



Stellenbosch

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forward together
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saam vorentoe

HIGHLIGHTS
from the
RECTOR'S MANAGEMENT REPORT
to
SENATE

Friday 24 March 2023

Prof Wim de Villiers,
Rector and Vice-Chancellor

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to the first Senate meeting of Stellenbosch University (SU) for 2023. Although it is nearly the end of the first term, it is perhaps sobering first to reflect on the somewhat sombre start to the academic year.

Bereavements

On 31 January, we were shaken by the news of the untimely passing of our Council chair, Ainsley Moos, who will always be remembered and revered as a formidable leader. On that very same day, we learnt that Desmond Smith, a previous chair of Council and serving chair of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), had passed away. To add to our sorrow, a second-year BCom student, Dylan Georgiades, died in an apparent hit-and-run accident in Merriman Avenue on Friday 10 February.

System problems

At the day-to-day level, we experienced unexpected system outages during the registration of our newcomer students. Notwithstanding this challenge, however, our colleagues in the faculties, the responsibility centre (RC) of the Registrar and the Division of Student Recruitment managed the registration process with the utmost professionalism. This came amidst an oversight visit by the University Education Branch of the Department of Higher Education and Training, who was doing the rounds to assess higher education institutions' state of readiness at the start of the academic year. The oversight committee was suitably impressed with SU's readiness for the year. The suspected system glitches are receiving dedicated attention.

NSFAS cap on accommodation allowance

The decision by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to implement a R45 000 cap on accommodation funding for qualifying students this year poses a significant challenge to the sector. At SU, many rooms in our residences as well as private NSFAS-accredited accommodation will cost more than R45 000 for the year. We approached NSFAS for clarity on how the implied shortfall per student will be paid.

The scheme later announced that applications for exemption from the cap would be considered. It is our current understanding that university accommodation will be prioritised for exemption. We have submitted our application and are awaiting a response. Yet we are aware of other universities whose applications have been rejected.

In the meantime, the Rectorate has appointed a contingency committee chaired by the Registrar to consider how the University can support students in this regard. The committee is comprised of representatives from Student Accommodation, Student Affairs (including Student Communities), Student Finance, Development and Alumni Relations, and the Students' Representative Council (SRC).

We will continue to support students in finding suitable accommodation and will engage with the relevant entities, including the SRC and NSFAS, to work towards long-term solutions.

Allegations of prohibition on the use of Afrikaans

We also saw a repeat of the alleged prohibition on the use of Afrikaans in social spaces at certain of our residences during the welcoming period, having received similar complaints in 2021. The latest

allegations are being investigated and will be dealt with in terms of the University's approved policies, principles and processes. The University is still awaiting the report of the South African Human Rights Commission on the 2021 matter.

Newcomer enrolments

Moving to more positive news, I am glad to report that we have seen an increase of 3,9% in newcomer first-year enrolments compared to last year. Actual registrations at the close of the registration period totalled 6 110 (2022: 5 880). The coloured, black African, Indian and Asian (CBIA) component of new enrolments has also grown from 2 458 in 2022 to 2 700 this year. (For detailed reports on this year's new enrolments and undergraduate registrations, consult

<https://www.sun.ac.za/english/InformationGovernance/services/student-reports.>)

2023 Institutional Planning Forum

We recently returned from our Institutional Planning Forum (IPF), which was attended by more than 70 of our senior colleagues from across our institution, including faculties and professional and administrative support services (PASS) divisions. The IPF followed the Rectorate Indaba the previous week. These planning events are critical moments in our annual planning cycle, steered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Strategy, Global and Corporate Affairs.

As a team, we needed to take stock of the purpose, role and place of our university in the context of the challenges of higher education in South Africa, but also projected against the larger backdrop of higher education trends and imperatives globally.

A summary of my remarks at the start of the discussions follows below:

Transformation

Transformation of our university is an institutional priority, and the Rectorate has added this important matter to our list of institutional gamechangers going forward. We are all in agreement that transformation is a nuanced and multifaceted process. However, with reference to the unacceptable and unsettling incidents on our campus last year and the subsequent recommendations of the Khampepe commission, we will, as a matter of urgency, address the matters raised in the commission's report. The Rectorate has discussed the commission's recommendations with our institutional transformation structures and will take the matter further with Senate and Council to ensure that our university-wide efforts and initiatives deliver on our quest to be a place where all our staff and students feel at home.

Taking stock of our role in society

Over the past few years, we have been purposefully working on shaping and sharpening the dimensions of our university that will bolster our excellence as we head into the future. Members of Senate will recall the discussions and action plans aimed at enhancing an entrepreneurial orientation in everything we do in order to have an innovative approach to our core functions of learning and teaching, research, and societal impact. We also want to grow our academic and research excellence exponentially (via our approved research areas) by responding to some of the formidable challenges of our time (climate change, HIV/Aids, etc.).

And in 2020, just as we turned our focus to being a nimble and agile institution, Covid-19 came along and forced us to adapt to circumstances and challenges that no-one could ever have foreseen. As a team, we showed that we had the grit, agility and resilience not only to survive under adverse circumstances, but to thrive. We have delivered handsomely on key objectives of our Strategic Framework 2019–2024 as we work towards realising our vision of becoming Africa’s leading research-intensive university.

Yet, while we have shown our ability to rapidly adapt, there has been nothing faddish, haphazard or random about the progression of our strategy implementation over the past few years. Every single step has been intentional and purposeful. Alignment, integration and coherent progression are the hallmarks of our strategic journey.

The current juncture, and looking forward

On the cusp of 2024 – which will mark the end of our current planning cycle – we find ourselves in a world characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Our challenge is to steer our institution to even greater heights with vision and clarity of purpose.

I think I can safely say that everyone knows what Stellenbosch University *is good at*. Our academic and research excellence is indisputable, and our governance is sound. On those, we will not compromise. But what is required now is to utilise our strengths to focus on what SU *is good for* in terms of our contribution to our immediate and broader society – locally, regionally and globally.

This is in line with the trend elsewhere in the world. Globally, leading universities have intensified their focus on their benefit to society and their engagement with the communities they serve, particularly in relation to our radically changed reality post-Covid.

We aim to meet this need through, among others, a concerted programme of academic renewal, a relentless focus on the interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity of our research, and developing new modes and platforms of delivery for our sought-after learning and teaching content to extend our reach and access to a broader student community. These imperatives form part of our list of gamechangers for SU.

This societal focus is not new or strange to us. Putting society’s needs at the heart of our enterprise is perfectly aligned with our goal to be a thriving, vibrant, transformed and systemically sustainable university with high social impact. And therefore, our senior leadership present at the IPF fully supported this strategic approach to guide us into the next phase of strategic planning and maintain the upward trajectory of our journey en route to 2040.

As we move forward together, coordinated and integrated planning and execution in our respective faculties, divisions, departments and entities will be crucial in delivering on our commitment to be of service to society.

As is customary, a member of the Rectorate will again be afforded the opportunity to submit an annual report to Senate. This time, it is the turn of the **DVC: Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Sibusiso Moyo**, to report on activities in her responsibility centre. For this reason, I will share only selected highlights from her portfolio – do consult her separate report for more details.

This report covers the period 11 November 2022 to 3 March 2023, unless stated otherwise. My fellow members of management and I welcome this opportunity to engage with our colleagues in Senate.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE RECTOR'S MANAGEMENT REPORT

In the following paragraphs, I provide highlights from my management report. For an in-depth look at contributions from the various responsibility centres, please turn to the addendum.

1. Growing the SU brand

We continued to implement our brand identity in the reporting period with a focus on brand visibility at institutional events and workshops.

- SU's [ceremonial emblem and seal](#), which Council approved in June 2022, made their first appearance on our graduation documents (certificates and programme book) in December 2022 (*pictured below*). The emblem and seal are a visual and symbolic continuation of our corporate logo.



- Corporate Communication and Marketing (CCMD) hosted a series of **brand workshops** for SU's brand implementers in November 2022. The practical, solution-driven workshops ensure that our identity is applied uniformly and coherently across the University. The team also hosted a brand and media workshop for Maties Sport's brand ambassadors.
- The **renewal of our graduation attire** is an exciting community engagement project aimed at taking SU's new brand identity forward. The project kicked off in February 2023, and the first phase is being facilitated by award-winning surface designer Primrose Charmz.
- The CCMD Branding team facilitated a distinctive and vibrant **SU brand experience at the 2023 Welcoming** for newcomer first-years through the design and production of flags, banners, selfie-frames and even 'tattoos'.

2. Graduation and pledge ceremonies 2022

The RC of the Registrar, CCMD, Development and Alumni Relations, Facilities Management and other stakeholders arranged the **graduation series** that took place from 5 to 9 December 2022. We were thankful to be able to return to full face-to-face (in-person) celebrations for all ceremonies.

We conferred **5 587 qualifications**, awarded six honorary doctorates, and recognised 14 staff members with the prestigious [Chancellor's Award](#). The livestreamed ceremonies recorded **47 409 online views** on SU's YouTube streaming channel. The [graduation webpage](#) received **71 375 views** in the weeks leading

up to the ceremonies. Moreover, the Institutional Secretariat and Publications (ISAP) Unit designed and produced four graduation booklets. These were published in collaboration with CCMD to ensure compliance with SU branding protocols and accessibility and user-friendliness for graduands.

The **undergraduate pledge ceremonies** of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS) took place on 5 December on Tygerberg campus. Altogether 442 undergraduates and BScHons in Biokinetics graduands made an interdisciplinary pledge in public to uphold the values of the Faculty and the health professions they were joining. We also had the first cohort of B of Nursing graduands participating.

Over **1 000 guests attended** the ceremonies at Tygerberg, and **1 477 people watched** via livestreaming. Tygerberg's Centre for Student Administration enjoyed excellent support from the Dean's Division and FMHS Marketing and Communications to ensure the success of the events.

3. SU Teaching Awards 2022

The institutional selection panel for the SU Teaching Awards 2022 met on 16 November. Seven nominees were interviewed, and the following three were subsequently approved (*pictured below from left to right*):



- **Prof Faadiel Essop** from the Centre for Cardiometabolic Research in Africa (CARMA) in the Division of Medical Physiology (category “Leaderly teaching scholar”)
- **Prof Herman Kamper** from Electrical and Electronic Engineering (category “Scholarly teacher”)
- **Ms Mareli Rossouw** from the School of Accountancy (category “Scholarly teacher”)

They received their awards at a teaching and learning celebration on 2 March 2023.

4. Two new SU teaching fellows

Two new teaching fellows were selected for the 2023 cycle. They are **Prof Dennis Francis** (Sociology and Social Anthropology) and **Prof Nicola Plastow** (Occupational Therapy). Both fellows' research projects will address social justice in teaching and learning in higher education.



Prof Francis (*left*) will focus on the troubling of compulsory heterosexuality in schooling in South Africa in the module Sociology 144, and the framework this module offers students to question social inequality more broadly.

Prof Plastow (*right*) will explore the promotion of social participation and occupational justice for older people in Bishop Lavis through service learning. Her research involves developing a new community engagement project at SU.



5. Another two research chairs

SU has been awarded two new research chairs in the energy field. A tier-1 Sasol/DSI-NRF chair in *Green Hydrogen Integration and Transition* was awarded to Prof Prathieka Naidoo from Process Engineering, and a tier-2 chair in *Power Systems Simulation* to Prof Bernard Bekker from the Centre for Renewable and Sustainable Energy Studies. A potential third chair, in computational astronomy, is still being considered.

6. Student recruitment and strategic enrolment management

To ensure a diverse and inclusive student body at SU, undergraduate student recruitment activities focus on reaching specific CBIA enrolment goals. Apart from targeted application generation throughout 2022, the Division of Student Recruitment, faculties and the RC of the Registrar also undertook **two conversion campaigns** in November 2022 and January 2023 respectively. The aim was to convert as many conditional offers as possible into actual enrolments.

It was well worth the effort, as we managed to exceed our overall CBIA newcomer first-year target of 43,1%, having reached 44,3% (*see table below*). However, while most faculties reached or exceeded their diversity targets, diversity enrolments in specific faculties and targeted academic programmes need to be improved.

2023 CBIA enrolments by faculty, against targets (as at 13 February 2023)

Faculty	Enrolments	Target	Difference	% difference
AgriSciences	133	160	-27	-16,9%
Arts and Social Sciences	678	550	128	23,3%
Economic and Management Sciences	514	506	8	1,6%
Education	365	110	255	231,8%
Engineering	314	316	-2	-0,6%
Law	71	66	5	7,6%
Medicine and Health Sciences	236	271	-35	-12,9%
Military Science	46	90	-44	-48,9%
Science	242	293	-51	-17,4%
Theology	101	56	45	80,4%
Total	2 700	2 418	282	11,7%

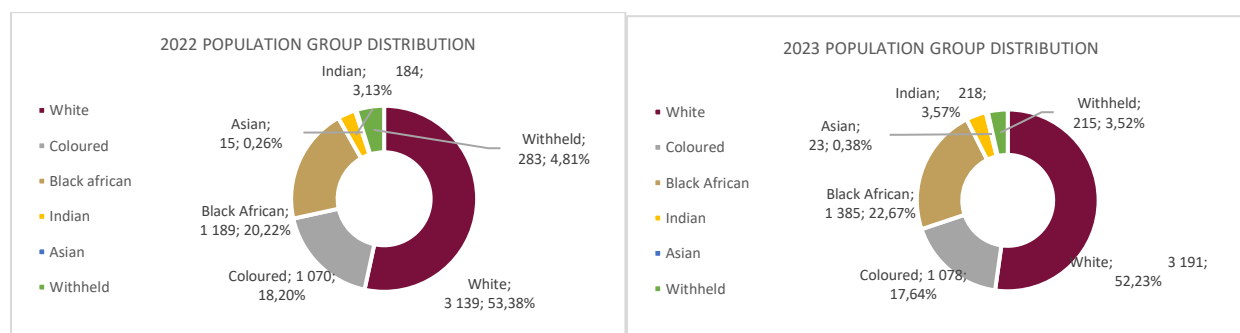
Recruitment activities with a view to the **2024 intake** commenced once schools reopened in mid-January 2023. Since then, the recruitment team has already participated in more than 42 career exhibitions in the southern and northern suburbs of Cape Town, the Cape Winelands and the Southern Cape. These exhibitions formed part of the annual calendar of expos coordinated by the Cape Career Exhibition Association (CCEA). A considerable number of school visits have also been conducted in the Western Cape, Limpopo, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Visits to the rest of the provinces will follow in the months ahead.



A highlight on the student recruitment calendar was the campus visit of 50 hand-picked high-school leaders from the Western, Northern and Eastern Cape who were attending the annual Die Burger youth leaders conference in December 2022. They indicated a keen interest in SU.

7. Snapshot of 2023 newcomer first-year enrolments and registration

The diagrams below reflect 2023 and 2022 enrolments based on official figures as at the end of the respective registration periods.



Population group distribution of new enrolments, 2022-2023

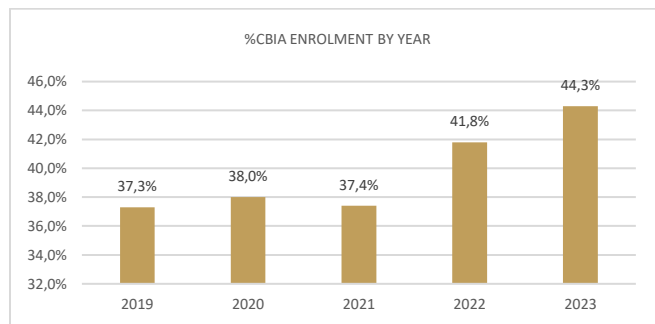
NOTE: Since 2022, international students no longer have to disclose their population group upon application, which explains the relatively high number of students who “withheld” this data in both years.

From 2022 to 2023:

- **black African** enrolments **increased by 16,5%** from 1 189 to 1 385;
- **coloured** enrolments **increased by 0,7%** from 1 070 to 1 078;
- **Indian** enrolments **increased by 18,5%** from 184 to 218;

- **white** enrolments **increased by 1,7%** from 3 139 to 3 191; and
- **Asian** enrolments **increased by 53,3%** from 15 to 23.

As the graph below shows, at **44,3%**, **total CBIA enrolments** are the highest since 2019.



CBIA enrolments as percentage of total, 2019-2023

8. Postdoctoral fellows

We ended 2022 with 348 postdoctoral fellows, having dropped from 371 as some fellows reached the end of their dedicated research projects in the course of the year. Postdoctoral fellowships are normally awarded for one to five years.

Our postdoctoral research fellows are distributed across all faculties, although the majority are in Science, Medicine and Health Sciences, Arts and Social Sciences, AgriSciences, and Engineering. They play an increasingly important part in furthering our strategic theme of conducting research for impact, and therefore, we aim to grow our number of fellows to 600 by 2026.

9. SUNFin progress towards go-live in June 2023

The focus of the SUNFin project team remains on:

- testing and signing off the Oracle Cloud Financial (OCF) solution;
- finalising the preparation of training material;
- conducting end-user training;
- building additional required reports;
- preparing for the migration to OCF in terms of technology and data clean-up;
- deploying the solution by the agreed target date of June 2023; and
- providing initial support after going live, and handing over to operations.

Testing quality has been excellent. Moreover, the tests are a good way to get core end-users to experience, understand and become more enthusiastic about the new system and how it will support their work.

While we have finished 50% of test cases, this consumed over 50% of the time allowed for testing, which does pose a risk that the team may need additional time to complete testing, with a potential knock-on effect on the go-live date. Yet the team is working hard to minimise the impact of the slower-than-anticipated progress through the speedy resolution of issues as they arise, considering the implications of

additional required time, and exploring whether subsequent activities in the plan may be overlapped or compressed.

We are closely monitoring progress. Once sufficient information is available on the user acceptance training plan and its impact on the SUNFin timeline, a special steering committee meeting may be scheduled to decide whether an extension of the go-live date should be recommended to the Rectorate.

10. Progress with SUNStudent

At the November 2022 steering committee meeting, it was agreed to postpone the go-live of the SUNStudent capabilities of Registrations, Student Fees and Services, Residence Management as well as Financial Aid from December 2022 to December 2023. This was to allow for system and configuration readiness, user readiness, and operational and institutional considerations.

The project team has since replanned their activities to ensure that all these modules will be ready for switch-on in accordance with the student lifecycle starting from December 2023. Several additional external and internal resources will be involved to achieve this ambitious target.

These delays now mean that SUNFin will go live before SUNStudent, requiring alternative integration between the old, integrated student information/finance system and SUNFin. Particular focuses in this regard are to:

- avoid ongoing access to financials from the old student information system once SUNFin has gone live; and
- deliver the required integrations from the old student information system in time to allow for proper testing within the SUNFin timeline.

In other SUNStudent news, with effect from April 2023, the Stellenbosch Business School's applications and admissions will also migrate to our new student information system. The Applications and Admissions module on SUNStudent has been working well for the rest of our institution for the past two years already.

11. Welcoming 2023

With preparations having started in August 2022 already, Welcoming 2023 included some additional changes to ensure a stronger focus on creating a human rights culture grounded in social justice, and to see to it that students got enough rest, considering both the faculty and general welcoming programmes they participated in. International students were included in the programme as an opportunity to meet locals and to familiarise themselves with the University's ethos.

Highlights of the welcoming programme, which is coordinated by our Centre for Student Communities and supported by the broader Division of Student Affairs (DSAf), included the following:

- In our **online onboarding programme**, which the Centre for Student Leadership, Experiential Education and Citizenship (CSLEEC) hosted from 14 December 2022 to 16 January 2023, five live webinars were offered to more than 3 000 prospective students, compared to 1 717 students the previous year. This increase in participation is largely the result of a student-centred mailer campaign created by DSAf's communications coordinator.

- At the **Dream Walk and Dream Fair**, newcomer first-years marked the official start of their academic careers at our institution and, along with parents and staff, could take part in a host of fun activities that ensured engagement. Thanks to expert coordination by our staff, newcomer Military Science students from SU's Saldanha campus and members of the Military Academy Student Council (MASC) arrived on our Stellenbosch campus earlier this year for a welcoming lunch with DSAf staff, and for their own Dream Walk in Victoria Street (*pictured below*).



Military Science newcomers and MASC members participate in the University's Dream Walk for the first time. This was preceded by a welcoming lunch with DSAf senior director Dr Choice Makhetha (in red) and other SU staff and student leaders.

Previously, our Saldanha students experienced a sense of isolation when attending the Rector's welcoming, as they felt excluded from the SU student community and were never able to participate in the Dream Walk due to their schedule. The students appreciated this year's arrangements, and discussions were held to invite the MASC leaders back for more engagement to ensure that our Military Science students also benefit from what is offered at Stellenbosch campus and by DSAf.

Tygerberg campus again hosted their own welcoming programme that catered to the needs of Medicine and Health Sciences students and their unique schedule.

- DSAf, the alumni platform Maties Connect and the Western Cape Department of Sport, Arts and Culture partnered to end the welcoming programme with **Vensters and the first Maties Connect Musical Festival (MC Fest)** (*pictured below*). The overall aim of the events was to promote social cohesion through diversity. For more, go to <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/Lists/news/DispForm.aspx?ID=9734>.



- Throughout the welcoming period, **events were monitored** to ensure that newcomers felt welcome at the institution and that practices that could violate their humanity and dignity were immediately addressed. Monitors also kept an eye on alcohol use, addressed food security challenges, and attended to emergency accommodation needs. The Monitoring Advisory Committee met every second day to assess activities and events, and where necessary, student leaders, residence heads and other partners were involved.

12. Addressing the Khampepe findings and recommendations

The Rectorate formulated a draft document that spells out the process that will be followed to address the insights, findings and recommendations of the Khampepe report. Discussions on the document subsequently commenced with various entities across campus. The plan is to constitute the central committee and workstreams proposed in the document by the end of March 2023.

13. Race and Transformation in Higher Education conference

SU, the University of Bath (United Kingdom) and Nelson Mandela University (Gqeberha) co-hosted the [Race and Transformation in Higher Education conference](#) at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study from 15 to 17 November 2022.

The event took place within SU's local context of transforming the University in line with human rights, equity and redress, as well as against the broader regional, national and global backdrop of transformation in higher education. The [thought-provoking and engaging conference](#) also featured site visits to local communities, where community members and SU partners could engage with conference delegates and share their lived experiences.

14. Research for impact

Since the first major revision of the Department of Higher Education and Training's funding framework in 2005, we have maintained a steady **increase in our total annual publication output** for subsidy purposes (journal articles, books, book chapters, and published conference proceedings). According to the latest report, which was released towards the end of 2022, our journal publications increased from 789,4 units in 2005 to 1 774,54 in 2021, representing a 4,89% annual growth rate. Overall publication units grew by 6,04% from 826,1 in 2005 to 2 240,49 in 2021. Nationally, we rank fourth in terms of publications, which we hope to improve through increasing our postdoctoral footprint.

To further establish SU's research impact, the DVC: Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Sibusiso Moyo, recently requested Prof Johann Mouton, director of the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST), to conduct **a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of our research performance** from 2005 to 2021. The resultant [four-chapter report](#) makes for interesting reading. Chapter 1 presents the analyses and findings on SU's research publications over the past 17 years, while chapter 2 discusses the trends in terms of master's and doctoral graduate production. Chapters 3 and 4 view research article output by faculty and according to the Web of Science database respectively.

CONCLUSION

All indications are that we face another challenging year. Yet all our strategic and operational building blocks are in place. Therefore, we are well positioned to advance on our chosen journey to become a thriving, vibrant, transformed and systemically sustainable university, with an embedded culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and agile responsiveness to the needs of society and the communities we serve.

CONTRIBUTORS

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