

Student Parliament

*Accountability, Transparency and Consultative Governance*

UNIVERSITEIT iYUNIVESITHI STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

**ANNUAL REPORT 2019**

**DEPUTY SPEAKER EXTERNAL**

**(SECRETARY GENERAL)**

**TN SELAHLE**

**SU: 20857446@sun.ac.za**



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# 1 OVERVIEW

My term serving as the Deputy Speaker External (Secretary General) of Student Parliament began at the end of March 2019 after the First Ordinary Sitting. From the outset, the committee was challenged with establishing the foundations that would form Student Parliament. A lot of the information reserves were lacking and the committees which existed lacked much of their structural foundations. A lot of key roles remained undefined and unprecedented, so the current members had to define a lot of committees/ roles from their context and what seemed reasonable/ practical to do.

Consequently, 2019 has, in my opinion, been more focused on building and defining than it has been about developing and progressing the mandate of Student Parliament. While the committee was able to fulfil all the duties as set out in the Student Parliament Constitution, the committee was more focused on strengthening those areas which lacked structure. The committee can, nonetheless, pride itself on the successful implementation of the Treasurers forum, the Policy Unit and the Accountability committee which have been operational for the first time this year.

This report briefly sets out my role in all of the different platforms that Student Parliament drives. The detailed extent of my involvement in of each of the different committees can be found in the minutes for that specific committee which are online on the Student Parliament website.

*Yours in Accountability, Transparency and Consultative Governance*.

Miss T.N. Selahle

20857446@sun.ac.za

Deputy Speaker External (Secretary General)

# 2 THE STUDENT PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE

The Committee which consists of all the executive members as well as the communications officer and the Tygerberg Speaker is set to meet at least once every two weeks. The minutes of each of the meetings were prepared by me and available on the Student Parliament website.

The executive committee of Parliament is mandated to attend as many SRC meetings as often as possible and TSP & TSR meetings once a semester. The attendance of Student Parliament members I think should be reflected more accurately by each body’s respective registers.

The Speaker and Deputy Speakers are jointly responsible for the over-all functioning of Student Parliament. We hosted the following sittings so far this year:

19 March 2019- First Ordinary Sitting

7 May 2019- Second Ordinary Sitting

5 September 2019- Third Ordinary Sitting

The minutes of each of the sittings are available on the website. Still this year, the committee will host the Speaker elections as well as the Extraordinary Constitutional Review Sitting.

# 3 SECRETARY GENERAL DUTIES

## 3 1 Record-keeping and administration

My primary duty as the SG of Student Parliament is always as a record keeper and ensuring that I have all the information that pertains to the general activities of the body. I am tasked with the compilation and availability of all agendas, minutes etc. (which are all available on the Student Parliament website as well as by request via email).

## 3 2 Transparency

This year, Parliament struggled with getting information through to students because access to the 2019 university mailing list was revoked due to several legal reasons brought forth by the Communication Department of the University. We were then challenged to build a stronger social media presence and establish a platform that we could use as our primary means of conveying information to the entire student populace.

The university supplied Parliament with website training which the Accountability Chair and I attended on the 25th of April. It was this training that enabled me to design the website that now exists for Student Parliament. The information that goes on the website is uploaded by either the Communications Officer or me and remains as relevant as possible as it is frequently updated.

All the final versions of the minutes and reports posted to the sight are only uploaded once a chance for comment and correction has been given to students as per the Student Parliament Constitution.

# 4 STUDENT PARLIAMENT SUB-COMMITTEES

## 4 1 The Accountability Committee

As the Deputy Speaker External, I serve as a member on the Student Parliament Accountability Committee which is tasked with investigating complaints brought before Parliament which pertain to SRC matters or their sub-committees. The Accountability Chair spearheaded the investigation of the Register All Policy and my involvement was mostly advisory and with the compilation of information and the final report.

## 4 2 The Policy Unit Forum

One of the biggest issues that Parliament faced when we assumed office this year, was the lack of information from prior years. When we made contact with our predecessors in title, the persons were unwilling to co-operate with us, so we forced to resort to other methods of acquiring information. From the information that we managed to source from past emails and documents, it appears that a Policy Unit forum has never been held by Student Parliament. The duty therefore fell upon me, as the Chair of the forum, to provide new structure for the forum as well as to define its duties.

It seemed impractical to me to have a formal sitting with all the members if there was no structure or foundation of information from which to begin working. For this reason, A group was created involving the various policy officers of the different leadership structures- but it appeared that there were a few committees which did not have constitutionally mandated delegates as policy officers, so many committees took a lot of time selecting a representative. I then prepared a framework which detailed how the meetings would proceed. This framework was made available to all policy officers on the group as well as on the Student Parliament website.

A decision was made by Student Parliament with reliance on S7(b)(vi) of the Student Parliament Constitution to postpone a formal Policy unit meeting and rather have a ‘virtual’ meeting where each policy officer was asked to prepare a report for their specific structure and post it to the group before a specified deadline. These reports would then form as a starting point and foundation for the Policy Unit meetings because it is then more effective and fruitful to address the matters that policy officers have taken the time to analyse and critique. The meeting with the newly elected leaders/ policy representatives will commence in the fourth term.

## 4 3 The Treasurers Forum

The Treasurers Forum has met a total of three times this year. The treasurers convened on:

* 18 April 2019
* 16 May 2019
* 31 July 2019

The forum is Chaired by our Executive Treasurer, P. Shongwe, who has managed to do an outstanding job of structuring the forum strongly, in my opinion. My role at the forum was to take minutes, and act as the policy representative of Student Parliament by informing the members of the forum of the relevant Constitutional provisions which bind and guide all of Student Parliament’s proceedings. The minutes are available on the website.

## 4 4 The Constitutional Review Committee

The Student Parliament Committee began the process by comparing the 2018 Student Constitution to the older version of Student Constitution and then to the Student Parliament Constitution. We noted a few significant changes as far as Student Parliament was concerned. We sought to get a declaratory order from Student Court to ensure that we were interpreting certain provisions correctly. The Speaker, the Accountability Chair and I got together to draft a document which as submitted to Student Court to propose a correct interpretation of the provision in question. Our application to the Court was successful and we were able to proceed. We then formed the Constitutional Review Committee and began the amendment process.

I was responsible for restructuring the Constitution so that the document was easy to read. The current draft of the Constitution has sections that seem as though they were simply inserted without considering the presentation of the document, the uniformity of fonts and text size and in some instances even the numbering was inconsistent. This draft was submitted to the Constitutional Review Committee to review.

I was absent from Stellenbosch Campus for about a month due to personal circumstances and the committee continued their work in my absence. I will resume on the committee again as from 23 September 2019 when the committee is next going to convene. The minutes of the meetings prior to this were prepared by other members of the Review Committee and are available online.

# 5 OTHER

## 5 1 Trainings and workshops

The Committee has attended several trainings and workshops over the year. The trainings I attended are below:

12 April *- General training with Student Governance*:

This training was to familiarise the executive with the processes and proceedings of student leadership and to acquaint us with the nature of our duties.

25 April - *Website Training*:

This training was to educate me on how to edit and design the Student Parliament website. This was because the website became Parliaments primary method of communicating with students.

3 May- *Co-operative Governance*:

This workshop was aimed at introducing the three branches of student leadership to each other i.e. Student Parliament, Student Court and the Student Representative Council. The workshop sought to establish a united goal between the three branches and help form constructive relationships between the three bodies.

11 June- *Constitutional Literacy Training*:

This training was aimed at educating us on the importance of Constitutions as guiding the different student bodies and familiarising us with the processes of Student Court.

There were also several meetings during the year between Student Governance and the Co-curricular office which I attended.

## 5 2 General Parliament tasks

I also served Student Parliament on the panel for the interviews of the additional committee members such as the Communications officer and the Deputy Accountability Chair. I was responsible for overseeing and planning the process.

I also assisted the Speaker in a number of other administrative tasks such as drafting the budget and year plan for Student Parliament as well as organising the different trainings for the committee- which includes our trip to the National Parliament on the 20th of August.

I am also responsible for ultimately overseeing the process of the co-curricular application for Student Parliament Committee.

# 6 SUMMARY

Considering the stance that we found ourselves in at the beginning of the year and the additional challenges we were dealt, I think that the committee has managed to make strides in what it has been able to accomplish. I personally think that the work that Parliament needs to do before it is fully developed and able to operate at the level which it was intended to will still take a few years to accomplish. I am optimistic that the constitutional amendment will be once such avenue which pushes Parliament in the right direction. I am confident that the 2019 committee has been a powerful vehicle in driving the vision for Student Parliament forward towards achieving its purpose.

