

Communication from Council (meeting of 22 June 2020)



A collage of selfies of Council members who participated in an online meeting of the body on 22 June 2020, from left, top row: Drs Ronel Retief and Tsakani Ngomane, Mr Charl Cillié, Profs Aslam Fataar and Amanda Gouws, Mr Lewis Mboko and Prof Hester Klopper. Middle row: Mr Jannie Durand, Adv Jean Meiring, Ms Ingrid Heydenrych, Prof Wim de Villiers, Ms Nadine Moodie, and Messrs George Steyn (Chair) and Ainsley Moos. Bottom row: Prof Stan du Plessis, Messrs Wayde Davidse and Hubert Brody, Ms Ziyanda Stuurman, and profs Arnold Schoonwinkel, Nico Koopman and Eugene Cloete

The Stellenbosch University (SU) Council held its second meeting for 2020 on Monday 22 June. As in April, the meeting was conducted on an online collaboration platform in compliance with the national lockdown regulations to curb the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Council commended the entire SU community for the way they were rallying in response to the crisis. The University rapidly switched to emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment (commonly referred to as “online learning”), which will go a long way towards the successful completion of the academic year. Thanks for all the hard work by SU employees – both academic and professional administrative support services (PASS) staff – and students in this regard. And all the best for the exams currently under way!

SU researchers also continue to impress with their innovative contributions in the fight against COVID-19. And the University is providing crucial support to the broader community in various ways.

Team SU indeed “rose to the occasion”, as the Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Wim de Villiers, put it in his overall [management report](#). Council expressed its appreciation for management’s proactive handling of the situation, which is mitigating the impact of the crisis on the University.

The Vice-Rector: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel, Prof Nico Koopman, [reported](#) in detail about activities in his responsibility centre over the past year. Council also praised the world-champion SU Choir for continuing to fly the maroon flag in these challenging times. Even though they are physically apart, they remain in harmony, lifting our spirits with moving virtual performances (click [here](#) and [here](#) to view).

Please read on for more details about our meeting ([click here](#) for an online version).

Kind regards and stay safe.

George Steyn
Chair: SU Council

Record number of qualifications awarded in 2019

In his report to Council ([click here](#) for the complete document, and [here](#) for a slide presentation), Rector and Vice-Chancellor **Prof Wim de Villiers** pointed out that SU again conferred a record number of qualifications for the 2019 academic year – a **total of 9 120**. This is 15% more than in 2015, when he started his first term.

At **361, doctoral degrees** also hit an all-time high, surpassing the 2015 figure by no less than 35%. Overall, SU again awarded more postgraduate than undergraduate qualifications (51% vs 49%), which is in line with the institution's positioning as a research-intensive university.

"We are proud of the significant contribution to progress and development that we are making in this way – not only in our country, but also on the rest of our continent and globally," Prof De Villiers said.

Annual report and financial statements for 2019

Council **approved** SU's 2019 annual integrated report, including the University's consolidated annual financial statements, at the recommendation of its Audit and Risk Committee.

An external audit of the University resulted in an unqualified external audit report on SU's consolidated financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2019. Council approved the going-concern status of SU and expressed the opinion that the University was in a favourable financial position and would continue as a going concern for the following 12 months. The severe impact of the pandemic on the financial outlook of most institutions, the University included, necessitated looking closely at this question.

The approved annual report and financial statements will now be submitted to the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, following which an electronic copy will be made available on the SU website.

Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel

At this Council meeting, it was **Prof Nico Koopman's** turn to report on activities in his responsibility centre – Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel – over the past year. ([Click here](#) for the complete document, and [here](#) for a pdf version of his PowerPoint presentation.)

Achievements in this area bode well for delivering on SU's intent of cultivating an institution characterised by inclusivity, deep and intentional transformation, and diversity – as expressed in *Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024*.

Highlights from Prof Koopman's report included the following:

- **Staff health and well-being** is a top priority. A second biennial staff survey about work culture and climate took place in 2019, a draft Staff Health and Well-Being Plan has been adopted by the Rectorate, and an external review of SU's Human Resources Division is under way.
- Good progress is being made with **diversifying SU's student and staff corps**, although challenges remain at senior levels – both among academics and professional administrative support services (PASS) staff. A new Code for Employment Equity and Diversity has been approved, which will make transformation a key performance area of every staff member.
- SU's **institutional culture** is also receiving priority attention. The transformation competencies of staff members and students are being developed in various ways, and visual redress and renewal is taking place across the University.

- **Social impact** is properly embedded in the activities of faculties, PASS divisions and student structures. And the University is providing valuable support to vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 crisis, collaborating with stakeholders and partners.

SU brand refresh

Council received an update from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Strategy and Internationalisation, **Prof Hester Klopper**, on progress with refreshing SU's institutional brand. The intention is to ensure that it is aligned with the University's *Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024* and brand positioning strategy.

Council reiterated its support for the process, which is aimed at **consolidating and strengthening** the SU brand after a touchpoint audit in 2018 revealed that more than 170 different visual identities were being used across the University. A brand valuation and brand perception audit were completed in 2019, and now form the basis of SU's brand strategy and narrative.

Prof Klopper outlined the agreed principles guiding the process, namely:

- adherence to a monolithic brand architecture (i.e. a single, unifying brand);
- development of a refreshed visual identity; and
- retaining maroon as the primary institutional colour.

It was decided that management should **continue with the process** – with input from Council and other stakeholders – and then make recommendations to Council for a final decision.

Personnel matters

Prof Johan Fourie attended his last Council meeting in his capacity as non-Senate member elected by permanent academic staff of the University not serving in Senate. Having been promoted to a full professor, he will now become a Senate member, which disqualifies him from serving on Council in his current capacity. Council thanked him for his contribution and congratulated him on his promotion.

The second term of the **Dean: Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences**, Prof Jimmy Volmink, ends on 31 December 2020. Because the current conditions caused by the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown are making it difficult to recruit a new appointment, Council accepted a recommendation of its Executive Committee to extend the process for appointing a new dean by one year. The new appointee is to assume duty by no later than January 2022.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the SU Council is scheduled for **21 September 2020**.