members from the Potchefstroom campus and their insensitivity to all the developmental challenges faced on their campuses ... and the perceived over dominant role which the Potchefstroom campus plays in the management model's implementation – often referred to as 'potchification'. (p. 38)*
- *General agreement existed, however, that the management model per se, **neither hindered transformation nor advanced it in any significant way**. Some views were expressed that there could be a danger that the campuses could see the Institutional Office as predominantly expressing the 'transformed face' of the University and therefore feel less urgency themselves in achieving transformation goals. (p. 49)*
- *In conclusion ... The present management model is widely supported within NWU although a very strong sense of frustration and irritation was evident from nearly all the interviewees about the effect the many implementation problems had on their own effectiveness as managers. In fact, this sense of frustration has become so intense that it is evident that urgent interventions are required over a wide front to preserve the integrity and credibility of the management model in seeking to build a unified NWU rather than three separate quasi-universities held together by an ineffective institutional centre. (p. 51)*

There are a number of important differences between the Stumpf review and the 'hearings' that were conducted by the Task Team. In the Stumpf study only managers/leaders were interviewed, who by virtue of their position have a vested interest in the management model. The review was much more in-depth than the 'hearings' in that extensive interviews were conducted with the majority of managers. In comparison the Task Team hearings, which took place over six days overall, were less rigorous for individual groups, but captured the views of a much broader range of the university community, and were more concerned with the effects of the existing governance model on the daily lives of all staff and students.

The feedback about the management model that the Task Team received during the campus visit at Mafikeng could be summarised in the following way:

- There is a pervasive uncertainty among students and staff (both administrative and academic) about how the model works: when the Institutional Office has power and when it does not; when the Vice-Chancellor will appear, and when he will not. There is very poor communication between the academics and the Vice Chancellor.
- The Institutional Office does not manage the University, but intervenes and interferes only when it is convenient for it to do so.

- There is a strong perception that the Institutional Office is not interested in resolving the problems on the Mafikeng campus.
- Planning capacity at Mafikeng is very weak, but very strong in the Institutional Office, and the latter 'sucks' competent staff out of the campuses.
- The Institutional Office has a lot of technical skill, but it does not benefit the campuses directly – for example, the Director of Student Affairs in the Institutional Office has been told not to get involved in the Mafikeng student problems.
- The model benefits the stronger campuses of Potchefstroom and Vaal, which have been strengthened in the process.
- The merger is being 'circumvented' by the management model, which gives 'cover' to Potchefstroom campus's failure to transform.
- The model inherently favours Potchefstroom campus, which is where it recruited most of its staff.

The view from Vaal and Potchefstroom is, however, quite different. The Vaal campus sees the merger as the 'best thing that happened to us', and they feel, as does Potchefstroom, that the management model has given them autonomy and helped to strengthen them. The only concern raised was the continual expansion of the Institutional Office.

11.1.1 Synthesis

If we combine the findings of the Stumpf review and the Task Team hearings, a clear picture emerges:

- The Institutional Office is a kind of 'corporate services' business model ingeniously married to a traditional academic autonomy model, which works very well for separate, independently functioning institutions, for which it is a 'win win' model – autonomy with technical and strategic support.
- For an institution such as the Mafikeng campus, which is not an autonomously functioning independent university, it is a failure in that it breeds suspicion, feeds into historical prejudices and fears and does not help the institution to overcome its 'historical legacy'.
- As for its contribution to bringing about transformation, Stumpf summarises it succinctly: it *'neither hindered transformation nor advanced it in any significant way'*.

In the terms of reference, the Minister instructed the Task Team to report on the causes of the disruptions in the context of the goals and objectives of the merger and the National Plan, the extent, success and efficacy of integrating institutional policies and practices, and the extent and success of enhancing social cohesion and a new institutional culture across all campuses that overcomes the apartheid-induced divide.

From the Task Team's review of the Mafikeng campus and the governance and management model it can be asserted that:

- The Institutional Office is an emerging structure that has considerable expertise in planning, strategising and promoting the image of the institution. The overview of the NWU presented to the Task Team by the Vice-Chancellor, drawing on the information from the Institutional Office, was that this institution had 'world class' standards.

The governance model of combining autonomy with an Institutional Office (corporate services) support structure has to a considerable extent brought about an integration of institutional policies, but not practices, and it has thus certainly not met the main objectives of the merger in terms of Government Gazette No. 1689, 14 November 2003:

- To the point, the model has not '*overcome the apartheid-induced divide between historically white and historically black institutions*', particularly not in terms of '*building administrative, management, governance and academic capacity*' nor has it achieved a '*new institutional culture across all campuses*'.
- The model has two structural flaws. Firstly, it is premised on the coordination and enhancement of *autonomous, well-functioning institutions*, which is a false premise considering that Mafikeng and Vaal are not 'sustainable autonomous universities'. Secondly, it is a useful approach to governance, providing a coordinating and steering framework, but it is not the strong problem-solving management model that is needed if unequal institutions with vastly different cultures and practices are to 'merge'.

11.2 Academic programmes and policies

11.2.1 Introduction

The merging and alignment of academic programmes and policies across the new NWU was identified early on as an essential measure of the progress of the merger. This is a massive undertaking. It was steered by the institutional management, but in the process it exposed very uneven power relations that in turn reflected differences in capacity across the campuses. This goes to the heart of the fundamental academic mission of the University, and exposes its weaknesses and strengths.

11.2.2 Overview of academic performance indicators

To foreground the assessment of the degree to which academic structures, policies and practices effectively support or do not support the original objectives of the merger, the Task Team thought it important to supplement the information gathered through verbal presentations and observations with the perspective that emerges from applying to the Mafikeng situation the standard performance indicators used in the South African higher education system.

An assessment of the available data on the NWU reveals the following trends and developments with respect to the key performance indicators:

- The NWU has experienced a strong growth in recent times, but this growth took place mostly at the Potchefstroom campus; the Vaal campus seems to have levelled out, while Mafikeng was on a downward curve in the period 2001 to 2007.
- With regard to student success rates, as calculated by the Department of Education, there has been an overall decline at the NWU from 78% to 75%, but the sharpest decline has been at Mafikeng (81% to 77%).
- There has been a 'correction' in the University in the ratio of administrative to academic staff. This was an endemic problem in the former homelands, where there were disproportionately more administrative than academic staff, and the former UniWest was no exception to this.
- The most telling reflections on the academic programme are revealed in the research outputs, staff qualifications and production of PhDs. The ratio of accredited publications per permanent academic staff member at Mafikeng was 0.05 in 2007. This is ten times less than at Potchefstroom. The Department of Education's target is 0.60. In real terms, although there was a slight improvement at Mafikeng from 2004 (1.5 units) to 2006 (13 units), the output for 2007 declined to 10.8 units. A closer look at the 17 articles that counted for the 10.8 points reveal that five were in law, four in agriculture, three in physics, two in geography, and one each in biology, chemistry, and education. While most of the articles had more than one author, none involved collaborations between the different campuses of the NWU.
- Regarding doctorates, the picture is equally dismal for Mafikeng. Since the merger the Mafikeng campus has produced 20 doctorates, in contrast to the 336 at Potchefstroom and the 47 at Vaal, which has only two faculties. The only category in which there has not been a decline is in the number of staff members with doctorates, but even so, a total of only 52 staff is not enough to keep a campus the size of Mafikeng viable.

11.2.3 Staff perspectives on academic integration

Staff at Mafikeng presented a very negative picture of developments with regard to academic integration at the University. Their complaint has been that there is a continuing inequality and lack of integration in academic programmes, a lack of real cooperation between campuses, and a systematic 'suffocation' of the academic programme at Mafikeng campus. These staff members were not complimentary about the curriculum alignment project, which was severely criticised as being dominated by Potchefstroom, to the extent that some new curricula material allegedly even arrived at Mafikeng printed in Afrikaans. As was mentioned in Section 10.1 of this report, it seemed that almost none of the academics, except those from the Faculty of Law, felt like equal partners to their peers in the integration process. It appeared that the actual academic practices varied on the different campuses, in spite of the proclamation of common policies by the Institutional Office.

Academic staff at the Vaal campus were by contrast positive about the academic alignment process, which in their view greatly increased electronic and physical interaction between staff at different campuses. This process involved developing relationships across campuses, with various teams from the three campuses meeting at Potchefstroom, which is geographically central. Academics at the Vaal campus feel that generally the merger has released a new energy, which in turn has allowed them to innovate to take advantage of new opportunities that are emerging in their environment.

Staff at Vaal have suggested that their counterparts at Mafikeng campus have on occasion showed a lack of confidence when called upon to contribute to the actual drafting of study manuals. This observation would tie in with what is known about academic indicators such as research article outputs. A question that arises from this observation relates to the attitude of management to such incidents, and what interventions were put in place to support the colleagues from Mafikeng.

Academics at Potchefstroom overall shared the sentiments of their Vaal campus counterparts regarding the extent and pace of academic integration in the University. They also expressed sympathy with a general 'understaffing and lack of capacity' at Mafikeng, which in their view leads to a feeling amongst Mafikeng academics of being dominated by Potchefstroom. Some academics at Potchefstroom claimed that there were some cross-campus initiatives in their faculties with Mafikeng, and that these had resulted in better relationships developing between colleagues.

In the main, there is some indication that the alignment of academic programmes is progressing, which is an important measure of the intention to create a unified academic institution. In this sense the merger goals are being fulfilled. However, the slow process of academic merger clearly indicates that there is uneven capacity across the system. It is also clear that the merger is being further negatively affected by the institutional governance model that is in force.

11.2.4 Proposals

The Task Team proposes:

- Further and intensive academic staff development linked to the alignment process, with the intention of securing input from all three campuses.
- As part of the process of reviewing the institutional plan and the merger/transformation project, a much more focused emphasis on identifying areas of academic excellence and niche areas for further development across all three campuses. Such a process requires buy-in from the respective departments and faculties.
- The institutional management needs to facilitate a process of academic exchange of staff and students, particularly postgraduate students across campuses, to share expertise and develop capacity.

These processes are vital to fulfilling the original merger goals of overcoming historical divisions, promoting a more equitable staff and student body, building academic and research capacity, and consolidating the deployment and use of academic personnel.

11.3 Student governance

There are significant disparities in the governance models of student affairs across the three campuses. In turn, each campus experiences certain dynamics between management and students, and within the student body itself, that are related to the specific governance model that is being employed.

11.3.1 Mafikeng campus

The student governance at Mafikeng campus is characterised by high levels of alienation and outright rejection of the governance regime, as well as the merger/transformation project as currently defined by management. The students make an array of allegations about management: campus management is repressive; resources for supporting SRC activities are lacking; infrastructure and accommodation are poor, which they blame on neglect by the institutional management; and so on.

There is deep suspicion of the merger, which is seen as a hostile takeover with the intention of stripping away the assets of the Mafikeng campus and eventually closing it down. Among other notable complaints made by Mafikeng students are that the fee adjustment model is unfair and that the application of disciplinary procedures is inconsistent and biased.

Mafikeng management has by and large denied the substantive allegations made by students. As outlined in an earlier section, management argues that the major factor in the disruptions at Mafikeng is an 'external force' that has infiltrated the student politics on the campus. In any event, management's view is that only a minority of students are the actual perpetrators of the disruptions on the campus, and it has resolved that the appropriate response to violent protest is to increase security measures, such as with fencing, visible security personnel and security cameras.

Overall, there is a complete breakdown of trust and communication between the student formations at Mafikeng and the campus and institutional management, resulting in the explosive situation witnessed during the various episodes in 2008.

11.3.2 Vaal campus

The Vaal campus is able to boast that it has not lost a single day due to student protest since the merger. Incidentally, there is no simple racial explanation for the difference between Vaal and Mafikeng. After all, since 2004 the majority of students at Vaal have been black, and the majority of staff are white. The Task Team suggests that the following factors help to explain the very different atmospheres at the two campuses:

- At Vaal there are clear, consistent and accepted disciplinary processes, with major student participation. The disciplinary processes involve all the levels of disciplinary committees, namely, residence committees, the SRC and the management disciplinary committee. This means that problems that occur in the residences are sorted out at that level first, and are escalated upwards according to the seriousness of the offence. The complaint by students at Mafikeng is that every offence goes straight to a management disciplinary committee, which allegedly metes out severe or disproportionate punishment.
- There appears to be good quality accommodation at Vaal, with very active residence committees that promote student participation in an active social life, and with house parents playing a significant role. There are even virtual 'residences' for day students, to encourage their participation in the activities. The result of all this is increased social interaction between students of different ethnic/racial backgrounds.
- Student leaders have ready access to campus management to address problems; indeed, SAPTU has expressed envy at the fact that they do not enjoy similar access. Student leaders say they get about 90% of what they want from management because, they claim, they make realistic demands.
- There are strong student support services such as health services, psychological counselling, career counselling, and academic support and follow-up for students experiencing problems. Students really feel they are looked after and are getting their money's worth. This is worlds apart from the sense of alienation and disaffection on the Mafikeng campus.
- Student leaders enjoy leadership bursaries, clothing ('uniforms') and training and support. Student leaders at Mafikeng do not receive these benefits.

The Vaal campus is not without flaws but the student body feels included, and is on board both with the governance processes and the wider merger/transformation project. However, the following grievances, which have possible future negative implications, were raised:

- *The language policy.* Black students have complained that the weekly alternating of translations between English and Afrikaans works to their detriment, as they perceive lecturers to favour Afrikaans-speaking students in the process of implementing the policy.
- *The policy of excluding student political formations from contesting SRC elections.* This is being vehemently rejected by the leaders of all political formations, from the Freedom Front Plus to the Young Communist League. In any event, this policy seems to be out of step with contemporary thinking and trends in student governance in the country.

Ironically, these two specific areas of potential conflict were hailed by the campus management as successful policies.

11.3.3 Potchefstroom campus

Student governance at Potchefstroom seems to be well established and is evidently functioning well in terms of its management, systems, procedures and processes. Indeed, the main structural outlines that were sketched for the Vaal campus apply equally to Potchefstroom, save to note that students at the Vaal campus have alluded to their Potchefstroom counterparts as being more advantaged in certain respects, such as student leadership bursaries and sports bursaries.

White students with access to the best resources at Potchefstroom, and to a lesser extent at Vaal, have few complaints. Potchefstroom campus retains its white Afrikaans culture, making few concessions as yet to the growing minority of black students. Outdated and alienating residence initiation rituals and repeated charges of racism need to be addressed to prevent future problems on the campus. As was noted in section 9.3.3 which deals with the meeting held with students at the Potchefstroom campus, white students displayed a patronising attitude towards black students, and some even explicitly suggested that black students had no choice but to adapt to the Afrikaner culture prevalent on the campus. In short, there was no sense amongst these students that the campus was a space shared between different cultures.

Black students at Potchefstroom and now in the majority at Vaal may have complaints but they seem to have bought into and fundamentally accepted the governance system and to see real value in the education they receive. However, there is a distinct voice composed of student political organisations that calls for a reform of the current system that excludes them from contesting SRC elections.

11.3.4 Summary and proposals

With regard to the original merger goals for the NWU, the record on student governance is uneven, and even contradictory. The Vaal campus has coped well with the changing racial composition of the student body, with a resultant buy-in from the students and nascent signs of a real non-racial culture emerging. This is despite the fact that the campus management remains exclusively white. Vaal has taken steps towards overcoming the apartheid divide, promoting a more equitable student body and building capacity.

The Task Team proposes that:

- Campuses that currently exclude student political formations from student governance will need to find means of accommodating them into the processes. Political organisations on campus are a fact of life that is not going to change any time soon. A continued prevarication or intransigence by university authorities on this matter could become a spark for future conflicts.
- Campuses need to continually review and adjust the language policy. There were across-the-board complaints from black staff and students about this matter.

With regard to Mafikeng campus:

- The Task Team was informed that the same policies for student discipline exist across all campuses of the NWU, but there is a strong perception that the policies are differentially applied. This needs to be investigated further to ensure that there is no discrimination in practice. The idea that there is a double standard is now well established at the NWU: 'Mafikeng student leaders get suspended even before an investigation while the "Potchefstroom racist Facebook accused" are sent for counselling' is the common refrain.
- The Mafikeng student affairs function needs to be overhauled and greatly strengthened. There is much to be learned from the sister campus at Vaal. In this instance, the decentralisation of functions is a weakness, in that colleagues are not sharing their experiences.
- The breakdown of trust and communication between the SRC and management raises questions about the campus management style and the fact that the situation has been allowed to spiral out of control by the institutional management.

11.4 Financial management and resource allocation

There is a widespread perception especially at Mafikeng, but also to a lesser extent at Vaal, that the Potchefstroom campus is benefiting the most from the merger at the expense of the other campuses. For many on the Vaal campus, the merger was experienced as positive. For this former satellite campus of Potchefstroom, the incorporation of Vista Sebokeng led to growth, and it also gained a fully fledged campus management structure under the 'unitary but autonomous' governance model of the NWU. The staff and students of the former Vista took some time to integrate, with some staff still not feeling wholly welcome even at the time of the visit of Task Team.

According to the submission made by the institutional management, the university resource allocation model in force uses an interactive budgeting process, initiated every year by the strategies identified in the institutional planning process. For purposes of budgeting, the Institutional Office and each of the three campuses are treated as separate business units. The underlying institutional budgeting framework is based on a number of strategic imperatives and criteria, including the following:

- Dependence on State grants is to be reduced to less than 40% of total income.
- Tuition fees are to be kept within 20 to 22% of total income.
- Surpluses from third and fifth income-stream projects are to be retained within the budgetary unit that generates them.

- Personnel costs are to be kept in line with a number of predetermined ratios to ensure financial sustainability, for example personnel costs to total income (50% : 55%), personnel costs to state subsidy (57.5% : 63%), academic personnel cost to support staff (2 : 1).
- Cross-subsidising applies to the entire University, but the intention is that each campus should eventually contribute to carrying the institutional overhead expenditure.

The global incomes (in R million) of the four business units of the NWU in the years 2007 (actual) and 2008 (recommended) are reflected in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Income and expenses of the four business units of the NWU in 2007

Year 2007	Institutional Office	Potchefstroom	Mafikeng	Vaal Triangle
Income – R million	102.7	808.6	244.9	113.9
Expenses – R million	179.3	702.9	258	102.7

Table 2: Income and expenses of the four business units of the NWU in 2008

Year 2008	Institutional Office	Potchefstroom	Mafikeng	Vaal Triangle
Income – R million	107.1	934.4	285.4	120.9
Expenses – R million	206.3	815.8	276	111.3

In 2007 the NWU Council approved a number of building priorities for the period 2008 to 2010. Table 3 summarises the 2008 budget allocations for the capital and micro maintenance projects for the various business units of the NWU.

Table 3: Project allocations for the four business units of the NWU in 2008

	Institutional Office	Potchefstroom	Mafikeng	Vaal Triangle
Capital projects – R million	1.25	39.538	29.945	27.656
Micro maintenance	0	29.8	11.5	5

expenses – R million				
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NSFAS grants for the NWU in 2007 and 2008 were R45,521,000 and R52,672,391 respectively. These funds were allocated to the three campuses during the period shown in Table 4.

Table 4: NSFAS allocations for the three campuses of the NWU in 2007 and 2008

	Potchefstroom	Mafikeng	Vaal Triangle
Allocations – 2007	R12,518,275	R20,484,450	R12,518,275
Allocations – 2008	R14,992,391	R23,200,000	R14,480,000

Besides the regular NSFAS grants, the University administers dedicated bursaries under the NSFAS and Funza Lushaka schemes. The Funza Lushaka education bursary allocations per campus in 2008 were: Potchefstroom (R5.95 million), Vaal (R2.975 million) and Mafikeng (R1.855 million).

The financial figures presented by management indicate that each of the four business units has the necessary resources for operational purposes. However, the Task Team cannot definitively pronounce on the extent to which these allocations accord, in the strictest sense, with the strategic objectives of the merger. A detailed analysis of this aspect would have to be an outcome of a focused review by the Department of Education.

Whatever the merits of the financial allocation model that is being used by the NWU, the point is that we found the stakeholders at Mafikeng highly suspicious of the institutional management, to the extent that suspected that the figures that the figures presented by management could even refer to another institution. These stakeholders constituencies allege that most of the critical functions, for example, the Finance Department, were being moved to Potchefstroom, while procurement was said to have been transferred already. Again, it is widely believed that the Mafikeng campus is being run down with the ultimate objective of closing it down. It was also alleged that salaries are separately administered on the three campuses to hide perceived discrepancies.

On a substantive note, this breakdown of trust and communication is such that it seems unlikely it can be healed simply by management 'presenting the facts', as they seem inclined to do. Management has to address the fact that it has not secured a buy-in to the merger/transformation project by the staff and student formations on the Mafikeng campus. Indeed, the very merger itself is perceived to be unequal, coercive and detrimental to the

survival of this campus. This has led to the call by Mafikeng students and staff for a review of the merger. In other words, it seems the challenge is no longer just a question of management, policies and procedures, but fundamentally about taking the lead in conceptualising the University anew.

11.5 Human resources policies, systems and practices

11.5.1 Policy development and implementation

Key policies approved by Council since the merger are, among others: recruitment, remuneration, staff development, academic staff promotion, performance management, employment equity, human rights, HIV/AIDS, and the diversity statement and rules for the appointment of senior management. In short, the new University is evidently armed with a repertoire of human-resource-related policies. However, it is the implementation of these policies that will be the litmus test of the institutional drive.

Among the major issues raised by the Mafikeng campus interviews are the appointment of staff, unequal salary packages, high staff turnover, the way the equity policy is implemented, and the lack of a clear staff development plan. Management, for its part, has argued that it has a strategic staff development fund that unfortunately is not fully utilised. We suggest that this contrast goes to the heart of the matter, at least as far as Mafikeng is concerned, namely that there seems to be no sense of common purpose among its constituencies.

The staff profile of the NWU shows that in 2007 there were 2,779 permanent staff at the university. For the same year, African, coloured and Indian employees accounted for 37% of all staff. This aggregated staff equity figure, however, masks the differences between the three campuses of the NWU. In reality, Mafikeng campus accounts for much of the current black staff representation at the University. To illustrate, in 2008 Potchefstroom campus had 23.8% black staff and 57.3% female staff, while at the Vaal campus African and Indian academics constituted only 22% and 1% respectively by October 2008. The two former PUCHE campuses thus collectively show a remarkably low pace of staff transformation, and it is a curious coincidence that their equity profiles seem to be so closely matched in some respects.

A more striking feature of the staff equity profile of the Potchefstroom campus is how consistently low it has remained over the years despite the transformation and equity drive of the country and the higher education sector in general. Table 5 gives a summary of the historical equity profile of this campus (mainly prior to the merger).

Table 5: Staff equity profile of the Potchefstroom campus

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2008
Total staff	1591	1539	1336	1418	1452	1533	1527	1629
Total black staff (inclusive)	534	512	344	367	373	376	376	389
Black staff/Total staff (%)	33.6%	33.3%	25.7%	25.8%	25.6%	24.5%	24.6%	23.8%

Sources: Department of Education/North-West University

There is a strong view held by students and academic and support staff about the lack of capacity of the Mafikeng campus management. There were constant claims raised that the Campus Rector is autocratic and rules by victimisation and fear, and that the human resource management practices are questionable. The alleged high number of staff disciplinary cases at the Mafikeng campus – 67 such cases in the recent past – seems to indicate that human and labour relations and management processes require urgent attention.

Both institutional management and campus management stated that good communication instruments are in place to communicate to all staff and students at all three campuses, and problems are caused by malicious and false rumours often emanating from mass meetings.

The staff, however, especially at Mafikeng, held the view that the communication process is top-down rather than consultative. There is a high level of mistrust expressed at Mafikeng between management on the one hand and academic and support staff and students on the other. Clearly there is an urgent need to develop communication strategies and mechanisms that go beyond information dissemination to encouraging open two-way communication and starting to build relationships with internal stakeholders at Mafikeng and the institutional management, and between campuses.

The institutional management and Mafikeng campus management did not give a full account of what process was followed in developing the policies for the new institution. In the end, whatever process may have been used, it was, however, clear from the interaction with staff that there is a definite lack of buy-in at the Mafikeng campus.

The organisational culture survey results commissioned by institutional management in 2005 and 2007 showed that some staff members had raised concerns about the inconsistent application of policies across all campuses and all levels of staff. In our interactions with management and on the basis of the written information provided, it is unclear how, or indeed whether management is addressing this perception, as it was a recurring theme in our interactions with the various internal stakeholders.

The decentralised human resource function was experienced as problematic in terms of capacity and resources. The general view was that the Institutional Office was staffed with highly skilled and competent individuals, while at the other campuses, especially Mafikeng, staff and management capacity was limited. Potchefstroom was considered to be advantaged by being located close to the Institutional Office. Mafikeng campus was said to be inadequately serviced by the central human resource unit.

11.5.2 The labour relations system

The labour relations system at the NWU reflects the simultaneously unitary and decentralised unitary-decentralised management and governance model adopted by the University. Thus, collective bargaining on substantive issues takes place at the Institutional Bargaining Forum, with campus-based consultation through Workplace Forums addressing local non-wage workplace issues.

Trade union recognition is based on a 30% threshold of employees measured campus by campus, and this is the basis of employee representation on the Institutional Bargaining Forum and the Workplace Forums. This has resulted in the levels of staff representation shown in Table 6:

Table 6: Recognised trade union representation on the various campuses of the NWU

Campus	Recognised union	% representation
Mafikeng	Staff Association	60%
Vaal Triangle	SAPTU	38%
Potchefstroom	SAPTU	60%
Institutional Office	SAPTU	34%

Whilst the 30% threshold is quite normal labour relations practice, problems arise where the scope of representation is not clearly and carefully delineated. In the present case, the union NEHAWU tends to find its membership in the higher education field largely amongst general and clerical workers. In this situation, it is very difficult to reach 30% of the entire body of employees on the campus, where a large percentage are academics and senior administrators. This is even more so when the University, and particularly the Potchefstroom and Vaal campuses, are still distinctly on a very slow equity growth path.

The application of the 30% threshold at the NWU has had the following results:

- The exclusion of NEHAWU, which had members at all three campuses, from collective bargaining, thus largely disenfranchising (black) general workers.
- The exclusion of the National Tertiary Education Staff Union (NTESU), which historically drew its membership from the (largely black) ex-Vista employees on the Vaal campus.

Ordinarily this scenario would not matter, and the 'majoritarian' principle would prevail, until challenged as a result of a change in membership allegiances. But in the context of a merger of institutions with very different histories and cultures, the Task Team finds the failure to include minority voices particularly problematic. While the bona fides of management per se are not challenged in terms of its initially granting the various staff unions a two-year period after the merger to reach the 30% threshold, this gesture, however, does not get to the heart of the matter; this approach is rather too legalistic for the purpose of creating an inclusive institutional culture. At worst, the situation overall could be read as being intended to exclude general black workers from effective participation in the affairs of the University for a long time, given the University's lacklustre performance in terms of reaching its own modest equity targets, especially on the two historically white campuses.

Certainly, SAPTU representatives have argued that for labour peace to prevail it is important to involve NEHAWU and NTESU at least to the campus-level consultative processes. SAPTU also points to an anti-union culture within the NWU, referring particularly to the Vaal campus. Further, SAPTU complains that management is slow to provide information requested, and that it feels excluded from merger processes and decision-making.

11.5.3 Mafikeng: A labour relations meltdown

In addition to derecognising NEHAWU for failing to meet the 30% threshold, the Mafikeng-based Staff Association, with 60% representation on campus, was also derecognised for a period of two years. The decision has since been rescinded. According to management, the de-recognition action was taken in retaliation for the Association breaking the collective agreement and taking part in illegal protest action. Whilst management felt it was within its rights to take this action, it may not have been wise to cut relations with the largest and most representative body on campus.

This action by management has soured labour relations on the campus, as well as excluding an important constituency from the transformation/merger process. There is certainly now a complete breakdown in communication, and relations between management and the Staff Association are extremely hostile.

Labour relations on the Mafikeng campus evoke memories of a previous (homeland) dispensation, and are characterised by fear, threats and counter protests. The Staff Association charges the management with harassment and victimisation and points to the large number of disciplinary cases and the high staff turnover in recent years. They also argue that disciplinary

processes are unfair and arbitrary. The management in turn argues that it had to respond to illegal actions by the Staff Association, and complains of outside political interference.

The Staff Association identifies campus management as their main problem, and joins the SRC in the demand for the removal of the Campus Rector. However, the Association is equally scathing about institutional management and highly suspicious of the merger, which is seen to benefit the Potchefstroom campus at the expense of Mafikeng. There is no buy-in to the institutional plan and vision.

11.5.4 Management mindset on labour relations

The attitude of campus and institutional management towards the unions can be summarised as follows:

- There is a strong view that historically the Staff Association was far too strong, even intruding on academic affairs. There is clearly an intention to exclude them and SAPTU from strategic decisions and confine them to purely labour issues.
- The Staff Association is viewed as unreasonable and, like the campus SRC, unwilling to follow the rules. The NWU institutional management culture is highly legalistic: you break the rules and we stop dealing with you. Negotiation and consultation give way too easily to disciplinary and punitive responses to any breakdown in relations.
- Management is very suspicious of outside political influence in relation to NEHAWU and the Staff Association, particularly any interference from COSATU, which mirrors the belief that student formations in Mafikeng particularly are largely motivated by outside political forces.

Not surprisingly, management's mindset has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The response of the Staff Association, NEHAWU and NTESU has been to reassert struggle traditions: protests and opposition, and extending their alliances to include each other, the student formations and the wider labour and political movement, particularly COSATU, with the intention of leveraging influence against the management of the University.

The present situation has the potential to frustrate good labour relations. It also alienates the so-called 'progressive' formations from the whole merger/transformation project.

11.5.5 Summary and proposals

The labour relations policies and processes at the NWU have failed to develop an inclusive and functional labour relations system. They also contribute to the widespread alienation of significant constituencies from the merger/transformation project. The current labour relations regime effectively undermines the first two goals of the merger, by entrenching historical divisions and silencing sections of the staff body.

The following measures are proposed by the Task Team to address this challenge:

- Move to a more inclusive labour relations regime, by suspending the current 30% threshold and actively encouraging participation in the institutional and workplace forums.
- Begin a high-level debate on the appropriate roles of all stakeholders in the merger/transformation exercise, perhaps through an expanded (less management oriented) Institutional (transformation) Forum with a view to engaging everyone in a review of the merger/transformation process.
- Seriously question the old-fashioned repressive style of management which prevails at the Mafikeng campus and the fact that this is tolerated or even encouraged by the institutional management.

PART FIVE

12. Terms of reference (iii): The extent, manner and success of enhancing social cohesion and a new institutional culture across all campuses that overcomes the apartheid-induced divide between historically white and historically black institutions

12.1 Creating a new institutional culture at the NWU

The geographic spread of the institution and the operationally 'federal' institutional model in place pose a number of conceptual challenges that potentially work against the envisaged or anticipated institutional culture and social cohesion meant to overcome the apartheid-induced divide that existed prior the merger.

Inasmuch as the Task Team tried to look at each campus of the NWU as part of the whole, it was mostly evident that, apart from the documented merger, there is little that connects the three campuses practically. The 'federal' model used to manage the new institution seems to have resulted in each campus developing, nay retaining, a unique historical character, with stark differences and inequalities becoming evident. Mafikeng campus has continued to decline in terms of resources, physical infrastructure and the quality of academic life. It is noted, however, that lately management has injected some resources into some new facilities for student residences, academic support and academic teaching and research.

Vaal campus has been a notable beneficiary of the merger, in terms of actual and potential growth prospects, student numbers, the quality of the academic staff, infrastructure expansion, and its status as an autonomous campus with its own Rector. The Potchefstroom campus remains the strongest and thus the most influential member of the NWU triumvirate. It had to 'accommodate' Mafikeng in its fold in certain areas by virtue of its strength, even though this 'accommodation' seems to have evoked mostly negative emotions on the part of various constituencies at Mafikeng. Indeed, given the historical advantages that pertain at Potchefstroom, its ways of 'doing things' have invariably predominated at the new University.

The Task Team has noted that each of the three campuses has a particular trend in the admission of students. In practice Potchefstroom is objectively observed to be largely reserved for Afrikaans-speaking, and predominantly white, students and a small number of black students. Mafikeng in practice remains a black campus, and enjoys a low status within the merger; this factor has tended to create a feeling of alienation and of being discriminated against. Vaal has improved its student equity for the better, with its majority of black students increasing steadily since the merger.

On the basis of these general observations, the Task Team was unable to see an expression of a unified institutional culture at NWU but rather a collage of three different institutionally based cultures purporting to be one.

12.2 Mafikeng campus

Mafikeng campus is characterised by a highly politicised student body whose leaders demonstrate a high level of familiarity with statutory and regulatory aspects of the higher education environment. The students are alive to the disparities that exist between the three campuses of the NWU, including the generally low qualification levels of staff on their campus. In a related context, these students perceive the Potchefstroom campus and the institutional management in particular as being unsympathetic to the plight and reality of black students, and as being interested only in white students. In their submission the students hardly mentioned issues pertaining to social life on their campus, which perhaps reflects the extent to which politics has become an almost consuming preoccupation on the campus. This observation prompts us to question the experience of the average student on the campus, and the extent to which their normal needs for a nurturing and enriching student experience are being catered for.

Both academic and support staff at Mafikeng seem generally demoralised; there prevails a sense of helplessness, resulting in a paranoia about the Institutional Office's 'secret' agenda to ultimately close the Mafikeng campus. For its part, the campus management team appeared irresolute and not in control of what happens on the campus, including the prevailing disruptions. The management appeared to have no strategy to deal with the situation on campus other than to blame their plight exclusively on 'external forces'.

In summary, there is a low level of trust between the staff and management, and between students and management, at the Mafikeng campus. On these grounds, it would seem that the merger has not gone well, but has rather worsened the already poor conditions at Mafikeng.

12.3 Vaal campus

The Vaal campus seems to be the only of the three that has worked meaningfully towards a progressive campus culture that tries to inculcate a sense of oneness and an appreciation of the diversity of its student population. The campus seems to make a concerted effort to support and encourage student social life in the residences with some financial support from management. Even day students are allocated a virtual residence with funds for entertainment. At the same time, we noted that the campus has a healthy mix of black and white students in terms of the country's demographics. The campus has a language policy that tries to accommodate equitably both the English- and Afrikaans-speaking students through a system of rotation; it was noted, however, that there is still room for improvement here.

The student body appears reasonably well informed and proud of the quality of teaching they receive on the campus, and aware of the high academic achievements and professional awards received by a number of their lecturers, for example that one of their lecturers recently received the 'economist of the year' award.

Both academic and support staff in the main share the vision of the campus leadership, and express optimism about the future of the campus. It is also significant that the qualification base amongst academics on this campus is very impressive.

Despite these positive developments on the Vaal campus, it should, however, be noted that there are a number of underlying tensions between students and management that need to be dealt with to avoid future conflicts. The following are some of these, and recommendations for addressing them:

- The dispute over the recent (2008/9) SRC elections and related policy matters needs to be attended to.
- Conditions at the Faranani residence, which is deemed to be earmarked for black students, are alleged to be inferior, while white and coloured students are encouraged to stay at the more prestigious Thutuka residence on campus. The residence admission policy needs to be made transparent, to dispel any suspicion of discrimination.
- The campus should put in place a quality assurance mechanism to monitor the English translation for lectures, as students have voiced some concerns about this.
- The exclusion of student political organisations from contesting SRC elections could potentially lead to some explosions in the future. The campus needs to find a way to deal with this matter at a policy level.
- There is still some underlying unhappiness on the part of black former Vista support staff about a number of issues, including equitable treatment and access to advancement opportunities.

12.4 Potchefstroom campus

The Potchefstroom campus is the backbone of the NWU in terms of its teaching and learning capacity, research capacity and outputs, financial contributions, management and administrative capacity and wherewithal, and so on. Its standing overall with respect to the various measures of institutional performance thus greatly influences the institution's aggregate performance. Unfortunately, it is this very status that has made it look like the domineering member of the three campuses. Many staff members on the campus tend to share a common sense of belonging, perhaps unsurprisingly given the fact that the campus has not changed significantly since the merger in terms of the racial and even historical profile of its staff.

The Task Team observes that this campus displays a dominant 'Afrikaans' culture to which other racial and cultural groups are expected to adapt (or leave). We observed the expression and manifestation of this domination in a number of instances. To illustrate, both black and white students commonly referred to 'non-white' students instead of 'black' students. As was noted earlier, some staff members also freely made the same reference to 'non-whites'. In a way, it would seem that the Potchefstroom campus has still not even acquired the contemporary social vocabulary of post-1994 South Africa.

At one level, the monolithic culture that prevails at Potchefstroom can be understood in the context of some institutional factors. For one thing, the campus student enrolment profile shows a marked under-representation of black students, especially in the contact and full-time programmes. Tables 7 and 8 show a summarised perspective of the enrolment profile for the campus for the years 2007 and 2008.

Table 7: Enrolment at Potchefstroom campus according to race in 2007

Faculty →	Arts	E&M Sc	Engineering	Health	Law	Nat Sc	Theology	Education
Black undergrad	124	290	102	1101	89	100	218	15280
White undergrad	753	3240	874	2083	880	873	211	4118
Black postgrad	36	222	67	94	14	73	56	80
White postgrad	96	575	193	312	59	231	147	85

Source: North-West University

Table 8: Enrolment at Potchefstroom campus according to race in 2008

Faculty →	Arts	E&M Sc	Engineering	Health	Law	Nat Sc	Theology	Education
Black undergrad	117	315	104	1373	117	105	190	8318
White undergrad	718	3265	906	2069	934	948	204	5730
Black postgrad	44	181	57	104	12	70	47	72
White postgrad	105	478	184	315	72	222	105	68

Source: North-West University

The enrolment figures in Tables 7 and 8 reveal a number of trends that are pertinent to unravelling the debates regarding institutional culture at the campus. These trends are also relevant for answering the strategic questions about access of opportunity and social equity, both of which are explicit elements of the merger that gave birth to the NWU. If we discount the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Health, both of which have a strong component of part-time and/or distance education, it is eminently clear that the Potchefstroom campus is in reality a white campus with a sprinkling of black students. Notably, in 2008 black undergraduate students in the faculties of Economic and Management Sciences, Engineering, Law and Natural Sciences combined constituted an average of 9.2% of their respective faculties, while the corresponding figure for 2007 was 9.4%. The NWU postgraduate black enrolment in the same four faculties in 2008 accounted for an average of 22.3%.

The foregoing observations about the enrolment patterns at Potchefstroom shed some light on the cultural dynamics within this campus. Black students are evidently a tiny minority in the body of full-time contact students, as already illustrated. But, even more fundamentally, the same enrolment patterns raise the question of the role of this campus in helping alleviate the skills shortage in South Africa, especially as it applies to black people in general.

In summary, the Task Team finds that the cultural environment at the Potchefstroom campus is not ideal, as it seems to marginalise students and staff who are outside the Afrikaans community. In addition to the implications of the enrolment patterns observed above, our conclusion on this matter has been informed by the following factors and observations:

- The Task Team observed a visible and verbalised declaration of Afrikaans as a dominant and principal language, with mostly black English-speaking students and staff being effectively faced with the choice of either adapting or moving elsewhere. We met with some bullish affirmation from staff and students that Potchefstroom is an 'unapologetically' Afrikaans-speaking campus.
- While the Task Team respects the concept of cultural and language rights as enshrined in the Constitution of the country, it finds that the language policy of the Potchefstroom campus fundamentally goes against a number of moral, political and constitutional imperatives:
 - Firstly, the Task Team finds it untenable that the majority of South Africans, and Africans in particular, are substantially constrained from accessing the public resources in the university campus as a result of what arguably looks like a convenient language policy.
 - Secondly, it is the considered view of the Task Team that the dismal student equity profile of the campus is proof enough of the claim above; otherwise the campus would have to pronounce that it finds black students uneducable or generally unsuitable for its standards.
 - Thirdly, the Task Team contends that the Afrikaans-speaking community cannot claim a monopoly of language rights at the expense of the common interests of other South Africans, by claiming that they are entitled to an 'own' language

university. Conversely, an insistence on and perpetuation of the latter version of language rights has much wider political implications, and would ultimately mean a return to some form of 'separate development', as each language group in the country would then ideally need its own exclusive educational space. We do not believe that it was the intention of the Constitution to recreate this unsavoury part of South Africa's history, nor do we find any way that this would advance the specific objectives of the merger in the first place.

- Residence life strongly follows on the 'old' Potch/PUK culture based on Afrikaans traditions. In turn, these traditions tend to alienate black students. Critically, white students in residences, by their own account, explicitly expect the black students to merely 'adapt', to the point of almost declaring Potchefstroom a 'white' campus.
- In essence, very little has had to change since the merger other than a few interactions with the Mafikeng team. Equity numbers at staff level remain low, and black student intake seems to be highly managed to maintain low numbers of black students. An allegation was made by black students that the campus prefers blacks with a proficiency in Afrikaans, and coloured students in particular. It is not clear why the proportion of black students in residences still stands at only about 12% to this day, and whether management considers this a matter of strategic concern in terms of infusing diversity into this space. The Task Team has found the residence policy framework at Potchefstroom too timid to be an instrument of effective transformation and equity.
- The exclusion of student political organisations from contesting SRC and other elections on campus creates a potential future flashpoint, while at the same time this practice and policy is rather outmoded in terms of the country's current democratic ethos. The policy seems to be a throwback to the pre-1994 era when university leaders used to be guided by a paternalistic approach to students.

12.5 Social cohesion

It was not evident to the Task Team there is sufficient social life and interaction among the three campuses, except for the three official days a year designated for social networking. Given the mandated nature of these social days, it was not easy to assess whether these will have any meaningful impact in the long run or whether the practice will be followed consistently. Generally, staff who had attended the social days seemed to be satisfied with the effort.

A few faculties and departments seem to have initiated their own social interactions and are optimistic about the future. We note, however, that Mafikeng staff who made submissions to the Task Team hardly made reference to the social days, which presumably demonstrates how little value they attach to this initiative; all they mentioned was that at Mafikeng there was no lounge or common room for staff to meet.

13 Epilogue

Having spent a total of six days listening to over 387 individuals representing various constituencies in the University, the Task Team was left with a number of indelible impressions. These issues were crosscutting and, given the state of affairs which led to the appointment of the Task Team, could not be overlooked or ignored.

- University management reveals a prevailing deep fear of 'political forces', which they perceive as some kind of a 'third force' that is in control of activities at the Mafikeng campus. Apparently these political forces are responsible for the disruptions at the Mafikeng campus. Management has even openly alleged that the Minister was in cahoots with COSATU in instituting the current investigation. Indeed, this fear of third forces has translated into a paranoia that was most visible during discussions about the role of student political formations in SRC and student governance processes in general.
- The majority of submissions made to the Task Team during the visit to Mafikeng pointed to a deep-seated fear of 'an agenda' by the Potchefstroom team (referring to the Institutional Office as well as the Potchefstroom campus) to denude the Mafikeng campus and then eventually to close it down. This sentiment was partly premised on the previous experience of the closure of the Mankwe campus of NWU after the merger took effect.
- The Task Team further observed that Mafikeng stakeholders were preoccupied with a gripping sense of sabotage that was allegedly being perpetrated by the Potchefstroom campus, with the continued dominance of the Afrikaner culture which the NWU was alleged to be imposing throughout the institution. This has given rise to a belief that since the merger all other parties have to either shape-up into the Afrikaans culture or ship-out.
- Mafikeng campus in particular suffers from a great sense of loss of trust between management and the institutional leadership on the one hand and other constituencies on the other, which has resulted in a feeling of abandonment and helplessness and an inability to even try and explore long-term solutions to some of the prevailing challenges. African students and NEHAWU members at the Potchefstroom campus shared some of the general discontent with the management of the University. Overall, these fault lines have negatively affected communication within the institution.
- Senior management displayed doubt, lack of trust and paranoia about the intentions of the Minister in appointing the Task Team, regardless of the documented terms of reference. Various enquiries were made as to the legal standing of the Task Team, the levels of authority between the Task Team and the university management, the need for the Task Team to enter into a 'confidentiality contract' with Council, the need for the Task Team to submit its first draft report to Council before submitting it to the Minister, and the tone and content of a newsletter circulated by the Vice-Chancellor prior to the arrival of the Task Team. All these left the Task Team with a sense of deep mistrust by the senior team about the Minister's motives in appointing them.

- Finally, the Task Team failed to get a clear sense or evidence of an existing plan from any of the structures aimed at resolving the recurring disruptions at Mafikeng, other than the resort to increased security and legal measures.

PART SIX

14. Recommendations

Before making recommendations, the Task Team found it relevant to pose the question as to whether the NWU is a viable institution. We have sought to answer this question through a normative comparison with other universities, and especially those that were the products of mergers, using parameters that are applied by the Department of Education, and within the transformation context of the mergers. On the basis of these broad measures, we make the following observations:

- The NWU has experienced a strong growth in student numbers over the recent period, and its student success rate is close to that of UKZN, one of the top five universities in South Africa in terms of Department of Education norms.
- Its student : staff ratio is within the national average, its percentage of staff with doctorates is well above the national average and very competitive with UKZN, its research publications per academic staff member is below the national target for universities, but by no means amongst the lowest in the country.
- Financially, the NWU has, since 2003, performed well above the national average.
- The Vice-Chancellor (NWU) reported to the Task Team that the NWU is now in the top five universities nationally in terms of teaching and learning, in the top eight in research, has won awards for multilingualism and governance, and in 2007 joined a small group of institutions who have broken the barrier of getting less than 40% of their income from direct government subsidy.

In summary, the NWU is performing well above national averages, except for research output. As an aggregate organisational entity, the NWU is doing well and seems set to play an important role in the North-West Province, and has even more potential to play a greater role nationally.

Short-term recommendations for the Mafikeng campus

1. The University should set up a joint forum with the leadership in the community to negotiate a solution to the persistent political contestation that has disrupted normal campus activity for some time now. This forum would consider, among other things, the specific and general breakdown in communication, trust, sense of common mission and ownership, and the collapse of functional relationships among the various stakeholders at the campus, and even the role of the Institutional Office in these instances. In essence, this forum would seek to re-establish and affirm the policy intentions of cooperative

governance and, more importantly, to also reclaim and restore the Mafikeng campus as a site of higher education learning where academia takes precedence over any other agenda.

Given the systemic breakdown in communication and relationships at the Mafikeng campus that has already been alluded to, it would seem unlikely that the internal stakeholders, including management, would be in a position to convene or at least initiate the discussion forum as contemplated. Since this is the case, it is recommended that the Department of Education take the lead in initiating this process, in consultation with the university leadership.

2. The above proposal should be pursued in tandem with a project for securing some external expertise to help mediate the more pressing issues that have arisen as a result of the events of 2008. We note that this idea was raised in the discussions with both the institutional management and the university Council, and was not opposed at either gathering.
3. Management should urgently install at Mafikeng campus all committees that are contemplated in the student disciplinary code, to allay the fear and dispel the perception that the absence of such committees leads to unfair and/or disproportionate sanctions being otherwise meted out by the existing structures.
4. The Student Support Services at Mafikeng campus generally should be equipped and provide services on a par with those of other NWU campuses, so as to remove the feeling that Mafikeng is being discriminated against.
5. The Task Team has found the management at Mafikeng campus generally incoherent and somewhat indecisive. Given this observation, the Task Team recommends that the Mafikeng campus management be restructured in an appropriate manner, including the possibility of redeployment where necessary. There must in addition be greater support and mentoring from the Institutional Office, as part of a medium- to long-term strategy to re-engineer the NWU's overall governance model.

Institution-wide recommendations

6. The NWU should re-conceptualise its current academic project to become a single (and not a unitary) university. This will require a reassessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the academic programmes, particularly, but not only, at the Mafikeng campus, in order to determine which components thereof can be strengthened.

6.1.1. The assumption for the re-conceptualised academic project would be that Mafikeng is not an 'autonomous university' offering a full range of programmes across five or more faculties.² Mafikeng campus could, for example, become an innovative multi-purpose

²To rebuild Mafikeng into an autonomous functioning university will require an extraordinary financial commitment, which would then make the merger superfluous, and it would mean that the North-West Province would then have *two* fully functioning universities.

campus where academic programmes are offered in a selected number of strategic areas, in line with national and regional needs.

6.1.2. Such a re-conceptualisation would require much greater academic and administrative interdependence between the three campuses; meaning, for example, that a student who completes two years of academic preparation at Mafikeng could then transfer to Potchefstroom or Vaal to complete his or her degree. Such arrangements would foster interdependence and cooperation between the different campuses, which would then have a much better chance of realising the strategic aims of the merger. Under the envisaged model, for example, it would be possible to deploy academics, and especially deans, from either Vaal or Potchefstroom to help in the turnaround of selected faculties at Mafikeng on the basis of the individuals' strengths and capabilities. In any event, the University is encouraged to consider such a measure as part of its short-term strategies for strengthening Mafikeng.

7. The NWU should change the governance/management model in a way that would enable the institution to achieve the aims and goals of the merger with a leadership structure that would initiate and manage change on all three campuses, integrate the academic programmes and administrative procedures, and take strategic decisions that would strengthen the institution so it can continue to make contributions regionally and nationally. Such a new model would harness the considerable expertise located in the Institutional Office, not only for planning and promotion of the institution, but also to manage it effectively.
8. The University should devise a strategic programme to actively encourage co-teaching and student exchanges as part of its drive to attain full academic alignment. While the Task Team acknowledges that such a programme will inevitably need some further funding, we suggest, however, that in the meantime some of the funds that are being used in other areas, such as for social functions, can be directed partly to the exchange programme.
9. The management style and culture at the NWU should shift away from a strictly formalistic and legalistic paradigm that tends to overemphasise security-oriented solutions, which culture the Task Team believes is a heritage from a former era. In any event, the Task Team believes that the said legalistic approach by management is highly unlikely to bring lasting solutions to the perennial problems that have afflicted especially the Mafikeng campus.

The NWU is accordingly enjoined to work towards a more consultative and inclusive management approach, but without the presumption that this transition process will necessarily be without challenges.

10. The NWU lags behind the higher education sector in terms of addressing critical aspects of black student access as reflected in its student equity profile, especially at the Potchefstroom campus. The Task Team has heard submissions to the effect that black students are being 'gently' diverted from Potchefstroom to Mafikeng, allegedly as part of a grand strategy to keep the former as an Afrikaans campus. The University's refrain

about its language policy only serves to deepen antipathy towards its policy direction in this regard, which is being seen by black students as stalling the merger's specific objective of increasing access and equity.

The Task Team urges the University to fast-track its transformation process in this respect as it relates to the admission of black students, as there seems to be neither a fundamental explanation nor a justification for the current low numbers of black students at Potchefstroom.

11. The University should pay special attention to improving the number of black staff, and particularly academics, at both the Potchefstroom and Vaal campuses. The Task Team contends that the distinctive emphasis that management puts on the notion of a 'sustainable transformation' that seems to imply a deliberate delay in making equity appointments, is part of the explanation for the current equity status of the two former PUCHE campuses. Indeed, an analysis of the available data shows that the Potchefstroom campus as a case in point has not only not improved in terms of equity employment in the past ten years, but has actually regressed in real terms. Alternatively, the Task Team argues that this notion of 'sustainable transformation' as propagated by the University has some self-serving undertones that tend to externalise the equity challenge, thus almost making equity a 'nice to have', instead of an outright national strategic objective.
12. The University should inculcate a more inclusive institutional culture, especially at the Potchefstroom campus. The Task Team received submissions from the student body, and also from staff members, to the effect that the Potchefstroom campus is essentially being regarded as an Afrikaner campus. The corollary is that black students at this campus are effectively considered an appendage to the substantive body of white Afrikaans-speaking students, hence the common reference to these (black) students having to learn to 'adapt'. The Task Team concludes that the prevailing culture on the campus thus provides a fertile ground for the manifestation of racist tendencies.

Recommendations directed to the Department of Education

13. The implementation of the policy on the equalisation of student fees across the three campuses is a sore point for students at Mafikeng, and constitutes a source of discontent, instability and strikes on this campus. The Task Team recommends that a small committee be established to help the institution address this matter as one of the short-term measures to be taken to avoid a possible student strike in 2009. This process should include the facilitation of a number of related initiatives, including most immediately the following: the signing of the memorandum of understanding, a review of disciplinary procedures, and dealing with the issue of suspended students.
 14. The Department of Education should appoint a working group to study and recommend different models and approaches to the governance and management of multi-campus institutions. The management of multi-campus institutions is much more complicated than what the merger proposals assumed, and it is time to draw from both local and international experiences. Such a study will also be useful for the Further Education and Training sector, where a number of multi-campus mergers have occurred.
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