



2023-2024 Annual report

1. Who or what is UVPERSU?

1.1 UVPERSU as union

UVPERSU's logo says it all: ***Achieve together.*** UVPERSU is unique in that it is the majority and representative union in the workplace and can look unrestrained after the interests of its diverse group of members. UVPERSU is a registered union, but not affiliated with any federation of unions. UVPERSU is multi-cultural and non-racial and has a diverse group of members. UVPERSU has concluded a collective agreement with the UFS Council. UVPERSU and NEHAWU are the only recognised unions on the UFS campus and following discussions with the UFS Management, agreed on a minimum number of members for other unions before the UFS will recognise such union/s.

UVPERSU doesn't operate in isolation but stay abreast of national and international developments in workplaces and labour law.

UVPERSU's vision

To be the most influential and leading union in higher education.

UVPERSU's mission

As a professional and non-political union, UVPERSU strives to serve the interests of members, collectively and within the framework of existing labour legislation and promote positive attitudes towards the preservation and growth of the University as an institution.

UVPERSU's motto

"We listen to truly hear, we care through action and so we add value to the working environment."

UVPERSU's values

Accountability, respect, integrity, equity, equality, and devotion.

1.2 UVPERSU's Management Committee (MC) 2023-2026

Dr H Potgieter (Chairperson) (UVPERSU Executive) (Chair: UVPERSU Salary Team)

In alphabetical order:

Ms L Coetzee (Liaison: Persons with disabilities)

Mr R Isaacs (Book bursaries)

Ms R Johnson (Vice-chair) (UVPERSU Executive) (UVPERSU Salary Team) (UFS Health Care Committee)

Ms A Lombard (CEO) (UVPERSU Executive) (UVPERSU Salary Team)

Dr G Magaiza (Vice-chair) (Qwaqwa chair) (UVPERSU Executive) (UVPERSU Salary Team)

Prof SZ Matebesi (UVPERSU Salary Team)

Dr J Myburgh (Assistance with shortlists and interviews)

Ms J Pretorius (Treasurer) (UVPERSU Executive) (UVPERSU Salary Team)

Ms GM Tsolo (Liaison: Insourced groups)

Mr F van der Watt (UVPERSU Salary Team)

Ms A Reynolds (Book bursaries)

Dr AJ van Niekerk (UVPERSU Salary Team)

1.3 UVPERSU support personnel

Ms S Crous (Office manager, recruitment)

Ms A Tjamela (Maintenance and venues)

2. UVPERSU in a new online/hybrid working environment

In March 2020, in the wink of an eye, our lives on the three campuses of the UFS changed drastically, due to a deadly and highly contagious virus, which attacked the whole world and completely changed the way of thinking with regards to work environments. Suddenly, we had to adapt to a “new normal” and we had to learn new and exciting technology to communicate and to think innovatively about teaching and learning.

UVPERSU was and still is there for members and we are constantly in contact with the UFS rectorate to address workplace issues. UVPERSU is also monitoring artificial intelligence and its impact in the workplace and on the staff component in the workplace.

UVPERSU will always strive to stay relevant in a changing environment and to stay relevant, careful strategic planning is now very necessary. Salary negotiations are part of serious strategic planning. UVPERSU acts as watch dog over important employment aspects in a

modern workplace. Networking is also important and liaison with members and non-members is high on the agenda. Regular surveys are conducted to get mandates for certain outcomes during negotiations.

3. UVPERSU's role on the UFS campuses

Ms Anita Lombard is currently the full-time chief executive officer, assisted by a management committee under the chairmanship of Dr Henk Potgieter. Ms Sarien Crous, as office manager, oversees administration and recruitment. Ms Adelina Tjamela oversees the venues. It is important to note that UVPERSU is a registered and independent union and Ms Lombard, and Ms Crous don't fall under UFS conditions of service. Ms Tjamela works as independent contractor for UVPERSU.

UVPERSU, as majority union, has a collective agreement with the UFS Council and imposes agency fees on non-members according to labour legislation.

UVPERSU has a co-operation agreement with NEHAWU to negotiate as a mutual forum for salary adjustments. UVPERSU and NEHAWU are the only recognised unions on the UFS campuses.

UVPERSU is thus fully recognised as an important role player on all three UFS campuses.

Important UVPERSU priorities are to prevent unfair discrimination, to protect jobs and ensure job security and to ensure a healthy and a safe workplace.

UVPERSU is also in contact with other universities in the country.

4. UVPERSU representation on UFS committees

UVPERSU is officially represented on university committees, sub-committees, task groups, as well as on the Institutional Forum, the Executive Management of the University, Transformation Committees (ITP), Institutional Multi-stakeholder group, the rector's senior leadership group and the Executive of Senate. UVPERSU always acts pro-actively in the interest of members and fulfils our watchdog function in accordance with labour legislation.

UVPERSU is also represented on the Health Care Committee, disability and group insurance committee, the Skills Development Committee, the Central Equity Committee, several other committees and all shortlist meetings and interviews. UVPERSU was also involved in the development of a new policy framework.

Ms Lombard is the vice-chair of the UFS Institutional Forum and is currently acting as chair. She was also part of an initiative where IF chairs from other universities met to discuss future activities of institutional forums.

UVPERSU constantly engages with stakeholders with regard to social justice. UVPERSU was also involved in activities of the Naming Committee.

UVPERSU was also part of engagement with the Council for Higher Education in the past.

On a national level, UVPERSU is part of a CCMA committee dealing with essential services.

5. Salary negotiations and service benefits

UVPERSU and NEHAWU participate as the Mutual Forum in the annual salary negotiations with the UFS Council Team. It remains one of the most important tasks of the unions. All changes in conditions of service are negotiated in the Joint Bargaining Forum, which consists of the two unions and a UFS Council Team.

The following salary adjustment was implemented for 2024:

The above agreement as approved by the University Council through the Council Salary Negotiation Team in the Joint Bargaining Forum, implies that for 2024, the pensionable salary increase 3,3% made up of budget growth of 2,9% plus 0,4 % available from recurring SLE's that could be utilised. In addition, management agreed to utilise all available and expected once-off, and non-recurring, salary savings funds for 2024 resulting in an additional 1.7% increase being provided as a non-pensionable allowance and the following is agreed upon:

General Salary Adjustment for 2024:	2.90%
Pensionable SLE savings:	0.40%
Non-pensionable allowance:	1.70%
Total increase:	5.00%

We are all aware that no law in this country states that yearly salary increments are compulsory, and such increments are also not part of the UFS conditions of service. The UFS is thus under no obligation to conduct salary negotiations or to backdate such increments. There is also no agreement with unions that increments must be pensionable. The fact that the UFS is subsidizing contributions to our pension fund, is a major fringe benefit that you will be hard to find in the industry where employees must mostly be self-sufficient in terms of making provision for pension contributions.

UVPERSU strives to negotiate the best possible increments in remuneration packages, without harming or destroying the financial sustainability of the institution.

It was announced by the government last year that subsidies to higher education institutions will be cut drastically and that annual increases in class fees will be capped. These announcements were outside our control, and immediately put all SA universities in a very dire

situation. Negotiations could only start after confirmation of subsidies for higher education. It must be mentioned here that it is very difficult and almost impossible to compare institutions with each other, as well as with the industry for reasons you as an informed academic should be aware of.

UVPERSU takes great care to communicate with members to keep them informed and when obtaining a mandate is on the cards, we make use of reliable and credible UFS systems of which results can be legally defended. Members receive comprehensive information upfront and can then cast an informed vote.

Another important point to keep in mind, is that the elected UVPERSU management members are your co-employees, and since we all are passengers on the same ship, UVPERSU cares for the members and will strive to prioritize job security and keep members satisfied, as well as to keep the ship afloat, to prevent drowning together!

When UVPERSU negotiates for salary adjustments, it is done with the utmost care and responsibility to act in the best interest of our members. We won't deliberately disadvantage ourselves and our members in these difficult times when budgets are tight and income severely restricted. We value our members, and we fiercely defend jobs and financial improvement when it comes to negotiating adjustments in remuneration packages and benefits for members.

What we must also clearly understand, is that in terms of higher education institutions, only 53 percent of the total budget can be utilized to pay remuneration and the funding of remuneration is generated from government subsidies and class fees of students. Funds allocated for maintenance of infrastructure can't be used to increase remuneration packages.

There is a model/framework within which salary negotiations at the UFS take place every year and it is within that framework, namely a multi-year income related model (so any reserves and ring-fenced income are excluded from the current model), and the 53% salary cap that UVPERSU must negotiate within. When the UFS Council Team puts offers on the table, the UVPERSU team studies the implications and weighs it against other possibilities and consequences to negotiate the best possible options for members under specific circumstances.

When operational requirements legally justify retrenchments in terms of section 189 in the Labour Relations Act and compliance with what is prescribed in the Act can be proved, it will be very difficult to avoid job losses, but UVPERSU acted proactively and negotiated against any current retrenchments.

All members of UVPERSU, like every member of the salary team, must abide by the values and principles of the union, and that is to be constructive in our approach, to secure sustainability and to prevent job losses and on top of that negotiate the best possible outcome for all our members. The integrity of our actions is important to us!

6. Liaising with Human Resources, including Employment Relations Management

Regular collaboration and liaison take place between UVPERSU and the said divisions. In this way, UVPERSU ensures that members' interests are continuously catered for in accordance with the UFS vision and goals. UVPERSU is also part of the Employment Relations Forum.

7. Liaison with the UFS management by conducting regular meetings

The UVPERSU Management Committee meets quarterly with the management of the University and any member of UVPERSU may submit matters for discussion to the chief executive officer.

8. Protection of Personal Information Act

UVPERSU has put measures in place to comply and Ms Lombard is working with a Johannesburg lawyer to make sure that UVPERSU will comply with the POPI Act. Compliance policies must be in place and Ms Lombard was registered with the Information Regulator as UVPERSU's compliance officer. All documents older than ten years are destroyed in terms of POPIA.

9. Settling of disputes

UVPERSU constantly strives towards settling disputes peacefully and to the advantage of all parties involved (win-win situation). UVPERSU succeeds in settling most of all problems, disciplinary cases, and grievances to the advantage of our members. Several corrective counselling issues are handled from time to time and in the past year several grievances and disciplinary hearings were handled successfully.

The office deals with enquiries from members about a large variety of matters daily. Approximately 40 to 60 calls (WhatsApp, Skype, and telephone calls) and hundreds of e-mails are handled per month. UVPERSU is committed to confidentiality in dealing with members' problems and complaints. Labour-related enquiries are also handled by Ms Lombard and in the case of disciplinary issues, members' interests are protected in a rational manner. In cases where UVPERSU cannot provide the necessary expertise, external consultants are consulted.

10. Communication

Good and effective communication and engagement with members with regards to the UFS goals and other important UFS matters, have been identified as priorities by the UVPERSU MC. The UVPERSU office communicates with members by means of the UVPERSU website, Facebook and Quick Mail.

Members can also make appointments to meet with members of the MC over a cup of coffee/tee in the UVPERSU Committee Room. The best time slot is Wednesdays between 13:00 and 14:00.

UVPERSU's communication is invaluable and positive feedback is constantly received.

11. Community Service – contributions on campus

Like in the past, UVPERSU plans to hand out refreshments to our Protection Services members who are working shifts during the cold winter months. Refreshments will also be handed out to Protection Services members who must work during the festive season in December.

12. Study Bursaries

In 2001, the Executive Management of the UFS approved that UVPERSU awards study bursaries. The reaction to invitations to apply for these book bursaries is overwhelming. A bursary committee considers every application and makes the awards. Several bursaries were awarded over the years.

13. Liaison with other unions

A good relationship is maintained in the workplace and a formal co-operation agreement regarding salary negotiations and workplace benefits was concluded with NEHAWU.

14. Membership numbers

The number of members is growing steadily. UVPERSU is proud of the diverse composition of its members. UVPERSU is still, with a considerable margin, the majority union at the UFS. As majority union, UVPERSU also enjoys various privileges under labour legislation. Membership numbers are influenced by staff members going on pension and leaving the service of the UFS.

Be sure to play your part to assist Ms Crous in recruiting new members!

During March – April 2023, free t-shirts were handed out to members. There are still t-shirts available for members. New members can also collect an UVPERSU coffee mug from the office.

15. Finances

Under the capable supervision of the treasurer, Ms Janine Pretorius, we can report that UVPERSU is financially sound. Ms Pretorius is assisted by a financial sub-committee consisting of Dr Henk Potgieter, Ms Janine Pretorius, Dr Grey Magaiza, Ms Riana Johnson, Mr Tello Theletsane and Ms Anita Lombard. This committee meets regularly to discuss UVPERSU's finances and budgets.

16. Attendance of online courses and webinars

Courses are attended regularly to stay abreast with matters pertaining to the workplace, as well as to improve skills and Ms Lombard also regularly attends courses and webinars in Labour Law.

In 2020, Ms Lombard attended an international online conference of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), hosted by a world-class Indian University. She is also a member of the ACU HR Community.

17. An expression of thanks

You, the members, are UVPERSU and we thank you for your support, cooperation, and loyalty. The Union and MC can only be as strong as your support and nothing more. We have no other choice than to be involved and it is everyone's social duty to participate and make contributions. We also thank you for the regular letters of support and gratitude - it makes our task worthwhile. You should guard the privilege to be involved with UVPERSU, with all you have, to ensure that you do not ever have to fulfil your duty without empowerment and remember:

"We achieve together".

18. Conclusion

It is clear from the above points that UVPERSU's sufficient and effective engagement with all parties on the three UFS campuses, contributes to UVPERSU's strive and success to reach our goals.

**DR HENK POTGIETER
CHAIRPERSON**



We listen to truly hear, we care through action and so we add value to the working environment. We achieve together!

Re mamedisisa hore re utlwe kannete, re tsotella ka diketso, mme ka mokgwa o jwalo re eketsa bohlokwa tikolohong ya tshebetso. Re fihlella mmoho!

Talk to us on **Skype or **MS Teams** anytime or send an email to lombarda@ufs.ac.za**

Please "like" our page on Facebook or visit our website, www.ufs.ac.za/uvpersu