I take up Executive Deanship of the Faculty of Management and Law from a wealthy academic and research background. I completed my Bachelor of Arts Pedagogy [B.A.(Paed)] in 1986 and B.A Honours in Geography in 1987. As a geography educator by profession, holding a Masters of Arts Qualification from the Western Illinois University in the United States of America (awarded in 1993), I joined the University of the North in 1993 (Department of Geography). Since 1994 I taught Geography of Development to honours students in the former Department of Development Studies. In keeping with the focus of my Masters Qualification, I ultimately took a transfer to the former Department of Development Studies in 1998. During the transformation of the University of the North, I had an unprecedented opportunity to lead the Academic Unit of Development Studies which had no undergraduate qualification of its own to ensure that a new viable niche of Development Planning and Management is crafted. My Doctoral Qualification was awarded by the University of the North, ultimately, in 2004; and, I was allowed a rare opportunity to be the HOD since the establishment of the University of Limpopo in 2005.

My postgraduate research contribution and research output are immense; hence, I have been awarded NRF C3 rating in 2015. The most visible highlight of my contribution to postgraduate research is that one of the student I had guided through the Masters mini-Dissertation in the past is now a prolific full professor at the University of Limpopo. Indeed, the numbers of graduates one produces are significant, but what matters more is what they turn out to be in the scholarship arena because the essence of research is to guide others so they too may conduct independent research on their own. As for supervision of honours research projects, I have lost count because there are so many that have passed through my supervision since 1993; and, they are presently holding significant positions in the public sector and beyond. I have also
supervised a handful of Masters of Development (MDev) mini-Dissertations as well as seventeen (17) Full Research Dissertations and a couple (2) of Doctoral Thesis.

Additionally, I have published four (4) book chapters, one (1) with Macmillan Press, one (1) occasional paper, four (4) subsidy-earning Conference Proceedings papers, nineteen (19) subsidy-earning journal articles and twenty-one (21) peer reviewed article in international scientific journals. One milestones that I have achieved, which all professor desire, is being rated C3 by the National Research Foundation over 2015-2020. That means, I am among the very few Established Researchers at the University of Limpopo with a sustained recent record of productivity in the field of Development Planning who is recognized by peers as having (a) “produced a body of quality work, the core of which has coherence and attests to ongoing engagement with the field”; and (b), “demonstrated the ability to conceptualize problems and apply research methods to investigating them”. So, I take up the Executive Deanship from a strong academic and scholarship position that my position-making is informed by over 22 years of experience at the University of Limpopo. Having cleared my personal profile as a Full Professor in Development Planning, I will hereunder provide commentaries of my beliefs and intentions relating to the Faculty’s actions, functions and behaviours in Teaching and Learning, Research, Community Engagement and Governance.

As Executive Dean, my leadership and management philosophy is drawn from the Vision of the University of Limpopo; and, it cannot be business as usual. I believe that UL2020 Goal 7 shall require a serious philosophical reorientation so that there may be fissure between policy intent and practice. The Faculty of Management & Law holds the potential to deliver the expertise, knowledge and skills that South Africa need in order to successfully drive national socio-economic transformation that is engendered through rurality and, inescapably, women empowerment. These ideals require a concerted multi-disciplinarity, for which the Faculty is specially positioned to provide, from the specialisms of accountancy, taxation, financial management, environmental accounting, auditing, law, legality, stability, order, micro/macroeconomics, public services, business management, human resources management and development planning. The Faculty should craft niche areas of specialisms that are multi-disciplinary because real life requires applied social research that is guided by pragmatic purpose;
and, conventional disciplinary silos have continued to produce half-hearted solutions. As the University of Limpopo’s motto has it, solutions for Africa are not a given, they require concerted effort that is creative, imaginary and innovative. The Faculty of Management and Law has an exceptional possibility to deliver milestone; and, my business is to seek for a collective that establishes and sustains an enabling governance environment to encourage and support accountable learning conversations, academic freedoms and excellence as well as professionalism. Philosophically, I believe that a Faculty which is consciously established into a learning organization through free learning conversations, inclusive of both Staff and Students, should provide a fertile ground for breeding responsible leaders, managers and practitioners who would take progressive action for societal transformation at all scales of their existence. Inculcating a culture of free learning conversations should ensure that Academic Staff lead by example so that the same values are acquired by Students for life-long learning as prescribed by the University of Limpopo’s Teaching and Learning Policy. I hold that adoption of a Student-centric Approach in the conduct and governance of the Academic Enterprise is a non-option. For the Academic Leadership (HODs, Directors and Executive Dean) to gain confidence of the Staff and Students, we need to adhere to a flat, flexible developmental bureaucratic governance and transformational managerialism, rather than the discredited autocracy that supresses open-mindedness, creativity, measured risk-taking, boldness, transformational leadership and genuine criticism. The Faculty of Management and Law is part of the University of Limpopo and a democratic South Africa whose Supreme Law upholds human rights and dignity as inviolate. In five years, the Faculty of Management and Law should be buzzing with learning democratic conversations and noises as a learning organization that inculcate a culture of life-long learning for both Staff and Students.

However, these ideals do not happen automatically; to this extent, my role in Executive Deanship is to lead the Faculty in finding avenues for ensuring that the Academic (Teaching and Learning) Plan, Research Plan and Community Engagement Policies of the University of Limpopo take pragmatic effect. First, I will seek to guarantee the University Executive Management that all the Qualifications on offer in the Faculty meet the minimum requirements set by Council on Higher Education (CHE) and
Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET), for quality and standards. Training of academics as teachers in assessment and moderation should strengthen the Faculty’s commitment to Best Practice in the conduct of the Academic Enterprise. In this way, together with the support of Academic Staff in acquiring higher Qualifications as provided in UL2020 Goal 3, the Faculty should serve the interests of Goal 1 of the UL2020. At the minimum, the Faculty should ensure that each Module has an up-to-date Subject/Module File as provided for by the Faculty Strategic Plan, as approved by Senate. We should all enforce Best Practice Teaching and Learning, foster compliance with the NQF Exit Levels along, among other instruments, the Bloom’s Taxonomy, for Quality and Standards. Lecturers and Students, equally, are responsible for guaranteeing themselves and the University Executive Management of quality teaching and learning. HODs have a duty to lead their Departments in organizing training for Academic Staff as teachers, assessors and moderators in accordance with the advice of the Council on Higher Education’s Quality Enhancement Project. There is no wisdom in training and producing thousands of graduates and then undermine the worth of their qualifications by pre-mature closure and loss of accreditation of the qualification. Loss of accreditation is a foreseeable self-selection; and, the Faculty should strive at all times to at least meet the minimum standards.

Successful intervention in pursued of the UL2020 Goals 1 and 3 should strategically create the potential for enhanced opportunity of broadening the pool of researchers among Staff and Postgraduate Candidate, as entailed in Goal 5 relating to the University of Limpopo research standing and status. I also think that there is a need for the Faculty to seriously take up the opportunities provided for in the Research Development Grant (RDG) to train Staff as Supervisors. Given that the DoHET provides for slower growth of the intake at undergraduate level in the Business and Management field, it is important for the Faculty to optimally exploit the opportunity to grow its intake and throughput rate in the Postgraduate Qualifications. The DoHET’s prediction is that postgraduate growth rate would be negative in the next few years; and, the Faculty will require dedicated interventions to ensure that such a trend is avoided, especially given that the proportion of postgraduate registration at the University is about eight percentage points below the national average of the sector.
As the Research Leadership of the Faculty, Full Professor have a duty to support other Supervisors through co-supervision in order that all may learn and apply knowledge about the separation of NQF Exit Levels 9 and 10 in order to ensure Quality and Standards are maintained at the highest levels of Dissertation and Thesis production. I look forward to a Faculty wherein the Higher Degrees Committees are strengthened in Departments and Schools to the extent that the discipline-based authority is respected and that at all levels there is value adding to Research Proposals. I encourage collaborative research and extensive publication. The question that each Full Professor should ask of himself/herself is: how can I serve the University of Limpopo through the collective expertise and experiences during my prime as established researchers? I think that Full Professor should embark on a process of mobilization of the Faculty to ensure that there is a noisy buzz about research, publication and completion of higher postgraduate qualifications. Full Professors should be able to establish a cohort of disciples that would seek to emulate or surpass their milestones. Researchers, especially Full Professors, should perpetually seek for fellowship and citations by others. As a result, they hold an exceptional potential to influence and provide excellent role models in research and academia. These sentiments arise from my personal perspective as one of the Full Professors at the University of Limpopo since 2012. I have understood this position to mean that a Full Professor at this University has to be developmental because being aloof as an oasis of research excellence is inadequate under the present circumstances that require progressive academic transformation. Full Professors at the University of Limpopo have a duty to provide transformational leadership in research and teaching. A decision whether to be developmental or not is indeed an individual Professor’s self-selection, but I cannot imagine any single Full Professor being satisfied with their own self-interested productivity.

There are several UL2020 and IAPP Goals that are relevant to Full Professors, but I believe that in the Faculty of Management and Law Goal 5 is paramount. I will encourage Full Professor to focus on Goal 5: Improving the University’s research Standing and Status, whose Strategic Objective is to achieve a significantly expanded involvement of UL Academic Staff in research, resulting in increased research output. No other Member of the Faculty would drive this Goal and Strategic Objective than
Full Professors. The Faculty of Management & Law may not have the largest number of Full Professors, but it can deliver the largest research output in the University. Again, the question for each Full Professor to ask of themselves is: how else can I, as a Full Professor, serve the University of Limpopo through the actions, functions and behaviours of the Faculty of Management and Law?

As Executive Dean, I believe that the Faculty should judiciously temper with the teaching load of Full Professors in order to take a pragmatically verifiable productive bias towards research and postgraduate research supervision. HODs have a duty, in collaboration with Full Professor in their Departments, to ensure that Full Professors have a semester or quarter that is dedicated as a research-driven space, confirmed through relevant research output and postgraduate deliverables. In creating such spaces, Departments should find ways of drawing Masters Candidates or Research Assistants into tutoring, which allows for skills transfers in addition for alleviating the consultation and marking workload for Full Professors. My role in the Executive Deanship, will be to create an enabling environment for Full Professors to drive Gaol 5 and its Strategic Objective. By their nature and definition, no Full Professor can wait to be forced to conduct their employ as Established Researchers in a befitting, legal and lawful manner. Hence, I expect, perhaps require, Full Professor in the Faculty of Management & Law to: Publish a minimum of three (3) articles per annum; Co-author and publish a minimum of another seven (7) articles per annum; Publish a minimum of one (1) article in high impact journal per annum; Carry a total supervision load of fifteen (15) Masters Dissertation and Doctoral Theses annually, without any exceeding the maximum duration allocated (taking responsibility of identifying Postgraduate Candidates who are adequately prepared to succeed at the highest standards of research); and, Launch subsidy-earning Conferences and/or collaborate by supporting the existing ones and assisting Postgraduate Candidates to submit papers for publication in the subsidy-earning Conference Proceedings; and, edit, publish and apply for accreditation of the existing journals in the Faculty and/or register new ones for the same purpose. If Full Professors hold such a mutual understanding and are committed to attendant actions, functions and behaviours, the Faculty of Management and Law should easily produce a guaranteed minimum of 100 subsidy-earning research units annually, inclusive of that for throughput of Masters Dissertations and
Doctoral Theses. That is the Faculty I envision for the next five years; and, urgent action is needed to refine the governance because it is a critical determinant, denominator as well as a cross-cutting and overarching control variable for the success of the Academic and Research Enterprise.

I believe that there is no need to reinvent the wheel because the University’s five values, as pronounced in the UL2020 and IAPP, are benign. I am committed to the five Values of the University of Limpopo as pronounced in the Council-approved UL2020: Accountability wherein each member of staff is answerable for their actions or inactions, functions or dysfunctions and behaviours or misbehaviours; Transparency wherein commitment to “a high degree of debate, discussion and consultation” on all actions, functions and behaviour are pivotal to the Faculty’s existence as a Learning Organization; Integrity wherein actions and interactions are characterized by honesty, fairness and principled decision-making processes, undergirded by care and respect for human dignity, as well as separation of issues from persons; Academic Freedom wherein Staff’s and Students’ Right to question and criticize any action and function of the Faculty is inviolate, except for deliberate and malicious intent to slander and libel; and, Excellence and Professionalism wherein all Staff and Students undertake to “assiduously honour all norms and standards” as well as commit to upholding the highest standards of professionalism and excellence in all actions and functions, especially in respect of Teaching and Learning, Research, Community Engagement, Governance and Administration. For the Faculty to become an honest and real learning organization, all Leadership should live by these values without exception. Hence, I will continue to relentlessly advise Directors and HODs to commit and uphold the five Values of the University of Limpopo at all times without exception. I advise that Directors’ daily operations be unconditionally steeped in Accountability, Transparency, Integrity, Academic Freedom as well as Excellence and Professionalism. Academic Units should be contested spaces by their nature; and, anything else becomes indoctrination. Given that the Faculty should strive to produce Leaders and Managers who are committed to the ideals of innovativeness, imagination and creativity, adherence to the five Values is not optional. We should open up the Academic Units as public spaces for free conversations and seek for collectivism because a Good Leader can never lose followers in fear. I strongly believe that such
a model of governance will equally free Full Professor to take their legitimate spaces as Research Leadership of the Faculty to serve Goal 5 of the UL2020.

In keeping with the UL2020 Goals 4 and 6 for integration of teaching, research and community engagement, I believe that the Faculty needs to strengthen the work of the Legal Aid Clinic, enhance the coverage of the Short-Learning Programmes at TGSL and refine the Unit as a Business School of national acclaim, support the Africa Research Centre in the School of Accountancy. These Academic Units provide the possibility for the Faculty to continue with invaluable academic services to the community. However, these operations need to be factored as part of the allocation of duties so that Staff involved therein are not overly burdened with impossible workloads. I will set out to assess these and such other informal activities of community engagement in order to establish the nature of interventions required to enhance their effectiveness and visibility. I believe that the community engagement activities of these Academic Units should be structured in a manner that they are codified in forms that serve as drivers for UL2020 Goal 6; and, publicised as material for both teaching and learning as well as research. The latter should equally provide invaluable feedback for the enhancement of community engagement activities, thereby serving UL2020 Goal 4. As Executive Dean, I will lead the Faculty in establishing platforms such as own scientific journals or such other publications for codification of the community engagement activities in line with the interests of UL2020 Goals 4 and 6, as prescribed.

My orientation is to articulate the Vision and Values of the University in an appealing manner to mobilize all Members of the Faculty so that we can all be purposeful and full of direction in the daily activities, functions and behaviours. On my part, I will do everything possible to ensure that the Faculty becomes a highly noisy democratic but effectively productive public academic space; and, under my Executive Deanship, the Faculty shall never play second fiddle to any other. For this and other reasons, I will shortly sign a performance contract and ensure that the same if done by Directors, HODs, Professors and Lecturers. As a minimum, Directors and HODs should hold regular School Boards and Departmental Meetings, with Minutes and Attendance Registers. Also, Directors and HODs are Members of Senate and I expect them to
unfailingly communicate Senate Decisions to the Schools and Departments in order that the Faculty is well informed as a meter of principle. Executive Dean too shall convey Notices and Decisions of EMC, ECS, Deans Committee and such other Committees to the Faculty, except for those that have no bearing to the actions, functions and behaviours of the Faculty as envisaged through the UL2020 and IAPP. Finally, and as a matter of emphasis, I envision the Faculty of Management & Law becoming a Learning Organization wherein a Culture of Multifaceted Learning Conversations is inculcated and a search for Academic Excellence is perpetual and habitual, inclusive of Students. In this way, the Faculty should be characterized by open, frank and free conversations that can ensure that as a collective, the Faculty would grow in Intelligence and “Love of Wisdom”.

Signed:  
Professor Johannes Tsheola, Executive Dean  
Faculty of Management & Law