



CIRCORE CLOSE-OUT REPORT

18 MARCH 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Committee for the Institutional Response to the (Khampepe) Commission's Recommendations (CIRCoRe) was established in April 2023 as Stellenbosch University's response to the findings of the 2022 Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of Racism at Stellenbosch University, led by Justice Sisi Khampepe.

This report details CIRCoRe's work, it explains CIRCoRe's leadership structure and how this evolved in response to changing circumstances. It also describes how, to achieve its mandate of producing research-led recommendations for interventions the university could implement in accordance with the Khampepe Commission's feedback, CIRCoRe divided its work across five distinct yet interlinked workstreams - each tasked with addressing a key theme relating to the overarching question of a welcoming university environment, and each led by experts in the field.

The workstreams spanned the following areas: student life and communities; exploring a compulsory core offering in democratic values / shared humanity for first-year students; institutional culture; race, categorisation and science; and alignment of institutional policies, processes and structures. Each workstream engaged in activities that supported its mandate. These activities included seminars, conferences, research reports and surveys. Ultimately, the workstreams' activities informed the suite of recommendations made by CIRCoRe to the Rectorate.

Some of the recommendations have already been implemented, while others are for short-term and long-term implementation. They address among others matters of building a sense of community among a fractured student community, frameworks for developing socially responsive curricula, and putting in place structures that ensure the University is equipped to deal swiftly and decisively with matters of harassment, dignity infringements, inequity and social injustice.

Among the recommendations that have been implemented are:

- Establishment of Interim Working Group to infuse a nimbleness in the University's response to the aforementioned transgressions;
- Realignment of Equality Unit to ensure rapid and systematic responses to complaints relating to harassment and discrimination;
- Exploratory work on a Transformation Charter for Stellenbosch University.

Recommendations for future implementation include, amongst others:

- The University offers support and facilitates productive safe spaces in which students and staff can talk freely and informally about race in terms of their lived experiences.

- The University ensures that opportunities for community-building amongst black and marginalised students (e.g. through societies) and additional support be made much more visible to students.
- The recommendations made by the Division of Student Affairs on the Implementation of the Khampepe Commission Report's Recommendations be accepted and taken forward.
- Academic staff consider various options, including stand-alone and embedded offerings, for infusing issues of equality, transformation and justice into students' learning and University curricula.
- A Directorate for Institutional Culture at Stellenbosch University be established to assist the Transformation Office to steer and monitor the implementation of transformation endeavours.
- Consider and further develop the establishment of a Stellenbosch University Transdisciplinary Institute on Race and Racism Studies.
- The University considers offering self-paced online courses on the use of race and other human categorisation descriptors in research.
- The Research Ethics Committee introduces a question relating to how researchers use human categorisations on research ethics forms.
- The principles underlying the development of transformative competencies as identified by the small task team within Workstream 2 be included in the professional development programmes currently offered by the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

The report also highlights several challenges that CIRCoRe faced during its 18-month tenure. These contextualise the broader institutional backdrop against which the committee operated.

CIRCoRe and its activities represent an important step in SU's transformation journey. In addition to the host of outputs – including resources and learning materials, conference papers, and scholarly seminars – the less tangible lessons learned and listed at the conclusion of this report are outcomes on which further steps in SU's transformation journey might be based.

The achievements and recommendations point to the need for substantial resources – human and financial – for future activities to be invested in SU's future transformation journey. It also requires dedicated 'transformation champions' to drive the relevant activities and processes at different levels. Crucially, the will to transform must endure against well-resourced and organised contrarian voices.

The report demonstrates that CIRCoRe has provided for a substantive response to the nuanced recommendations of the Khampepe Commission. It points the way to the future of inclusive excellence, built on culture of collaboration, the development of

collective and collegial learning, and ongoing effort to change the current dominant culture.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction to the Khampepe Report and CIRCoRe

The Committee for the Institutional Response to the (Khampepe) Commission's Recommendations (CIRCoRe) was established in April 2023. It was a contingency measure established by the Rectorate to develop proposals spanning the multiple areas of concern highlighted in the findings of the Khampepe Commission following its investigation into incidents of alleged racism at Stellenbosch University (SU).

While the Khampepe [Report](#) acknowledged the significant progress that had been made at the University as part of its transformation journey, the Commission revealed various shortcomings, concerns and challenges that needed to be addressed. These include salient, but alienating, aspects, such as institutional culture, residence culture and practices, a lack of attention to how our ordinary research and teaching practices may contribute to legacies of scientific racism, and deficiencies at our deeper levels of human interaction.

CIRCoRe and its workstreams aimed to assess and address these concerns and to make recommendations on appropriate and pragmatic ways to help accelerate the transformation of our institution to where a sense of belonging and co-ownership for all endears.

In the course of its work in the last eighteen months, the workstreams presented the Rectorate with a host of recommendations for consideration – some have already been implemented, such as the establishment of the Interim Working Group (IWG) that has added to the efficiency and agility in dealing with matters related to human dignity infringement and social justice; the realignment of the Equality Unit (EqU) and its related structures; and the considered submission on the closure of the Wilgenhof residence, while others needed further refinement following the Rectorate's input.

1.2 CIRCoRe's structures

At the inception meeting on 20 April 2023, the CIRCoRe Governance Committee (later renamed the CIRCoRe Advisory Committee) received and discussed the proposed structures put forward by Professor Aslam Fataar who was appointed by the Rectorate to lead the process. The presentation explained that while the Rector was the "owner" of this initiative, its planned activities would take place within five workstreams.

[2023.04.20 - CIRCoRe Inception Meeting Presentation - Prof Aslam Fataar .pptx](#)

The five workstreams spanned the areas of concern highlighted in the recommendations made by the Khampepe Commission.

1. Student Life / Communities
2. Compulsory Core Offering for First Year Students

3. Institutional Culture
4. Race, categorisation and science
5. Structural alignment

Each workstream was led by an academic with expertise on the topic. (Some staff members were bought out of some of their teaching duties for the duration of the project so that they could give CIRCoRe the attention it required.) They, together with individual workstream members identified, were invited to attend a CIRCoRe workshop in May 2023 after which the terms of reference ([TOR](#)) for each workstream were further refined.

The presentations at both the inception meeting in April 2023 and the workshop in May 2023 gave emphasis to CIRCoRe following a scholarly process. While recommendations for concrete action – short-term, medium-term and longer-term – were the expected outputs of the process, these recommendations would be informed by well-researched and scholarly data. A two-year timeline was initially suggested for the work to be completed. During 2024, this timeline was reduced to the end of March 2025 to align with Professor Wim de Villier's end of tenure.

The Governance Committee included senior staff from across the University. Its role was to monitor progress within the workstreams and CIRCoRe more broadly. Regular meetings were chaired by the Rector, Prof Wim de Villiers or Professor Nico Koopman, DVC Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel, and attended by heads of the workstreams. Later, it was suggested and agreed that this committee be re-named as the CIRCoRe Advisory Committee as this more closely reflected its role.

In addition to the five workstreams, further activities were highlighted in the CIRCoRe proposals: the establishment of the Interim Working Group (IWG), facilitated dialogues across the institution and with external stakeholders, the Employment Equity Roundtable, and the development of an institutional Transformation Charter. Developments around each of these are described in the second section of this report along with changes made to the initial CIRCoRe structures described above.

Thus, the CIRCoRe process was planned as a comprehensive, institution-wide approach which required meetings and report-back sessions with stakeholders such as the Rectorate, the Institutional Transformation Committee (ITC), Senate and Council.

The CIRCoRe process navigated several challenges during its lifetime, one of these being the resignation of Professor Fataar in February 2024. Following Professor Fataar's resignation, it was agreed that to ensure optimal continuity, the five workstream heads along with the external advisor, Prof Andre Keet of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, and Mr Mohamed Shaikh, Executive Manager Rectorate, as coordinator of the CIRCoRe processes, would form the Steering Committee under the leadership of Prof Nico Koopman.

1.3 CIRCoRe in context

1.3.1 The national context

It is useful to locate CIRCoRe within the broader SA higher education transformation context. In doing so, the following two documents are useful to draw on:

1. The Transformation of South African Education: [Concept paper](#) prepared for the second national Higher Education Transformation Summit, 2015.
2. The State of Transformation of South Africa's Public Universities: [Research report, 2023](#).

Both reports were prepared under the auspices of the Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation on the South African Public Universities whose role was to monitor progress on transformation in public universities and to advise the Minister. This body was established on 10 April 2013, four years after the release of the Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (Soudien Report 2008) which confirmed alienation, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance across the education sector, including higher education.

Together, the two reports of the Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation on the South African Public Universities mentioned above, amongst others, trace developments in public higher education institutions since the *1997 Education White Paper* which defined transformation in line with core principles: equity and redress; democratisation; development; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; institutional autonomy and public accountability. While the period that followed focused on equity and redress and arrangements that would increase efficiency, effectiveness and quality, the *2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* introduced deeper debates on the student and staff experience, epistemological equity and social justice.

One of the most critical transformation challenges highlighted in the two reports listed above is that of institutional culture. "The type of incidents arising in universities raise concerns about societal identity, values, ethics and morality that shape universities in South Africa" (Concept paper, 2015) and fly in the face of the SA Constitution and its principles. It is argued that both the structures within universities and the socio-economic order that has persisted in the post-apartheid period, including the hierarchies of privilege embedded in the colonial past, continue to shape lived experiences of both staff and students.

While a variety of transformation projects and initiatives across South African public universities are referred to in the 2023 report on The State of Transformation of South Africa's Public Universities (some merely rote compliance-based and others more innovative and holistic), this report also notes "the challenge of assessing the extent and nature of comprehensive transformation at the institutional level" which is complicated by the complexity and great number of indicators required and which is made more impenetrable by the lack of standard indicators and few agreed targets across the system (2023: 4).

1.3.2 The institutional context

The history of SU's work on transformation was captured in reports outlined by Professor Nico Koopman at CiRCoRe's inception meeting in April 2023. These reports highlight the periodisation of transformation at the institution. Notably, before 2000, the concept of transformation was "avoided" by the University. Between 2000 and 2014,

transformation met with resistance within the University. From 2015 to 2023, the process of institutional transformation began with several investigations, commissions and reports. Overall, the journey was described as having been one of “ambivalence”. [2023.04.20 - CIRCoRe Inception Meeting Presentation - Prof Nico Koopman.pptx](#)

It is also important to recognise that the University is located within the town of Stellenbosch which has a particular political history that has inevitably influenced the institution in various ways. Historical patterns of privilege have been reflected in the demographic profile of staff and students. CIRCoRe’s work has highlighted at least some of these patterns illustrating how they have continued to shape institutional structures and ways of being and doing. Disrupting established and engrained patterns is not easy work – neither can it be done within 18 months.

The next section of the report documents CIRCoRe’s work – in the stand-alone activities and those that were conducted within the five workstreams – together with the recommendations that arose from the various activities. The conclusion outlines broader lessons learned about the conditions necessary for transformation. In these sections, the report provides an evaluation of CIRCoRe’s successes and failures using both quantitative and qualitative measures.

While the primary audience for this report is the outgoing Rector, Professor Wim de Villiers, the Rectorate and the SU Council, the report is expected to inform decisions taken forward by the incoming Rector, Professor Deresh Ramjugernath and Rectorate, as will be indicated, the ITC. In addition, it makes a contribution to current understandings of transformation at both SU and across the higher education sector.

CIRCORE’S ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, in addition to the activities undertaken within the five workstreams, several related but stand-alone activities were undertaken as a means of exploring topics that will ultimately inform the thinking on matters dealt with in the respective workstreams. This section of the report begins with the latter and then moves to those of the individual workstreams. Recommendations made are made in *italics* and **bold**. (The recommendations can also be found separately from the full narrative in Appendix A.)

2.1 Stand-alone activities

2.1.1 The Interim Working Group (IWG)

Given that CIRCoRe had to perform its activities against the backdrop of the review of key transformation policies and practices underway at the time of its inception, one of the first concrete proposals made by CIRCoRe was for the [establishment of a structure known as the Interim Working Group](#) (IWG). Its role was to assist the Rectorate in responding to incidents of discrimination experienced by students and staff, including incidents of racism, gender-based violence (GBV) and HIV/Aids whilst some of the

relevant policies were (then) under review. It was expected that this structure would ensure a clear and agile process in responding to such incidents.

The Rectorate approved this proposal, and the following role players served in the IWG:

- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel
- The Head of CIRCoRe¹
- The Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation (chair)
- The Senior Director: Student Affairs
- The Head of the SU Equality Unit
- The Director: Employee Relations
- The Director: Corporate Communication

A member of the CIRCoRe office served as secretariat.

The key questions addressed in the meetings of the IWG were:

1. Does the University have the necessary policies and procedures in place to address the issue put on the table for discussion?
2. Are the policies and processes being implemented as planned?
3. If not, what recommendations should be made to the Rectorate?
4. To what extent should SU communicate and/or guide communication on the matters at hand?
5. Are there any other relevant proposals to be made to the Rectorate?

The IWG was called together as soon as it became aware of a sensitive incident at SU. The information on these incidents was mostly provided through IWG's members (including referrals that came through its members). Amongst others, the IWG deliberated on the following issues:

- Reported cases of alleged sexual violence and rape (staff and student cases)
- A urination incident (and other similar incidents)
- The Gaza matter (as it played out in the current Israel/Palestine conflict) and its impact on the SU community
- Student discipline-related matters
- The Wilgenhof settlement processes

In addition to making recommendations on incidents related to individual student's behaviour, the IWG engaged the Rectorate and the Senate in discussions related to larger societal issues (such as a proposed resolution regarding the Israeli-Palestine conflict that included a call for an immediate ceasefire, the condemnation of the destruction of the education sector in Gaza and to express solidarity with academic colleagues victimised for their willingness to speak out against the educaracide in Gaza, amongst others) and students' protests on these topics.

While the majority of the Senate did not pass the proposed resolution at its meeting on 30 April 2024, the Rector [issued a statement](#) that recognised that the Israeli-Palestine crisis had affected the SU community and emphasised that the institution stood firmly

¹ After the resignation of Professor Fataar, Mr Mohamed Shaikh attended as coordinator of the CIRCoRe processes.

for the principles of peace, respect for human rights, freedom of expression, and the principles of International Humanitarian Law.

The morale within the CIRCoRe workstreams suffered after the said decision of Senate. As indicated in a statement made in June 2024, “the intense sense of defeat that these colleagues felt was palpable and required dextrous work to keep CIRCoRe on track”. It appeared to them that the Senate decision was an endorsement of an institutional culture that is intensely resistant to change. The Steering Committee argued that as a value-driven institution, SU is morally bound to take an institutional view of the genocide in Gaza. They linked this matter to the principles of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which are articulated in both the University’s Transformation Plan and its Restitution Statement. In addition, CIRCoRe’s statement pointed to the global moral position taken across and within various structures of the United Nations and the increasing number of countries recognising Palestine diplomatically.

As regards student protests, the IWG advised the Rector to consider the right to freedom of expression for those students staging protests about the Israeli-Palestine conflict. This is in the context of the draping of the Palestine Flag by Students4Palestine at the university’s library in October 2024. Students claimed that the flag was removed by university representatives resulting in much unhappiness among students and some academics who accused the University management of being high-handed and authoritarian. This event was perceived unfavourably by the members of the workstreams, including the Workstream leadership. This incident, read together with Senate’s earlier decision on the Israel-Palestine conflict, was experienced by the workstream leaders as inhibitive of deep relational change at the University. The letter of the Rector to some academics ([here](#)) explains the factual position and sheds more light on the matter.

Although the IWG had technically ceased to exist at the end of 2024 when CIRCoRe’s activities ceased, this committee was convened again early in February 2025 to discuss an incident of inappropriate behaviour by a staff member – particularly the reputational harm this incident posed for the University.

At this meeting, it was recommended that although CIRCoRe had closed, a similar structure to the IWG should be established to continue its work -i.e. to consider the policies and regulations and their implementation as challenging incidents arise. It is recommended that the following role players serve on the proposed committee:

- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel
- The Senior Director Social Impact, and Transformation (chair)
- The Senior Director Student Affairs
- The Head of the SU Equality Unit
- The Director Employee Relations
- The Director Corporate Communication

The Rectorate and the ITC could consider additional members as well as a name for this institutional contingency committee. The TOR and reporting line for this structure could also be further considered.

2.1.2 Facilitated dialogues

While seminars were hosted by several of the workstreams as part of their ongoing activities, to ensure broad involvement and inclusive ownership of the CIRCoRe process, its original proposal highlighted the importance of listening to and learning from diverse sets of stakeholders and participants. It was thought that such interactions would provide the necessary spaces for challenging engagements which, in turn, would assist CIRCoRe to develop and articulate a theory of what inhibits and promotes institutional transformation and associated recommendations for implementation.

It was acknowledged that these engagements would likely foreground the University's ambivalence towards transformation. Given this, a training session for dialogue facilitators was planned for November 2024. The trainer contracted for the session, an expert in facilitation and mediation with deep knowledge of the higher education sector, was briefed by the CIRCoRe office and planned the training programme.

During the introductory session on 4 November 2023, it quickly became clear that before embarking on any training as facilitators of transformation dialogues in the University, participants needed to address questions about their own lived experiences of discrimination at the University. As one asked, "How do we facilitate discussions about transformation in the very institution where we have been discriminated against?"

After the workshop, CIRCoRe sent all participants an email that recognised the importance of providing opportunities for individuals to share their experiences and for these to be heard and acknowledged. This communication also noted that the day had offered profound insights into how individuals experienced the institution as uncaring and unsupportive. (Email communication of 11 November 2023)

The key recommendation arising from this is that the University needs to take urgent steps to provide productive spaces for continuing dialogue on transformation matters with a specific focus on more effective support to those who have suffered the effects of discrimination. As will be seen, the recommendations arising from Workstream 5 go some way in ensuring better responses to complaints about discrimination.

In addition, Workstream 1's recommendations related to a methodology for Assisting students to speak about race could be adapted for inclusion in staff capacity-building programmes and used for future training for dialogue facilitators.

2.1.3 The Employment Equity (EE) Roundtable

In November 2023, a [day-long roundtable event on Accelerating Employment Equity \(EE\)](#) was held where the University's policy, plans and profiles related to this topic were considered. Mr Sello Molapo, Director: Employment Equity and Promotion of Diversity, began by explaining that while the University has responded to the Employment Equity Act in terms of its EE Policy, EE Plan and Code for EE and Diversity, data reveals a much slower rate of transformation amongst academic staff than PASS staff.

During an [Employment Equity Roundtable discussion](#) in November 2023, internal barriers to transforming academic staff demographics were noted. These were found to include the PhD criterion, the perception that the institutional culture is "conservative

and unwelcoming”, advertisements written in such a way as to exclude some potential applicants, and insufficient attention given to the training of PASS staff and technical officers, and to their career paths and promotion opportunities. In addition, the difficulty in matching counter offers received by applicants selected for appointment, their family members’ challenges in finding employment in the relatively rural environment of Stellenbosch and the cost of living in this area were also noted.

During the discussions, several recommendations for short-term measures together with medium and longer-term strategies to achieve EE goals were discussed. These included the need to review selection panel appointments and the training provided to members to provide disaggregated data on race and gender to Deans and HODs to assist them in succession planning and setting targets for equity and diversity; to introduce further opportunities to grow our own timber; and to hold a seminar series on EE related topics aimed at addressing the hurdles that stymie the university’s employment equity endeavours.

2.1.4 The Transformation Charter

The Khampepe Report urged SU to adopt a Transformation Charter that “clarifies what the university stands for and what measures are in place to hold it to its values ... [and] the process of creating the charter should be leveraged to spark university-wide discourse”. Other universities have adopted transformation charters that formalise the ethos underpinning their work and aspirational institutional culture.

To lay the groundwork for a credible and legitimate Transformation Charter or Transformation Statement, CIRCoRe has undertaken initial exploratory work within SU. This work has entailed understanding which sections of the university have adopted transformation charters of their own, which have not, and the threads that can be drawn between the various charters developed and adopted.

CIRCoRe strongly recommends that this work be taken forward as a matter of priority. The process for developing this needs to involve various stakeholders in the University, its community and the wider higher education fraternity. Being participatory in nature and rooted in the principle of broad yet sincere engagement, the process of development will itself be assist in demystifying the discourse of transformation within the University. Moreover, the Charter or Institutional Transformation Statement that is eventually adopted will be imbued with a sense of ownership by the university community at large. This sense of ownership carries with it a sense of communal responsibility for bringing the Transformation Charter or Statement to life in every aspect of every individual’s work, study and interaction.

CIRCoRe’s firm belief is that this inculcation of a sense of communal ownership immeasurably strengthens the likelihood of a Transformation Charter or Statement being enacted for generations to come, succeeding in its role of being a fulcrum for discussions about how best to orientate the University as it grapples with the challenges of reconciling the realities of its past and present into a coherent, inclusive and equitable future.

This project should be led by the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Transformation, Social Impact and Personnel.

2.1.5 Mapping the Decolonising Education Imperative at Stellenbosch University

While the work of decolonising education at Stellenbosch University has been taking place within pockets of the institution, a coordinated and institutionalised approach is necessary. To this end, CIRCoRe hosted a workshop titled [*Mapping the Decolonising Education Imperative at Stellenbosch University*](#) on 5 December 2023.

The workshop, led by Prof Aslam Fataar, head of the CIRCoRe project at the time, aimed to create a map of the fragments of decolonial teaching practice at SU, to lay the groundwork for a deliberate and structured approach to this critical work.

It interrogated the understanding of decolonisation within the context of the South African higher education system and explored how to broaden the conversation's reach and impact. This would serve to move the decolonisation imperative from the margins of the university to its centre.

This discussion took place against the backdrop of Stellenbosch University codifying its approach to transformation and decolonisation of education. Drafts of major academic policies were being workshopped at the university at the time, including the university's Transformation Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy and Academic Renewal Policy. The [*2017 Decolonising Education Task Team Report*](#) was also available and is a key framer for discussions on this subject.

Academic and professional staff shared examples of putting the principles of decolonisation into practice in their sections. These examples formed the foundations of a holistic overview of the decolonial work taking place at SU and allowed for the exchange of ideas and drawing attention to potential tools to explore.

Prof Fataar highlighted a major stumbling block in the drive to decolonise higher education: the failure of language. To properly constitute a broad conversation about decolonising education at SU, a "language" that did not elicit fear or "alienate 90% of our stakeholders" needed to be developed, allowing scholars to engage substantively with the subject, instead of remaining trapped in historical preconceptions. Moreover, said Fataar, a strategic approach was necessary.

"Given the system and the individual in the middle, there is a growing phenomenon of what I call pedagogical politics," said Fataar. This means joining up the conversation, taking the conversation to the system, and announcing our decolonial work to each other. We should identify opportunities to work together in cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary ways. This is how we grow that pedagogical policy."

Key recommendations arising from this discussion included the following:

- It is recommended that clear, inclusive and persuasive language around the concept of decolonising curricula and the purpose it serves be developed.
- It is recommended that, in acknowledging that role players in such tasks are emotionally invested, negatively or positively, an ethical engagement with the complexity of the task as it related to the humans undertaking the task be undertaken.

- Foreground the ‘why’ for engaging in such work in the first place – which, in this case, is a commitment to protecting and promoting a public university that promotes societal improvement and the public good. This foregrounding offers a different point of departure to a “technicist approach”.
- Observing that governance and leadership structures at SU do not always provide the necessary buttress against anti-progressive developments, to engage the system in a way that lays the foundation for progressive work to be more than mere promotional material.

2.2.1 Workstream 1: Student Life / Communities

2.2.1.1 Terms of Reference

The TOR for this workstream included activities that focused on the question of diverse student experiences, particularly marginalised student experiences at SU, and how to systematically ensure the flourishing of *all* students. The Khampepe Report highlighted the role of race in students’ experience. This cannot be separated from intersectional experiences of gender, class, and disability, amongst others. The workstream aimed to identify barriers and opportunities to enhance a flourishing student experience for all.

In doing so, the workstream considered how student experiences are marred by racism and its intersectionalities to help SU re-imagine, conceptualise and operationalise its work with students in a democratic society in transition. The workstream recognised the importance of students leaving SU as citizens who value and implement an ethos of democracy and human rights. Through facilitating and sharing scholarly insights and awareness of challenges and opportunities that students face in the University, including its research, teaching and community engagement, the workstream also aimed to contribute to the development of relevant policies.

2.2.1.2 Activities

Regular monthly meetings were held for members of the workstream. Additional speakers were invited as required by the topics on the agenda.

Literature review

The first activity was the commissioning of a [literature review of Black students’ out of class experiences](#). Dr Liezl Dick from the Centre for Student Life and Learning drew on peer-reviewed articles published between 2013 and 2024. These articles gave specific attention to students’ experiences of ‘whiteness’ and white spaces and how these impacted black and marginalised students’ sense of belonging and personal development at traditional White Higher Education Institutions (TWI), like SU. The methodological approaches employed by authors were mostly qualitative, with a specific focus on interviews.

Defining whiteness as “an ecology of hostile structures and practices that shape what we consider to be daily norms” (Garrett 2024), the report provides a clear sense of black and marginalised students’ sense of oppression in white spaces. Not only is whiteness and its manifestations as everyday white supremacy normalised, it impacts the well-

being and success of black and marginalised students. The review reveals that, very often, for white students, these spaces and mechanisms are invisible – while, for black students, almost every level of their lived experiences is affected.

The report explains that black students experience their universities' commitment to social justice and transformation policies as “window dressing”, mere distractions that prevent deep institutional change. Experiences of racialised stereotyping, micro-aggressions and stigmatisation are cited in the report. Such experiences make black and marginalised students feel intentionally unwelcome, insufficient and inadequate – “out of place”.

The report highlights the residence spaces, roommate placement practices, and the use of symbols and artefacts as being important areas for research about students' sense of belonging.

A number of recommendations are made in the report: the need to dismantle white spaces and mechanisms and to provide counter-spaces where the deficit notion of black and marginalised students can be challenged, and community-building can take place. These spaces, where blackness can be celebrated, are instrumental in assisting black and marginalised students to navigate white spaces and to develop counter-narratives. In such spaces, black and marginalised students can be encouraged to draw on their cultural wealth, networks, and prior skills and knowledge. In this way, black placemaking and black joy emerge.

The report concludes with an important question: How do educators work with, and against, wilful ignorance without losing the student in the learning process? It was recommended that both students and staff need to find a way to speak about race and that development and training be provided for this purpose.

Development of a methodology to speak about race productively

Once completed, the literature study was shared in the workstream and in student focus groups in order to develop guidelines for student-centred methodologies to be used to assist students in talking productively about race and its intersectionalities. It was expected that this would assist to:

- Understand how students approach conversations about these sensitive issues, and
- Develop methodologies that may be valuable and meaningful amongst students when speaking about these issues.

Focus group workshops were advertised using digital flyers after which nine workshops catering for approximately 10 – 15 students each, were held either during lunchtimes in the Psychology Department or in the evenings at Admin B building. Student participation was voluntary. Once students had signed up, they received a short visual summary of the main issues arising from the literature review via email / WhatsApp.

Approximately fifty students participated in these conversations over the 9 workshops. Some returned to continue their discussions in subsequent workshops. Most were in student leadership positions and represented various race and gender groups on campus. The lunchtime sessions were more popular than the evening sessions, likely because workshops took place close to exam time.

The key finding was that all students were petrified to talk about race. They reported having felt unsafe and vulnerable when student facilitators of discussions on race did not have the necessary training or experience to manage these discussions. Such feelings also arose when some students expressed considerable rage in these discussions. Both Black and White students voiced being very scared of what they referred to as “cancel culture” since stigmatisation and marginalisation could kick in if they were not politically correct.

While Black students explained that they have to perform a certain kind of Blackness not to be marginalised, White students feared saying the wrong thing and being labelled racist. As a result, students prefer not to make any public contributions in class when race and racism are being discussed by the lecturer. They prefer to have such conversations with only one or two close friends after the lecture. These findings point to both Black and White students being silenced by their fears of being stigmatised – something which they felt could affect their entire university career.

The discomfort felt by students when speaking about race and racism was found to be exacerbated when the focus group participants included both Black and White students. For example, even when there were only one or two White people in the group, Black students would start by apologising for what they were about to say.

The everyday experiences students spoke about in the focus group sessions included the following: moving into residence and a White student asking for “a different roommate”, and challenges in finding food options that they were familiar with and could afford. They did report that the Victoria hub now includes pap on the menu and that Huis ten Bosch also serves pap and wors, chicken feet, dumplings, steamed bread and bunny chow. These were seen to be positive developments.

The need for familiar surroundings was also highlighted when students reported self-censoring when events are held on campus. They explained that they feel that they might not be welcomed – “It’s not for us. It’s for them” – so stay away. The music chosen at these events may also serve to alienate Black students. Language and accent were seen as other issues that highlight differences. Despite this, students in the focus groups reported that student societies could be the most affirming spaces.

Students reported that while the Master classes offered by the Centre for Student Leadership are helpful, they requested that opportunities for conversations that are less steeped in theory and less formal would be very useful.

It is recommended that the University ensures that safe spaces are offered where students can speak more informally about race in terms of their lived experiences.

It is recommended that performance poetry be included as a medium to communicate about race.

Wilgenhof residence

Throughout 2024 and alongside other role players, Workstream 1 discussed and made recommendations related to the Wilgenhof residence. (A timeline of the events related to the Wilgenhof residence can be found on the University’s website under Wilgenhof [Updates and timeline](#)).

Recommendations made in 2024 included that no first-year students be placed at Wilgenhof until after thorough consideration of the restructuring of the residence, that such restructuring requires that the residence in its current form be closed so that a new community can be created, and that current Wilgenhof students be dispersed and accommodated elsewhere – this process to be managed by Student Housing.

Workstream 1 contributed to two submissions made to the three-member Wilgenhof Panel under Advocate Nick de Jager that investigated the Wilgenhof matter. The [second of these submissions](#) was made in July 2024 under the umbrella of CIRCoRe and endorsed by the Institutional Transformation Committee. It followed the template provided by the University for these submissions and included strong arguments for the closure of the residence. These were based on the deeply ingrained residence culture, the failure of recent undertakings by the residence leadership to effect material and substantive change to foster an all-embracing culture, and the dangers of secrecy and a ‘coded’ language. It was argued that the issues extend beyond individual students and are systemic reflecting a deliberate resistance to change that is contrary to changing societal values and norms and is at variance with SU’s values and strategic direction.

Two legal challenges followed Council’s resolution of 16 September 2024 that the Wilgenhof residence be closed in its current form for 2025 and replaced with a reimagined and rejuvenated male residence. While the challenge from the Association for the Advancement of Wilgenhof Residents (AWIR) was settled through a compromise, the other from the Wilgenhof Alumni Association (WAA) has also lately been resolved as reflected in a [joint statement](#) by the University and the Wilgenhof Alumni Association.

It may be argued that the Wilgenhof residence matter and the decision-making processes around this provide a good indication of the “transformation temperature” prevalent at SU in 2024. It certainly influenced CIRCoRe’s structures and activities. These included the resignation of Professor Aslam Fataar as leader of CIRCoRe in February 2024 soon after the discovery of the two rooms in Wilgenhof, the joint resignation of the heads of the five workstreams in October 2024 along with the resignations of many workstream members who highlighted their lack of morale following the aforementioned decisions and agreements.

The issue of residence culture has also been dealt with in the [Report on the Implementation of the Khampepe Commission Report’s Recommendations](#) by the Division of Student Affairs.

Research group on commuter students

This study responded to the need for the University to understand and support a diverse student body, not only in terms of differences in race, gender and age but also in terms of the differences in students’ living and travelling arrangements during the time of study. As indicated in the Khampepe Report, commuting students, like all other SU students, should be given equitable opportunities to attain personal and academic success. This report pointed out that the current design (deployment of funds, mobility systems, institutional administrative infrastructure to name a few) is heavily skewed in favour of residential students and does not do enough to ensure equitable access for commuting students too.

The research group drew on a book published shortly before CIRCoRe was launched - *The educational pathways and experiences of black students at Stellenbosch University* edited by Professor Aslam Fataar. Chapter 3 of this publication, by Dr Jerome Joorst, focused on the socio-educational experiences of black SU commuter students. Qualitative educational and related social experiences of three black students who travelled more than 20 kilometres daily to and from SU were collected through interviews. Their lived experiences of studying while commuting represent the stories of many other black students whose university encounters are inflected, conditioned, and complicated by the double challenge of being black and poor and having a commuter identity. (Link to publication.) This earlier work was instrumental in the use of the term student “ecologies” – the various factors and dynamics that influence students’ lived experiences and how these impact their learning experiences.

Although the research group initially planned to collect primary data for this study, it soon found a wealth of secondary data within the institution. The Commuter Student Unit (now part of the Unit for Commuter Student Communities) have tracked not only the exponential increase in commuter students but also the challenges faced by these students. The Unit identified the four major challenges as:

- Navigating time and space.
- Mobility.
- Institutional infrastructure – structural and cultural issues.
- Staff to (commuter) student ratio.

Associated with the above is the need to ensure that commuter students feel a part of the wider university community and develop an SU identity since integration encourages the engagement required for quality learning outcomes.

While the questionnaire probing these matters has been developed in recent years, the data has not been fully analysed and shared across the university. This is partly due to staff time constraints.

In addition to these data, additional surveys undertaken were identified such as that by NSFAS. Many of the questions included [in this survey](#) align well with the concept of student ecologies in that they probe students’ living and travel arrangements (e.g. distance from the university and mode of transport) as well as financial strategies (e.g. management of living allowances) and nutrition needs (e.g. the number of meals consumed daily and where they shop for food – on or off campus).

A noteworthy finding was the number of students who lacked knowledge of existing support (e.g. booking and buying meals of the day at residences in their clusters).

Initially, the research group had envisaged the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data – both primary and secondary, but discussions around budget and timelines necessitated a reduction in these plans. The work completed to date provides a platform for further analysis of existing data and consultation with staff who work on commuter students.

Close links with the Division of Student Affairs

It is noted that many of the issues described under Workstream 1’s activities are also covered in the *Report on the Implementation of the Khampepe Commission Report’s*

Recommendations by the Division of Student Affairs. This report includes information on the work of the newly formed Centre for Student Life and Learning (CSLL) including that related to student governance and leadership training, additional educational interventions (such as *Shared Humanity: Lessons on critical thinking* referenced under Workstream 2), welcoming events and commuter students.

2.2.1.3 Recommendations for immediate implementation

2.2.1.3.1 It is recommended that the University ensures that opportunities for community-building amongst black and marginalized students (e.g. through societies) and additional support (e.g. booking and buying meals through residences in the cluster) be made much more visible to students. In addition to posters and flyers in student spaces, social media needs to be used to advertise these opportunities and support. The advertisements need to be made much more visible throughout the year, not only in the welcoming and orientation weeks. This recommendation needs to be taken up by residence staff, clubs and societies and by those providing student leadership training.

2.2.1.3.2 It is recommended that productive spaces for discussions on race be offered in small group settings – in class as well as in clubs and societies - where students can speak more informally about their lived experiences.

2.2.1.3.3 It is recommended that the reports on the literature review and the methodology for speaking about race and its intersections be shared with staff responsible for offering student training in the Division of Student Affairs. This could be additional reading material and topics for discussion in seminars.

2.2.1.3.4 It is recommended that the literature review of the methodology for speaking about race and its intersectionalities, and the data on commuter students, be shared with the wider academic staff through the offerings in the Centre for Teaching and Learning. This will afford academics a deeper understanding of the diversity among SU's students and their lived experiences.

2.2.1.3.5 It is recommended that research capacity be strengthened – particularly to enable staff to “mine” the data collected on commuter students and share the findings in various fora across the university and beyond.

2.2.1.4 Recommendations for longer-term implementation

2.2.1.4.1 Workstream 1 supports the recommendations made by the Division of Student Affairs in the [Report on the Implementation of the Khampepe Commission Report's Recommendations](#), particularly those related to residence culture, commuter students, and the development of student leaders recognising that some of these are for longer-term implementation.

2.2.2 Workstream 2: Compulsory Core Offering for First-Year Students

2.2.2.1 Terms of Reference

This workstream took as its starting point the recommendation made by Judge Khampepe that the University consider the possibility of introducing a compulsory core

curriculum for first-year students to facilitate their learning and critical engagement on matters relating to equality, transformation and justice. It was further suggested that such a module could be based on the existing offering *Shared Humanity: Lessons in Critical Thinking* suitably adapted to optimise its efficacy when taught to a larger group of students. The Khampepe Report also noted the “ample academic and human resources at the University’s disposal to design and optimise the course”.

The workstream members (initially under Professor Lis Lange and later under Dr Sharman Wickham) focused on the undergraduate curriculum and included the co-curriculum environment in considering how best to respond to the recommendation of the Khampepe Commission.

In addition, the workstream agreed that its focus would broaden to facilitate scholarly insights and awareness of the role of curriculum in the development of citizenship, democracy and social justice. In this way, the workstream would support the broader University in unpacking the different dimensions of the ‘transformative student experience’ and how this aligns with the process of academic renewal.

The final item on the TOR was to consider different types of academic staff training to provide lecturers with the resources to develop and teach/facilitate such curricula.

2.2.2.2 Activities

Research on compulsory core curricula

Along with regular monthly meetings, this workstream began by commissioning research to identify examples of [compulsory core curricula](#) for first-year students. The report drew on a review of over 60 journal articles and book chapters in identifying seven key concepts used in a number of regions, globally, and describing selected transformation initiatives in South African higher education. The key findings “(both national and international) establish that transformation is a process, not an event, which requires a multimodal approach to enabling different stakeholders to engage reflectively, discursively and probably uncomfortably with each other, led by trained facilitators and supported by committed management and adequate resources”.

The findings above hold important lessons for SU. They point to the need for ongoing engagement (as opposed to just a module for first-year students only), that a variety of learning approaches are required (as opposed to the traditional transmission modes), and that staff members, themselves, may need additional training and support. The concept of continuous engagement via multi-tiered curricula is woven through many sections of this report and may be considered to be a necessary condition for transformation.

Research on faculty offerings in Stellenbosch University

While an initial search across faculty handbooks for offerings that included the terms used in the research report above was done in 2023, the workstream agreed that the results, while interesting, did not reflect the reality of developments on the ground. Both stand-alone and embedded content were identified. In addition, students took up co-curricula courses such as critical citizenship, peer tutor learning and outreach programmes. Credits varied from offering to offering.

In 2024, additional research was undertaken to investigate how faculties within SU had already adapted existing content in line with the concepts of equality, transformation and justice. Not all the faculties were included in this exercise as CIRCoRe activities came to a halt before the end of October 2024. Examples completed were those from the [Faculty of Arts and Social Science](#) and the [Faculty of Military Science](#).

It should be noted that the collection of the faculty data was limited to the identification of the titles of modules that included references to the key concepts identified in the research report. As such, this exercise was not a full review in that it did not analyse the content nor explore the modes of teaching, learning and assessment used. While CIRCoRe did not have sufficient time to do this, it is recommended that such analyses could form part of programme reviews.

Discussions with representatives from other faculties (e.g. Engineering) suggested that terminology used in curriculum renewal (e.g. “graduate attributes” introduced from “a humanist perspective” as opposed to “transformation” from “a social justice perspective”) may be influenced by statutory bodies (e.g. the Engineering Council of South Africa). These bodies are responsible for the regulation of the engineering profession and set and maintain the internally recognised standards of professional competence and ethics. These discussions suggested that, while terminology may vary, the student outcomes – knowledge, skills and attitudes – are often similar. Faculties may need to be granted some flexibility when analysing their offerings as part of review processes.

Further examples of transformative offerings identified

Further examples of transformative teaching came to light during the period of the project. These included the offering mentioned by Judge Khampepe in her report - [Shared Humanity: Lessons in Critical Thinking](#); and the [Civic and Soft Skills Programme from Higher Health’s Higher Education and Training: Health, Wellness and Development Centre](#).

Successfully piloted at SU in 2019, *Shared Humanity* was designed, managed and facilitated under the leadership of Dr Ruth Andrews in the Centre for Student Life and Learning in the Division for Student Affairs (DSA). Initially run as a stand-alone offering in 2021 and 2022, it was embedded in the MBChB programme curriculum in Faculty of Medicine and Health Science in 2023. Early in 2024, after plans had been made to continue this work, it was stopped. Lack of resources was cited by some as the reason, while a lack of collective leadership was cited by others.

A review of the content and modes of engagement in *Shared Humanity* and Higher Health’s programmes.

- Both are multi-disciplinary in nature. The former includes history, science and technology, arts, anthropology, economics, law, political science and educational technology. Sessions address questions about knowledge, values, social structure, resilience, culture and design thinking.
- Higher Health’s offering includes sessions on civic and peer education, gender, mental health, disability, sexuality, substance abuse and resilience, climate change and financial literacy. This offering is an QCTO NQF level 5 accredited course with 60 credits. A self-paced course, it requires six hundred notional hours, with a minimum of 180 hours online.

- Another example of curriculum development discussed in the workstream meetings was that found in Professor Faadiel Essop's conference paper entitled [Addressing scientific racism: an initial attempt at curriculum renewal for postgraduate biomedical sciences students](#). Professor Essop has been [recognised for transformative teaching](#) and visionary leadership that focuses on "modelling" our struggles with complex topics for students, interdisciplinary learning and challenging paradigms that perpetuate discrimination. He eschews purely didactic presentations, instead drawing on "the pedagogy of engagement" that uses group work, real-life case studies and "mystery-solving" assignments. He explains that "The goal is to produce graduates who are not only technically skilled but also critical thinkers and change agents."

The above examples indicate that content related to equality, transformation and justice may be included as a stand-alone offering or embedded within an existing qualification. The latter gives the students the opportunity for "sense-making" within their own disciplines but may require that academic staff extend their own capacity to include the additional content in such a way that students develop the necessary transformative competencies to become critical thinkers and change agents.

Strong arguments were made by members of the workstream for credit-bearing offerings.

Seminars offered

As part of its TOR - to facilitate scholarly insights and awareness of the role of curriculum in the development of citizenship, democracy and social justice - the workstream hosted three seminars during 2024. These were:

- [*Socially responsive curricula in health professions education*](#)

Drawing on their own experience and insights gained in a five-year, multi-institutional research project on the responsive curriculum, Professor Susan van Schalkwyk, Professor Cecelia Jacobs and Dr Anthea Hansen argued for the need for critical consciousness as a prerequisite for social justice. This can be achieved through a range of teaching practices, all of which question the ideologies that lie at the root of oppression, exploitation and exclusion. A key lesson shared by the presenters was that the development of socially responsive curricula "requires a village" (i.e. collective effort) and includes students' voices and perspectives as informed by their lived experiences. Finally, they urged academics to "disrupt" the existing power relations, but to "disrupt with kindness".

- [*Decolonisation and the Question of Language*](#)

This seminar highlighted the important role that a decolonial language policy or framework might play in higher education. Not only would this challenge the notion of "bounded languages", the use of multilingualism and translanguaging would assist in dismantling colonial legacies and language hierarchies. In addition, translanguaging would allow students to draw on their full linguistic repertoires and reduce inequalities established through the dominance of English and Afrikaans. The concept of "linguistic justice" was introduced along with the importance of "democratising" language.

- [Experiential Learning as Pedagogy – Towards Institutional Transformation](#)

Participants were invited to explore how experiential learning can act as a conduit for fostering deeper intercultural understanding, engaging with complex social issues, and supporting the University's transformation agenda. Dr Jean Farmer pointed to the need for a theory of change and transformative conversations, while Dr Itumeleng Moroenyane's presentation focused on the broad range of learning opportunities included in the curricula of the Department of Botany and Zoology. These encourage students to identify social problems and possible solutions in real-world situations. The final speaker, Ms Zimbili Sibiya, a PhD student from the Faculty of Agri-Science, gave a personal story of her transformation since arriving as a first-year student at SU. This highlighted the value of raising questions of identity and the need to "unlearn" before "re-learning".

A fourth seminar was being planned at the time that CIRCoRe's activities came to a halt. This would have been a panel discussion with staff from the Engineering and Natural Science faculties (with Commerce as a possible addition). It would have outlined the content and mode of delivery of modules such as Science in Context, Community Interaction and Leadership Development.

To support staff who had completed *Shared Humanity* in 2023, the workstream approved that CIRCoRe resources be made available to one of the panellists to develop an innovative pilot offering focusing on embodied self-enquiry, community and empathy. The results of the pilot will be assimilated into the ongoing work of institutional transformation.

[Building staff capacity through professional development](#)

The final activity of this workstream focused on staff training for transformative competencies. A smaller task team convened during October and November 2024 to discuss the existing professional learning programmes at SU and how these might be enhanced with content that enables academic staff to ensure the critical engagement of students, particularly on matters relating to equality, transformation and justice. It was agreed that the seven experiential learning competency domains together with SU's [graduate attributes](#) provide useful frameworks for further developing existing professional learning programmes. The content would aim to encourage participants to question their assumptions, "truths" and worldviews (including those on the role of universities, the nature of knowledge, and how learning happens. This should also provide participants with a language in which to better articulate their ideas.

The content of the enhanced programme would also draw on the methodology for discussing race (as developed by Workstream 1) and the tool to assist in thinking more critically about human categorisation (as developed by Workstream 4).

The above, together with the previously-mentioned activities and lessons learned, have raised a number of recommendations for consideration.

[2.2.2.3 Recommendations for immediate implementation](#)

The recommendations below take into consideration the University's new [Teaching and Learning Policy](#) (1 January 2025). This emphasizes a learning-centred approach, student

engagement, graduate attributes, and the transformative student experience. The policy also points to the need for the professionalisation of academics and continuous academic renewal.

2.2.2.3.1 As the workstream concluded that there is no one way to embark on renewing and/or developing the curriculum to engender and enhance students' learning of issues of equality, transformation and justice, it is recommended that academic staff in departments and faculties first consider and review various options - both standalone and embedded offerings - before deciding on the best approach to take in developing and / or renewing their curricula. The first step would be to review this section of the CIRCoRe report (including the associated documentation) as an array of options are provided here.

2.2.2.3.2 While both stand-alone offerings and content embedded in existing modules are valid approaches, the workstream strongly recommends that the content be offered at more than just the first-year level/ Rather, ideally, the content should be infused across the years of study programmes – and not only at undergraduate levels but also in postgraduate qualifications. This accords with a lesson highlighted in the earlier-mentioned research report – i.e., transformation is a process and not an event.

2.2.2.3.3 While it is recommended that academic staff experts in the field of study or discipline take the lead in the processes of curriculum development and renewal, it is also recommended that the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) under Dr. Nicolene Herman continues to be the key institutional leader to facilitate and support these processes. In doing so, it should draw on the expertise available in other structures, particularly amongst those staff in the [Centre for Student Life and Learning](#) in the Division of Student Affairs (DSA). In addition to its experience in providing leadership programmes through the co-curriculum to engender graduate attributes, the Centre is mandated to offer staff and students sessions on the design, implementation and evaluation of transformative experiential learning opportunities. In addition, it has expertise in Experiential Learning Transcript Recognition.

2.2.2.3.4 Based on its understanding that curriculum development requires coordination of a complex institutional system, it is recommended that change management strategies give attention to the building of trust within and across Institutional structures and academic and professional support staff. For example, the University needs to ensure that there are safe spaces where these staff can have (sometimes, uncomfortable) conversations in small groups. Given the references to the experiences of distrust and competition (especially for recognition and resources) raised by members of the workstream, it is recommended that engagements and collaborations within faculties be facilitated by staff in the CTL.

2.2.2.3.5 It is recommended that the principles underlying the development of Transformative competencies as identified by the small task team within Workstream 2 be included in the professional development programmes currently offered by CTL.

2.2.2.3.6 It is recommended that seminars such as those held by the workstream in 2024 continue to be held on a regular basis, these build awareness of additional ways in which to approach the curriculum and open up spaces for debate.

Over time, such events will contribute to the development of learning communities where different teaching practices (including experiential learning and the use of translanguaging) can be shared and explored. Seminar presenters and learning communities should include staff from different faculties and disciplines and again be coordinated by the CTL.

2.2.2.4 Recommendations for longer-term implementation

2.2.2.4.1 In the longer term, it is recommended that the University works towards ensuring that the values and attributes contained in the [Vision 2030 Document](#) are operationalized and threaded into the criteria used in programme and departmental reviews and into the ways in which Key Performance Areas (KPA) related to transformation are assessed. It is through weaving together the golden threads of the concepts contained in Vision 2040 that the “compulsory” recommendation made by Judge Khampepe can best be effected.

2.2.2.4.2 To support the transformative efforts of academic staff / disciplinary experts, it is recommended that the University provides additional financial resources to those centres and units with the necessary expertise in transformative learning and competencies. Not all academic staff / disciplinary experts will be in the position to be able to spend time and effort in developing stand-alone modules; they will depend on professional support staff to assist them – either referring them to content that has already been piloted successfully or suggesting new modes of delivery for inclusion in their teaching practice.

2.2.3. Workstream 3: Institutional Culture

2.2.3.1 Terms of Reference

The principal focus of the work of the Institutional Culture workstream was to study, deliberate on, and recommend how to align the University’s institutional culture with a democratic human rights ethos. Key questions addressed by the workstream were:

- What is the institutional culture, especially as it relates to intersectional inclusions and exclusions, at SU, and how is it experienced?
- How and under what conditions is institutional culture produced, reproduced and resisted at SU?
- What might a collective, institutional culture path or paths look like? In other words, what are the leverage points for systemic change?
- What indicators would need to be put in place to monitor institutional culture and social change?

Together, these questions speak to many issues linked to institutional culture: these include organisational change, discrimination, inclusion, race and racism, nationality and ethnicity, decoloniality, class, gender, sexualities, disability, language and accent. Close links between this workstream and the other four can be seen – particularly as Workstreams 2 and 4 pick up on issues related to race.

2.2.3.2 Activities

Seminar series

During 2024, this workstream hosted ten seminars, thus providing spaces for open dialogue where frank discussions on pertinent and sensitive topics were expertly guided. Such events assist in positioning SU as a space where complex yet critical subjects can be broached in ways that progress the university's transformative mandate and aid in its contribution to the development of a cohesive national and continental identity.

The seminar themes, topics and speakers are listed below:

Theme: SU's layered relationship with itself and the broader community

- **Krotoa is Present (KIP):** Elephants in the Room performance

This performance was linked to the multi-disciplinary *KIP* Arts Project, which started at the SU Woordfees in 2022. In this forum, the roles and responsibilities of both the University and its broader communities and the relationships between them were explored.

- **Pierre de Vos:** On Wilgenhof and Belonging

What role does shame play in remembering – or misremembering – unsavoury chapters in one's history, and how does the adjustment of such memories, whether on an individual or institutional level, contribute to the reproduction of complicity with practices that are otherwise obviously harmful?

Prof Pierre de Vos, Claude Leon Foundation Chair in Constitutional Governance in the Department of Public Law at the University of Cape Town, on the role of shame in remembering [conversed with SU's Prof Kopano Ratele](#) / misremembering and how this might apply in the case of SU's Wilgenhof Residence. De Vos, a Wilgenhof alumnus, relayed his experiences of initiation at school and university, considering why such practices persisted despite being called out many times in SU's history.

- **Thaddeus Metz:** Decolonising Higher Education Institutions

Professor Thaddeus Metz, A-rated philosopher based at the University of Pretoria, interrogated several prominent arguments that proponents of decolonisation theory (Africanisation, Afrocentrism, etc) have advanced for making African sources the focus of teaching and research. Metz argued that large swathes of the decolonisation movement had not given Africa its epistemic due, ignoring what the continent could teach the rest of the world.

Theme: Reengaging Steve Biko in 21st century higher education institutions

- **Joel Modiri:** Reading Biko and Race in the Afterlife of Colonial-Apartheid.
- **Tshepo Madlingozi:** Black Consciousness and Pluralist co-existence 'after' conflict
- **Thando Njovane:** Collective Intimacies – Biko and the Existential Black Condition

Senior Lecturer in the Department of Literary Studies in English at Rhodes University, Dr Njovane is an Andrew Mellon early career scholar whose areas of research include critical race theory, trauma theory, childhood, psychoanalysis, political philosophy, feminisms, and higher education. She is also the co-director of the transcontinental interdisciplinary platform, Finding Africa. Dr Njovane is currently working on her book, tentatively titled *Trauma and Childhood in Contemporary African Fiction*. Dr Njovane presented two talks, one on 14 August 2024 under the title **Thirty years on Thinking with Biko**; the other on 15 August 2024 under the title **Towards a Politics of Recognition: Biko and Racial Trauma**. Taken together, in her presentations, Dr Njovane considered the idea that we might come to understand blackness as a political category in terms of the resistance rhetoric offered us by Biko in *I Write What I Like* (1978) and what this might mean if South Africa was considered as a country still grappling with trauma. In so doing, Njovane explored how we have come to inhabit the uncomfortable intimacies our multi-racial society impose upon us thirty years after the fact of democracy. **Tshepo Madlingozi**: Steve Biko, the Gumba-Gumbas and the Forging of Beloved Communities.

Abdoulaye Gueye: From Africans to Blacks: The Making of a Racial Identity in Contemporary France

Abdoulaye Gueye, a sociologist at the University of Ottawa, presented a seminar on his research about the creation of a black identity in 21st-century France. He critiqued existing literature, which mainly focused on colonial history, and highlighted a gap in understanding black identity in post-colonial France. Gueye's research examined how African-descended people in France had mobilised to claim and define black identity despite France's race-blind ideology, rooted in its Republican universalism.

Gueye argued that black identity was shaped not only by discrimination but also by the agency and efforts of these communities to assert their identity, particularly through organisations like Collective Egalité and the Promotion of Diversity Organisation.

- **Hugo Canham**: Experiments in Rage and Black Planetary Orientation.

Hugo Canham's presentation explored the intersections of black studies, African feminism, African queer theorisation, and necropolitics. He focused on the phenomenology of living at the margins of human value, suffering, and death. Canham, being particularly invested in dismantling the binaries between the human and the natural, multispecies world, and where this research fits within the transdisciplinary field of Black Planetary Studies, also engaged with critical ideas of life and death in ways that challenge traditional boundaries of social and ecological thinking.

In summary, all the seminars above influenced workstream 3 members' thoughts on the survey on institutional culture and the conference programme outlined below as well as the recommendations to be taken forward.

Survey on institutional culture

This survey was led by Prof Brian Ganson, Prof Kopano Ratele and Dr Carina Venter. It is intended to help SU reflect on whether we share a common description of what transformation looks like, whether we can measure its attainment, and where we may be on our transformation journey, particularly with respect to our institutional culture. The survey results will be published by the researchers in due course and promise to be

a rich source for future thinking and decision-making around institutional transformation.

[En]Countering Transformation Conference

The [En]Countering Transformation Symposium was co-hosted by the Transformation Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Institutional Culture workstream. Organised to acknowledge the truism that genuine, inclusive transformation is a protracted, often exhausting, journey, it took place at another moment when the University was seized with different views about the past and future of the institution.

The symposium provided another opportunity: for dialogue, listening, openings, contestation, and for jointly creating memories of a future worth having. The University community spoke critically and constructively about transformation and institutional cultural change.

Plans for the establishment of STIRRS

What started out as a proposal to establish a Chair in transformation in Higher Education, evolved through the discourses in the Workstream as well as engagements with touchpoints and intersectional facets of the other Workstreams into a much broader framework to capture the nuanced nature of race and racism. Together with Workstream 4, Workstream 3 gave considerable attention to plans for [Stellenbosch Transdisciplinary Institute for Race and Racism Studies](#) (STIRRS) to provide a dedicated centre for transdisciplinary research into issues of racialised inequality that relate to human sciences, technology, and the institutions of knowledge creation. Such an institute would contribute to the vision of SU as “Africa’s leading research-intensive university, globally recognized as excellent, inclusive and innovative, and advancing knowledge in service of society” (Vision 2040, 2018).

Operating from a ‘problem-led’ base, STIRRS affiliates and researchers would address the legacies of race-thinking across the sciences and institutions of knowledge creation as well as the continuing effects of racialised inequality in the production and politics of knowledge, technology, and innovation. The centre would draw from interdisciplinary approaches that explore the ways “structures of inequality shape and are shaped by science and scientific inquiry” (Pollock & Subramaniam, 2016, 952-3). Linked to this research focus is the salient matter of generating new knowledge and information that will shape future paradigms on the transformation of higher education institutions.

Identification of possible publication on Changing Institutional Culture

Workstream 3 reviewed the publication entitled, *“Like That Statue at Jammie Stairs ...” Some student perceptions and experiences of institutional culture at the University of Cape Town in 1999*, a broad-ranging and illuminating research project conducted by UCT’s Institute for Intercultural and Diversity Studies of Southern Africa, into UCT students’ experiences of their university’s institutional culture in a rapidly changing social context. Students were interviewed and their experiences analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. It was agreed that a similar study would be useful for SU.

Data from this project could play a significant role in informing interventions designed to shift SU’s institutional culture towards an inclusive plurality of

identities and ideologies that would signify a robust and equitable higher education institution. For SU's purposes, it is recommended that the views and experiences of students and staff are harvested. While the final product will provide a trove of important data, the research process itself will confirm SU's sincerity in executing its transformation mandate.

Project on Voices of Redress

Together with Workstream 4, Workstream 3 developed some initial plans for a project entitled Voices of Redress.

2.2.3.3 Recommendations for immediate implementation

2.2.3.3.1 It is recommended that a webpage on the university website be developed to house the rich resources on the institution's transformation journey, institutional racism, institutional culture and institutional change gleaned through the seminar series, conference, and symposium.

2.2.3.3.2 It is also recommended that selected resources mentioned above be shared with colleagues in both the Centre for Teaching and Learning for professional development programmes and with those who offer student leadership programmes.

2.2.3.4 Recommendations for implementation over the longer term

2.2.3.4.1 The workstream strongly recommends that a Directorate for Institutional Culture be created within the SU leadership and management structures. This manner of formalising the responsibility for the University's institutional culture will empower this critical portfolio with resources and executive capability and facilitate the achievement of a fundamental recommendation made by the Khampepe Report. The establishment of a Directorate would also ensure that this portfolio can be conferred a degree of accountability, further enhancing the potential for its success over the longer term. It is envisioned that this directorate would be located within the ambit of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Transformation, Social Impact and Personnel.

2.2.3.4.2 It is strongly recommended that the plans developed for the [Stellenbosch Transdisciplinary Institute for Race and Racism Studies](#) (STIRRS) be taken forward. This recommendation is elaborated in the section of Workstream 4. Its mission would contribute to the vision of Stellenbosch University as "Africa's leading research-intensive university, globally recognized as excellent, inclusive and innovative, and advancing knowledge in service of society" (Vision 2040, 2018).

2.2.3.4.3 It is recommended that the University design and install friendship and well-being benches across the university, starting with a pilot at Krotoa. The idea is to create spaces that intentionally plant the seed of community at a grassroots level, such that even the simple act of sitting down for a moment of relaxation can contribute to fostering a sense of cohesive student identity.

2.2.3.4.4 It is recommended that workstream’s initial ideas for a publication on changing Institutional Culture be taken forward. This would require the support of a range of stakeholders at the University, including the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Transformation, Social Impact and Personnel; the Transformation Office; the Division for Student Affairs; student leadership structures; and faculties, who would provide research support.

2.2.3.4.5 It is recommended that the project on Voices of Redress be taken Forward (see recommendations under Workstream 4).

2.2.3.4.6 Finally, the workstream recommends that a documentary on the History of Stellenbosch University with a focus on institutional culture and change, be pursued. This will require leveraging SU’s archives and libraries, and interviews with members of the SU community, present and past. This documentary is envisioned to fill the role of an easily digestible, broadly appealing medium to tell the story of the university’s efforts to transform its institutional culture, from the point of departure that SU is attempting to become an inclusive and equitable university that serves all students and staff and is seen as a resource available to the broader Stellenbosch and Winelands community. The workstream recommends that the story is told through the voices of students, staff, alumni and Stellenbosch community members. This project will require the support of the Corporate Communication and Marketing Division; the Division for Student Affairs; and would benefit from collaboration with departments such as the Libraries, Department of Journalism, and the Department of History.

2.2.4 Workstream 4: Race, science and human categorisation

2.2.4.1 *Terms of Reference*

The Race, Human Categorisation and Science (RHCS) workstream began under the leadership of Professor Dion Forster who vacated the post when he took up a new position at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Professor Voster and Professor Alsam Fataar, who resigned as Head of CIRCoRe in January of 2024, were instrumental in setting up the initial TORs for the RHCS workstream and its initial foci. This work was invaluable to Dr Phila Msimang when he took over as workstream head in 2023 and served as the foundation for the final revised TOR for the RHCS workstream when Dr Msimang took the workstream into new directions (for some context to the reframing of the work of the RHCS workstream, see Msimang’s [presentation to the Rectorate](#)).

Given the emphasis on race in the Khampepe Report, it was important for one of the workstreams to focus on this issue. The TOR for the “Race, Human Categorisation and Science” (RHCS) workstream foregrounded questions of race and human categorisation at SU problematising the University’s role in promoting race science and uncritical use of race in research practices. This is aligned with SU’s commitment to anti-racism and becoming a key site for developing a critique of race science and scientific racism with its enduring legacies in research and related institutional practices and processes today.

In planning its activities, the workstream agreed that these would:

- Provide insight into how scientific racism remains seeped into the University's research, teaching and learning, and social impact operations.
- Facilitate scholarly insights and broaden awareness of the uses and abuses of human categorisation and population descriptors in the processes of the University, including its research, teaching, and societal work. This was viewed as adding value and academic depth to debates in the University and the higher education sector more generally.
- Help SU to re-imagine how it can continue to re-orientate and re-structure its work within a democratic society in transition through instituting campus-wide discussions and mechanisms to promote, coordinate and deepen processes related to a transformed understanding of science and research.
- Train staff and students on the use of race and human categorisation in science.
- Feed the results of these activities into the relevant university research structures and processes in line with the requirements of the country's Constitution.

2.2.4.2 Activities

Stakeholder engagements on the use of race in science

Workstream 4 had a broad mandate to look at the use of race and other human categorisations in science. It focused on the effect of 'race science' or scientific racism and its legacies on SU in its research and practices given recent problematic research coming to light from SU researchers. The first set of activities that the Workstream thus undertook were stakeholder engagement sessions, some of which happened during the monthly workstream meetings. Experts in different areas came to present to the workstream on their work and how it related to the use of race. Academics such as Professor Jonathan Jansen focused on race in research and questions of transformation, while leaders in the university's administration like the Registrar and Deputy Registrar, Dr Ronel Retief and Dr Celeste Nel, helped us understand how race factors in our admissions policies and entrance decision matrices.

The former Workstream head, Dr Phila Msimang, had a number of engagements with stakeholders outside the workstream meetings to get more in-depth insights about the challenges researchers are facing across the institution. One of the notable instances of this was the engagements with the Department of Clinical Anatomy at the Tygerberg Campus who were struggling with what to do about the future of the then-named Kirsten Skeletal Collection which had a moratorium on it given many ethical questions raised about it including its history with and use in race science. Discussions remain ongoing and recommendations have been made by the workstream on this matter.

From the experience of the former workstream head in the Research Ethics Committee for the Social and Behavioural Sciences, and their engagements with the various Health Research Ethics Committees across the institution, and through engagement with leaders in research administration, it was noted that researchers across SU are struggling with the question of race. It was reported that researchers are unsure whether to use categories like race and ethnicity in their research and do not know what

the status of race is in scientific contexts. These stakeholders requested guidance on this matter. A few initiatives flowed from the request seeking to address this need, such as most of the activities listed in this section. Presentations on this matter were made to the Rectorate by the former workstream head, and to departments that requested engagements on the topic like the Department of Biochemistry and the HRECs at the Tygerberg campus.

Creation of a question on classification in Research Ethics Clearance forms

The workstream reviewed the Research Ethics Clearance forms that are used at SU and considered that a single strategically designed question could be added to prompt researchers to explore their choices of categories and population descriptors. This is not a prescriptive measure, but rather one meant to aid a systematic and scientific approach to the use of classifications in research projects. It is hoped that the amended form will assist researchers to be more intentional with their study design and to be aware of the limitations thereof.

Development of a tool to assist researchers in thinking through the use and meaning of human categorisations in their work

Flowing from prior engagements with stakeholders on the challenges they are facing in knowing how and whether to use race and other human categorisations in their work and as one of the ways to assist researchers think more scientifically about categorisations in their work, the workstream supported the development of tools to aid researchers think about race. Some of these tools require additional resources that were beyond the scope of the workstream, like courses on the use of population descriptors, but these are proposed as recommendations for development by SU using the expertise of academics across the institution.

One of the tools proposed is completing development. This is an infographic on the history of South African racial categorisation to demonstrate the historical specificity, political contingency, and overall fluidity of categories. The former workstream head, Dr Phila Msimang, and the workstream's postdoctoral fellow, Dr Tessa Moll, researched and created this infographic with the assistance of an external service provider who provided their graphic design expertise. Msimang and Moll will disseminate the infographic and the learnings gleaned while developing the infographic to the broader public via *The Conversation*, as well as to academic audiences in peer-reviewed journal articles.

National conference on race in higher education in SA

In June 2024, the workstream hosted a [two-day conference](#), titled '*Controversies in the use of race and other human categorisations in the South African higher education sector*'. As the first South African national forum to focus on the use of race in scholarship, the conference drew presenters from across different disciplines. The conference attracted speakers and presentations from across the country. The presentations were from different areas in the social sciences, natural science, law, health, education, and engineering (among others). They explored how the question of race emerges in these different disciplinary settings. Many of the presentations highlighted the dangers associated with using racial categories unquestioningly and

described how antiquated views about human beings and their groupings perpetuate scientific racism in South Africa.

Some notable contributions to the conference looked at various ways racism and the inequities it creates can be practically tackled, whether by improving research methodologies or developing new technologies. This practical, forward-looking, orientation of the conference was part of its explicit design. The conference was conceptualized as a step toward creating a problem-led methodology for researching race and tackling racism in science. Thus, one of the purposes of the conference was to introduce the SU community, and other actors in the HE sectors, to the scientific aspects of working on issues of race and racism across disciplines. The conference was a practical demonstration of the need for interdisciplinary work and collaboration to solve some of the problems raised in it. The vehicle planned to undertake and coordinate this type of work by the workstream is the proposed research centre, “STIRRS” (see Recommendation 4.1).

Faculty engagement workshops

Five workshops were organised across the institution where staff from each faculty were invited to discuss the use of race in science and research in their respective fields. These workshops indicated that many attendees were uncertain about when, how and if at all, racial categorisation should be used in their research. Individuals spoke of their fears of unintentionally producing “racist research” and the likely repercussions of this. A source of stress and discomfort expressed by these academic researchers is that they had no forums to discuss their challenges about the use of race but were also producing research that used those kinds of racial and ethnic classifications.

Similarly, there was also uncertainty as to how to include content related to race, racism and racial inequalities in teaching practices. Some staff reported finding themselves in departments that ascribe to “racial/colour-blindness” and feeling isolated professionally. (It is useful to note that staff members’ fears around researching and speaking about race mirror those reported after focus groups held as part of Workstream 1’s activities with students.)

A key takeaway from the workshops was that introducing conversations amongst staff across faculty divides assists in raising awareness of the ethical and methodological challenges regarding race across the research lifecycle – from conception through to publication – and not just at the stage where students and researchers are applying for ethical clearance from their respective research ethics committees.

Voices of Redress

Prior to October 2024 when CIRCoRe’s activities halted, Workstream 4 had started plans on the activity called Voices of Redress, an audio augmentation project designed to enhance key features of the Visual Redress Collection at SU. This project would add a layer of audio narrative accessible on any mobile device to add context to the collection. The aim of this is to deepen the emotional connections between communities at SU across time and history by including the stories of multiple stakeholders and role-players.

In the first stage, the project would address the history and legacy of forced removals, exclusions and issues of spatial injustice in the area where SU is located. This would

include interviews with members of Die Vlakte community and their descendants, and various scholars – academics and researchers in relevant fields. Key themes are likely to include impact and restitution.

2.2.4.3 Recommendations for immediate implementation

2.2.4.3.1 EdX courses on the use of race and ethnicity in research

Drawing on the results of the faculty engagement workshops, the conference, the development of a learning tool for researchers, and its consideration of the ETC form as described in the previous section on this workstream's activities, it is recommended that the University consider offering self-paced online courses on the use of human categorisation and population descriptors in research. It is recommended that there be at least one course about the use of race and other human categorisations that tend to emerge in quantitative research and another course on challenges that emerge in qualitative research.

Such offerings would guide researchers on reasoning about the use of classifications and provide them with opportunities to test the appropriateness of the use of human categorisations in different research contexts. Some other critical resources to encourage academics to approach the use of classifications more scientifically have already been developed, and it is recommended that the institution reach out to stakeholders to share these resources with them (e.g. the decision tress developed by a workstream member and her colleagues in Health Sciences). In addition, the workstream's activities assisted in the identification of other academics and networks that could be drawn into this work (e.g. the Transformation Learning Network). These resources could also be shared with staff in the Centre for Teaching and Learning and those who offer student leadership programmes. All these offerings are recommended to be placed on the webpages of the various Research Ethics Committees as part of the resources for researchers that they already provide.

2.2.4.3.2 Adaption of the REC form and its questions

The workstream recommends that the Research Ethics Committee introduces a question in the existing REC form that deals with how researchers use Categorisations in their proposed studies. The purpose of this question is not to be prescriptive about whether or not researchers can use categorisations like race and ethnicity in their studies. Rather, the purpose of such a question is to prompt researchers to think more critically about the use of classifications that categorise populations in their work.

By giving a rationale behind such choices, the researcher benefits from understanding whether those classifications play any role in their studies (e.g. is race a variable, or what kind of variable is race, in this study?), helping them to think through whether these categories and classifications are needed or not. Their responses to the question would also assist members of the REC to think through, in a more structured fashion, the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the proposed use of categories and classifications in a study.

2.2.4.3.3 Support the creation of ethical human remains collection

It is agreed that the Kirsten Skeletal Collection cannot continue to exist or be used in its present form. Thus, it is recommended that SU support the Department of Clinical Anatomy's endeavour to create a new collection without the inclusion of the unethically acquired remains from the Kirsten Skeletal Collection. The institution is encouraged to make efforts to better align the collection, research, and teaching practices concerning human remains with international best practices for the ethics of the use and management of human remains. The support that the Department of Clinical Anatomy and the Tygerberg medical community require is immediate, but the form which this support should take particularly in terms of the resources needed to establish a new ethically founded collection of human remains. This will also affect the museum collections and others held by the institution.

2.2.4.4 Recommendations for longer-term implementation

2.2.4.4.1 The establishment of STIRRS

The workstream recommends that the University give further attention to the proposal for the establishment of a new institute: the Stellenbosch Transdisciplinary Institute for Race and Racism Studies ([STIRRS](#)). Such an institute would not only situate SU as a global leader in addressing critical questions of racial inequality in science, innovation and technology, but its work would also align with SU's commitment to anti-racism through scholarly critique on the use of race in knowledge-creation processes and institutional practices. It might be argued that the postgraduate training offered within STIRRS would influence future academic staff and, in the longer term, institutional culture.

It is recommended that this proposal be taken forward by the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies.

2.2.4.4.2 Conference on scientific racism from an international perspective Based

on the success of the conference held in 2024, it is recommended that the University consider taking forward the initial plans of this workstream for an international conference. This has been conceptualized as bringing together the themes of race and institutional culture and looking at how scientific practices can be improved in this context. One of the purposes of the conference, conceptualised as "*Human Differentiation and Racism in Institutions, Science and Technology: Contemporary Issues and Ways Forward*," was to bring together international leaders in science studies who are the cutting edge of this kind of work ([see the call for papers here](#)). It is recommended that SU consider supporting and creating such a conference if it wishes to pursue the plans of making SU a research leader on these questions.

2.2.4.4.3 Voices of Redress

It is recommended that the University's Visual Redress Committee take forward the workstream's early plans for the audio augmentation project including interviews with stakeholders and role players in SU and the broader community.

2.2.5 Workstream 5: Simplifying and aligning university structures, policies and regulations with transformation

2.2.5.1 Terms of Reference

Three over-arching areas of work were identified for this workstream. These were based on a range of recommendations in the Khampepe Report to simplify and align University structures, policies and regulations to more effectively enhance transformation at SU (See recommendations found in the following paragraphs: 405 – 408; 414; 417 – 421; 428 – 436; 502 – 508 and 517-518.).

The first area of work was to critically discuss SU's current structures – beginning with those related to transformation and then extending the discussion to others with the following questions in mind:

- What are the roles/functions of these structures (considering their origins and history)?
- How do these relate to each other – process flow, overlaps and distinctions?
- How might these structures be simplified for greater effectiveness and efficiency?

It was expected that the recommendations emanating from this work would ensure a more nimble and agile process for reporting discriminatory practices for both staff and students.

The second area of work was to review current over-arching SU policies and regulations related to transformation and how these influence sub-policies with the following questions in mind:

- Where has race “seeped in” to these policies and regulations and how does this affect student experience?
- What recommendations might be made for the alignment of these policies and regulations with SU's vision of a university that ensures that all students are provided with quality learning experiences?

The final area of work was to incorporate feedback from the other four workstreams in the work outlined above.

2.2.5.2 Activities

Workstream members met regularly to review and discuss existing policies and regulations. Additional staff were co-opted to provide presentations at meetings as needed. Broader consultations (e.g. with the Institutional Transformation Committee) on the ideas for changes to structures and processes took place from time to time

Re-activation of the consultation and approval process for the Policy on Unfair Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual and Gender-based Violence

The newly updated and integrating draft policy on unfair discrimination, gender-based violence and HIV/Aids was re-activated for consultation and recommendation. This process is ongoing and is now managed by the DVC: Learning and Teaching and the DVC: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel.

Operational and procedural aspects of case management linked to the mentioned draft policy

The workstream agreed that the regulations associated with the operational and procedural side of case management should be finalized in a separate but related document/plan rather than in the policy above and be signed off by the relevant DVC as required.

Equality Unit (EqU)

The discussions on unbundling the EqU followed the recommendations in the Khampepe Report. In these, the workstream recognised the links between the EqU, the Office for Employee Relations (ER) and the Office for Student Discipline (SD), amongst others.

It was recommended that the EqU be the first port of call and conduit structure for all unfair discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, GBV, victimization, racism and stigma-related matters or complaints regardless of who the complainant is. As such, any responsible functionary within SU should alert the EqU of matters that arise from any given environment.

Given the advanced role of the EqU, the workstream acknowledged that the unit might need to be renamed to better reflect its role as an obvious first port of call for the above-mentioned types of complaints. It pre-supposes that the EqU is better, structured, placed, supported and 'marketed'.

The workstream recommended the activation of a virtual hub consisting of a senior member of each of the EqU, Employment Relations and Student Discipline to activate and speed-up case management and support. This would be activated when a complaint was received to consider the timeous redirection or referral of the complaints received within a prescribed period of time. This should be set out in the regulations.

The virtual hub will consider and decide the appropriate process to activate including the possibility of redirecting/transfer matters aligned with clearly stated criteria to minimise the need for further or late referrals. This includes consideration of current/previous processes regarding the same matter. In effect, this could lead to a staff-related matter to be referred to ER immediately and a student-related matter to be referred to SD immediately.

As the first port of call, the workstream recommended that, the EqU, will consider the following criteria to determine the seriousness or urgency of a matter:

- The nature of the complaint
- The seriousness of the complaint
- The complexity of the complaint
- The dispute resolution process set out in the applicable policy and regulations
- The broader interests of the University in the outcome.

The workstream discussions referred to additional points that further clarify the process for and speed with which complaints should be dealt with, including giving timely written feedback to the complainant. These will also ensure a comprehensive record of all complaints while minimising dual reporting. Finally, the process will develop

improved communication channels between the three key structures – the EqU, ER and SD.

Transformation policies

The workstream recognised that SU has a myriad of policies and plans. Some of these links directly and indirectly to transformation. During 2024, a list of these was compiled to determine policy gaps, the possible need to integrate certain transformation-linked policies and to consider the possibility of an overarching transformation policy and / or strategy. Given time constraints experienced after October 2024, this work will need to form part of the longer-term consideration and recommendations.

2.2.5.3 Recommendations for immediate implementation

The following recommendations have already been made and were accepted by the Rectorate.

2.2.5.3.1 That the EqU's mandate of advocacy and training will move to the Transformation Office.

2.2.5.3.2 That the EqU's mandate on health and well-being matters (specifically the HIVAids programme) will move to Campus Health Services.

2.2.5.3.3 That the EqU be the first port of call and conduit structure for all unfair Discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, GBV, victimization, racism and stigma-related matters or complaints regardless of who the complainant is.

2.2.5.3.4 That the mandate of case management will be carried out through a new case management unit (a name is still to be determined) under the DVC Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel. This will include a senior member of each of the EqU, Employment Relations, and Student Discipline to activate and Speed up case management and support.

2.2.5.3.5 That the Rector is to be the highest order of appeal within the University.

In addition to the above, the workstream recommends that:

2.2.5.3.6 An alert system, where the EqU notifies ER and SD of all unfair discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, GBV, victimisation, racism and stigma-related matters reported to them and vice-versa (even if the matter can be resolved at the EqU level) should be implemented (online reporting tool) as this will enable the work of the virtual hub and will help with process flow.

2.2.5.3.6 Any responsible functionary within the University may be requested to play an advisory role to the Head EqU.

2.2.5.3.7 Greater institutional use should be made of an existing online reporting tool that will activate the role of EqU also in relation to the virtual hub and data management system and the Deloitte tip-off line should be encouraged.

² The mandated role of the SU Ombud and the functioning of the Deloitte tip-offline should continue as is and is thus not directly affected by this recommendation.

2.2.5.3.8 Confidentiality (involving as few people as possible), procedural fairness and due process principles need to be captured in the regulations. The consequences of breach of confidentiality and undue influence by any party involved must be clear. At the same time, the necessary official reporting requirements must be observed (e.g. to address possible employer liability under section 60 of the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998).

2.2.5.3.9 Continuous and timely feedback to the complainant(s) must be provided by the EqU as the primary port of call. This should be explicitly set out in the regulations mentioned earlier.

2.2.5.3.10 Continuous and timely feedback to the EqU from the given environment that a matter was referred to or emanated from is crucial. Since the EqU remains the central actor in the processes linked to discrimination, feedback on matters referred to e.g. ER and SD must be received by EqU. The latter will be asked to close the loop at the end of the processes.

2.2.5.4 Recommendations for longer-term implementation

2.2.5.4.1 Workstream 5 recommends that the University (under the DVC Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel, together with the Senior Director Social Impact and Transformation, and the Institutional Transformation Committee (ITC), considers the development of an over-arching policy framework for transformation.

2.2.5.4.2 Workstream 5 recommends that the University (under the DVC SITP, with the support of the SD Social Impact and Transformation and the ITC) share models to better align, integrate and support the various transformation-related offices. This includes the current Transformation Office (now integrated in the Centre for the Advancement of Social Impact and Transformation), the Office for Employment Equity and the SU Disability Unit. Further consideration can be given to this by these offices and other linked SU environments.

LESSONS LEARNED, REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

CIRCoRe and its activities should be considered an important step in SU's transformation journey. There is much to be learned through CIRCoRe's activities and achievements warranting time to reflect on these lessons in reaching conclusions in this final section of the report.

- In addition to the host of outputs (resources and learning materials, conference papers, scholarly seminars, articles and recommendations) produced through the stand-alone activities and those conducted in the workstreams, the less tangible lessons learned are outcomes on which further steps in SU transformation journey might be based.
- CIRCoRe has confirmed that transformation is indeed a process, not an event and that this process needs to be nurtured and guided. It also takes time and space for people to come together to speak out *and* to speak together. New realisations gleaned through dialogue with others may entail equipping people to deal with forms of loss – a loss of power, past ideas and ideologies, as well as practices and processes – before a re-birth, a change in some understandings and ways of being and doing. The transition from the past to the new requires not only time and space but a range of skill sets, and an attitude characterised by an openness to learning – which itself requires *un*learning, another form of loss.
- Workstream 1's focus groups with students highlighted the fears experienced by students in speaking of race and its intersections – the fear of being exposed in some way as “less than” or “othered”, marginalised, stigmatised and, therefore, of not belonging. The members of Workstream 2 spoke about their own difficult experiences in interacting with staff who were dismissive of the entire transformation endeavour and the changes required. The planned facilitators' training session for dialogue illustrated that simply providing people with sets of (facilitation) skills is not enough: it is important that their past experiences of pain and trauma first be dealt with.
- Workstreams 3 and 4, with the emphasis given to seminars, conferences and symposia, revealed that the struggles of transformation are not just an SU issue – it's a national and international issue. These events highlighted how staff are grappling with and responding to transformation – in their research, teaching, administrative environments, and social impact responsibilities. Both workstreams have made recommendations for activities that can be taken forward, including the establishment of the Stellenbosch Transdisciplinary Institute for Race and Racism Studies (STIRRS) and a Directorate for Institutional Culture, and hosting an international conference on race, racism and its intersections is now more needed given the geopolitical shifts and conflicts that have seen the rise of a new wave of nationalisms – with its invariable impact on higher education; tweaking the research ethics form's questions in a way that will conscientize researchers anew on the matter of race, and employing a learning tool to assist researchers to develop deeper understandings about human categorisation.

- These workstreams, together with Workstream 2, have made recommendations for possible content, tools and learning approaches that can be introduced and piloted in the formal and informal curricula as well as in professional development and student leadership programmes. The examples included in this section of the report provide academics with a menu of options for meeting their transformative mandate.
- Workstream 5's achievements in considering how complaints about harassment, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence may be more effectively and efficiently handled in partnership with Employee Relations (ER) and Student Discipline (SD). It will not only improve the work undertaken by the Equality Unit (EqU) but also provide a model for reviewing other structures within the University.
- Similarly, the recommendation that the work of the Interim Working Group (IWG) be taken forward to improve the efficiency in dealing with the infringement of human rights and personal dignity, provides an important forum for institutional agility in the face of critical incidents which may be lost in complex structures and policies to the detriment of the university's credibility as a home for all.
- Reviewing and rebirthing the many dimensions of the University – the profile of staff and students, the learning opportunities provided to both staff and students, the policies and structures, the research approaches and protocols – is critical to the process of institutional transformation and building a new institutional culture. It requires a collective, institution-wide effort with champions at different levels and an executive that supports the learnings and recommendations that arise in the reviewing and rebirthing process. The dialogue required in this process needs to be ongoing in sharing ideas and building trust.
- Both the achievements and recommendations included in the previous section of this report point to the need for considerable resources for future activities in SU's transformation journey. The resources identified are not merely financial; they are also human – the knowledge, attributes and skill set that assist us in tolerating the "bumps in the road", the sense of frustration and, when it occurs, the sense of loss. It is this deeper understanding of transformation – a more scholarly set of insights – that is a necessary condition for its success. Policy and structure shape the context, but it is people that make the changes to these.
- While it might be argued that transformation is "everyone's business" and must involve multiple role players at different levels, the work of transformation needs dedicated champions to drive the relevant activities and processes at these different levels. The challenges involved extend well beyond those logistical challenges in getting staff together at the same time for regular meetings. They require ongoing open communication with staff who are already stretched in conducting the core business of the University – teaching, research and social impact. They require motivating staff (over time) not to lose sight of the University's overall role – to produce knowledge and graduates for a complex, diverse, democratic and inclusive society.
- Moreover, the will to transform must endure against well-resourced and organised contrarian voices. The Wilgenhof residence case demonstrates pockets of resistance to the University's transformation mandate, with external

stakeholders de facto holding considerable sway over the University's internal processes. Positioning ourselves to endure such bumps in the road requires the network of champions and the University's senior leadership to operate in tandem, understanding each other's contexts and plotting paths to success that navigate adverse material realities.

In conclusion, this final section of the report indicates that CIRCoRe has provided a substantive response to the nuanced recommendations of the Khampepe Commission. Through its detailed and informed analysis of the SU ecosystem, it points the way to the future of inclusive excellence. Re-imagining and redesigning this future requires a culture of collaboration, the development of collective and collegial learning, and ongoing efforts to change the dominant cultures.