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UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE COLLEGE MODEL

REPORT OF THE REVIEW PANEL TO THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND COUNCIL

12 October 2010

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UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE COLLEGE MODEL

Background to the Review

The College Model

On 14 July 2006, in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No.101 of 1997), the founding Statute of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) was published in the Government Gazette No. 29032, setting out the legal framework by which the University is organised and run. The Statute entrenches the College Model in law. Those aspects of UKZN's structures contained in the Statute that differ from those of more conventionally organised institutions are highlighted and elaborated in more detail in various University documents.¹

The College Model was developed in the context of the merger between the former Universities of Durban-Westville and Natal. As various founding documents indicate,² the model was premised on a desire to break away from the *status quo*, to redress the imbalances of the past, and to create a new and distinctive university from the legacies of the merger partners, integrating not only the two previous institutions, but also the various centres and campuses of the new institution.

The model was adopted following a prolonged process of consultation within the institution and in-depth research of a range of overseas institutions where the model in various forms was in operation, including Imperial College London; the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST)/Manchester in the United Kingdom; and the University of Sydney in Australia.

¹ Particularly the University's *Institutional Audit Portfolio* prepared for the Higher Education Quality Committee's institutional audit in October 2008, (pp.28-33), and the *Report to Senate on Actions for Implementation*, emanating from submissions on the Reports of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (Ministerial Report), and the Governance and Academic Freedom Committee of Council (GAFC), approved by Senate on 12 November 2009 and Council on 4 December 2009, (pp.63f.).

² Notably *Colleges and Governance Structures*, adopted by Senate on 8 September 2004 and approved by Council on 14 October 2004; and *Conceptual Framework for the Support Sector in the New Institution*.

Rationale for the Review

The College Model proposal document approved by Senate and Council accepts as a principle the need for regular review of organisational structures.³ The College Model has now been in operation for five years, and a review is timely and appropriate.

In the early years of implementation, criticisms of the model were articulated, most notably in the course of the Senate Ad Hoc Sub-committee's enquiry into the causes of the industrial action of February 2006.⁴ Concerns were also raised about the operation of the model in the course of the Vice-Chancellor's visits to schools in 2008. In 2009 submissions for the Senate Report on the GAFC and Ministerial Reports highlighted aspects of the model that appeared to have fallen out of alignment. This Report gave added impetus to the need for a review, recommending that the University "conduct an external review of the functionality of the College Model, focusing on structural realignments and roles and responsibilities and taking cognisance of the points raised in this report", and "fully implement the College Model in line with the Statute, the founding documents and best international practice".⁵

The Review

It is against this background that the Council of the University initiated a review of the College Model, to be led by the Vice-Chancellor.

The review was conducted by an external panel of experts who have first-hand experience of College models, and/or who are specialists in organisational structures and operations.

The review took place on the Westville Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal from 30 August to 3 September 2010.

³ *Colleges and Governance Structures*, p. 3.

⁴ *Report of the Senate Ad Hoc Sub-committee Looking into the Causes of the Industrial Action of February 2006*. Discussed in the Institutional Audit Portfolio, pp.34-36.

⁵ *Report to Senate on Actions for Implementation*, Action 24, p.75.

Members of the College Model Review Panel

1. **Professor Mzamo Mangaliso** (Chair) is a professor at Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts, with research interests in management and organisation. He is a former President and CEO of the National Research Foundation.

2. **Professor Nigel Brown** is Vice-Principal and Head of the College of Science and Engineering at the University of Edinburgh.

3. **Professor George Magoha** is Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, Kenya.

4. **Professor Ronnie Miller** is a former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

5. **Professor Bob Munn** is a former Vice-President for Teaching and Learning in the University of Manchester.

REPORT OF THE REVIEW PANEL

Introduction

Terms of Reference

The Panel's terms of reference were as follows:

1. "To assess the functionality of UKZN's College Model at the level of Colleges, Faculties and Schools, and to identify in what respects the model in practice may have fallen out of alignment with the system envisaged in the founding documents, or may be operating ineffectually;
2. To assess the extent to which the structures of key Divisions in the support sector are aligned to the founding documents and support the College Model, and to identify areas in which operational arrangements hamper efficient and effective service delivery to the academic sector;
3. To make recommendations, based on these assessments, to the Vice-Chancellor and Council on how to improve the coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of the College Model in both the academic and support sectors; and to make any other recommendations the panel may see fit".

These terms of reference imply the continued existence of "the College Model". The brief of the panel was not to debate whether the University should have colleges, defined in the UKZN Statute as "the primary academic structure established by the University consisting of the sub-structures as approved by council". Its brief was to assess the functionality of colleges in the form they take at UKZN with the express purpose of improving their effectiveness, and to refine systems so as to ensure that colleges receive the level of institutional support they require to operate efficiently.

The Review Process

Prior to the on-site review process, members of the panel were provided with a wealth of documents on the University in general and on UKZN's college system in particular. These included the University Statute, and the Council-approved founding document, "Colleges and Governance Structures". The panel also had access to existing documents that refer to the functioning of the UKZN College Model, including the Institutional Audit Portfolio and the *Report to Senate on Actions for Implementation*, emanating from submissions on the Reports of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions, and the Governance and Academic Freedom Committee of Council. These documents, and many others, served to provide the panel with

valuable background information about UKZN's college system as well as insights into the context in which the University is currently operating.

The on-site process was managed by staff in Quality Promotion and Assurance (QPA), with the oversight of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning.

The formal review was preceded by an introductory session to welcome the panel and set out the background and purpose of the review, and concluded with oral feedback by the Chair of the panel.

The review itself took the form of a series of 30-minute interviews with a wide variety of individuals or group representatives, including:

- the Vice-Chancellor
- Members of Council (including members of the Governance and Academic Freedom Committee of Council)
- the Executive Management Committee (without the Vice-Chancellor)
- Deans of all faculties
- Senate
- the Central Students Representative Council (SRC).

For each of the four Colleges, the panel interviewed:

- the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Head of College
- Deans and Deputy Deans
- Heads of School
- Representatives of the academics
- College support staff
- Faculty and school support staff.

For each of the following support portfolios, separate interviews were conducted with the responsible member of the Executive, and staff representatives:

- Human Resources (HR)
- Finance
- Student Services
- Physical Planning and Operations
- the Registrar
- Corporate Relations
- Research
- Teaching and Learning.

In the case of the Chief Finance Officer, who was out of the country, and the Executive Dean of Students, telephonic interviews were conducted.

Over the course of 46 interview sessions, the panel interacted with 248 individuals.

In as far as the choice of individuals to attend was at its discretion, QPA is to be commended for putting together a programme that exposed the panel to a wide cross-section of the University, balancing disciplines in the academic sector, and race, gender, rank and experience in both the academic and support sectors.

Although the panel felt that thirty minutes was too short a time to explore many of the issues in the depth they would have liked, the broad scope of the interests represented

enabled the panel to cross-check and verify their observations. In addition, participants who felt they had had insufficient opportunity to engage with the panel or to expand on their points were encouraged to make short written submissions. Thirty-one (31) such submissions were made. The panel also received a brief two-page analysis of strengths and weaknesses from the DVC of each College. Comments and remarks from all these sources have been factored into the panel's deliberations.

The panel is satisfied that in the course of their engagement, they amassed sufficient evidence on which to base their recommendations.

The panel would like to thank all those who participated in the interview sessions. We were impressed by the professionalism and enthusiasm of staff in all areas of the University, and their frankness, openness and willingness to consider alternative ways of doing things were much appreciated.

This Report

This report attempts to distil what the panel learnt from interview participants, to interpret it in the light of their experience of the College system in their own institutions, and to put forward recommendations.

It is divided into three main sections:

- Submissions to the Panel (information received from interview participants orally and in writing)
- Analysis (the findings of the panel based on the submissions)
- Recommendations.

For the sake of clarity, and as a reference point, the first section is prefaced by an outline of what the panel understands by the UKZN 'College Model'. In this section submissions regarding the academic structure and the institutional support provided by the support sector are treated separately in line with the terms of reference.

The third section is introduced by a brief account of how the College system functions in the Universities of Edinburgh, Manchester and Nairobi, to serve as background to the recommendations.

A Submissions to the Panel

Preface

The UKZN “College Model”

Based on the documentation provided, the panel understands the form taken by the UKZN College model as follows:

Structurally, the system comprises

- Four Colleges, each headed by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, with an Academic Affairs Board as its main governance structure;
- Within Colleges reside Faculties (2 in each College, headed by a Dean);
- Faculties are constituted by schools consisting of either a single discipline or a set of cognate disciplines.

The model was designed and adopted in the belief that that it was the most appropriate structure to:

- i) underpin the vision, mission and goals of the University;
- ii) foster unity, and ensure the efficient and integrated management and administration of a large and complex academic operation;
- iii) ensure better co-ordination between operations and strategy;
- iv) exploit synergies across faculties; and
- v) provide the critical mass necessary to compete in the national and international arena.

Underpinning these structures are the following operational principles:

- *Single university-wide faculties and schools, operating across delivery sites where appropriate*
This principle aimed to ensure that academic governance structures in the merged university would not be duplicated. The intention was to integrate not only the two previous institutions but also the various centres and campuses of the new institution.
- *Devolution*
The College Model was intended to provide an appropriate structure to facilitate the devolution of core academic administrative functions. In particular, the model should provide more scope for strategic redirection of financial resources, and more flexibility in budgets, with the College Heads as the principal budget-holders. Within Colleges, management responsibility and accountability, including budget control, should be further devolved to faculties, and thence to schools.

It is the functioning of this system that the panel was required to explore in its engagement with participants in the review process.

The Questions

As well as probing specific issues, at some point in interviews the panel asked participants to respond to three broad questions:

1. With regard to the College Model, what is working well? What is working less well?
2. Where do you see duplication in the system?
3. How do you perceive the support sector to be facilitating the operation of the College Model?

Responses to these questions were nuanced according to the particular perspective and place of the individual within the institution, but, taken together, the responses enabled the panel to put together a comprehensive picture of how the College Model is currently functioning in both the academic and support sectors. The responses to these questions will be described below.

Question 1: With regard to the College Model, what is working well? What is working less well?

1. Support for the College system

The panel was struck by the level of support expressed for the College model as a system, not only by staff but by students.

- The “rationale is good”. Academic and support staff, as well as the SRC, indicated that they think that the model is appropriate for a merged institution, addressing the imbalances of the past, facilitating the creation of a single university, and the administration of a large, complex, multi-campus organisation.
- The advantage of Colleges in creating cohesion and promoting and exploiting synergies is appreciated, as is its flexibility, which enables clusters of disciplines to tailor-make arrangements to meet their own needs and interests, while providing internal checks and balances.
- It is also recognised that the model provides a vehicle for championing academic sectoral interests, with four College DVCs - in place of one DVC: Academic under the previous model - servicing the sector and providing a greater voice for the academic enterprise. The Executive is brought closer to the academics and academic and management authority is vested in those closest to the operations.
- Participants at various levels recognise the value of the system as a vehicle for decentralisation, especially decentralised control and cross-subsidisation of budgets with the Chair of Council describing Colleges as “a useful financial tool”.

Although representatives of all Colleges expressed support for the College Model, enthusiasm appeared to be more muted in the College of Humanities. The only dissenting voices heard by the panel came from this College. One representative of the support staff in the College believes that colleges entail an unnecessary additional layer, although others think that the structure is needed “to ensure consistency across faculties”. Among academics, one participant expressed the view that advantages to the individual are not clear: the model had been imposed and does not enjoy universal buy-

in, perhaps due to insufficient marketing. However, this was a minority voice, not shared by others in the group. Nevertheless, one written submission states that “the buy-in is not there in some quarters. Some staff simply withdraw: they continue to live in the past”. A second submission from the same College also makes mention of the need for buy-in, although the writer concedes that “the challenges we are experiencing at College...level are not due to structures *per se*. Structures don’t work on their own; behind them are warm bodies championing things”.

2. Challenges

In response to the question about what is working less well, participants raised issues that can be broadly grouped as follows:

2.1 Geographical Location

Heads of School in the College of Humanities referred to the difficulties of having their constituent faculties located on different campuses, with the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (HDSS) operating on the Howard College and Pietermaritzburg Campuses and the Faculty of Education located on the Edgewood Campus with an additional operation on the Pietermaritzburg Campus. For Heads of School in the College of Science and Agriculture the location of the Faculties of Science and Engineering on two different campuses in the Durban area poses logistical problems in delivering science disciplines to Engineering students and limits opportunities for staff interaction.

The “Heads of School” group in the College of Health Sciences felt that the physical separation of Anatomy from the medical sciences on two different campuses had a detrimental effect on the training of doctors. Elsewhere, particularly in the College of Humanities, participants stated that the location of schools and disciplines on different delivery sites necessitated extensive travel, which was time-consuming and stressful, that the cross-campus teaching and operations necessitated by single schools were difficult to manage, and that territorial competition existed between campuses.

On a more positive note, the panel heard from the Dean of the Faculty of HDSS that “distance is not a problem *per se* (except where time is lost travelling between campuses)” and that “there are cases where disciplines across campuses function very well”. The DVC, Deans and support staff in the College of Science and Agriculture acknowledged the difficulties of cross-campus teaching. They experience territorial competition between campuses, especially in smaller schools, and could cite examples of schools that were still “operating around a *de facto* Department structure, where disciplines are run independently, including budget and academic processes”. Nonetheless, they indicated that there is strong support for the principle of the single school operating across campuses. Much effort had been expended in creating the common curriculum required by the concept of single schools, and this process had forced staff to interact across physical and territorial divides and had led to improved practice and quality in teaching and learning.

2.2 Inter-personal Tensions

Staff in the College of Health Sciences referred to rifts or tensions between faculties in the College. In the College of Law and Management Studies there is a perception in some quarters that the DVC favours his own discipline (Law) over Management Studies, or is not in a position to understand the discipline-specific issues arising in the “other” faculty.

In the College of Humanities levels of unhappiness seem to be acute. Participants spoke of a “lack of a College identity”, low staff morale, apathy and feelings of disempowerment. “Real or perceived marginalisation” has prompted “a retreat to the laager” where people feel safe and in control. Faculties were described as not working together (attributed to a variety of reasons ranging from the “technicist” nature of Education programmes to the Resource Allocation Model (RAM)). The panel heard of in-fighting among some disciplines within schools because of perceived sympathy of Heads for their own disciplines, dissatisfaction with partners, or “having to be in a school at all”. Reference was made to leadership crises, marked by vacuums when appointments came to an end, and to too many people in acting positions who feel overwhelmed. In the recent past a culture of fear appears to have prevailed, with Deans delegating decisions upward “because they were afraid”.

2.3 Exploitation of Synergies

While participants understand the value of a College system in exploiting synergies, they indicated that in some cases this has failed to materialise or has only partially been achieved.

The DVC of the College of Management Studies is strongly of the view that in his College “the model has strengthened synergies across and within disciplines” and noted that “research output in the Faculty of Management Studies has more than doubled over the last few years as a result of the College Model and the synergies that have come with it”. Despite the areas of synergy across disciplines noted by the DVC, Heads of School in the College stated that the two Faculties operate largely independently, which suggests that the potential for synergies has not yet been fully exploited. In the view of one participant “there are no real synergies between Law and Management Studies”.

Heads of School in the College of Humanities reported that although the College model should facilitate the delivery and creation of multi-disciplinary academic and professional teaching programmes, in practice it has proved difficult to mount programmes or supervise postgraduate students across the two faculties in their College. This is partially attributed to inadequate resources but the College “culture” is seen to have played a role, and there is a view that the issue could be addressed by creating a deliberate space for inter-disciplinarity.

The Dean of Health Sciences indicated that Faculty-level research mentorship programmes and a Research Day initiative have been put in place, and that new and young staff are beginning to work together. However, other participants acknowledged that cross-faculty research is not taking place, and that increasing research output in the College as a whole remains a challenge, with the demands of clinical training being cited as a constraint.

Participants in the College of Agriculture, Science and Engineering feel that research synergies are not being fully exploited. Interdisciplinary projects existed prior to the establishment of the College Model, and new interdisciplinary research within colleges and schools has not materialized to any significant extent. There is a view that the promotions policy and performance management, which emphasise the need for individual academics to publish, militate against collaborative group work.

One participant in a written submission refers to synergies across colleges, rather than across faculties within colleges, and is of the view that a college system militates against synergies across colleges. “Better and greater communication” is required if cross-college synergies are to be exploited.

2.4 Challenges at the school level

The challenges most frequently identified were at the school level.

2.4.1 Structure of Schools.

The DVC in the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science indicated, and Heads of School confirmed, that some schools in the College do not have critical mass.

In the medical faculty, there appeared to be some confusion about schools. The panel was presented with an organogram indicating six schools, but there was some debate among the group (demarcated on the schedule as “Heads of School”) as to whether there were four or six schools. It appears that schools “do not work” in the medical faculty because of their dual service/clinical responsibility and that an alternative system of departments has been sanctioned.

The problem of school structure seems to be most conspicuous in the College of Humanities. The panel heard from College staff at all levels, both academic and support, that there are schools that are incoherent. The Dean of HDSS traced this problem to the original formation of the schools. When schools were formed, some disciplines were too small to stand alone and it was difficult to find a home for them. This led to large dysfunctional conglomerate schools consisting of disciplines that are “not so cognate”, and very difficult to manage. There is a view that at the time of the merger, strong personalities at the discipline and school level shaped the way the schools were formed to further particular interests, “cement their positions”, or to “avoid being grouped with certain disciplines for historical reasons”. The panel was told that academics like to protect their turf and mark it out “like rhinos”. In addition, small disciplines are duplicated across campuses, and disciplines are duplicated across faculties within the College.

Nonetheless, the need for rationalisation is recognised and Heads of School in the College reported that schools are currently being reconfigured and refined.

2.4.2 Heads of School

With the exception of the College of Health Sciences, which appears not to have functioning Heads of School, the panel heard about the following range of problems relating to Heads of School:

- Heads of School have “little autonomy but much responsibility”.

- Heads of School suffer under the burden of heavy administrative workloads. In some cases the workload has reduced Heads of School to administrators, to the detriment of their role as academic leaders.
- Administrative support for Heads of School is inadequate. In some cases, the support provided is weak, which results in additional administrative work having to be done by academic staff.
- Human Resource budgets are not devolved to schools, requiring cumbersome and time-consuming upward approval of changes in a school's staff complement.
- Heads of School are poorly remunerated, and this makes the position unattractive. Consequently it is difficult to find appropriate leadership at school level.
- In some instances leadership at school level is weak and the governance structures such as the School Exco, the School Finance Committee and the School Board are not functioning effectively, although this is not the case across the board. One submission describes a situation in the Faculty of HDSS where Heads of School have "failed to create a school identity". Some Heads "simply cater for their own disciplines and the rest remain 'orphans'".
- Heads of School do not receive leadership training or induction. "They are thrown into the system and expected to swim or sink".
- Academic staff in a school do not have a voice (or sufficient voice) in the appointment of Heads of School.

Question 2: Where do you see duplication in the system?

In response to this question a range of concerns emerged, chief of which are the following:

1. Overlap of Roles

1.1 DVCs and Deans

The panel repeatedly heard of an overlap of functions between the College DVCs and Deans.

The DVCs themselves are clear about their job descriptions, and academics in the College of Science and Agriculture explicitly support the notion of a DVC, understanding the value of a DVC as a champion for the interests of the College at Executive level. On a personal level, the Executive has become more approachable and budgeting processes are more consultative.

This understanding is not shared in other Colleges, however. One participant described the DVC of his College as a "checkbox" and a question posed more than once was "What do DVCs do for their Colleges?" The writer of one submission declares that "I don't see the need for a DVC for the different Colleges"; another that "DVCs are another layer of management – are they worth it?" and a third that the position of College DVC is "artificial", requiring "a great deal of imagination to fill out the line".

Much of this misunderstanding is due to the potential overlap of functions between College DVCs and Deans. The panel frequently heard that the respective powers and roles of each are not clear. Both are perceived to have a strategic role that may be in conflict. There are no clear “responsibility guidelines” and this leads to “diffusion of responsibility”. A common complaint is that DVCs bypass Deans, and conversely, that Heads of School bypass the Dean and deal directly with the DVC. DVCs are perceived to micro-manage, monitor and interfere in the affairs of faculties, thereby diminishing the authority of the Dean. Participants from all colleges at various levels, whether directly or by implication, referred to tensions between DVCs and Deans.

1.2 Deans and Heads of School

There is a view that there is duplication in the roles of Deans and Heads of School, although this was not commonly expressed.

2. Cross-cutting Portfolios

The panel heard that there is potential for tension between the roles of College DVCs and cross-cutting DVCS, the College DVCs being responsible for teaching and learning and research in their own colleges, and the DVCs for Teaching and Learning and Research “being responsible for teaching and learning and research in the whole university”. There is a strongly-expressed and critical view that the cross-cutting DVCs place ever-increasing demands on the Deans and Heads of School to provide reports, statistics and plans, “to justify their existence”.

A further challenge intrinsic to the cross-cutting portfolios was articulated by the Dean of Research. The University Dean of Research straddles both the academic and support sector, and is responsible for providing academic leadership as well as management support, and this uneasy tension is difficult to manage.

3. Duplication of Structures

The overlap and duplication seen in leadership roles is mirrored in the college structures. As with the role of the College DVC, the role of the Academic Affairs and Quality Boards (AAQBs) is improperly understood. Heads of School in two colleges see the AAQBs as an extra layer and appear not to understand that AAQBs are the equivalent of Senex in pre-merger structures. The view of AAQBs as an extra layer re-surfaced among faculty and school support staff in the one of these colleges. At the Deans’ level, although participants were aware that the AAQBs perform the same role as the former Senex, they feel that as a structure, the AAQBs act as no more than “a rubber stamp”. As with the overlap of DVC and Dean’s roles, they are of the view that the relationship between AAQBs and Faculty Boards is not clear and that AAQBs have “usurped the role of Faculty Boards”.

4. Duplication in Administrative Operations

In the context of the effect of the College system on administrative operations, the panel frequently heard reference to the practice of “multiple authorisation”. Participants at various levels, both academic and support, in three Colleges described the process entailed in gaining approval for changes in a school’s staff complement, whereby the decision is made at school level and is then referred upward to the faculty Dean and then to the college AAQB for approval, before submission to HR. This was partly attributed to failure to devolve human resource budgets to schools but the panel also heard that even decisions as routine as approval of sabbatical leave are cascaded upwards for approval, resulting in delays. The duplication inherent in such processes was described as “cumbersome”, “time-consuming”, “overly bureaucratic” and “not cost-effective”. There are “multiple places where things can go wrong” and a feeling that there is “no recourse when decisions get stuck” in the process of upward referral.

Mention was also made of duplication in formal approval by the college structures. Matters agreed at the level of School Boards are referred upward to Faculty Boards and then tabled again at AAQBs. Support staff in one College laid the blame for this duplication at the door of the AAQB, which is seen to “create delays” and “enforce silos”.

Question 3: How do you perceive the support sector to be facilitating the College Model?

The panel was able to interact with a large cross-section of the support sector staff at many levels, as indicated above, and to elicit the views of the end-users of their services in the academic sector.

It is convenient to group the large amount of information gained under two broad headings:

- Management Issues; and
- Devolution

1. Management Issues

Although the panel heard of pockets in the sector that are operating efficiently and providing excellent service, such as ICT, the support sector was described as “dysfunctional in many areas”. There are no service level agreements in place. Development opportunities for support staff are not fully utilised, perhaps because they are inappropriately timed, and morale is low.

One participant’s written submission states that service delivery in his particular area of operation was being hampered by poor management skills, patronage, and “pervasive silo mentalities” which inhibit interaction between cognate operations, and result in duplication and uncoordinated spending.

Inconsistencies in systems and procedures across campuses were identified as a problem. One participant referred to a “deep-seated localised custom of practice rather

than uniformity of operation”, and “a lack of standard operating procedures” as challenges. In another Division “a common manual of procedures does not necessarily translate into common practices” and the example was given of different numbers of periods being timetabled for the same module offered in the two centres.

In other sessions the panel heard that coordination between academic and support structures is often poor. Examples cited were poor communication between faculties and the Disability Office regarding the admission of students with disabilities, and a perceived “lack of coordination” between the academic support services provided by Student Services and “what faculties do in this area”.

Structures for formal discussion appear to be lacking or dysfunctional. Within Colleges there is no structural mechanism to allow support staff to meet together to engage with best practice, talk about problems, streamline common operations and improve planning of activities.

The most frequent complaints from end-users related to the Finance Division. Participants referred to slow response times for centralised activities, such as central data capture and transfer of funds. Issues with the MISB remain unresolved and cause frustration at all management levels. Centralised electronic systems were described as unhelpful and impersonal and are perceived to be used to mask inefficiency. There is no Finance presence on some campuses, and staff are “stuck in their old ways”.

For their part, staff in the Finance Division referred to problems caused by senior posts not yet filled, large numbers of temporary positions and absenteeism. They alluded to a “resistance to technology” on the part of administrators, despite training in the use of the new centralised electronic systems, and to unrealistic expectations on the part of end-users.

2. Devolution

Participants at all levels, both academic and support, at some point in their interviews referred to the issue of the devolution of the support sector, and highlighted a number of problems. At a general level, there were comments such as “there are insufficient support staff physically located in colleges”. The panel heard of instances, such as oversight of examinations, where devolution of responsibilities to faculties or schools had happened without the concomitant re-deployment of central staff to assist.

The panel was able to develop an overview of the state of devolution in Human Resources, Finance and Corporate Relations, and it may be helpful to distil what the panel understood with regard to these three operational areas.

2.1 Human Resources

Under the leadership of the new Executive Director, described by one participant as “hell-bent on making devolution work”, a structured implementation plan has been adopted. Ultimately the intention is to devolve 90% of HR operations to the colleges, leaving a lean centre to deal with such university-wide functions as benefits, remuneration, diversity management, staff development, and policy. There will also be a

a small campus presence whose size will be determined by the volume of work. Where practical, use is already being made of electronic systems so that staff do not have to leave their offices for certain routine matters.

A three-phase approach to devolution to colleges is being adopted because the heads of HR in colleges, (termed “Strategic Partners”) are not yet specialists in all aspects of HR such as Labour Law, and need time to gain experience in managing staff. They need training, as do college managers, and their induction is not yet complete.

- Phase 1, recently implemented, has seen HR teams physically located in Colleges;
- In Phase 2 (Year 2) the cost of recruitment and the compensation budget of the college-based HR staff will be transferred to colleges;
- In Phase 3 (Year 3) performance management of the college-based HR staff as well as “strategy alignment” will become the responsibility of the colleges.

Until the completion of Phase 3, performance of HR staff in colleges will be centrally managed, and the primary (“solid”) reporting line is to HR, with a secondary (“dotted”) line to the College Head. The importance of the primary reporting line, including performance management, being with the “client”, the college, in the form of the DVC was independently recognised by one of the participant DVCs.

Phase 1, the physical relocation of HR staff to colleges, has now been implemented, and satisfaction with the new arrangements was universally expressed, both by end-user staff in colleges, and the relocated HR staff themselves.

2.2 Finance

Although the panel heard from Finance Division staff that “finance has been devolved”, it understood from other participants that what has been devolved is academic teaching funding. Other functions are campus-based or centralised.

The panel was informed that the intention is for a Financial Manager (a senior position), a trained accountant and a trainee accountant to be appointed for each college, and for Finance to have a presence on campuses where the College office is not based.

The future location of procurement is not clear. Staff in the Division see it as remaining central and operating as at present with individual staff allocated to (but not in) Colleges. The Chief Finance Officer stated that “procurement procedures should be devolved to Colleges”, with payment remaining centralised.

With regard to the implementation of these plans, a few finance staff have been located in colleges. These staff have a solid reporting line to Finance, and their performance management is, and is intended to remain, in Finance because they “must be subject to regulations”, the centre “must be able to vire funds”, and there must be uniform central reporting.

Participants complained of inordinate delays in appointing staff to serve in colleges. In one college, Finance staff already based there appeared to be as frustrated as academics. In response, reasons given by senior managers in Finance included lack of the requisite capacity given the large number of vacancies, staff in acting positions, and temporary appointments; the lengthy process involved in making appointments; the need to negotiate and agree the structures with “Executive management and the Joint

Bargaining Forum”; lack of space in colleges; the requirements of the Audit and Risk Committee and Council; and “independent custodial responsibility” that militates against devolution. The Chief Finance Officer stated that the structures should be in place in “a month to a month and a half”.

There was also a complaint that the planned devolution of central staff to campuses has not occurred. It was said, for example, that the Howard College Campus is not adequately serviced and “there is no one at Howard College to authorise anything”.

2.3 Corporate Relations

The new Executive Director of Corporate Relations stated that hitherto corporate relations have been too centralised to adequately serve the needs of the college system. A single College Public Relations Officer “would not be strategic enough”, and college requirements would be best catered for by a “strategic team” for each college, to coordinate events, liaise with secondary schools, and perform web and journalism functions.

The panel understands from staff in the Division that teams are now in place in colleges, and it is clear that college-based officers recognise the importance of being physically located there. However, it appears that some are servicing two colleges. One faculty has appointed a Public Relations Officer from its faculty budget at the same level and grade as college-level officers, despite the lower workload and level of responsibility. The panel learned that this officer reports directly to the Dean, with no reporting line to Corporate Relations, whereas college-level officers have a functional reporting line to a college DVC, and a direct reporting line to Corporate Relations who are responsible for performance management.

Funding for devolved functions was mentioned as a problem. According to the Executive Director, Corporate Relations “gives money to each college, which is supplemented by some colleges and not others”. An officer in one college reported being referred back and forth in a confusing manner between the college, the faculty involved, and Corporate Relations in search of funding for an agreed marketing campaign. It seems that the College draws up an annual budget without any reference to the officer concerned, which is submitted to Corporate Relations. The College allocates funding to marketing “when available”.

B Analysis

The Functioning of the College Model: Rationale and Principles

As the founding documents indicate, the College Model was adopted in the belief that a system of this kind, innovative in the South African context but tried and tested internationally, would be the best vehicle to manage an institution of UKZN’s size and complexity. The positive aspects highlighted by participants, as outlined above, indicate that the rationale for the Model articulated in the founding documents has been absorbed and internalised by the University community. The almost universal support expressed and the widely stated view that the system “is working” are a far cry from the

criticism contained in the Senate Ad Hoc Sub-committee's enquiry into the causes of the industrial action of 2006, as cited in the Institutional Audit Portfolio. At that time, a commonly held opinion was that "the new structures were exacerbating rather than ameliorating the organisational problems posed by the size and complexity of the new institution".⁶ UKZN appears to have matured into the College Model.

- The founding documents emphasise the potential value of the Model as a means of **exploiting synergies** across faculties within a college. Indications are that this has not occurred to any significant extent, and that where synergistic relationships can be demonstrated, these probably existed prior to the merger and cannot be credited to the College Model. In the panel's experience synergistic collaboration takes time and effort and cannot be artificially enforced. If the University wishes to foster interdisciplinary activities as a strategic initiative, the most effective manner in which to do so is to dangle the carrot of large grants for collaborative research in front of academic noses.
- The College Model was also intended to "provide the **critical mass** necessary to compete in the national and international arena".⁷ It appears that some schools as presently constituted do not have sufficient critical mass, although the panel heard that this issue is being addressed in the College of Humanities.
- Underpinning the system is the principle of **single university-wide faculties and schools**, operating across delivery sites where appropriate. As indicated above, the panel heard much about the difficulties entailed in operating across five campuses, and across two centres, Durban and Pietermaritzburg. We also heard support for the principle from structures that are functioning well. While the panel is able to appreciate the frustrations and problems cause by physical location, and the unhappiness and tensions caused by ineffectual management, we believe that the single structure principle is fundamental to the Model: without it the system would unravel. Successful implementation is dependent on strong coordination, communication and commitment at the management level. The location of faculties and schools on particular campuses split from others in a college, and structures operating across campuses and centres, is unavoidably an issue that UKZN has to live with and manage.

• Devolution

The founding principle of devolution is another matter. It too is fundamental to the Model. For any college system to function effectively it is essential that responsibility and accountability be fully transferred not only to the colleges themselves, but to the structures within them. A college system is an autonomous system. In addition, administrative functions that support the academic enterprise should be physically located in colleges and answerable to colleges for the effectiveness of the service they provide.

⁶ Institutional Audit Portfolio, p.35.

⁷ *Colleges and Governance Structures*, 2004, p.3.

Financial devolution

With regard to financial autonomy, arguably the most important aspect of devolution, there has been devolution of budgets which have been placed in the hands of the College Heads and other Executive portfolios as “budget holders”. However, devolution has only been partial. What has not been devolved is financial control and management, and routine financial procedures such as procurement, which affect the day-to-day running of a college. Financial management and administration remain tightly controlled centrally, by staff located centrally in the Finance Division. Financial rules and regulations made centrally without regard to the principle of autonomy curb budget holders’ freedom to manage their budgets as they see fit for the interests of their college. They do not even have the right, for example, to vire funds between their own HR and operating budgets. These problems are compounded by the fact that budget holders and controllers operate in an environment where the university’s budget is in deficit; zero-based budgeting that hampers forward planning is practised; and budgets for the following year are finalised and released late in the academic year.

This dysfunctionality filters down through the system and manifests itself lower down in complaints at school-level that Human Resource budgets are not devolved to schools, requiring cumbersome and time-consuming upward approval of changes in a school’s staff complement, and that budgets are released late.

Coupled with these problems, is the centralised Finance Division’s apparently longstanding and persistent reputation for inefficient service. In the view of the panel, these financial issues, taken together, seriously inhibit the effective functioning of UKZN’s college system.

Devolution of support services to colleges

With regard to the physical relocation of support services at the site of service delivery, it is clear to the panel that some participants are correct in saying that the support sector has lagged far behind the academic sector in the implementation of the College Model, and has been very slow in putting into effect the principle of devolution. Failure to implement devolution first surfaced as a criticism in the early years of the merger,⁸ and appears to have continued as a recurrent theme, re-surfacing again in the *Report to Senate on Actions for Implementation* of November 2009, one of whose action items is to “devolve key support structures, particularly Finance and Human Resources, in a way that is consistent with the tenets of the College Model and optimises service delivery to the academic sector”.⁹ With new Executive management in place, it seems that some progress has been made in giving effect to this resolution in Corporate Relations, and significant progress in HR. Nonetheless, even in these Divisions, devolution remains incomplete.

⁸ Institutional Audit Portfolio, p.35, referring to the Senate Ad Hoc Sub-committee’s enquiry into the industrial action of February 2006.

⁹ *Report to Senate on Actions for Implementation* emanating from submissions on the reports of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions, and the Governance and Academic Freedom of Council, 12 November 2009, p.72.

Devolution of support services to colleges does not mean that all services have to be physically devolved. As the institution has already realised, HR, Finance and Corporate Relations need to be devolved to colleges to provide effective service. In other areas, structures should be tailored so as to enable the support sector to deliver on its mandate to support colleges. Structures should be driven by functionality and the need to provide efficient support: the nature of the operations will dictate the operational structure, which may, or may not, be best located in the colleges themselves.

The panel learned that there are different structural models in place in the support sector, as one would expect in a complex institution where services need to be provided across five campuses and two centres.

- In two instances, QPA and the Division of Management Information, there is a system whereby particular staff are appointed as “consultants” or assigned to a particular college, although the staff remain physically located centrally and have a direct reporting line to the Director of the Division. This appears to work well in small centralised units such as these.
- Other larger support operations, such as the Research Management Office, are centralised in one location, and this appears to work less well. As with Finance, which is also strongly centralised, a criticism emerged of the levels of service provided by the central Research Office and there is a call for the devolution of services to campuses, mirrored in the similar call regarding financial services, mentioned above. This is not a new complaint, the panel having noted it in an earlier University document.¹⁰
- Still other operations, such as Risk Management Services, Student Academic Administration and Student Services are campus-based. Here the problems identified seem to relate not so much to physical location, as to “merger ghosts” – to quote the phrase of one participant used in a different context. Uneven service levels across campuses in the absence of any service level agreements, and inconsistent systems and procedures appear to be an issue. While the panel appreciates the concept of “principled flexibility” that underpinned the development of support structures in the merger, there must be a very sound reason for any deviation from what should be standardised procedures. This aspect requires attention, and the panel noted with approval a comment on the organogram of the Registrar’s Division that senior staff in Student Academic Administration are currently discussing “options for restructuring Student Academic Administration to ensure effective cross-campus operation and improved functionality”. This initiative notwithstanding, the panel is of the view that rationalisation and standardisation of systems and procedures across campuses, and the development of service level agreements, should be a priority for the support sector.

Although the panel recognises the role of campus-based centralised operations, this does not mean that some aspects of support activities that are currently centralised or campus-based could not be transferred to colleges. Some research management support, for example, could be devolved to college level, leaving a lean central function concerned with research management, policy issues and consistency of application. Participants themselves identified ICT end-user support and space management as two

¹⁰ *Report to Senate on Actions for Implementation* emanating from submissions on the reports of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions, and the Governance and Academic Freedom of Council, 12 November 2009, p.71.

possible areas that could be integrated into colleges. It is true that, ideally, college DVCs should be responsible for the space they occupy. However, physical planning in the institution at present appears to lack an effective mechanism for coordination; space management is in its infancy, and it would be inappropriate and premature for the panel to make any firm recommendations in this regard.

The Structure of the UKZN College System

Duplication of Layers

As detailed above, the panel heard much about overlap and duplication of roles between the College DVCs and Deans, and to a lesser extent between Deans and Heads of School. This is mirrored in confusion about the role of the AAQBs and a perception of AAQBs as an extra layer that has usurped the role of the Faculty Boards.

Coupled with duplication of roles, and perhaps because of it, the functioning of UKZN's college system is hampered by what one participant referred to as "multiple layers of bureaucracy". As described above, the system is characterised by upward referral of decision-making and authorisation from school level to faculty level, and from faculty level to DVC level, which causes lengthy delays and is seen as cumbersome and diminishing the authority of the Dean and Head of School. There is a perceived disjuncture in the fact that research and teaching activities are based in schools, faculty Deans set strategic goals, but real decisions are made at Executive level. Responsibility for academic leadership is spread across all three levels. Tensions inevitably develop, giving rise to criticisms by each level of the level above, claims of imperfect devolution of authority, and feelings of disempowerment.

Cross-cutting portfolios represent yet another location for academic leadership, and there is further potential for conflict if their concern with policy and procedures, external liaison, and consistency across colleges is seen to extend beyond the raising of issues, and to cross over into the management of them, which is the domain of colleges.

The proliferation of layers of authority and responsibility is attended by heavy administrative workloads, made even more onerous for Heads of School and academics by inadequate administrative support at the school level. This, coupled with poor remuneration, results in reluctant Heads. Weak leadership and autocratic management styles, not improved through any form of routine leadership development for those in management and executive positions, have intensified the levels of unhappiness in some quarters.

The Remedy

Participants often stated that UKZN's college system has too many layers, and that the number of levels of reporting should be reduced. From an organizational theory perspective this is consistent with contemporary lines of thinking. It is now recognised that management has become a highly complex undertaking. Traditional 'command-and-

control' models, which require understanding and mastery of a confined area and limit the number of subordinates under a supervisor's control, have been replaced with more consultative models that require less micro-managing and more managerial autonomy. Flatter organizational structures are now more common, with fewer layers of hierarchy allowing wider spans of control. The most famous example is that of General Electric under Jack Welch, which cut the layers of hierarchy from twelve when he began his term in the early 1980s down to four by the end of the millennium.

It is an acknowledged fact that administrative efficiency is greatly enhanced when the number of organizational levels through which a matter must pass is kept at minimum. Flatter, more decentralised structures are consistent with more democratic participation than pyramidal, centralised models. A flatter structure shortens the social and administrative distance between management and others in the organisation, which is good for morale. On the other hand, increased spans of control have the potential to create looseness, and this morale-efficiency trade-off needs to be continually monitored and the appropriate balance struck between the two. Training in management principles and practice is required.

Empowerment of the leadership is as important as a lean structure in the functioning of any college system. Organisational theory says that whereas strategy should be developed from the bottom up, effective structures to give effect to that strategy are top down. At one panelist's institution "the word of the College Head is like religion", and leadership authority at the lower level should be similarly unquestioned – always assuming that leaders have the necessary management skills.

Devolution of authority and management from the centre to colleges, and from the college level to the structures within the colleges, is imperative if leaders are to be empowered, and if any college system is to function effectively.

How these principles of flatter structures, empowerment of the leadership, and devolution of authority and management could be translated into practice at UKZN is the subject of the next section.

C Recommendations

Preface: International Models

External reviewers come to the review task with a background of structures in their own institutions and a lived experience of how these structures work in practice in their particular context. As background to the recommendations, it may therefore be appropriate to set out the essential features of the three college systems represented on the panel, as they were described at the final feedback session.

University of Edinburgh

The University of Edinburgh, one of the top five universities in the United Kingdom (UK), is a large institution of 28000 students. It has operated a college system since 2002.

There are three Colleges: Humanities and Social Science (16000 students); Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (4000 students); and Science and Engineering (8000 students). Each college is headed by a Vice-Principal and Head of College (the equivalent of UKZN's College DVC), who has complete autonomy within his college.

Within the colleges are large schools, 22 in total.

Taking the College of Science and Engineering¹¹ as an example, the College has 2000 staff, of which 1300 are academic and 700 technical and support. There are seven large Schools: Biological Sciences; Chemistry; Engineering; Geosciences; Informatics; Mathematics; and Physics and Astronomy. The smallest (Mathematics) has 61 academic staff, and the largest (Biological Sciences) 369. Each is headed by a Head of School, who has complete autonomy in the school. Heads of School report directly to the Head of College.

Arrangements within each large school are determined through consultation and discussion among the academic staff. The School of Engineering, for example, has a system of Discipline Heads for Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and the other engineering disciplines in the School.¹² Arrangements for research differ from teaching arrangements, and are dictated by the School's research interests and collaborative areas.¹³ These arrangements are designed for the facilitation of teaching, learning and research, and do not represent another layer of authority.

The College has an administrative officer at a senior level (the support sector equivalent of a senior lecturer or associate professor) called a Registrar, a Head of HR and a Head of Finance. These senior staff report to the Head of College. They take their instructions from him, and he, or the Registrar, is responsible for their performance review. There are dotted lines to the centre for professional matters, such as professional development, and to ensure consistency of practice. Seventy (70) additional support staff handle HR and Finance matters as well as admissions and examinations in the College.¹⁴

Each Head of School has a personal assistant, and a research assistant to enable him or her to continue with his or her research programme. Each school has a senior administrator (the equivalent of UKZN's Faculty Officer); a Finance Officer (whose seniority and % FTE depends on the size and complexity of the school's activities), and appropriate technical and administrative staff.

The Head of College has complete autonomy in the management of his budget, and can move funds around as he sees fit. He knows his budget four months in advance of the

¹¹ <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/science-engineering>

¹² http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/teaching/teaching_2/

¹³ <http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/research/>

¹⁴ <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/science-engineering/about/college-office/staff-list>

new academic year, and informs Heads of School of their budgets well in advance also. The annual planning round is based on the previous years' budgets. Heads of School similarly have complete autonomy and freedom in the management of budgets, subject, of course, to legal constraints and annual auditing by the centre.

The College has a Dean of Learning and Teaching and a Dean of Research – 30-40% part-time academic positions. Their role is to coordinate research and teaching and learning across the College, and they report directly to the Head of College. They also liaise with the Deans of Teaching and Learning or Research in the other colleges, and report upwards in each instance to a University Teaching and Learning Committee, and a Research Priorities Group. These central groups are small, comprising the cross-cutting DVC with university-wide responsibility for Teaching and Learning/Research, the three college Deans of Teaching and Learning/Research, and an administrative person, together with individuals with related responsibilities (e.g. Quality Assurance).

There are three other cross-cutting college Deans in the areas of Internationalisation, Quality Assurance and Research Careers.

Strategy in the College is in the hands of a Strategy and Management Committee chaired by the Head of College, and consisting of the College's Registrar, Head of HR, Head of Finance, the cross-cutting Deans and the seven Heads of School.

Senate meetings focus on major strategic and policy issues. The routine business is transacted by electronic discussion before the formal meeting, with the option of referring a matter for discussion at the meeting.

University of Manchester

The University of Manchester, a leading university in the UK, was formed through a merger of the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) and the Victoria University of Manchester in 2004, the same year as UKZN's merger. It is the largest university in the U.K., with 35000 students.

At the time of the merger, and quite independently, the new University adopted a college system that operates in a very similar way to the University of Edinburgh. The terminology, however, is different.

The University of Manchester has four college-equivalent structures, which are, somewhat confusingly for UKZN readers, called faculties.¹⁵ There are Faculties (Colleges) of Engineering and Physical Sciences; Humanities; Life Sciences; and Medical and Human Sciences. Each faculty (college) is headed by a DVC-equivalent called a Dean and Vice-President (the head of the University being the President and Vice-Chancellor).

Within faculties (colleges) are large schools, consisting on average of 80 academic staff members. Size ranges from 50 academic staff in the smallest school to over 200 in the largest. As an example, the Faculty (College) of Medical and Human Sciences has five

¹⁵ <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/structure/academic/>

Schools: Dentistry; Medicine; Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work; Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences; and Psychological Sciences. There are 22 schools in total. Faculties (colleges) also house centres and institutes,¹⁶ some of which are located in schools.

Arrangements within schools to give effect to teaching and learning and research are at the discretion of the school, and some have Programme Heads.

Each faculty (college) has a Board, and each school has a School Board, constituted and operating in a similar way to AAQBs and School Boards at UKZN.

Administrative support in faculties (colleges) and schools like that at the University of Edinburgh is in place and operates in a similar way, with high levels of devolution and autonomy in faculties (colleges) and schools.

Arrangements for teaching and learning and research within colleges are also similar, with part-time Associate Deans instead of Deans of Learning and Teaching and Research. These Associate Deans meet every two weeks with the responsible cross-cutting DVC-equivalent (Vice-President) to develop and formulate policy, the implementation of which is discussed at school level in colleges. There are very few university-level committees; for example, once a new degree programme has been approved by the relevant faculty (college), it is authorized on behalf of Senate by the Vice-President for Teaching and Learning.

It is interesting to note that, as at UKZN, school structures in the merged institution and the placing of disciplines within schools have evolved since the merger. Administrative and support functions also took longer to establish than academic ones, and functions into and across colleges have required re-arrangement.

University of Nairobi

The University of Nairobi is the largest university in East Africa, with 50000 students and 6000 members of staff. It has operated a college system since 1985. There are six colleges spreading across 11 campuses: Colleges of Agriculture and Veterinary Science; Architecture and Engineering; Biological and Physical Sciences; Education and External Studies; Health Sciences; and Humanities and Social Sciences. Each is headed by a College Principal, who is ultimately responsible for all academic and administrative activities in the college.

Each college has schools within it, 26 in total across the six colleges. Some specialist schools like the School of Dental Sciences and the School of Law are small (42 academic staff in the School of Law), and some are very large. Each school is headed by a Dean – a relic of a re-structuring exercise that replaced faculties with schools. Heads of the new structures were reluctant to give up the title of Dean, especially in the professional disciplines, and there is also some residual use of “faculty” instead of “school”. Nonetheless regardless of nomenclature, this is a two-layer system with mega schools/mini-faculties sitting within colleges.

¹⁶ <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/structure/institutes/>

In large schools, there are Associate (Deputy) Deans (Heads of School) who may be appointed to coordinate undergraduate or postgraduate programmes, or to coordinate activities on a campus where the school operates over more than one delivery site.

Within schools arrangements are made to facilitate the delivery of the academic programme. Some (including the more problematic like the College of Humanities and Social Sciences) have Departments; others have Thematic Heads of disciplines that work well. However organised, these are not structures but arrangements and should not constitute a layer of authority or power base from which to challenge the authority of the Dean (Head of School).

The College Principal is supported by a Financial Manager called a Bursar, and a College Registrar responsible for HR and administration, with appropriate subordinate staff. The Bursar and College Registrar report to the College Principal who directs their day-to-day activities and conducts their performance review. Performance contracts for academic and support staff in colleges are made in the college. The only performance reviews conducted centrally are for centrally-based functions. The management of the college budget is fully devolved to the College Principal.

Schools similarly have administrative support that is answerable operationally to the Dean (Head of School) and not to the centre. There is full devolution and independent management of budgets. Operational decisions such as granting of sabbatical leave are made at school level and are not referred upwards.

Each college has two management committees, a College Academic Board and a College Management Board, both chaired by the College Principal. The College Academic Board includes Deans (Heads of School) and Thematic Heads of disciplines and all professors in the college. Examinations provide an example of how the college academic committee system functions. Examination results are processed and considered at the school level, finalised at the College Board, and ratified by the College Principal on behalf of Senate. They are submitted to Senate only for noting.

The College Management Board is responsible for the day-to-day running of non-academic matters in the college. It is a small group including the College Principal, the Bursar and the Registrar in charge of HR and administration. School Deans may be invited to attend meetings as required.

While these three models are not identical, they do have some common elements that the panel believes are fundamental to the effective functioning of any college system. It is these common elements that are currently missing, or are imperfectly implemented in the UKZN College Model, and form the basis of the recommendations below. Some elements are structural; others are intended to give effect to the autonomy of colleges and to empower the college leadership.

Structures

Recommendation 1: A two-layer structure

It will be clear from the descriptions above that, in comparison with structures elsewhere, UKZN is operating what may be called a “hybrid model” – three layers: the old faculty/school system with the new college/school system superimposed. One reason for this three-layer structure may have been to ease the transition into a college system by retaining the known, and the DVC of one College did express the view that “the structure that emerged at UKZN is in reality an interim one”.

Participants generally acknowledged that the overlap and duplication of functions noted above, and the tension that ensues, are caused by the fact that UKZN’s college structure has too many layers. The advantages of a flatter structure are discussed above. The panel therefore recommends that the number of layers be reduced from three to two.

Recommendation 2: A college-school structure

When groups who agreed there were too many layers in the system were asked which layer should be removed, the most common response was “faculties”. There was also agreement that schools are the primary constituent academic units, whose structural role is to coordinate cognate disciplines to fulfill the research agenda. The school layer clearly needs to stay. One written submission actually articulates the panel’s view on the matter: “I would suggest that ----the Faculties should disappear, with the Schools growing in size, and taking on the role of Faculties”.

What the panel recommends is not so much an abolition of faculties, as a merging of faculties and schools – a process whereby fewer, larger “mega” schools are created that function like “mini” faculties. An example already existing in the present UKZN system is the Faculty of Law. This Faculty would become a School of Law. The Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine is already a school of the type envisaged. The School of Engineering in the University of Edinburgh described above is another example that could readily be translated into the UKZN context. The College of Humanities could include, *inter alia*, Schools of Education, Social Sciences, and Performing Arts. Restructuring into the new schools might also present an opportunity to move away from historical practice and to exploit synergies by grouping cognate disciplines in exciting and innovative ways.

The primary determinants of the new schools should be academic coherence and staff size. Comparisons with the college systems described above would suggest that 40–60 academic staff should be the minimum guideline. Three hundred and fifty (350) is perhaps a reasonable upper limit. The panel would not wish to be prescriptive about the number of schools, but given the size of UKZN’s academic staff complement, we would speculate that around 20 schools in total across the four colleges might emerge.

Each new school would be led by a Head of School performing a role akin to a Dean. Deputy Heads of School could be appointed to coordinate undergraduate or

postgraduate programmes, or to coordinate activities on a campus where the school operates over more than one delivery site.

A case could perhaps be made for retaining the title 'Deans', as in the University of Nairobi. Professional disciplines like Law, Engineering and Medicine tend to favour 'Dean' as the term most familiar to the external professional bodies with which they interact. Nonetheless, Deans are generally associated with faculties rather than schools, and 'Head of School' may be the more appropriate term, as in the University of Edinburgh. The panel does not wish to be prescriptive about terminology.

Whatever they are called, the Heads of School in a college would report directly to the DVC of the college, thus eliminating one layer of authority.

Recommendation 3: Appointment and remuneration of Heads of School

Academic staff in schools should have some input into the appointment of Heads of School and be represented on selection panels. Heads of School should be appropriately remunerated.

Recommendation 4: Appropriate administrative support in schools

In order to function effectively as mini-faculties the new schools will need to be much better resourced in terms of administrative support than are the present schools. It is recommended that each Head of School be empowered by the provision of an administrative team to include an administrator (an equivalent of a Faculty Officer, or a Faculty Manager in a very large and complex school); a Finance Officer; a Personal Assistant, and appropriate technical and administrative staff. The present Faculty Office staff would obviously need to be re-deployed.

Recommendation 5: Discipline-based arrangements within schools

If a layer of overlap and duplication is to be removed, it is important that secondary layers of authority are not created within the new mega-schools.

The panel recommends that sub-structures within schools should not be defined. Within schools there should be, not standardised uniform structures, but arrangements designed to facilitate the delivery of teaching programmes, and the coordination of research. Schools should have the flexibility to reorganise in ways that best suit their particular circumstances. Arrangements for research in a school could be different from arrangements for teaching and learning, for example. Schools could incorporate units and centres, as in the Manchester and Nairobi systems.

There is no intention that disciplines be swallowed up, but rather that the integrity of disciplines be protected and form the basis of whatever arrangements are made to promote effective and efficient programme delivery and research. Academic staff within

a school, who understand the requirements of their particular disciplines, should have the right to decide on the arrangements that best suit their circumstances.

In the college systems described above individuals variously designated Discipline Heads, Programme Heads, or 'Thematic Heads' perform coordinating roles within schools. Some existing schools at UKZN have Academic Coordinators that could also translate into the new system. Individuals who may be designated Programme Head or Discipline Head need not be formally appointed through any HR process but by agreement with the staff and individuals concerned, in consultation with the Head of School.

Although intra-school structures do not have to be identical across schools in a college, it is important for the successful functioning of UKZN's multi-campus system that the principle of cross-campus uniformity and the common curriculum are adhered to in operational arrangements. The principle of single schools operating across campuses will need to be supplemented by the principle of single disciplines operating across campuses where applicable. Arrangements within schools should not be such that they allow disciplines to run independently on different campuses, with their own budget and academic processes, as the panel heard was the case in some instances currently.

Recommendation 6: A two-tier academic committee structure: AAQBs and School Boards

The panel recommends that the two-tier college-school structure be reflected in a two-tier academic committee structure: AAQBs and School Boards.

The reconfigured School Boards in the proposed new system would essentially perform the role of the present Faculty Boards. It would be for the AAQB of each college to determine the composition, functions and procedures of each new School Board within the college.

In terms of the UKZN Statute, "each college must establish an academic affairs board". These are the AAQBs, and they must be retained. The functions of academic affairs boards set out in the Statute make it clear that they are meant to perform the functions of Senex in the pre-merger institutions. Many of the criticisms of AAQBs regarding overlap and duplication and usurping the role of Faculty Boards stem from a misunderstanding of the role of AAQBs, and this misunderstanding needs to be clarified once and for all. AAQBS are the college equivalent of Senex. They perform functions on behalf of Senate. A single Senex in an institution of the size and complexity of UKZN would simply not be able to handle the volume of work. An AAQB subjects decisions of the constituent bodies of a college to close scrutiny on behalf of Senate, and provides checks and balances in the system. In an old faculty-school system few people would contest the procedure whereby decisions made at faculty-level are referred for scrutiny and approval to Senate (where much of the routine work is performed by Senex). If the function of AAQBs is properly understood, no one should object to decisions of the new School Boards being referred upwards to the college AAQB as the equivalent of Senex.

Recommendation 7: College Deans of Research and Teaching and Learning

In the view of the panel, articulation between the cross-cutting DVCs of Teaching and Learning and Research and the colleges needs to be improved to lessen the potential for tension at the Executive level, and to better channel the flow of work that the cross-cutting DVCs are perceived to generate. Structural arrangements should be premised on the fact that teaching and learning and research are in the domain of colleges, and that central structures should play a supporting role rather than a controlling one.

UKZN may wish to consider the Edinburgh and Manchester models where the academic leadership for research and teaching and learning in a college resides in colleges in the persons of Deans of Research and of Teaching and Learning. As described above, these would be 30-40% part-time academic positions. Their role would be to coordinate research and teaching and learning and to encourage and formalise collaboration across the schools within their college, as well as to articulate outwards to other colleges and upwards to the central DVCs for Teaching and Learning and for Research. While these Deans would report directly to their College DVC, in their articulating role they would also liaise with their counterparts in the other three colleges, and report upwards in each instance to a small central strategy group. In the case of teaching and learning, this group would include the DVC for Teaching and Learning, the four college Deans for Teaching and Learning, a senior administrative person, and other individuals with related responsibilities. The research group would be similarly constituted of the equivalent officers in the research arena. These groups would meet regularly to develop policy and ensure consistent implementation across colleges, with centrally agreed decisions and strategic initiatives being channelled back into the colleges via the college Deans and not via the Offices of the DVCs responsible for Teaching and Learning and Research.

If a model such as this were to be adopted, the role and place of university-wide Teaching and Learning and Research Committees would need to be re-evaluated.

In this model the new mega schools could each have a person/portfolio responsible for research and one for teaching and learning, who would liaise with the college Deans for Teaching and Learning and for Research. These school-based individuals would form the nucleus of a College Research Committee and a College Teaching and Learning Committee chaired by the relevant college Dean, should colleges see the need for such committees.

Autonomy and Devolution

If any college system is to function effectively it is imperative that full operational control be devolved to colleges. Effect must be given to college autonomy through full devolution of authority. This means control of college resources and control of relevant support activities. It also means that decisions should be made at the lowest possible level of authority and accountability, including the level of individuals, without referring upwards to higher levels of authority.

Recommendation 8: Budget control and planning

- With regard to budget control the college DVC should have the right to manage the resources allocated to the college in the manner he or she sees fit, subject, of course, to legal constraints and annual auditing of accounts by the centre. Budget management should not be hampered and inhibited by centrally imposed regulations whose effect is to maintain control at the centre. In particular, the panel recommends that the present limitations on virement between HR and operating budgets be removed as a matter of urgency. DVCS should be able to vire funds without referral to the centre, and university regulations preventing this should be changed if necessary.
- By the same token, Heads of School should have full operational control of the school's budget, within the constraints of legal requirements and annual auditing, including the right to vire funds without upward referral to the DVC or approval from the centre.
- The panel also recommends that the planning cycle be moved forward so that budgets are available to colleges and schools further in advance of the academic year than they are at present, and that the University moves away from the practice of zero-based budgeting. While we recognise that this may be difficult in an environment of deficit university budgets, this should be the aim, and it should be consciously and visibly factored into the plans for managing the deficit.

Recommendation 9: Full devolution of relevant support sector activities to colleges

The panel recognises that there is a place for cross-university support activities to be managed centrally via a centralised Executive portfolio with an appropriate budget for such centralised activities. However, there is scope for significant devolution of support functions to the colleges, and wherever possible, this should occur, in the interests of college autonomy and effective support to the academic enterprise.

It should be understood that, in the panels' view, devolution to colleges should mean the following:

- College support staff are physically located in the DVC's suite;
- Although these staff may be appointed centrally where the necessary expertise may reside, they are *de facto* employees of the college. Central staff should be transferred to colleges with their salaries and operating budgets.
- The Head of a support service located in a college reports directly to the DVC. The DVC is the primary (solid) reporting line.
- There should be a secondary (dotted) reporting line to central services for such activities as professional development, training and support.
- Performance management of college-based support staff is conducted in colleges. In the case of the Head of a support service, the DVC should review performance, with Heads of School being involved in drawing up the performance contract, and with professional input from central services in the review process. The DVC should have

the right to require central services to replace an officer whose performance is unsatisfactory with another.

In the light of this operational definition, it will be clear from the situations described above that in the three Divisions on which the review focused, Finance, Human Resources and Corporate Relations, devolution is as yet incomplete. The panel's general recommendation is that services be fully devolved, as defined.

In addition, there are some further recommendations relating specifically to the three Divisions.

Recommendation 9(a): Finance

- The rudimentary state of devolution of financial functions, as well as criticism from colleges about centralised service delivery, lead us to the view that the time has come for the Finance Division to cease paying lip service to the notion of devolution to colleges and to give full operational effect to it, as a matter of urgency – certainly by the end of this academic year. Appointments need to be finalised and staff physically put in place in colleges. If there is no space, as the panel heard, space must be found. The regulatory umbilical cord with the centre must be cut.
- The Finance Division should also give thought to what further financial services could be devolved to colleges. For example, in college systems elsewhere research funds and their management are devolved to colleges according to various models that include such features as a central fund for special initiatives (centrally managed) and a system of levies. At the very least procurement procedures should be devolved as defined above. It is accepted that activities such as negotiating group discounts, central stores, drawing up lists of preferred suppliers, and payment processing would remain centralised, whereas specific discounting, raising procurement requests, and raising payments and invoices would be handled by finance staff in the colleges.

Recommendation 9(b): Human Resources

The HR staff with whom the panel interacted have a clear understanding of devolution as we define it, and the Executive Director is to be congratulated on having a structured implementation plan, which has already begun to take effect.

- The panel, however, is concerned that the three-phase approach, which will delay the transfer of primary reporting lines and performance management to the college until the third year, will entrench staff perceptions that they belong to the centre and not to colleges. We would recommend that the Division collapse Phases 2 and 3 together. The primary reporting line to the college DVC could be instituted now and performance management could be conducted jointly during what would become Phase 2. We agree that training is required, not only for the HR staff, but also for the college management, but this could be accelerated to become part of Phase 2.
- The panel also accepts that staff training in Labour Law is desirable, but given the complexity of this area and the high levels of expertise required in handling such cases, the University may wish to consider appointing an HR person centrally to coordinate employer relations. This does not mean that all specialist HR knowledge

should be held centrally, and does not preclude college HR staff from having cross-university specialist expertise that can be called on as required.

- The panel was struck by the terminology currently being used for the college-based HR staff – “Strategic Partner” and “consultant”. While these may be widely used professional buzzwords, they imply that primary reporting rests with HR, and that staff are on loan or contracted out, with the centre retaining ownership. “Strategic Partner” in particular suggests that HR regards itself as a co-equal partner in decision-making with the college instead of serving as a provider of expert advice to it. College-based HR staff should be part of the college in name as well as fact, and HR may want to re-consider job titles so as not to entrench mindsets.

Recommendation 9(c): Corporate Relations

As described above, the panel heard that, although some staff are now in place in colleges, there were reports of uneven levels of service delivery across colleges, anomalies in the location and reporting lines of Public Relations Officers, and confusion about the source of funds for marketing.

- The panel supports the notion of a team of Corporate Relations staff as outlined by the Executive Director, located in colleges. These staff would be devolved as defined above. In the proposed new system of colleges and schools there would obviously be no place for faculty-level Public Relations Officers and any that exist would need to be re-deployed to college-level (where they would incidentally solve the problem of one officer serving two colleges).
- In the process of devolution defined above central staff are transferred to colleges with the operating budget for their activity. In the case of Corporate Relations this means that each college’s annual budget and budget vote would include an allocation for corporate relations activities in the college. Funds would be allocated directly to the colleges and not via Corporate Relations. Corporate Relations own budget would cover centralised activities only. There should be no confusion in colleges about the source of funds for projects and activities. The budget for corporate relations functions in the college should be drawn up in consultation with the college-based staff involved and allocated to the various activities by the DVC.

Management and Service levels

Recommendation 10: Leadership development

The panel heard a number of complaints that could be laid at the door of weak management. We also observed a general lack of leadership training and induction. For any governance system to function well, leaders need to understand their roles and responsibilities and be empowered to perform effectively by developing the requisite skills. It is recommended that the University put in place a comprehensive and meaningful programme of training and induction for DVCs and Heads of School. It should be a routine and mandatory requirement that new appointments undergo such a programme and, once in steady state, such training could be provided for potential leaders as part of succession planning.

Recommendation 11: Service level agreements

As noted above, in order to improve service delivery, rationalisation and standardisation of systems and procedures across campuses, and the development of service level agreements, should be priorities for the centralised support sector.

Service level agreements relating to such as aspects as the timing of delivery and funding arrangements should be drawn up between colleges and centralised support activities. Such agreements would serve both to improve service levels and to protect support staff from unrealistic expectations and demands.

Conclusion

UKZN has come a long way since 2004 and the initiation of the merger. The institution has succeeded in putting in place and operating a College Model based on sound principles. The participants with whom the panel interacted have clearly applied their minds to the functionality of the Model. They themselves identified areas for improvement in a manner that suggests they are familiar with the concept and practice of self-evaluation that is fundamental to quality enhancement. The panel would like to thank them again for their openness and willingness to engage, so necessary in a review process of this kind.

We are well aware of and sensitive to the fact that UKZN and, prior to the merger, the two component universities, have been in an almost continuous state of restructuring. The enormous cost, both financial and human, of establishing colleges, and cross-campus faculties and schools is not lost on us, and renders the institution's achievements the more remarkable. Continuous upheaval makes people change-weary, Nevertheless, surprisingly many of the people to whom the panel spoke professed themselves ready for more changes to improve their university.

We would not wish our recommendations to be seen as yet another destabilising restructuring process. UKZN has a College Model and a system is in place: our recommendations are simply meant to refine the existing system as part of an evolutionary process. As noted above, external reviewers come to the review task with a background of structures in their own institutions. Our experience of college systems elsewhere has obviously influenced the recommendations contained in this report, but we hope that in fulfilling the mandate contained in the terms of reference we have managed to distance ourselves from our own circumstances and to crystallise elements that could improve the functioning of UKZN's college system. We also hope that UKZN will view the recommendations in the spirit in which they have been made, and see this as a positive opportunity to enhance operations.

A review process of this kind is a learning experience, not only for the host institution, but for the panel as well, and we take away with us many insights that we will put to good use in our own universities. We are grateful for the opportunity afforded us, and we wish UKZN well on her path to becoming the Premier University of African Scholarship.