

**#RACISMMUSTFALL MARCH:
19 May 2022: Stellenbosch Campus**

STATEMENT BY THE RECTOR AND VICE-CHANCELLOR: PROF WIM DE VILLIERS

This was a very difficult week at Stellenbosch University. I am saddened and outraged by the reported incidents of racism and violation of individual rights on the Stellenbosch University (SU) campus.

I am truly sorry for the pain caused, and I want to, again, assure the SU community of the University's commitment to ensure that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated on our campus at all. It remains our main priority to provide an inclusive environment for all our students and to maintain a safe student community where social cohesion is promoted to provide quality tertiary education for all.

I agree that racism and victimisation must be eradicated in every part of our society and also in every corner of our SU community. The university leadership believes firmly that there is no place for bigotry, discrimination, prejudice, violence, victimisation, damage of property, gender-based violence and certainly no place for racism on our beloved campus. This campus belongs to all who study and work here. Inclusivity and a welcoming spirit is, and must continue to be, the Stellenbosch way.

We all need to protect the dignity and rights of everyone who is part of our SU community, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, background or societal standing. Together we need to protect the reputation and standing of our institution as a world-class centre of academic excellence where we welcome the best of the best from all communities in South Africa and further afield. The University deeply values respect, compassion, equity, accountability and excellence in all interactions and conduct.

I can assure the SU community that the investigation into the cases of alleged racism enjoys top priority at the highest level of the university leadership. It is critical, though, that we allow proper governance and procedures to be followed for a decisive outcome which will allow for the full extent of the law as well as compliance with the University's governance regulations to be applied.

Also rest assured of our compassion towards the victims. The University is committed to support the victims of the incidents to ensure their academic progress and sense of belonging on campus are not affected. The final outcomes must pave the way to avoid a repeat of similar breaches of personal human dignity in the future.

As part of this commitment the Rectorate will set up an external independent commission of enquiry into the incidence of racism and harassment at the University, headed by a respected judge. As part of this enquiry, we envisage a review of the culture of student communities at the University in its entirety. In addition, we are creating a reporting hotline that students and staff can use to report acts of discrimination or violation of rights and get help as a matter of urgency at a time of distress.

Be assured of my and the Rectorate's commitment to a University of inclusive excellence and a zero-tolerance to any racism. I will join my colleagues to keep everyone in our community updated of the progress in this critical matter.

In the meanwhile, let us work together constructively. Let us allow the due process to unfold and together make sure that no racism or discrimination has any foothold in our SU community - not now and not in the future.

I agree with our community- all discrimination must fall. Racism, violation of rights, GBV and all forms of bigotry must fall.