

New claims and questions from City Press journalist

By [Professor Ihron Rensburg](#), issued by [Vaal University of Technology](#)

7 Aug 2020

The latest enquiries from the City Press journalist regrettably seeks once more to elevate anonymous emails beyond their merit. For the record, the use of anonymous emails to create innuendo, to make false claims and to defame have been standard practice at Vaal University of Technology. Competing factions with their shifting coalitions and relationship to power and decision making, regularly use anonymous emails, social media and, on the face of it, agreeable journalists to serve their nefarious purposes.

The idea with these anonymous emails is to create false pictures of malfeasance when in fact they are intended to deflect, corral, intimidate and harass decision makers so that they are paralysed. And, so that they default to schizophrenia and become overwhelmed by responding to this avalanche of alleged concerns rather than leading and managing the institution. All is done in order for the factions to press on uninterrupted with their despicable projects of corruption, theft, bribery, wasteful expenditure, appointment of friends, and other malfeasance.

Those who write anonymous emails under the false claim of being “whistle-blowers” and then defame and make false claims about members of staff must be held accountable, and this resultant toxic culture remediated. Failure to apprehend those who make false claims and defame, and who foment this toxic culture will simply sustain and reproduce institutional failure and collapse, and see the institution regularly revert to being placed under administration. This cannot be afforded, and all lawful measures to remediate this will be taken, including finding out who they are, and then subjecting them to the full might of university disciplinary procedures and the law.

The Administrator’s Programme of Work

For the record, through quarterly reports, the Administrator reports to the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, and the Department of Higher Education and Training. Furthermore, appointments of members of the Administrator’s Task Team – including those of Dr Prins Nevhutalu and Mr Andile Nongogo - are subject to due diligence, recommended for consideration thereafter by the Administrator to the Minister and Department, and finally approved by the Minister.

Placing VUT under administration was the result of the catastrophic collapse of the strategic and operational roles and responsibilities of the university’s council and executive management. So for example, the university council was unable to fulfill its many mission-critical strategic responsibilities such as approving and monitoring the implementation of the university strategic plan; the prudent and cost-effective stewardship of the university financial resources; implementing senior management performance contracts and performance management; considering, approving and providing annual and half-year reports to DHET; approving the appointment of internal and external auditors and related audit plans; and, considering and approving critical executive appointments.

Moreover, in the face of factions contesting authority and control over university resources, the council failed to take the necessary actions to bring this to an end. This evidently was a complete collapse of strategic and functional governance.

For the record, here is a list of some of the actions already undertaken by the Administrator with the support of the Management Committee:

1. Refocused the university senior management on their operational and strategic roles and responsibilities, and their accountability for institutional performance through reviewing, approving and implementing the University Strategic Plan 2024, the Annual Performance Plan, the senior management performance management systems and performance contracts.

2. Realigned the senior management structure and combined and reduced the number of senior managers, with the resultant annual present and future savings in excess of R45M.
3. Appointed the external auditor, following concurrence with the Auditor General of South Africa, resulting in the University's Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements, the latter unqualified, being approved and submitted to the department as required.
4. Appointed the internal auditor and the internal audit plan; this includes an audit of all appointments made in the last three years in order to establish whether any of these was irregular and outside of the university's human resources management policies.
5. Hosted staff and student imbizo's to share the state of the institution assessment, to provide regular updates on progress and to focus the university community on its rights and responsibilities.
6. Made several senior management appointments following the institution's recruitment and appointment processes, and thus kick started the institution in areas where malfeasance, collapse and paralysis had been evident for some time.
7. Implemented plans for university-wide free and high-speed Wi-Fi, online late applications student registration, improved security of examinations and student records, improved student success through an early warning system, the establishment of research excellence centres, student and staff safety, the phased rehabilitation of student residences, fast-tracking the completion of academic buildings, and fit for purpose procurement policies and systems.
8. Offered staff on contract who had been with the university for more than one-year, three-year term contracts.
9. Set in motion the process of insourcing the protection service staff.
10. Reviewed the viability of satellite campuses and made decisions on their phasing out and closure.
11. Initiated disciplinary actions against all members of staff implicated for wrongdoing in the SNG forensic report. For similar reasons, additional staff members have been since being suspended and disciplinary actions initiated.
12. Initiated the appointment of a specialist company to host the university's whistleblowing facility.
13. Initiated the process of undertaking life-style audits of all senior managers.
14. Required senior managers to declare conflicts of interest.

It is self-evident that despite claims to the contrary, VUT has now been stabilised, and its turnaround, inclusive of the recommendations of the Assessors is now firmly in place and implementation is well underway.

Furthermore, as a result of the role of the Administrator supported by the Management Committee, the university experienced, in 2020, for the first in a long time, no disruption to its academic programme. As a result, the first academic quarter was completed, while semester one is on track to be completed by all students who are in their final year of study or who are undergoing clinical training or require laboratory work to complete their studies. It is expected that all other students will complete their first semester studies by 31 August.

Allegations regarding the relationship between the Administrator and Mr Swana

City Press journalist is claiming that Mr Swana is the brother-in-law of the Administrator. First, there is no family relationship between Mr Swana and the Administrator's wife. Secondly, the University's recruitment and appointment processes were followed in making the appointment. There is nothing further from the truth. This is a blatant lie, and an

excellent example of subterfuge and deflection.

Allegations regarding the award of the security tender

During a Management Committee meeting in March the meeting was informed by the Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor Resources and Planning that possible irregularities with the tender boxes in relation to the security services tender may have occurred. An unanimous decision was then taken by the Management Committee to remove the boxes and to lock them in a safe place. While the meeting continued the boxes were removed and locked up in the office of the Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor.

As a result of this potential irregularity a decision was taken to go out on tender again for the provision of security services. This process resulted in a further round of tenders after which 54 tenders were received and evaluated by the university's Bid Evaluation Committee. The outcome - that none of the tenderers complied with the tender specifications – was conveyed to the Bid Award Committee and subsequently to the Management Committee. Following this outcome, the Bid Award Committee advised the Management Committee that all 54 tenderers should attend a compulsory briefing session and re-submit their tender again. This is where process currently is, and the Bid Evaluation Committee has been reconstituted to evaluate tenders submitted.

Allegations regarding the procurement of laptops

The university's supply chain management team SCM initiated the tender for the award of the purchase of laptops occasioned by the university moving to the remote learning support triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, 37 tender submissions were received. The Bid Evaluation Committee found none of the tenders met the mandatory tender requirements, and they advised the Bid Award Committee, and the Management Committee of their decision. Given the urgent nature of the matter, the Management Committee subsequently decided to instruct the supply chain management team to ask for quotes. These were subsequently submitted to the University Laptop Procurement Committee which was mandated to oversee the procurement of all required laptops. While some laptops were procured, this procurement process for the remaining laptops is continuing.

Allegations regarding the purchase of Academia student residence

During the first month of the Administrator being in office a review of all outstanding projects was undertaken, including the stalled purchase of Academia student residence. Mr Moodley presented all the relevant documentation, i.e. due diligence reports, ministerial authority submission and all the correspondence relating to the purchase for his perusal.

The outcome of the review and due diligence conducted on the purchase of Academia student residence was that the purchase would make good business sense. Subsequently, the university with the support of the Department of Higher Education and Training re-engaged the seller, and the price was re-negotiated downwards. All remaining matters to finalise the purchase are being attended to with the support of the Department of Higher Education and Training. The purchase of the Academic student residence will result in the university adding 1,836 new high-quality beds to its existing student residence stock.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Ihron Rensburg is the VUT Administrator.

" VUT to play a key role in rejuvenating the declining economy of the Vaal region " 16 Feb 2023

" Closure of satellite campuses and relocation of some academic programmes to Vanderbijlpark " 13 Dec 2022

" VUT strengthens ties with Kenya's Maasai Mara University by signing a memorandum of understanding " 10 Nov 2022

" Prof. Mandla J. Radebe takes up the reins as chairperson of the VUT Council " 9 Nov 2022



Vaal University of Technology

Established in 2004, as the Vaal University of Technology (VUT), VUT originated as a College of Advanced Technical Education (1966-1979) and was later known as Vaal Triangle Technikon (1979-2003).

[Profile](#) | [News](#) | [Contact](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [RSS Feed](#)

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