



Public Statement

TERMINATION OF DR ALBERT SCHRAM AS VICE CHANCELLOR OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY FOR SERIOUS MISCONDUCT AND BREACH OF CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

The Unitech Council, made a unanimous decision on 15th February 2018, to terminate, with immediate effect, Dr. Albert Schram as Vice Chancellor, for serious misconduct and breach of contract of employment. The Council consists of very learned people of standing in the society hence the decision was made after considering all the materials and following due process as follows:

- On 19 January 2018, Council made a unanimous decision to charge Dr. Schram with 21 allegations. As per the term of his contract of employment, Dr. Schram was given seven (7) working days to respond to the allegations. During the term of his suspension, he was allowed to access his office to prepare his reply although his powers as VC were suspended.
- Council also suggested to Dr. Schram to consider resigning quietly if he considered the allegations serious. He refused to do so.
- On 30 January 2018, Dr. Schram submitted his response to the Council through the Registrar.
- The materials constituting the allegations and responses were forwarded to a private lawyer for an independent legal advice. The advice was furnished on time.
- Council reconvened on 15 February 2018 at 9:30am:
 - As is the custom of all personnel matters, which are considered confidential, some Council Members including the Students' representatives, were excluded from the deliberation of this matter. Council had 2 and a 1/2 uninterrupted hours perusing the materials before them. Thereafter, the independent lawyer was called in for an hour to brief Council and clarify questions pertaining to his advice.
 - Dr. Schram was then called in to say anything he wished to say in addition to his written response and also clarify issues Council Members had.
 - Council then took another 2 hours to deliberate on each of the allegations against the evidence and responses.
 - The Meeting concluded around 5:30pm with the resolution to terminate Dr. Schram for Cause.

Except for a few concessions and dismissals, the Council unanimously upheld the charges in its entirety. For the benefit of the stakeholders and the public, the following are amongst the many allegations that were sustained: -

1. Non-provision of Verified Academic Credentials

The issues pertaining to the authenticity of Dr. Schram's academic credentials clouded his entire term in office as VC. It was an issue that led to a student unrest in 2012 and a subsequent formal Inquiry by late retired Justice Mark Servua (Sevua Inquiry). The Sevua Inquiry did not resolve the merits of the issues and hence questions still lingered. Dr. Schram gave an undertaking to the Sevua Inquiry that the originals of his academic credentials were left back in Europe so he'd procure them when he next travelled to

Europe in February 2013. He failed to produce the credentials although he travelled to Europe each year since then.

When Dr Schram's contract was renewed for another term in 2014 under the leadership of Sir Nagora Bogan as Chancellor, the Council, cognizant of the unresolved issues pertaining to his credentials, made it mandatory that the renewal of the contract was conditional upon him furnishing his verified credentials to the Registrar. He failed to do so, hence the charge 3 years later.

It was put to Dr. Schram that his academic credentials became a recurring issue and required further verification because of the anomalies discovered with the certificate copies he provided in 2012 and his CV, such as: -

- The Doctoral Certificate copy he provided differs in format, design and logo to the one issued by the same institution –European University Institute (EUI). When two copies of EUI doctoral certificate samples were produced in front of him to compare against his own, he appeared stunned and lost for answers.
- There is a citation of “University of Harvard” on the doctoral certificate instead of “Harvard University”. Dr. Schram responded that it was a clerical error – a clerical error that appeared on a formal doctoral certificate and endorsed by the Principal of EUI?
- Dr. Schram claims to have obtained his PhD in 1994 whereas according to an official graduation ceremony published by EUI, he graduated ten years later in October 2004. Dr. Schram responded that during those days, there wasn't any graduation so he attended a graduation in 2004. But then, his name appears on the official 2004 doctoral degree conferral list.
- Dr. Schram claims in his CV to have obtained his Masters in “Political History” whereas formal documentation shows he obtained his masters in “History”.
- Dr. Schram claims in his CV that he obtained a PhD in “Economic and Business History” whereas formal documents show a Albert Schram graduating with a PhD in “History and Civilization”.
- In his CV, he claims to have commenced his masters program straight after secondary school, and in the third year into his masters program, he commenced his bachelors program in another university, 50 kilometers apart. He claims to have graduated on the same day from both universities with masters and bachelors. He doesn't have a copy of his masters certificate. His explanation is that there were no graduation ceremonies in Europe during those days –but no certificate?
- In a CV he produced in 2011 when he applied for Unitech VC, he claims to have commenced his PhD studies in 1989, whereas in 2013, after his credentials were called into question, he changed the date to 1990 as the date of commencement of his PhD.He also claims this as a clerical error –a clerical error by an historian who claims to be efficient and very particular with details, let alone this being his CV to convince the appointing authority of Unitech.
- His work history periods and places overlap in many respects.

In his written response, Dr. Schram provided and relied on the same questionable copies he provided in 2012 and demanded Council to accept it and make this issue go away. During the verbal hearing, he claimed that 7 days was insufficient and requested more time, about 2 weeks, to procure those documents. Council put to him that he had 5 years since the issue first arose to produce his credentials, let alone this being a mandatory condition of his renewed contract. He then reacted that he could provide same within 10 minutes. He returned after 10 minutes with some copies of documents, the same ones he previously provided, but this time mischievously dated them (with a pen) to 2015, which raised more questions than answers to the issue.

Council considered Dr Schram's behavior as not only a serious breach of a mandatory condition of his contract, but deceitful. He not only disrespected Council but demeans the Office of the Vice Chancellor. Council also formed the view that there are potential

criminal implications as well, including academic fraud and benefiting by false pretenses, which requires further action by appropriate authorities.

The Office of the Vice Chancellor of Unitech is a public office created by statute and those who occupy this office must be beyond reproach, especially their academic credentials, because they are entrusted to run a higher education institution that teaches standards and confers authentic academic credentials. We cannot allow a VC whose own qualifications are seriously doubted.

2. Constant Overseas trips on vague University Business

Dr. Schram's entire term in office is littered with constant absence from office. He spends more time overseas than at the workplace; -Unitech. On average, he spends at least 6 months overseas in a year. He consistently charged the University for travel, accommodation and travelling allowances for frequent overseas forays without prior Council approval and without showing the relevance of such overseas forays to the business of the University (which should have been approved in advance in an overarching Strategic or Corporate Plan ratified by the University Council). Businesses that usually take a day, matters that can be dealt over a telephone call, email or skype, etc., become a perfect excuse for the VC to travel, for weeks and even months.

For instance, a trip to South Africa between December 2014-January 2015 to attend an Annual General Meeting of the Association of the Commonwealth Universities. A meeting of such nature usually takes only a day but he provided no explanation for the 2 months he spent there at the cost of the University. Another trip to the United States for almost a month was unnecessary when all he achieved was an email address exchange.

He usually overstays his annual recreational leave by another 30+ extra days. He did not deny this allegation but claimed that he was conducting University business whilst on leave and he claimed that it wasn't illegal to do so. For instance, in 2016, whilst on rec leave, the VC claims to have visited 11 countries on university business. The Council considered that this was not only illegal but fraudulent, using Unitech funds for globetrotting on some vague and fictitious university business.

Council constantly reminded him of his duty to remain on campus and the financial hardships the country was facing. In a Council Meeting on 1 December 2017, the VC was specifically asked to produce all his travel details and plans. He resisted and failed to do so satisfactorily. Council expressed serious concerns on his constant travels and imposed a caveat on his travels. Unbeknown to Council, he was planning on another vague university business trip overseas for two months in Australia and India the next day (2nd December 2017), burning up K80,000 of university funds. He demonstrated total contempt and arrogance to Council.

As a result of his constant absence from work, he failed to call regular management meetings to monitor academic and administrative progress and thereby provide regular reports to Council. He failed to put in place a review of the University Statutes which in some cases date back to the 1980's and are now incompetent in view of the significant changes in Government policies on HR and Finance which apply across the public sector and have been endorsed for other public bodies through the SCMC process. He failed to review and establish a new SRC Constitution. When taken to task, he blamed everyone else except himself. If it

wasn't for the tireless and doubled efforts of the Deputy VC and the Pro-VCs, the administration would have collapsed long ago due to lack of attention by the VC.

Dr. Schram failed to provide any explanation to the satisfaction of the Council as to why he spends more time overseas and away from his place of work. All his travel reports perpetuate with promise of future benefits that do not materialize when the future arrives. For instance, in 2014, he promised benefits in 2015; in 2015, he promised benefits in 2016; in 2016, he promised benefits in 2017. It's a case of forever married to hope and divorced from reality!

3. Engagement of Consultants

He engaged incompetent consultants to cover up for him whilst he was away overseas. For instance, he engaged a finance consultant on retainer basis to prepare the financials for external auditing but the consultant failed to even produce basic financial reports and reconciliations correctly. The consultant was given many opportunities to correct this but failed on each of them. The consultant who continued to produce disclaimer reports wasn't even a CPA member at all. Dr. Renagi, as Acting VC, terminated the consultancy contract, and liaised with the Bursar and Auditor General to appoint a new accountant to audit the books of 2013 and 2014, and further work by the Bursary was made to obtain unqualified audit reports for 2015, something that Dr. Schram claims credit for.

Dr. Schram also engaged another foreign firm to be on retainer for three years, where the University paid almost K600,000, for a scoping and designing work that is usually one-off and doesn't require a retainer arrangement. It was Dr. Renagi, as Acting VC, who terminated the retainer contract last year on the advice of the Acting Chancellor.

If Dr. Renagi did not terminate those retainers, Dr. Schram would have allowed these to go on forever. Imagine Unitech has the expertise in accountancy, surveying, architecture etc, yet the Schram management continue to spend so much money on incompetence. The engagement of incompetent consultants, and retainer arrangements on one-off tasks, demonstrates that Dr. Schram was at best incompetent, at worst dishonest.

4. Engagement of private lawyers to represent personal interests

In November 2017, knowing that Council was going to question him for his constant overseas travels, Dr Schram engaged a private law firm at Unitech's expense to attend Council meeting and take the minutes of Council, as well as be his lawyer in Council in case Council took some disciplinary actions against him. Inviting people to access confidential Council briefings without the consent of Council is a serious breach of duty and disrespect to Council. Not only that, he abused his office, by using University funds (K30,000) to protect his private interests. His response was that it was done before so there wasn't anything untoward about it.

Council was of the view that Dr Schram not only breached confidentiality requirements of Council proceedings but abused his power for private gain.

Allegations that Border on Criminal Conduct

There were also a number of allegations that have criminal implications that Council will refer to the Police to undertake parallel criminal actions.

Serious Allegations yet to be Considered

Certain allegations also arose during disciplinary process. The first of this relates to Dr Schram's refusal to table a Council commissioned investigation report by an independent investigator in relation to the student unrest in 2016 that resulted in the death of a student and destruction of university properties. For reasons known to Dr Schram himself, he refused to table the report in Council. Dr. Schram was also overseas for the entire time the unrest occurred.

The second allegation relates to Dr. Schram striking a deal with the University of South Pacific (USP) in Fiji to offer their MBA course at Unitech when Unitech already has its own Executive Master of Business Administration program. There was no feasibility studies undertaken by experts who teach this course. Without going through the normal vetting process through the Post-Graduate Committee, Academic Board and Council, he exerted immense pressure on the business school to start advertising the program immediately to meet his personal commitments to USP. Unitech is the premier university in the South Pacific and the decision to subscribe to USP courses is very serious matter!

These are but few other allegations that emerged during the course of the disciplinary process but since Council did not include them, they were not part of the charges served on him, hence did not form part of the reason for his termination.

Repatriation Arrangements

Dr Schram was given a week to prepare and leave the campus. The Unitech administration is preparing his repatriation.

Acting Vice Chancellor

The Council appointed Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dr. Ora Renagi, as the Acting Vice Chancellor, until the position is properly advertised and a new VC is appointed. Dr. Renagi had been holding the fort about 6 months on average in a year for the last four years when Dr Schram was globetrotting on his countless overseas forays.

Concluding Remarks

Council is responsible for the overall governance of the university and to ensure that the Vice Chancellor and those under him, are competent, honest, transparent and accountable in the discharge of their duties. The allegations in this disciplinary action had been raised in Council from time to time but had never been formally put to Dr. Schram to respond. Despite the many warnings and criticisms in Council, the impunity grew unabated hence Council initiated the disciplinary process which eventually resulted in the termination.

The decision of the Council is about transparency, accountability and prudence, which are values Unitech upholds. Council members are very independent thinking people and to reach a unanimous decision requires very cogent reasons, which in this case were substantial. Council considered all the factors and resolved that terminating Dr. Schram was the best decision under the circumstances. The Decision was in the best interest of the University!

We hope this explains the Council's decision to terminate Dr. Albert Schram as Vice Chancellor of Unitech.

For immediate release.

.....
Ms. Jean Kekedo, CSM, OBE
Acting Chancellor