



LOST OUT ON JOB DUE TO 'FEARS'

UCT prof slams Max Price over race

Lisa Isaacs
Content Producer
Sandiso Phaliso
Multimedia Journalist



WHEN former UCT vice-chancellor Max Price called to inform a black professor she was unsuccessful in her application for a senior job, he apparently expressed shock at her disappointment, saying he assumed the only reason she applied was because she had been nominated by the Black Academic Caucus (BAC).

UCT's BAC is a collective of black academics committed to transformation in higher education in South Africa.

UCT Professor Elelwani Ramugondo is now taking UCT to court to challenge its process in appointing a deputy vice-chancellor (DVC) for teaching and learning.

The appointment of Lis Lange, a white candidate from Argentina, has been met with outrage, with activists saying she did not meet the equity requirements nor key criteria as advertised for the post.

In the looming legal battle, Ramugondo is being supported by the BAC, cited as a second applicant.

Ramugondo has been at UCT since her student days, having obtained her BSc Occupational Therapy, her MSc and her PhD there.

She was also Price's special adviser. This article is copyright protected and licensed under agreement with DALRO. Redistribution, modification, re-sale of this is not allowed without prior written consent of the original author of the works.



ELELWANI RAMUGONDO



MAX PRICE

the decision to appoint Lange, and direct UCT to re-advertise the position and start the recruitment appointment process again.

"UCT first initiated the process to recruit a candidate for the position of DVC: Teaching and Learning in February 2017. This process ran from February to June 2017.

"(Lange) had been a candidate in that initial process, together with two other highly qualified candidates, who were DVCs in their respective institutions. (Lange) withdrew her candidacy.

"For some inexplicable reasons, the recruitment process was abandoned with no appointment having been made," Ramugondo says in her founding affidavit.

A second selection process was initiated from July 2017 to November 2017.

Five applicants were shortlisted as "A" grade candidates, including three African black candidates, one white South African female and (Lange), she said.

had been deemed "unappointable" by the selection committee, despite having been shortlisted for the position and meeting all the requirements of the post as advertised.

Ramugondo contends Lange's appointment violates the transformation objectives of UCT to prioritise black South African candidates.

"(Lange) was neither a full or associate professor at the time... or any other time. I am aware that (Lange) was recommended to associate professor in about February 2018 and her promotion, with immediate effect.

"The disparate treatment in the promotion to professorship is of concern and gives an inescapable impression that her promotion to associate professorship was to give her the academic weight that she did not have at the time of the appointment.

"While it took over two years to get to the point of recognising (Lange's) promotion, after appointment, was with immediate effect."





Reply to Ramugondo 'strange'

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Ramugondo said.

She also contends the procedure itself was not fair in that the required two-thirds approval by senate to appoint Lange was not met.

Within two hours of completing the interview, Ramugondo was informed she had been unsuccessful.

When Price called, she said his comments gave her the distinct impression that her nomination and application was not seriously and properly considered.

Following Lange's appointment, Price appeared in the media and said that Ramugondo's candidacy was substantively inferior to that of Lange, and that she failed to reach the minimum threshold for appointment.

"I am known for my courage to articulate UCT's failings in transforming the university. It is possible that the university fears that I would do more with the authority of DVC to ensure that transformation is not an ideology but a lived experience," she contends.

BAC member Dr Shose Kessi confirmed the caucus

nominated Ramugondo for the position.

She said the university was not abiding by its employment equity policy.

"Prof Ramugondo's qualifications and experience, qualify her for the position," Kessi said.

She called Price's comments to Ramugondo "strange".

"We're making the assumption that Prof Ramugondo is not making decisions that she wants to make.

"It's quite patronising and undermining to make that assumption about somebody that senior... that he has worked with and acknowledged, (that) has all the capabilities of the post."

UCT spokesperson Elijah Moholola reiterated that the appointment was a fair, transparent and above-board process.

"UCT believes that although it is unfortunate, it is within the unsuccessful candidate's rights to seek legal recourse if they believe that there were irregularities with the process.

"Since this matter has

now become subject to legal proceedings, we wish to not comment any further than we have at this stage," Moholola said.

In previous statements on the appointment, Price said UCT follows an especially rigorous process in the selection of candidates to senior leadership posts within the institution.

"It is worth reminding ourselves that a selection committee has access to confidential referees' reports and an in-depth interview, as well as the confidential feedback from the audiences that listened to the candidates' presentations.

"None of this is available to the senate, the public or the BAC," he said.

"The BAC's argument also assumes that a white person cannot drive a transformation agenda.

"We reject this view and in this particular case, Associate Professor Lange has years of experience in transformation in other universities and across the sector as a whole," Price said.

lisa.isaacs@inl.co.za
sandiso.phaliso@inl.co.za

