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SRC

Students' Representative Council
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Studenteraad



SRC 2024 TERM 3 REPORT

Prim Committee Vice-Chairperson and Wellness Portfolio

Students' Representative Council

Third Floor, Neelsie Student Centre

Table of Contents

Private Bag XI, Matieland, 7602

Tel: +2721 808 2757 | Email: sr@sun.ac.za

Portfolio Overview	4
Committees/Task Teams	6
Term 2 Overview	7



Foreword

Dear Students,

The time I have had to serve the students of Stellenbosch University has been an absolute privilege, within both the Prim Committee and SRC structures.

As a previous Primaria and House Committee member, ensuring the needs of all students are met to the best of our abilities is something I strongly believe in. Equipping them with what they need to experience the life that awaits at Stellenbosch. This is a unique opportunity to expand your horizons, both academically and personally. Step out of your comfort zone, join committees, attend events, and meet new people. The diversity of experiences and perspectives on campus is vast, and it's in these interactions that you'll discover new passions and forge lasting connections.

I am grateful for the opportunity to humbly serve you all and I cannot wait to share my many more passions and ideas with you all. This is simply the first of a few to come.



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Constitutional Responsibilities

As per SU Statute:

Section 68:

"Prim Committee' means the committee of head students of the various residences and in the private student organisation of the University".

As per Student Constitution:

Chapter 9 of the Student Constitution deals with the Prim Committee (PC) and sets out the composition, powers and duties of the PC.

Section 100: Constitutional mandate

"The Prim Committee has a constitutional mandate to: (1) Actively promote the rights of students contained in CHAPTER 2, and specifically the right, under s8(1), to an enabling campus environment in which student success and academic excellence are encouraged and pursued. (2) Serve as a forum of house committee leaders that strives to protect and further the interests of all students, by advising the SRC via the Prim Committee chairperson and vice-chairperson."

As per Prim Committee Constitution:

The PC Constitution, as amended in 2022, provides the mission, vision and core values of the Prim Committee. It also organises the affairs of the PC in respect of its meeting procedures, rights and duties, and code of conduct.

Section 5: Vision

"To sustainably foster a collaborative, advisory, and accountable relationship between Communities as well as to advocate for the needs of the students within these Communities in any and all bodies necessary."

Section 6: Mission

"To ensure that the values of the university are not only reflected within Communities but upheld intentionally when representing students within said communities. The Prim Committee does this through its collaborative and deliberative engagements."

Section 7: Nature of the Prim Committee

(1) The Prim Committee is established by the Student Constitution as an autonomous student representational body and grants it all the powers necessary for that function.

(2) The Prim Committee functions in partnership with the CSC to facilitate the advocacy of community-based needs to the CSC, SRC, and relevant university management.

(3) The Prim Committee also serves as an adequate relay of information between university structures and the Prims of the houses, through the presence of the Prim Committee Executive members on various relevant bodies.

(4) The Prim Committee Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson function as ex-officio members of the SRC and thus, form a chain between the Centre for Student Governance and the CSC.

(5) The Prim Committee functions to ensure that all Communities represented in the committee function in alignment with the student constitution as well as residence rules. Any community deviating from these documents shall be held accountable.

Portfolio Overview

Harnessing the power of this portfolio, my aim is to instigate sustainable change in the attitudes and approaches toward mental health and student well-being within the SU community. Central to this endeavour is enhancing my presence on campus to facilitate engagement with students. Understanding that addressing mental health challenges necessitates a collective effort, I am committed to forging strong relationships, particularly with the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD).

As we embark on the year 2024, we are introducing a fresh perspective on mental health awareness, integrating an array of physical activities, initiatives, and programs in collaboration with key stakeholders. At the heart of my mission lies a steadfast commitment to prioritize and champion the holistic well-being of each student, acknowledging that a sound mind and body form the bedrock of academic achievement and personal fulfilment. Through strategic initiatives and synergistic collaborations, our overarching goal is to cultivate a campus ethos that not only acknowledges but actively promotes student wellness as a fundamental cornerstone of student life.

Committees/Task Teams

The wellness portfolio currently does not sit on any committees. However, in my capacity as Vice-Chairperson of the Prim Committee, I sit on various committees. These can be found in my Vice-Chairperson report.

Term 3 Overview

Events weren't hosted in this term, however, I did have the opportunity to talk about mental health within male spaces at Eendrag's conversation about mental health. This was the perfect opportunity to share how men are able to seek the mental help they need.

Other Opportunities taken:

Term 3 was taken as an opportunity to engage with students during one of the busiest times of their university careers. It gave me the opportunity to see where students were really struggling, the gaps in resources that they had and what was needed to fulfil those gaps.

The key struggles that were noticed included:

1. Stress and Anxiety

- **High Expectations:** Students often face immense pressure to achieve high grades, which can lead to chronic stress and anxiety. The fear of failure and disappointing themselves or others adds to this burden.
- **Time Management:** Balancing study schedules, part-time jobs, and personal commitments becomes increasingly difficult, contributing to a sense of being overwhelmed.

2. Sleep Deprivation

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- **Inadequate Rest:** Many students sacrifice sleep to study longer hours, leading to sleep deprivation. This not only affects cognitive functions and academic performance but also has detrimental effects on overall health.
- **Irregular Sleep Patterns:** The stress of exams can disrupt normal sleep patterns, making it hard for students to get restful sleep even when they do manage to rest.

3. Poor Nutrition

- **Unhealthy Eating Habits:** The convenience of fast food and lack of time often lead to poor dietary choices. Students may skip meals or rely on snacks and caffeinated beverages, which can negatively impact their energy levels and concentration.

4. Physical Inactivity

- **Reduced Exercise:** Regular physical activity often takes a backseat during exam season as students prioritize studying over exercise. This reduction in physical activity can exacerbate stress and negatively affect mental health.
- **Sedentary Lifestyle:** Prolonged periods of sitting and studying can lead to physical discomfort and contribute to long-term health issues.

5. Mental Health Challenges

- **Increased Anxiety and Depression:** The pressures of exam season can exacerbate existing mental health conditions or trigger new ones. Students may feel isolated, overwhelmed, and unable to cope with the demands placed upon them.

6. Social Isolation

- **Reduced Social Interactions:** The intense focus on studying often leads to decreased social interactions. This isolation can contribute to feelings of loneliness and reduce the emotional support that is crucial during stressful times.
- **Limited Family Time:** Students who live away from home may find it particularly hard to connect with family members, further increasing feelings of isolation and stress.

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From these noticeable struggles, I decided to come up with a few recommendations that would help me plan my term plans:

1. Promote Time Management Skills

- Workshops and resources on effective time management to help students balance their academic and personal lives.

2. Encourage Healthy Sleep Habits

- Providing information on the importance of sleep and strategies for maintaining regular sleep patterns, even during exam season.

3. Improve Access to Nutritious Food

- Campus dining services should ensure the availability of healthy and affordable meal options, and provide information on quick, nutritious meal preparation.

4. Support Physical Activity

- Promoting physical activity by offering accessible fitness facilities and encouraging short, manageable exercise routines.

5. Foster Social Connections

- Creating opportunities for social interaction and peer support can help mitigate feelings of isolation. Study groups and social events can provide much-needed breaks and emotional support.

Term Plans:

1. Mental Health Event:

This would be an event where educating students on these above mentioned crucial topics will take place. I want to have experts or researchers in the field come and talk to students on campus about the importance of Sleep, nutrition, time management, and overall wellbeing in order to ensure that students are optimizing their minds and bodies to do well in their studies. I want students to walk away from this event with knowledge to apply and make changes practically. Here we will also showcase the video we have worked on bringing awareness to mental health.

2. Continuous Improvement:

Continuously refining our approaches in response to emerging trends, research insights, and the evolving demands of our student body and surrounding communities, we aim to create a dynamic campus environment. Through forming a culture that prioritizes well-being, our goal is to not only enhance academic achievement but also foster the holistic development of our students, enabling them to flourish personally and professionally.

Kind regards,



Courtney de Klerk

Vice-Chairperson