

UFS Business School appoints new director

The University of the Free State (UFS) has announced the appointment of Dr Udesch Pillay as director of the UFS Business School, effective 1 October 2021.



Dr Udesch Pillay, new director of the UFS Business School

Pillay was formerly group executive and portfolio head: Research, Innovation, and Built Environment Studies at the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). He previously served as senior adviser for the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) on research, innovation, and the fourth industrial revolution, and also as senior adviser for the Department of Public Works (EPWP). Pillay was also associate professor, lecturer, and supervisor at the Universities of Pretoria, Wits, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and California Berkeley, and served as emeritus research fellow at the Harvard Business School and the London School of Economics (LSE).

UFS rector and vice-chancellor, Prof Francis Petersen, says: “Dr Udesch Pillay brings a wealth of experience as an acclaimed leader in the private and public sectors, coupled with expertise in the academic system, which is a perfect combination for the future of the Business School. I am confident that he will be able to turn the Business School into a competitive, leading entity within higher education.

While Pillay brings a wealth of experience from the private, public, and higher education sectors – having served in executive management for close to 25 years – his vision goes beyond repositioning and repurposing the Business School into a world-class institution. Pillay is deeply committed to the imperatives of sustainable economic development. He believes that the Business School will be well purposed to the principles of innovation and entrepreneurship and subscribes to the framework of a just energy transition. Emphasis will also be placed on meeting the demands of the SME sector, a key contributor to the country’s GDP. Financial sustainability of the Business School and ensuring a critical mass of top academics and scholars is also integral to Pillay’s vision.

Pillay's multiple skills, coupled with his academic credentials, including a PhD in Built Environment Studies, Public Policy and Business Operations and Management from the University of Minnesota, USA, as well as an MA in Geographical and Built Environment Sciences from UKZN, among others, make him an ideal candidate to lead the Business School in the next phase.

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