

Race row over UCT academic's appointment

By [Tamar Kahn](#)

2 Mar 2018

The Black Academic Caucus at the University of Cape Town (UCT) is seeking legal advice on the appointment of Lis Lange as deputy vice-chancellor for teaching and learning, saying a more suitably qualified black candidate was overlooked in a procedurally flawed process.



© globalphoto – [123RF.com](#)

The caucus is a collective of black academics.

The appointment comes at a critical time for the university as it navigates pressure from students and academics to reform the curriculum in the wake of the 2015 RhodesMustFall protests, which began as a campaign to remove a statue of British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes from the campus. It then led to a wider movement to "decolonise" education that drew global attention.

UCT is also in the process of selecting a successor to vice-chancellor Max Price, whose second five-year term ends in June 2018. Two short-listed candidates - UCT deputy vice-chancellor for research Mamokgethi Phakeng and University of the Western Cape deputy vice-chancellor for academic affairs Vivienne Lawack - were interviewed last week.

The caucus held a lunchtime protest at UCT on Thursday to draw attention to its unhappiness about Lange's appointment instead of her colleague Professor Elelwani Ramugondo.

"I cannot see anything but racism in this decision," said caucus committee member Adam Haupt, who was on the deputy vice-chancellor's selection committee in 2017 before it was reconstituted.

Lange had the seniority but not the expertise required for the position, Haupt said.

"It needs to be a suitably qualified person, and from our assessment of the documents available to us, Lange does not meet the requirements. She does not have extensive teaching experience in an academic environment," said Shose Kessi, a member of the caucus. Ramugondo had the requisite teaching experience and had been active in debates at the university about changing the curriculum, Kessi said.

"It seems to me she would have been the perfect person [for the job]. She's been at UCT for decades and is a product of [the institution]."

The deputy vice-chancellor for teaching and learning is one of four deputy vice-chancellor posts at the UCT. That of transformation is held by Loretta Feris, while Anton le Roex is acting deputy vice-chancellor for institutional innovation.

University spokesman Elijah Moholola said the caucus had not formally objected to any of the other appointments.

Source: Business Day

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>