2017 SU Culture and Climate Survey Conclusions

Seven hundred and twenty staff members participated in the survey during February 2017 - a 20% participation rate. Results from nearly 100 000 quantitative questions were statistically validated, resulting in an average score for the staff corps at Stellenbosch University at the time of the survey of **3.53**. This trends towards the positive scale used for the survey. Overall scores varied between 2.149 and 4.766.

The following themes scored above the average of 3.53:
- Feeling Connected (4.15)
- Cultural Awareness (4.00)
- Sustaining Momentum on Excellence (3.97)
- Approach towards Transformation (3.85)
- Sense of Belonging (3.76)
- Protest Actions (3.76)
- Supervisory Relations (3.62), and
- Opportunities for Development (3.56).

The following themes require additional attention as they scored below the University average of 3.53:
- Equality (3.52)
- Addressing Discrimination (3.50)
- Institutional Intent & Strategy (3.47)
- Diversity Management (3.40)
- Language Policy (3.38)
- SU Leadership (3.34)
- Decision Making Involvement (3.31)
- Employee Retention (3.10)
- Wellness Promotion (3.04)
- Diversity discussions (2.94) and
- Sustainability (2.89)

Of the 138 quantitative questions Q69 "**I respect the diverse backgrounds of my colleagues**" had the highest score at 4.522 and Q137 "**Disruptions caused by protest action to the University programme are acceptable**" had the lowest score at 2.418.

No statistically significant variations in the scoring were observed in race, gender, organisation unit and language.

Of concern is that staff under the age of 40 are statistically less positive about the Culture and Climate at SU. At further classification of staff it is clear that CBI Female staff and white male staff under the age of 40 are the least positive about Culture and Climate at SU. White male academic, white male support staff over the age of 40 and CBI male academic and faculty support staff over the age of 40 are the most positive about their employment at SU.

Clear division amongst staff groupings are evident in particular factors:
- Female staff are statistically less positive about their role in decision making
- CBI staff are less positive about Addressing discrimination, Involvement in decision making and Equality,

- Staff under the age of 40 are less positive about Opportunities for development, SU leadership, Involvement in decision-making and the IIS.

From the qualitative questions, more attention should be focused on dealing with promotion and career development opportunities, transformation, and workload and pressure.

Following the feedback sessions across the University, various issues were raised, e.g.: Lack of engagement with management, the survey was too long, relook further analytics including campus, tenure, identify top performing environments to learn from best practice, involve more groups in sense making process.

In order to improve the survey process for implementation in 2019, the following should be considered: improve communication, allow for a save and return function, rethink the 5 point Likert scale, limit personal opinions, the questions and the allocation of questions to particular themes should be re-examined.

(See Appendix 1 for more detailed comments).

In general the reporting back of the survey was well received although poorly attended, but the opportunity for engagement was appreciated.

Recommendations by the Steering Committee: Culture and Climate Survey

It is of strategic importance to focus on a few obvious "low hanging fruit" to demonstrate that there is management will to act on what the survey has highlighted as areas for improvement.

1. Recommendations based on survey findings

Finding	Recommendation	Immediate suggested actions	Longer term actions
Women and CBI [1] staff are less positive about inclusion of their opinions in decision making especially when it directly affects them	Create intentional opportunities to consult with women and CBI staff at all levels of decision making	Senior managers, Department Heads, Deans and the Rectorate should create at least one intentional opportunity to consult women and CBI staff on key institutional decisions. These opportunities could include: joining an advisory structure that represents these voices, scheduling check in opportunities with individuals or creating informal advisory groups to consult	Consider co-option of women and CBI staff or arrange dedicated feedback presentations by these stakeholders to ensure input on key decision-making structures like council, senate, IF and Faculty. Presentation themes could be themed: Key issues women, coloured, black and Indian staff would like to see prioritized/considered at SU. Standardise representation requirements for women, coloured, black and Indian staff on task teams and advisory structures or subcommittees of senate and council.
Staff members of 40 years old and younger are less positive about the Institutional Intent and Strategy and the	Prioritize the involvement of staff 40 years old and younger in the conceptualization and	Create a specific under 40 staff think tank to interact with the team responsible for the formulation of	Create a special co-option opportunity for staff under 40 to join the Institutional Planning Forum and

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[1] *During consultation, there was a request that the CBI (Coloured, Black and Indian staff) should be unbundled and not be clustered in one group. These recommendations are based on the findings of the study and the recommended changes will be considered for future studies.*

perceived benefits of the overall strategy of the university	consultation process related to the formulation of the new Intent and Strategy	the Intent and Strategy	task team when strategies are conceptualized.
CBI, younger and English speaking staff are less positive about actions to address discrimination in the workplace	Prioritize engagements within divisions and departments to discuss the discrimination policy and its application to actual case studies of events	Discuss case studies of how discrimination was addressed both in policy and practically in the past with the specific focus on the input of CBI, younger and English speaking staff on how this can be improved.	Institutionalize an annual discrimination review and feedback session where discrimination data, reporting trends, challenges and case outcomes can be shared and analysed.
CBI staff are more positive and open to institutional transformation and understanding its benefits	Design transformation engagements that includes both staff who are potentially anxious or resistant and those who are more positive about transformation with strong support from leaders to engage.	Commit and allocate time to participate and prioritize transformation competencies training. (at least 4 x 2 hour discussions per year)	Standardize transformation competencies training as part of key performance areas for all line managers.
CBI, young and English speaking staff are less positive about how discrimination is addressed and perceived levels of intolerance of discrimination at SU	Increase the competencies levels of all staff related to identifying, understanding, reporting and discussing discrimination.	Prioritize and identify senior white (and generic Black) role models who can actively model competencies and engage with issues of discrimination in collaboration with CBI leaders.	Standardize transformation competencies training as part of key performance areas for all line managers.
Perception about immediate supervisory relations in terms of professional input, constructive criticism and transparent communication is declining with increase of tenure	Assess the specific supervisory needs of staff who have been at SU for longer than 10 years and develop specific feedback to line managers to address these needs.	Leaders and senior management can prioritize one conversation that ask staff in their immediate environments who has worked for the institution longer than 10 years about their experience, needs and suggestions with regards to supervisory relations.	Consideration of alternative forms of professional feedback that suits the development needs of staff who have been at the university for a longer period and alternatives to feedback that is limited performance appraisal methods. Widen opportunity for staff to have access to

			coaching and skills development.
There is an overall neutral to low perception among staff of the institutional commitment to wellness as well having a say in the type of wellness programmes	Create opportunities for staff to express and identify wellness priorities and needs within their immediate environment and practical opportunities to implement ideas	Leaders and senior management can prioritize at least one conversation per year that ask staff in their immediate environments to identify wellness challenges and priorities other than centralized events and assessments.	Develop institutional practices and guidelines that will enable leaders to conduct wellness "check-in conversations" with staff as a standard component of strategic planning and leadership KPA's

2. **Additional general comments**

It is vital to reflect on:

- How can we better understand the lack of a sense of belonging among younger staff?
- How can the senior managers, forums, senate and IF prioritize input from under 40's, CBI staff and women at SU to give input on:
  - Key institutional decisions and specifically strategy and vision
  - Dealing with Discrimination
  - Wellness priorities and interventions
  - Sustainability
  - Excellence

3. **Recommendations about the longitudinal nature of the survey:**

The Culture and Climate project must have an appropriate institutional home – it is recommended that Institutional Research and Planning might be considered as the best option as to being the custodians of institutional data and research.

The Project needs to be managed as an Institutional project to be repeated every two years and the project team should be adequately resourced.

The current Steering Committee should be disbanded and a new Steering Committee should be convened by the Project Team (with due consideration of ensuring continuity, appropriate representation as well as appropriate knowledge and skills). The members of the Steering Committee should in future act as an advisory body to the Project Team responsible for conducting the survey and interpreting the data.