

24 March 2022

Dear Conference Delegate

Welcome to this 2022 AAA Conference and AGM, the third of the Association for Academic Administrators. It is also the first time that the conference is held independently from the AAA's previous main sponsor, Adapt IT's Education Division.

It has been a long time indeed since the previous AAA Conference and AGM that was held in May 2019 at the Saint George Hotel just outside Pretoria. The reason for two years without an event was of course the Covid-19 pandemic that struck the world in early 2020. This pandemic and subsequent lockdown levels of limitations affected each and everyone of us in some or other way. Many of us has sadly lost family members and relatives, and we saw how many of our friends and family lost their jobs and were struggling to make ends meet. Our hearts go out to everyone that suffered during the last two years.

However, we must believe that this shall also pass, and hopefully this Conference is the start of returning back to the way of living that we had before Covid-19.

At the 2019 AGM, it was decided that the then elected Management Committee should be the interim Board of Directors of the Non-profit Company. Under the dedicated leadership of the chairperson, Mr Vido Kungune, the Directors carried through on their responsibilities and made an invaluable contribution to re-structure the operations, procedures, and statutory compliance after the withdrawal of Adapt IT as main sponsor of the Association. The four remaining Directors of the Board must be commended, as their time and inputs to the AAA are often not recognised, as they are doing this voluntary, and in addition to their own workloads at their institutions.

The theme for this year, i.e., *“Challenges that Academic Administrators at HEI's are dealing with in VUCA times, i.e., Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity & Ambiguity - Coping with the resultant stress and mental health issues”*, was the theme that the Board formulated for the planned May 2020 conference, which as you know had to be postponed, and indeed was postponed six times over the last two years. However, the theme as was formulated then, remained and might even be more relevant in the current environment that academic administrators are working. We trust that our keynote speaker, Mr Tiaan Vermeulen who is a Neurophysiologist and Director of Operations at Neuro-Link, should provide us with advice and mechanisms to cope with some of these “VUCA” factors.

One of the other dangers related to the unprecedented ways in which we had to work over the last two years, is that one might get too comfortable and neglect to focus on new initiatives and creativity. The motivational talk at the end of the program on Friday before lunch by Tertia Visser is aimed at inspiring you to get out of that comfort zone, get energized and be positive about the future.

With just over 240 delegates registered for the conference representing 16 public universities from South Africa, 1 from Botswana, 1 private HEI, and 1 public TVET College, our expectations were well exceeded. This support confirms the need for a network of professionalized academic administrators and perhaps even more so, to return our lives back to normal after the pandemic's lockdown levels and limitations.

Please note that according to the AAA Constitution and the rules thereto, if this is your first time of attending the conference, it automatically awards you the status of Associate Member of the Association and earns you 3 CPD points. You will also receive an electronic membership certificate after the conference. If you have attended the AAA Conference in 2018 and/or in 2019, you were included on the membership register, and 3 CPD points were awarded for attendance of a conference. Delegates will find the constitution and the rules and regulations published on the conference webpage at <https://assocacadadmin.co.za/conferences/2022-conference-agm/conference/>

If you have a problem with your accommodation, please take it up directly with the hotel's staff. We are not responsible for that part of the conference.

You are also more than welcome to engage with us, the members of the elected Board of Directors, to address any concerns, make contributions or proposals on the format and organisation of future conferences.

We trust that you will leave from here on Friday afternoon, feeling rejuvenated and that you again had the opportunity to take something useful back to your institution to contribute to a more effective and efficient administration of your institution, and that you also made some new friends.

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Mr. Vido Kungune, VUT
Deputy Chairperson: Mr. Ashmind Daniels, University of Stellenbosch
Additional members: Ms. Ranitha Ramdeyal, UKZN
TVET Colleges Representative: Ms. Thilo Dookhi, Elangeni TVET College

Note: Ms. Dookhi unfortunately had to tender her apology for not being able to attend this conference due to a managerial issue at her college.

AAA General Manager: Mr Peet du Plessis