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9 March 2010

UCT signs first Lusophone partnership with another African university

The University of Cape Town today signed its first partnership agreement with a university in a Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) African nation.

UCT Vice-Chancellor, Dr Max Price and Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) Rector, Prof Doutor Filipe José Couto signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) committing the two universities to cooperate and collaborate in teaching, research and other areas across the faculties of the two universities.

“This important development will strengthen UCT’s focus on links with the African continent,” said Dr Price. “UCT already has many links with universities in the global North – in Europe and the US, for instance. Now we have consciously decided to face in other directions. More specifically, we want to deepen our links with Lusophone nations such as Mozambique, Angola and Brazil.”

A second agreement was signed by the deans of the Law faculties of the two universities: Professor PJ Schwikkard of UCT and Professor Doutor Armando César Dimande of UEM. This agreement outlines the specific cooperation and collaboration to take place between the two faculties, including exchanges of students and staff. The two Law faculties are already jointly organising an international conference on Regional Integration and SADC Law, to be hosted by the UCT Faculty of Law on 7-9 September 2010.

Background: putting muscle behind UCT’s Afropolitan vision

These agreements will help develop UCT’s Afropolitan vision, which was articulated by Dr Price in his first year as Vice-Chancellor and recently approved by the University Council: they put into action UCT’s vision to cooperate with universities and institutions in other African countries. The African continent is an important focus of UCT’s internationalisation policy, which supports the proposals in the National Plan for Higher Education to increase linkages within SADC, including the establishment of a SADC Higher Education Consortium. UCT already enrolls SADC students on the same terms as South African students.

In addition, UCT faculties are involved in hundreds of cooperative programmes with other African universities at an individual and departmental level, and the university is committed to strengthening its institutional links across the continent. For example, the University Science, Humanities & Engineering Partnerships in Africa (USHEPIA) involves eight Southern African and East African universities, including UCT. It was established in 1996 to build institutional and human capacity in the participating institutions. USHEPIA offers post-graduate scholarships to staff members of the partner universities undertaking doctoral research. Students work on topics of local concern, jointly supervised by their home university and an away university, which to date has been UCT. The

ultimate goal of USHEPiA is to develop a network of African researchers capable of addressing the developmental needs of the continent.

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