

1. Introduction and acknowledgements

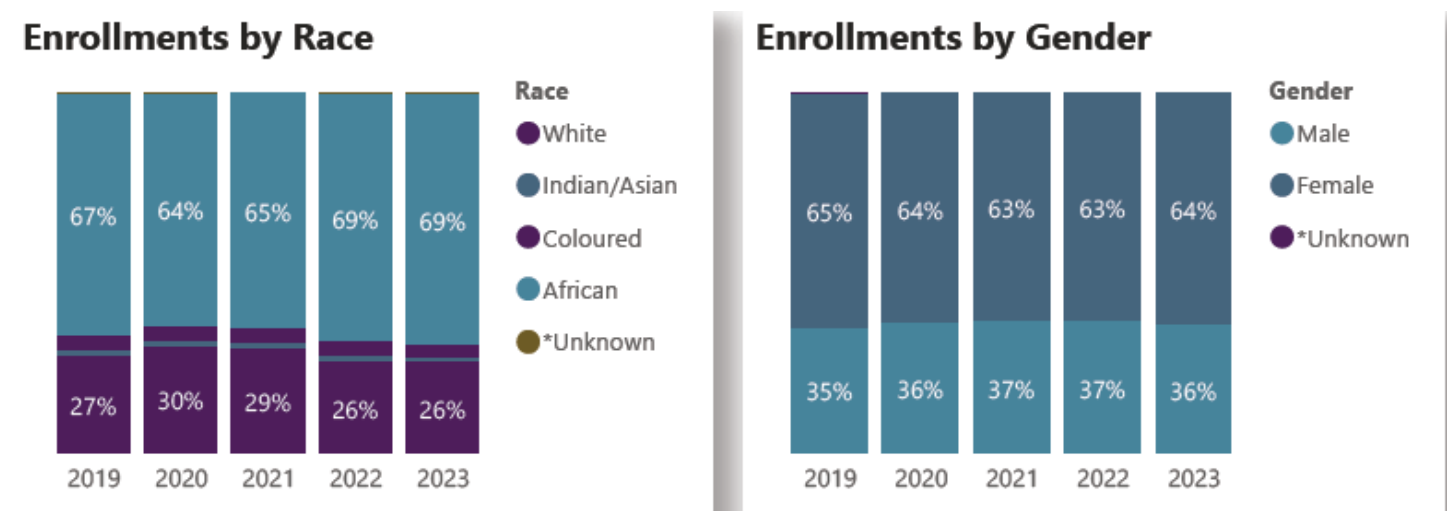
Good morning Chairperson of Council, Vice Chancellor and members of the NWU, and welcome to this special opening of the academic year in which we reflect on the highlights and achievements of 2022 and share directions to be pursued in our core business in 2023. Thank you also to members of the management team who provided inputs into this address. It is timely for the University, having appointed Prof Tyobeka as the Vice Chancellor, and having gone through the CHE Institutional Audit in 2022, to consider the fitness for purpose of our Strategy and functioning in 2023. This year is appropriately themed as a year of “review, reflection and new frontiers”.

Our Strategy Statement is “To transform and position the NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence with a commitment to social justice”. Towards the end of 2022 the University’s senior management considered also a range of initiatives, to be consulted with our staff, that can enable us to make a greater impact nationally, in the form of a renewed focus on the School of Medicine, and a new focus on the School for Veterinary Sciences, a focus on capacity-shortage realities in North-West Province, a new focus on sustainable mining and community development; a focus on the development and implementation of a new student information system, and a new focus on the scoping and sourcing of a new learner management system. Why are we doing this? These and other initiatives underpin our commitment to academic excellence in a manner which makes evident also our commitment to social justice in our academic project. Excellence and social justice are integrated concepts. All our efforts as University are geared to supporting student success and impact in our local as well as professional communities and the extent to which we develop our staff to ensure the future success of our cherished university, is commensurate with our awareness that our students are key to a better future for our beloved country.

At the start of 2023 our actual first-time entering undergraduate enrolments totalled 14 037 for both contact and distance students. We commenced the first semester in this week. Our enrolment plan, as submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training for the 2020-2025 planning cycle, noted a target of 12 726 first-time entering undergraduate students for 2023. As numbers for the 2023 academic year are being finalised, we can report on 11 944 students for contact as well as distance alike. In 2022 NWU had 54 530 students enrolled on its three campuses.

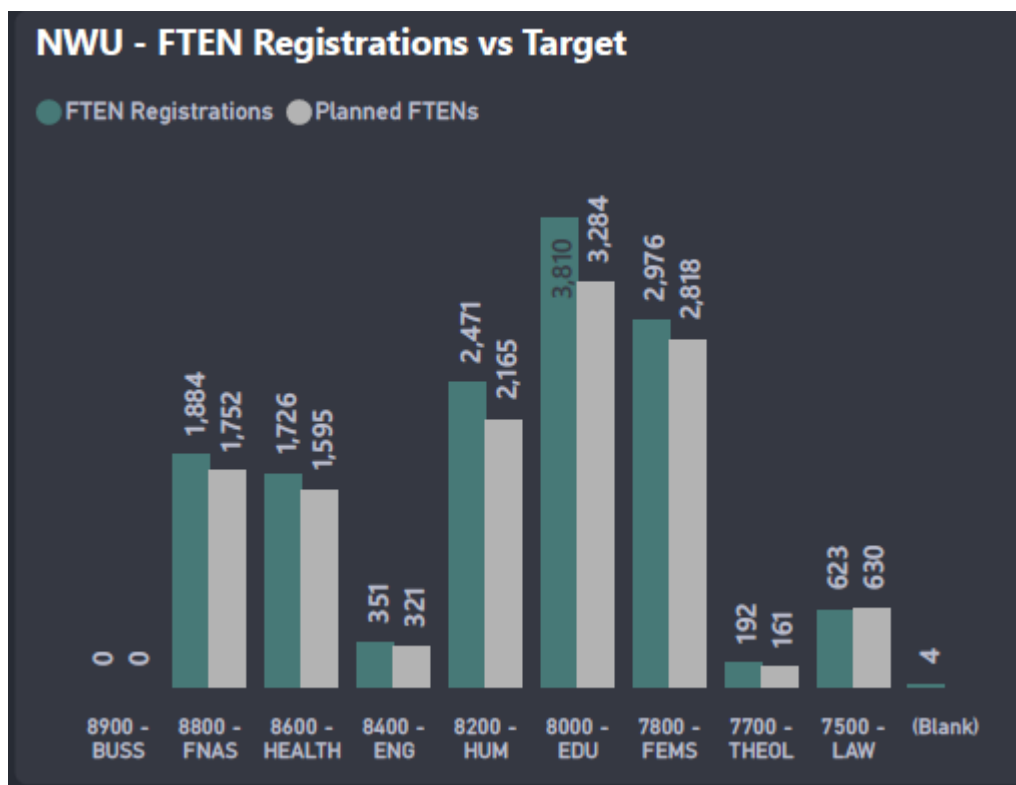
Thus far, NWU has reached 110,3% of our target for undergraduate First Time Entering students. As of yesterday, 1 896 (or 13.5%) of the FTEN registrations were still provisional, awaiting decisions by funders, including NSFAS..

Tables 1.1 & 1.2: Enrolments by race and gender 2019-2023 as on 22 February 2023



In 2022 and 2023 the NWU its 2023-2025 enrolment targets by race; being 69% African, 4% Coloured, 1% Indian and 26% White students and by gender 64% female and 36% male. And, when we glance at our numbers per faculty as seen in Table 2, we note slight over enrolments in all Faculties, except the Faculty of Law where enrolments are more or less on target.

Table 2: Actual vs Target First Time Entering Students (Contact & Distance 22 Feb 2023)



As on 23 February, we have a total of 56 248 registered students, 47 695 (84.8%) fully registered and 8 553 (15.2%) provisionally registered. In relation to postgraduate studies enrolments for 2022 were 7 175 when compared to 7 305 in 2021, the drop being explained by a reduction in the numbers of Honours and students Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate students. In 2023 we have a total planned M & PhD enrolment target of 7 127 students to reach, and have a current enrolment of 3306, bearing in mind postgraduate registrations are ongoing for M&D students in the year. This leads me in the next section focussing as it does on research and innovation 2022 achievements and 2023 initiatives.

2. The Research and Innovation Project at NWU: 2022 achievements and new initiatives in 2023

In line with the NWU Strategic Plan, the R & I portfolio has been focussing on key corollary and complementary activities to address and translate the ambition of Goal 2, that is, “Strengthen research and innovation with a strategic focus on impactful globalisation”. The institutional research output trends (specifically journal articles, books, book chapters and conference proceedings approved by the DHET) have been on an impressive upward trajectory since 2005. The 2020 NWU subsidy units were 1554.59 (against 1541.2 subsidy units for 2019) based on our last official report from the DHET. The NWU unaudited combined subsidy units for Jan-Dec 2021 submitted to DHET were 1727.03. This is an impressive record, clearly showing resilience of our academics amid the global economic challenges and the Covid-19 pandemic. We are pleased to report that in the last three years, 51% of the NWU researchers take leadership in generating publications as first or main authors in DHET accredited journals. The NWU would like to grow this figure and strongly encourages all academics to make use of every opportunity to take leadership in advancing new knowledge.

Our research activities were conducted predominantly, but certainly not exclusively, in our 61 research entities, consisting of 10 research chairs, seven hosted entities, one commercial research unit and 43 NWU research entities. These 43 entities comprised five centres of excellence, 12 research units, 15 research focus areas and 11 research niche areas.

In 2022, the University adopted a new policy on Open Access which promotes and paves the way for publishing in open access journals and other platforms. As part of the NWU’s efforts to promote Open Access publishing, transformative agreements were signed off with six publishers through the South African Library and information Consortium (SANLiC). Transformative agreements enable NWU authors to publish in open access journals where the University has subscription, without having to pay for article processing charges (APCs). Such publishers include, Wiley, Cambridge, SAGE, ACM Open, Royal society, as well as Springer Nature. BioMed Central was also internally signed by the LIS, following requests from researchers.

The NWU is committed to building a pipeline of commercialisable technologies and increasing the rate of IP and commercialisation. By engaging with industry, we gain a deeper understanding of their needs and challenges and can respond with relevant solutions and innovations. We are also strengthening our prospects of continuing to attract funding, collaborators, commercialisation partners and licenses by improving our marketing of NWU IP, technologies and innovative research.

Our existing international partnership profile is robust and diverse. Reaching across continents, our research collaborations involve prestigious institutions. The NWU is a culturally and socially diverse university that hosts numerous international students of various nationalities. In 2022, international students and postdoctoral fellows were showcased in a video

showcasing our international students, in appreciation of our multicultural student body and to celebrate student diversity at our institution. In 2023 we hope to increase our international footprint and to bring to Senate and Council a strategy for internationalisation that will strengthen not only partnerships, but also presence in the market in terms of postgraduate recruitment and collaborative international projects involving student exchange and staff innovations.

3. The Community Engagement Project at NWU: engaged learning, teaching and research: achievements and initiatives for 2023

In 2022, strides were made towards the alignment of the CE, T&L and R&I strategies within faculties and support units and the APP. 2022 proved to be a landmark year in the development of a unified approach to NWU's CE activities and the development of a database. The data collected during the year was continuously presented to stakeholders to co-create an agile process to manage all our activities. The evaluation of the activities provided insight into stakeholder relationship identification and management, funding, resource management and formalising of relationships that were collated in an action plan to support engaged scholarship

Seven hundred fifty-four (754) community engagement projects were reported by 12 different units for 2021 until June 2022. Active activities indicated to continue longer will not have to be re-registered; they will only be monitored and evaluated for the continuation of the project. It is imperative that NWU record, monitor, and determine the impact and sustainability of community engagement activities and link these to our performance management and promotion system. At the end of the year, 348 activities were evaluated.

Mahikeng Campus represented 20% of the CE activities evaluated, with 10% of evaluations collected from the Vanderbijlpark Campus and 70% collected from the Potchefstroom Campus. The clustering and evaluation of these interactions indicated that as our internal staff and students are more sensitised to linking community engagement to core business, as the scholarship of engagement is becoming more prominent. The outreach component of our activities was reported to be 30% which is a sector standard.

Monitoring the impact of CE activities towards engaged scholarship in communities will enable benchmarking of the university in the international arena. Our mutually beneficial relationships are valued, and we have initiated a process to prove that we are contributing to a sustainable positive impact. In the bigger context we can also compare our contribution to the sustainable development goals or SDGs. The registration indicated that the key intended outcomes were to support Goal 4 Quality education; Goal 10 Reduced inequalities that aligns with NWU's social justice mission and Goal 8 Decent work and economic growth aligning with National Development Plan 2030. Towards the end of the year contributions towards Goal 4 Quality Education = 245 projects; Goal 3: Good Health and well-being = 186 projects and Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve SDGs = 154 projects were recorded. As part of this initiative several new standard operating procedures will be implemented in 2023 including the revival of our community stakeholder forums, quality management and the recognition of students' co-curricular activities that are important to record. Environmental awareness and the ways we contribute to green practices will also be high on the agenda for 2023.

4. The Curriculum Project at NWU: 2022 achievements and initiatives for 2023

The North-West University (NWU) is the best choice among local universities for studies in the field of engineering. The latest subjects ranking by Times Higher Education (THE) places the NWU at the top of the ladder in this field, and highlights the NWU's other quality subject offerings. According to THE's World University Rankings by Subject for 2023, the NWU is first among local institutions in engineering, moving up from third position last year. It places the NWU in the 401 to 500 category globally. This is a great achievement, as THE ranks the NWU out of 10 top South African universities that offer studies in the field of engineering and measures the university against 1 306 institutions worldwide. Other top rankings are in physical sciences (401 to 500 globally) and psychology (301 to 400), where the NWU is ranked third locally. 2022 was also the first year that NWU was ranked in computer sciences. Locally, the NWU shines in fifth position, and globally in the 601 to 800 ranking category. The NWU's other fifth place rankings are in the fields of business and economics (remaining in fifth position from 2021) and clinical and health (301 to 400 globally). Rounding out other top 10 positions are a seventh position in the fields of law (251+) and education (401 to 500), eighth in life sciences (601 to 800), ninth in social sciences (601 to 800 category), and tenth in arts and humanities (501 to 600 globally).

Closer to home our BA Graphic Design group was ranked as South Africa's 4th best Graphic Design school with staff taking away a total of 6 Pending individual awards from student work. The rating is done through the Pending Awards specifically. 12 institutions took part – 7 of the 12 received awards in the 2022 awards ceremonies. NWU's School of Accounting Sciences remains within the top three Schools in South Africa in terms of SAICA Board examinations. NWU achieved a 100% pass rate in the 2022 Board examinations, the highest in the country out of 18 accredited institutions. Moreover, three of NWU's candidates passed with distinction out of only 29 distinctions in the country. The Management Accountancy programme (CIMA) was awarded two international CIMA Academic Partner Excellence awards: The Global Prominence Award for CIMA Employability Excellence and The CGMA Campus Culture Excellence Award. Our School of Music continues to feature students in international productions and national competitions.

In terms of recognising excellent teaching and learning that contributes to the above, I am pleased to report that participation in the Faculty based teaching learning awards is robust, with a new award introduced in 2022 to focus on team teaching. At the Annual NWU Excellence Awards event in November 2022, some 58 members of the University were recognised for teaching-learning excellence. In 2023 we will ask faculties to revisit their Integrated Teaching Learning Plans in which ICT

integration and the development of existing programmes for online and open distance learning purposes have been described, and to make use of the CTL dashboard in which STLES data about student experience is shared.

In 2022, the TL Model was consulted with all NWU stakeholders that allows for an approach to infrastructure development for TL venues that is hyflex. Venues continue to be prioritised through FIP, TI and CTL collaboration where faculties have identified programmes that are aligned across campuses, and/ or where team teaching is a more efficient use of our human resource. In later 2023 the model will be incorporated into the TL Strategy for approval by Senate. To support the envisaged transformation of spaces and places from a curricular perspective also, CTL has developed a Curriculum Renewal programme aimed to engage in a systematic process of curriculum transformation and renewal to equip graduates to address the challenges of the 21st-century society. The programme includes:

- Curriculum conversations with students and staff based on grounded data generation tools.
- CPD opportunities for staff and students for renewing and designing inclusive curricula.
- Facilitate curriculum renewal workshops within faculties using learning design methodology which is flexible but fit for purpose and include students as partners.
- *Identifying risk indicators in first-year modules and develop interventions.

In early January our Office hosted the second annual teaching-learning synergy and alignment workshop with faculty and support managers to report back on 2022 projects and discuss goals for the year. Themes that emerged, include the increasing prominence of artificially intelligent large language models (like Chat GPT) and the impact thereof on academic work and integrity: we need to focus on authentic assessment and evidence of skills development rather than content synthesis. Inevitably this also affects curriculum design (modules and programme outcomes) and we thus look forward to the second year of the PQM Project. In 2023 there is also already a greater uptake of interpreting services and we are pleased to record the establishment of a language directorate footprint at Mahikeng and Vanderbijlpark campuses respectively. We recognize that student experience is not only about feedback and performance and in this year we will contribute to the Student Life coordinated project on student centricity.

On the policy development front, we are pleased to be able to present to Senate and Council in 2023 the Revised Teaching Learning Assessments Policy, the revised Teaching Learning Assessment Rules, the Policy on Open Education Resources and the Framework for Micro credentials for recommendation and approval respectively. In 2023 we will focus on Digital transformation to unpack the implications of this for micro credentials, block teaching and the application of various Artificial Intelligence TL tools. Quality in teaching and learning is, of course, underpinned by a robust peer review system for assurance.

In total, and excluding site visits by professional or statutory bodies, the NWU externally evaluated 90 programmes (comprehensively) since its establishment. Within the 2020-2026 cycle, some 254 internal programme evaluations were scheduled. 97 external programme evaluations, and 31 Statutory/Professional bodies visits have occurred. In total, 382 reviews are scheduled for the current cycle.

During 2022, 38 programmes were evaluated internally, and six were evaluated externally. There are 53 internal evaluations are scheduled for 2023. During 2022, four programmes "Met Minimum Standards", whilst two programmes are still subject to a post external evaluation process. These programmes include the Diploma in Coaching Science, Bachelor of Arts Honours Public Governance, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture: Agriculture Economics, Postgraduate Diploma in Nuclear Science and Technology, BCom Tourism Management and BCom Tourism Management with Recreation Skills, and the BA Honours in Sociology and BSocSc Honours in Sociology.

In 2022 we were visited by several professional bodies. ECSA came to quality assure the Bachelor of Engineering in Mechatronic Engineering which has been provisionally accredited. The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) visited to quality assure the Bachelor of Commerce in Financial Accountancy, Bachelor of Commerce in Financial Accountancy (ECP), and Bachelor of Commerce in Management Accountancy in 2022. The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) participated in the quality assurance of the Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Management Accountancy programme, and the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) visited the School of Industrial Psychology and Human Resource Management for the accreditation and review of 8 programmes (both undergraduate and postgraduate) representative of the BAdmin, BCom, BA Human Resource Management and Labour relations qualifications during October 2022. Also in 2022 the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) - visited the School of Physiology, Nutrition and Consumer Sciences during June, for the accreditation of the Bachelor of Health Sciences in Dietetics programme. We are pleased with the outcomes of accreditations for these programmes.

Of the 53 internal evaluations and 11 external evaluations scheduled for 2023. The preliminary programmes are listed below:

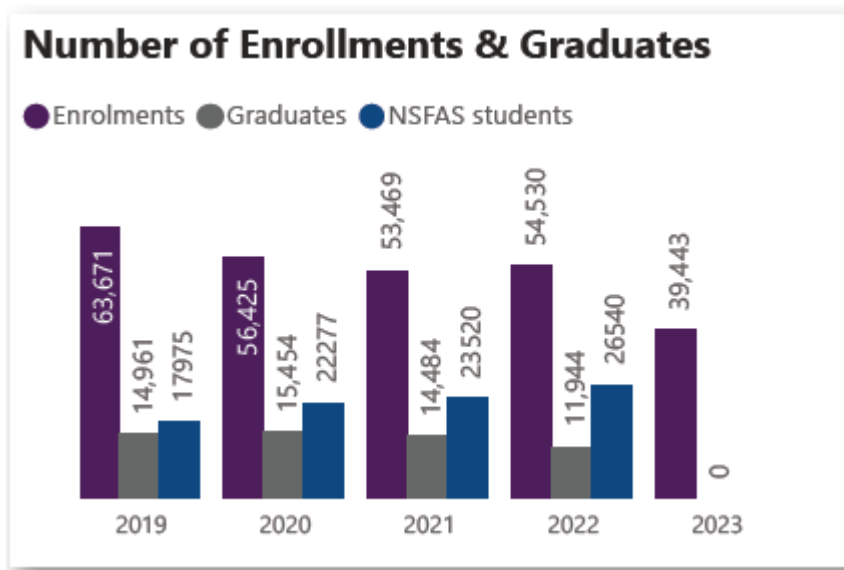
- Faculty of Education: 4 BEd Programmes and 1 PGCE in preparation for the national review.
- Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences: Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Economics & Risk Management
- Faculty of Health Sciences: Master's Degree in Forensic Practice and a South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC) visit towards the accreditation of the Bachelor's Degree in Pharmacy.
- Faculty of Humanities: Bachelor's Degree and Honours Degree in Music
- Faculty of Law: BCom in Law

Supporting the core business of the University are careful financial planning and stewardship of our human, finance and infrastructural resources as described in sections to follow.

Student funding for student success: 2023

Supporting student success, financially in partnership with government and NSFAS, is key to NWU’s commitment access and excellence. In terms of Income, Block grant subsidy for the sector increased with 0,9%, the NSFAS allocation for the sector increased with 0,4% and this is reflected also at NWU. The number of NWU students funded by NSFAS has shown a significant increase from 17 975 in 2019 to 26 540 in 2022. Tuition fee increases have been capped by government at 5,1%. These increases noted, it is important to remember that the total allocation from state to the university sector decreased by 1,6%. In terms of bursaries, state funding accounted for R2,56 billion (or 83% of the total amount allocated for as bursaries) with NWU contributing R229 million of own funds to student bursaries, which is 7% of the total funds allocated for financial aid. In total, NWU administered R3.067 billion with regards to bursary payments in 2022. Clearly the main sources of income for universities are under pressure and longer term financial sustainability of NWU will require diligent and focussed interventions on efficiencies terms of our services.

Table 3: Enrolments 2019 to 31 Jan for 2023¹ showing NSFAS funded students



Building our University: Infrastructure and development 2022/ 2023

Progress of infrastructure projects during 2022 was impacted by external challenges familiar in our sector: construction stoppages, loadshedding, weather conditions and worldwide supply chain problems of especially electric and electronic equipment. That said, visible strides have been made. On the Vanderbijlpark Campus students started the 2023 academic year in the newly constructed lecture room complex. The conversion of the old administration building into a multi-purpose hall for the campus is nearing completion as we speak. Construction on the Psycho-Social Health Building is progressing well. Construction will also start on two buildings for the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and Economic Sciences respectively, which will improve and expand their teaching learning spaces. New sport facilities, improving recreation areas, a campus clinic and support spaces for student life start construction during the course of the year.

The Mahikeng Campus’s capacity to house more students on campus was increased significantly with the newly constructed student housing project, and 1728 beds were added and ready for occupation in 2023. A building for Psycho Social Health was also completed. Various academic departments are being relocated while their spaces are being upgraded. The renewal and expansion of Natural Science teaching- and research laboratories will continue. Construction has started for community engagement with a new Law Clinic. Upgrades to the Ipelegeng Centre for Health Sciences will follow. Improvements to sport facilities will start and the expansion of these facilities are being planned. A retail centre with a cafeteria space and student recreation facilities are in planning.

On the Potchefstroom Campus the refurbishment of Building K21 to accommodate Biokinetics in an academic environment, was completed. The Library at Education Sciences is being extended to support group work activities. Construction is progressing to relocate Biological- and Geospatial Sciences to upgraded spaces.

On all three campuses upgrades of residences and student life sport and recreation facilities continue in 2023. Operationally, the effect of the national energy crises on the environment is significant, requiring various retrofitting projects for sustainable energy this year. On all three campuses the installation of a PV Plants to provide solar power to the campuses are various staging of implementation or planning. At a systems level, the ongoing development of the student

information system, and the identification process for a new learner management system are on going and good progress has been made. Sustainability, in terms of energy, finance and other resources leads also to a focus on the development and support of our people.

Developing an Inclusive Culture: 2022 achievements and initiatives in 2023

At the end of 2022, NWU had a staff compliment of 3976 permanent and fixed term employees of which 1596 are academics and 2380 support staffⁱⁱ. The traditional notion of the office has changed and in April 2023, we will be implementing the hybrid work model. This necessitates a renovation of policies, procedures, and practices that have defined the cultures of the NWU in the past. This will also require a shift in the mindset of leaders to influence the Institution's culture. Beyond the current workforce, we are also reimagining and reconstructing the talent supply chains to expand access to diverse sources of skills and capabilities (talent ecosystems). While supporting flexible work arrangements and hybrid work models will likely aid in this, the ability to utilize alternative talent pools that will contribute greatly to enabling capability, capacity, and agility.

As the NWU we continue to invest in the capacity building of our staff through prescriptive skilling initiatives and programs that target gaps and provide intentional pathways for all employee to build the skills, establish relationships, and gain the experiences that will allow them to contribute at high levels both now and well into the future. We are focused on building and shaping both staff and students that exhibit human leadership behaviours of authenticity and empathy. The Leadership Academy for Academics was launched in 2022 and 90 employees have been nominated and 28 were trained so far.

We also recognise that there are about 5 generational cohorts within the NWU, and thus in the second quarter of the year we will implement the NWU multigenerational strategy with a view to promoting an age-inclusive culture to position the NWU as an employer of choice for intergenerational employees. Such initiatives align closely to our values. The revised NWU values were launched in early 2022 and were followed by awareness campaigns to affirm inclusivity. The objective of the culture activities and celebration the NWU Values, was to ensure that students and staff buy into the values and live them (make them their own). Our University culture is also supported by an ambitious employment equity plan whose major thrust is the elimination of barriers for the attraction and retention of people from the designated groups and people living with disabilities. To demonstrate our commitment towards the transformation journey, 461 appointments made in 2022 (92 were non-designated which accounts to 19,95% of the appointments and 369 were designated appointments which amounts to 80,05%). This shows that whilst we are committed to transformation, we are all inclusive.

Concluding remarks

Finally, the University has made huge strides in implementing its strategy and operational structure since 2017, but in 2023 the new frontiers identified require a review of the effectiveness and efficiencies of our operational arrangements, together with the strategy. In these endeavours we remain committed to support the work of our staff and the success of our students. On behalf of the University's Management, we welcome you to the new academic year, and we wish our academics and our support staff well in the delivery of our programmes, the realisation of our research ambitions, and the deepening of our commitment to improving the lives of our communities as a unified NWU.

Thank you.

References:

NWU Strategy. 2015-25

NWU Teaching and Learning Strategy, 2021-2025.

ⁱ Verified by Strategic Intelligence 22/02/23

ⁱⁱ Verified by People & Culture 22/02/23