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Dear Prospective Newcomer Matie

## PRIVATE STUDENT ORGANISATION COMMUNITIES AT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Congratulations on your being accepted conditionally for an academic programme at Stellenbosch University (SU). We are looking forward to welcoming you in 2021.

The purpose of this letter is to tell you about our PSO communities. At SU, approximately 70% of enrolled students stay in private accommodation. Those students are assigned to private student organisation (PSO) communities that provide them with extensive opportunities for successful social and academic integration on campus. PSOs have been positioned to offer students in private accommodation a wholesome and diverse university experience. To this end, co-curricular and out-of-class experiences form one of SU's key focus areas for student development.

### What is a PSO?

A PSO is an organisational structure for supporting SU students living in private accommodation. The PSO's resort under the Centre for Student Communities (CSC) and are managed by elected student leaders in collaboration with the PSO coordinators, who form the PSO Office.

Each PSO coordinates the orientation of its newcomer students and offers access to sporting, cultural and social activities as well as leadership development opportunities. Newcomers are also allocated a peer mentor through their PSO. We believe that this support structure contributes towards SU's delivering well-rounded graduates to society.

**Please note:** PSOs *do not provide* student accommodation. If you will not be staying in a University residence, you have to find accommodation yourself.

### How do I become a PSO member?

Membership is conferred automatically on all enrolled students who do not live in an SU residence. PSO membership fees are compulsory; the item is debited to your student account until the end of honours studies.

Private students are allocated randomly to one of ten PSO communities as per the SU Placement Policy. You may not change from one PSO to another, and your allocation remains unchanged for the duration of your sojourn at SU. All PSOs offer the same quality of academic and social support, and allow you access to the facilities offered through each cluster (a group of PSOs). PSO and cluster membership also allows you to take part in various activities as a Matie. The academic faculties allocate students to academic tutorial groups according to their cluster.

*saam vorentoe • masiye phambili • forward together*

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## PSO virtual engagement model

While the fallout from Covid-19 has seen us move away from campus, SU has used the opportunity to expand cloud communities. This has resulted in students' having access to a whole host of enriching opportunities ensuring that they remain connected to campus and to one another. The PSOs have adapted their functions during the course of 2020 to offer their members virtual engagement opportunities ranging from academic and mentor support to social engagement and academic support networks.

The PSO community remains the access point for students to their campus network, ensuring that their time at Stellenbosch is rich with developmental and social opportunities despite the inability to connect in a physical space for the time being. With social distancing at the centre of our "new normal", the PSOs will keep striving to adapt and evolve with a view to offering virtual engagement opportunities and to helping SU students thrive during these times of uncertainty.

Because of the success of the virtual model in 2020, and students' enthusiastic participation, plans are in motion for the PSO experience to be adapted in 2021 into a blended model that will afford students, both commuters and those residing on campus, further ease of access to an enriched campus experience. Once you have received your PSO allocation you will be able to engage with your PSO. Do make use of it, as they offer a plethora of virtual engagement opportunities that will build up to your welcoming and orientation in 2021.

A personalised letter from the PSO to which you have been allocated, detailing the specifics of your welcoming and orientation programme for 2021, will follow at a later stage. The welcoming of newcomer students at SU is set to start on 3 March.

## More information

For more information on the PSO structure please visit [www.sun.ac.za/pso](http://www.sun.ac.za/pso).

As noted above, the PSO Office cannot provide you with information about private accommodation. However, please visit the following webpage, where you will find assistance in that regard: [www.maties.com](http://www.maties.com) > [accommodation](#) > [private accommodation](#).

Warm Matie greetings

## PSO OFFICE

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