



Hope in Africa

The role of universities in times of political transition,
particularly in the context of democratisation

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Abstract

In this paper the author examines the role of universities in times of political transition, particularly in the context of democratisation, with reference to the South African experience. Stellenbosch University serves as a case study, both of an institution undergoing transformation and of one contributing to fundamental change in society. The role of community interaction is highlighted, and particular lessons are drawn from this experience.

(This paper is the second in a series for the Talloires Network. The first, *Hope in Africa: Human development through higher education community interaction*, was delivered at the Bellagio Conference, Italy, in 2010.)

Keywords

Community interaction, democratisation, development higher education, HOPE Project, transformation, transition, South Africa, Stellenbosch University, values

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1. Introduction

Democratisation poses significant challenges to society, both on the macro scale and at the level of particular tasks that need to be fulfilled. Universities are well placed to assist with both.

On the one hand, the oppressive system of the past and its legacy need to be dismantled and replaced with new values, and this includes an effort to repair the social fabric. And on the other, a critical commitment to democracy and human rights should be nurtured, and developmental needs should be attended to.

By focusing their core academic functions— research; learning and teaching; as well as community interaction – on these challenges, institutions of higher learning can provide hope of a better future for all.

2. Conceptual clarification

The topic at hand is “the role of universities in times of political transition, particularly in the context of democratisation”. As a first step, basic conceptual analysis of its key elements should provide some clarity, allowing the discussion to unfold further.

2.1 Transition

“Transition” can be defined as “changes in the political, social, economic, cultural and educational structures of a society”, resulting in “completely new configurations of relations of power” (Fourie, 1999:276; Kirsten, 1994:3). It typically affects “every single institution and organisation of society” (Fourie, 1999:276; Esterhuse, 1992:28).

Transition involves wholesale “social transformation”, which refers to “the change of society’s systemic characteristics” (Lebeau, 2008:141; Genov, 1999). It influences, amongst others, the “distribution and use of political power”, and involves “changes in the structure and performance of state institutions and other bodies of decision-making and control” (Lebeau, 2008:141).

Looking at the case of South Africa, the demise of apartheid can be regarded as one of those “dramatic moments of transformation” (Lebeau, 2008:141). However, the country’s first democratic election in April 1994 was neither the start nor the end of deep-seated change. Instead, it resulted from a variety of local and international influences over decades, and continues to find expression in major societal shifts 17 years on.

2.2 Democratisation

Democratisation entails moving to a democratic political system – frequently from, as was the case in South Africa, an authoritarian, repressive dispensation. The destination is a more open, inclusive society in which fundamental freedoms and basic human rights are guaranteed equally to all.

Civil and political rights typically associated with a democracy, such as the right to vote, freedom of expression and association, and the right to equality and non-discrimination are reflected in the Bill of Rights contained in South Africa’s post-apartheid constitution, adopted in 1996¹.

2.3 Universities

Where does higher education fit in? Castells (2001) assigns four major

¹ <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/index.htm>

functions to universities: they “reflect ideological struggles in societies”, “serve dominant elites”, “generate knowledge” and “train a skilled labour force” (Lebeau, 2008:140).

In apartheid South Africa, universities were considered by some as places where separate development could be theoretically underpinned and justified, and by others as a site of struggle for democracy. The academic commitment to truth-seeking through science helped to keep the debate open and facilitated the transition from apartheid to democracy.

Higher education itself would be influenced by events in the broader South African society. Fourie (1999:278) points out that “[f]ollowing on the country’s transition to democracy, the demands and expectations arising from the new political dispensation gave new impetus to the internal drive towards a more open, relevant and non-discriminating higher education system”; and that the new government expected “a transformed higher education system to redress past inequalities, to serve a new social order, to meet national needs for person power and development” (RSA DoE, 1997:1).

The “agenda set by the [n]ew South African regime for higher education” was that it should contribute to “the ‘transformation’ of South Africa” (Lebeau, 2008:142). The South African transition required “a contribution of higher education to the public good within the framework of accountability and responsiveness” (Lebeau, 2008:143).

Brennan, King and Lebeau (2004) point out that in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), “higher education institutions (HEIs), and especially the major public

universities, have often remained key sites for debate, critique and mobilisation on behalf of political change, especially but not exclusively in the direction of democratisation and the resolution of conflicts” (Lebeau, 2008:139).

3. The challenges of democratisation

Societies in transition have to deal with three challenges simultaneously, relating to events in the past, present and future. These can be called the temporal dimensions of the challenges of transition.

Injustices that occurred in the previous dispensation have to be redressed. Peace-building and reconciliation needs to take place between sections of society that had previously been in conflict with each other (cf. Botman and Petersen, 1996). And insights into what went wrong have to be sought so that lessons can be learnt and similar wrongs prevented in future.

At the same time, the legacy of the past will probably be continuing in the present. On a tangible level, previously disadvantaged sections of the population are in all likelihood still experiencing such problems as poverty, homelessness, unemployment and socio-economic inequality in general. And new wrongs that might be taking place also have to be identified, rectified and prevented from carrying on.

Lastly, societies in transition have to keep moving forward, toward a greater level of realisation of the goal of democratisation originally envisaged. They also need to look even further into the future, to new circumstances and situations that they will need to prepare for in order to create

good prospects for future generations. Then there is also another set of levels on which the challenges of democratisation become manifest, namely, on the one hand, the macro level and, on the other, the level of particular tasks that need to be fulfilled to ensure a successful and meaningful transition. These can be called democratisation's challenges of scale.

At the macro level, the task to be performed is to dismantle the oppressive system of the past and its legacy, and to replace it with new values. After all, transformation is marked by changes in a society's "value-normative system" – the values prevalent and dominant in various spheres (Lebeau, 2008:141). Universities in Africa and elsewhere have played an important role in "encouraging and facilitating new cultural values" (Lebeau, 2008:141). The goal has often been to build national unity by repairing the social fabric that had been torn apart by divisions of an ideological, political, social, cultural or economic nature.

4. The role of universities

Universities are well placed to assist with the challenges of transition. They can nurture a new critical commitment to democracy and human rights among their staff, students, partners and members of the broader community that they engage with on an ongoing basis. By doing so, they can develop people that will stand up for justice and truth in society. This function would play itself out on the macro level.

Universities can also concern themselves with the particular developmental needs of society. They can get involved in activities that will ensure service delivery to the poorest of the poor in society.

5. The case of Stellenbosch University: From 'success' to 'significance'

Stellenbosch University (SU) is situated at the southern tip of Africa, in the historic town of Stellenbosch, 50km from Cape Town. It is one of 23 public universities in South Africa. The country has a combined head count of 521 000 students in higher education contact tuition. Stellenbosch has approximately 28 000 students (of which more than a third are at postgraduate level), 10 faculties, 4 campuses, and 891 academic staff members.

In the year 2000, an important policy statement, the University's *Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond* (SU, 2000), signalled a new direction. In it, "[t]he University acknowledges its contribution to the injustices of the past ... and commits itself to appropriate redress and development initiatives".

When I was appointed Rector and Vice-Chancellor in December 2006, I dedicated my term of office to the tangible realisation of this commitment. In my installation address (Botman, 2007), I pointed out that the University faced the challenge of "relevance". We would have to find a way to move from "success" to "significance".

I proposed that we follow a "pedagogy of hope" at Stellenbosch. This was inspired by, amongst others, the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921-1997). It was his *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (2006 [1970] a) and *Pedagogy of Hope: reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2006 [1992] b) that had led to a global emphasis on a "critical pedagogy" within education, conveying the

idea that education should play a role in changing the world for the better.

In particular, he had argued that education should stimulate critical thinking and a critical consciousness. People should be empowered so that they may free themselves from oppression, poverty, injustice and the difficult task of living peacefully with former oppressors in a new situation.

I felt that by infusing our work as a university with this kind of hope, we would be able to become not only “significantly different” from our past, but also “significantly better” for the future – in terms of our excellence and commitment to the people of our country and continent (Botman, 2007).

My colleagues and I looked at local, regional and international development agendas, including the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)². We ended up distilling five themes to guide our functions as a university, i.e. learning and teaching; research; and community interaction. These themes are to fight endemic poverty and related conditions; promote human dignity and health; consolidate democracy and human rights; deepen peace and security; and balance a sustainable environment with a competitive industry.

The next step was to galvanise academic and support staff around these themes. The University community responded with enthusiasm, and proposals based on existing expertise and programmes streamed in. A committee sifted through them, and by 2008 we had a solid batch of 21 strategic hope-generating initiatives. The list has grown since then; we now

² <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>

have almost 30 initiatives resorting under the HOPE Project³, which was publicly launched on 21 July 2010. Several examples are highlighted later in this paper.

In a policy document adopted by its Senate and Council, *Hope as guiding concept* for Stellenbosch University⁴, the institution states that it “is committed to creating hope in and from Africa by means of excellent scholarly practice.”

Further excerpts from this document serve to clarify what it was that led to this commitment, what it is exactly, and how the University embodies the idea of hope:

Stellenbosch University has responded to global and local challenges by adapting hope as the leitmotif of the University’s activities, which means that scientific knowledge is created, shared and used to the advantage of and through interaction with the world within which the University finds itself.

By using hope as the guiding concept, the University is led to ask critical questions about reality, to look at problems in a scientific manner and to use science to make a difference. In this way hope becomes a radical transforming concept. If hope is used with the assumption that a better future can be created actively through a joint search for knowledge, in service of the community, it becomes more than empty optimism and changes into a shared social resource.

Hope is created when the possible is prioritised rather than that which is on

³ <http://www.thehopeproject.co.za>

⁴ Hope as guiding concept for Stellenbosch University. Unpublished policy document adopted by the Stellenbosch University Senate on 18 March 2011 and the Stellenbosch University Council on 3 May 2011.

hand at the moment (with reference to Eberhard Jüngel's formulation: "Die Welt als Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit"). This means that the SU community (researchers, lecturers, support staff, students and other stakeholders) does not simply accept the current reality as the beginning and end of everything, but takes as point of departure the assumption that another and better reality can and must be created and cultivated by creating, applying and sharing new knowledge.

Hope as leitmotif does not only ask what Stellenbosch University wants to do, but also what Stellenbosch University is and how it positions itself. From this perspective, creating hope is the reason why this university exists.

The University endeavours to create the conditions that will ignite the imagination of scientists to solve problems in creative ways through basic and applied research and through multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary academic activities. The three core academic functions of the University, namely scientific research, learning and teaching and expertise-based community interaction are integrated and used in the service of both the private and the public good. The University builds on its tradition of excellence in scientific work, but now with a sharper focus on the world within which the University finds itself.

6. Building new values

The notion that universities should produce graduates for the "public good" is not new (cf. Walker, 2010). Graduate attributes are generally seen to go beyond technical knowledge (Van Schalkwyk et

al, 2010). It includes qualities that also prepare graduates as agents for social good (Bowden et al, 2000). Stellenbosch is no exception. SU sees all its students as agents of change.

Senate resolved in 2001 that the University's learning and teaching policy should aim to produce graduates "who are capable and equipped, through the application of their high-level skills, to play a constructive role in the responsible and sustainable development of the country and society, and who, in so doing, contribute to the wellbeing and quality of life of all people" (SU, 2007).

6.1 Frederik van Zyl Slabbert Institute for Student Leadership Development

An example of how the University is addressing the macro-level challenge of creating new values is the newly created Frederik van Zyl Slabbert (FVZS) Institute for Student Leadership Development⁵. The Institute was launched in March 2011 as part of SU's HOPE Project.

The Institute bears the name of SU's late Chancellor, Dr Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, a visionary free-thinker and principled political leader. Deeply committed to non-racialism, he had devoted decades of his life to building democracy and addressing the polarisation between black and white South Africans. He embodied SU's endeavour to produce graduates "who can play a leadership role in society as responsible and critical citizens in a democratic social order" (SU, 2007).

The FVZS Institute is focussing on equipping students – from Stellenbosch, other tertiary institutions and in some

⁵ <http://www.thehopeproject.co.za/fvzs>

cases at secondary school level – to deal with the challenges facing young people in society today. It no longer is enough for universities to just provide graduates with good academic qualification. SU wants to develop well-rounded thought leaders who have broadened their horizons; young people who are committed to ploughing what they have learnt back into society.

The Institute aims to foster ethical leadership and provide students with a transformative understanding of their role as leaders in an African and global context. A key goal is to ensure that the University's graduates conceive of themselves as subjects, not objects. They need to know they have agency to change things, to make life better for people on the continent. They do not have to accept reality as an unchangeable given.

6.2 Listening, Living & Learning houses

Another area reflecting the process of shaping new values at SU is student housing. In particular, we have created 16 Listening, Living & Learning (LLL) houses where a diverse mixture of students live together for a year, in the process shaping new thinking in their own ranks and on the rest of the campus.

The students in the LLL houses are from different faculties, genders, races, backgrounds, nationalities, etc. Each house adopts a specific theme for the year, and the students engage in ongoing conversation about it. Outsiders are also invited to join the conversation, so academics, civil servants and experts of various kinds provide input. Each LLL house also engages in a specific community project.

The LLL initiative is an experiential learning process that helps students identify and adjust their perceptions of “the other”, i.e. those who are different from them. Participating students discover different perspectives and have the unique opportunity to form friendships across perceived barriers that might otherwise have kept them apart.

Ryan Hartley who lived in the Gender Equality House in 2010, reported that the initiative brought together “South Africans from every province, Tanzanians who’ve driven across America, Americans who have lived in Tanzania, Dutch theologians, ambitious businessmen, liberals, conservatives, Christians, atheists, lawyers, accountants, political scientists, members of the Student Representative Council and other student leaders, gay and straight, black and white”⁶.

He added: “In that plethora of ideas, dreams and theories were a hundred conversations and quite a few arguments... As the University’s ‘Think Tanks’ the Live and Learn Houses did quite a bit of thinking ... There’s a sense that we’re hurtling towards something new.”

7. Promoting human development

Lebeau (2008:141) points out that universities have “frequently been regarded as key institutions in processes of social change and *development*” [my emphasis].

⁶ From a letter quoted in “Welcome to the Listening, Living and Learning Community”, an unpublished document issued by the Centre for Student Communities, Stellenbosch University.

7.1 Stellenbosch University Water Institute

An example of how SU is addressing particular needs in society is the “teabag” water filter developed by the new Stellenbosch University Water Institute⁷, which was publicly launched in March 2011 as part of the HOPE Project.

In 2010, *Scientific American* magazine chose the little filter as one of 10 “World Changing Ideas”⁸. It looks like an ordinary teabag, and fits into the neck of a standard water bottle. It then delivers clean water as you drink from it – one litre per filter. The outside of the teabag filter is coated in nano-fibres containing a biocide, which means that it kills bacteria as it filters the water. Inside the bag there are active carbon granules to remove chemical pollutants.

This cost-effective and environmentally sustainable invention can make a big difference to the lives of the estimated 300 million people in Africa who do not have access to safe drinking water.

7.2 TsamaHub

Another example of a HOPE Project initiative addressing developmental needs is the TsamaHub⁹, which is an acronym derived from its full name, the Centre for Transdisciplinarity, Sustainability, Assessment, Modelling and Analysis. (A “tsama” is also a type of wild watermelon that has long sustained life in Southern Africa’s driest parts.)

The TsamaHub functions in partnership with South Africa’s Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and Human

Sciences Research Council, as well as the Sustainability Institute.

It also forms part of an agreement between SU and the Stellenbosch Municipality called “Reinventing Stellenbosch: A Sustainable University Town”. It covers the towns of Stellenbosch, Pniel and Franschhoek¹⁰.

We have turned the town of Stellenbosch and the surrounding areas into a living “laboratory”¹¹ to pioneer new knowledge and to create tangible hope of improved living conditions. Our academics and students engage with the Municipality as knowledge partners on such issues as land reform, spatial development and planning, water purification, refuse management and a scientific approach to the landfill problem, as well as issues pertaining to infrastructural planning for the future and ensuring a sustainable environment and responsible resource usage.

Stellenbosch remains one of the most unequal towns in South Africa, where the gap between the rich and poor is growing. In Enkanini, an informal settlement on the outskirts of the town, 8 000 people live with only 36 taps, 60 toilets, no electricity, inadequate waste disposal and flimsy dwellings subject to floods and fires.

¹⁰ SU has a similar memorandum of understanding in place with the Drakenstein Municipality, called the “Sustainability and Learning Initiative”. It is aimed at “promoting sustainable development in the Drakenstein area through local knowledge partnerships”, and covers Paarl, Wellington, Saron, Gouda and Simondium. The University is also collaborating with the Western Cape Provincial Government, and with local authorities and structures in other towns in the region, such as Worcester, Ceres, Robertson, Caledon, Hermanus and Swellendam.

¹¹ Our surrounding geographical communities constitute our first “laboratory”, but it is also our community interaction policy to associate with communities of practice and communities of interest.

⁷ <http://www.thehopeproject.co.za/water>
⁸ <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=world-changing-ideas-dec10>
⁹ <http://www.thehopeproject.co.za/tsama>

A core group of four TsamaHub students are now conducting research in Enkanini with the community. They represent the first generation of researchers in a long term transdisciplinary research project.

South Africa's policy on human settlements has shifted from once-off housing interventions to an incremental approach of infrastructure upgrading. However, implementation remains top down and technocratic. In order for incremental approaches to make significant development impacts, partnerships between shack dwellers, local government and researchers are required.

The Enkanini project's transdisciplinary research is expected to result in co-produced knowledge between academics and community representatives in order to inform a transition to a more liveable and sustainable Enkanini.

The TsamaHub's collaboration with its institutional partners and local communities is significant for a number of reasons. In pursuing the transdisciplinary research methodology we are looking for both sustainable solutions to real-world problems, as well as the production of new scientific knowledge and insights into these challenges. The transdisciplinary methodology is not only about finding practical and equitable solutions, but is also about the University co-producing knowledge in engagement *with* other members of society.

8. Community interaction

Internationally, the term "community engagement" is commonly used to describe the mechanism through which

teaching and research is integrated into a university's engagement with and in society. SU prefers the term "community interaction", which offers essentially the same meaning, but emphasises reciprocity between university and community.

The process of transforming community service at SU into community *interaction*, and elevating it to the level of a core academic function of the institution alongside research as well as learning and teaching started in 2003.

At SU, community interaction exists to nurture and manage partnerships with communities. This facilitates cooperation between communities and the University. And it provides the means whereby both parties can actively and in partnership discover knowledge and teach and learn from each other.

Community interaction contributes to an environment where student learning is enriched and research relevance is enhanced. It supports SU's institutional commitments to reciprocity, redress, development and transformation.

SU is considered a leader in the field of civic engagement because of the extent to which community interaction has been institutionalised. It forms an integral part of governance structures, budget lines, academic work and student activities at the University.

The Division for Community Interaction¹² at SU offers a credit-bearing Short Programme on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (SPSLCE) to equip academics to design and deliver service-learning modules. Presently, service-learning modules are offered in

¹² <http://admin.sun.ac.za/ci>

nine Faculties of the University, mainly by lecturers who are graduates of the SPSLCE. This means that thousands of our students are exposed by their lecturers to experiential learning within community settings. From 2011, academics from other South African HEIs are also participating in the Stellenbosch SPSLCE. This has tremendously positive implications for the personal growth, academic learning and professional development of students, since they are exposed to real-world situations as part of their formal education. This practice goes wider than the engagement traditionally associated with disciplines such as medicine, social work and education.

As far as research is concerned, the Division for Community Interaction, in conjunction with SU's Division for Research Development, is developing a similar short course to equip academics in terms of community-based research methodologies, such as community-based participatory action research.

On the side of student volunteerism, the Frederick van Zyl Slabbert Institute for Student Leadership Development, in conjunction with Matie Community Service and SU's Division for Community Interaction, offers a credit-bearing Short Course in Leadership and Community Interaction to equip volunteers at SU for their tasks. Student leaders register for this short course, in addition to their chosen field of study. Although it can be interpreted as "extra work" for students, the course is over-subscribed and there is a long waiting list. Other South African HEIs are showing keen interest in SU's volunteer short course.

9. Challenges of transformation at Stellenbosch University

The political transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa has had a transformative impact on Stellenbosch University – a process that is still continuing. Several challenges still remain, and they all have to do with managing the transition.

9.1 Access and diversity

Part of the redress envisaged in our *Strategic Framework* (SU, 2000) was the important goal of achieving greater equity through building a student body and staff corps demographically more representative of the South African society. In my installation address (Botman, 2007), I stated we could only feel satisfied that there was fair access once the "daughter of the farm worker" had the same opportunities as the "son of the farmer".

In 1990, the year of Nelson Mandela's release from prison, SU had just 762 black students. Now we have over 9 000 (33% of the student body). However, we realise that we still have a considerable way to go. Improved access and diversity remain key strategic goals at SU.

9.2 Financial pressures

Universities worldwide are under tremendous financial pressure as state subsidies decrease and the demands of access, relevance and excellence increase.

In South Africa, education is one of the government's strategic priorities, and higher education is well-supported, but it has none-the-less become clear that subsidies and class fees on their own are

no longer sufficient for everything that we at SU want to and need to do at this critical juncture in our history.

The strategic positioning of the University to become “significantly different” from its past and “significantly better” for the future has serious cost implications. For instance, the University is in a process of reaching out to communities in rural areas around us. We want to establish rural platforms from which to conduct the University’s engagement with and service delivery to the rest of society.

In the town of Worcester, about 80km from Stellenbosch, we have established the **Ukwanda Rural Clinical School**¹³ as part of our HOPE Project in partnership with the Western Cape Provincial Government. The idea is to extend health sciences education away from the Faculty of Health Science’s predominately urban hospital-centric setting in Tygerberg, Cape Town, out into underserved and rural areas.

In South Africa, approximately 46% of the population live in rural areas, and this figure is higher elsewhere on the continent. For rural communities, the main benefit of initiatives like these is greater access to healthcare.

The Ukwanda Rural Clinical School will enable the University to produce more healthcare professionals by focusing on underserved rural sites. International experience indicates that recruitment and retention rates are higher if you immerse students in rural life during training and recruit students from rural areas.

A hub-and-spoke model is being envisaged. The Ukwanda Rural Clinical School will

¹³ <http://www.thehopeproject.co.za/ukwanda>

have its main hub in Worcester, and initially spokes in the towns of Caledon, Ceres, Hermanus, Robertson and Swellendam. At all of these sites we want key University Departments to engage with the community, e.g. law, education, social work, etc. This will benefit society, but also our students and the institution as a whole through learning and research opportunities.

All of this is expensive, so as part of the HOPE Project, we have launched an ambitious capital campaign to raise gifts of at least R1,75 billion (US\$250 million) by 2015. So far, since the start of the silent phase of the campaign in 2007, we have raised R900 million (US\$129 million). This can be considered an endorsement of the University’s vision of providing hope in and from Africa through excellence and relevance in higher education.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, firstly some thoughts on community interaction. In our experience at SU, a university can take this core function to the next level by offering credit-bearing experiential learning opportunities in community settings (e.g. service-learning¹⁴), linking it to the academic output of staff and students. We have shown that this core function can be boosted by creating the institutional context wherein research and scientific endeavours are focused on the everyday problems communities are struggling with.

What Stellenbosch University has managed to do with its HOPE Project, is to make community interaction fully part

¹⁴ Service-learning is but one of an array of experiential learning opportunities. Others include internships, practicals, work-integrated learning and field-trips.

of its higher education mandate, which is to generate, share and apply reliable, scientific knowledge to the benefit of the community. By doing this in collaboration with community partners, the emphasis shifts from charity-like community service to a collaborative search for answers and solutions to life's challenges.

To create an institutional context that encourages community interaction, SU has instituted a structured award system for faculties and divisions that engage with communities in a sustainable way. Community interaction is also a measurable performance area for academic staff, integrated with their research as well as teaching and learning.

Secondly, some thoughts on the broader question of the role of universities in political transition. By focusing their core activities – research, learning and teaching, as well as community interaction – on particular developmental challenges, universities can play a relevant role in societies undergoing change. This would require of them to address such problems as poverty, health threats, failures to treat people with the dignity they deserve, violations of democratic principles and human rights, threats to peace and security, as well as environmentally unsound practices and obstacles to sustainable industrial growth.

Stellenbosch University has deliberately embarked on a path of relevance that takes us out of the “ivory tower” and situates us firmly in society, where we can coproduce knowledge in collaboration with others and put it to use with them to address seemingly intractable problems. The benefits of this choice are such, that we have no qualms in recommending it to others.

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Stellenbosch University

Institutional profile

Nestled among picturesque mountains in the heart of the Cape Winelands, Stellenbosch University (SU) offers a stimulating academic environment, a vibrant student life and a preferred sporting and cultural destination. With origins dating back to 1866, the institution acquired university status in 1918 and now is recognised as one of the top research-intensive universities on the African continent. The University has the highest research output per academic staff member in the country, as well as one of the highest percentages of postgraduate students. In addition, it has South Africa's second highest number of researchers rated by the National Research Foundation (NRF), with the highest number for the human sciences.

Academic and research excellence

Stellenbosch University has 270 NRF-rated researchers, three Centres of Excellence and 14 Research Chairs. SU designed and manufactured Africa's first micro satellite, SUNSAT, which was launched in 1999. South Africa's second micro satellite, SumbandileSat, was launched in September 2009 under the management of the University, while the satellite was built by SunSpace, a spin-out company of SU.

Eight of the University's ten faculties – AgriSciences, Arts and Social Sciences, Education, Engineering, Law, Science, Theology, and Economic and Management Sciences – are situated on the University's main campus in Stellenbosch. The Tygerberg Campus is home to the Faculty of Health Sciences, while the Faculty of Military Science is located at the Saldanha Campus on the Province's West Coast. The Business School and the School for Public Leadership are situated at the Bellville Park Campus.

Life on campus

The University campus culture is one of a vibrant blend of differences and similarities. Various student organisations on the four campuses cater for a wide

range of interests, including politics, religion, culture and relaxation. Well-known and established student activities that range from festivals to more focused discussions and debate add to the unique experience of being a Matie (as a Stellenbosch student is affectionately known). Ultimately, students are being prepared for the complex societies within which they must live and work.

The heart of campus life, and the true experience of being a Matie, lies in the wide variety of activities on offer. Maties share a feeling of solidarity, forge lifelong friendships, and in consequent years often reflect fondly on all the experiences they have shared.

Stellenbosch University can be described as a residential, town's university. The "res" is one of the focal points of the Stellenbosch University experience. This is where friendships are formed and strengthened, where cultural differences are discovered and enjoyed. The residence system enables students to live and learn in an environment that helps them thrive. Experience has shown that students living within a structured support network with access to mentors, teachers, tutors, counsellors, peers and friends achieve greater success than those who do not have similar support.

Internationalisation

Through its Post Graduate and International Office, Stellenbosch University has forged strong international relationships. The office creates a focused support service platform to promote postgraduate studies and the success of postgraduate students, and promotes the incoming and outgoing international academic mobility of staff and students. The university offers a range of opportunities for international students enrolled elsewhere to follow courses here at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, depending on the student's academic background and the availability of places on courses. The Postgraduate and International Office is a member of the Association of African Universities (AAU); Association of Commonwealth Universities; European Association for International Education; Association of International Educators (NAFSA) and the International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA).

Stellenbosch University has earned international recognition over many years for its excellence in all three pillars of its core function: teaching, research and community interaction. In addition, knowledge-based initiatives that are aligned with international development objectives provide proof that Stellenbosch University is transforming its vision of being a builder of hope in the South African and African context into tangible science for society.

Faculties

AgriSciences; Arts and Social Sciences; Economic and Management Sciences; Education; Engineering; Health Sciences; Law; Military Science; Science and Theology.

The HOPE Project

Stellenbosch University's HOPE Project creates sustainable solutions to some of South Africa's and Africa's most pressing challenges. The Project is rooted in its three core functions – teaching and learning, research and community interaction – and showcases academic initiatives that serve human need. Through partnerships with government, the business sector, foundations, and individuals, today's HOPE will become a dynamic reality for next generations.

With its multidisciplinary approach rooted in science, the HOPE Project enables excellent research on local, regional and African challenges and provides some of Africa's best opportunities for learning and growing new generations of thought leaders. The academic initiatives are grouped into five focus areas that are aligned with the international development agenda: eradicating poverty and related conditions; promoting human dignity and health; promoting democracy and human rights; promoting peace and security; and promoting a sustainable environment and a competitive industry. Read more: www.thehopeproject.co.za.

Statistics 2010

Total number of students	27 694
Postgraduate students	10 043
Masters students	5 004
PhD students	1 060
International students	3 089
Academic staff	891
Undergraduate degrees awarded	3 354
Masters degrees awarded	1 120
PhD degrees awarded	174

Fast facts

- Stellenbosch University is the most research-productive university in the country measured by the weighted research outputs per permanent academic staff member. SU shows constant growth in the awarding of publication subsidy units. The average annual growth in research outputs for the past four years has been 6,22%. There is a growing trend towards publication in accredited international journals. SU has also been very successful in the category for books and chapters in books with a record number of subsidy units awarded in 2010, which represents an increase of 118%. SU's research outputs are stimulated, amongst others, by its development themes within the HOPE Project, which also relates very strongly to the South African Medium Term Strategic Framework for the period 2009-2014, as well as the international development agenda.
- SU has 270 researchers with ratings from the NRF, 14 of whom have A ratings (researchers regarded as world leaders by their peers) and three of whom have P ratings (researchers regarded as potential world leaders by their peers).
- For several years, SU has been a major recipient of research funding from the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (THRIP) of the Department of Trade and Industry, in terms of which the Department matches industry funding rand for rand. In 2010 R16 million was allocated to SU.
- SU has retained the top position among universities in South Africa in terms of funding obtained through various bilateral partnerships managed by the NRF, with a total income of approximately R10 million.
- With innovative interdisciplinary programmes, the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies offers national and international researchers the opportunity to embark on thematically oriented projects.
- The South African Department of Science and Technology (DST) has established three out of only seven Centres of Excellence at Stellenbosch University – in Invasion Biology, Epidemiological Modelling and Analysis and (in collaboration with the University of the Witwatersrand) and Biomedical TB Research.
- Spearheading innovation on the campus is InnovUS, the University's technology transfer company. InnovUS, one of the oldest technology transfer companies in the country, facilitates technology transfer from the academic to the commercial environment, taking the benefits of scientific inventions to communities.
- Through their involvement in the European Union's prestigious Framework Programme 7 (FP7) Stellenbosch University researchers are recognised as leaders in their fields of expertise. Framework Programme 7 is the largest public funder of research in the world.
- SU makes science work for Africa through eight centres with a special focus on Africa:
 - **The African Business for Sustainable Natural African**

- **Plant Products** brings research proficiency to individuals in order to ensure sustained agribusinesses.
- The **African Institute for Mathematical Sciences** is an internationally acclaimed initiative in Muizenberg supported jointly by the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford, Paris-Sud, Cape Town, Western Cape and Stellenbosch, that develops talented young mathematicians from Africa.
- The **National Institute for Theoretical Physics** gives local physicists international exposure and trains future African theoretical physicists. It provides theoretical underpinning for national programmes and has regional centres at the Universities of KwaZulu-Natal and Witwatersrand.
- The **Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management** equips students with the knowledge and skills to manage the impact of HIV/Aids in the workplace.
- The **Ukwanda Centre for Rural Health** coordinates and supports training and research initiatives in rural and underserved communities.
- The **Desmond Tutu TB Centre** combines basic and cutting-edge research with the training of students in the Health Sciences.
- **Networking of African Congregational Theology** develops Christian leadership in Africa.

- The Graduate School, the **African Doctoral Academy (ADA)** and the **Partnership for Africa's Next Generation of Academics (PANGeA)** are part of a three-pronged academic initiative in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences which forms part of Stellenbosch University's (SU) HOPE Project.

The Graduate School coordinates research themes focused on Africa's development, administers doctoral programmes and full-time doctoral scholarships, recruits and enrolls doctoral students from the African continent, appoints supervisors and examiners, and monitors and evaluates operations to assure quality. Linked to the Graduate School, the Faculty has also established the ADA as a support structure to promote advanced scholarship and research.

PANGeA is a network of leading African universities including SU, the University of Botswana, Makerere University in Uganda, the University of Malawi, the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and the University of Nairobi in Kenya collaborating in research projects and staff exchanges; in the recruitment, funding, supervision and mobility of doctoral students, and in future offering joint doctoral degrees.

- Striving to be relevant and taking its social responsibility seriously, SU has established itself as a national leader in community interaction. Solid institutional arrangements, incentives and flagship projects are in place to advance community interaction as a

core function of the University. SU actively pursues the integration of community interaction with its other core functions of teaching, learning and research.

- Stellenbosch University hosts nine research chairs as part of the **SA Research Chairs Initiative** (SARChI) in the fields of: Functional Nanostructured Materials; Experimental Petrology; Advanced Macromolecular Architectures; Genetic Tailoring of Biopolymers; Post-harvest Technology; Photonics, Ultrafast and Ultra-intense Laser Science; Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome; Economics of Social Policy; and Property Law.
- Through an **SA National Energy Research Institute** (SANERI) Research Chair, the University acts as the hub for a postgraduate programme in Renewable and Sustainable Energy Studies.
- Stellenbosch University is also home to two other research chairs: the **HF Oppenheimer** Chair in Human Rights Law and a **South African National Roads Agency Limited** (SANRAL) Chair in Pavement Engineering.
- The **University of Stellenbosch Business School** (USB) is one of the few management schools outside of Europe that is accredited by the European Quality Improvement System of the European Foundation for Management Development. The School's MBA programme has also been accredited by the Association of MBAs of the United Kingdom.

- Unique to Stellenbosch University is the **First-year Academy** (FYA), an initiative that focuses specifically on success in the first year of study. In the Faculty of Health Sciences alone, this initiative has led to an improvement in the pass rate from 92% to 96% over the past three years, in spite of a greater intake of students from disadvantaged schools.



African networks

122	active collaborative projects in
36	African countries involving
132	African institutions and
363	African collaborators

Stellenbosch

Building sustainable knowledge partnerships with the community

Why community interaction?

Community interaction (CI) as a core function of Stellenbosch University exists to nurture and manage partnerships with communities; facilitate cooperation between the university and communities and provide the means whereby both parties can actively discover knowledge, teach and learn from each other.

Who is our community?

The term community signifies a social grouping of society involved in an interaction at any given moment. Community refers to groups of people united by a common location, or to groups of people that are linked intellectually, professionally and/or politically. This includes geographic communities, communities of interest and communities of practice. This broad definition allows the university to focus on marginalized groupings in society while at the same time including other community formations.

Types of community interaction

- 1: Integration of teaching and learning, research and CI. In exceptional instances, projects integrate aspects of all three core functions.
- 2: Integration of teaching and learning, and CI. Examples include service-learning and short courses.
- 3: Integration of research and CI. Examples include contract research, community-based research and science and society initiatives.

- 4: Volunteerism and public service. Examples include student volunteerism, public service by faculty, community outreach and partnerships.

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