

Matengu to whip Unam into shape

■ JEMIMA BEUKES

Incoming Unam vice-chancellor, Professor Kenneth Matengu, has promised to transform the university into a sustainable international hub of higher education, training, research and innovation in less than 12 years. He is the former pro-vice-chancellor for research, innovation and development.

Matengu said he is committed to further aligning academics with the job market and will eventually call for a review of Unam's curricula.

Matengu emphasised his ultimate objective is to create a stronger, more cohesive university that is ready to tackle complex 21st century challenges and maximise the benefits of the 4th Industrial Revolution. During his maiden speech yesterday as head of the university, Matengu urged staff and students to align themselves with his vision.

In his pursuit of this vision, Matengu has appointed a six-member team that will re-examine a restructuring report and plot the way forward in the current economic headwinds, while also taking into account global trends.

This team is expected to complete their work by the end of August.

"Individually and collectively we must now future-pace ourselves; imagine how Unam

will look like by 2030, visualise it today and work together to achieve it by making necessary adjustments to how we conduct ourselves.

"I know, as you do, that our current challenges are many and complex. Graduate employability, for example, remains a challenge in some disciplines," he said.

Transformation

In light of diminishing financial support, Matengu promised to fully implement and operationalise Inceptus, a commercial entity wholly owned by Unam.

The purpose of the company is to serve as a trading body for the commercialisation of intellectual property and business ventures.

"This entity should significantly contribute to the financial sustainability of Unam and reduce dependence on the state. I will soon issue a directive to make it clear what the functional focus of the Unam Foundation is, as opposite to Inceptus and UCCB (the University Central Consultancy Bureau)."

Patience

Matengu also pleaded for understanding from staff that have expressed concerns over their salaries.

"In some respects I also know the concerns students have. And so the challenges are many. But we must perceive these challenges as opportunities to make a real difference to our institution and to the Namibian people. We are not the first to face an economic downturn and we will not be the last to go through a recession," he added.



CRACK THE WHIP: Professor Kenneth Matengu has big plans for Unam. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED