



SRC 2020/2021 Term 2 Report

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Constitutional Responsibilities

The Senior Prim Committee (SPC) portfolio on the Student Representative Council (SRC) is the constitutional mandate of the SPC Chairperson, as per Chapter 8 of the Student Constitution and it's chairperson is an *ex officio* member on the SRC. The Senior Prim Committee has a constitutional mandate to actively promote the rights of students contained in Chapter 2 of the Student Constitution, and specifically the right, under section 8 (1), to an enabling campus environment in which student success and academic excellence are encouraged and pursued.

Portfolio Overview

The Senior Prim Committee consists of a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and the Prim, or their nominee, of each senior residence, as well as any other members that are provided for in the constitution of the Senior Prim Committee.

The SPC Chairperson represents the Primarii/Head Student Leader or nominee of a senior residence, namely LLL, The Village, Huis Russel Botman, Concordia, Lobelia, Huis de Villiers and Huis MacDonald. The committee by extension, represents the student leaders as well as all the students within senior residences.

The SPC has a direct link between the student leaders on campus and the Student Representative Council as well as other structures at Stellenbosch University such as the Centre of Student Communities (CSC).

Committees / Task Teams

A Constitutional Task Team has been set-up and led by the Vice-Chair of the SPC that will;

- 1) Reviewing constitutions that exist in senior residences and recommending improvements.

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- 2) Establishing a process to draw up constitutions for a number of senior residences that don't have any.
- 3) Starting the constitutional amendment process for the SPC's own constitution which is unnecessarily cumbersome and complicated.

Term Overview

The second term of the SPC 2020/1 was more eventful as we were able to stage a training seminar for all student leaders in senior residences. In hind sight this could have and should have occurred earlier however with no roadmap in this portfolio, everything is experiential and in constant development. The senior space has gotten a bad reputation in the past for not being engaging and it's vision from the Centre of Student Communities is that it is geared at getting students ready for the "world of work". This vision is obviously not entirely accurate for the contemporary senior residence space as many students enter senior residence straight from the undergrad and are under the age of 23 – these students tend to be clustered at the Village, LLL and Huis Russel Botman. The rest of the residences – Lobelia, Huis de Villiers, Huis MacDonald and Concordia tend to be more senior students with a mix of final year undergrad and postgraduate students.

Leaders in each spheres have different challenges however the common trend is that where there has been no development in governance and student voices, there is unhappiness. Most of these issues require a culture shift and the point of departure is constitutional processes and the implementation there of – clearly defined roles, powers and governance process, for as long as students are not aware of these at the start of their leadership journey, there are bound to struggle to fulfil their leadership goals.

The SPC Training was aimed at building leadership soft skills and aptitude for senior leaders as well as greater cohesion between senior residence spaces. The late conceptualization of the project stems from the realization of the committee that the Centre of Student Communities has no tangible plans for the committee apart from cluster activities. This is evidenced by:

- No leadership training (or budget) for the senior residences specifically to deal with the challenges specific to the space
- No accredited or existing developmental programme for HKs in senior residences
- No leadership development budget set aside for senior residences
- No staff member who is in charge of liaison with the committee unlike the PK that deals directly with Director of the centre

In effort to start tackling these systemic problems, the strategy of the committee is two-fold. One being proactive and engaging staff members that are willing to craft solutions with the SPC and secondly, addressing these challenges at an institutional level in the hopes to create a task team to thoroughly assess the challenges.

The first of the initiatives that will be piloted by the SPC is the Senior Prim Development Programme and the SPC Training will strive to launch the new vision of the senior leaders by requiring ownership of the space both from CSC and SPC's respective leaders.

The previous term of the SPC didn't address these issues at all and thus as the leader accountable for the committee some of the issues are being discovered as the term progresses.

In collaboration with the Wellness portfolio, we also did a financial literacy seminar series which was well received.

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Other issues the spaces has been tackling is discipline – who is charge of these process and what are HKs roles – once again highlighting the need for clear constitutions. Curfew and the inaccessibility of residences for visitors remains an issue as senior students tend to live in isolated sections with already few interactions. This issue is harder to deal with due to the institutional stance on visitors.

Plans for next term

The driving school in collaboration with the Alumni office and SLS cluster is our biggest project earmarked for the year – the project this year will aim to benefit 30-40 students with driving lessons. The target will be students who aim to enter the workplace next year.

The financial literacy programme was a good project however it could benefit from formalisation. The plan is it to partner with the FVZS and this process is still at early stages.

Formalising the Senior Leadership Development Programme is also the committees goals after assessing the trail outcome this year. Planning a training framework for the next committee that eases their work will also be a top priority.

Recommendations to improve portfolio

Stronger links, mandate, training and Res Education is needed from the Centre of Student Communities. Right now a lack of vision, ownership and institutional plan by the Centre of Student Communities (CSC) hinders the potential of the Senior Prim Committee. Communication is rare from CSC to the SPC even though that is responsible body of SPC, it seems there is an inertia to acknowledge and accept this. A meeting at the beginning of our term was held with stakeholders from the CSC to address this issues however the issues still persist.

A number of core and necessary development programmes are absent from the CSC that are geared at leadership development and formalization of the senior residence leadership spaces.

- 1) A leadership development plan for senior leaders doesn't exist in the co-curricular handbook however we've had strong engagements on piloting one this year with Multicultural Education Coordinator.
- 2) A Senior Prim leadership development plan should also be introduced to address a lot of issues that Prims/House Leaders have about their role and the role of the res head.
- 3) There should be at least one compulsory RedEd Programme in senior residences as a condition if accepting your stay. Themes that could be explored are GBV, Life after Study etc.
- 4) A weakness identified by SLS Cluster Convenors last year was the slow elections of senior residences which hampered the progress of new leadership terms. This has largely been resolved this year, with only the LLL interns being appointed out of the September yearly elections cycle.

Student Governance has played a greater collaborative role with the SPC to assist with administrative duties and ongoing direction with campus developments in the upcoming academic year.

Important Contacts

Noel Bekkers noelbek@sun.ac.za ResED Group Coordinator – Senior Living Spaces

Enos Lekala enos@sun.ac.za LLL Coordinator and Huis Russel Botman Res Head

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