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First Term Report of the Speaker of Student Parliament

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# Introduction

This is the term report of the Speaker of Student Parliament written in accordance with the Student Constitution and Student Parliament Constitution of the University of Stellenbosch. This report will speak of the goals achieved by Student Parliament in the fourth term and first term respectively, that it from the date of the election the speaker of Student Parliament. This term report will also critically analyse the milestones set out and achieved by me in my official capacity and will mention the challenges faced when trying to achieve those goals.

# Fourth Term

I was elected on the 28 of October 2018. This as noted by my predecessor in his annual report definitely a challenge as, I now could not open interviews of my committee due to exams. The official transfer of power was completed on the 1 of November 2018 as that was when my term officially started in terms of Section 6 of the Student Parliament Constitution. I then took the conscious decision to assume my duties on the 1st term due to; firstly, the universities restrictions on mass communication during the examination period and, secondly, that I needed to establish a committee. It was also a challenge to meet with all members of the previous executive as they were also writing examinations.

# First Term

In the first term my main goal was to meet with all structures that I will be working hand in hand with which was Student Governance. When the academic term started, I made an appointment with the head of Student Governance, Mr. Anele Mdepa and Thulani Hlatswayo to meet and greet. In that meeting we then began to discuss the mandate of Student Parliament within the university. We met a few times more that is when I requested access to the mailing system used by Student Parliament, SYMPA. This was due to the fact that I needed to send a mass communication to all registered students to inform them of the vacancies for the executive of Student Parliament. The keys to the Student Parliament office were also given to me.

## Informing Students about Student Parliament

In the beginning of the first term, I decided to go to all residences to inform students about Student Parliament. This was well received by many student especially senior students who did not know about Student Parliament. The reason I decided to go out to these students was because I felt that communicating with the student populace solely through emails was ineffective and had to be changed. Student Parliament must go out to the students if it wants a larger turn out at their sittings.

## Monica Residence

The House Committee of Monica Residence requested me to preside over a dispute that had been occurring amongst them. This was requested at a time where I did not have a committee. Therefor I decided to fulfil my mandate which is to adjudicate disputes in impartially. I then proceeded to listen to their grievances and assisted them in acquiring a solution that was conducive to both parties. I emphasized the point of unity amongst leadership because in unity there’s strength.

## Addendum J1

Addendum J1 gave the Speaker of Student Parliament two mandates. Firstly, the speaker is required by this provision to establish a committee within the first academic term. Secondly, the Speaker is also required to hold the first sitting with the first academic term. These mandates were both achieved in the first term and I would like to thank the previous Student Parliament Committee and Thulani from Student Governance for making possible for me to achieve this mandate. The executive members of student parliament are Nhlakanipho Mkhize (Accountability Chair), Thatego Sehale (Secretary General) and Phila Shongwe (Executive Treasurer). The number of applicants was equal to the number of positions available therefore, according to Addendum J1, if the number of applicants is equal to the number of positions available then it becomes a motion of confidence in the members.

## First Sitting

The 1st sitting was held of Student Parliament was held on the 19th of March 2019 at the Wilcocks building 3001 at 18h00. Although all relevant personnel were informed of the first sitting at short notice, I must say that the was a turn out. I would like to thank Student Governance again for being able to attend the first sitting especially in such short notice. In this sitting the Speaker of Student Parliament was inaugurated in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Student Parliament Constitution.

# Challenges

* 1. Procedural versus Substantive law

In the first term one of the main challenges faced by the Speaker of Student Parliament is the fact that one does not know what to do in order to fulfil their constitutional mandate. I must stress the distinction between substantive law and procedural law. The Student Parliament constitution bestows powers to the Speaker of Student Parliament and also limits them. However, the problem is how to use your powers to ensure that your mandate and the mandate given to you by the Student Parliament and Student Constitution is met. That I found to be a challenge for me.

## Communication

One of the challenges I have noted is that Student Parliament as a Constitutional creature is inherently very formal and student who require its assistance do not know how to request its assistance. I believe that if I work with my Accountability chair, we will be able to find a way to with this issue. The second challenge is communication, our SYMPA mailing list is old and outdated, the first years do not receive communication from Student Parliament, as a result, Student Parliament has to find other alternative routes to communicate with Students. We have met with Student affairs to find a way to deal with the issue of communication. The proposed solution was to use the mailing system used by the university, as it is new, and students can unsubscribe to this mailing list at their discretion.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to mention that all of the goals I had given to myself and the mandates given to me by the Student Parliament Constitution were achieved in the first term. With regards to communication as a bearer to Students I am working with my team to be able to effectively tackle the issue.