

[Final draft; Embargoed until delivery; Compare against delivery]

Submission to Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training  
Cape Town, 1 September 2015

### Stellenbosch University (SU) Management

#### 1. INTRODUCTION – Prof Wim de Villiers, Rector and Vice-Chancellor

- Thank you, Chairperson [Mrs Yvonne Nkwenkwezi Phosa]
- Honourable Minister, honourable members, thanks for invitation. Glad to be here.
- We welcome the opportunity to engage with all stakeholders.
- Here to update Portfolio Committee on transformation at SU & discuss specific concerns
- First, Management presentation, then other stakeholders.
- From Management's side:
  - Introduction: Prof Wim de Villiers
  - *Luister* video: Prof Wim de Villiers
  - Transformation: Prof Nico Koopman, VR (DVC): SITP
  - Language: Prof Arnold Schoonwinkel, VR (DVC): LT
  - Conclusion: Prof Wim de Villiers
- Stakeholders:
  - Council: Prof PW van der Walt, Vice-Chair
  - Institutional Forum: Mr Le Roux Burrows, Chair
  - SRC:
    - Outgoing Chair: Mr Stefan Laing
    - Incoming Chair: Mr Axolile Qina
- Chairperson, a few remarks to set the scene
- SU 1/25 public universities in SA; "Traditional" (not "Comprehensive"; University of Tech")
- Established 1918 Act of Parliament; roots 1866 (Stb Gym > Stb Col > Victoria Col)
- Research intensive – DHET: highest per capita output of publications + Ms & Ds
- 10 faculties: (AgriSciences, Arts & Social Sciences; Economic & Management Sciences; Education; Engineering; Law; Medicine and Health Sciences; Military Science; [Natural] Science; Theology)
- 5 Campuses: Stellenbosch; Tygerberg; Bellville Park, Saldanha, Worcester Rural Platform
- 30 150 students
  - 1/3 postgrad; 14% international from 117 countries; 56% of international students come from elsewhere in Africa
  - Actual 2015:
    - 62% white; 38% BCI
  - Projected 2019:
    - 56% white; 44% BCI
- 4 335 staff members (roughly 1/3 academic)
  - Professional and Support Staff:
    - 50% BCI
  - Academics:
    - This is where we have our biggest challenge in terms of demographics
    - Only 17% BCI
- Transformation is a journey ...
  - SU has moved from "historically white"; "formerly Afrikaans" ...
  - To a non-racial, multilingual, national asset
  - No longer just for one section of population; now proudly serving all
- 2000, "Strategic Framework":

- “University acknowledges its contribution to the injustices of the past ... commits itself to redress and development” = apology for Apartheid; often repeated since
- Laid foundation for greater equity (access); service in disadvantaged areas
- 2013, “Institutional Intent and Strategy” (21<sup>st</sup> century positioning):
  - SU is inclusive, innovative, and future focused: a place of discovery and excellence where both staff and students are thought leaders in advancing knowledge in the service of all stakeholders
    - More “inclusive” > through broadening “access”; greater “diversity”
    - More “innovative” > through maintaining academic “excellence”
    - More “future focused” > through “social impact” for a better tomorrow
- Some of the other keywords in our Intent and Strategy document & Institutional Plan ...
  - Multilingual
  - African footprint
  - Diverse community
- Many achievements in terms of transformation, e.g.:
  - Die Vlakte: Restitution 4 forced removals 60s; Lückhoff School; Memory Room, bursaries
  - Khayamandi Oral History Research Project: Community empowerment
  - HOPE@Maties: Extra classes to get talented learners to university
  - African Doctoral Academy: Fast-tracking PhDs for the continent
- Lost sitting VC for 1<sup>st</sup> time in our history: Prof Russel Botman, 28 Jun '14
  - Big shock to system – but University committed to course he set
- I appointed new VC in Apr '15 (5 months in office)
- 1 of our 3 VRs also new: Prof Nico Koopman full responsibility 1 Jul '15 (2 months)
  - Portfolio restructured; “Transformation” now elevated to top level ...
  - ... Prof Koopman will tell us more in his submission
- Let me now turn to the *Luister* video
- The video raises very important issues re. transformation at SU.
- Watched it with my wife; found it extremely uncomfortable.
- Contains valid lived experiences of students.
- Do not enjoy knowing that they suffer.
- Hearing these narratives of racism and dehumanisation is really painful
- Not going to defend the indefensible: racism, discrimination, human rights violations, exclusion, marginalisation – these things are all wrong, end of story.
- Except, whatever is wrong must be fixed. We are attempting to do exactly that.
  - Terminated services of lecturer who sent racist SMS.
  - Student suspended from residence while offensive slurs are being investigated
  - Various channels for students to report racism – including anonymously
- Transformation a top priority – because it is the right thing to do.
- Students should be critical – that is the nature of the “open discussion”, which I have been promoting since Day 1 of my tenure five months ago.
- In line with thinking of Johan Degenaar, one of SA’s greatest philosophers who died recently. Known as “Socrates of Stellenbosch” – “Unexamined life not worth living.”
  - He took lots of flak from the establishment at the time for criticising Apartheid
  - Degenaar exemplifies the tradition of critical, progressive voices at Stellenbosch
- 21 years since dawn of democracy, turbulence on campuses countrywide ... specifically also at Stellenbosch, which is why it is good that Parliament’s oversight body for higher education is hosting this discussion today.
  - SA still in transition. Legacy of the past lingers – unemployment, poverty, racism.
  - Born frees have arrived on campuses: old enough to think for themselves, see problems; young and energetic enough to do something about it.
- Change always difficult. If not uncomfortable, not right. Universities = critical thinking.

- To get back to *Luister*, we have no problem with it being critical – in fact, I welcome it. But there are some nuances that should be pointed out:
- Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute not part of SU. Yes, we accredit one of its qualifications, but no say whatsoever over the running of that campus.
  - Not to say the experiences of students there are less important
  - We must do everything we can to stop racism everywhere.
- Similarly, off-campus incidents (pubs, clubs) not under University's control.
  - Again, what's wrong is wrong, we must investigate, engage and act on racism.
- Perceptions in video / social media that SU management refuses to listen to issues
  - Simply not true.
  - Most recent forum 13 August – various student groups that made submissions attended round-table discussion
  - Open Stellenbosch chose not to participate.
  - The organisation refuses to acknowledge legitimate university structures, has ignored invitations from Management to engage and is unwilling to follow application processes for mass meetings as prescribed by law.
- Language of tuition raised in #Luister
- I said at my inauguration that SU is not an Afrikaans or English university. SU a world-class multilingual institution.
- Research shows: multilingualism a competitive advantage in diverse society.
- Decision by Council in Nov to move from preference for Afrikaans to equal footing for English/Afrikaans as languages of tuition.
- Now implementing this policy, and eight months not a lot of time.
- Not denying there are problems with implementation. Of course there are.
  - Task teams investigating; open invitation to all to raise problems
  - Also investigating proposals of Open Stellenbosch, SRC and others
  - Will report back to campus and to Council
- Language a complex and emotive issue, given our history in SA. Need to handle correctly
- We must avoid the danger of polarisation, serious problem for any democracy.
- As each side increasingly demonizes the other, compromise becomes more difficult.
- Social media awash with racist slurs from all sides in the wake of #Luister.
- What worries me most, is the resurgence of an “us” versus “them” mentality.
- We have come too far, achieved too much – though much to be done still – to regress.
- **Now is the time to move forward ... but leave no one behind; to make progress ... but not at anyone's expense.**
- This is the spirit in which we would like to address transformation on campus – “open discussion”, all sides actively listen, open to persuasion, not dig in heels.
- Lots done to promote integration, mutual understanding as SU becomes more diverse.
- E.g. “Listen, Live and Learn” initiative in student housing – not restricted to LLL Village but principles applied throughout system.
- It encourages the pursuit of ideological pluralism, a safe space for all perspectives, reasoned disagreement, principled dissent and multiple interpretations.
- As we become more diverse, important to get to know each other. Hence various ways in which multicultural understanding is promoted.
- Need to open Stellenbosch University even more.
- We are open to change, which is a collective duty of all our stakeholders.
- Committed to an open discussion.
- We are listening, we are talking, we will continue doing so
- We can all agree on need to build an SU as described in our recent vision and mission:
  - “Community characterised by **social justice** and **equal opportunities**”

- “Leverage the inherent power of **diversity**”
- “**Inclusive**, diverse experiences for students and staff”
- Our common goals will only be achieved “**through sustained transformation**”
- Thank you
- Without further ado, over to Prof Koopman for more details on transformation at SU ...

### **3. CONCLUSION – Prof Wim de Villiers, Rector and Vice-Chancellor**

- Honourable Chairperson, Minister, members ...
- You have now heard from my the Management team
- Wrapping up now – only 3 points

#### SUPPORT:

- Broad support for transformation and progress at SU:
  - Senate on Fri passed a motion:
    - Concern about reports of racism & sexual harassment
    - Support for transformation discussion and initiatives

#### INVITATION:

- But come and see for yourselves
- Invite the Committee – and the Minister – to visit
- We have nothing to hide; everything to share
- Transparent – come experience Stellenbosch for yourselves: campus, classroom, res

#### WELCOME INPUT:

- We would welcome your input
  - We don’t have all the answers
  - In the spirit of mutual responsibility, co-ownership, all must contribute
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- Thank you. Dankie. Enkosi.