



WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC PLAN
2020 - 2030





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**FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL**

I am pleased to introduce the Walter Sisulu University Vision and Strategic Plan – Vision 2030 – for the next decade (2020 – 2030) to you. It is an affirmation of the University’s pursuit of excellence, constructive Afrocentrism, and technological infusion in the academic project of the University. The Strategy is an attempt to recognise the opportunities available in order to reflect our purpose, vision, mission, and values as a proudly African University – against the backdrop of the formidable challenges that the higher education sector faces.

No one can deny the importance of quality higher education. Even in this period of tremendous global uncertainty and widespread societal anxiety, it remains the last bastion of empowerment for the disenfranchised and upliftment for the marginalised and the ‘forgotten’. In carefully laying out the steppingstones to its new future, WSU has clearly acknowledged, through this Strategic Plan, that proper self-preparation and self-positioning are key to identifying and harnessing opportunities; indeed, without these, the best opportunities can be easily missed or squandered. The Strategic Plan defines the University’s new journey, clarifies the energetic determination and depth of commitment required of its stakeholders, and provides indications of the inevitable sacrifices that will have to be made by all so as to steer this historic institution along a sustainable trajectory. Needless to say, these are important preconditions for recognising and harnessing opportunities.

*T Tembeka Ngcukaitobi***Adv. Tembeka Ngcukaitobi SC**



I note with great excitement that the Plan foregrounds excellence in not just the crucial institutionally mandated areas of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement, but appropriately, in all activities designed to support the core mandates. These include human resource management systems, financial administration, infrastructure, as well as management, governance and administration.

This Strategic Plan makes it clear that even the smartest ideas around teaching and learning, research, postgraduate studies and innovation may not be realised in the face of lacklustre commitment to quality institutional support. It defines excellence as the interplay of many factors – quality teaching and learning, impactful and relevant research and innovation, transformative community engagement, enriching student

experience, an empowered workforce, financial sustainability, modern ICT, state-of-the-art infrastructure, and people-centred governance and administration. I particularly commend the deeply consultative and collaborative spirit in which the Plan was forged, and the robust, institution-wide debates that helped to shape the contours of the new Vision. The strategic planning methodology elucidated in the Plan document bears testimony to the accommodative prowess of WSU's stakeholders – management, labour and students – who engaged in the process. It is my sincere hope that this truly forward-looking, lucid and bold roadmap to a sustainable and transformative new future will be diligently followed by every member of the WSU community and embraced by all who are impacted by the University's activities.



**FOREWORD BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRINCIPAL**

I am pleased to commend the Walter Sisulu University Vision and Strategic Plan – dubbed Vision 2030 – for the next decade (2020 – 2030) to you, steadfast in the pursuit of excellence despite the resistance we currently face as a sector, country and global village. Vision 2030 recognises the exciting challenges posed by the concerns of our age and yet it is a contemporary and brave statement of our purpose, vision, mission and values as a proudly African University.

Alongside our new Vision and Strategy, we are co-creating a living framework that will sustain us beyond this 10-year Strategy. It elucidates ideas important to the University, including impact and excellence. Our iterative framework is located within an interactive network that acts as a dialogue over successive years, supporting our actions, deliberations, and outcomes to benefit our students, staff, and communities. Our shared commitment to ecologically sustainable systems, an equitable and just society, wellbeing for all, and a thriving economy based upon innovation is therefore to be understood through the lens of this framework. Our Vision 2030 signals a solid commitment to excellence, integrity sustainability, relevance, fairness, and positive impact in all we do. It does this for the benefit of the University's immediate communities and the global social and economic systems critical to intergenerational equity across the world. We promote a strategy that emphasises wellbeing, human value, and preserving and protecting our natural world. In short, our Strategy is for Africa and the world.

*RN Songca***Professor Rushiella Nolundi Songca**



Consequently, we will sharpen our focus, prioritising our education and research efforts to improve insight and understanding of regional and global concerns and opportunities, taking informed and positive action through the ethical use of knowledge. We will do this across broad domains – geopolitical factors, the environment and resources; justice, equality, and democracy; health and well-being; technology and digitisation – and, through these efforts, advance understanding of what it is to be human, curious, flawed, ingenious and interconnected. To realise these aspirations, we favour trans-disciplinarity, working collaboratively through our teaching and research, respectful of the complex abilities and needs of the diverse communities that we serve. We co-create and disseminate knowledge within and beyond the academic, enabling meaningful and robust engagement with students, staff and partners, using open, responsive and novel work practices.

To succeed, we must be a principled and value-led academic community, holding ourselves and our partners to standards that support academic freedom, curiosity, research-driven knowledge, sustainability, impact, and engagement. Paramount amongst these is the most human of values – openness, tolerance, fairness, trustworthiness and respect for each other and our ideas. Throughout the uncertainty and changes ahead, we will live our values and continue to reflect on them as we, and our world, change. The foci proposed by Vision 2030 will only be possible by working in ways that respectfully challenge old boundaries and assumptions that require different behaviours. We will be recognised by our explicit collaboration with our students, staff, alumni and partners

to understand their needs, aspirations and experiences. This collaboration will inform how we work and our policies, processes, systems, and decision-making. Importantly, we will continue to demonstrate our belief in sustainable, fair and equitable societies, innovation-led economies, and meeting our responsibilities to students from all socioeconomic backgrounds through our lived values and diverse worldviews.

This strategic plan is a “living” document, one that informs decisions and choices while plotting a future course for WSU to continue its trajectory of excellence and the success of all students who come through its doors. We will continuously measure our progress against this plan and share that progress publicly through a strategic plan dashboard. These are exciting times in the robust history of WSU. Guided by a clear vision and path forward, we are confident that we can meet the challenges of a changing higher education landscape while marching toward the realisation of our pursuit of excellence. This Strategic Plan reflects the strategic outcome-oriented goals and objectives which WSU endeavours to achieve over the next ten years (2020 –2030).

“WSU has found herself since merger, in rough oceans and conflicting tides, and while the lessons learnt cannot be denied, WSU now stands at a crossroad of monumental importance. As an institution, we can choose the safe harbour of the traditional, the known-and dare I say- developmental, or we can take the path less travelled, and perhaps find ourselves in a place of exceptionality.”





HONOURING WALTER SISULU

Walter Max Ulyate Sisulu was born at Quthubeni at Engcobo in the former Transkei region of the Eastern Cape on 18 May 1912 – coincidentally the same year the ANC was founded.

Sisulu joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1940 and it was through him that Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo were brought into the organisation.

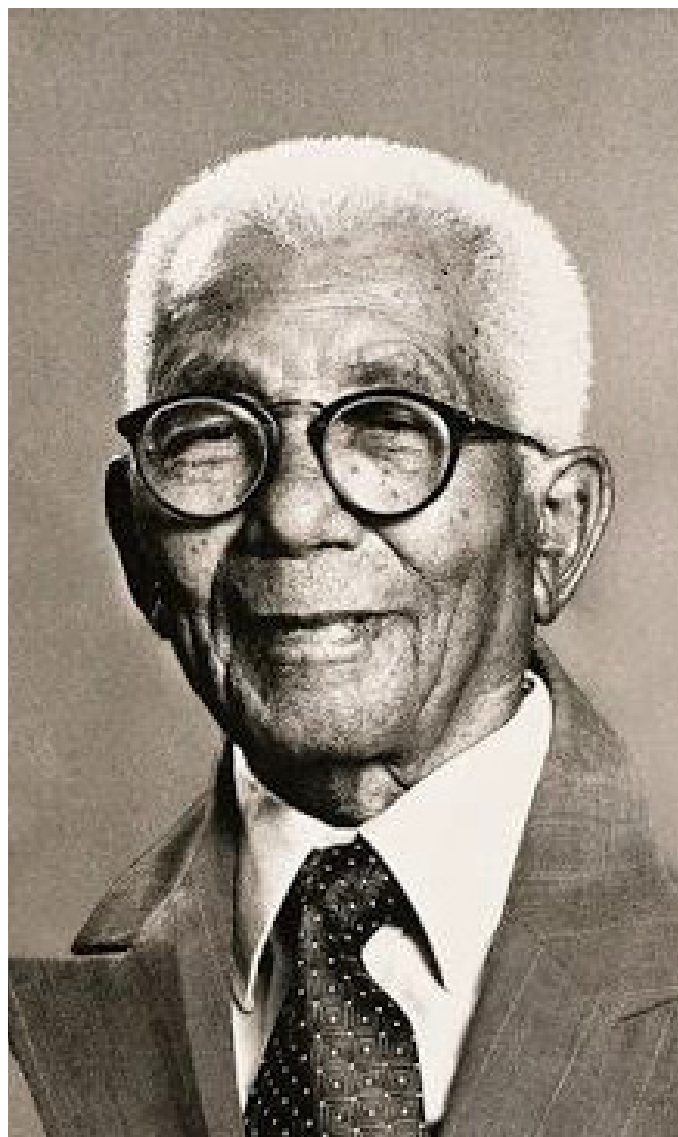
Sisulu is recognised for his pivotal role in the liberation struggle and is respected by friends and foes because of his dignified manner as well as the values he embraced. He remains a towering giant of South Africa's and humanity's struggle for justice. His humility, ability to identify and promote leaders as well as his selflessness are some of his distinctive traits. Sisulu proved to be as faithful to the struggle as he was to his family.

It is an honour for Walter Sisulu University to be carrying the name of such a towering figure in human history. He is an embodiment of the values of selflessness, courage, humility, Ubuntu and compassion to which WSU aspires.

Thus, three of his core values are used on WSU's academic crest:

- EXCELLENCE
- WISDOM
- INTEGRITY

The University is proud to be named after Walter Max Ulyate Sisulu.



"The people are our strength. In their Service we shall face and conquer those who live on the back of the people."

- Walter Sisulu





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this Strategic Plan Walter Sisulu University articulates a vision that will guide its journey into the next decade. Framing the University's character and aspirations as well as growth and development imperatives within a dynamic set of factors, the Plan lays out the University's commitment to the pursuit of excellence. It commits the University to harnessing socio-economic, cultural and ideational assets within the institutional, national, African and international contexts to achieve its goals.

Factors within the African and international context include the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Africa Agenda 2063, while the National Development Plan 2030 and changes and challenges within the South African higher education landscape are highlighted as key framing issues for the Strategic Plan. Institutionally, the Plan draws impetus from, among other things, the University's history as well as its space and place in a predominantly rural and socio-economically marginalised rural province. It equally takes seriously the role of global disruptors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but views such disruptors as capable of being turned for good as they will sharpen the University's instinct of excellence and force it to acquire the agility and creativity to reach for new frontiers of achievement.

The University's philosophy is captured thus:

Vision: An impactful, technology-infused African University.

Mission: Through its core business, WSU responds to societal needs in ethical, scholarly, sustainable, and entrepreneurial ways, and delivers future-ready graduates.

Purpose: In pursuit of excellence, Walter Sisulu University addresses societal challenges by producing relevant, innovative and impactful research; championing sustainable and just development and graduating versatile individuals.

Core values: Honesty and integrity, quality and excellence, respect, Ubuntu.

Slogan: In pursuit of excellence.

Impactfulness is explained both in terms of the University's historical role as an institution of access for the disenfranchised, and a new commitment to creating and implementing an empowering curriculum and carefully designed student development initiatives that ensure that WSU graduates are able to access the highest echelons of society, that research and innovation bolster the pursuit of local, national, and continental development efforts, and that, now and in the future, the University's





core activities contribute to the achievement of sustainable and just global development.

The University seeks to position technology at the centre of teaching and learning, research and innovation as well as administration by making appropriate investments geared towards the acquisition and creation of vital technology.

The Strategic Plan affirms the University's African origins and African location and makes a case for epistemic justice. It commits the University to greater levels of epistemic sensitivity in all areas of its functioning - from curriculum design, pedagogical orientation and course content, to teaching approach, research and innovation, and the composition of the professoriate. Africanness must underpin management and leadership practices and be reflected in the built environment. Conscious efforts must be made towards an Africanised curriculum.

The journey articulated in this Strategic Plan is geared towards achieving the following nine (9) strategic goals:

1. Quality, Impactful Teaching & Learning.
2. Enriching Student Experience.
3. Relevant and Impactful Research & Innovation.
4. Transformative Community Engagement, Internationalisation and Partnerships.
5. Empowered Staff.
6. Financial Sustainability.
7. Cutting-edge ICT.
8. Modern Infrastructure.
9. Effective and Efficient Governance and Administration.



SECTION A: CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC FRAMING



SECTION A: CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC FRAMING

As the 2014-2019 WSU Strategic Plan comes to an end, the setting of a new vision to guide the University as it navigates its way to 2030 is both a necessary and an exciting exercise. The new WSU Strategic Plan (2020 –2030), is developed to provide the navigational markers for the University's operations for the next 10 years. It is inspired by experiences and challenges arising from the last Strategic Plan, but more importantly, from the new energy that has infused the University in the last few years, recent research and active dialogues embarked on within the University and with external stakeholders, as well as global, national and local exigencies with which the University must necessarily grapple. The purpose of the strategy is to capture the foundation of the shared institutional vision and understand the University's role and identity in the context of multiple, ever-shifting demands — nationally, regionally and internationally.

WSU Vision 2030 captures the University's core strategies over the next 10 years by:

- i. Recognising the University's early beginnings, challenging journeys, and enduring strengths.
- ii. Positioning the University's strategic trajectory within a changing socio-political and economic environment, especially as it impacts – and is in turn impacted by – the higher education environment.
- iii. Articulating the University's new vision, mission, slogan, purpose, and core values.
- iv. Foregrounding the core activities of research, teaching, and learning.
- v. Embedding community engagement and international partnerships in the academic mission.
- vi. Harnessing the University's strength as a comprehensive residential university to steer the technology-infused, research-active and innovation-focused identity it now wishes to pursue.
- vii. Embracing diversity – in its fullest demographic, material and ideational expression - to enrich the University's intellectual culture and improve graduate outcomes.
- viii. Setting the overarching strategic goals, from which targets and fundamental performance measures will be derived.

Conventionally, efforts such as these are often contextualised around “challenges” and “constraints” that necessitate strategic responses and a pragmatic focus, in a bid to reposition an institution, but the *WSU Vision 2030* takes as its point of departure the thinking that what may ordinarily be viewed as challenges or even constraints may embody *enabling* ingredients that, if properly harnessed, can yield critical outcomes for both the University and the communities it serves. This is a new journey - by an institution that has been emboldened by its challenges and constraints, and one that is endowed with enormous socio-cultural and environmental resources, refined by its history, and inspired by the life story of the South African liberation icon whose name we bear. It is a journey to a new future.



Understanding the various contexts within which the University operates is essential to shaping the way we seek to face the future. These contexts and ecosystems are also important to ensure that any opportunities they present are properly identified and exploited, and challenges carefully navigated, with a view to advancing the University's efforts of repositioning itself in the higher education landscape and in society as a whole.

While the University recognises the importance to the national/continental/global development agendas, the University will be selective with respect to the goals it responds to. It will give attention only to those goals that coincide with its own strategic priorities.

Four of these contexts are discussed in this section, namely: African and international context, national context, institutional context, and the specific context defined by global disruptors, known and unknown, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT



1.1 Brief History of the University

Walter Sisulu University (WSU) was established on 1 July 2005, as Walter Sisulu University for Technology and Science (later to be known as Walter Sisulu University), Eastern Cape, by Government Gazette No. 25787 of 28 November 2003, through a merger of Border Technikon (BT), Eastern Cape Technikon (ECT) and the University of Transkei (Unitra). It consists of four campuses with 11 sites of delivery spread across a distance of approximately 840 km. The four campuses are:

- Mthatha (Nelson Mandela Drive Site, Zamukulungisa Site, and Medical Sciences Site).
- Butterworth (Ibika Site).
- Komani (Grey Street Site and Whittlesea Site).
- Buffalo City (College Street, Chiselhurst, Heritage Building, Cambridge Street and Potsdam Site).

Following the mergers, only the following three types of institutions exist in South Africa:

- Traditional academic universities.
- Comprehensive universities (which offer both academic and technological oriented programmes).
- Universities of Technology.

As a unique, *comprehensive university in terms of the geographical location and student profile*, WSU offers students a wealth of academic choices together with articulation and mobility across the qualification spectrum – ranging from certificates to diplomas, degrees, and post-graduate studies.



By its location and its nature as a comprehensive University, WSU is strategically located as it embraces the following characteristics:

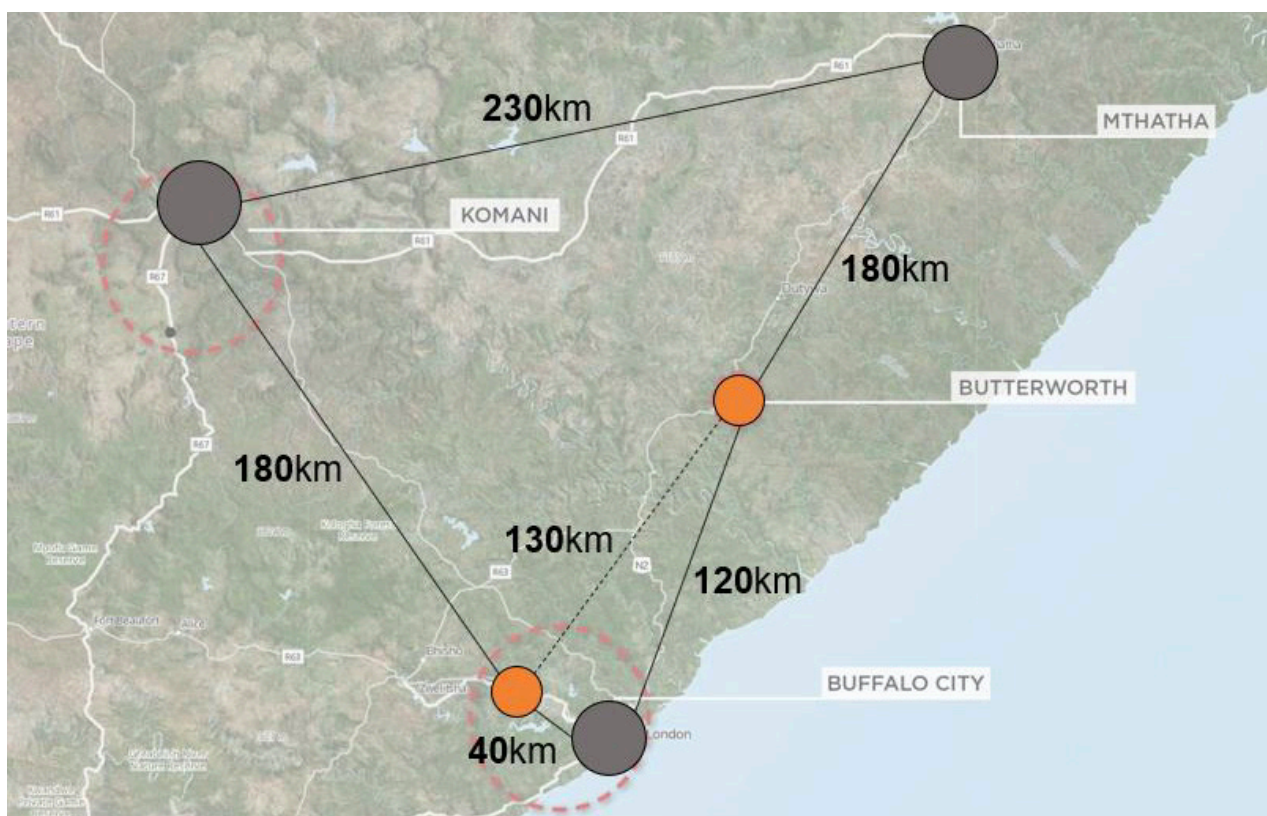
- A diverse range of academic programmes.
- Student mobility through vertical and horizontal articulation.
- Work-related qualifications from certificates through to full degrees.
- Service to the community, business and industry.
- Innovative, problem-solving research.
- Life-long learning opportunities.
- Flexibility by strengthening relationships with the community, civic, government, business, and industry partners for local and regional development.

1.2. The Local Context of the University

WSU is situated in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, which is largely rural and an area of widespread and deep poverty where illiteracy, unemployment and poor access to basic and social services continue to be endemic despite significant investment in service provision. Furthermore, the province is characterised by:

- A large rural population.
- A high proportion of young people faced with high levels of unemployment.
- A great need for sustainable socio-economic development.

Figure 1: Geographic location of the University in the Province





The Province of the Eastern Cape is the second largest of the nine provinces in terms of surface area, comprising 170 600 square kilometres (km²), representing 14.0 per cent of the country's total landmass. Eastern Cape is a post-1994 amalgamation of what was known as the former homelands of Transkei and Ciskei together with what was previously part of the Cape Province.

The Eastern Cape Province comprises six district municipalities: Alfred Nzo, Amathole, Cacadu, Chris Hani, Joe Gqabi, and OR Tambo. There are also two metropolitan municipalities in the Province: Nelson Mandela Bay and Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipalities. WSU is located in three of the six district municipalities: OR Tambo, Chris Hani and Amathole district municipalities. WSU has a campus in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality. The Eastern Cape is a region endowed with several resources that gives it a geo-economic competitive edge.

The 2030 Vision underscores the need for the University to pay special attention to its socio-historical and geographical contexts as it seeks to reposition itself for greater impact. Being a multi-campus, comprehensive university, with a strong rural and urban presence should translate to profound depth and richness in curriculum design, a transformative pedagogical approach, a research and innovation focus that is change-engendering, and a partnership-building philosophy that is both imaginative and forward-looking.

The Eastern Cape Province is in the process of building an articulated post-school education and training sector that will enable broadened access to quality education, training, research and innovation. The post-school sector will focus on the personal and professional development needs of programme participants and the development of communities, society and the economy. It will also embrace indigenous and informal knowledge frames. This is line with the provisions of the Eastern Cape Vision 2030 Provincial Development Plan (which envisions a "thriving province" filled with "flourishing people").

One of our overarching institutional traits is that we are an engaged university that is responsive to our diverse contexts. WSU contributes to the development of highly skilled human resource capital that has a direct effect on the sustainability of the socio-economic environment of the EC Province. WSU is also one of the significant employers of choice in the Eastern Province, creating jobs and considerable opportunities for the flow of large quantities of goods and services.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT



2.1 The National Development Plan 2030

The National Development Plan (NDP) is a long term South African development plan, developed by the National Planning Commission in collaboration and consultation with South Africans from all levels of society.



The NDP envisions a South Africa where “everyone feels free yet bounded to others”; where everyone embraces their full potential, a country where “opportunity is determined not by birth, but by ability, education and hard work”. It envisions a South Africa where “we participate fully in efforts to liberate ourselves from the conditions that hinder the flowering of our talents” (Vision 2030). To realise such a society, we need to transform the domestic economy and focus efforts to build the country and enhance people’s capabilities. To eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, there should be accelerated growth in the economy, which benefits all South Africans. The NDP serves as an action plan for securing South Africans’ future as chartered in the Constitution. The Constitution requires that “we must build a united and democratic South Africa, able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations”. The NDP is founded on six pillars representing the plan’s broad objectives to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality.

THE NDP AIMS TO ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES BY 2030:

- Uniting South Africans of all races and classes around a common programme to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality.
- Encouraging citizens to be active in their development, strengthen democracy, and hold their government accountable.
- Raising economic growth, promoting exports and making the economy more labour absorbing.
- Focusing on the key capabilities of both people and the country.
- Capabilities include skills, infrastructure, social security, strong institutions, and partnerships within the country and with key international partners.
- Building a capable and developmental state.
- Strong leadership throughout society that works together to solve our problems.

At its core, the NDP aims to ensure a “decent standard of living” for all South Africans by 2030. This consists of:

- Housing, water, electricity, and sanitation.
- Safe and reliable public transport.
- Quality education and skills development.
- Safety and security.
- Quality health care.
- Social protection.
- Employment.
- Recreation and leisure.
- Clean environment.
- Adequate nutrition.

Government alone cannot provide a decent standard of living; it requires determined and measurable actions from all social actors and partners across all sectors in society. WSU Vision 2030 thus commits the University to the pursuit of excellence in every facet of its mandate in



higher education provisioning, and in its relationships with all the communities it serves. Farther to equipping its graduates with the attributes necessary for adapting to the demands of a changing world of work, WSU commits itself to contributing to the necessities and challenges of the South African people, including the macro and micro economy, and human capital necessary for addressing some of the major economic and societal development challenges.

2.2 The Higher Education Landscape

A survey released in October 2020 by PwC titled *Vice-Chancellor pulse survey: A learning experience* brought to the fore the views of Vice-Chancellors in South African universities about the key challenges facing the higher education sector. It was conducted primarily to gauge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the higher education sector in the face of a national lockdown that had been in force since mid-March 2020. Significantly, the survey indicated that some of the key issues identified by respondents in 2020 were the same challenges that had plagued the higher education sector for decades, only now compounded by the pandemic. Top on the list was financial sustainability, which encompassed dwindling government funding, rising student debt, and poor recovery of funds from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). The survey also highlighted unsatisfactory student experience – indicated by inadequate student accommodation, unconducive learning environments, poor internet access, and a dearth of appropriate devices for multimodal learning.

The study also showed that the South African higher education landscape was beset by problems such as institutional racism and violent student unrests. Also identified were academic staff capacity challenges, a lack of “coherent and secure” business processes, declining student enrolment despite rising demand for university education, as well as reputational risks and sustainability dilemmas associated with slow transformation and negative public perception.

The issues highlighted by the PwC survey are among the challenges WSU faces, and thus serve as a basis for understanding the emphasis the WSU 2030 Vision places on the imperatives of adaptability, creativity and technological agility, and on the need for a fundamental rethink of the values that underpin the pursuit of our core business.

HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE





3. AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT



3.1 Africa Agenda 2063

Also shaping the strategic thinking and goals elucidated in this Strategic Plan is the place of Africa in the broader scheme of global development. Universities do not exist in a vacuum: their existential realities are intricately tied up with those of the wider continental arena. While WSU is located in South Africa, and is governed by South African laws, policies and regulations, it is an *African* University. As such, it must pursue its mandate in such a way as to advance Africa's developmental aspirations – such as those articulated in the African Union's Africa Agenda 2063. This Agenda was borne out of the need to refocus Africa's energies towards inclusive social and economic development, continental and regional integration, democratic governance and peace, and security, among other issues aimed at repositioning Africa to becoming a dominant player in the global arena. It is an articulation of how the continent intends to achieve the Pan African Vision of “*An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena*”.

African Union



An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa

According to the AU Commission, Africa Agenda 2063 was motivated by the need for:

- Ongoing structural transformations.
- Increased peace and reduction in the number of conflicts.
- Renewed economic growth and social progress.
- The need for people-centred development, gender equality and youth empowerment.
- Changing global contexts such as increased globalization and the ICT revolution.
- The increased unity of Africa which makes it a global power to be reckoned with and capable of rallying support around its common agenda.
- emerging development and investment opportunities in areas such as agri-business, infrastructure development, health and education, and the value addition in African commodities.

From the point of view of WSU Vision 2030, these are not simply an articulation of a Pan-African socio-economic and political agenda: Africa Agenda 2063 speaks to issues that should engage all African universities. As they strive to make a difference in their respective societies, universities must define and broaden their teaching and learning, research and innovation, and community engagement and internationalisation mandates to have applicability to the continent as a whole.



3.2 The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

One of the most ambitious global agreements in recent history is the United Nations' *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. This agreement sets the goals – known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - to be pursued in transforming the world. At the core of the 17 SDGs is a guide to tackling the world's most pressing challenges – including ending poverty and bringing economic prosperity, social inclusion, environmental sustainability and peace and good governance to all countries and all people by 2030.



Education, research, innovation, and leadership are crucial in terms of helping society address these challenges. With their broad remit around the creation and dissemination of knowledge and their unique position within society, universities have a critical role to play in the achievement of the SDGs. Furthermore, engaging with the SDGs will significantly benefit universities by demonstrating how impactful a university is or can be, capturing SDG-related education demand, building new partnerships, accessing new funding streams, and defining a responsible and globally aware university. However, the contribution of universities to the SDGs is much broader, as they can provide the knowledge base upon which they can be implemented. Some of these main areas of contribution are:

- Teaching & Learning: Providing students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to understand and address the SDGs (broadly 'education for sustainable development'); providing in-depth academic or vocational expertise to implement SDG solutions; providing accessible, affordable, and inclusive education to all; and empowering and mobilising young people.
- Research & Innovation: Providing the necessary knowledge, evidence-based, solutions, technologies, pathways, and innovations to underpin and support the implementation of the SDGs by the global community.
- Organisational governance, culture, and operations of the University: Implementing the SDGs principles through governance structures and operational policies and decisions, such as those relating to employment, finance, campus services, support services, facilities, procurement, human resources, and student administration.
- External leadership: Strengthening public engagement and participation in addressing the SDGs; initiating and facilitating cross-sectoral dialogue and action; ensuring higher education sector representation in national implementation; helping to design SDG based



policies; and demonstrating sector commitment to the SDGs.

The SDGs increasingly serve as a framework for defining what it means to be a *responsible* university and a yardstick for measuring a university's societal impact. The Goals also create possibilities for new streams of funding for universities, and an imperative for internal and external collaboration and partnership-building towards more impactful teaching and learning as well as research and innovation. The SDGs also serve as a framework by which universities appraise society's overall progress towards sustainability. Even so, universities produce critical knowledge that could shape the SDGs, sharpen the implementation of the Goals, and improve their applicability in governance, leadership and other societal spheres.

Put simply, WSU Vision 2030 acknowledges that in today's world, knowledge production, teaching and learning and community engagement do not, and cannot, just happen. They occur in a context where everyone must contribute to humanity's collective advancement towards a sustainable – and *just* – world.

4. SUPER DISRUPTOR



Declared by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 11 March 2020 as a global pandemic, COVID-19 became the most virulent disruptor of the global economy in recent memory. It engendered unprecedented socio-economic challenges that will take years to overcome. When South Africa declared a national lockdown on 15 March 2020 as part of the response to the pandemic, one of the sectors that was most directly impacted was higher education. Most South African universities found themselves ill-prepared to handle the shock of the disruptions, with the historically disadvantaged universities, including WSU, particularly exposed. This became glaring as universities struggled to adapt to remote teaching and learning and other critical measures, and many faced a real risk of losing the academic year.

While universities across the country, with

the assistance of the Department of Higher Education, made huge adjustments and managed to save the 2020 academic calendar by extending it to the first quarter of 2021, it became evident that the pandemic had forced a profound and irreversible change in the South African higher education sector. At WSU, whose financial constraints have been worsened by dwindling state funding (partly due to the pandemic), major investments have begun to be made towards mainstreaming *blended learning*. A "new normal" has emerged in all areas of the University's mandate and is bound to take hold – for good. An unforeseen health crisis had compelled higher education institutions to rethink their mandates, the mechanisms, and methodologies for fulfilling those mandates, and their ideas of societal impact. This Institutional Strategic Plan compels WSU to not confine this 'rethinking' simply to the impact of COVID-19,



but to sharpen its instinct of excellence and gain the agility, adaptability, and foresight to be able to respond to super disruptors that are as yet unseen and unknown.

Humanity has entered or stands on the verge of a technological advancement that will essentially change the way we live, work, play and relate to one another. It is said that the scale, scope, and complication of this advancement will be unlike anything humankind has experienced before. The era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is with us. South Africa cannot be left behind. The

Strategic Plan (2020-2030) of WSU is developed within this context.

It is projected that the skills requirements for most jobs will fundamentally change during this strategic period and beyond. There will be a move towards the requirements for more soft skills because a number of those basic technical skills will fall within the compass of artificial intelligence (AI). The vision, mission and goals of WSU cannot be developed without taking account of this super disruptor, especially as it relates to human capacity development.





5. PHILOSOPHY



The University's philosophy is encapsulated in the vision, mission, purpose statement, core values and the motto.



5.1. Vision

An impactful, technology-infused African University.



5.2 Mission

Through its core business, WSU responds to societal needs in ethical, scholarly, sustainable, and entrepreneurial ways, and delivers future-ready graduates.



5.3 Purpose statement

In pursuit of excellence, Walter Sisulu University addresses societal challenges by:

- Graduating versatile individuals.
- Producing relevant, innovative, and impactful research, and
- Championing sustainable and *just* development,



5.4 Core values

Walter Sisulu University's core values are:

- Honesty and Integrity
- Quality and Excellence
- Respect
- Ubuntu



5.5 Slogan

In pursuit of excellence

IMPACTFUL



TECHNOLOGY-INFUSED



AFRICAN UNIVERSITY





6. VISION ELEMENTS - ELABORATION



The central elements in the University's Vision Statement are the following:

- Impactful
- Technology-infused
- African University

This section elaborates on what they entail, and how they underpin the strategic goals articulated later in this Plan document.

6.1 'Impactful'

To all intents and purposes, WSU is a "university of access". The overwhelming majority of its students are from socio-economically and geographically marginalised communities. Historically, these are communities whose population had very little access to higher education, and, hence, to the liberating possibilities of sustainable livelihoods in a modern economy. Under apartheid, education was deliberately manipulated to produce many other forms of exclusion and disadvantage. The unfettered access that this segment of the South African population now has to higher education enables WSU to have significant societal impact.

However, to be truly impactful, the University's graduates must be able to access and enter other doors – those that lead to the highest levels of opportunity in industry, the public sector, civil society, and entrepreneurship. This Strategic Plan commits the University to exposing its students to an empowering and liberating educational experience that will enable them to attain such heights in their post-university careers. This underscores the emphasis the Plan makes on a curriculum steeped in excellence, the faith WSU places on a committed, empathetic and inspirational professoriate, and the new investments the University is poised to make in providing its academic staff and students the best teaching/learning and research infrastructure and a truly enriching environment for its workforce.

To be impactful is to be a university whose core activities contribute to the building of a just, equitable and sustainable world. One index of such contribution is the extent to which teaching and learning, research and innovation as well as community engagement and internationalisation connect to and bolster the pursuit of local, national, continental and global development priorities aligned to WSU's mission, vision and values. This is in line with the move, among universities globally, to gauge their societal impact by tracking how their core activities help society to progress towards specific national, continental and global development goals.

To track how its teaching and learning, research and innovation and community engagement



contribute to sustainable and just development, the University will necessarily look to specific frameworks. At the local level, this will be the Eastern Cape Vision 2030 Provincial Development Plan (which envisions a “thriving province” filled with “flourishing people”). At the national level, the National Development Plan (NDP) seeks to “eliminate poverty and reduce inequality” in the country by 2030 through the creation of a “virtuous cycle” of growth and development. Continentally, it will be the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, which speaks of the “Africa we want”. Feeding into some of the core provisions of these frameworks is the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which spell out 17 areas in which urgent action is needed at the global level to set the world on a new development path.

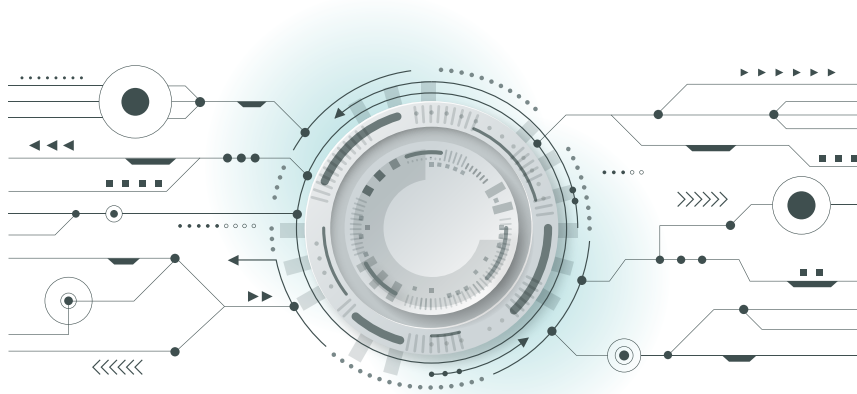
This Strategic Plan makes a case for academics, researchers, students and the entire WSU community to constantly engage with and interrogate these and other frameworks with a view to seeing how their work could bolster whatever goals they articulate. Such engagement could serve as an immediate yardstick for assessing the University’s societal impact.

However, in highlighting the need to engage existing development frameworks, the point must be made that WSU does not subscribe to philosophies, practices, or institutional pronouncements that seek to *instrumentalise* the academy and its knowledge-production mandate. Universities are not handmaidens of political dispensations and time-bound development frameworks, but are institutions dedicated to the long-term pursuit of truth – truth that might question any existing conceptualisations of development. It should be added that development itself, as a multi-parameter concept, does not always lend itself to formulaic definitions: different academic disciplines or schools of thought might view it in radically different ways. An aestheticist might view development differently from, say, an economist. An official ‘development framework’ might not regard a lyricist as working in the field of ‘development’; yet lyricists might define development in ‘non-material’ terms and view the ‘appreciation of art’ and beauty as the ‘highest form’ of societal development.

From the point of view of this Strategic Plan, therefore, scholarship that critiques existing development frameworks might still be viewed as impactful, as it could pave the way to the jettisoning of the provisions of existing frameworks and may offer better tools for the greater good of humanity. The University acknowledges its role as a vehicle for the production of knowledge that will outlive the knowledge creators or the institutional or political dispensations within which it is produced.



6.2 'Technology-infused'



We live in an every-increasing technology-infused world and therefore need to become a technology-infused university. This entails responding to and harnessing technological advancements to improve operational efficiency and sustainability; and, importantly, to prepare our graduates for the demands and opportunities offered by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) – and beyond. In other words, technology must become a veritable tool of teaching and learning, research and innovation, community engagement, administration, and overall institutional well-being. This Strategic Plan envisages the day when every aspect of academic and institutional administration will be carried out effortlessly with the use of technology. Above all, the Plan commits the University to producing graduates who can navigate a technology-infused world with the nimbleness and confidence of people who not only understand the place of technology in their lives but can use it proficiently and sustainably to create opportunities and solve problems. The University commits to producing graduates who will be active players and social catalysts in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and not helpless victims of it.

Despite the enormous socio-economic and health crisis it has engendered globally, COVID-19 has taught the world that much can be achieved if societal challenges could be approached with a different and bold mindset. For instance, technology can be, and has been, utilised to create electronic platforms for administration, thus alleviating queueing. Through the use of technology, vast amounts of information can be processed and made available. Technology facilitates the ease of communication. It can accommodate online classrooms and student chat groups. Through appropriate learning management systems, students can gain access to course materials and submit assignments and have them electronically assessed and returned. It can also be used to facilitate “smart classrooms” - from remote teaching or expert guest lectures from international experts to participation in distance-based modules and programmes offered by various institutions. Lectures can be electronically stored and listened to at one’s convenience.

Research processes can be conducted from an electronic platform and big data can be accessed and manipulated. Journals can be accessed, and internationalism of collegial relationships can be



fostered. Research findings can be shared.

From a community perspective, various applications of technological advancement could be investigated and developed. While the benefits of 4IR for universities are often advocated, there are also developmental applications that might be of benefit to local communities which need to be investigated, especially in relation to relevant knowledge platforms. Given the ubiquitous nature of hand-held devices accessibility is a distinct possibility.

The opportunities made possible through technology will allow the University to use its data to improve decision-making and increase efficiency through taking advantage of emerging technologies to achieve sustainability. University infrastructure and operational processes will have to be customised and learning and teaching reimagined so that our graduates are work- and future-ready.

Put simply, educational institutions across the

world, including WSU, have demonstrated, and will continue to demonstrate, the power of technology in everyday life. Technology has been firmly positioned at the centre of what has come to be known as the 'new normal'. At WSU, the idea is to ensure that the university's clients feel the seamless use of technology from entry to exit. Appropriate investments are currently being made, and will be intensified, to ensure that students – in all disciplines – are equipped with modern computing devices and internet connectivity to enable them to operate at the cutting edge at all times.

Building on the recent spurt of innovation by staff and students, some of which has been widely reported in the South African media, WSU seeks to be not just a 'user', but also a creator, of technology. The University will create some of the technology it uses in its operations but will also play a frontline role in the creation of some of the technologies and solutions needed to help society at large address its challenges.

6.3 'African University'

At WSU, our starting point on the debate about being an 'African university' is that an institution that seeks to expand the frontiers of human knowledge and innovation, or desires global influence and significance, can only truly do so by first recognising and harnessing the socio-economic, cultural and ideational assets in its own environment. The University has recently publicly and unequivocally upheld this standpoint when its scientists, working with a local traditional healer, formulated *Creation Nervine* and *Creation Arthritis* herbal teas - innovations that are, as of 2021, at pre-commercialisation stages. WSU's affirmation of an "African" identity is not a romanticisation of essentialist narratives about Africa and 'Africanness'. Rather, it is a statement of fact about location, the peopling of the institution, and how seriously we take the African context. It is also a statement about the need to understand how Africa has contributed, and can continue to contribute, to global knowledge. Our declaration of 'Africanness' is homage to the soil and the socio-cultural riches from which the institution is nourished and the seriousness with which we take the issue of Africa's development.



Above all, it is an acknowledgment of the fact that knowledge institutions embody both *local* and *global* attributes and so must constantly draw on and be energised by the best of these attributes as they pursue their mandates.

For instance, there is a powerful discourse occurring throughout the country, and across the continent, focusing on the 'decolonisation' of the curriculum. An alternative perspective is to view this as a call for the 'Africanisation' of the curriculum. At one level Africanisation requires the revalidation of indigenous and local knowledge systems which require investigation and codification. At another level it requires a new narrative - a narrative of resilience in the face of adversity and the reclaiming of identity. At yet another level, there is a need to identify those aspects of international knowledge systems which are appropriate to the advancement of African well-being and prosperity in the contemporary era. This is usually captured in the "Think Local, Act Global" mantra. This process needs to be led by a truly African professoriate.

All this has a connection to the grand philosophical question: How can African scholarship add a valuable perspective in the internationalisation of knowledge? This is particularly important given the complexity of forces that have worked to dispossess, suppress and disfigure Africa over the past six centuries. In seeking to make the world a better place, therefore, WSU actively urges its academics and students to interrogate – and where possible, integrate into their scientific work - *knowledges* that communities across Africa, and elsewhere, have utilised through the ages to tackle, overcome or adapt to daunting challenges.

This Strategic Plan commits the University to even greater levels of epistemic sensitivity - in curriculum design, pedagogical orientation, course content, teaching approach, research and innovation, the composition of the professoriate, management and leadership practices, and even the built environment. The 'Africanisation' articulated in the University's Vision is fundamentally about *epistemic justice*. The University acknowledges that the challenges facing the contemporary South African society – and Africa as a whole - cannot be solved through an overdependence on, or the regurgitation of, any one form of knowledge, but through the rigorous interrogation, sifting and amalgamation of helpful ingredients from diverse knowledge systems. This is particularly important for African knowledge systems, which have historically been marginalised for no other reason than that they lacked the 'tools of hegemony.'





SECTION B: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR WSU



SECTION B: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR WSU

7. THE APPROACH



The University adopted a two-pronged approach to the development of this Strategic Plan. First was the use of planning “Commissions” to carry out an in-depth analysis of various domains within which the University operates and are critical to the subject matter of the Strategic Plan. Seven Commissions were established, to focus on the domains of:

- Vision and Mission.
- Teaching and Learning .
- Research and Innovation.
- Community Engagement and Internationalization.
- Student Experience.
- Finance and Human Resources.
- Infrastructure, ICT and Operations.

The brief to the Vision and Mission Commission was for it to set a guiding tone for strategic planning at WSU by crafting a new Vision and related elements. The other Commissions were then to align their work to that Vision. This was done after due consideration of the SWOT analysis that was conducted, for the University to understand the future opportunities it might exploit and areas that needed strengthening as it faced the future. The other Commissions were tasked with carrying out an in-depth analysis of issues within their domains and how such issues could be dealt with within a new vision. Three of the Commissions focused on the academic project, three Commissions focused on resources and operations, to advance the University business and one Commission focused on governance and administration.

The second approach, which was meant to ensure robust engagement with various institutional stakeholders, to ensure genuine, broad-based participation in the planning process, but also to provide an indication of planning progress as well as buy-in by various stakeholders of the foundational work done by the seven Commissions. Thus, a Workshop Approach was the adopted. For example, the first Workshop, which kick-started the process, adopted the idea of establishing Planning Commissions made up of internal stakeholders. A joint Workshop of Council and Executive Management Committee (EMC) endorsed the direction that the University had taken to draft the new vision and its elements. Another Workshop, held in February 2021, involved the recognized labour formations, Student Representative Council (SRC), Deans of faculties and the EMC. This Workshop endorsed the latest formulation of the vision and made input to the strategic goals and objectives to be pursued in order to realise the 2030 Vision. Importantly, all workshops presented an opportunity for participants to make their input in order to shape the strategic plan. It is therefore from these workshops that a ‘shared understanding’ emerged regarding the *2030 Vision*.



8. STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



WSU Vision 2030 views academic excellence as the dynamic interplay of talent, vision and creativity borne out of a new attitude and a fresh commitment to position the University for excellence, characterised by unprecedented growth and impact. It underscores the imperative of forging change rather than merely responding to it, harnessing the power of technology, rather than being 'driven' by it, and collapsing the binary of problem-posing and solution-seeking in the quest for sustainable and *just* solutions to society's challenges.

Regarding the production of new and the search for sustainable solutions, academic excellence entails opening new spaces, crafting innovative approaches for interrogating the meaning of knowledge itself and forging knowledge partnerships and collaborations that are as mutually beneficial as they are truly symmetrical. It calls for bold interventions in the global knowledge ecosystem and specifically urges new visibilities for historically silenced or 'forgotten' African epistemologies. Above all, the imperative of excellence challenges the University to discover new pedagogical avenues to empower and affirm young people. They become co-creators of scientific and professional excellence and rise above the strictures of race, class, geography, and gender.

WSU envisions a unified management system that operates with effectiveness and efficiency. This it does by aligning and integrating the academic project as well as various administrative functions. In pursuit of excellence, therefore, nine (9) strategic goals are delineated, to be pursued under this Institutional Strategic Plan. The nine (9) goals are as follows:

8.1 Strategic Goal 1: Quality, Impactful Teaching & Learning



QUALITY
IMPACTFUL
TEACHING & LEARNING

WSU is committed to the provision of a quality educational experience cognisant of its value driven



vision of being an impactful technology infused African university. The University's focus is the creation of knowledge as an informed and contextualised by-product of reciprocal interaction between knowledge creators/generators and receivers. In such an ontology academic staff ground themselves on scholarly engagement with their teaching methods and pedagogy informed by students' lived experiences of the way knowledge is discovered, created, analysed, synthesised, challenged and transformed in varying contexts and conditions through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).

This approach underlies excellence in teaching and learning within an enabling environment supportive of innovative teaching and learning designs. Within the technologically driven world such an approach cannot operate in a vacuum isolated from the reality of the impact of technology and multi-media resources, and the opportunities they pose for education in general. In this regard, the teaching and learning approach relies on technology and its potential to enhance quality education and the infusion of technology to enable future-ready graduates.

The following are WSU graduate attributes:

- Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.
- Participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities.
- Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
- Contributing to the social and economic development of South African society at large.

These graduate attributes aim to equip students with a well-rounded education, nurturing their personal growth, civic engagement, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to make meaningful contributions to the social and economic fabric of South African society.

WSU commits itself to the transformation of the curriculum, epistemology and metaphysical approaches to knowledge-making. In order to do so, WSU commits to designing transformed curricula in such a manner that a student will have every opportunity to develop metacognitive abilities to understand how scientific knowledge is formed and validated within different disciplinary and professional contexts. In as much as the purpose, characteristics and methodologies of inquiry differ within various academic disciplines and fields, the WSU recognises that the focus of learning is the student, and the purpose of its teaching is both to induct the student into particular fields, and at the same time to develop an appreciation of the differences between approaches to teaching and learning depending on the field of study. Thus, the holistic approach to teaching is learning-and-student-centred where quality learning requires the design and delivery of academic programmes using diverse educational approaches, sensitive to the diversity and lived experiences of students and scholarly academic teaching through pursuing the following objectives:

- i. Relevant programmes that are responsive to societal needs.
- ii. A framework for contextualized quality education, ensuring continuous quality assurance and



enhancement.

- iii. Enhance student support services to increase student throughput rates overall success in all academic programmes.
- iv. Integrate technology into teaching and learning practices.
- v. Greater multilingualism within the teaching and learning environment.
- vi. Increase scholarship of teaching and learning among faculty to enhance educational practices and student learning outcomes.

8.2 Strategic Goal 2: Enriching Student Experience



ENRICHING STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Enriched student experiences result in higher retention and graduation rates, thereby providing an ultimate return on investment in a qualification enrolled for and completed. Furthermore, enriched student experiences create an inclusive future for the university as it meets students' needs, how they acquire knowledge outside the classroom, how they interact with peers and whether they feel a sense of belonging and purpose for their tertiary education.

Envisaged strategic objectives are implemented through a range of diverse, relevant, and student-centred programmes focussing on holistic development of students and designed to complement students' graduate or postgraduate academic curriculum. Programmes to be implemented are comprised of residence life and co-curricular programmes ensuring that students are accommodated in living and learning environments that are conducive to their well-being and success. They will be allocated to mentors, participate in workshops that advance their academic excellence; have access to primary health care and psychosocial support services and to sports and recreation facilities which promote the physical fitness of students, enabling them to participate in leisure and competitive sports activities. Student governance and leadership development will ensure representation of students on various statutory governance structures and committees, enable capacity development



for the SRC and its sub-structures, leadership exchange programmes, conversations between the SRC and sub-structures, engagements between University Management and the SRC regarding feedback on student experiences, and proposed solutions to drive change in service delivery.

Programmes to be implemented will enable students to acquire skills and competencies in their professions, foster resilience, develop proactive coping strategies, and identify available resources and support services required to complete their qualifications. Ultimately, these programmes will prepare undergraduate and postgraduate students to make a meaningful contribution to their society and remain competitive in a changing job market. Digital transformation that meets students' expectations and enriches their experiences is ensured through the application of flexible and accessible online programmes that enable frequent and customised interactions.

The following strategic objectives have been identified:

- i. A techno-responsive out-of-classroom environment.
- ii. A stimulating residence environment that is safe and secure.
- iii. Student-centred service provision.
- iv. A responsive and ethical university student culture.
- v. Good citizenship through nurturing student talents.

8.3 Strategic Goal 3: Relevant and Impactful Research & Innovation



RELEVANT & IMPACTFUL RESEARCH & INNOVATION

A primary objective of WSU is to produce well-rounded citizens and empower the youth through research and innovation that responds to the needs of society. This can be achieved through sustainable and impactful research that directly addresses societal challenges and promotes positive change. However, WSU faces certain challenges in its research landscape, including the limited availability of



postgraduate programmes in key areas, a low graduation rate of postgraduate students, and a lack of commercialized research outcomes.

The following objectives are intended to address the challenges that WSU is currently faced with:

- i. Enhance capacity of academic staff to deliver quality and impactful research.
- ii. Accelerate research output growth.
- iii. Increase postgraduate programmes.
- iv. Promote Innovation and intellectual property (IP) commercialisation.

8.4 Strategic Goal 4: Transformative Community Engagement, Internationalisation & Partnerships



TRANSFORMATIVE C O M M U N I T Y E N G A G E M E N T INTERNATIONALISATION & PARTNERSHIPS

Walter Sisulu University is committed to fostering transformative community engagement, internationalisation and partnership. The University intends to establish a strong presence that resonates with diverse communities whilst driving positive change both locally, within the continent as an African University, and globally.

Through strategic collaborations, we aim to create lasting connections that transcend boundaries through the following objectives:

- i. Partnerships and collaborations with community stakeholders to contribute to the betterment of communities.
- ii. Provision of professional and discipline-based services to address industry and societal needs.
- iii. Innovative teaching and learning practices that promote active student participation with communities.
- iv. Research and scholarship that address real-world challenges, and advance knowledge.



- v. International partnerships and collaborations with universities, research institutions and other global institutions.

8.5 Strategic Goal 5: Empowered Staff



EMPOWERED STAFF

Considering that the University's academic staff qualifications profile is below the target set out in the national development plan and considering the need to improve academic leadership, WSU will prioritize the enhancement of academic staff qualifications through the recruitment, development, and retention of academic staff. Further attention will be aimed at ensuring that the University support staff are equipped with the skills and expertise necessary for 4IR and this shall be done by ensuring more resources are provided towards the training and development of employees. Technology-driven work arrangements and reporting must be embedded as the normal way of conducting business. This will be accomplished through cultivating a high-performance culture inside the University, ensuring that staff members feel involved and motivated, and leadership is equipped to handle the challenges facing the institution. The staff profile of the University in the occupational levels of top and senior management as well as professionally qualified and experienced specialists will reflect the national demographics of our country in particular in respect to gender equity within the management levels.

The following strategic objectives have been determined to achieve:

- i. Improved levels of academic staff qualifications, and higher levels of capacity for leadership and support staff.
- ii. A workplace culture and climate that is conducive to high performance.
- iii. Improved client experience with HR services.
- iv. Advancement of transformation particularly in gender equity.
- v. Attraction and retention of talented staff.



8.6 Strategic Goal 6: Financial Sustainability



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Walter Sisulu University has made a remarkable recovery from the days of administration and the University's finances have been stable and steadily improving. However, the financial context of the University set out below should be noted:

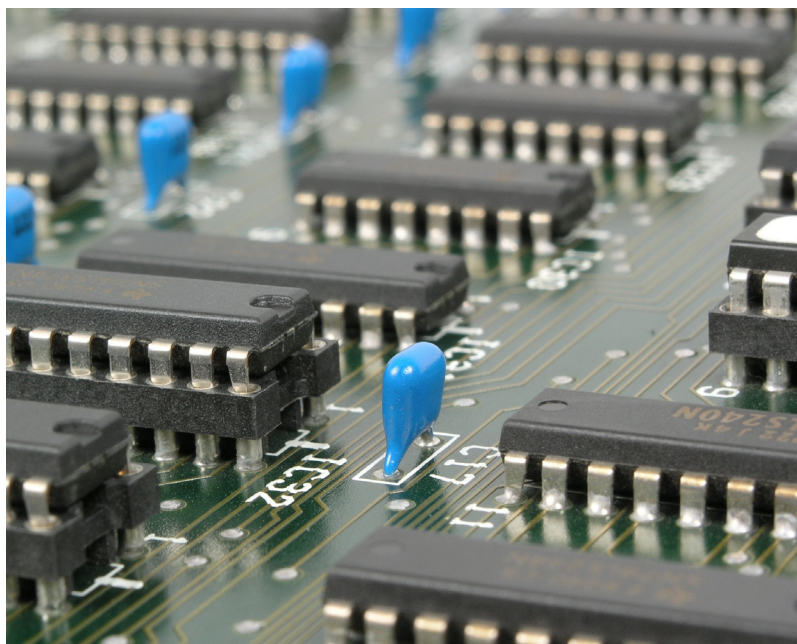
The University is one of the historically disadvantaged institutions with most of our students coming from poor and rural backgrounds. Student debt is a huge problem for the University as students with no access to funding are unable to pay for their studies and therefore accumulate debt. Through the HDI grants, the government has sought to address some of the historic imbalances in the funding of universities, but the gap is too wide. Like other HDIs the University does not have reserves and access to donations. The University is heavily reliant on government for its funding.

To achieve its vision and mission the University needs to be financially sustainable and has set the following financial objectives:

- i. Efficient management of resources.
- ii. An integrated long-term financial framework to ensure the sustainability of the institution.
- iii. Strengthening Financial Management systems.
- iv. Increase and diversify income streams.



8.7 Strategic Goal 7: Cutting Edge ICT



CUTTING-EDGE ICT

The Walter Sisulu University (WSU) has set itself a bold vision of being “An impactful, technology-infused African University” and has committed itself to pursue excellence that will see it address societal challenges. As an African university, it is expected that WSU will contribute and produce graduates that will contribute to the development of South Africa and the African continent. The vision and mission of WSU are informed by the country’s National and Provincial Development Plans. Like all the other South Africa universities in the higher education sector, WSU has to manage the challenges relating to digital transformation required in the Fourth Industrial revolution(4IR), financial sustainability in a struggling global economy, and the crisis into which COVID-19 has thrown companies world-wide.

Infusing technology in teaching and learning for WSU will have to take into consideration that WSU operates from four campuses with 11 sites of delivery spread across an area covering a circumference of approximately 1 000 km in the Eastern Cape province. The province is characterised by a large rural population, a high proportion of young people faced with high levels of unemployment, and a great need for sustainable socio-economic development.

Adopting technology for blended teaching and learning, both for face-to-face and remote learning, will enable WSU not only to address the challenges listed above but will also enable the University to respond to disruptions to the University’s business model.

To cater for the expressed needs of the institution in the context of its environment and the internal challenges faced, this Digital Strategy explicitly covers what must be done in relation to the maturity of the ICT function to ensure that it is able to lead the digital transformation of the value chain of WSU so that the institution becomes “An impactful technology infused African university” by 2030.



The following strategic objectives have been determined to:

- i. Improved network performance through provision of effective and efficient ICT connectivity.
- ii. Transformed IT environment by automating and digitizing to support business operations.
- iii. An IT environment that is agile and resilient.
- iv. IT systems with integrity, security and privacy.
- v. An ICT environment compliant with WSU's corporate governance framework.

8.8 Strategic Goal 8: Modern Infrastructure



MODERN INFRASTRUCTURE

It has been acknowledged before that due to its recent history WSU has lagged behind in its infrastructure development and maintenance implementation. This lack of adequate infrastructure has negatively affected the University's academic delivery performance in ways that have been expressed in numerous reports such as the Council of Higher Education (CHE) audits and many professional accreditation bodies. It is against this background that we have put forward a request for funding.

The University infrastructure plan addresses key spatial challenges that the various campuses of the University face, based on good principles of university campus design. This strategy will clearly articulate the infrastructure plan of the University and align to the current teaching and learning plans. This will result in campuses that function efficiently in terms of layout and campus life. A clear Academic Strategy Plan would assist in creating a spatial framework that meets the teaching and learning requirements of the University.

The current strategy primarily advocates building development on previously disturbed land. However, a strategy plan around the development of greenfield sites will assist in informing future developments. This will include proposals to enable open land to become productive - for food



growing, research or recreational facilities. This would also link with the community outreach and public private partnership strategies.

It is increasingly common cause internationally that the issue of sustainability is one of the most pressing imperatives that needs to inform spatial/infrastructure decision-making. It is appropriate and important for the University to assume a leadership role in this through its own practices: to lead through demonstration and example. It is useful in this regard to view the University as a metabolism, in that it has inputs, throughputs and outputs. The central sustainability issues are to make the maximum use of renewable resources, and to minimize our ecological footprint, in terms of inputs; to maximize efficiencies (measured largely in energy flows) of throughputs; and find ecologically responsible and, wherever possible, productive ways of dealing with outputs (through recycling and re-use).

The next stage of the process is the development of a maintenance plan, a landscaping plan, as well as a strategic infrastructure plan. All of these are to be complemented by an Implementation Strategy Plan for the phased implementation of the required infrastructure and maintenance programmes. This will be refined in close collaboration with the leadership of the University. Accompanying the Implementation Plan will be documentation including marketing to justify project funding from the DHET and other prospective donors to the University.

The following strategic objectives have been determined to:

- i. Sufficient and quality infrastructure for the 21st century.
- ii. Enhanced environmental performance to achieve a green-star rating.
- iii. A safe, and healthy environment for staff and students.
- iv. Efficient and effective provision of facilities management services.





8.9 Strategic Goal 9: Effective and Efficient Governance and Administration



EFFECTIVE & EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION

In the pursuit of excellence, WSU has deliberately prioritised the establishment of robust governance and administration systems that place people at the centre of its operations. This is the essence of this strategic goal. Acknowledging the intense competition within the knowledge economy, WSU recognises the critical role that effective management and governance play in delivering quality education, teaching, research, and community engagement.

The backbone of achieving the desired outcomes lies in strengthening the governance and management structures at WSU. This necessitates the active involvement of leadership at various levels, each playing a distinct role. To succeed in this endeavour, WSU cultivates a culture of responsiveness and adaptability in its mission execution, and by so doing, ensuring dynamic and agile approaches as common practice.

Central to this strategic goal is the principle of co-creation, emphasising the importance of maintaining clear distinctions between roles, responsibilities, and lines of accountability between the Council and management. By implementing this principle, WSU aims to foster an environment where the Council and management can collaborate effectively, working towards shared objectives while upholding individual accountabilities.

WSU has made a deliberate decision to invest in cutting-edge technological developments and applications, recognizing their potential to facilitate capable management and administration. By leveraging these advancements, WSU aspires to achieve greater results, enhancing both the efficiency and effectiveness of its governance and administration practices.

Through its commitment to people-centred governance and administration, WSU endeavours to



establish a university environment where individuals are empowered, collaboration is fostered, and excellence is pursued. By embracing this strategic goal and the identified objectives, WSU strives to elevate its position as a leading African University in the knowledge economy, delivering high-quality education, research and community engagement.

To realise the full state of efficient and effective governance and administration, WSU has identified the following key strategic objectives:

- i. Effective and efficient Council.
- ii. An environment for the effective functioning of legislated governance structures.
- iii. Effective and efficient Student Academic Administration.
- iv. An effective and efficient governance and unitary management system.

9. CONCLUSION



The University will design and locate monitoring and review cycles within the ten-year strategic plan period to ensure that WSU remains relevant and responsive to the ever-changing demands of the higher education sector. Thus, the strategic plan will be revised every five years based on the outcomes of these reviews.

In order to give effect to the aspirations of the strategic goals and long-term vision of the University, the Executive will develop an Institutional Operational Plan (IOP). Faculties and support services departments will prepare their own operational plans, which will be aligned with the IOP and WSU's long-term vision and strategy. Cascading the strategy across all the operational levels of the University ensures that everyone understands and engages with the shared institutional vision and moves in unison towards execution of the strategy.

These operational plans will feed into the institutional annual performance plans which are submitted to DHET over the strategic plan period. Each operational plan provides specific actions, activities, targets and key milestones to be achieved.

Monitoring implementation of the Strategic Plan is the responsibility of structures charged with oversight of the Strategic Plan. The executive leadership will ensure the plan is a living document that drives the strategic agenda of the institution, and that appropriate institutional resources are allocated to accomplish the desired outcomes. Results must be evidence-based/driven and will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the outcomes are achieved as planned, and that corrective action is taken timeously.

