

# **CIRCORE'S REPORT TO THE RECTORATE**

**30 APRIL 2024**

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

In this report, the Steering Committee of CIRCoRe provides short summaries of developments within the five workstreams highlighting a list of recommendations to the Rectorate for consideration. It should be noted that the workstreams, depending on their focus areas and activities, progress at different rates.

Also, flowing from the recent work of the Interim Working Group (IWG), a few recommendations have been included in the third section of this report.

## **B. WORKSTREAM UPDATES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1: STUDENT LIFE / COMMUNITIES**

Work continues in terms of the focus areas and key deliverables listed in the previous Report to the Rectorate.

#### **Focus**

The focus of this workstream is to contribute to thinking about how the University might become a key site for developing an evaluation/critique of student experiences of race and their intersectionalities (e.g. gender, masculinities), with the aim of ensuring opportunities/platforms for all students to flourish.

- The workstream focuses on providing insight into how student experiences are marred by racism and its intersectionalities.
- It will help SU re-imagine how it may conceptualise and operationalise its work with students in a democratic society in transition to allow students to leave SU as citizens who value and implement an ethos of democracy.
- The workstream will facilitate scholarly insight and awareness of challenges and opportunities that students face in the University, including in its research, teaching, and community engagement.
- This workstream will feed into the relevant university student structures to align all its engagements into policy, processes and practices both at university and national levels.

#### **Key deliverables**

1. Develop a process and deliverables (outcomes) to work systematically with key structures responsible for student matters on campus.
2. Create operational structures (how should we set up our structure) to effectively understand the extent of our work
3. Conduct scholarly work, (how do we understand student challenges and flourishing), with the aim of understanding and making recommendations towards a transformative student experience for all students.

4. Consultation to provide informed input on various student related questions on campus.

The above will provide for the fifth deliverable:

5. Informed strategies (and activities) that focus on inclusion and democracy to educate and generate participation from students and staff.

### **Plan of action**

The following projects and activities will be prioritised, implemented, and supported. These will be monitored and continuously (re) assessed in order to maximise efficacy and impact.

1. Literature review on university student experience of race. The key question is: What are the out of class experiences of race, and other forms of discrimination among university students? [In process]
2. Findings to be shared with students in workshops to generate participatory recommendations. What recommendations are made to address students' challenges? [In process]
3. Conduct research into student ecologies, particularly commuter students [In process]

These first three activities are related to the Khampepe Report recommendations 518, 522, 529-532

4. Consult and provide input on matters related to student issues, e.g. de Lange / Wilgenhof commission. Recommendation 517 of the Khampepe Commission. [In process]
5. Engaging in existing symposia on campus and involving students in symposia. Recommendations 529-532
6. Training to build democratic citizenship in collaboration with other workstreams and university roleplayers. Recommendations 511, 515

### **Recommendations to date**

This workstream has provided a set of recommendations for consideration by the panel that is investigating the Wilgenhof matter. In the interim, the Workstream would like the Rectorate to consider the following:

1. Research be conducted on the gap between policy and implementation in the residential environment [a touchpoint with the Workstream focusing on simplifying processes, procedures and alignment of policy].
2. No first-year students be placed at Wilgenhof until after thorough consideration of the restructuring of the residence.
3. Restructuring Wilgenhof requires that the residence in its current form be closed so that a new community can be created.
4. Current Wilgenhof students be dispersed and accommodated elsewhere – this process to be managed by student housing.

***(The workstream appreciates that more final decisions can be made after engagement with the forthcoming Wilgenhof inquiry.)***

## **2. COMPULSORY CURRICULUM OFFERING EMBEDDED IN PROCESS OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNING RENEWAL**

### **Introduction**

A key purpose of the workstream is to “seek consensus as to the best approaches to respond to the Khampepe Report recommendation regarding a compulsory core curriculum offering”. Alongside this, the workstream is tasked with accessing and considering curriculum examples (including those in the co-curriculum) and supporting the University in unpacking the different dimensions of the “transformative student experience”. In doing so, the workstream will facilitate scholarly insight and awareness on the role of curriculum in the development of citizenship, democracy and social justice.

The workstream agreed to include both the undergraduate curriculum and co-curriculum environments in its deliberations and to explore how these help students to “engage critically with received ideas about individuals, society and knowledge in order for them to actively contribute to the development of a democratic institutional culture and a just society as graduates” (Terms of Reference for Workstream 2).

In order to assist in the decision-making process and arrive at consensus, a research report was commissioned. The penultimate version of this report by Prof Karen Wolfe, completed at the end of 2023, reviewed the approaches to and concepts underlying other similar offerings in South African universities and beyond with a view to exploring how the SU undergraduate and co-curriculum environment can help students to engage as critical citizens in a democratic society.

The following “gaps” in the research report have been noted:

- Information (including some evaluative comments) on the SU Shared Humanity: Lessons in Critical Thinking (SH) offering. Piloted in 2019 in the Division of Student Affairs and later expanded to include training for the learning coaches, the offering has been delivered using two models: a stand-alone course for self-selecting students, and in partnership with the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. In the latter’s case, in 2023, 304 4<sup>th</sup> year MBChB students received this offering as part of their formal curriculum.

It is also noted that the SH offering will not run this year as no budget is available. (Previously, funds had been sourced through the DVC: Teaching and Learning and, later, through Student Affairs.)

- The sub-section entitled “*Opportunities at Stellenbosch University*” is incomplete and requires “collective development”. This section will include information on current curricula as well as co-curriculum initiatives. At the time of writing the report, “yearbook information had been collated with a view to developing a programme snapshot per faculty of potential sites of enrichment”. (The current chair will meet with the author of the report to ascertain the work still to be completed – and the role

of representatives from Transformation Committees in gathering and analysing information.)

Given the above, **it is recommended that the research report above be completed before final consensus can be reached on the University's response to the Khampepe Report.** At this stage, the workstream recognises that insufficient research into (and evaluation of) the design and delivery models of offerings has been conducted. It also recognises that the SH offering described above provides an excellent platform for further evaluation. (Interviews with relevant role-players are being set up.)

The workstream also recognises the extent of the work related to curriculum transformation / renewal that has been undertaken over the last five years (such as the Draft Policy on Teaching and Learning which served at the Rectorate in January 2024 and in terms of programmes that have already embedded social justice frameworks (e.g. see seminar held on *Socially Responsive Curricula in Health Professions Education* on 23 February 2024). The workstream will continue to provide a platform to showcase this work more broadly within the institution in order to facilitate scholarly insight and awareness of the role of curriculum in the development of citizenship, democracy and social justice.

In line with the above point, and after consideration of a proposal received from Dr Philip Southey, **Workstream 2 recommends that the required resources be made available to support an innovative pilot offering for staff who completed the Shared Humanity Module in 2023.** Covering an 8-week period in the second semester of 2024, the offering will include embodied activities designed to develop critical engagement of self and society.

- **Documentation on the Higher Health offering was tabled at the workstream's last meeting. While certain content would be suitable for inclusion in SU-adapted courses, possibly spread across multi-years of academic study, further analysis of this offering will also be included in the final version of the research report.**

### **Next steps**

As indicated above, the research report will be completed in order to reach consensus on the further recommendations to be made.

## **3: INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE**

### **Recommendations to date**

The recommendations from this workstream have been divided into short-term, medium-term and long-term categories.

#### *Short-term*

1. Development of a webpage on the university website with rich resources on institutional racism, institutional culture and institutional change.

Linked to Recommendation 512 in the Khampepe Report

2. A documentary on the history of Stellenbosch from the perspective of institutional culture and change.

Linked to Recommendation 519

### *Medium term*

3. Conference on Institutional Racism/Beyond Whiteness at SU, envisaged to be held around September/October 2024 or February 2025.

Linked to Recommendations 531-539

4. Intervention with themes reflecting changing institutional culture on Rooiplein for first years /Welcoming for 2025.

Linked to Recommendation 512

### *Long-term*

5. Training to build antiracist/multicultural competencies. This is work in progress.

Linked to Recommendations 511-515

6. Establishment of a Chair in Critical Race and Cultural Studies. Given the depth and scope of meaningful institutional transformation (as envisaged by the CIRCoRe process and its broad transformation agenda), SU is ideally positioned to becoming the leading scholarly forum for deep relational change that is crucial to the higher education sector in SA, and society at large.

Linked to Points 112, 12i,12x and Recommendations 509-510.

## **4: RACE, HUMAN CATEGORISATION AND SCIENCE (RHCS)**

Work continues as below:

### **Focus**

The principal focus of the CIRCoRe Race, human categorisation and science (RHCS) workstream is to study, deliberate on, and make recommendations about how Stellenbosch University should manage the use of race and other human categorisations in the sciences. In its recalibrated focus, the RHCS workstream will be working predominantly on the issue of race in science. Key questions that guide this workstream are listed below:

1. What are the main problems in the use of race in science, and what best practices have been developed to deal with these problems?
2. Are there scientific contexts in which the use of race is justified, and are there contexts in which it is not? What are those respective contexts?
3. What guidance can be given to research ethics committees at Stellenbosch University in respect to the use of race in research?
4. What is the state of knowledge about race across different environments in the university, and how can every environment be exposed to the most up-to-date practices about the use of race in science as it pertains to the research of specific disciplines?
5. How is data about race in research, policy, planning, and other contexts of the university to be produced (if and where appropriate) and managed where such data already exists? Are there legal and ethical implications or limitations to the use of such data?

### **Key deliverables**

1. Two conferences from the RHCS workstream: the first being a national conference on the use of race in science and the second being an international conference on the issue of race in science as it manifests on a global scale.
2. Establishment of an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary conversation about the use of race and ethnicity across environments on campus that should continue beyond CIRCoRe.
3. The development of tools for researchers that may need to consider the use of race and ethnicity in their research.
4. Developing best practices and basic standards for deliberation about race and ethnicity for SU Research Ethic Committees (REC's) through the introduction and testing of a question in the REC application process.

### **Plan of action**

Given that the problems related to race and other human categorisations in science are immense and constitute a number of traditions in distinct scientific research areas in numerous academic disciplines, the activities of the RHCS workstream aim to make decisive first steps in ameliorating the challenges of the use of race in research.

1. National conference "*Controversies in the use of race and other human categorisations in the South African Higher Education sector*" - 12-13 June to be held at STIAS.
2. Stakeholder and responsibility holder engagements. These are engagements with institutional bodies such as the Division of Clinical Anatomy, talks with the various RECs, etc.,
3. Development of tools for researchers. These tools will aid researchers in reasoning through the appropriateness or lack thereof of human categorisations in their studies.
4. Science communication about the change of SA categories over time. This activity is connected to the development of the aforementioned research tools.
5. Design of additional REC form question.
6. International conference on race and science.
7. Research centre focused on race and science.

### **Recommendations**

Leading recommendations will emanate from the activities, data and scholarly input from the planned "think tanks" listed above.

## **5: SIMPLIFYING AND ALIGNING UNIVERSITY STRUCTURES, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS WITH TRANSFORMATION**

### **Introduction**

After discussions at a meeting on Monday, 11 September 2023, Workstream 5<sup>1</sup> agreed that two draft recommendations be formulated to be submitted to the Rectorate for consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Workstream 5 members are Leslie van Rooi (Chair), Penny van der Bank, Sharman Wickham, Manie Lombard, Ellen Tise, Geo Quinot, Jaco Brink, Phiwokuhle Qabaka, Zethu Mkhize, Miriam Hoosain, Nicola Smit, Barbara Pool, Nico Koopman, Christelle Feyt, Deresh Ramjugernath, Irfaan Dalvie, Reggie Nel, Karen Bruns, Wikus van Niekerk, Winston Beukes.

The formulated draft recommendations were discussed at meetings held in October, November and December in 2023, where further suggestions were made. The revised recommendations were approved by Workstream 5 on 5 Feb 2024.

The recommendations address the issues raised in the Khampepe Report regarding the University's "complicated, bureaucratic, multifaced systems and structures, which are evidently left to perform their separate functions with little cohesion or overarching coordination" (see Finding (111) on page 11 of the executive summary). As indicated, the consequences of this situation include confusion for complainants, operational inefficiencies, and "a delay in closure and justice".

### **Recommendations to date**

To ensure a more nimble and agile process for reporting discriminatory practices for both staff and students SU, CIRCoRe workstream 5 thus recommends that:

1. a The newly updated and integrating policy on unfair discrimination, GBV and HIV/Aids be activated for consultation, recommendation and approval as soon as possible
1. b The regulations associated with the operational and procedural side of case management be finalised in a related document/plan rather than in the policy and be signed off by the relevant DVC as changes are required. It is envisaged that these regulations will strengthen and further activate proposal 2 below.
1. c That the regulations are reviewed and/or tested at the CIRCoRE workstream 5 and the Institutional Transformation Committee (ITC).

Regarding the role, functioning and positioning of the Equality Unit as office that focuses on case management, and here also the link between this unit, the office for Employee Relations and the office for Student Discipline, the workstream further proposes the following:

2. a That the Equality Unit (EqU) be the first port of call and conduit structure for all unfair discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, GBV, victimisation, racism and stigma-related matters or complaints regardless of who the complainant is. As such any responsible functionary within SU should alert the EqU of matters that arise from any given environment. Given this advanced role of the EqU, it might entail the renaming of this environment to better reflect its role as an obvious first port of call for the above-mentioned types of complaint matters. It presupposes that the EqU is better resourced, structured, placed, supported and 'marketed'.
- 2.b Where the EqU is not the first port of call, all matters are referred to the EqU unless otherwise determined e.g. by the complainant.
2. c That a virtual hub consisting of a senior member each of the EqU, Employment Relations (ER) and Student Discipline (SD), be activated when a complaint has been received. This virtual hub will consider the timeous redirection or referral of complaints within a prescribed period of time. This should explicitly be set out in the regulation referred to in paragraph 1b.
- 2.d The virtual hub will consider and decide the appropriate process to activate including the possibility to redirect/refer matters aligned with clearly stated criteria to minimise

the need for further or late referrals. This includes consideration of current/previous processes regarding the same matter. In effect, this could lead to a staff related matter to be referred to ER immediately, and a student related matter to be referred to SD immediately.

The EqU, as first port of call, will consider the following criteria to determine the seriousness or urgency of a matter:

- The nature of the complaint
- The seriousness of the complaint
- The complexity of the complaint
- The dispute resolution process set out in the applicable policy and regulations
- The broader interests of the University in the outcome

Hereafter the virtual Hub will be actioned as outlined above.

2. e An alert system where the EqU notifies ER and SD of all unfair discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, GBV, victimisation, racism, and stigma-related matters reported to them, and vice versa (even if the matter can be resolved at the Equality Unit level) should be implemented (online reporting tool) as this will enable the work of the virtual hub and will help with process flow.
2. e Any responsible functionary within the University may be requested to play an advisory role to the Head: EqU.
2. f Greater institutional use of an existing online reporting tool that will activate the role of EqU, also in relation to the virtual hub and data management system and the Deloitte tip-offs<sup>2</sup> line should be encouraged.
2. h Confidentiality (involving as few people as possible - a circle of confidentiality), procedural fairness, and due process principles to be captured in the regulations in 1.b above. The consequences of breach of confidentiality and undue influence by any party involved must be clear. At the same time, the necessary official reporting requirements must be observed (e.g., to address possible employer liability under s 60 of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998).
2. i Continuous and timely feedback to the complainant(s) must be provided by the EqU as primary port of call. This should be explicitly set out in the regulations referred to in paragraph 1b.
2. j Continuous and timely feedback to the EqU from the given environment that a matter was referred to or emanated from is crucial. The EqU remains the central actor in processes linked to discrimination as highlighted above. As such feedback on matters referred to e.g. ER and SD must be received by the EqU. As such the EqU will be asked to close the loop at the end of processes.

It is believed that these recommendations will:

- Clarify the process for and speed with which complaints are dealt with, including providing timely written feedback to the complainant.

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<sup>2</sup> The mandated role of the SU Ombud and the functioning of the Deloitte tip-off line should continue as is and is thus not directly affected by this recommendation.



- Ensure a comprehensive report of all complaints while minimising dual reporting.
- Develop better communication channels between the EqU, ER and SD.

### **Concluding remarks**

The workstream realises that a number of matters linked to this proposal must still be considered in detail so that this recommendation can be fully activated. We propose that this should be done by the specific structures as mentioned above, guided by the EqU. It is envisaged that the final model of the virtual hub including its processes should form part of the relevant policy related regulations.

### **C. INTERIM WORKING GROUP (IWG)**

**In view of the current apparent surge in GBV incidents on campus, the IWG request that the Rectorate consider the following proposals for immediate implementation:**

- The implementation of an institution-wide running campaign against sexual and gender-based violence. The CCMD, with its expertise in communication and marketing, will spearhead this campaign, which will include the official SU logo or relevant insignia as an endorsement of our institutional commitment to this cause.
- The GBV Strategic Plan and GBV audit must be implemented expeditiously. The GBV audit must have high-level support and urgency.
  - Re-evaluate the Institutional GBV Monitoring Committee's functioning and positioning to fulfil its mandate effectively.
- Engage the Equality Unit regarding the recommendations from the expert external review panel report on the Unit.
- Foreground the SU INSPIRE Facility's potential to enable GBV research, learning and teaching, specifically getting academic champions to spearhead funding, partnerships research, internships, and post-doctoral and co-curricular opportunities.

The following documents are available to support the preceding recommendations:

- UDP Annual Statistics 2023
- Student Climate Change Survey – Sexual harassment and assault 2019 – 2022
- Anti-GBV Strategic Plan 2023
- GBV Survey Summary 17 September 2020
- Equality sexual assault survey data summaries 2024
- GBV monitoring tool draft

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