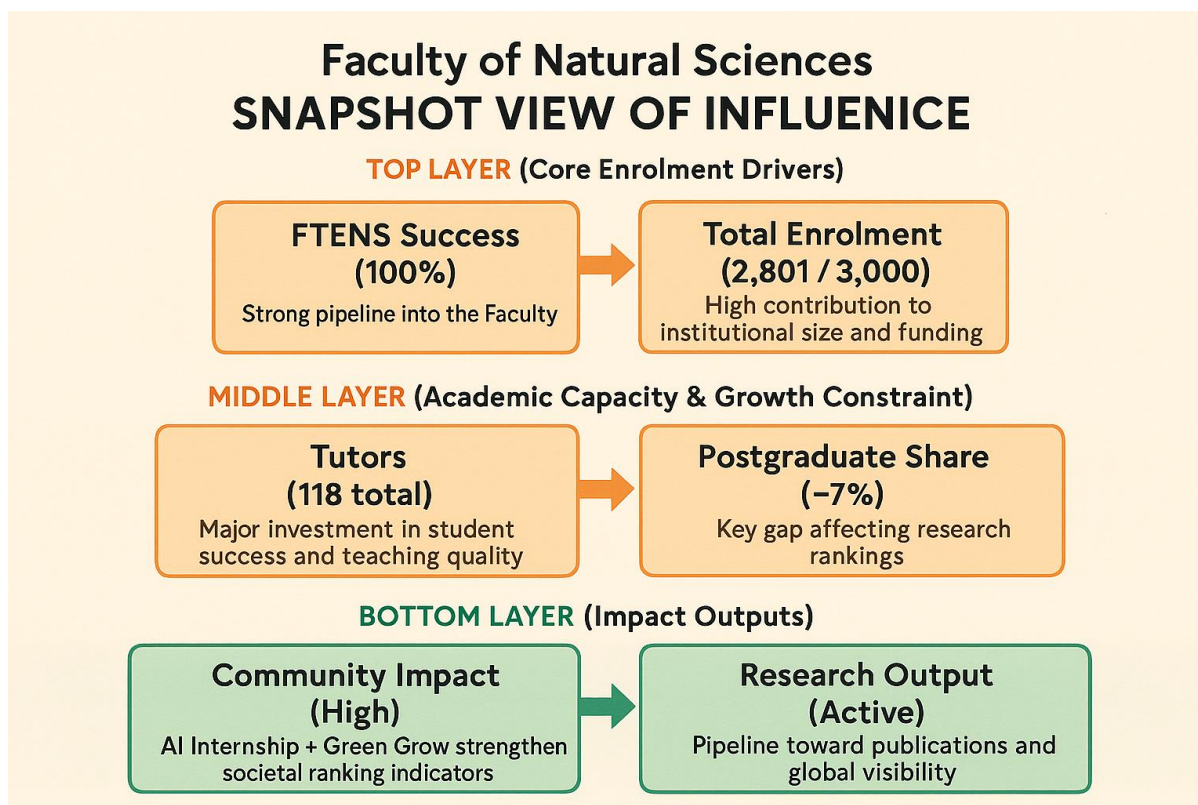


FACULTY OF NATURAL SCIENCES

NEWSLETTER: APRIL 2026

Albert Thembinkosi Modi, Executive Dean



1. Executive Summary

The Faculty of Natural Sciences (FNS) recorded a **strong and encouraging start to the 2026 academic year**, reflected in both enrolment performance and academic development initiatives.

The Faculty registered **2,801 students against a target of 3,000 (93.4%)**, successfully **meeting its FTENS (First Time Entering Students) target**, which confirms sustained demand and effective undergraduate recruitment strategies. [[Faculty Re...April 2026 | Excel](#)]

Despite marginal shortfalls due to structural constraints—particularly reduced returning undergraduate numbers and limited postgraduate intake—the Faculty remains **academically robust and growth-oriented**.

Key Success Highlights

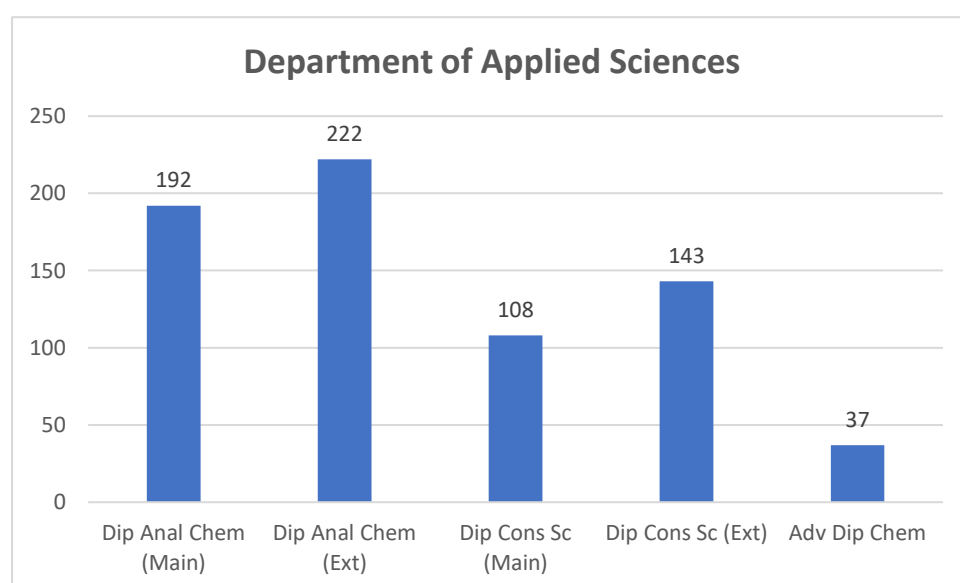
- **Successful FTENS intake**, confirming strong undergraduate demand
- Deployment of **118 tutors (85 externally funded + 33 faculty-funded)** to strengthen academic support
- Active **teaching and learning innovations** across departments, supported by tutors
- Continued **research engagement on national and global platforms**
- Positive contribution to **university research outputs**
- Launch of **Data Science and Artificial Intelligence Internship (Phase 2)** with NTG Solutions
- Expansion of **Green Grow programme** with multidimensional student development initiatives
- Strengthened alignment to **community engagement, sustainability, and student employability**

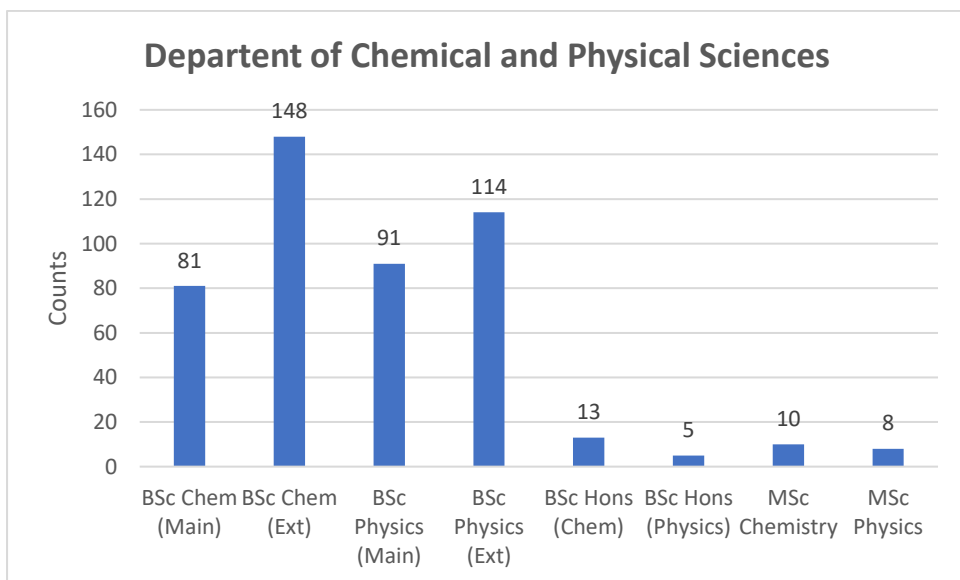
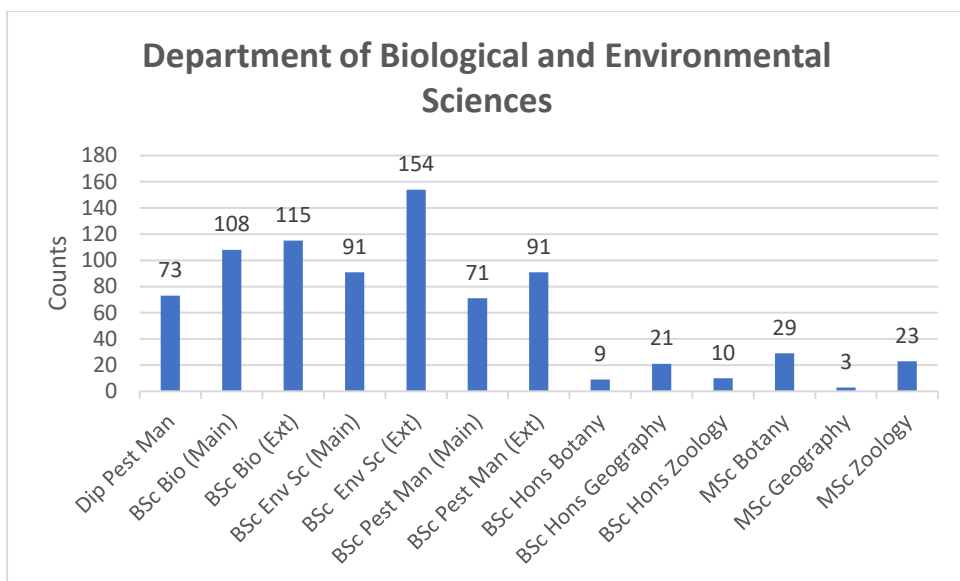
The Faculty is therefore **well-positioned to consolidate its teaching excellence, expand postgraduate enrolments, and deepen its societal impact.**

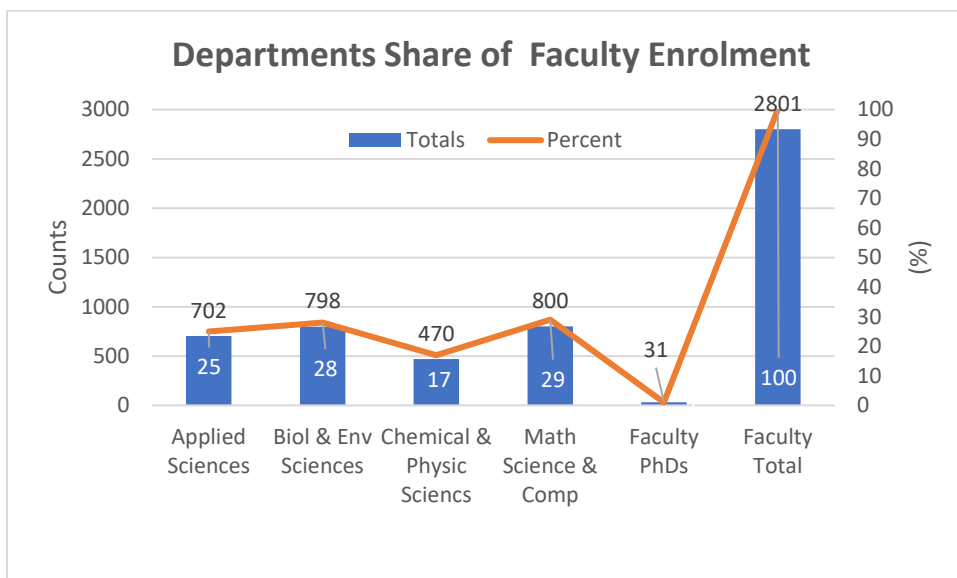
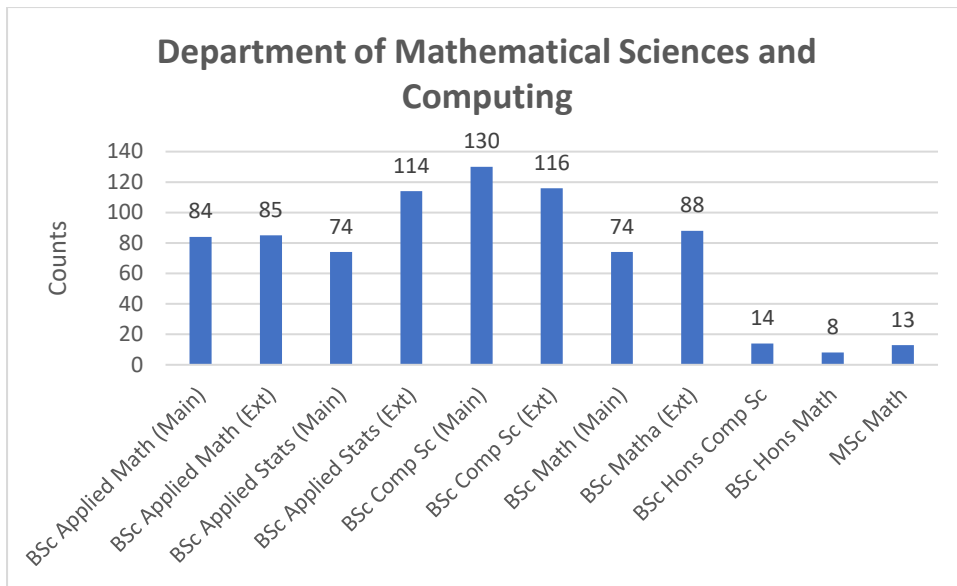
2. Faculty Enrolment Overview

The Faculty achieved **2,801 registrations**, distributed across departments as follows:

Department	Enrolment	% Contribution
Mathematical Sciences & Computer Science	800	29%
Biological & Environmental Sciences	798	28%
Applied Sciences	702	25%
Chemical & Physical Sciences	470	17%
Total Faculty	2,801	100%







Management implications:

- Strong enrolment base driven by **Mathematics, Computer Science, and Biological Sciences**
- Continued **underperformance in Chemical & Physical Sciences**
- Growth constrained by:
 - Exclusion of non-performing returning students
 - Limited postgraduate intake

3. Teaching and Learning

3.1 Tutorial Support and Capacity Development

The Faculty received a **University Capacity Development Grant** to appoint **85 tutors**, complemented by an additional **33 tutors funded internally**, bringing the total to **118 tutors**.

This represents a **significant institutional investment in student success**.

3.2 Faculty Board Resolution

The Faculty Board has resolved to:

- **Rigorously evaluate the impact of tutorials** on student success
- Apply **recognised teaching and learning models** to:
 - Strengthen relationships between **lecturers, tutors, and students**
 - Improve academic performance and throughput

3.3 Teaching Innovation

Encouragingly:

- Academic staff across departments are **reporting innovative teaching practices**
- Tutors are playing a **critical collaborative role** in:
 - Academic support
 - Student engagement
 - Enhancing learning outcomes



**Biostatistics 102 Lecturer
Established Innovative
Tutorial Sessions for Over
100 Class Size**

Dr Ruffin Mpiana Mutambayi is excited.
He has a strong tripartite alliance with girl
tutors - delivering services everyday of the
week with no qualms

Management implications:

The Faculty is shifting toward a **data-driven and evidence-based teaching model**, with tutorials positioned as a **central intervention for student success and retention**.

4. Research and Innovation

Although April marks the **early phase of Term 2**, and it is premature to quantify full research output:

4.1 Current Observations

- Faculty researchers remain **active on national and international platforms**
- Ongoing research activities indicate **continued scholarly engagement**

4.2 Outlook

The Faculty anticipates:

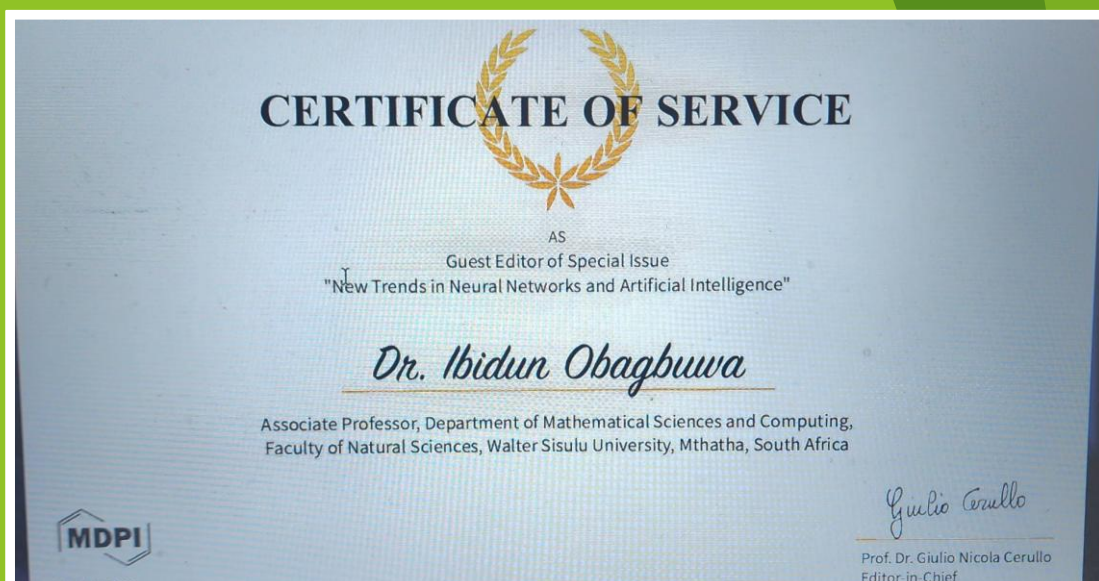
- Increased **publication outputs** in the coming months
- Contributions toward:
 - **Research award targets** (minimum of 2 research points)
 - **Internationalisation goals**

4.3 Contribution to Institutional Research

The Faculty continues to make a **positive contribution to university-wide research performance**, maintaining its role as a **key academic driver**.

NOTABLE APRIL RESEARCH OUTPUTS

- **Ibidun Obagbuwa et al.** The designing of a transparent hybrid machine learning framework for water leak detection: a systematic review. *Front. Big Data*, 24 April 2026
- **Inam Yekwayo et al.** Global Biodiversity Framework Targets Can Drive Action on Insect Declines, But Lack Robust Indicators to Prove Their Effectiveness. *Conservation Letters*, 2026; 19:e70025.
- **Njabulo Gumede et al.** Synthesis, spectroscopic characterization, antibacterial activity, and computational studies of (E)-4-benzyl-6-(4-chlorophenethyl)-2-(2-oxo-2-phenylethyl)pyridazine-3(2H)-one. *Journal of Molecular Structure*. 1368, 146236



5. Community Engagement and Strategic Partnerships

5.1 Data Science and Artificial Intelligence Internship (Phase 2)

A major highlight in April was the **launch of Phase 2 of the Data Science and AI Internship**, in collaboration with **NTG Solutions**.



MoU With NTG Solutions On Track To Deliver Second Cohort of Unemployed Graduates From April 2026: Agreement to Prioritize FNS Graduates

Strategic impact

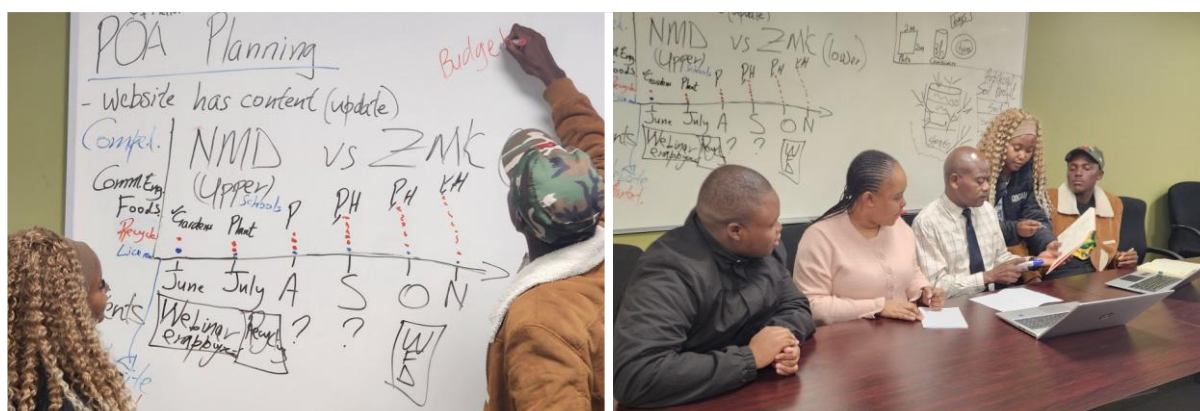
- Targets **at least 12 unfunded postgraduate students**
- Provides:
 - Critical **digital and IT skills**
 - Opportunities for **income generation and employability**
- Aligns with:
 - Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)
 - Student livelihood development

5.2 Green Grow Programme Resumes

The **Green Grow initiative**, focused on **student development and sustainability**, held its **first management meeting of 2026**, resulting in the approval of a **multidimensional programme**:

Key Strategic Pillars

1. **Entrepreneurship Development**
 - Full participation in **ENACTUS**
 - Promoting student-led ventures
2. **Environmental Sustainability**
 - Campus-wide **recycling initiatives**
 - Environmental awareness campaigns
3. **Food Security and Sustainability**
 - Development of **campus gardens (NMD and ZMK)**
 - Expansion to:
 - Schools
 - Community households
 - Focus on **value chain development**
4. **Student Wellness and Employability**
 - Preparing students for **employment before graduation**
 - Emphasis on **soft skills and career readiness**



Green Grow is evolving into a flagship Faculty programme

Strategic impact

Green Grow is evolving into a **flagship Faculty programme**, integrating:

- Academic development
- Entrepreneurship
- Sustainability
- Community engagement

6. Strategic Academic Development Opportunities

6.1 Programme Expansion: Biological & Environmental Sciences

The Faculty is exploring the introduction of new streams in:

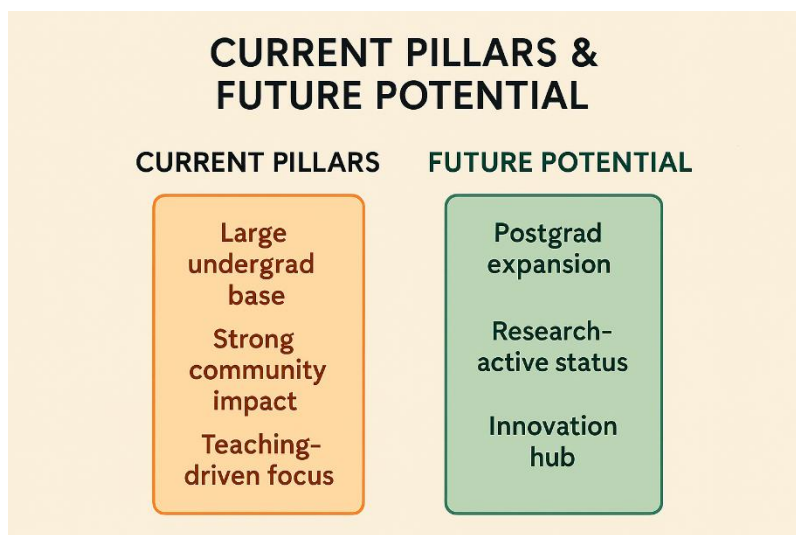
- **Agricultural Sciences**
 - Sustainable agriculture
 - Food security systems
 - Rural development
- **Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)**
 - Traditional ecological knowledge
 - Ethnobotany and medicinal plants
 - Climate adaptation

These initiatives align with:

- National development priorities
- Rural economic transformation
- The Faculty's community engagement mission

7. Key Strategic Focus Areas (2026–2030)

1. **Enhancing Student Success**
 - Strengthen tutorial impact through monitoring and evaluation
 - Improve retention and throughput rates
2. **Postgraduate Growth**
 - Expand MSc and PhD enrolments
 - Secure funding and increase supervision capacity
3. **Curriculum Innovation**
 - Introduce new programmes in:
 - Data Science, AI
 - Agriculture
 - Indigenous Knowledge Systems
4. **Research Development**
 - Increase publication output
 - Strengthen global research collaborations
5. **Community and Industry Engagement**
 - Scale internship programmes
 - Expand Green Grow impact



8. Conclusion

The Faculty of Natural Sciences continues to demonstrate **resilience, innovation, and commitment to academic excellence**, despite structural constraints.

The progress observed in:

- **student support interventions,**
- **teaching innovation,**
- **research engagement,** and
- **community impact initiatives,**

provides confidence that the Faculty is moving in the **right strategic direction**.

As we enter the critical academic period, I wish to **encourage both staff and students** to remain focused on the **immediate priority of the semester — examinations**.

Let us approach this period with:

- Discipline
- Commitment to excellence
- A shared sense of purpose

I urge all members of the Faculty to continue being **model representatives of Walter Sisulu**, upholding the values of **academic integrity, hard work, and community responsibility**.

Together, we will not only achieve our targets but also strengthen the Faculty's role as a **driver of knowledge, innovation, and societal transformation**.

 Advance the governance of Indigenous Health Knowledge Systems as sovereign, community - owned economic infrastructure, while formalising the rights, recognition, and authority of Indigenous health practitioners and knowledge holders.

 Scale research, bioscience, ICT, manufacturing, and innovation systems that transform Indigenous knowledge into validated products, services, technologies, and scalable healthcare solutions.

