

Communication from Council

As a university rooted in a complex history, Stellenbosch University (SU) continues to prioritise restitution, accountability and the commitment to building a more inclusive, equitable future. It is in this spirit that the SU Council convened its final meeting for 2024 on 2 December to address matters critical to our shared vision.

The year has been filled with significant academic achievements, record philanthropic donations, and tremendous strengthening of SU's links with other tertiary institutions in South Africa and across the globe. At the upcoming graduations, the University will confer nearly 6 000 qualifications. This will be an opportunity to reflect on the incredible journey it has been for many of our graduands, often in the face of significant obstacles. I am grounded by stories such as those of [Phophi Mudau](#), who funded part of her studies by selling sweets, and of [Llewellyn van der Ross](#), the Western Cape's top teacher, who will receive his master's degree next week. And I love the joyous celebrations from the audience when loved ones cross the stage. Graduations bring our academic project, the central purpose of the University, to life and remind us all why we do what we do *with* and *for* SU.

So, I am sad that the recent Council meeting was, of necessity, dominated by continued discussion around governance issues relating to the rejuvenation of Wilgenhof. At the same time, these deliberations underscore Council's commitment to rigorous governance and accountability, which I strongly support. For more on this, I invite you to read the [communication](#) that was shared following the discussions. Importantly, the work that sets the reimagination and rejuvenation of Wilgenhof in motion is under way, and Council looks forward to this progressing in 2025.

In approving the 2025 budget, Council was particularly pleased that the budget allows for modest increases in student fees (5%) and accommodation fees (7%), while also providing for an annual salary increase of 6,6%, as well as an increase in certain base remuneration levels (BRLs), capped at 8,6%. The performance marks for 2022 and 2023 will be used to calculate the changes to the BRLs. The budget, subject to confirmation of the state subsidy later this month, attests to careful financial management over many years to maintain the sustainability of our institution. Council does not take this careful stewardship lightly, especially given the stresses felt in our sector.

In addition, Council noted developments on SUNStudent (particularly in the run-up to the graduations), as well as the plans for the return to campus in the new year. Particular attention has been paid to accommodation and to developing meal plans that can be managed within the annual NSFAS allowance. The Institutional Plan for 2025–2030 and other governance updates also received Council's endorsement.

Council celebrated Prof Hester Kloppe's appointment as Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the Free State. Hester has had a significant impact at SU, and we look forward to many years of collaboration ahead.

In ending, I extend Council's heartfelt gratitude to you all for your indefatigable work that makes the achievements of the University and its students possible. We look forward to stepping into 2025 with renewed focus and the opportunity to continue building on our shared vision for SU.

Warm regards

Nicky Newton-King
Chair of Council