

# INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY, VISION MISSION PURPOSE VALUES AND NAME

The purpose of this space is to engage with what was shared yesterday and today and share further recommendations going forward. How are we going to do this together?

## Recap of group commitments shared the day before

### Rules of engagements

- Equity and distribution... who speaks? Who is silent?
- Taking responsibility that every body can speak and are heard. Collective responsibility around this
- Be careful not to just let people speak but to let their points of view be impactful in our discussions
- We will get heated in our conversations we need to discipline ourselves to listen
- Speaking in the language you are most comfortable with
- Beyond the tendency to speak for groups ( they, us, we ) responsibility to speak from the “I”
- Conflict is part of the process. By its very nature this is a contentious discussion. How do we leverage this? We need a different attitude to conflict
- Confidentiality around communication outside the room, how do we share in ways that are able to be clear about the context in which the conversation coming from?

## Additions from the group

- Respect
- [Question](#) )How do we decide what decisions make it to the recommendations?[Response from facilitator](#)) We will have rounds of discussions around the recommendations, we will see where we are at that point.
- We might have to have to note the number of people who agreeing or disagreed around certain issues as part of the notes on recommendations.
- We will choose who makes that presentation to the plenary after the session
- We need to be careful about respect not saying something violent and then explaining it later as our own opinions. Call each other in and say when things feel disrespectful.
- My pronouns are she and her
- [Comment 1](#)) Our very first speaker in plenary I felt she was very disrespected [Response 1](#))It was tricky and problematic [Response 2](#))I think it was because no one read the report so it came as a surprise
- [Question](#)) Are we at liberty to make assumptions about how people want to be addressed unless someone says so? [Response](#)) Group agrees yes.

## Activity 1

Find 2 people that you are the least familiar with and form groups of 3. Group joyously mixes and finds partners.

- Brief Introductions
- Your link / role to the University?
- What draws you to this conversation?
- 10 minutes for everyone in your group to share

People share in Groups

## Facilitation questions:

- How was that? [Response](#)) lovely, interesting
- Did you learn something you didn't know?
- What was the quality of the listening? [Response](#)) Great! until the facilitator interrupted! Group laughter

## Activity 2

Stand up around the room  
answer the following questions

### **Facilitator Question) This conversation is important because...**

Form constellations in response to what is being said by individual members i.e move in proximity or distance to the person who spoke if you resonate with what was said or not

Deep responses heartfelt sharing of diverse view points were offered by the group. It felt like a very potent look to the intersectional experiences that sit in the room. A range of very nuanced discussions took place that allowed individuals to share the heart of what they are sitting with. The space was also created for these perspectives to be held generously.

See in depth comments from flip chart paper to get a sense of what emerged for each person who shared.

some comments that came from the floor include :

- I am deeply attached to the institution, It doesn't mean there is no no alienation. If we get our purpose, value and name right everything else will fall into place.
- There are strong perceptions around blackness and its politics and whiteness and its politics. it is hard to express yourself if you are black or if you are white you are expected to think in certain ways.
- Our identities sit in in our departments. Identity across faculties is harder.
- I don't think RU has an identity, every person is just going their own way.
- as an academic there is a tension between representing the brand where at the same time the brand is violent to you.
- I am here for less emotional reasons. I care about the brand value of the institution if it means we get less money it will impact us.
- This place is oppressive for many people and bodies. Even as a majority you feel like a minority.
- When we speak about transformation we forget queer bodies. I came to RU because i was excited to be in a place that had a LGBTIAQP++ community, only to come here and find Ru to be very heteronormative. I am hear for representation of that experience.
- I came here to make no assumptions. I hear the pain in this room. we need the space to be with this pain. Lets find out who we are. We can build this place and stop the sense of alienation.

## Activity 3

What are the three insights, or 3 key issues that you think are the most NB to consider individually

- **Question raised from participant:** What do we mean by identity. I have gotten confused and now I am empty.
- **Response 1;** with regard with identity we can look at it in 2 ways 1) how the individual identifies themselves. Secondly what is Rhodes' identity??
- **Response 2:** We have to look at the title of the working group the identity of the University mission vision, purpose and values
- **Response 3:** who are we, who do we *think* we are rather than what our identity is. Basically who are we? how do we define ourselves as opposed to UCT and fort Hare.
- **Response 4:** you could factor in your experience of Rhodes. Unfortunately identity is not nice and neat .. its contested and political.
- **Response 5:** its aspirational, this is what we want the University to be like, what do we want it to be?? Some people say that you should never be comfortable in a University. The identity can be what we would like it to be in the future.
- **Response 6:** I understand identity as the associations that people hold on to at all levels is there diversity, there ids race there is earnings. There are the development prospects of support staff.
- **Response 7:** I really have difficulty talking about identity because my personal identity is fluid. I carry multiple identities so which identity are we talking about. Experience is not an identity

**Facilitation Question)** At this point we want to get your own personal insights. What are the key issues that you feel are important as part of this conversation. What are those 3 things for you? Write them down on different pieces of paper.

Participants divided into groups of 5

### **Guiding questions:**

In your groups share what you have written down?

As a group find a way to discuss and decide...

- Where is the agreement about what is important?
- Where do you need clarity or further input?
- What is urgent ?
- What would be impactful?

30 mins group work

### **Welcome Back**

Facilitator gives us a sense getting a sense of where we are going with our morning programme. We want to identify 4 topics that we will develop recommendations for. Each group is invited to share the discussion that they had. Everyone is invited to listen to the common emerging themes.

### **Group 1 Report Back:**

- We agreed that the identity and culture of the institution is not represented by the demographics 60% of the demographic is black this doesn't translate into a change in the culture of the institutions.
- Revisions need to be made. The university not living up to the mission and vision statements. It is not the reality on the ground.
- What values to the Alumni hold when it comes to them holding Rhodes as the name? Why are they fighting it so hard?
- Stakeholders and alumni should both be valued. Should they be valued equally? Who should matter most?
- The alumni on the fence, they are pulling us back. Some say they are exercising financial blackmail. Some said that it is the govt pulling us back
- Ideological aspirations vs practical realisations. The ideological aspirations are inclusive but a reality where everyone can navigate the space race, class, gender, the aspiration we can see in the mission and vision but its not happening in reality
- The name change won't change the oppressive culture still in the University
- Reserve funds would be better used in reaching out to schools in Makana
- Name change impacts social justice and redresses historical meaning. Cecil John Rhodes should not be a representation on this university but this name carries weight so its those two things the tension between them.

**Question:** does the vision need to be changed or are we not living up to it?

**Response:** African identity its there in the vision but what does that mean?Some aspects of it are problematic, some of the terms including African identity need to be changed.

### **Group 2 Report Back:**

- We had common things that we wrote .Number 1 who are we and what is our identity, what do we identify with?
- Name change is a priority because it is blocking the other engagements

- We need to think about the values more carefully
- Where leaders learn, home for all, African identity - what do we do to make sure that we practice these values. Are we equipped enough to practice them? What systems do we have in place that help promote this?
- 3 ps practice, preserve and promote. Your values are linked to your practice what you preserve and promote comes from this.
- Strategic direction vision and purpose- what are we aspiring to? At the class level what do we do?
- Do we have a direct sustainability plan? We depend mostly on funding. We are in Makana we should be the hub we could be the hub of economy in Makana. What systems do we have in place to make sure we are planning sustainability.
- When are we going to do the impact analysis. We haven't done an impact analysis we haven't analyzed the impact in both areas.

**Comment:** We contribute the biggest percentage in the GDP of this town. We are the biggest employer. It's important to know that.

**Response:** Yes, we have realised that potential. But what are we producing as a University that doesn't need external funding? What is our strategic plan, how are we going to sustain ourselves in the future?

### Group 3 Report Back:

- Three topics came up- name, values and the mission
- With regard to the mission what is urgent is to locate ourselves in the mission better in terms of policies, procedures, practices.
- One of the values that needs to be highlighted is inclusivity. Coming from the presentations yesterday and today there are many experiences of alienation, that we need to pay attention to
- There is not enough of a focus on the funding issue . There is a need for more stakeholder engagement around the funding of this institution.
- The name change can be impactful but not as immediate thing. This could simply become cosmetic. Rather get the other things right - and then ask now we have changed who are we? What shall we call ourselves now that we have changed?

**Question:** Institutional culture and name change don't have to follow each other. It is a chicken and egg situation. There are not two separate conversations.

**Facilitator:** We will note that in the recommendations.

### Group 4 Report Back :

- We thought about the name whether or not it should be changed we looked at the impact of it being changed.
- Values should be revised
- Representation on campus for all groups and avenues and channels to address issues that may arise
- Our Relationship with Grahamstown came up. How we represent the community, what we do for them.
- **Comment :** its what we do *with* the community not what we do for them.

### Group 5:

- The name was an important contentious issue- we didn't agree what to do with it
- We spoke about the purpose of the University teaching, learning and research, But what about community engagement? It is important to establish this. I can't think of a better University posed to do this.
- Themes that emerged strongly for us were affiliation, alienation, disjuncture. We were reflecting on how powerfully expressed the themes of alienation were when we shared our own experiences. It is interesting that people feel this here. There is something about the culture that leads to this desire to be able to identify

with it. Why do we feel like this about a university and not other things i.e BP garage we don't feel the need to belong there

- If we change the name what do we change it to? What are we changing to? Will be named after another human being but maybe that's the wrong way to go. What we hope to be could lead to the name should be ever change it.

**Facilitator Instruction:** We have to do this big task of agreeing to 4 things we can drill down on. time is short. we need to identify the 4 different things. After 4 things should we take it all there or come back?

**Comment:** Let's look at what the 4 topics are.

**Group is invited to surface the 4 topics that are important in the group.**

**Facilitative Questions to consider in groups.**

- what needs to be done?
- what is the process?

**Four Chosen Topics**

- Name and vision
- Institutional culture and values and inclusivity
- Community engagement RU and relationship
- Statement of purpose

**Question:** Community and identity? What is the link?

**Response:** In the mission statement there is not much mention of the community. It needs to be worked in more that's why we want this added.

**Comment :**the community engagement cannot be a stand alone

**Comment:** its must a a part of the statement of purpose

**Comment:** its a profound shift in how we think about the University. We need it to stand alone before it is infused. It should stand alone because it is a paradigm shift to where we are now.

**Comment:** sometimes when something stands alone it doesn't permeate, if we leave community engagement standing on a limb its a stand alone. I don't think it should be a stand alone it should be integrated int who we are. Its very important to our identity . it should carry more weight.

**Facilitator:** Those in groups can work community engagement into their groups

**Comment:** I don't mean to undermine the process we have been through but we might have just gone round a big circle and some back to where we started. We have to report back to plenary. We are back where we started.

People self select to be part of the 4 chosen topics and come up with recommendation.

Facilitator because of time constraints were gonna end in an abrupt way. Can each group work on their four recommendations and share them individually in plenary.

**Comment:** Does that mean we are not going to see the recommendations before they are shared?

**Facilitator:** unfortunately because of time constraints this will not be possible. We can share our comments about the recommendations in plenary if something comes up for us.

**Recommendations:**

1. No consensus on the name change. Process has to be put in place by council by 6months. Council can take note of the developments that have been made already and take it forward.
2. Interrogate the vision and mission to questions segments such as “ international Accreditation vs. local relevance. This mindset feeds into conversations about research, curriculum, teaching and community engagement.
3. We need to probe if what is contained within the vision and mission is practiced preserved and promoted. Can we honestly celebrate these values when a large number of students feel alienated and excluded?
4. Current status in terms of our vision and mission. Is it that they need to be changed or do they need to be embraced?
5. We need a SWOT analysis of our visions and mission. We need to publicize what comes out of this.
6. We need to identify our unique attributes strengths and potential and see how they contribute to the vision and the mission.
7. We recommend a formation of a representative group that has access to a large group. They will help us pull together what our values are so that they can be infused in every day life. The purpose of the University should represent teaching and learning, research and very critically community engagement and innovation.
8. Restorative relationship between management and the students. We will need someone outside of the institution to facilitate this.
9. Our relationship with Grahamstown/ Rhini needs to explicitly be part of our stament of purpose.
10. We need to prioritize inclusive engagement for a sustainable city.
11. Grahamstown/ Rhini should be seen as a centre of education excellence.
12. Make campus more accessible to our community
13. Promote social, economic and environmental development.
14. We need to inform and align student societies and Community Engagement as a priority.
15. We need to review resource allocation, policies and processes when it comes to community engagement
16. Embed Community Engagement in teaching and learning practices providing experiences beyond the lecture theatre.
17. Promote engaged research methods and topics.

## Comments from plenary:

- The mission should be more succinct and aspirational, we need the employees to understand it and live it
- We need people to clearly understand their purpose, the vision and mission.
- A vision statement is a vision statement it should be it about where we are going and not where we are. It is something that is aspirational that looks forward.
- They are many dissatisfied with the name. Were there any alternatives in terms of the names?
- In terms of the consultation when it comes to the name change. Whose voice are we going to prioritize because if we prioritize alumni they aren't the ones who have to intact with the name daily. What is our conversation around peoples current interaction with the name. **Response** we are family we need to engage the issue of the name together.
- On the process of the name change, I want clarification director of institutional culture. There was a process opened last year where academics were encouraged to submit a proposal and why. We need clarification in terms what happened to the process. When we say we need to make Africa the centre of gravity in this institution why is it that that logic flies out of the way with the naming? **Response:** it was called on for individuals who could serve on the commit to oversee the process. It was individuals in the imminent persons committee who served on this committee.
- The are two acts that govern name change by department the of arts and culture that act precedes the University act. What are the merits of examining these two acts? This is the department of arts and culture mandate. the act also specifies the system of engaging the community in name change. **Response** the department of arts and culture does not govern the University when it comes to name change. That responsibility rests with council. We are governed by the higher education act not the arts and culture act. It is the gift of council to change the name
- Other institutions managed to change their names with no problems. What is the issue with Rhodes? What is it about Rhodes University name that is so difficult like the rest of the others. **Response:** there is no University that has changed a name. New institutions ( including merged universities) had to have new names and department provided funding for that to happen. One university Orange Free state dropped orange. NMMU dropped metropolitan. Its the historical Universities that merged that changed their names. This was paid for by the department.
- Aspirations with respect to inclusivity one of things it doesn't say is that this is a place people want to work. Where are we with regard to living up to the vision and mission?