School of Management, Information Technology and Governance (SMIG)

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School of Management, Information Technology and Governance (SMIG) Strategic Plan (2019-2023)

Foreword (by the Deanery)

The SMIG's Strategic Plan is the outcome of extensive consultation with our internal and external stakeholders, including staff, students, international partners, and business. Benchmarking was undertaken within UKZN, as well as with other South African comparable programmes, taking cognisance of global trends in the fields of management, IT and governance. The strategy focuses on leadership and governance; creating a niche for the SMIG; promoting impactful research aligned to societal needs; improving graduation throughput; promoting internationalisation and partnerships; enhancing technology integration in our operations; implementing sustainable third-stream income; empowering staff; improving operational efficiencies; promoting transformation, innovation and entrepreneurship; enhancing the student-staff experience and aligning self-funded teaching programmes (SFTPs) with the mainstream.

While the SMIG Strategic Plan draws on UKZN's strategic goals and enablers, it is largely evidence-based and locates the Disciplines of Management, Information Technologies and Governance in the broader national and global context. In this regard, it broadly outlines our purpose, principles, values, focus areas or priorities and actions.

We express our gratitude to all stakeholders who contributed their time and knowledge to generate this Strategic Plan that will reposition the SMIG on the global map in the years to come.

The SMIG Strategic Plan is broadly organised and presented in terms of our **purpose, vision and mission** as an organisation, followed by a set of **principles** that gives us our identity and coherence. The strategy then articulates our **values** that coincide with those of UKZN. We have mapped a set of strategic **focus areas** or priorities that clearly delineate our future trajectory. Finally, the strategy presents a set of **actions** that will translate our aspirations and priorities into reality.

Purpose

The purpose of the SMIG is to develop and implement high quality, contextually relevant research, teaching and learning, and stakeholder engagement in order to produce globally relevant graduates that will proactively impact society.

Our endeavours will promote life-long learning and excellence in scholarship to develop critically engaged citizens and productive professionals who have high relevance for business, government, academia and civil society.

In achieving these goals, we strive to be a global leader in education innovation, entrepreneurship, and knowledge production in the fields of management, IT and governance to produce graduates with 21st century attributes.

Vision

To be a global leader in management, IT and governance education and research for government, industry and civil society through innovation, entrepreneurship and transformation, contextualised to the complexities of African needs and problems while juxtaposed with global developments.

Mission

To produce globally competitive graduates in Management, IT and Governance who can positively impact society.

Principles

- Aligned to the UKZN Research Flagships and alignment between research and teaching
- The SMIG will operate as a unified school
- Coherence across all programme offerings
- Streamlined and efficient processes towards efficient service delivery and client-centred service excellence
- Continuously engage with external stakeholders
- Nurture innovation and entrepreneurship in all our academic programmes and research

Values

The SMIG has adopted the UKZN values as its own values and shall endeavour to ensure that all staff and students in the School translate these into "lived" values in our daily interactions with one another. This means that we commit to fair and transparent processes to enable us to hold one another accountable should we not live up to these values. In doing so, we shall build a community within the SMIG that resonates with these values. The School leadership commits itself to engage constructively and to challenge other University stakeholders, irrespective of rank and without fear or favour, that do not live up to these values.

Respect: The SMIG undertakes to promote mutual respect, courtesy, and inclusiveness.

Excellence: The SMIG undertakes to display quality, leadership and energy in all that it does.

Accountability: The SMIG promises to be responsible and accountable in its behaviour towards all its stakeholders.

Client Orientation: The SMIG undertakes to consistently satisfy the needs of all its clients, stakeholders and partners.

Honesty: The SMIG promises to deliver with integrity – steadfastly and with adherence to good governance.

Trust[T]: The 'T' symbol after REACH[T] refers to the principle of 'trust' that underpins all the other institutional values. The implicit trust enjoyed by every member of the SMIG and their well-defined actions that embrace the REACH[T] values, are important ingredients of the Institution's moral fibre.

Focus Areas and Priorities

Provide Effective Leadership and Governance

The SMIG has identified that it does not currently operate as an integrated School. It is as a result of a historical process that the existing Disciplines are housed together in the School; from one perspective, this is a "historical accident". Nevertheless, there is sufficient overlap, goodwill and co-operation across our individual Disciplines to craft a framework for integration that yields coherence and synergy for the School as a whole. This is achievable without losing our professional identity, and professional networks and associations that are Discipline-specific, while enhancing cross pollination between Disciplines and growth within them. This is not an either / or proposition but rather a both / and. It is a relatively easy WIN-WIN scenario.

In order to achieve this, the SMIG will provide effective leadership and governance across all aspects of the School's activities and operations. The School Management Committee (SMANCO) will serve as a role model and ensure that it abides by the principles we have set out as well as adopt and model the REACH[T] values in our engagements with one another, and with students, parents and external stakeholders.

This focus area also means that we shall be very deliberate about the distinction between our mainstream programmes and the Self-Funded Teaching Programme (SFTP), and we shall ensure consistent effective, professional and transparent leadership and management across these programme offerings.

We shall recalibrate how we consider leadership and management of the School and our underlying Disciplines, units and programmes. We shall make a deliberate and reasoned shift away from autocratic leadership, and one of management decree to one that is participatory, invitational, and interactive that draws out the talents of all our staff and stakeholders. This does not imply *laissez-faire* or weak leadership, but is strict on delivery and accountability and requires a highly level of maturity from all our people. We shall revisit our roles and responsibilities commensurate with University policies to ensure that there is clear understanding of expectations and deliverables, while nurturing a collegial environment.

Within this focus area, we acknowledge that we have many dysfunctional systems and procedures and that our curricula are bloated and are not fit-for-purpose. We shall address all these issues under this focus area, in a timeous manner.

Actions:

- Create an advisory board comprising key partners from government, business, academia and civil society
- Develop our internal leadership and management capacities
- Ensure decisive leadership to match the scope and size of our School and our delivery aspirations, with the resources that we are able to attract
- Develop a programme to organically grow the School as it attracts the requisite funding and resources
- Full review and interrogation of SFTP programmes for effective governance and delivery
- Provide academic leadership to foster and nurture effective teaching and learning, research and community engagement
- Provide leadership in balancing resources and workloads across the School

- Review our professional services operations, staff workload allocations and levels to ensure that they are commensurate with the needs of the Disciplines and units within and outside the School that they service
- Engage proactively with the College to ensure appropriate resource levelling between the College and the SMIG for professional services, and adequate service level achievements by College staff
- Build relationships with external stakeholders, industry and government

Create a niche for the SMIG

Many universities in South Africa operate in the same domain as the SMIG or its underlying Disciplines. This means that we operate in a contested and crowded market. At undergraduate level, the geographic catchment is a key driver of student enrolment, and, given the UKZN brand we have a relatively large captive market. However, due to the historical vestiges of apartheid, many parents of middle- to upper-class students (partially also aligned to race) prefer to send their children to universities such as Stellenbosch, WITS and UCT. UKZN and by extension SMIG fees are relatively more affordable than these universities and hence we still have a large captive market within KwaZulu-Natal despite the fact that most of our students come from historically disadvantaged quintile 1-3 schools. These students therefore need more elaborate and sophisticated monitoring and support systems.

The situation is somewhat murkier at postgraduate level. Conditions in South Africa are such that this market is largely based on corporate and government sponsored students. A small proportion of postgraduate students pay their own fees. Furthermore, the geographical boundaries are much more blurred at postgraduate level. Other universities operate in KwaZulu-Natal with satellite offices and ICT based infrastructure. There are many postgraduate offerings to students in the province that use blended learning approaches. In addition, in certain niche areas, the Durban University of Technology (DUT) is a formidable competitor to UKZN at Masters and Doctoral

level. DUT spends large amounts of money on research support and capacity building for postgraduate students. This was compounded by the migration of experienced UKZN supervisors to DUT in the past seven years.

It is, thus, imperative that the SMIG clearly stake out its desired market segments and create a niche for itself. Some of the key interventions to achieve this, will be the design and implementation of entrepreneurial curricula, that provide students with the skills and competencies not only to serve effectively in government and business, but to start their own businesses and enterprises, and to develop their research and scientific capacities that support innovation in new market development, product development and innovation, and business model innovation.

In addition, there will be interventions to enhance the student experience at the SMIG. This covers the full gamut of "moments of truth" from first impressions through to information seeking, enrolment, academic study, assessment, and graduation. It requires that our operational processes be streamlined, that adequate infrastructure and support are in place, and that we develop our skills and competencies in customer service and orientation, and adopt a service mindset. These are not aspects that come naturally to academics and hence, we shall have to expend time and resources to create such a mindset without compromising our academics' individuality, academic freedom, etc.

Actions:

- Identify and clarify our market segments
- Streamline and rationalise our programme offerings, including module rationalisation
- Take the lead in decolonising the curriculum in a rigourous, scholarly way in order to create new, hitherto undeveloped, market spaces for SMIG offerings
- Build relationships with industry and professional bodies

- Explore new accreditation options for our academic programmes
- Design innovative, blended programmes with IT enhanced mixed mode delivery
- Attract international, especially African, students to our niche-based programme offerings

Conduct research aligned to societal needs

Developing countries such as South Africa, and indeed Africa as a whole, face immense societal challenges. The SMIG has clearly articulated that it will conduct research aligned to societal needs. This requires a very clear understanding of the myriad of challenges in order to scope and bound the nature of the research that we endeavour to undertake. We shall bring our disciplinary perspectives to bear in ways that hone our inter-disciplinarity. Not all the intractable problems facing our world such as those related to poverty, crime, public health, state capture, governance, climate change, etc. are amenable to single disciplinary perspectives, but demand an inter-disciplinary set of lenses and research endeavours. The SMIG will be pioneering in how it conducts such inter-disciplinary research by drawing on the strengths and capacities of our individual Disciplines, in creative ways. In order to kickstart this trajectory, we shall ensure that our research is aligned with the University Research Flagships:

- Social cohesion – "Addressing Inequality and Promoting Nation Building"
- African health – "Saving Lives"
- Big Data and Informatics – "Computing Solutions"
- African cities of the future – "Most liveable cities"

Actions:

- Develop a culture of research in the SMIG

- Create opportunities for professors extraordinaire in the five Disciplines free from any teaching or administrative chores to nurture research talent
- Create research champions tied to the Research Flagships in the School to coordinate research aligned with the flagships
- Develop proposals and attract funding for one or more Research Chairs within the SMIG
- Streamline our postgraduate proposal development and defence process at School level to promote inter-disciplinarity, efficiencies and collegiality across Disciplines
- Develop cohort supervision programmes and associated processes
- Increase the number of staff with PhDs
- Develop infrastructure and support for researchers to obtain NRF ratings
- Create engaging physical spaces and research commons

Improve Student Throughput

The SMIG has been plagued by very low throughput, especially at postgraduate level. This focus area is intended to turn the situation around speedily and with resolve. There are many underlying reasons, including poor student support mechanisms and preparedness, late admission of students, delays in ethical clearance processes, a paucity of supervision capacity, the large number of postgraduate students vis a vis the 1:1 model of supervision, weak communication systems, and lack of mentorship and doctoral communities, etc. However, this is only one side of the picture and many of the other reasons are of our own doing. We take full ownership of the situation, and will design and implement effective interventions to address these issues.

Actions:

- Improve the efficiencies and effectiveness of student administrative support

- Develop bridging and foundational programmes for under-prepared students to meet students "where they are"
- Eliminate unnecessary and bloated credit weightings on programmes
- Develop a specific intervention to work on retention, progression and throughput rates
- Develop staff as strong supervisors and examiners
- Provide strong research support for postgraduate students, including frequent workshops on research methodology, research techniques, literature reviews, statistical and interpretive analytical techniques, and academic writing, to expedite completion of their empirical work, and writing up of theses and dissertations
- Seek decentralisation of ethical clearance processes to College and School level
- Introduce a doctoral school to mentor postgraduate students
- Create a one-stop centralised virtual and physical communication system in the School
- Revamp the school website to enhance its communication role

Promote Internationalisation and Partnerships

While we are rooted in our local context, and will conduct research aligned to our specific challenges, we understand that the knowledge endeavour is a global one. We are a part of a global scholarly community, and will continue to develop global scholarship, nuanced by our regional and local conditions. We shall therefore promote internationalisation through joint research, exchange programmes, digitising curricula, etc.

Actions:

- Promote African scholarship through publications that chart new territory, as this is largely under-developed theoretically.
- Leverage existing MOUs between UKZN or the SMIG and international universities as well as with government and business

- Develop staff and student exchange programmes with selected international partners
- Implement a visiting professorship programme – to leverage third stream funding when we host international visitors through seminars and workshops for industry and government

Enhance Technology Integration in our Operations

Given that IS&T resides in the SMIG, it is ironic that we do not fully exploit the application and integration of technology in our academic and professional services. As part of our strategy, we shall embed an appropriate technology platform that will enhance technology integration in all of our endeavours as a School, both administrative and scholarly. We shall utilise appropriate technology for blended learning in the form of Moodle, MOOCS, Podcasts, Webinars, Videocasts, cell phone enabled learning, etc.

Actions:

- Develop a programme for the application and integration of open learning and MOOCs into our offerings
- Leverage UKZN audio-visual technology and support to create engaging technology-enabled lectures, workshops, seminars and module offerings

Implement Sustainable Third-Stream Income

We shall redesign our SFTP offerings such that they are a sustainable source of third-stream income to enable the School to resource its activities beyond the funding generated from the University.

We shall also leverage research funding in the form of grants and other sources as an additional form of third-stream income. In the longer term, we shall attempt to convert this into IP that generates revenue in the form of patents, licensing, etc.

Actions:

- Develop a viable and sustainable business model for the School
- Streamline, revitalise and extend SFTP programmes to generate additional third-stream income
- Ringfence School income from SFTPs for specific resource development and other support to fund the focus areas set out in this strategy document
- Implement a programme to develop and support access to grant funded projects
- Develop policy briefs that may be sold by subscription to government departments and corporates
- Develop a programme to support commissioned research by the School to attract third-stream income
- Offer short courses in collaboration with the GSBL and UEL
- Develop an effective and targeted marketing strategy that encompasses an informative website, and visits to businesses and schools
- Establish programmes that are more specific to government and business. Areas to be considered include data analysis and the aviation sector
- Greater collaboration with professional bodies to design specific modules/postgraduate qualifications for their members
- Consideration of gradual migration towards block release delivery of module content. This will be conducive to attendance of part time students and will also eliminate duplication of delivery of modules on the Westville and Pietermaritzburg campuses
- The University mechanism for monitoring expenditure and variance from budgets must be followed on a monthly basis.

Empower Staff

In this focus area, we state unequivocally that given that our work is knowledge-based, the real value that we deliver emanates from our people. We also recognise that our people or the intellectual asset we have is our

most precious and critical resource. We must harness and leverage this resource to overcome both internal and external challenges and reposition our offerings and knowledge production portfolios on a more competitive global footing in the dynamic and fluid higher education environment. We therefore strive to empower our staff to be able to deliver on their commitments to what we hold them accountable for. We shall ensure that there are adequate resources commensurate with the demands placed on our staff.

Actions:

- Develop a mentorship programme to fast track the growth and development of staff in teaching and learning, research, academic leadership, etc.
- Provide significant training and capacity building opportunities for staff in exchange for agreed deliverables after the intervention. This could include creative ways to leverage the benefits such as projects, publications, academic process innovation, etc.
- Facilitate and streamline academic promotions for staff within University parameters.
- Engage in brown bag sessions, team-building, etc. to develop collegiality and camaraderie.
- Design interventions to build strong, engaging relations between professional services and academic staff.
- Develop infrastructure for shared physical spaces for staff to interact, such as common rooms, etc.
- Develop mechanisms for regular staff interaction between campuses and across our underlying Disciplines.
- Flatten hierarchies in the School by sharing academic and other leadership responsibilities using team-based approaches, with the design of incentives which are not necessarily monetary.

Improve Operational and Communication Efficiencies

In order to operate in an efficient and streamlined manner, we shall ensure that we focus on improving our operational and communication efficiencies. This includes communication across the School at the academic and professional services levels, and between our Disciplines, as well as across other University departments. The intention is to create a vibrant culture of shared and open communication and to reduce delays in our operational processes in order to improve service delivery and engagements with stakeholders.

Actions:

- Undertake a process workflow analysis to identify inordinate delays and bottlenecks
- Design and implement an intervention to reduce and eliminate bottlenecks and delays in our processes
- Implement and promote a monthly School e-newsletter to stimulate School-wide communication

Promote Transformation, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The external environment that we engage with, and offer value to, has transformed significantly in the past two decades. This includes rapid globalisation, economic integration, the new metabolism of the knowledge economy, tectonic shifts in technology advances, the looming 4th Industrial Revolution and the potential for huge societal disruption and upheaval. The concomitant changes to government and industry, and the world of work are equally astounding. The world that we have to educate our students for is, and will be, radically different from the one we have been educating them for in the past 20 years. In addition, to becoming multi-skilled, agile and technologically astute, our graduates require an entrepreneurial mindset and capabilities for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Actions:

- Engage in staff development programmes to develop the competencies of creativity and innovation
- Develop systems and processes within the School to promote innovation and entrepreneurship
- Ensure that as a School, we adopt an approach to promote constant environmental scanning to understand the signals that indicate transformation of society, government, industry and business
- Apply the learning from the above initiative to adjust our curricula, and to transform our ways of working as a School
- Work continually with partners in government, industry, academia and civil society to enhance our curriculum
- Provide opportunities for our students to engage in internships and service learning prior to entering the labour market
- Develop online teaching methods such as MOOCS (Massive Open Line Course) and e-learning techniques
- Reduce the number of electives offered in the School
- Enforce review of programmes and modules in the mainstream and self-funded stream
- Put in place an advisory board to help to align labour market needs and the curriculum

Enhance our Staff-Student Experience

Students are central to our identity as a School. Consequently, our focus will be to ensure that the staff-student experience is one that is enriching for both parties. This relationship is not meant to be patronising, nor is it an instrumentalist one of student as consumer. Rather, it is an experience of mutual development; our academics have competence and expertise that they will share through their teaching, while our students bring curiosity, passion and agency to their learning encounters. Together, we grow and develop as we enrich one another through all our joint engagements. REACH^T values are integral to this experience as this is where we live out the

values in daily interactions between staff and students. We strive to ensure that when our students graduate, they will take memorable experiences away with them and that they will have built enduring relationships with the School, which they will draw on as alumni.

Actions:

- Develop and implement a workshop to sensitise staff to the nature of the staff-student relationship we wish to create
- Highlight successful staff-student encounters in our communications
- School leadership and SMANCO to model the behaviours in their own interactions with staff and students
- Improve communication between staff and students
- Create a staff-student day in the SMIG for informal interaction between the parties

Integrate the SFTP and Mainstream Programmes

The SFTPs need to be interrogated, reviewed and redesigned to ensure that we offer high quality education under the SFTP banner that is commensurate with our mainstream programmes, whether in enrolment, teaching and learning, assessment, graduations, etc.

We shall integrate our SFTP and Mainstream programmes in order to ensure consistency in quality, exemplary standards of teaching and learning and equitable distribution of workloads. Concurrently, our SFTP programmes will offer our staff the opportunity to supplement their income from their contributions in these programmes in synergy with the School and the University receiving third-stream income from them. We shall ensure that there is an appropriate balance with our mainstream programmes and that the latter do not suffer as a result of running SFTP programmes.

Actions:

- Full review and interrogation of SFTP programmes for effective governance and delivery

- Develop an integration plan for the SFTP and mainstream programmes
- Ensure equitable workload distribution between SFTP and mainstream programmes
- Ensure equitable opportunities for staff to earn extra income from their contributions to SFTP programmes without compromising the mainstream programmes
- Streamline and rationalise the management of SFTPs
- Strengthen the deanery's oversight of SFTPs
- Restructure the SFTP management and operational structure to avoid duplication and reduce costs. This should include a reduction in programme managers and administrators on the SFTP.

The priority areas described for the SMIG are illustrated below:

MIG Strategic Focus Areas