Unisa staff heaved a collective sigh of relief when Executive Management and Nehawu announced that a settlement on the salary dispute was reached between the parties on 5 May 2009. The signing of this agreement disposes of the intended strike action by Nehawu, as well as the balloting process. The implementation date of the amended 2009 salaries and salary related increases is 1 January 2009 and will be reflected on the May 2009 salary advices of staff.

Speaking to staff at a special assembly on 8 May 2009 in the ZK Matthews Hall on the Muckleneuk Campus to provide an overview of the salary negotiation press, Prof. Barney Pityana, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, announced that the salary deadlock was resolved through the intervention of the CCMA and the Regional Office of Nehawu, and because of the general goodwill of all parties.

He said that this affirms that the University has effective labour relations structures in place and stressed that Management pledged its support and commitment to the Unisa Bargaining Forum (UBF) and its constitution in managing labour relations at the University.

The Principal emphasised that, while the values of fairness, justice, and equality ensure that there is no exploitative relationship between the University and staff, the nature of remuneration is set within the context of the total cost of what the University is about. There must be a balance between remuneration and operations so that the University has the resources for continuous improvement and is responsive to national needs.
Launch of **five year publication**

**Transformation: Five years on**

A hum of expectation filled the ZK Matthews Hall on the Muckleneuk Campus as Unisa staff and representatives from neighbouring universities gathered on 20 April 2009 for the launch of the publication celebrating the five years of Unisa as a merged institution.

Speaking at the function, Prof. Narend Baijnath, Vice-Principal: Strategy, Planning and Partnerships, visualised the tapestry of Unisa crafted as a work in progress by the aggregated efforts of the governing Council, management team, staff cohort and students. “Each, from their vantage points, is weaving rich and colourful threads into its design,” he said. “The pattern that has been laid down is already conspicuous, and remarkably attractive. We work assiduously now and into the future to weave in the detail.”

Prof. Barney Pityana, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, evoked a cycle of change and renewal when he stated, “Those of us who are contemporaries at this time are creating a university that speaks to our own minds and creativity and visions and thinking, but we are also building on the past of all of the constituent institutions that come to make up the University of South Africa from 1873 when the original University of the Cape of Good Hope was established. We stand on that foundation but future generations will also be standing on the foundation that was laid down during this five-year period and they will construct for themselves and for the future perhaps a different kind of Unisa.”

Prof. Mandla Makhanya, Pro Vice-Chancellor, thanked the editorial team responsible for the publication: Prof. Narend Baijnath, editor, Ms Jeanette Botha, project manager and coordinating editor, and project advisors Dr Marié Ferreira, Mr Gerard Grobler and Ms Nancy-Anne Anderson from the Department of Corporate Communication and Marketing (CC&M).

The event ended with a selection of mellow songs both old and new from acclaimed jazz musician Ms Judith Sephuma that had the audience cheering and dancing in the aisles. As Mr Gerard Grobler, Director: Communications and Programme Director, noted, “Ms Sephuma is not only a South African icon but a good friend of Unisa.”

The editorial team of Dr Marié Ferreira, Ms Jeanette Botha, Prof. Narend Baijnath, Ms Nancy-Anne Anderson, and Mr Gerard Grobler
Academic celebration of five years post merger

Unisa celebrated five years post merger at its first 2009 autumn graduation ceremony, which was the occasion for the conferment of two honorary doctorates. Prof. Kader Asmal, Professor Extraordinary in the Faculty of Law at the University of the Western Cape, delivered the keynote address. Prof. Asmal was the key driver during the merger process in his capacity as former Minister of Education. His address focused on the theme *The merger – social engineering or educational necessity?*

According to Prof. Asmal, the merger between the old Unisa and Technikon Southern Africa, and incorporation of Vudec to create a single dedicated distance education institution had various benefits, including developing a clear focus and strategy for the role of distance education in contributing to national and regional goals. This aim has seen application in the new Unisa adopting a new model for distance education, namely open and distance learning (ODL). Prof. Asmal applauded Unisa for this development, which is a major shift from the traditional correspondence model and recognises “the importance of social interaction in the education/learning process”.

Unisa also paid tribute to two outstanding individuals who have contributed to the betterment of society, exemplifying the University’s values of excellence, integrity, and social justice and fairness. The recipients of the honorary doctorates were Dr Anna Theresa Masamo Mokgokong and Archbishop George Francis Daniel.
The 2009 Strategic Discussion Forum Series was launched in the Dr Miriam Makeba Concert Hall on 2 April 2009. The underlying rationale for the strategic discussion forum is the recognition that the hallmark of a university is its role in fostering rigorous, independent, critical debate.

The first discussion forum focused on Modelling throughput at Unisa: the key to the successful implementation of Open and Distance Learning (ODL). It has long been acknowledged that one of the key challenges facing Unisa as an ODL provider is the improvement of its student success and throughput rates, as well as the enhancement of the student experience throughout all points of interaction with the Institution.

In response to this challenge a modelling task team was formed to undertake the first step in the process. This comprised Prof. George Subotzky, DISA; Prof. Chris Swanepoel, Decision Sciences; Dr Paul Prinsloo, Directorate for Curriculum and Learning Development (DCLD); Dr At van Schoor, Bureau for Counseling, Career and Academic Development (BCCAD); and Ms Hanneri Botha, ICT.

The literature review and the proposed model were introduced to the broader Unisa community during this first strategic discussion forum.

The two respondents to the discussion document were Dr Gugu Moche, Director: School of Science, and Prof. Ian Scott, Deputy Dean: Centre for Higher Education Development, University of Cape Town.

The College of Science, Engineering and Technology (CSET) has launched a seminar series to share and showcase best Open Distance Learning (ODL) practice in the College. The first seminar in the series, entitled Teaching Science at a distance: a case for Mathematics, was held on 31 March 2009 and was addressed by Dr Gugu Moche, Director: School of Science, and by Dr Eeva Rapoo and Ms Stella Mugisha, both lecturers in Mathematics.

During the seminar, Prof. Mamokgethi Setati, Executive Dean of the College, reflected on the centrality of ODL at Unisa and the fact that given its expertise in the use of technology and its commitment to quality tuition, CSET must take leadership in the implementation of the ODL tuition delivery model.

In his response to the presentations, Prof. Dele Braimoh, Executive Director of the Institute of Open Distance Learning, congratulated the College on initiating the seminar series. He emphasised the importance of learner support in an ODL environment and congratulated the speakers on the insightful work that they are doing in this regard. He further highlighted the sterling involvement of CSET staff in ODL task teams.

The next seminar in the series will be on 29 July 2009 and will be presented by Prof. Ilisa Basson, Chair of the Department of Physics.
The use of formal methods in computing continues to be a topic of much debate. Advocates of such techniques claim that mathematical formalisms allow them to produce quality, verifiably correct or, at least, highly dependable software and that the testing and maintenance phases are shortened. Critics, on the other hand, maintain that software formalisms are hard to master, tedious to use and not well-suited for the fast turnaround times demanded by industry.

In this paper, Prof. van der Poll looks at popular formalisms and considers their advantages and disadvantages in the early phases of the software development life cycle. In particular, the role of formal specification followed by some reasoning activities is investigated. Reasoning about the properties of a specification is a rewarding exercise since it may lead to useful insights; hence the advances made by automated reasoning assistants over the past couple of decades are highlighted. Towards the end, Prof. van der Poll lists some formal methods successes and speculates on some conditions for an increased acceptance of formal methods by practitioners.

Prof. van der Poll enrolled for an MSc degree in Computer Science at Unisa which he completed in 1987. The title of his dissertation was Towards the denotational semantics of QuadLisp 86.

His supervisor was the late Prof. Stef Postma. He was appointed as a senior lecturer at Unisa in January 1988, and completed his PhD in June 2000 with a thesis titled Automated support for set-theoretic specifications. He was promoted to the position of associate professor in January 2002 and to full professor in January 2006.

During the fall term of 2000 he was offered a visiting associate professorship at the University of McMaster in Hamilton, Canada, where he taught graduate courses in compiler construction and automated reasoning.

Prof. van der Poll was an external examiner at the University of the Witwatersrand as well as at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) for a number of years. He is currently an external examiner at the University of Pretoria. He has served on various university and college committees in Unisa and was also the Secretary of the subject body, SAICSIT (South-African Institute of Computer Scientists and Information Technologists) from 2005 to 2008.

He is the author of 25 refereed, peer-reviewed journal articles and conference contributions.

Prof. van der Poll is currently on study leave and is researching the impact of formal methods in industry with colleagues at the University of Pretoria.

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Prof. David Abdulai, CEO and Executive Director of the Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL), was invited by His Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the Ashanti Hene, on the occasion of his ten year ascendancy to the throne to chair a high-level symposium entitled Deepening democracy in Africa.

This auspicious event took place on 25 April 2009 at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana.

“`A new ‘wind of change’ is blowing across the landscape of Africa. This new wind is bringing about the democratic transformation of the continent from Cape to Cairo, from Dakar to Dar es Salaam,” Prof. Abdulai said in his opening address at an event that boasted a panel that included the former President of Botswana, Festus Mogae, former President of Sierra Leone, Ahmed Tejan-Kabba, former President of Nigeria, Olesugun Obasanjo, former President of Ghana, Jerry Rawlings, and the former Prime Minister of Spain, Jose Maria Aznar. Also in attendance were ministers of state and members of the diplomatic corps, including the South African High Commissioner in Ghana, His Excellency Ntombizodwa Lallie.

Prof. Abdulai continued by saying that for true democracy to take root in Africa, it must first be anchored on Africa’s rich traditional cultures and institutions. Furthermore, to deepen democracy in Africa, a culture of accountability is essential. Accountability affirms the obligation of leaders to those they lead. He further mentioned that the rule of law and an independent judiciary must exist to ensure that the spirit and letter of the law are enforced. He added, “It is not just sufficient to have an independent judiciary, but the judiciary must be honest and be above reproach. Where the judiciary is corrupt and incompetent, the entrenchment of a true democratic culture becomes a mockery and impossible.”

According to Prof. Abdulai, for a true democratic culture to be entrenched in Africa, there must be a credible opposition or credible opposition parties in African countries. He underscored that opposition parties should learn to agree to disagree and agree to agree on diverse issues without resorting to violence. Finally, he added that there must also be civil and political liberties in African countries to enable the entrenchment of a democratic culture. This will encourage popular participation and allow citizens to be able to express themselves without the fear of any repercussions.

In closing, he said that, ultimately, the entrenchment of a democratic culture in Africa is the responsibility of all Africans. Friends of Africa can help where they can, but the heavy lifting is the responsibility of Africans.
Mentorship programme launched by CHS

Nearly 50 mentorship-mentee partnerships were signed on 2 April 2009 at the launch of the College of Human Sciences (CHS) Mentorship Programme. This programme, together with a Tuition, Research, Leadership and Fellowship Programme, forms part of the CHS Scholars’ Development Plan.

In 2008, CHS identified an urgent need to address the human resources profile in the College and consequently initiated and instituted a Scholars’ Development Plan under the leadership of the Executive Dean, Prof. Rosemary Moeketsi, and Programme Manager, Prof. Philip Higgs. The Scholars’ Development Plan introduces a focused and rigorous programme of developing, capacitating and mentoring younger and promising colleagues, and aims to improve their academic standing while inculcating a culture of hard work, accountability and productivity. Chairs of departments in the College of Human Sciences were requested to identify young academics with a potential for growth in their departments.

In collaboration with the Human Resource Development Division, the College hosted 100 guests at the launch event, including keynote speakers Prof. Mandla Makhanya, Pro Vice Chancellor; Prof. Rita Maré, Vice-Principal: Academic and Research; Prof. Rosemary Moeketsi and Ms Firoza Patel, Director: HR Training and Development. Mentoring pairs were called upon to sign the mentorship contract and mentors received a book entitled Fundamentals for effective mentoring from Prof. Makhanya.

The Tuition, Research and Mentorship Programmes have been up and running since March 2009 and are monitored on a continual basis for sustained involvement by the participants. A portfolio of involvement is being created for each of the participants so that their development can be recorded for reference purposes. The Leadership and Fellowship Programmes will be introduced during the course of 2009.

Humanities, gender and the Pan-African ideal

The College of Human Sciences (CHS) hosted Dr Pinkie Mekgwe, Research Programme Officer of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), on 23 March 2009, as part of the College’s African Visiting Scholars’ Programme. Second in the series, the lecture was entitled Humanities, gender and the Pan-African ideal.

Dr Mekgwe, who hails from Botswana, received an MSc and DPhil in Gender and Literary Studies from the University of Sussex, UK. She currently works in the Research Department of CODESRIA in Dakar, Senegal, and has published widely in the fields of English and African literature, and gender and education in reputable academic journals.

She argued that the best way to understand issues related to humanities, gender and the Pan-African ideal is to find ways to better understand African epistemologies and ontologies.

In response to Dr Mekgwe’s lecture, newly appointed Deputy Executive Dean in the College of Human Sciences, Prof. Kuzvinetsa Dzvimbo, elaborated on the importance of the girl child in the educational context. Prof. Dzvimbo joins Unisa from the University of Johannesburg where he was a Professor and Head of the Department of Education Management.
On 1 April 2009, the School for Graduate Studies hosted a seminar during which Prof. Anil Bhatti, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, spoke about Heterogeneity and homogeneity: on the tension between religious nationalism and secular/syncretic positions.

Using the example of post-colonial India, he identified two major approaches to culture that are equally applicable to the post-apartheid South African situation: an indigenist or nativist approach that aims at the recovery of supposedly pure pre-colonial roots, and an inclusivist approach that recognises the reality of a multi-layered society of diverse religions and languages.

The discussion highlighted lessons to be learned from the Indian experience for programmes of Africanisation within the South African context. Prof. Ulrike Kistner, Department of Classics and World Languages, and Prof. Johan Strijdom, Department of Religious Studies and Arabic, respectively introduced and contextualised Prof. Bhatti’s theme.

The Human Resources Department at Unisa has established a walk-in customer service centre, which will be known as the HR Front Office.

This office, which was officially opened at the beginning of March 2009, will initially be run as a pilot project to bring HR and its customers closer together. Its primary function is to provide a customer-oriented, specialised advisory service to staff. It will provide advice on all HR policies, procedures, practices, conditions of employment and other legislative guidelines and attend to HR customer enquiries, problems or needs. Where necessary, it will refer HR enquiries to the respective line managers in the appropriate HR Directorates dealing with such issues.

Since its opening, Ms Antoinette Hoberg and Ms Rinky Ngcobo, the two members of staff in this office, have already attended to 1 003 enquiries.

If you require assistance with HR-related matters, please visit the walk-in HR Front Office, Room 4-28 of the OR Tambo Building (left-hand side of the foyer as you exit the lifts).
Our Children live in a

The Department of Geography is organising the South African part of the Barbara Petchenik Children’s World Map Competition run by the International Cartographic Association (ICA). The theme for this year’s competition was *Living in a globalised world.*

All the children were given fun T-shirts with the picture of the winning map from the 2008 competition, and hats. The day was spent drawing pictures of the earth and, after lunch, Thato Mokoena (under 9 category), Bohlale Teffo (under 12 category) and Anita de Jager (under 16 category) were selected as the artists of the day. Prof. Elri Liebenberg, former Head of the Department of Geography, presented the winners with geography books, puzzles and atlases.

All maps drawn on the day will be entered into the international competition. All the entries will also be on display as part of the International Map Exhibition, which will be held during the 24th International Cartographic Conference of the ICA in Santiago, Chile, later this year.

Anita de Jager with Ms Melanie Nicolau (Head: Geography Department) and Prof. Elri Liebenberg
Our Children live in a globalised world

The Department decided to use the opportunity to do some research on the general levels of map literacy amongst the South Africa child since the group of children came from a variety of backgrounds and schools.

Some of the results of the questionnaire:

5% have a globe or a map of the earth at home.
23% know what the relationship is between a globe of the earth and a flat map of the earth.
71% do not know in which province they live.
83% agree that the earth is round.
88% feel that humans are not looking after the earth. They feel that they have a responsibility to look after the earth.
93% know in which town they live.
93% say they stay in South Africa, while 83% do not think South Africa is part of the African Continent.
98% were correct in indicating on the globe where they live.
African Languages roundtable discussion

The Department of African Languages recently hosted a roundtable discussion to engage stakeholders in discussions on the new offerings of the department. The need for this became apparent because several departments are now required to include an African language in their curriculum and do not know which of the modules will best suit their needs.

The discussion was facilitated by Prof. Ekkehard Wolff, Professor for African Languages and Literature at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Leipzig, Germany. He is an international scholar with extensive knowledge on the subject of tuition in African languages and experience in international curriculum evaluation. He acknowledged that the department has been second to none in quality and quantity in the teaching and research of African languages. Its excellence in output must be a guideline to future achievements.

Presentations were given by the coordinators of the modules of the new curriculum that was introduced in 2009 and which will be further phased in over the next two years. The presentations triggered question-and-answer sessions that afforded participants opportunities to voice their concerns and needs on African languages in various professions. Among others, the need for discipline-specific glossaries, cooperation with other departments and for using African language teaching to modernise society, were expressed clearly.

The Corner People of Lady Selborne

Established in 1905 close to Pretoria, Lady Selborne evolved into a racially mixed suburb like District Six and Sophiatown, and was one of the few places where Africans could own land. By 1942, it was home to about 22 000 people, the majority of whom were Northern Sotho, followed by Nguni, Shangaan, coloured, Indians, whites and Chinese. It was destroyed by Group Areas legislation in the 1950s and 1960s and transformed into the suburb of Suiderberg.

Author John Sekalala Mojapelo charts the story of Lady Selborne from its beginnings until its rebirth in the City of Tshwane. In her foreword to the book, Dr Gwen Ramokgopa, Executive Mayor of Tshwane, points out that she was “born in this erstwhile vibrant, dynamic township that has not only produced leaders in various fields of life, but also whose people made great contributions in the struggle for freedom and democracy in our country.”

The Corner People of Lady Selborne
John Sekalala Mojapelo
Unisa Press Hidden Histories Series
Johannes du Bruyn, Nicholas Southey and Russel Viljoen (Series editors)
Tel 012 429 3448 or thearl@unisa.ac.za
R332
Utopia gone wrong

Although largely oblivious of a term such as dystopia, many contemporary South African artists, in very different ways, have dealt with and still render various facets of dystopia as manifesting in the social order, in personal relationships or in the mundane everyday existence in a country fraught with histories of political domination and upheaval.

Curated by Prof. Elfriede Dreyer of the Department of Visual Arts of the University of Pretoria and Mr Jacob Lebeko, Assistant Curator of the Unisa Art Gallery, Dystopia comprises a collection of artworks by such artists, selected specifically for the dystopian content in their work.

The exhibition consists of a combination of recently and newly produced work of South African artists, both emerging and internationally acclaimed, as well as selected artworks from Unisa’s art collection.

Broadly speaking, Dystopia deals with the themes of political utopia-gone-wrong; teleology and apocalypse; dystopian contestations of gender, race and culture; spatiality and boundaries as post-ideological zones; the post-industrial city; and technodystopia.

A comprehensive catalogue accompanies the exhibition and there will be outreach and educational activities in the form of walkabouts, lectures and workshops surrounding the exhibition.

Dystopia is primarily funded by Unisa and the National Research Foundation of South Africa under the Key International Science Capacity (KISC) Initiative.

For further information, please contact: Jacob Lebeko at the Unisa Art Gallery (012) 4296255 or lebekj@unisa.ac.za, or Elfriede Dreyer at the University of Pretoria, (012) 420 2353 or elfriede.dreyer@up.ac.za.
Handing over the bursaries to Prof. Nqosa Mahao, Executive Dean: College of Law, on 15 April 2009, Mr Brian Wimpey, President of SAIIPL, noted that the field of trademark and copyright law is a fascinating area, but one that is not very well known. “The Institute hopes that the ultimate objective of these bursaries will be to encourage people to join our firms, get involved in the law of intellectual property and to spread the word that this is a very fast growing field,” said Mr Wimpey.

Prof. Mahao affirmed that intellectual property is a growing area, both in the modern and undeveloped areas of the economy, and added that it has been identified as one of the three research niches for the School. “Unisa wants to raise its profile in this area and hopes in the long term to establish an academic chair in intellectual property,” he stated.

Ms Simla Budhu, Department of Public, Constitutional and International Law, emphasised that while the aim of the Distance School for Legal Practice is to assist candidates who cannot complete their studies for various reasons, the profile of students is also changing, with large companies such as Sasol sending candidates to the School who are serving articles and doing their examinations through SAIIPL.

Mr Lloyd Modjadji, Fundraiser: Unisa Foundation & Alumni Affairs, thanked the SAIIPL for its assistance, and said that a bursary fund bearing the name of the Institute would be established, and feedback on the recipients and the assistance they received would be provided to SAIIPL.
Serving the wider community

Tshwane Mayoral AIDS Council: Mr Leon Roets

Mr Leon Roets, Programme Convener of Unit for Social Behaviour Studies in HIV/AIDS and Health (USBAH), Department of Sociology, has been nominated to serve on the Tshwane Mayoral AIDS Council.

The purpose of the Council is to provide strategic vision to the HIV/AIDS response in the City of Tshwane and develop solutions that are implementable within the Council itself. The Council will adhere to the rationale of providing shared expertise and resources, and representing key community stakeholders.

Mr Roets has worked extensively on strategic planning around an integrated response to the impact of the AIDS epidemic and was one of the key experts who developed the Policy Framework on HIV and AIDS for Higher Education in South Africa.

SAUSSA Vice-President: Mr JP Matlala

Mr JP Matlala, President of the Unisa Sports Club, has been appointed Vice-President of the Southern African Universities Staff Sports Association (SAUSSA) at its Annual General Meeting held earlier this year at the University of Namibia.

Mr Matlala will serve in this capacity until 2011 and will chair the Disciplinary Committee and officiate at the activities of the Association in the absence of the President.

Unisa has been a member of SAUSSA for the past ten years. The Association currently comprises 10 member universities from SADC member countries.

National Press Club – Pretoria: Ms Doreen Gough

The National Press Club – Pretoria recently elected a new executive committee under the chairmanship of Mr Yusuf Abramjee, Primedia Broadcasting’s Head of News and Current Affairs.

Also on the committee as a co-opted member is Ms Doreen Gough, Manager: Media Affairs, of the Department of Corporate Communication and Marketing, who is serving her second term.

The membership profile reflects role-players across the entire spectrum of the communications field, including journalists, news photographers and communication practitioners, and the National Press Club – Pretoria has created a news communication platform that encourages networking.

Language technologies for African languages

The first workshop on Language Technologies for African Languages (AfLaT 2009) was held in Athens, Greece, at the end of March, prior to the 12th Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics.

Prof. Sonja Bosch, Department of African Languages, presented a talk on African language families and their structural properties. This was followed by refereed research papers in computational linguistics.

The call for papers specified that the focus would be on the less-commonly studied and lesser-resourced languages of sub-Saharan Africa. The call was well answered, with 16 papers being presented at the workshop. Among the papers were two that emanated from the multi-disciplinary project entitled Computational Morphological Analysis, in which researchers from the Department of African Languages and the School of Computing are involved: Exploiting cross-linguistic similarities in Zulu and Xhosa computational morphology (Laurette Pretorius and Sonja Bosch) and Setswana tokenisation and computational verb morphology: facing the challenge of a disjunctive orthography (Rigardt Pretorius, Ansu Berg, Laurette Pretorius and Biffie Viljoen).
"Unisa has made big strides in transformation within the Institution, and Management is now looking into the reform of the curriculum to reflect the "Africanness" of the Institution," the Vice-Principal: Strategy, Planning and Partnerships, Prof. Narend Baijnath, told Midlands regional staff in Rustenburg on 30 April 2009.

He said this during his Institutional Operational Plan (IOP) road show aimed at explaining to staff the process and thinking behind planning the University has undertaken since the merger in 2004.

“Staff sometimes complain of the invisible top management and lack of understanding of the IOP and we therefore took this initiative to mitigate this perception,” said Prof. Baijnath.

He told staff members how challenging it was to streamline systems within Unisa after the merger that saw the University employ more than 5 000 staff members instantly. In spite of this, no single individual lost his or her job because of this realignment. He stressed the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in the curriculum of Unisa. Prof. Baijnath also briefed staff on the HEQC process that was undertaken last year and highlighted the results.

He was accompanied by Ms Liana Griesel, Executive Director: Strategy, Planning and Quality Assurance, who indicated the process of aligning the IOP with the Regional Operational Plan. Prof. Baijnath’s next visit in Midlands will be in Bloemfontein.

Transformation right on track, now to reform curriculum

Senior members of staff visit Cape Town

On 1 April 2009, Prof. David Mosoma, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-Principal: Learner Support and Student Affairs; Dr Ben Mokhaba, Executive Director: Learner Support; and Mr Convy Baloyi, Dean of Students, visited the Cape Town Campus to interact with staff and students.

Prof. Mosoma discussed leadership, management, communication and various other matters of importance to regional staff. The visit coincided with some student activity and Prof. Mosoma chaired a lively yet fruitful meeting with student representatives.
The African landscape is unthinkable without its rich variety of trees. The northern parts of South Africa are synonymous with the large baobab trees (muvhuyu in Venda and mowana in Tswana), while the marula trees (umgano in Zulu or morula in Northern Sotho) found in the northern and eastern parts of our country have become internationally renowned for the beverage made from its fruit. The bark, leaves, roots and fruit of trees are furthermore widely used for their healing properties and used in various rituals. There is, however, an often forgotten characteristic of trees, namely the shade they provide, often unknowingly but generously.

"Those in deep rural areas should at least be able to use centres near them and not travel long distances to reach them, we must therefore resource all the regional centres in the Midlands with videoconferencing and satellite facilities, said Mr Kokong. He emphasised the importance of collaborating with other institutions, such as FET colleges, and to use their buildings or facilities to provide such support services to students. Young Academics Project Coordinator, Prof. Phumla Mtala, indicated that the programme will run for a period of three months and will fast-track participants in areas of tuition, research and academic management. She said the University is

Young academics visit Midlands region

The Midlands region hosted 16 young academics so that they could personally experience how the regions assist Unisa students. Mr Mathews Kokong, Regional Director, emphasised a need for close working relationships between academics and tutors to provide excellent levels of service to students. He also stressed the importance of using Information Communication Technology (ICT) maximally so that Unisa can reach all its students in both the urban and rural areas.

"Those in deep rural areas should at least be able to use centres near them and not travel long distances to reach them, we must therefore resource all the regional centres in the Midlands with videoconferencing and satellite facilities," said Mr Kokong. He emphasised the importance of collaborating with other institutions, such as FET colleges, and to use their buildings or facilities to provide such support services to students. Young Academics Project Coordinator, Prof. Phumla Mtala, indicated that the programme will run for a period of three months and will fast-track participants in areas of tuition, research and academic management. She said the University is

The word moriti (shade in English, and skaduwee in Afrikaans) is a Sesotho noun for shade, protection or relaxing space. The shade provided by trees is often the silent witness to private conversations, but also to community gatherings to resolve disputes or address a community issue. To a farmer moriti represents shade and protection for livestock from the scorching sun and rain. To many farming communities being under the moriti (shade) of a tree is a luxury contested (and shared) by both beast and humans. Moriti provides comfort, a sigh of relief and a reassurance of hope for a better life. In most cultures shade serves as space to provide for discourse, sharing of ideas, unlocking of creativity and the resolution of social, political, cultural and religious problems. Moriting, which can be freely translated as ‘in the shade’, is therefore a concept we would like to use as a metaphor and title for this newsletter.

We would like to provide a resting and safe space for the weary lecturer or administrator who would like to take a breather, just for a moment, amidst the sometimes harsh realities of teaching and supporting teaching, in an open and distance learning (ODL) environment. Through the newsletter we would also like to provide a forum where we can critically reflect upon curriculum and learning development issues not only within the context of the University of South Africa (Unisa) but also within national and international higher education landscapes. As the shades of trees often provide a location for settling disputes (or starting them), we hope this newsletter will play a supportive but also critical role in starting conversations that matter.
I have had the privilege of attending all four presidential inauguration ceremonies held in the august amphitheatre of the Union Building in the cusp of a Herbert Baker architectural embrace. At all times the event fills one with a sense of awe and of pride and leaves one enveloped by feelings of patriotism.

Saturday 9 May, the official inauguration of Mr Jacob Zuma as President of the Republic of South Africa was no different. He took the oath in a firm voice, he delivered his speech with assurance, and the military flypast, the acrobatic displays by the SAAF, the inspection of the Guard by the new Commander in Chief, all added to the sense of occasion that South Africa’s state events capture so well.

The inauguration speech struck the right notes in its themes of national unity, reconciliation and social cohesion; the pledge to honour and respect the Constitution; the commitment to uphold democracy and the rights of citizens and, especially, freedom of the press, of religion, opinion and conscience. The President undertook to see that the critical challenges of our country receive attention: poverty and unemployment, crime and violence, education, health and social welfare. It was a reassuring address and his administration deserves the support of all South Africans to the extent that he delivers on his promises and meets the expectations of all South Africans, whatever their political persuasions.

Not sufficiently highlighted, though, in much of the commentary on the inauguration address was the following: To achieve all our goals, we must hold ourselves to the highest standards of service, probity and integrity. Together we must build a society that prizes excellence and rewards effort and that shuns laziness and incompetence. We must build a society that draws on the capabilities, energy and promise of all its people.

That sentiment could have been lifted right out of the mission and vision statement of Unisa and which also permeates the Unisa strategic plan, Unisa 2015: An agenda for transformation. I have been addressing these themes at our recent staff assemblies. I have sought to locate our principled approach in budgeting, remuneration, performance management, relations with organised labour and, from latter events, our principles in salary negotiations. We are calling all staff to industry and productivity, to earn their living rather than to expect to receive it without putting in a fair day’s work; to the service and support for each other in our common tasks by collaborating with each other; to honour, respect and preserve University property and facilities; and to manage with sensitivity the dignity of the other.

We are delighted that the salary negotiations for the year have now been concluded. I have been able to thank the negotiators and facilitators for the achievement that was the most challenging we have had to face. I wish to thank the large turnout of staff who responded positively to the ballot we conducted. We felt that it was imperative to consult staff directly given the deadlock that was declared by Nehawu, the failure of the conciliation process and the strike declared by Nehawu which, in our view, would never have been in the interests of the University or the staff at a time of economic difficulty for so many families in our country. Thankfully, by patient dialogue, the worst was averted.

On behalf of colleagues in Executive Management, I reiterate our commitment to principled engagement with staff and appropriate management of the resources of the University; and our pledge to moral conduct, fairness and justice, accountability and transparency in our dealings with one another. Finally we shall not be deviated from the singular purpose of this University: to provide quality education with a conscience by means of distance learning.