

**REPORT ON**

**CAPE HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM  
AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF THE  
WESTERN CAPE SUMMIT**

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October 2006**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This report serves as an aide memoire to the historic summit of the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC) and the Provincial Government of the Western Cape which took place in Cape Town on 16 October 2006. This event was attended by senior officials of the Provincial Government of the Western Cape, including Premier Ebrahim Rasool and members of his Cabinet, and senior management and academic staff from the five universities which operate in the Western Cape.

The summit culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the Premier and the Vice-Chancellors. While described as a modest step forward, the signing of this document, together with the successful cooperative discussions between provincial government departments and the university planners held over the previous year, is indicative of the commitment to the development of a learning region with broad-based partnerships, mutual benefits and tangible outcomes.

The concept of a learning region and its value in addressing regional economic and social challenges was introduced by Premier Rasool in his opening address. He explained that the establishment of government / university partnerships is becoming a global trend - one that encourages the sharing of expertise and perspectives, and the unlocking of reservoirs of creativity in developing and implementing home-grown solutions to regional challenges and problems. In effect, the provincial government challenged the universities in the region to work with them in addressing the social and economic problems in the Western Cape. In his response, Professor Martin Hall, the Chair of CHEC, highlighted the willingness and the potential of the universities to respond to this challenge.

This report captures the key issues raised in these and other presentations at the summit foregrounding the terms and requirements of the developmental state and the developmental university as well as challenges to and guidelines for the development of sustainable government / university partnerships in the region. The report concludes by briefly outlining the key tenets of the Memorandum of Understanding.

**2. THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

The concept of the developmental state was introduced and explained in relation to the complex challenges faced by the Western Cape Provincial Government and its Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS) known as “iKapa Elihlumayo”.

## **2.1. Challenges facing the Western Cape**

A number of challenges facing the Western Cape were described in both the formal presentations and in delegates' responses to these. In his presentation, Premier Rasool highlighted some of the most important. Two of these are the twin challenges of unemployment and poverty. It was argued that in terms of the former, the youth of this region are one of the worst affected groupings. In addition, research indicates that 40% of the population of the Western Cape survives on under just R 4 000.00 per person per year.

Structural unemployment in South Africa has had wide-spread negative consequences - disillusionment, resentment and social instability. Delegates were warned that even if a 10% economic growth rate were to be achieved, unemployment would still be at unacceptable figures. It was argued that what is needed is not merely economic growth, but, rather, collective and creative strategic responses which will ensure robust growth that is widely shared so that the social pathologies associated with unemployment and poverty are addressed. Such responses need to ensure that confidence is restored in the people themselves as well as in the social institutions in which they participate. It was also argued that in addressing the challenges related to unemployment and poverty and in breaking the current vicious cycle of poverty, hopelessness and violence, the skills mismatch in the region needs to be solved and the employability thresholds shifted.

Another challenge – or rather, another set of challenges - facing the region are those related to transport. Here, it was argued that not only should transport systems be efficient, safe and affordable, they should also improve the economic efficiencies of the region and enable greater levels of social integration. The transport systems of the Western Cape currently present complex dilemmas for both officials in provincial departments and for academics – especially those in engineering faculties. Higher education institutions need to produce skilled graduates for this sector as well as to address a number of research questions inherent in these dilemmas.

A third challenge highlighted by Premier Rasool in his presentation relates to the importance of giving careful consideration to the environmental integrity of the region when addressing the other challenges. The Western Cape has a unique climate in South Africa and one that is likely to be adversely affected by climate change. It is essential, therefore, that the early warning signs be read and responded to so that the impact of climate change on activities such as agriculture are well understood and carefully monitored. In addition, challenges related to water and energy consumption as well as to human settlements need to be addressed with environmental considerations in mind.

The environmental challenges posed in this region should be regarded as providing opportunities to create new areas of knowledge through systematic and sustained research, to balance competing interests and to build new forms of employment. In addition, ensuring environmental integrity requires both a change in behaviour and that people accept the principle of paying now for benefits that will only accrue later.

While the Western Cape faces a number of environmental threats, this region is well positioned to meet these challenges: its unique position between two oceans and its abundance of indigenous fynbos forms a natural laboratory that attracts some of the best scientists in the world. Their presence here and interest in these areas is likely to ensure that a narrow utilitarian response to the challenges of the region will not go unnoticed.

Working towards greater social cohesion is yet another challenge to be addressed. While it might take two generations before this challenge is fully addressed, better understandings need to be developed through systematic and rigorous research so as to move away from the blaming culture and the 'us and them' dynamic frequently promoted in the popular media. In other words, it was argued that the development of better understandings of difference and diversity in the region will assist in the development of a public discourse which, in turn, will support new strategies for addressing this challenge.

## **2.2. The Provincial Government Development Strategy: “iKapa Elihlumayo”**

The Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS): “iKapa Elihlumayo” which envisions that by 2014 the Western Cape will be a sustainable ‘Home for All’ its citizens, provides a basis for regional collaboration and, therefore, the development of the Western Cape as a learning region.

In her presentation of the PGDS, Ms Nthato Gobodo began by outlining the vital statistics of the region providing a breakdown of the GDP and drawing a portrait of the main economic and poverty concentrations in relation to the ecosystems. In this way she emphasized that the PGDS has been based on the regional specificity of the Western Cape. She went on to identify the critical gaps and key issues taken into account by the provincial government in developing this strategy. Amongst these were poverty and unemployment, quality of life, the existence of the second economy, housing delivery and supply, and the skills mismatch. The importance of bridging the gap through the identification of scarce skills, innovation and thought-leadership, and research and development was highlighted.

The PGDS is viewed as the mechanism for placing the Western Cape on a new trajectory and shifting its development path towards a future of shared growth and integrated development. Ms Gobodo explained that the strategy is based on a shared vision of inclusive growth and prescribes to the triple bottom line approach to sustainable development. In doing so, it provides the foundation for a developmental state, inter-governmental collaboration and integrated development. Its underlying principle is that progress in improving social equity and inclusiveness for all Western Cape citizens, in tackling problems of social and economic exclusion, and environmental degradation and in making the Province an ideal place to live, work, play, study and visit are vital to the sustainable success of the Province.

The conceptual framework for the PGDS includes its vision, strategy, informants, programmes and projects. In addition, it is based on four key pillars: growth, equity, empowerment and environmental sustainability. In unpacking the thinking underlying these features of the PGDS, Ms Gobodo emphasized that equity, empowerment and environmental concerns are not just given equal weight to economic imperatives, but are seen as a necessary part of the economic imperative.

The eight strategic goals or outcomes of the PGDS guide the activities and interventions towards the shared growth necessary to achieve the iKapa Elihlumayo vision, while the infrastructure investment focus lays the foundation for the location, form and type of economic development.

The eight strategic goals or outcomes of the PGDS are:

1. Broadening economic participation through targeted skills development and higher rates of human, infrastructural and financial investment
2. Investing in efficient 'connectivity infrastructures' to stimulate and sustain economic growth (transport, energy and ICT)
3. Planning, building and managing effective public and non-motorised transport that provides access to all citizens of the Province, especially the poor and those disconnected from opportunities
4. Creating livable communities that foster the well-being of all residents (consistent with the ideals of sustainable human settlements)
5. Fostering resilient and creative communities that are interconnected through webs of social solidarity (bridging social capital)
6. Ensuring greater spatial integration embedded in a drive to protect and develop public places and the natural resource base (and overcoming apartheid spatial legacies)
7. Nurturing a culture of tolerance and mutual respect that harnesses the creativity / innovation dividend that stems from dealing explicitly with social-cultural influences and unequal power relations
8. Creating and protecting effective governance institutions which are able to harness the diverse energies of multiple interest groups and role players towards the shared goals of the PGDS.

Ms Gobodo concluded her comprehensive presentation by outlining key indicators for success and explaining the difference between the path-breaking, path-shaping and path-consolidating interventions of the PGDS. Particular attention was given to the importance of integrated transport as a path-breaking intervention and a priority focus.

In his response to Ms Gobodo's presentation of the PGDS, Professor Mark Swilling of the University of Stellenbosch congratulated the Province in moving beyond economic reductionism and recognising that economic growth is dependent on the wider social context and that there are tensions between the developmental state and the financial constraints within which it operates. In addition, he noted that the strategy takes into account the unique features of the Western Cape region, is aligned with the Provincial Spatial Development Strategy and focuses on the concept of a learning region.

Professor Swilling went on to highlight key absences in and challenges for the implementation of the PGDS. These are mentioned later in this report in connection with the challenges faced in developing and sustaining government / university partnerships that address the economic and social problems of the region.

### **3. THE DEVELOPMENTAL UNIVERSITY**

Presentations at the summit provided an overview of the higher education sector in the Western Cape and also suggested a new vision for these institutions in taking up the challenges of the developmental university.

#### **3.1. The higher education sector in the Western Cape**

Higher education as an economic sector in its own right was the focus of Professor Martin Hall's presentation. While acknowledging that the universities in the Western Cape have not yet developed clear performance indicators in this regard, Professor Hall

provided a number of statistics to support the argument that the higher education sector makes a substantial contribution to the economy of the region. For example, he reported that in 2005, four of the universities together offered 13 052 courses combined as 1 962 programmes, 2 000 of which led to full qualifications. In 2005, these four universities enrolled 85 385 students and achieved a healthy ratio between undergraduate and postgraduate students (67 647 undergraduate and 17 740 postgraduate students). In 2005, 20 402 qualifications were awarded at these institutions. In addition, Professor Hall referred to statistics related to staff (in 2005, these four universities employed at least 13 700 staff members) and expenditure (in 2005, these institutions spent R 4.4 billion in the local economy). In 2005, the four universities attracted more than R1 billion from the national treasury in the form of subsidies. In addition, further income was generated through approximately 10 000 international students.

While these statistics were acknowledged to be basic and do not include other forms of income and expenditure (such as that generated by families travelling to the region to attend graduation ceremonies), they provide some indication of the contribution made by the higher education sector and its strong position in responding to the challenges of the region and in playing a developmental role.

### **3.2. Re-imagining the role of higher education institutions**

In discussing what it might require to take up the developmental role envisaged, Professor Ahmed Bawa, the keynote speaker at the summit, argued that government / university partnerships are not merely about improving service delivery, but, additionally and significantly, they will encourage academics to re-imagine the role of universities. As important players in the national system of innovation, universities are well positioned to bring together academic knowledge so as to effect transformation and to galvanise the necessary capacity to work in the knowledge economy.

A number of key questions were raised in Professor Bawa's address. One of the most important focused on the impact of the developmental role on the current core activities of higher education – the production of high level human resources and the generation of new knowledge. In effect, the question posed was: How do the core activities of teaching and learning and research articulate with the development challenges highlighted above?

Professor Bawa argued that in the South African context, the higher education system takes on another role over and above those of teaching and learning and research. In addition to shaping intellectuals, including public intellectuals, higher education is also responsible for shaping the nation in that it makes a contribution to defining society, strengthening our new democracy and preparing the citizenry. While this role is recognised as important by universities in this country, the level of implementation and articulation requires closer examination presenting a challenge for the institutions and academics themselves.

In considering reasons for taking on a strong developmental role, Professor Bawa pointed to the state subsidies allocated to higher education institutions and the fact that many of these institutions refer to community engagement and partnerships in their mission statements. He believes that while a number of partnership projects are currently underway, some of these are little more than attempts to generate additional resources or third stream income. Taking on a stronger developmental role is one way in

which universities can respond to accusations that they are merely 'ivory towers' without direct relevance or close connections to the regions in which they are located.

Yet another reason for universities to engage in partnerships with government lies in the competition faced by higher education institutions in the context of the knowledge economy. The greater diffusion of knowledge production outside universities means that these institutions may no longer be the first port of call when potential partners require knowledge and / or specialised expertise. In effect, universities are beginning to lose their monopoly on knowledge.

In addressing the question as to how the developmental role might impact on the core activities of universities, Professor Bawa suggested that the possibilities of developing new modes of knowledge production need to be considered in partnerships and that, in doing so, universities could find themselves re-imagining their role.

Professor Bawa concluded his address by arguing that, in his view, South African higher education institutions, like the country itself, are in search of an identity. While the colonial roots of these institutions are still prevalent and their colonial heritage is still strong, there are a number of possible new identities from which to choose - ranging from intensely global to intensely local identities. In re-imagining a role for these institutions, it is useful to pose another question: "What is the knowledge project for South African higher education?" He suggested that in addressing this question, universities should move beyond aligning the South African knowledge system to the global system; rather, they should give more attention to the terms of knowledge production.

Finally, Professor Bawa stressed that being connected to the local is different to having a knowledge project and that the South African higher education system needs to assume responsibility for local knowledge production, even when (or, perhaps, especially when) working with international partners. He believes that government / university partnerships may be useful mechanisms in assisting academics to root their sense of responsibility and to explore a new identity. The work of building local legitimacy through responsive partnerships should not be seen as a constraint which negatively impacts on current core activities; rather, the establishment and maintenance of government / university partnerships should be viewed as opportunities to grow, to consolidate and to improve the quality of research and teaching activities as well as to build greater coherence within and beyond the universities.

### **3.3. Universities, Development and Civic Responsibility**

Professor Njabulo Ndebele of the University of Cape Town and Professor Brian O'Connell of the University of the Western Cape each gave ten minute presentations on "Universities, Development and Civic Responsibility".

In his presentation, Professor Ndebele argued that while all universities provide the space for intellectual and critical enquiry and contribute to the development of a critical skills base, the institutions in the Western Cape should consider the need for a differentiated system and work to address universal issues in local and specific contexts. He also argued that the notion of development is inseparable from that of freedom and that rather than universities looking for benchmarks and indicators, they should work to producing graduates who are social enablers.

In terms of civic responsibility, Professor Ndebele spoke of the need for higher education institutions to demonstrate a high level of self-reflection – both individually and as a sector. He argued that these institutions can no longer afford to compete against each other but need to work regionally in collaboration in attracting students, ensuring better access and planning outputs. In doing so, the universities need to address the question raised by Professor Bawa, “What is the knowledge project for these institutions?” In addition, Professor Ndebele suggested that the knowledge project of Africa be considered.

To conclude, Professor Ndebele raised further questions relating to collaborative planning. These included, “How do higher education institutions, provincial government and the City itself plan together?” “How do we have a conversation in this province?” “How do we begin to re-imagine our roles as higher education institutions?” “How do we enhance diversity?” and “How do we reflect the changes in teaching and research?” In effect, these are the challenges facing higher education institutions as they take on their role as development universities.

Professor O’Connell began his address by considering the ways in which people make decisions and understand their contexts and situations. He spoke about the use of heuristic devices in decision-making: the short cuts and stereotypes people use in understanding and responding to others and to organizations and institutions. In explaining this idea, Professor O’Connell said that universities, education and knowledge have evoked feelings of hostility amongst certain people in South Africa as they have been seen to be disconnected from ordinary people. Anti-intellectualism has resulted from bad experiences people have had with both apartheid education and the post-1994 outcomes-based curriculum. In addition, distinctions have been made between academic knowledge and relevant knowledge. In some cases, these distinctions have been reinforced by the physical and geographical location of universities.

Professor O’Connell referred to Castells, who writes that higher education lies at the heart of any country’s success, in arguing that it is essential that this schizophrenia be addressed and that higher education be reconnected to everything else in the world. Only in this way, he believes, will knowledge be both valued and better applied beyond the university.

#### **4. GOVERNMENT / UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS**

While sound reasons for taking on strong developmental roles were articulated by the key-note speaker, members of the Western Cape Provincial Government and the Vice-Chancellors of the regional universities, it is clear from both these presentations and the formal responses as well as the informal questions and comments from the floor that the implementation of these roles within government / university partnerships will present a number of challenges.

This section of the report summarises the constraints facing both the provincial government and the universities as they move towards the establishment of partnerships and the implementation of “iKapa Elihlumayo” and then outlines the guidelines offered for the development and strengthening of partnerships.

#### **4.1. Challenges for government / university partnerships**

In introducing the session entitled “Alignment with Scarce Skills and Growth Priorities and possible areas for collaboration”, Mr Ron Swartz of the Provincial Government spoke of the discomfort that government / university partnerships often invoke as a result of the inherent differences in the partners’ foci and roles. For example, while provincial government needs to focus on critical short-term pressures, academics tend to take a longer-term view and are reluctant to be driven by labour market needs. The effects of these differences are often exacerbated when the partners do not know each others’ contexts sufficiently well.

This point was highlighted by Professor Mark Swilling in his critique of the PGDS: he said a key absence in the strategy relates to the higher education sector, the extent of the knowledge capital invested in its institutions and how this radiates outward beyond the institutions – through innovation and through social movements, two important drivers in development undertaken by universities.

The extent of the networks in which these institutions operate was also highlighted by Mr Rob Woodward of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in his presentation on behalf of the institutional planners in the universities in the Western Cape. He stressed that universities are not only local institutions but also have strong national and international foci. He explained that, as national competencies funded by national rather than by provincial government, universities have national responsibilities. In addition, since academics are part of global disciplinary networks, their focus is often outward in predicting the shape of future knowledge.

Mr Woodward went on to speak of the range of existing partnerships enjoyed by universities – with industry, business, government and NGOs – as well as their relationships with professional bodies. While these partnerships and relationships introduce their own pressures and constraints, they point to the many areas of influence where universities have an impact.

These comments suggest there is a need for provincial government to better understand not only the contexts of and constraints facing higher education institutions, but also the current and potential value of their wider networks and operations.

Constraints relating to funding and planning were also highlighted in Mr Woodward’s presentation and further elaborated upon by other delegates. These constraints have considerable impact on the capacity and ability of higher education institutions to respond to the labour market. Responsivity requires that universities engage in multi-year planning, which includes research and the identification and acquisition of the necessary resources for the development of new learning programmes and / or the restructuring of existing curricula.

It was also pointed out that multi-year planning needs to be done in a context where the higher education sector as a whole anticipates only modest increases in enrolment figures. Given the decreases in state funding over the last ten years – including funding for capital projects - it is hardly surprising that some institutions feel that they have reached capacity and that there is little possibility of expansion without increased funding for permanent infrastructural development.

Insufficient attention to public sector investment and the means by which finances will be drawn in was also highlighted by Professor Swilling in his critique of the PGDS. He argued that “it’s a world of deals, a hustling world” and that there is much that both provincial governments and universities need to learn about how to access available finances. In addition, he argued that the PGDS does not consider how alternative sources of funding might be identified or how savings might be generated through greater efficiencies and through working smarter.

Comments from delegates suggest that the issue of funding is a larger and more complex question than merely accessing finances. For example, while one delegate pointed to the scale of urbanization and suggested that it is cities that provide resources, another suggested that more attention should be given to resourcing rural areas in order to stabilise these areas and restore the dignity of the people who live there.

Professor Swilling also pointed out that the neat alignments, relationships and linkages required by planning logic tend to disguise intellectual differences and contextualized subtleties. This means that local managers are left trying to respond to “two songsheets”. In addition, he pointed to inconsistencies in the strategic goals related to the four pillars of growth, equity, empowerment and environmental integrity that inevitably lead to further difficulties in implementation.

In his response to the PGDS, Professor Swilling was, in effect, demonstrating a set of critical roles for academics in government / university partnerships – roles which Premier Rasool had mentioned earlier in his introductory presentation, i.e. to engage in critical and dialectical conversation and to monitor, analyse and criticize. By providing such intellectual content and through developing public discourses, academics are able to assist governments to deepen their understandings of the challenges they face.

Further challenges to effective government / university partnerships and the development of a learning region as raised by delegates included the need to ensure alignment between national, provincial and local government in policies and practices, to invoke shifting trajectories in multi-year planning, and to include the private sector and large parastatals in planning exercises.

#### **4.2. Guidelines for the development of government / university partnerships**

Despite the constraints and challenges acknowledged above, the development of a learning region through government / university partnerships was welcomed by all role-players and a number of guidelines were offered for the development of these partnerships. For example, in his keynote address, Professor Bawa argued that it is important to consider the nature of partnerships and to develop a set of principles to guide their implementation. Firstly, he said, in order to achieve a mutual partnership, it is important to understand what is required from each partner and what kind of engagement is expected of them.

The importance of understanding the pressures under which the respective partners operate became an important theme in the afternoon sessions of the summit. In effect, this means that both sets of partners need to develop better understandings of each others’ contexts, and their associated constraints and possibilities. As pointed by Mr Rob Woodward of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, while the universities in this province are committed to a cooperative mode of thinking and working, they need to

engage in structured dialogue with the provincial government in a comprehensive mapping exercise. For example, the recently compiled enrolment projections and description of potential growth areas need to become the subject of mutual discussion and interrogation by all those involved.

Structured and on-going dialogue between the higher education institutions and provincial government will assist the universities to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the strategies and needs of the province and, simultaneously, will assist the provincial government to come to a fuller appreciation of the strengths, assets and constraints of the regional higher education institutions.

A second guideline offered by Professor Bawa related to the need for partners to increase the extent of participation in partnerships. This means not only that projects should reach into all levels of the higher education institutions and government departments, but also that projects should be jointly shaped at the outset and that their design and management processes should ensure that the necessary capacity for participation is built.

As already indicated in this report, an injection of resources is critical – and not only to the higher education institutions – to ensure that government / university partnerships are sustainable and translate into real returns that are of reciprocal benefit to both the Province and the universities. It is important to note that funding is needed to build both human capacity as well as for the development of infrastructure.

Finally, a comment from the floor highlighted the importance of monitoring and evaluating government / university development programmes in order to assess whether goals and objectives are met and to determine the effectiveness of partnerships.

#### **4.3. Areas for possible engagement and collaboration**

While specific areas for engagement and collaboration will need to be negotiated between individuals in both the government departments and the higher education institutions, possible areas for government / university partnerships can be identified in the PGDS. In this way, the PGDS acts as a strategic framework not only for collaboration and alignment but also for the development of a learning region where strategy can be transformed into interventions and products.

As suggested by Professor Swilling and others, it is in effecting application that universities can do much to support provincial government not only through critique - unpacking the political world, asking the difficult questions and making politicians uncomfortable – but also through the development and re-structuring of programmes and courses. While the provision of new learning programmes is not a quick solution to addressing scarce skills shortages, universities also modify existing programmes and offer short courses.

In her summary of the higher education offerings in relation to provincial priorities, Ms Judy Favish of the University of Cape Town argued that there is far greater alignment than anticipated. She explained that data gathered from the five regional institutions were organized into three categories: economic growth, other development priorities and scarce skills after which a 36-page document was developed in table format. This lists information on the provincial government's priority areas together with full qualifications,

short / continuing education courses and formal and informal research groupings found at all five of the regional universities.

While acknowledging that the product is not comprehensive, that there may be mismatches between curricula and particular skills or knowledge requirements, and that it would be important to drill down into the data, Ms Favish suggested that the findings generated are important in facilitating future planning. More specifically, the product may be used to create an awareness of the capacity of the higher education institutions to work in partnership with Province in certain areas.

In his presentation, Mr Brent Walters of the Western Cape Provincial Government pointed out that there are existing formal and informal collaboration and initiatives between higher education institutions and Departments of the Provincial Government in the Western Cape and that the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding seeks to strengthen these partnerships. In addition, an addendum to this document identifies (a) projects in which collaboration has been agreed upon, and which are being developed and implemented, and (b) projects in which possibilities for joint implementation can be explored.

In Category A, there are projects which relate to scarce skills development, cross-cutting issues and research and development, while in Category B there are projects which relate to cross-cutting issues, skills development, infrastructure, policy formulation and regulatory environment and research and development. These initiatives were formulated within the context of the PGDS and are aimed at facilitating and supporting the PGDS priorities and initiatives, while simultaneously building on the existing strengths of the universities. The list will be revised on an ongoing basis via the platform for facilitating structured engagement between clusters and sub-clusters in the provincial government and the higher education institutions.

Delegates' responses indicated that they viewed the two categories of collaborative projects as a good start to facilitating conversations and increasing alignment between the provincial government and the universities. A number of gaps were also identified.

## **5. CONCLUSION: THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

In the introduction to her presentation of the PGDS, Ms Nthato Gobodo referred to the sentence "Scientific discoveries arise from discourse" as used by Grisham in the television series *CSI Las Vegas*. It may be argued that the greatest success of the summit was in creating opportunities for discourse so that potential partners could get to know each other and better understand each other's contexts, constraints and strengths. In effect, both the summit and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in the last session of the day served to open up spaces for structured dialogue between role-players in provincial government and the higher education sector in the Western Cape.

The primary objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding are to:

- establish structures that enable the Western Cape higher education institutions and the Provincial Government to develop and implement shared strategies for advancing social and economic development;
- promote the Western Cape as a "Learning Region" which can be used to attract people to the region to study and contribute to the growth and development of the Western Cape province;

- facilitate the regular sharing of information on the plan of higher education institutions and the Provincial Government;
- develop a three-year plan to address the mutually agreed strategic initiatives; and
- strengthen the contribution of higher education to the provincial economy.

Hence this Memorandum of Understanding provides a framework for:

- facilitating alignment between the demand for scarce high level skills in the medium to long term and the supply of graduates particularly in relation to identified growth areas;
- establishing strategic partnerships to support the provision of continuing education courses to address critical scarce skills shortages in the short term;
- reflecting on university / Provincial Government partnerships and for systematizing and extending these best practices; and
- guiding the nature of collaboration between Higher Education Institutions and the Provincial Government around agreed strategic priorities.

In this way, the summit provided a basis for a new vision and possibilities for government / university partnerships, and a deeper understanding of their value and significance. In the conclusion to his presentation, Mr Rob Woodward said, "We would want to believe that higher education in the province has both the willingness and the flexibility to be able to move beyond the constraints of historical practices into a realm where they are prepared to enter into partnerships that are both challenging to the institutions and meaningful to the province. In seeking to make a meaningful contribution we would also hope to be able to embrace new modes of thinking, interaction and cooperation".

Finally, it is important to note that, as suggested by Professor Bawa, if the Western Cape is successful in its endeavours to develop government / university partnerships and a learning region, this would serve as a model for other regions in South Africa.