



# SRC 2020/2021 Term 2 Report

Eduard Zehrt, Secretary General, zehrt@sun.ac.za

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## Constitutional Responsibilities

According to the Stellenbosch University Student Constitution, 2018, the Secretary is at least responsible for:

- Maintaining internal communication within the SRC.
- Managing knowledge and institutional memory within the SRC.
- Ensuring that SRC meetings, and any other meetings or consultations where the SRC desired record keeping, are properly recorded; and
- Updating, safekeeping and making available records, policies, and other documents of the SRC.

## Portfolio Overview

### Role in the SRC

The Secretary General is primarily responsible to uphold internal communication within the SRC.

This means that the Secretary General makes all relevant documents available to the SRC, including, but not limited to, the minutes and agendas of SRC meetings, the minutes, and agendas of Executive Committee meetings as well as the minutes and agendas of Executive SRC Members and Management meetings.

What is notable about this is that internal communication is most definitely, not limited to these formal circumstances. Because of this extension of definition, additional responsibilities befall the Secretary General such as keeping members and managers of the SRC on the various happenings and stances of the SRC.

The Secretary General is also responsible to ensure smooth communication lines within the SRC, using different platforms, including, but not limited to, emails and cell phone communication.

### Role in the University

The role of the Secretary General in the context of the University stretches as far as maintaining communication lines with the Rector's Management Team. The Secretary General is responsible to set up the agenda as well as to minute all meetings held between the Rectorate and the SRC Executive. They are also responsible to make these minutes and agendas available to all the people included in the SRC Executive and Management meetings contact list (listed in important contacts).

Further, the Secretary General plays a pivotal role as the direct communicating link between the SRC and the Rectorate Management Team

### Role in South Africa

SRC's around the country have a very important role to play in representing students on the different campuses. The Secretary General is an Executive position in all SRC's, plays a very important role a store of and main point of access for SRC Members and managers, Management, and students to all information relevant to the SRC. When Secretary Generals from various University's hold effective communication it helps unify the students of South Africa especially in extraordinary circumstances such as the ongoing pandemic. The Secretary General typically accompanies the Chairperson to meetings of the South African Union of Students, to articulate students' needs on a national level.

## Committees / Task Teams

### Term I

- Workstream for Student Services
- SRC Executive Committee

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- RegisterAll Task Team

## Term 2

- Workstream for Student Services
- SRC Executive Committee
- Communication Policy Task Team

## Term Overview

### Welcoming Week

I created a PowerPoint presentation to introduce the newcomers to all SRC members & their portfolios, and to give an outline of the student leadership structures at SU, how they fit into each other, and what the SRC's role is in them. I contacted all Prims and requested them to provide a 15-minute timeslot for several SRC members (depending on who was available) to do the presentation. Fewer than half of the Prims responded, but arrangements presentations were done for all of those who did. In subsequent years, this initiative must be made longer and more interactive – perhaps by encouraging students to role play in a difficult student leadership scenario and discuss the approaches to and importance of student leadership.

### Registration

The last few weeks of registration were the most difficult period of my time on the SRC. This year, registration was completely online, unless a student was unable to register online or via email. In the first week after registration opened, there were several complaints about glitches in the online registration system. However, these were soon ironed out by the Registrar's Division & IT. The next month of the registration period was almost completely quiet. Then, in the last week before registration was set to close, the situation escalated rapidly.

Dozens of NSFAS-funded students emailed the SRC because they had not received their funding outcomes from NSFAS yet and were about to be financially excluded. At other universities, student unrest developed as they insisted on registration blocks being lifted, regardless of their student debt. Those sentiments were shared by the "People's Movement", who orchestrated a protest and closed all entrances to the Neelsie Student Centre, intending to shut it down until all their demands were met. In an effort to get students registered, whilst attempting to mitigate student protests (as these could result in criminal charges or violence), the SRC urgently met with SU Management several times. We communicated the gravity of the situation and contextualised how harsh financial exclusion is during a pandemic. To protect the integrity of the registration process, especially its fairness, Management would not lift the registration block. However, they made an extraordinary effort to secure funds to clear the debt of these students, which is a much more favourable solution for these students. By pooling funds from external donors such as the Metje Foundation, as well as internally from SU's contingency reserves, we jointly secured more than R20 000 000 to completely clear the debt of 438 students and the #Action4Inclusion campaign. This was an absolute triumph for students and our council.

During this time, the SRC chairperson (Xola) and I attended a meeting of the South African Union of Students (SAUS, a union of all universities' SRC's) where we met with Prof. Ahmed Bawa (USAf), Mr Buti Manamela (Deputy Minister: DHET) and NSFAS Executives. We articulated the dire situation brought about by NSFAS, including laptop loans being a year late, unfunded First-Time-Entering-Students (FTEN's), defunded PGCE students, and no allowances having been aid, even as the academic year started. The productivity of the meeting was however hampered by members digressing into demands for free education and dismissing explanation offered by the executives. Still, the national

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shutdown which SAUS called afterwards placed the government under sufficient pressure to return much-needed funding back to NSFAS & DHET.

### COVID-19 Protocols Campaign

In collaboration with Students Governance and our Branding & Marketing and Safety & Security portfolios, we created and distributed posters on campus to encourage students to stick closely to the COVID-19 protocols. I contacted the managers of various computer user areas to display it on their screens and contacted Neelsie Management with concerns about the Neelsie's potential to become a COVID-19 hotspot. If we are to measure the success of the campaign by the fact that Stellenbosch's R-value (rate of spread) has consistently remained under one, then it was successful.

### SRC Meetings

SRC Executive Committee meetings continued on a weekly basis, SRC General meetings fortnightly. This, along with other meetings, SRC responsibilities, and academics, made it impossible to continue writing all minutes myself. I applied for a budget amendment to charter the support of a minute scribed, paid per meeting minuted. This was both a necessary and effective measure, as it allowed me to pay due diligence to constitutional requirements (timely scheduling of meetings, drafting of agendas, managing sr@sun.ac.za) and other SRC responsibilities (office duty, committee representation, SAUS travels).

The method of submitting apologies was changed to a Microsoft Form with a conveniently shortened bit.ly link. Members could indicate whether they will arrive late, leave early, not attend at all, or attend online instead of in person, as expected. This initiative worked excellently, as all apologies were consolidated in one place, and could never be lost or missed. It will help keep members accountable to their constitutional responsibility of attending meetings.

### Workstream for Student Services (WSS)

The WSS is one of the workstreams created by the Institutional Committee for Business Continuity (ICBC). It is chaired by the registrar and includes members from various departments like Bursaries & Loans, the Registrar's Division, Sport, Residence & Admissions etc. Its purpose was to make recommendations to the ICBC and advise on upcoming decisions, based on the inputs of its diverse members.

This term, the efforts of this workstream were focused on the logistics of welcoming back 100% of students to campus. Often, this entailed devising two scenarios that cater to both possible trends of the pandemic (improving & worsening) and usually necessitated a hybrid (in-person & online) solutions throughout.

My strategy in representing students on this workstream was:

1. To advise against taking unnecessary risks.
2. To pre-empt what students will do (their perception and response to motions / scenarios)
3. To assert that students' needs must be placed first.

A recurring issue of contention was the conflict of interest between academic obligations and social solidarity regarding COVID-19. For example, the SRC cautioned that students may misrepresent themselves on the Higher Health screening app if they felt their complete honesty would have a severe academic consequence – for example, not being allowed into a test venue and failing a module as a result. We advised the assessments to be structured in a way that would not make students choose between academic success and others' safety, but with the third wave apparently coming during test & exam times, this might happen yet.

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## Communication Policy Task Team

Stellenbosch University decided that it needed a communication policy to regulate how students and staff communicate with each other and with university stakeholders, especially since many other universities and institutions of this size have such a policy.

I am excited about being a student representative on this task team because I have never been involved in a task team that deals specifically with policy, much less one that is creating a policy completely from scratch.

In the name of thoroughness, the task team is off to a slow start. At the time of writing this report, the latest meeting dealt with establishing the scope of the policy.

My strategy in representing students on this task team was:

1. To ensure SU's commitment to multilingualism is upheld in the policy, by ensuring situations where multilingualism is reasonably practicable are included, and to include an accountability mechanism to this effect.
2. To put forward a motion for SU to break away from its email-heavy communications in favour of more centralised and organised communication channels. Staff members should not be saying, "If to need support with 'this matter' send an email to 'this person', because:
  - a. Emails are time-consuming, for both students and staff. Email chains can get very drawn out and extend the time needed to resolve a matter.
  - b. During busy periods, emails routinely get lost and students are left with urgent yet unresolved matters. Emails do not have tracking (like support tickets do) to ensure matters are resolved.
  - c. Emails can be ignored. This year, it was not uncommon for staff members to set an automated reply, mentioning a 3-5 day waiting time for responses. A support ticket system could be monitored by the head of that responsibility centre to ensure no query is unintended to.

## Budget

### Budget & Reasoning

Item	Cost	Purpose
12GB Long-term Data Bundle	R899.00	SRC Meetings, emails, etc. Live off-campus without uncapped internet
Mass Mailers	R9000.00 (6x R1500.00)	Keeping students informed about SRC activities, issuing statements on urgent / wide-reaching matters.
Minute Scribe	R3690.00	Ensuring SRC meetings are minuted accurately & on time.
Discretionary funds	R1000.00	Other portfolio-related costs.

### Expenditure so far

- R403.20 from discretionary funds for transportation costs outside of academic days
- R1440.00 for minute scribe meetings during Term 2
- ~R50.00 for data costs

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## Plans for next term

I have no major plans for my portfolio, other than intentions to run it efficiently, to keep response time to student emails to a minimum, and to make sure internal communication is more frequent and efficient (by providing succinct 'digests' of meetings to members via WhatsApp or email).

## Recommendations to improve portfolio

When things get busy, the importance of planning and getting things ready or done beforehand becomes apparent. I recommend that systems to deal with routine tasks and constitutional duties should be implemented as early as possible and should be as automated as possible.

For example, meeting apologies will have to be consolidated for every single SRC-related meeting (General, Executive Committee, SU Management). Having an apology form ready right from the first meeting, will streamline the process for the other 50 meetings. Designing the Welcoming Presentation / Activities well beforehand will allow you to consult other members for improvement and allow you to communicate with Prims early enough to find convenient times. Said presentations should preferably occur in both residences/PSO's and faculties.

Set up two calendars as early as possible:

- SRC Member Birthdays calendar (the vice-chair might opt to do this)
- SRC events / activities calendar (to be discussed in the first few meetings, to ensure events are well-timed and members are informed for good participation)

Finally, and this is more a recommendation to the entire SRC: Make room for collaboration with other student leaders and external organisation. This year, we often received requests for collaboration, but because members had their plans and were so fixated on them, nothing much came of it. Set time and funds aside for others who approach you for collaboration.

## Important Contacts

### SU Management

Executive	
Prof Wim de Villiers	<a href="mailto:wimdv@sun.ac.za">wimdv@sun.ac.za</a> <a href="mailto:vc@sun.ac.za">vc@sun.ac.za</a>
Prof Stan du Plessis	<a href="mailto:stan@sun.ac.za">stan@sun.ac.za</a>
Prof Deresh Ramjugernath	<a href="mailto:dereshr@sun.ac.za">dereshr@sun.ac.za</a>
Prof Eugene Cloete	<a href="mailto:eugeneclote@sun.ac.za">eugeneclote@sun.ac.za</a>
Prof Nico Koopman	<a href="mailto:nkoopman@sun.ac.za">nkoopman@sun.ac.za</a>
Prof Hester Klopper	<a href="mailto:hklopper@sun.ac.za">hklopper@sun.ac.za</a>
Dr Ronel Retief	<a href="mailto:ronelretief@sun.ac.za">ronelretief@sun.ac.za</a>
Dr Choice Makhetha	<a href="mailto:choicemakhetha@sun.ac.za">choicemakhetha@sun.ac.za</a>
Werner Abrahams	<a href="mailto:wabrahams@sun.ac.za">wabrahams@sun.ac.za</a>
Grace Bruinties	<a href="mailto:graceb@sun.ac.za">graceb@sun.ac.za</a>

### Student governance

Anele Mdepa	Manager	<a href="mailto:thulani@sun.ac.za">thulani@sun.ac.za</a>
Thulani Hlatswayo	Coordinator	<a href="mailto:anelemdepa@sun.ac.za">anelemdepa@sun.ac.za</a>
Sharine Dowries	Administrator	<a href="mailto:sharine@sun.ac.za">sharine@sun.ac.za</a>

### Division for Student Affairs

Dr Choice Makhetha	Senior Director	<a href="mailto:choicemakhetha@sun.ac.za">choicemakhetha@sun.ac.za</a>
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Third Floor, Neelsie Student Centre  
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Tonia Overmeyer	Dean of Students	<a href="mailto:toniaovermeyer@sun.ac.za">toniaovermeyer@sun.ac.za</a>
Gerschwin Fritz	Administrator	<a href="mailto:gfritz@sun.ac.za">gfritz@sun.ac.za</a>

### Other Contacts

Gary Howell	Manager: Letting Office	<a href="mailto:ghowell@sun.ac.za">ghowell@sun.ac.za</a>
Nicky Adams	Promotion Officer	<a href="mailto:nadams@sun.ac.za">nadams@sun.ac.za</a>
J.C. Landman	Communications Coordinator	<a href="mailto:jclandman@sun.ac.za">jclandman@sun.ac.za</a>

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