STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY PSO STRUCTURE

PSO Office report by
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VISION 2040 | VISIE 2040 | UMBONO 2040

Stellenbosch University has launched its Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024.

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INTRODUCTION

Benjamin Disraeli reminds us of two fundamental ideals, that: "a University should be a place of light, of liberty and of learning " and "success is a product of unremitting attention to purpose". Reminded of these ideals a University must indeed, in order to produce success, be unremitting in the pursuit of its goals, of its objectives, of its mission and its vision. Stellenbosch University has over the years invested in a purposive and specific effort to ensure that all Students enjoy a transformative student experience. An experience that will encourage the development of; an enquiring mind, an engaged citizen, a dynamic professional and a well-rounded individual. These are the foremost attributes that Stellenbosch University ensures are acquired by all its Students. As a creator of sustainable hope in Africa, Stellenbosch University as an institution that seeks to produce graduates for the public good is purposive about optimising the ecosystem of learning, of socialising and of engagement which supports the development of these attributes.

We often find that conceptualising the attainment of graduate attributes is a complex task, wrought with considerations of the adequate infrastructure and environment necessary to accomplish such a feat, this burden, coupled with vision 2040 requires the University to be surgical about how it ensures that all of its Students can enjoy the best elements of the University transformative experience.

The development of Private Student Organisations and their integration into the University ecosystem is one of the most remarkable and innovative mechanisms which the University has employed in ensuring that All Students enjoy maximum exposure to the educational characteristics of residential life. PSOs cater to the needs of Students who do not make use of the residence accommodation offered by the University. They ensure that private accommodation Students feel at home and that they are able to utilise University facilities which will allow them to engage with their peers socially, academically and holistically, PSOs ensure the complete and wholesome integration of private accommodation Students with residence Students and thus ensures the mutually beneficial success of that integration.

The PSO Office is the institutional body that is responsible for the management and oversight over all the PSO structures, it works with elected Student Leaders to ensure

that PSO Students are afforded a holistic and transformative University experience. This report has been commissioned by the PSO office with the following objectives:

1. To report on the historical journey of the PSO environment.
2. To reflect the purpose, and function of the PSOs
3. To report on the establishment and the role of the PSO Office.

This report accordingly recounts the history of the PSO environment from the establishment of the first PSO, it further reflects the philosophy on which the PSO environment is premised, lastly, this report reflects the purpose and the function of the PSO office and how it has transformed over time. This reporting is done through reflecting on the work done by numerous Task Teams, staff members, student leaders and researchers who have contributed to the Stellenbosch University PSO ecosystem and its continuing development.

1. SUMMARY

The Private Student Organisation project of Stellenbosch University is premised on the same ideal as attested to in the work of Terezini and Pascarella who assert:

> *"The research on within-college effects suggest programmatic and policy levers. For example, we have long known that Students living on-campus enjoy larger and more varied benefits of college attendance than do commuting Students. A college might usefully ask, how can the most educationally potent characteristics of the residential experience (e.g. frequent academic and social interaction amongst Students, contact with faculty members, more opportunities for academic and social involvement with the institution) be made more readily available to Students who commute?"*
>
> *And*
>
> *"Research on the impact of student residence offers more clues. Considerable evidence suggests discernible differences in the social and intellectual climates of different residence halls on the same campus; halls with the strongest impacts on cognitive development and persistence are typically the result of purposeful, programmatic efforts to integrate Students' intellectual and social lives during college ..."*

Report Summary

The first PSOs were established in the early 1970s, at the time the PSOs were allocated Students based on geographical location, the main purpose of PSOs was to ensure that private accommodation Students are able to meaningfully participate in campus activities and that the University had a mechanism to organise them and to modify their development and behaviour. This system was retained up till 2007 when it was reviewed due to a major shift in the composition of the University student population. This led to a major restructuring of the way in which PSOs are allocated Students, as well as their function and purpose. In 2009 a Task Team was established by the Vice-Rector of Learning and Teaching to investigate how the University experience could be optimised for commuter Students, the Task Team investigation suggested major changes to how the physical spaces around Stellenbosch Campus could be modified to better allow for Students to engage and for commuter Students to interact with residence Students. In 2015 another Task Team was established with the purpose of investigating and reviewing the way in which PSOs were managed and how that system could be optimised, further the Task Team was established to investigate how the Cluster Initiative could be made more beneficial for PSO Students, the Report recommended a complete restructuring of the management system, this culminated in the establishment of the PSO Office under the stewardship of the PSO coordinators. Further recommendations from the Task Team encouraged the maximisation of the engagement between PSO and residence Students in the Cluster spaces. Following this Task Team report, the Visiting Head management system was abolished, the PSO Office was established and it has since grown into a structure that has numerous skilled individuals contributing to the development of the PSO space.

2. PSO OVERVIEW

- **What is a PSO?**

A Private Student Organisation (henceforth referred to as PSO), is an organisational structure that supports Students living in private accommodation (i.e. non-residence Students) that attend Stellenbosch University (SU). These Communities are administered through the Centre for Student Communities, within the Division of Student Affairs, and they are led by elected student leaders, in collaboration with the PSO Coordinators (members of staff) who manage the PSO Office. Each PSO manages the orientation of new Students and guides them as they assimilate into the Stellenbosch University culture, offers access to sporting, cultural and social activities and leadership development opportunities. The PSOs manage the assimilation process through the allocation of newcomer Students to

a peer mentor through their respective PSO. An important distinction between residences and PSOs is that a PSO does not offer accommodation to Students, rather it creates a platform for non-residence Students to be fully integrated into the Stellenbosch out-of-class experience.

- **The need for PSOs**

Non-residence Students constitute close to 70% of the Students of Stellenbosch University, institutions all around the world have come to realise the significance of this student demographic, therefore as part of the key focus areas for student development at Stellenbosch University is the co-curricular and the out-of-class experience; it is paramount to the development of Students that PSOs be optically positioned in order to fulfil this need and to give Students the opportunity to experience a wholesome and diverse University experience. Any student who does not make use of the University's residence accommodation is automatically placed in a PSO ward.

Newcomer Students are randomly divided into different PSO communities which provide them with all the opportunities for successful social and academic integration on campus. Stellenbosch University utilises this structure to provide these Students with support and opportunities for growth and development in the co-curricular environment. This allows Stellenbosch University graduates to leave the institution as well-rounded individuals who, because of their diverse University experience, are better positioned as attractive graduates in the job market and are better global citizens, the aforementioned structure helps deliver well-rounded graduates in society post-graduation.

- **PSO allocation**

There are currently 11 PSO wards (i.e. Aristea, Aurora, Capri, Equité, Olympus, Osler, Oude Molen, Pieke, Silene, Venustia & Vesta), newcomer Students are randomly allocated to one of the eleven PSO wards, as per the institutional placement policy. Each PSO offers an equivalent quality of academic and social support and allows Students access to the facilities offered through each Cluster. Students are not permitted to change PSO's and their allocation remains for the duration of their University journey. PSO Students take part in various activities

through either the PSO or Cluster and will also, depending on their academic faculty, be allocated into academic tutorial groups.

- **Cluster engagement**

A Cluster is made up of several residences and PSO's that are geographically close to one another. Clusters play a significant role in the integration and support of new Students on campus and ensure that Students experience the University as a caring and nurturing place. They also integrate the University experience of residence Students, day Students, and Students in private accommodation. Clusters also ensure that the facilities between the PSO and Residence Students are shared.

- **Operational Structure**

The PSO Office operates within the Centre for Student Communities (CSC), which forms part of the Division of Student Affairs (DSAf) of Stellenbosch University. DSAf is overseen by the Vice-Rector: Teaching and Learning. The PSO Office is managed by the PSO Co-ordinators. The PSO Office was established in March 2016 to offer a world-class co-curricular experience to PSO Students. The coordinators are assisted by PSO Assistants and work in collaboration with the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson of the Prim Committee. Collectively, the PSO Office oversees the elected student leaders (Prims, Vice-Prims, House Committee members and Mentors) of the eleven (11) PSOs.

- **PSO Fees**

In order to maintain this ecosystem of support all PSO Students, pay PSO Fees. The University Council resolved that all Students not living in University residence, barring specific exemptions must pay PSO fees until the end of their honour's year. As indicated above, PSO members have access to many out-of-class facilities and activities offered through their PSOs that are strongly encouraged. It is Stellenbosch University's intention that Students take part in Residence or PSO activities besides their academics in order to leave SU as well-rounded graduates. This is one of SU's intended graduate attributes with the PSO & residence structure being the intended mechanism used to attain this.

3. DESCRIPTION

The PSO project is an idea 50 years into the making, Stellenbosch University has premised the idea of a PSO Student on the fundamental idea that a Student's ability to fully develop into a well-rounded individual requires a holistic University experience, evidence from research indicates that there is a direct and necessary link between a Student's social and academic life, i.e. if one wishes to ensure that Students are cognitively developed and persistent there needs to be a concerted effort to integrate their academic and social life. This philosophy is the foundation on which the PSO stands. This philosophy is best articulated in the work of [1]Terenzini and Pascarella in which they assert:

> *"Research on the impact of student residence offers more clues. Considerable evidence suggests discernible differences in the social and intellectual climates of different residence halls on the same campus; halls with the strongest impacts on cognitive development and persistence are typically the result of purposeful, programmatic efforts to integrate Students' intellectual and social lives during college ..."*

However, it is a well-known challenge that to ensure that the entire University population receives the same level of exposure to these purposeful, programmatic efforts to integrate Students' intellectual and social lives is difficult when 70% of those Students are non-residence Students, and as Terezini and Pascarella further attest:

> *"The research on within-college effects suggest programmatic and policy levers. For example, we have long known that Students living on-campus enjoy larger and more varied benefits of college attendance than do commuting Students. A college might usefully ask, how can the most educationally potent characteristics of the residential experience (e.g. frequent academic and social interaction amongst Students, contact with faculty members, more opportunities for academic and social involvement with the institution) be made more readily available to Students who commute?*

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[1] Terezini and Pascarella in a 1994 article titled *"Living with Myths. Undergraduate Education in America"* included in a later work titled *"Learning from Change: Landmarks in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education"* by Deborah Dezure (2000).

The Solution proposed by Stellenbosch University, therefore, is one that considers the primary goal of moving towards a transformative Student experience, this idea is best described by [2]JC Landman as:

> *Quality support and developmental opportunities for all Students are equally important to ensure a transformative student experience that leads to student success. All these core functions are key in maintaining SU's momentum of excellence through the entire student cycle – from the first contact in the various markets, to graduation and beyond by enhancing our graduates' employability and personal growth.'*
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> *…To support the development of a welcoming and supportive living and learning environment, [3]DSAf focusses on the conceptualisation, development and implementation of policies and practices in order to develop a holistic systemic context into which the interventions are embedded. These are in alignment with the national and international student affairs best practice and theory.*
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> *These SU policies and practices impact the entire institution, its culture, climate and academic and social life, providing services and development opportunities to all Students within the undergraduate and postgraduate sector. An institution with a welcoming and supportive learning environment is likely to impact positively on student success in a way that not only reflects in academic pass rates, but also manifests in the development of graduate attributes.*

Therefore the PSO system in Stellenbosch University is a mechanism that is used to imbue "Living-outs"[4] with the wholesome ecosystem of support that is necessary to ensure the development of the SU graduate attributes. This ecosystem is then shared with residence Students and through making the most educationally potent characteristics of the residential experience (e.g. frequent academic and social interaction amongst Students, contact with faculty members, more opportunities for academic and social involvement with the institution) more readily available to Students who are "living-outs".

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[2] In TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCE Compiled by: JC Landman. (2020). Stellenbosch University.

[3] Division of Student Affairs of Stellenbosch University

[4] These terms are derived from the accommodation model followed at Durham University in England, where reference is made to *livers-in (hostel Students)* and *livers-out (non- hostel Students)*

4. HISTORY OF PSO WARDS

The beginning of the PSO Project[5]

The PSO wards were first established in 1973, four PSO wards were established, each was a single-sex PSO, there were three PSO wards for male Students (Pieke, Libertas and Oude Molen) and one ward that made provision for female Students (Aristea). Students belonged to a PSO ward based on the geographic area where they lived in Stellenbosch. Each ward had a [6]Visiting Head.

It is important to note that at the time of the initiation of the concept, 75% of Stellenbosch University Students lived in residences. Further, it should be noted that Women on campus were much fewer than their male peers, further, the percentage of residence women was much higher, therefore, there was only one ward for women.

The original intention of the PSO wards project was to create a mechanism for the growing number of Students who were not living in hostels to participate in campus life more meaningfully. The underlying idea was to keep Students happy and entertained, and the primary role of the VH was to ensure that the Students living out of University residences conducted themselves in a manner that was deemed appropriate and reflected a way of life that represented the University well.

Soon it became clear that the PSO ward system needed to be expanded beyond the borders of the Stellenbosch town. In 1981, another private ward, Aurora (a mixed gender PSO), was added. The new geographical jurisdiction of this PSO would be expanded to the Students who lived in the northern and southern suburbs of Cape Town. The financial burden of this system was allotted such that the VHs were afforded from the main budget, and a Council resolution made the levying of fees that the PSOs could use for House finances compulsory for all Students who were not living in residences. This structure was retained until 2008.

However, in 2008 the institution had transformed immensely, and the original structure was unable to cope with the new dynamics of the time, the following developments distorted the structure:

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[5] As found in: Report of the Task Team about "The future utilisation and organisation of Private Student Organisations (PSOs) to enhance student success in the context of the Cluster initiative". 2015. Stellenbosch University

[6] The Visiting head (VH) was the staff member assigned to the supervision of the PSO wards

1. The number of Students studying at the University had grown considerably, this meant that the percentage of Students who lived in residences had reduced from 75% of the total Student population in 1973 to around 45% in 2008, this meant that the PSO ward structure could no longer meaningfully handle the number of Students.

2. The number of woman Students at the University grew immensely, and Aristea became uncontrollably large. Aristea had grown to such an extent that they needed to manage up to 750 first-year Students during welcoming each year.

3. The geographical allocation model in which Students were allocated to a specific PSO based on their geographical location in the Stellenbosch town was distorted by the accommodation developments all around the town, this resulted in PSO allocations being unevenly distributed.

4. The system had no means of tracking which Students belonged to which PSO and therefore Students often gravitated to the PSOs that they liked the most, the practical implications of this was that PSO Students were unevenly distributed along, sex, culture, race and language lines,

5. Developments with regard to the co-curricular education and peer support in the environment outside the classroom could not be reconciled with PSO structures.

In order to deal with these developmental issues, especially that of creating opportunities for meaningful, purposeful and programmatic activities which would capture the best elements of the residential student experience and expose PSO Students to those programmes, the Cluster initiative was initiated in 2007. The Development of the Cluster initiative and the accompanying developments in the management of residences made new opportunities possible. The Cluster initiative initially had one of the five PSO wards that existed at the time included in each of the 6 Clusters. That meant that [7]one of the six Clusters in Stellenbosch did not have a PSO ward as part of the Cluster.

One of the primary motivations for the Cluster initiative was the integration of the campus experience of PSO Students and residence Students, especially with a view to improved student success. To give momentum to the objective would mean that the

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[7] Validus Cluster was the only Cluster that would remain without a PSO ward until 2012.

distribution of diversity in Clusters (with regard to both race and gender) had to be improved, and the numbers of Students in PSO wards had to be made more controllable. This was achieved by adding three new wards for women (for all practical purposes, Aristea was divided into four), and one new ward for men. This meant that five of the six Clusters then had men and women ward from the PSO environment as part of the Cluster. One of the Clusters had a mixed-gender ward, and the other four Clusters had separate men's and women's wards. The PSO wards Silene, Venustia and Equité were added for women and Vesta for men.

Another problem was the allocation system of PSO Students, this was reformed and from 2009, the allocation of Students to Clusters was done randomly to ensure maximum diversity in each PSO ward. The Cluster that had no PSO ward found it difficult to function because there were no PSO Students that could be integrated with Students in residences. This was rectified in 2012 when Olympus, a mixed-gender PSO ward, was established and made part of the Validus Cluster.

The new divisions since 2009 and the incorporation with the Cluster initiative made it possible to organise peer support in the form of mentors for first-year Students, also for PSO Students, with relative success for the first time.

Tygerberg campus PSO

The Tygerberg campus was established in 1974. The Students who did not live in residences formed part of the Tygerberg PSO. In 2010, the name was changed to Osler PSO (named after Sir William Osler). The Tygerberg campus followed the PSO model of the Stellenbosch campus. The only exception was that the PSO was a mixed-gender PSO from its establishment.

5. 2009 TASK TEAM

After the 2008 reforms to the PSO structure, staff and Students at Stellenbosch University expressed concern about the University experience of the PSO and commuting Students. Several attempts were made to improve the experience of this group of Students. For example, the Cluster initiative was created to allow for better integration between PSO Students and residence Students, additionally, transport was provided at night to the areas where Students lived. However, these concerns arose out of research that demonstrated that the way Students experience a University

has a direct effect on their success. This was confirmed through reviews of the relevant literature, visits to other universities (nationally and internationally) and visits by international experts in this field. The University decided that it needed to enhance the quality of the University experience for this large group of Students – indeed they are significantly larger in number than Students living in the residences, thus, in light of this new outlook on the structure of PSOs within the institution a Task Team was established in 2009 by the Vice-Rector of Learning & Teaching, the intention behind this Task Team was to investigate:

- The way the University experience impacts PSO Students but more specifically [8]Commuter Students;

- The optimal use of the University's timetable in light of the safety risks for day-Students when they write tests in the evenings;

- All possible implications should the timetable for the existing class and test roster be changed;

- The impact of timetable changes (including test timetables) on organized sports activities;

- The legal implications of meetings during lunchtime, especially with regard to basic conditions of employment;

- The management and utilization of the Study Centre at the JC Smuts Building, with special attention to the needs of commuting Students.

The Task Team for the Advancement of the Integration of PSO Students in Learning and Living Communities [9]consisted of various members of staff and student leaders, and it drew its academic inspiration from the research of [10]Keeling and its foundational principle was:

> *"... (that) learning must be reconsidered – that new research, changing times, and the needs of today's emerging generations of Students require that our traditionally distinct*

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[8] Commuter Students (also referred to as day-Students) are a category of PSO Students who do not live in proximity to the Stellenbosch Campus and therefore have to travel-in to Campus.

[9] See – Executive Summary: Report of the Task Team for the Advancement of the Integration of PSO Students in Learning and Living Communities (2009)

[10] Keeling, R. P. (Editor).2004. Learning Reconsidered. A Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience. Published by NASPA and ACPA, Washington DC, RCA

categories of academic learning and student development be fused in an integrated, comprehensive vision of learning as a transformative process that is centered in and responsive to the whole student"

The Task Team was divided into four working groups and each group had to investigate and produce recommendations for a section of the larger task. The Task Team met weekly and required four two-hour sessions to complete its work. The working groups met in between and reported back at the Task Team meetings. The briefs of the working groups were as follows:

- Working Group 1:

    ✓ To consider the impact of timetable changes on day-and test-timetables;

    ✓ To consider the optimal utilization of the day-timetable with a view of improving the safety of Students (e.g. to move away from evening tests);

    ✓ To consider the legal implications of holding meetings during the midday session with specific reference to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act;

    ✓ To consider any other implications with regards to the above.

- Working Group 2:

    ✓ To review the current situation with regard to the handling of day-Students and those who commute.

- Working Group 3:

    ✓ To consider the impact of a changed day-timetable on sport.

- Working Group 4:

    ✓ To consider the management and utilization of the Study Centre for PSO Students

    ✓ To consider the utilization of other spaces and venues for day and commuting Students

In this regard the task team investigated various elements of campus life which commuter Students were being excluded from by virtue of the lack of accommodation

for their particular circumstance, the Task Team Considered the important aspects and accordingly made the following observations:

1. *It is abundantly clear from the literature, experiences at other universities across the world and our own experience, that special attention should be given and provision should be made for PSO Students (including commuting Students) if their experience of the University and eventual academic success are to be on par with that of Students in residences.*

2. *It is also clear that if we want to assist these Students optimally - and better than we assist them currently - we will need specific time slots and appropriate physical spaces.*

3. *It is apparent from the literature and what we see on our own campus that the Students' life and experiences outside of the lecture hall context are of cardinal importance. The out-of-class experience clearly plays a crucial role in the development and growth of Students and therefore impacts significantly on their academic achievements.*

4. *If the recommendations are to be implemented, they could be of great value to the University because they should impact positively on the largest group of undergraduate Students with a concomitant positive effect on through-put.*

5. *The implementation of these recommendations could lead to an improved image of the University among prospective Students, parents and even University staff, because the institution will be regarded as being more accessible, more adaptable to changing circumstances and willing to create space (physical spaces as well as time-slots) for all kinds of activities associated with an excellent tertiary institution that provides an environment where Students and staff can flourish.*

6. *It is also clear that the promotion of the integration of PSO Students in learning and living communities will require a systemic-holistic approach, not a piecemeal one.*

7. *SU is one of a select few universities in the country that makes provision for sports activities, and that is commendable because the wellness of Students is regarded as being of key importance in a systemic-holistic developmental approach. Even so, it is clear that if the recommended change to the timetable is accepted, it will have an impact on sports activities taking place during the week. However, it is also apparent that if tests are written in a midday slot and not in the evenings that there will be considerable advantages for Students participating in sport. All things considered, it would seem that a change to the class timetable should not have a significant impact on sport at the University.*

8. *The extended midday session could probably encourage some informal sports activities taking place. A direct result of the Task Team's work is that there is a much better understanding than before of the importance of the planning and utilization of*

physical spaces at the University. The utilization of these physical spaces and services to the benefit of PSO and commuting Students, sends a powerful message to those Students; that Stellenbosch is a caring University that is committed to enhancing the University experience of all its Students. It is envisaged that these changes will have a positive effect on the success rates of this particular group of Students.

9. *The integration of PSO and commuting Students into the activities of the University means that Students no longer have to live in expensive accommodation in town and close to campus but may opt for cheaper options further from campus and outside of town, without sacrificing a full University experience, by virtue of activities being moved into the midday slot.*

Following these observations, the task team made over 40 recommendations on how the institution could holistically optimise the University experience for PSO Students in general and commuter Students in particular, in its conclusion the 2009 Task Team ended their report with a quotation from the work of Keeling:

"All campus educators should commit to identifying and integrating community-based learning experiences so commuters, adult learners, graduate Students, and part-time Students can create a holistic experience by learning from their total environment."

6. POST 2009 DEVELOPMENT

Following the 2009 Task Team report, the following developments took place[11]:

1. Various Faculties developed their physical spaces to make them better adapted for commuter Students.
   a. **Engineering Faculty**: Two rooms and the lobby were changed into social and group study areas.
   b. **Natural Sciences (Peroldt building):** The quadrangle was changed to accommodate extra seats and a cafeteria.
   c. **Arts and Social Sciences:** The entrance and lobby were changed to create more areas where Students could interact. The areas in the

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[11] See – para 10.4 in Report of the Task Team about "The future utilisation and organisation of Private Student Organisations (PSOs) to enhance student success in the context of the Cluster initiative". (2015).

psychology building, where Psychology and History are accommodated, were also furnished differently and made more Student friendly. There are several benches outside the building where Students can sit and communicate, learn, have study groups et cetera.

d. **Education**: The lobby was transformed in terms of the area and furniture, and the dressing rooms were rearranged.

e. **Economic and Management Sciences (Schuman building):** The lobby and a separate area on the first floor were changed to accommodate more Students and create a social and group study area for interaction.

f. **AgriSciences (Neethling building):** The quadrangle was changed; a roof was constructed over the quadrangle, which was also rearranged multi purposely to accommodate more Students.

2. Benches (which were also turned towards one another for better interaction between people) that create social areas on campus were placed on campus.

   i. Refreshments (that Students can buy) were made available at most faculties.

   ii. Most residences were equipped with computers, which reduced the pressure on the CUAs[12].

   iii. Sleepover facilities were made available in the hubs of the Wimbledon, amaMaties and Tygerberg Clusters. Students of other Clusters who need these services were also accommodated.

   iv. The positive effect that the 2009 PSO Task Team report had on the campus environment cannot be mistaken, although the most central recommendation about the day timetable changes has not been implemented.

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[12] Computer User Area

7. 2015 TASK TEAM

7 years after the creation of the Cluster Initiative, after the addition of 5 new PSOs and following the Implementation of the 2009 Task Team report, a new Task Team was established in 2015 by the Vice-Rector of Teaching and Learning, the Task Team took their instruction from the concluding words in the 2009 Task Team report:

> *"All campus educators should commit to identifying and integrating community-based learning experiences so commuters, adult learners, graduate Students, and part-time Students can create a holistic experience by learning from their total environment"*[13]

The Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching) requested that a proposal for the possible consolidation of some PSO wards and the concomitant adjustments in the management and leadership structures be submitted. In light of this, a Task Team was put together to reflect on the future of PSOs and their optimal integration. The Task Team functioned under the chairpersonship of the Director of the Centre for Student Structures and Communities (CSSC)

The investigation had to – pay attention to the aspiration to be more inclusive and to embrace diversity in multiple forms; set new comprehensive objectives for PSOs for developing Students in view of the opportunities Clusters and hubs provided; establish a sustainable financial model for affording PSO structures and management mechanisms to ensure that PSO structures do pursue the new objectives and reach them as far as possible. The context in which the reconsideration of the PSO structure took place was one characterized by the following factors:

1. Sufficiently clear objectives had not yet been set for PSO structures with regard to what is expected of them with greater integration in the Cluster context, the best utilisation of expensive infrastructure erected for them, and a sharper academic focus.

2. Two hubs had been completed, where the moving of the House Committee (HC) to the hub required a complete change of thinking with regard to service delivery to PSO Students and the University.

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[13] See quotation – page 29 in Keeling, R. P. (Editor).2004. Learning Reconsidered. A Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience. Published by NASPA and ACPA, Washington DC, RCA

3. A larger percentage of all PSO Students registered at the beginning of the year to become acquainted with the Cluster and the University as part of the PSO community, especially during the welcoming period.

4. The posts of all the Visiting Heads (VHs) were due to terminate in September 2015, and if a new management system for PSO structures was to be proposed, it would not terminate any contractual relations.

5. It was considered a suitable time to evaluate progress with PSO integration in terms of the 2009 PSO Report and to update those recommendations in the light of new developments.

6. Defrayment of PSO leadership structures was a thorny problem for the budget, and a new structure and thinking about it needed to be placed on a financially sustainable road.

As a point of departure the Task Team considered the research of Terezini and Pascarella[14] and their suggestion that:

> *"The research on within-college effects suggest programmatic and policy levers. For example, we have long known that Students living on-campus enjoy larger and more varied benefits of college attendance than do commuting Students. A college might usefully ask, how can the most educationally potent characteristics of the residential experience (e.g. frequent academic and social interaction amongst Students, contact with faculty members, more opportunities for academic and social involvement with the institution) be made more readily available to Students who commute?"*

And also

> *There is an organizational analogy to Myth no 5, that Students' academic and non-academic experiences are separate and independent sources of influence on student learning. Since 1870, when Harvard's Charles William Elliot appointed Ephraim Gurney "to take the burden of discipline off President Elliot's shoulders (Brubacher and Rudy, 1968), the academic affairs and student affairs functions of most institutions have been running essentially on parallel but separate tracks: academic affairs tends to student cognitive development while student affairs ministers to their effective growth.*

> *This bureaucratization of collegiate structures is a creature of administrative convenience and budgetary expedience. It surely has not evolved from any conception*

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[14] in a 1994 article titled *"Living with Myths. Undergraduate Education in America"* included in a later work titled *"Learning from Change: Landmarks in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education"* by Deborah Dezure (2000).

of how Students learn, nor is it supported by research evidence. Organizationally and operationally, we've lost sight of the forest.

If undergraduate education is to be enhanced, faculty members, joined by academic and student affairs administrators, must devise ways to deliver undergraduate education that are as comprehensive and integrated as the ways Students actually learn. A whole new mindset is needed to capitalize on the interrelatedness of the in- and out-of-class influences on student learning and the functional interconnectedness of academic and student affairs divisions."

.... "John F. Kennedy stated that "the great enemy of truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived, and dishonest – but the myth, persistent, persuasive and unrealistic" (Schlesinger, 1965). It is time we put to use what we know with some confidence about what constitutes effective teaching and learning and put to rest educational myths that have outlived their usefulness."

Inspired by this research and the declaration of the University that:

"With the new Cluster, hubs, listening, learning and living houses (LLL) and an improved hostel placement policy, the University wants to ensure in the future that its Students will have a complete campus experience that will ensure success."

The Task Team set out to investigate the following aspects:

1. What do PSOs do typically, and what should/can they do with regard to different year groups to make a better contribution, given the new strategy and resolve of the University, the developments of the past number of years and the pursuit of greater student success?

2. The best structure to give expression to it, including the division of PSO wards and the nature of their composition, namely single- or double-gender wards (i.e. mixed-gender wards).

3. The allocation of Students to PSOs in terms of the Policy for placement in residences and listening, learning and living houses, as well as placement in PSO wards and Clusters (Placement Policy) and the mechanisms to reach the objectives of diversity and limit walking over between wards. Together with this, reflection about the inclusion of Students in private hostels in a single PSO by the letting office.

4. Particular management mechanisms to ensure that the respective PSO pursues the objectives efficiently, including mechanisms not to expose Students to PSO structures that do not pursue the objectives efficiently.

5. The size of PSO wards in the light of the service and development contributions they make, their own financial sustainability (house finances) and the financing of the leadership structures (the financial model to be able to afford the PSO).

6. The extent to which the PSOs manage to take care of all undergraduate year groups first, second and third-year Students) on the campus and render a service to year groups further than the first year.

7. The extent to which the PSOs are geared for postgraduate Students and international Students coming to the US for the first time.

8. The institution of an annual satisfaction survey and what should be reflected in such a survey.

9. The inclusion of PSO wards in Clusters and the co-operation that exists between residences and PSO wards in a Cluster.

10. How do the PSOs deal with and accommodate commuters, and what can be learnt from that?

11. Which matters from the 2009 report must be followed up, and to what extent have the expectations of that report been met?

12. The handling of any related matter that seems to be necessary during the course of the Task Team's activities.

The 2015 Task Team about "The future utilisation and organisation of Private Student Organisations (PSOs) to enhance student success in the context of the Cluster initiative" was divided into three working groups to divide the work. Each work group focused on a part of the task and reported on it. The working groups were divided as follows:

Work Group 1: The work group was tasked with investigating:
a. What PSOs typically do and should do,
b. Best structure for the Management of PSOs,
c. The inclusion of PSO wards in Clusters and co-operation between residences and PSO wards.

Work Group 2: The work group was tasked with investigating:
a. The allocation system of Students to PSOs,
b. The size of PSO wards and their financial sustainability and financing of leadership structures,

   c. Reviewing of the 2009 PSO Report

Work Group 3: The work group was tasked with investigating:

   a. Satisfaction surveys,

   b. PSOs and commuters,

   c. Newcomer, postgraduate and international Students in PSOs

Following the in-depth investigation, consultation of research and analysis of the different working groups the following recommendations[15] were made:

Work Group 1

   a. PSO wards must increasingly integrate in terms of gender. The aim is to have only one mixed-gender PSO ward per Cluster eventually. When the PSO wards take up their residence in a hub, there will be only one mixed-gender PSO ward in that Cluster.

   b. The posts of Visiting Heads (VHs) on the Stellenbosch campus are to be abolished and replaced by two full-time PSO co-ordinators who will also be responsible for organising a ResEd educational programme especially for PSO Students.

   c. Where a mixed-gender PSO ward is established, that house committee (HC) should consist of a Prim, two Vice Prims (one man and one woman) and nine other House Committee members. The total number of house committee members should be 12.

   d. Management mechanisms to motivate PSO to pursue their objectives must be accepted. It includes the possibility of not allocating newcomer freshmen to PSO wards that are not efficient.

   e. Physical areas must be established in all Clusters (including hubs) to let PSO Students feel 'at home' and where they can interact better with Students in the residences.

   f. The leadership models of the Prim Committee (PC) and Clusters must be amended to give PSOs sufficient say in deliberations.

Work Group 2

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[15] See – addendum A of this report for full list of observations and recommendations

a. Retain the system of random allocation of Students to PSO wards.

b. As a point of departure, walking over between PSO wards must not be allowed. The possibility of registering electronically with the PSO ward in advance must be considered. PSO wards with fewer amenities must be assisted to counter walking over or fall-out.

c. Marketing of PSO wards among prospective Students must be improved.

d. It is important that infrastructural improvements with regard to hubs and the accessibility of hostels for PSO Students be completed purposefully so that experiences of PSO Students between Clusters can be of equal value.

e. Retain the PSO levy and consider phasing in the increases necessary with regard to the PSO levy over a period of two years.

f. In Clusters where there are two PSO wards, the wards must be consolidated so that there is one PSO ward. Further, a reduction of the number of HC members accordingly is advised. The consolidation can be phased in as the hubs are completed. That means that the consolidation of wards in amaMaties and Wimbledon Clusters must be negotiated with the student leadership.

g. The student card system should be changed such that the Cluster to which the student belongs is also added to the student card.

Work Group 3

a. Consolidate the results of the ALFA and OMEGA questionnaires, the welcoming questionnaire and the BeWell mentor feedback with the satisfaction questionnaire to obtain the best data to amend strategies for PSO Students.

b. Develop personnel capacity to administrate and interpret the questionnaires.

c. Amend the mobility plan to transport commuting Students to the respective Clusters.

d. Use the Cluster as a mechanism to include postgraduate and international PSO Students in campus life. Make it part of the senior experience that is developed for Students in student accommodation.

The Task Team concluded that the development in the ecosystem of support for PSO Students through the development of the Cluster spaces and PSO wards warranted a new structure to be implemented in the management and integration plans of the

University in order to bring the PSO initiative in line with the SU vision for the inclusive and transformative development of graduate attributes within Students.

7. POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT

Following the 2015 report key changes were introduced to how the PSO space was to be managed and how the integration of commuter Students was developed, some of the most notable developments include:[16]

1. The management system of having Visting Heads was abolished, with the lone exception of the Tygerberg PSO, Osler, which retained their Visiting Head, owing to the unique nature of their positioning.

2. Two (2) PSO co-ordinators were appointed by the CSC.

3. The PSO coordinators were tasked with ensuring that the medium and long term goals of the 2015 Task Team report would be implemented, additionally they would need to develop a PSO student specific ResEd model, further they needed to organise and manage the operations of all the PSOs in collaboration with the elected student leadership of that PSO.

4. The welcoming period was optimized to ensure that there was a proper system for tracking and maintaining the list of allocated Students, adjustments were introduced to this system to ensure that walk-overs were no longer permitted, except for limited circumstances.

5. The PSO office was established in 2016, with the objective of formalizing the institution of support for the PSOs.

6. The PSO office developed capacities to both create and interpret surveys and questionnaires and thus be able to appropriately gauge the satisfaction of PSO Students.

7. PSO welcoming programmes were developed to ensure that newcomer Students are made aware of and are exposed to all the facilities available to them within their Clusters.

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[16] See – PSO Office Mid-year reports for 2016, 2017, 2018

It remains the main focus and object of the PSO Coordinators to build relationships with the different leadership structures (HK, Mentors & Committees) within the different PSO communities. Both Coordinators continue to find innovative and impactive means to engage with PSO leaders and to establish relationships with them. They also focus on building relationships with other communities and departments on campus.

In order to establish SU as a world-class institution, the PSO office remains cognizant of the need to increase accessibility for "living-outs" Students to on-campus spaces where out of class learning, engagement and socialization can take place. This has been proven achievable in the development of the first two hubs, namely amaMaties and Wimbledon. These spaces have also allowed for significant interaction between Students and the student affairs division. The PSO Office, therefore, continues to place a lot of emphasis on the development of further spaces where this can happen.

8. CONCLUSION

The Stellenbosch University PSO model, is an idea that is close to 50 years in the making, it has seen major shifts and turns and continues to be a work in progress, what cannot, however, be mistaken is the overwhelming impact that this ecosystem of support for the "living-outs" Students has had on the growth of their cognitive development and perseverance, the Stellenbosch model, is premised on the philosophy that in order to produce a more transformative student experience that instils the graduate attributes that the University seeks to grow within all Students, there must be a purposeful, programmatic and specific efforts to integrate the academic and social lives of Students, especially for Students who do not reside in University accommodation. This is achieved through an infrastructure that over the last 50 years has invested in maximizing the most educationally potent characteristics of the residential experience (such as: frequent academic and social interaction amongst Students, contact with faculty members, more opportunities for academic and social involvement with the institution) and making those characteristics readily available to Students who do not particularly live in residences. As a leading institution in the field of innovation and enhanced student experiences, Stellenbosch University

has uniquely positioned itself in such a manner that not only will its purposeful efforts to enhance the student experience mean that Vision 2040 is realized, but it will afford other institutions an opportunity to learn and develop their own ecosystem of support for commuter Students which will ensure the universal elevation of the standard of higher education.

This report has reflected the history of the PSO project, from its inception in the early 1970s, to the restructuring of 2007-2009, it has reflected on the Cluster initiative which was a further development aimed at supporting the integration of PSO Students with residence Students. This report additionally reflected the institutional 'think tanks' such as the 2009 Task Team for the Advancement of the Integration of PSO Students in Learning and Living Communities and the 2015 Task Team about "The future utilisation and organisation of Private Student Organisations (PSOs) to enhance student success in the context of the Cluster initiative" which contributed immensely to the substantive transformation of the PSO space and the PSO student experience. It, therefore, suffices to conclude this report on the same note as that which it began, with an ideal, best articulated by Stellenbosch University's Vision 2040[17]:

> *Stellenbosch University will be Africa's leading research-intensive University, globally recognised as excellent, inclusive and innovative, where we advance knowledge in service of society*.

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[17] See - the Stellenbosch University Vision 2040 and 2019-2024 strategic framework document.

9. SOURCES

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ADDENDUM A – 2015 TASK TEAM OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WORK GROUP 1

CONCLUSIONS/FINDINGS

1   Students expect increasing support regarding their development, and in this regard, the model of the VH is obsolete. (See point of departure 6.10.)

2   Objectives of PSO wards must be extended to include the academic integration of, the utilisation of facilities in the Cluster by and service provision to more senior Students.

3   The management of diversity as described in point of departure 6.7 must be supported, and the PSO wards must integrate with regard to gender.

4   The development of PSO Students must be pursued purposefully. ResEd education can be presented easier in hostel context; therefore, similar opportunities for PSO Students must be developed purposefully, however.

5   Integration of the PSO with the Cluster is important, and PSOs must receive bargaining power that is equal in the Cluster. In this regard, especially the development of Cluster leadership must receive attention. Similar adjustments should be made in the PC.

6   Integration of postgraduate and international Students can be managed better by doing it together with hostels in the Cluster.

7   Where a private hostel is leased, it can be managed as part of the PSO. In such a case, it is better that the private hostel co-operates with the PSO ward and the PSO leadership do not live in the hostel. The incorporation of Nooitgedacht A with Olympus PSO is the preferred model.

8   It is desirable to introduce certain measures that will make it possible to encourage the PSO ward to pursue the objectives for PSOs (and the broader Cluster). In the case where the PSO ward does not pursue the objectives effectively, it is necessary that newcomer Students not be exposed to the leadership of the PSO ward.

9   Areas in the respective Clusters contribute to better incorporation of PSOs with the larger Cluster. It is especially so in the case of hubs and the use of hostel

amenities (like dining halls). It is not all about the physical areas, but also about the other strategic outcomes of the Cluster initiative. For example, it exposes hostel Students to other Students, who in turn broaden their limited understanding of the University.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1   The objective of PSO wards is to incorporate newcomer first-year Students in a welcoming way with the University, Cluster and mentor groups, introduce them to the mutual areas in the Cluster, and to present a ResEd educational programme. With regard to non-final-year and final-year Students, the PSO facilitates the incorporation in the mentor, tutor, and study groups of faculties. It also provides a programme of ResEd education, and facilitates the use of mutual areas in the Cluster. For all Students, the PSO arranges involvement in social, sports and cultural activities. The PSO ward co-operates with the Cluster leadership to provide a home in the Cluster for postgraduate and international Students.

2   PSO wards integrate increasingly where they are not in a Cluster with a hub. The aim is to have only one mixed-gender PSO ward per Cluster eventually. When the PSO wards move into a hub, there will be only one mixed-gender PSO ward in that Cluster.

3   The posts of the VHs on the Stellenbosch campus are abolished by the end of September 2015 or as soon as practicable thereafter. The posts are replaced by two PSO co-ordinators. The persons simultaneously will be responsible for guiding the PSOs of three Clusters to achieve the described objectives and to arrange a ResEd educational programme especially for PSO Students.

4   Where a mixed-gender PSO ward is established, that house committee consists of a prim, two deputy prims (one man and one woman) and nine other house committee members. The total number of house committee members is then 12.

5   That management mechanisms to encourage PSO to reach their objectives be instituted and that the institution of a last credible resort, for instance to place a PSO under administration or to not allocate new members to the PSO, be accepted.

6   That physical areas in all Clusters be created to ensure that there are areas where PSO Students can feel "at home" and where these Students can have better interaction with Students in the hostels (and vice versa).

7   That the leadership models of the PC and Clusters be adjusted to give adequate and, in terms of numbers, equal participation in deliberations to PSOs. In addition, that the numbers of PSOs in the PC will decrease and the PC will have to be restructured to give equal say to the PSOs. The same applies to the leadership model in the Cluster where only a representative from each of the hostels and PSOs is used. In that case, the hostels get an improper big say in the organisation of the Cluster.

WORK GROUP 2

CONCLUSIONS

1   All arguments considered, the random allocation of newcomer Students to PSO wards still makes the most sense.

2   For the different ways in which PSO wards are utilised, it is important that Students should not walk over between the respective wards. However, it is so that no system can have no flexibility. However, to provide flexibility, any mechanism should be utilised very restrictively and be defined properly.

3   If Students and their parents understand the PSO structure better, it will relieve much tension.

4   There is a difference in the quality of services a PSO student receives, depending on the ward with which the student is incorporated. The difference is accentuated where more hostels are made accessible to Students and where the infrastructure, for example the hub, is completed/improved in a Cluster.

5   The location of the hubs must be included in the route the Matie shuttle follows.

6   The structure of the PSO wards in its extended capacity is necessary for the effective inclusion of PSO Students. It is necessary to merge PSO wards to have only one ward per Cluster. Except for the advantages for handling diversity, the model is manageable and affordable. It is important to decide on a sustainable budgeting model for the defrayal of the extended leadership of PSO wards. It will necessitate an additional increase in the PSO levy.

7   The additional burden the budget places on the PSO levy is an aspect that probably must be phased in and cannot be applied in one year.

8   There is no sufficient reason to maintain the difference in the honoraria of PSO leadership and hostel leadership.

9   The VH structure is obsolete and should be replaced by at least two full-time personnel members who are committed to the development of PSO Students.

10 The accommodation budget is utilised to create a more welcoming culture for Students by funding, maintaining and paying running costs of the infrastructure that is accessible to PSO Students. It also contributes to the compensation of PSO leadership. The accommodation budget recently also took over the payment of mentors in hostels as part of the accommodation budget. With that, the accommodation budget also supports the academic success of Students

11 Acceptance of PSO Students' access to hostels varies. It will improve as hostels are made accessible to PSO Students and the representation of PSO Students in leadership structures increases. (See also the recommendation of Work Group 1 with regard to the changing of leadership structures.)

12 It is clear that the Cluster initiative is using hostels to improve the campus experience of all Students on campus.

13 The application of the PSO levy as financing mechanism is fair. It is especially fair when considering how much support for PSO Students has increased during the past six years. (In this regard, also consider the feedback about the implementation of the 2009 report.) There are Students who utilise the benefits of PSO accessibility, but who are not subject to the PSO levy at present.

14 The Task Team notes with appreciation the positive effect that the 2009 PSO Task Team report had on the campus environment, although the most central recommendation about the day timetable changes has not been implemented.

15 Official confirmation of the Cluster (and consequently the PSO ward) on the back of the student card will play an important role to let Students identify with their wards and add an important self-regulating aspect to the use of mutual amenities in Clusters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1   Retain the random allocation of Students to PSO wards.

2   As a point of departure, walking over between PSO wards must not be allowed. Make electronic pre-registration at a PSO ward possible to establish loyalty as early as possible, which will counter walking over. It will also let proceedings on arrival of newcomers on the first day of welcoming run more smoothly.

3   Make the programme for providing infrastructure known as far as possible. Investigate ways in which the University can assist PSO wards with fewer amenities to counter walking over or fall-out. An example of this is the utilisation of the tent as a temporary hub during welcoming at Olympus.

4   Improve the marketing of PSO wards among prospective Students. It will be a work assignment for PSO co-ordinators. See Addendum B for proposals on how to do this.

5   It is important that the infrastructural improvements with regard to hubs and the accessibility of hostels for PSO Students be completed purposefully and that Students' experience will be on an equal level, regardless of the Cluster to which they belong.

6   Retain the PSO levy and consider phasing in the increases required with regard to the PSO levy over a period of two years. Increase the levy with R35,00 (in 2015 Rand value) and pay any deficit from accumulated overarching PSO funds and savings until all the envisaged changes have been achieved.

7   Finance the extended leadership of the PSO by financing 40% of the additional need from the main budget, 30% by means of the accommodation budget and 30% by an increase in the PSO levy

8   Finance the infrastructural cost concerning the four remaining hubs by the campus renovation project. The accommodation created for PSO leadership at the hubs can be financed from the accommodation budget.

9   Finance the refurnishing of the hostels to be accessible for PSO Students from the accommodation budget.

10   Merge the wards in Clusters with two PSO wards so that there is only one PSO ward, and reduce the number of PC members accordingly. The merging can be phased in as the hubs are completed. It means that the merging of the wards in amaMaties and Wimbledon must be negotiated.

11   Where wards are merged, the HC numbers are reduced to 12.

12   Replace the VH structure at the end of September or as soon as practicable thereafter with two full-time personnel members who dedicate their attention full-time to the development of PSO Students. Finance it by using the money that is utilised for the 10 posts for VHs, and finance any deficit by a levy of R23 per PSO student.

13 Change the student card system so that the Cluster to which the student belongs can also be indicated on the student card.

WORK GROUP 3
CONCLUSIONS/FINDINGS

1 The introduction of an annual satisfaction questionnaire will enable the University to determine how strategies can be adapted to serve PSO Students successfully. The questionnaire can also be used to measure satisfaction with a particular ward. It is possible that the questionnaire can form part of a more comprehensive satisfaction questionnaire for all Students with questions about the implementation of the language policy, alcohol use and the general campus experience.

2 The ALPHA and OMEGA questionnaires as well as the questionnaire about welcoming and the BeWell mentor feedback already provide valuable information about PSO Students.

3 A capacity must be developed so that questionnaires can be interpreted meaningfully to all University officials who can benefit from them.

4 Commuting Students have greater difficulty to become part of the University, and the mobility plan should be adjusted in such a way that the Students benefit from it.

5 Where Students use dining amenities in the Cluster, chances are very good that they use more services of the PSO ward and Cluster.

6 The backpacker amenities provide a relief for commuting Students.

7 The Cluster should be the mechanism to integrate postgraduate and international Students better with life on the campus. Five of the seven Clusters already have a considerable amount of accommodation for senior Students, and those areas can be used to provide an intellectual home for postgraduate Students. It can be used as a starting point to get postgraduate Students to use more services for PSO Students in the Cluster.

8 The development of the functioning of the Cluster to provide a home for postgraduate and international Students should be developed in coherence with the development of the senior experience in senior hostels.

9 International Students who come to the US for only a semester can make a great contribution to enrich South African Students' experience. Negotiations between

CSSC and PGIO are necessary to understand how to let it happen optimally and to involve those Students in PSO wards and Clusters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1   Compile a comprehensive satisfaction questionnaire for PSO Students. The proposed satisfaction questionnaire can be viewed at https://equipu4.formstack.com/forms/pso.

2   Consolidate the results of the ALPHA and OMEGA questionnaires, the welcoming questionnaire and the BeWell mentor feedback with the satisfaction questionnaire to obtain the best data to adjust strategies for PSO Students.

3   Add to the biographic particulars of all the questionnaires the choice option to indicate the student's Cluster.

4   Develop personnel capacity to administrate and interpret the questionnaires.

5   Adapt the mobility plan to transport commuting Students to the respective hubs at more scheduled times.

6   Use the Cluster as a mechanism to include postgraduate and international PSO Students in campus life. Make it part of the senior experience developed for Students in student accommodation.

7   When the hubs are built, the possibility of an area for postgraduate Students that can be used by Students and lecturers must be investigated. It can serve as an exclusive postgraduate area towards which Students can aspire (aspirational space).

8   CSSC and PGIO must reflect together on how to make international Students part of the Clusters