SU gives assurance that Afrikaans will still be used for instruction

Carlo Petersen

STELLENBOSCH University (SU) will retain Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

This was the assurance the university gave AfriForum Youth (AFY) which took it to court earlier this month following a decision to make English the primary language of instruction at the university.

AFY spokesperson Hein Gonzales said the civil rights organisation contacted SU management on January 29, requesting an assurance that necessary steps would be taken to prevent the implementation of the decision.

“SU refused to comply with the request and AfriForum Youth subsequently launched a court application on February 5 to force the university to abolish the enforcement of the decisions taken by the two mentioned faculties, to respect the language specifications contained in the university yearbook and to execute the language policy and plan,” Gonzales said.

After the matter went to the Western Cape High Court on Friday, SU management issued AFY with written confirmation to fulfil its demands.

“It is necessary for personnel, students and alumni that are pro-Afrikaans, to start using the institutional decision-making structures of the SU to ensure the place of Afrikaans on the campus in the long term. It can only be done if personnel, students and alumni participate actively in the process followed to compose these structures,” Gonzales said.

SU spokesperson Martin Viljoen said university management and the SU Council had been giving the matter “urgent attention” since earlier this month.

He said the university will work towards giving Afrikaans equal status with English as medium of instruction as approved during the University’s Council meeting in 2015.

“The university has initiated a revision of its language policy and language plan with the intention to table a new draft by the end of the first semester. This revision will follow due process as determined by the university’s governing provisions,” Viljoen said.

He said the SU Council expressed its support for the expansion of the English academic offering provided it was not to the detriment of the Afrikaans offering.

“The University Council has to approve the Language Policy and Language Plan with the concurrence of Senate. The University will ensure that it is a participatory process which affords stakeholders a reasonable opportunity to offer input,” Viljoen added.

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CHANGE OF HEART: After Open Stellenbosch protests and action by AfriForum Youth, SU said it will work towards giving Afrikaans equal status with English. Picture: HENK KRUGER