

# **MANY VOICES, MANY STORIES, MANY PARTNERSHIPS.**

## **Greg Ricks: A Story of a Transformation Catalyst**

Author: Barbara Nussbaum

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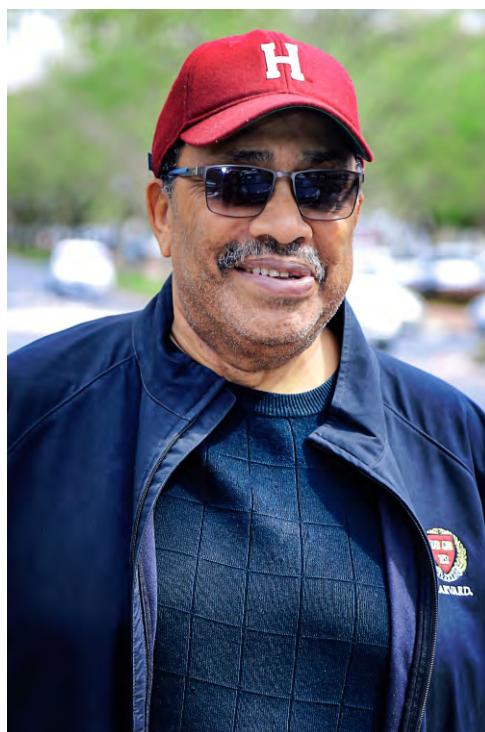
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## GREG RICKS: BIO

Gregory Theodore Ricks was born in Boston, Massachusetts. His interest in identity was awakened during his primary school and teenage years where he experienced what it was like to be the only black person in both public and private schools. After school (in 1970), he completed an undergraduate degree in Economics and Government at Hampton University. Gregory became involved in the civil rights movement in the late sixties (around the time that Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968). He was given opportunities to explore his new identity at Hampton University through his service on the institution's executive student leadership body. On a postgraduate level, he went on to receive a master's degree in City Planning from MIT (the Massachusetts Institute for Technology; 1972), and a master's degree in Education from Harvard University (1976). He became the youngest college dean at a major university (North Eastern) in America at the age of 24. Later, Gregory went on to serve as an academic dean at Dartmouth College, Sarah Lawrence College and Stanford University. It was in 1988, at Stanford University, that Gregory came to work formally in the field of multicultural education. After Stanford, he went back to Boston to serve as a vice president for City Year National— an NGO committed to providing a national service opportunity for young people to be engaged in a year of national community service that is not military. In 1990, this program served 250 students in the Boston area. In 2017, it has grown to a national program called Americorps, which serves over 1 million students per year.

Gregory was asked by President Bill Clinton to move to South Africa to head up the development of the Clinton Democracy Fellowship Program for Emerging Young Leaders in 2000. In this capacity, he contributed to the development of skills, such as social entrepreneurship. He continued this work until 2005 where after he moved on to head up the development of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in Johannesburg, South Africa. He met Pieter Kloppers in 2005 and was inspired by Pieter's vision for what Stellenbosch University could become. He has been working as a senior fellow for multicultural education at Stellenbosch University since 2006.

He is married to Feriel Petersen Ricks. They have three children: Keija, Schayla and Ethan. Gregory currently resides in Washington DC, USA.



	Page No.
<b>AUTHOR'S NOTE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>FOREWORDS</b>	
Taamba lithethe	2
Monica Du Toit	3
Faith Pienaar	4
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1. The Context: Place and Time	7
1.2. A Series of Powerful Partnerships	11
1.3. Transformation and the Drivers of Change	13
<b>2. GREG RICKS: HIS INSPIRATION, METHODS AND IMPACT</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1. Purpose and Inspiration	17
2.2. Methods and Qualities	18
2.3. Impact	24
<b>3. PIETER KLOPPERS: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO A KEY PARTNER</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4. LANDMARKS OF CHANGE IN THE CENTRE FOR STUDENT COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>30</b>
4.1. Changes in Representation – Race and Gender	32
4.2. Educational and Cultural Shifts in Residences	34
<b>5. STORIES OF CHANGE IN THE CENTRE FOR STUDENT COMMUNITIES</b>	
5.1. Awêness Camp: The First-Generation Success Camp – Carlo McConney and Nadine Moodie	35
5.2. A Silver Thread – Jurie Jean van de Vyver	38
5.3. Embodying Multicultural Skills – Lana Davids	39
5.4. From Sonop HK member to Queens Leader – Farai Mubaiwa	41
5.5. Facilitative Leadership Evolving a Skill for Deep Meaningful Change – Wayde Groep	41
5.6. Innovation: The Story of Olympus, a New PSO – Lloyd Blake	42
<b>6. MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>7. TRIBUTES</b>	
7.1. Farai Mubaiwa	46
7.2. Lloyd Blake	46
7.3. Elzet Kirsten Blaauw	47
7.4. Faith Pienaar	48
7.5. Renee Hector-Kannemeyer	49
7.6. Johan Groenewald and Christine Groenewald	49
7.7. Tonia Overmeyer	49
<b>8. AFTERWORD</b>	
8.1. Greg Ricks	50
8.2. Pieter Kloppers	50
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
Other Shifts in Education and Culture in Residences	52
<b>ADDITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>BARBARA NUSSBAUM BIO</b>	<b>53</b>

## ABBREVIATIONS

CSC	Centre for Student Communities
FVZS	Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Leadership Institute
HK	House Committee
LLL	Listen, Live and Learn Initiative
PK	Prim Committee
POPS	Prims, Onderprims en Sameroepers / Prims, Vice Prims and Convenors
PSO	Private Students Organisation
ResEd	Residence Education
SRC	Student Representative Council
SU	Stellenbosch University

This booklet was commissioned to contextualise, summarise and celebrate the achievements of the CSC and to honour Greg Ricks after 10 years of extensive involvement in transformation at Stellenbosch University (SU). Greg is a unique catalyst and superb collaborator meriting joyful celebration for his engagement here. This booklet offers the beginning of a portrait of Greg through a small window into a vast and complex landscape. It is a topic that requires more texture and detail, but will be published in time for a celebratory dinner for Greg on 12 October 2017.

Working on this booklet has been both a privilege and a challenge – a challenge born out of impossible time constraints and an unanticipated crossing of terrain filled with spoken and unspoken cultural and political complexity. Celebrating an American within a Calvinist culture was both fascinating and occasionally daunting. At times, I have felt like a compiler hastily making a patchwork of stories, rather than being the author of a fully woven blanket.

You will notice several tensions within the book that have not been fully resolved. The decision to choose depth over breadth has meant that many of the achievements of the CSC and its talented staff will, sadly, be covered all too briefly. The powerful stories of innovation in Goldfields Residence, Metanoia Residence, the Listen Live and Learn Initiative, Residential Education, Clusters and Hubs deserve celebration and detailed documentation in subsequent publications. I was given the editorial freedom to choose the areas of focus within a general brief and take full responsibility for what has been included and excluded in this publication. Greg has been central to the work of CSC and a primary partner of Pieter Kloppers (Director CSC). In the service of writing a truthful document, it was impossible to celebrate Greg's successes without acknowledging the very powerful partnership between these two dynamic men and the essential leadership roles that they both play, separately and together.

It has taken the hands of many to build vibrant and robust student communities in a pioneering department. In truth, this publication deserves to become an expanded book – or the first in a series, written over a much longer period of time. The stories of many more staff and students can and should be told. Ideally these stories should be written by a variety of authors and slowly cooked, gently stirred and seasoned so that fresh flavours can be savoured and shared with wider audiences, locally and globally. It has been interesting to witness the savvy, strategic mind, wisdom and generosity of Greg Ricks – and the love, respect and admiration he evokes in the hearts of so many. More of Greg's stories need to be told, shared and written up so that his legacy can be fully celebrated. It was Greg's wish that his students and mentees become an important part of his story and my heartfelt regret is that only a small number of his mentees could be included in the limited space available.

This has been a collaborative and inclusive process – not only with Greg and Pieter, but with other stakeholders entrusted to be stewards of the project. My thanks go to the Centre for Student Communities for commissioning the project and especially Gareth Cornelissen for his help. I also wish to thank Pieter Kloppers, Gareth Cornelissen, Greg Ricks, Lana Davids and Wayde Groep, who helped to steward this project, and Wim Steyn who agreed to review drafts of the publication. I am grateful to all the staff and students who took part in interviews for the project; to Mathew Smorenburg for crafting very useful graphs and to Suné Pohl for her editing.

## FOREWORD : TAAMBA IITHETHE<sup>1</sup>

I met Greg Ricks on what was seemingly a normal weekday afternoon in Matieland. I was oblivious to the significance that this seemingly normal moment in time would have on my personal development, this brief encounter started and ended quite unremarkably. With hindsight, what has been remarkable is to have been an active witness in the change that was catalysed by the phenomenon that is Greg Ricks.

Contrary to a convenient narrative this is not the story of one man, but the story of how a generation of student leaders, students, staff and administrators gathered the courage to deal with the behemoth that is 'change'. Greg did not bring this change; he did not pre-package and import it to Stellenbosch from Boston. He called it out of us. He made us grapple with, grind, fight and work for it. He made us find it within ourselves, on a collective, as well as an individual, level. He asked us to bring all of ourselves, warts and all, with all our issues, prejudices, deficiencies and inadequacies. Vulnerable and unprepared we willingly obliged, because Greg was brave enough to bring all of himself. Being fortunate enough to have been active in student leadership at that time, I appreciated the space to try, to fail, to experiment, to challenge, to question, to agitate, to take a chance, and even if I fail in all of the above, to keep trying. The story of Greg Ricks is a couple of thousand different stories, all of them as unique and special as each Matie who in their own way 'encountered' Greg.

Just as we will not remember the name of that person who planted that 100-year-old oak tree, or even who came up with the idea, who bought the seed or who sowed it or who diligently watered it and tended to it, we cannot deny that we live in the reality of the beauty they invested in. Let us never underestimate the small and large contributions that are made by all the sowers, but as we are doing now let us acknowledge and thank them, taking stock of the fact that it's never really 'the end', but rather another beginning.



<sup>1</sup>Previously a BCom. student at SU, Goldfields Prim, Metanoia Prim, SRC and Prim Committee Chair. Currently managing director for Black Turnkey Development and Project Managers.

There are many drivers of change in the transformation space in Stellenbosch. This book celebrates the work of the CSC, which has been a key catalyst for change in the residences and PSOs (private student organisations that cater for day students). It is a welcome publication that seeks to honour the contribution that Greg Ricks has made, while at the same time recognising that a whole community of role players holds the fire and generate new sparks of inspiration during a long, and sometimes difficult, journey.

My sense of Greg's work is that he offers energy bursts during certain times of the year. Clearly during the times that he is away, major events have happened. Other people have stood up and taken the lead. But Greg comes back and always shows a real interest and engages in sense-making. He asks, "Where are you now?" and "What is holding you back?". Greg understands that you have to support the work, but most of all you have to nurture, develop and encourage the people in the frontline. In truth to sustain transformation, the one can't go without the other – we are all role players who drive change. And I think that is the strength of our community in Stellenbosch. We need to emphasise how immense an investment is required of many people, to make someone like Greg's ignition roll into a field of energy in a direction that is sustained and yet also hosts new directions.

When you do the right work, it develops a life of its own. Without the modelling, without the support of the process, what is ignited cannot be sustained. So, my sense is that the value of Greg's work is that he brought bold initiatives when they were needed, and that he came back with support and enthusiasm and allowed new leaders to find their voice. Because of Greg's vision and dedication, other people have stood up and taken the lead too. In facilitation and in transformative work, it is really about the ability of people to connect with the context – which is changing all the time. All of us involved in transformation must find the energy to ignite, to reignite, to persevere, to let young people run with it and to support it again.

Greg has played an important role for us. He is constantly acknowledging those who have worked to sustain the journey. He listens, he tells stories of this work in other parts of the world, he rages and celebrates with students. All are necessary on the road to transformation at Stellenbosch University. Thank you, Greg, for your inspiration, for your wisdom, and for your support over the years.



<sup>2</sup>Monica du Toit, Head, Transformation Office SU

## FOREWORD : FAITH PIENAAR<sup>3</sup>

I hope that this booklet really marks a moment in time where we're not just reflecting on Greg the person, but also on his legacy. I hope we take the time to think about the ways in which we would like to build on this legacy. This is so important because, with a few brave passionate young students, the foundation for student communities has been laid. And now, the question is: how do we see the next ten years of student communities at SU? And in what ways can we model student communities around the country based on this foundation that we have created? Also, how can we learn from contexts and campuses that are completely different from our own?

My hope for Stellenbosch University is that, in building open and resilient student communities, we become fully invested in the work of critique and proposition. This is one of the ways in which I believe we will move forward and begin to imagine a truly inclusive university.



<sup>3</sup>Faith Pienaar, Stellenbosch Graduate and former staff member SU



This publication celebrates some of the inspiring achievements of transformation at Stellenbosch University, in relation to residence education and the building of student communities. There are many transformative agents, champions and change agents at the University involving multiple stakeholders: staff, academics, and student leaders, who have demonstrated commitment to a vision of change. Different eras have spawned different thought-leaders and change agents. In this context, the conversation changes every few years – new leaders emerge, new ideas are tried and tested. This publication has been commissioned by the CSC, a unit of SU that focuses on student communities, residential education and building student leadership through the residence structures, PSOs, the Listen Live and Learn (LLL) Initiative, hubs and clusters. My intention is to tell the story primarily through the voices of various people who have both helped to shape transformation during the period 2006 to 2016 and who have been moulded, mentored and guided through the residence education and other educational experiences they have received. It does not attempt to be comprehensive or scientific, but is rather a celebration of what has been accomplished by the CSC and Greg Ricks. A collective story is told through the eyes, ears and memories of people who have all become part of the transformative changes during this time frame.

Perhaps some would argue that not enough transformation has taken place and therefore a celebration of transformation is premature. It may well be more accurate to say we are celebrating the foundations of important beginnings, whilst acknowledging that the journey to transformation is never-ending and that we have still a long way to go. Yet progress has been made by countless individuals in many parts of the university; from rectors and vice rectors, to academics, to students in the SRC and many other student organisations; from leadership institutes such as Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Leadership Institute (FVZS), to the designated Transformation Office and other SU units. This publication, the first of a series, seeks to summarise the achievements of the CSC and to honour the contributions of Greg Ricks, whose unique legacy bears acknowledgement after ten years of engagement as a multicultural specialist.

In this booklet, I summarise some of the benchmarks of change in the CSC, considering not only new buildings and housing policy changes, but also the workshops offered, and the innovative programmes that have been established with the aim of widening circles for conversations and ensuring increased representation of students of colour on all levels. Creative and innovative social architecture has moved PSOs and residential spaces forward and paved the way for greater inclusion. As elsewhere, the territory of diversity, inclusion and transformation at SU is fraught with complexity, contestation and conflict, yet graced with progress and multiple moments of individual and collective growth. Some of these stories are described, but remain as unfinished journeys, requiring ongoing effort and sustained attention.

To honour Greg Ricks's spirit and legacy, the telling of this story is shared by a number of people who have either worked with Greg and/or been mentored and inspired by him. Greg's legacy is vast and multi-layered and therefore cannot be distilled through the voice of a single person. Also, to provide readers not based in Stellenbosch with some background, time is taken to provide context on Stellenbosch University itself, some institutional history, and the early beginnings of transformation. Early in the interview process, Wayde Groep offered a beautiful insight about Greg, which has shaped the editorial choices, the form, style and texture of this booklet.

*Sometimes, people journey with us and write the story with us; and sometimes we help them to hold the pen so that they can write their own story. Greg does both – he writes the story with us, and gives us the pen. Greg empowers people to own their stories, to add their own depth, their own characters, giving voice and ownership of their own stories.*

# 1 : INTRODUCTION

This booklet includes the voices and “pens” of a variety of storytellers, who celebrate and honour Greg Ricks by owning their stories. They comprise only a small sample of many stories that could be shared by the staff, students and partners he has impacted during the ten years of his involvement at SU. In these pages, some of Greg's mentees – people who went on to become drivers, leaders and exemplars of change – share the stories of their own transformation. These are presented so that readers can understand the role that Greg (and others from the CSC) have played in their growth. Carlo McConney was profoundly influenced by the Awêness (First-Generation) Camp; Jurie Jean van de Vyver, a previous Wilgenhof Prim, describes his memories of Greg Ricks; Lana Davids speaks about her mastery of multicultural skills: crafted and refined over years in LLL; Farai Mubaiwa, played a part in shifting residence culture at Sonop ladies' residence<sup>4</sup>; and Faith Pienaar describes the impact of Greg's mentorship in supporting her development as a student leader and then staff person working in the SU Transformation Office. Lloyd Blake, the pioneer of SU's Olympus PSO, is a leader who was inspired by Greg, although primarily mentored by Pieter Kloppers. Lloyd's frustration with the pace of change in student housing at SU inspired him to start a completely new PSO – one which marked a break with the past, and then embraced a new future. One of Greg's unique contributions, as also noted earlier by Monica du Toit, has been to spark change through hundreds of workshops heco-designed with others and provided to students. Wayde Groep, a student who later joined the FVZS Institute as a staff member, tells the story of how facilitation workshops became an important resource in equipping students to become agents of change themselves. A collection of quotes, compiled from a wellspring of wisdom offered by residence heads and other SU staff members are given prominence on individual pages throughout the book. The sentiment of these quotes is underscored by the tributes of selected mentees and colleagues to the fine work of Greg Ricks. This booklet concludes on a sober note, naming some of the mountains still to be climbed.

Throughout the booklet, specific attention is given to Greg's strong partnership with Pieter Kloppers, Director of the CSC. Without the foundations laid by Pieter, and his continuous support, Greg would not have been able to make the significant impact he has made during the past ten years. The final say of this publication is given to the men themselves – it is Greg and Pieter who have written the afterword.

As we reflect on, and celebrate, the powerful contribution of Greg Ricks, we acknowledge that Greg's contribution was enabled by champions who paved the way for transformation in the CSC, including Ex-director, Dr Ludolph Botha<sup>5</sup>, and current Director, Pieter Kloppers. The next section begins by giving some brief historical context to Stellenbosch University.

<sup>4</sup>One of the biggest women's residences at SU established in 1937

<sup>5</sup>Senior Director for Student Affairs during the years 2010–2015

## 1.1. The Context: Place and Time

To understand the context of transformation at the SU Centre for Student Communities it is helpful to briefly track how the shifts in transformation have emerged during the past ten years and to celebrate what has been shaped by individuals such as Pieter Kloppers and Greg Ricks, through their generative partnership and from the many conversational spaces that were intentionally created within the CSC.

Stellenbosch University is about to celebrate its hundred-year anniversary, claiming both a rich and nefarious past. Until 1994 this University produced most of South Africa's prime ministers. It was, as Mandela remarked to Greg Ricks, just the right place to be.

Stellenbosch was the home and breeding ground for the intellectual architects of apartheid. Thought leaders at this University were “pioneers”. Stellenbosch academics – sociologists and theologians – crafted the theological and socio-political justification for apartheid. For Dr Leslie van Rooi<sup>6</sup>, Stellenbosch is a university on a journey to transformation. *“From an English college turning to an English university, to turning into a Dutch university, turning into an Afrikaans university, to the changes occurring post 1994...and Stellenbosch becoming a globally competitive university that would serve more than just a single idea. The biggest signposts marking the conversations about transformation started to happen in the 90s.”*

Student body statistics are indicative of the change taking place. In 1990, the year of Mandela's release, 5% of the student body (less than 800 students) were black, coloured and Indian. While there were some changes in the early nineties at the University, there was initially a resistance to transformation – a resistance that in certain ways still remains, despite all that has been achieved. On another level, the national level, two things influenced change in Stellenbosch – the dawn of democracy with the 1994 elections and the South African government's White Paper on Higher Education (which is still in existence)<sup>7</sup>. There were some signs of change when, in 1998, Nelson Mandela received an honorary doctorate. For Dr Leslie van Rooi, this signalled that we would give the honorary doctorate to the state president, a statesman very different from some of his predecessors honoured by our University. The second was a very important strategic document that came out in the year 2000: *Stellenbosch at the Turn of the Century and beyond*.<sup>8</sup> Andreas van Wyk, the then Rector<sup>9</sup> championed the document and it is still used as a framing document to talk about Stellenbosch becoming a different kind of university. Then there was Russel Botman's election as Rector in 2007 and Vice-Chancellor. Van Zyl Slabbert's appointment as Chancellor also in 2008. Both appointments signalled the break with the old story.

While important changes took place in the first ten years, growth was slow. Then under the leadership of Rectors Chris Brink<sup>10</sup> and Russel Botman, the pace of change quickened and intensified. By 2015 the percentage of black, coloured and Indian undergraduate students had increased to 38%.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Director, Social Impact, SU, Church historian

<sup>7</sup>Council of Higher Education, Education White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher Education, July 1997

[http://www.che.ac.za/media\\_and\\_publications/legislation/education-white-paper-3-programme-transformation-higher-education](http://www.che.ac.za/media_and_publications/legislation/education-white-paper-3-programme-transformation-higher-education)

<sup>8</sup>The Afrikaans document is called Die Eeuwisseling en Daarna.

<sup>9</sup>Terms of the rectors: Andreas Van Wyk: 1993–2001; Chris Brink: 2002–2007; Russel Botman: 2008–2014; Leopoldt van Huysteen: Acting; Wim de Villiers: 2015–present

<sup>10</sup>During the years of his rectorship, Brink increased the number of black students by 70% – by the time he left, black students made up 50% of the medical school. In every year of his rectorship, the annual increase of students of colour increased by 11%, while the number of white students maintained a 1% growth. (Source: Jessica Shepherd: Chris Brink, Cry Academic Freedom in The Guardian, February 11, 2008)

<sup>11</sup>Transformation at Stellenbosch University, what the future holds. Corporate Marketing Breakfast with the Cape Times Table Bay Hotel. October 6, 2015.

What is clear, and worthy of celebration and pride, is that the same soils of Stellenbosch University produced notable thinkers, visionaries and national change-makers such as Van Zyl Slabbert, Beyers Naude and Professor Johan Degenaar – all vehement critics of apartheid. And in more recent years, there are people of vision and innovative architects of change committed to transformation. In the interviews conducted for this booklet, both Greg Ricks<sup>12</sup> and Dr Ludolph Botha referred to their friend and colleague, Pieter Kloppers, as one of the major architects of transformation at Stellenbosch University.

The SU 2017 Transformation Implementation Plan frames the institution's view of transformation, as a systemic process, by which all dimensions of university life must be involved in the change and renewal taking place.

Transformation has involved changing the institutional culture, built over years and protected by generations of proud graduates, who have both romanticised precious memories and stewarded their views about what student residential life was and should be. Generations of families have held dear the values and traditions of residence life. Over time these have become woven into the institutional fabric of this University and have shaped the ethos of the University. The strong legacy of Stellenbosch is held in the walls of this institution as well as in the memories and values of the parents and grandparents who are alumni of this institution. This alludes to the notion that the unseen, but clearly felt personality of this institution is intangible, yet pervasive. Over the past twenty years, both winds of change and forces of resistance have begun to influence life in residences and PSOs, yet even in 2003 there were significant differences between residences.<sup>13</sup> What is clear is that one cannot assume a single narrative, neither at Stellenbosch University nor the residences. The picture is always much more complex.

Here is the voice of Abi McDougall, writing in 2013.<sup>14</sup> Living as a graduate student in LLL, she captures the complexities and paradoxes in the Stellenbosch University she experienced. Her thinking offers a nuanced narrative reflecting the reality of Stellenbosch during that year, and illustrates the important point that there are many influences in the buildings and traditions of the University, her people and the surrounding ecosystem.

*The context is important – Stellenbosch is one of the most unequal towns in a deeply unequal country. Fresh off the boat from Rhodes University, it seemed to me like a bizarre vision of an ever-static South Africa: inequality is fractured along the same lines as it was under apartheid. Race and class divisions are cemented by spatial ones. Despite all the changes we have made since 1994 – the progressive policy and redistributive measures, the discourse of non-racialism and reconciliation, our liberal democracy – here the divisions remain. Stellenbosch University operates in this context, and is itself a paradoxical place. On the one hand, Stellenbosch seems true to its reputation as an enclave of white Afrikaans conservatism. I must have spent my first few days on campus with my mouth hanging open and my eyes wide as I grappled to comprehend this new place. A jaw-dropping 66.9% of students at the University are white (compared to the 9% that whites actually make up of South Africa's population). This is partly because most students who apply for Stellenbosch are white – only 28.3% of students who applied for 2013 were black, coloured and Indian. Stellenbosch particularly struggles to attract black students, due to the perception that Stellenbosch is exclusively Afrikaans, in terms of language and culture. Many aspects of residence life remain deeply rooted in traditions based on white Afrikaans culture, and although residences only house about 25% of students they heavily influence campus culture. As recently as 2011, house committees in some residences were found to be placing first-years with roommates based on race, resulting in segregation within those residences. Black students who do not want to be part of the traditional residence culture apply for newer residences that are perceived as "black" residences and as a result house mostly black student, or move into privately owned flats. There are exceptions, but walking around on campus you generally see homogenous social groups, as students filter into clusters of like-with-like sorted by language, race and culture.*

<sup>12</sup>Personal Interviews with Greg Ricks in February 2017, and Dr Ludolph Botha in August 2017.

<sup>13</sup>Van Zyl Slabbert Report, 2003, SU

<sup>14</sup>This unpublished article was written in 2013 and while she was a student resident in LLL, which is an innovative residence programme, which intentionally encourages both gender and racial diversity and inclusion. Abi, a Mandela Rhodes fellow, later became a LLL co-ordinator at SU.

*The level of self-segregation is high, and the perception of most people I've asked is that it "happens naturally". From the outside, Stellenbosch – both university and town – seem to be evidence for the victory of path-dependency and the tenacity of structural inequality. Public debate on campus is a cacophony reflecting the tension between the reality for students and the vision of the University of tolerance, diversity, and equity. The vision is dragging Stellenbosch University forward, and some people are kicking and screaming.*

*Yet, there are aspects of Stellenbosch that are amazingly progressive and constantly undermine the stereotype. There is a high level of awareness of the need for further transformation at the highest level of management, and an openness to innovations and initiatives that further these aims. The University has a powerful capacity to implement radical change in key areas, and doesn't do things by halves. There are a number of key initiatives that attest to this. The HOPE project, initiated by Russel Botman, generates 'science for society' that is then applied to development challenges such as sustainability. The Centre for Student Communities' initiatives to create clusters and hubs that are more inclusive environments for learning and socialising, the Frederik van Zyl Slabbert Leadership Institute's short courses on multiculturalism and leadership and the First-Generation Camp offered for new students are some examples of changes that are taking place. In response to the 2011 first-year placements shock, placement policy is being revised. The progressive and conservative elements of the Convocation are deeply divided on the new policy, which embodies the general paradox of Stellenbosch.*

Even since the time of Abi's writing, four years ago, even more significant strides have been made to both honour and loosen the grip of older traditions, to bring those who are "kicking and screaming" into conversations around transformation. Pioneers of all ages, with fresh dreams, are becoming catalysts for transformation all over the University. Many have been creating the thinking frameworks, the co-curricular experiences for heads of residences and students alike to begin to reflect on and re-consider those aspects of tradition which are antithetical to inclusivity and diversity. They are being invited to re-imagine a different kind of residential experience, an expanded version of Stellenbosch University and to re-align their thinking according to a value-driven philosophy in line with the highest ideals of the South African Constitution. Although this is not the place for a detailed history of transformation at SU, it is important to mention a few definitions of transformation that have shaped this University's journey:

*Stellenbosch University stands for an idea. What we hope to do is to adapt this idea. The new idea of Stellenbosch that we want to promote is embodied in Vision 2012; the achievement of Vision 2012<sup>15</sup> is our way of implementing transformation. Incidentally, nothing will be achieved by trying to avoid the word "transformation", or getting angry about it. It is much better for us to give content to the word ourselves, as we are now doing by means of Vision 2012. Two comments are relevant here:*

*The first is that transformation is something that we choose to do, with the simple objective of being and remaining a good university. It is not something being forced upon us by the State, or the donors, or any political party, or some or other group behind the scenes. It is a conscious and well-considered decision that goes back to our Strategic Framework of 2000<sup>16</sup>, and has since been spelled out in numerous policy and planning documents. In this regard, I would like to give credit to our staff and students, the great majority of whom accept the necessity for transformation and have embraced the challenge of co-responsibility for Vision 2012.*

<sup>15</sup>Vision 2012, SU

<sup>16</sup>Strategic Framework 2000, SU

*The second remark is that transformation, in the sense in which we speak about it, is not a numbers game. It does not, in the first place, have to do with numbers or tables or graphs of how many people from the designated groups can be found on the Stellenbosch campus. **Transformation, in the first instance, involves a mind-shift.** It has to do with ideas. And it has to do with the idea of Stellenbosch.*

*—Chris Brink on transformation<sup>17</sup>*

Russel Botman was a pioneering figure in the SU transformation story. Undoubtedly, he helped to shape and support the direction programmes of the CSC took and, therefore, this publication cannot neglect to mention him.

Russel internalized and lived out the ethos of transformation, which he summarized as follows:

*“In order to produce graduates who can meaningfully transform society into welcoming spaces, you need to become the sort of institution where **graduates of this nature can be nurtured** (Van Schalkwyk et al, 2010)<sup>18</sup>. Another way to say this is to quote Mohandas Gandhi: “You must be the change you want to see in the world”.*

*—Russel Botman on transformation<sup>19</sup>*

In a recent speech, the current Rector Wim De Villiers added to these ideas, stating that:

*Transformation relates to the renewal of Stellenbosch itself. The goal is to align ourselves with the spirit and values of the Constitution, which is also embodied in our Institutional Intent and Strategy.*



<sup>17</sup>Transformation: Public Annual Report 29 July 2004 (P111) in Botha, Amanda (editor): Anatomy of a Transformer (2007).

<sup>18</sup>[www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/Rector/Speeches World Innovation Summit for Education \(WISE\), Doha, Qatar July 29, 2004.](http://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/Rector/Speeches/World%20Innovation%20Summit%20for%20Education%20(WISE),%20Doha,%20Qatar%20July%2029,%202004)

<sup>19</sup>7 December 2010



## 1.2. A Series of Powerful Partnerships

The story of such a transformation in the SU context begins with Dr Ludolph Botha. In his roles as Senior Director of Student and Academic Support (2010–2013) and Director of Student Affairs (2013–2015), he became an important sounding board and mentor for Pieter Kloppers, before Pieter became the Director of the CSC. When Pieter was initially piloting his novel ideas at Goldfield's residence during the 1990s, Ludolph Botha and Russel Botman were early adopters of his approach. At that time, few people understood the innovative vision and philosophies of value-driven leadership that Pieter was developing. When Magda Fourie-Malherbe<sup>20</sup> became Vice-Rector in 2008, she also was a strong supporter of the emerging ideal of transforming the University through CSC initiatives. According to Dr Leslie van Rooi:

*Driven through residence education, there were deliberate institutional changes that happened from the '90s onwards. There I would highlight Pieter Kloppers' role in the University since starting with his work as residence head at Goldfields. The idea of shifting the institutional culture was driven by a lot of his work around values and value-driven leadership.*

The story continues with Pieter Kloppers, who was already formulating a different vision of values-driven leadership to influence changes in residences. Pieter met Greg Ricks in 2005 and they soon established a generative thinking partnership, characterized by profound mutual respect. Greg was a seasoned multiculturalism expert, having been a dean at North Eastern University and several Ivy League universities. He had witnessed first-hand that period of American history when increasing numbers of minorities were demanding greater inclusion in universities. His subsequent work in South Africa at the Clinton Democracy Fellowship Program for Emerging Young Leaders and the Oprah Winfrey School for Girls had also developed a robust understanding of South Africa.

Pieter and Greg arranged a joint trip to the USA in 2006, visiting a number of Ivy League universities, as well the University of California at Berkeley. In the words of Nick van Zyl (PK<sup>21</sup> Chair of 2006/7), "Pieter came back from that trip with a bounce in his step". The ideas Pieter had already begun to formulate prior to his trip, were strengthened and refined by what he saw in American universities that had faced similar challenges. Based on these insights Pieter then began to innovate in Stellenbosch University with new skills and insight. He applied a variety of new ideas to the unique ResEd program, where there was greater readiness for fast-paced, transformative change in SU residences and PSOs.

Pieter's vision for transformative change through value-driven leadership in student communities was complemented by Greg's passion and purpose: to release the potential of every student and to be a champion of the values of social justice, inclusivity and diversity. Greg is the first to admit that his very presence at SU would not have been possible without Pieter's vision and value-driven stance. Similarly, Pieter acknowledges the essential and unique role that Greg plays.

*You need champions who can have the emotional conversation at times when nobody else is present. And that means sometimes it's after midnight. Greg played that role...there is no way that Stellenbosch or the Centre for Student Communities could have been remotely successful in its transformation in the way it has been, if it was not for an influence like his. Greg is a figure who binds both black and white students, both female and male students, both people in the mainstream as well as people on the margins around him, as the living example of what it means to be inclusive. These are the possibilities that stem from the fact that if you live such an integrated life around the issue of inclusivity, then it signals that we can be like this. In that sense, he was also the glimpse of the future for students.*

<sup>20</sup>The previous Vice-Rector of Teaching and Learning at SU.

<sup>21</sup>The PK is the leadership committee of Prim leaders at SU.

In Greg's consulting appointment at SU, the powerful partnership between him and Pieter was birthed. One of the moving themes of this booklet is the heartfelt respect and friendship between these two dynamic men. This flowed over into other parts of the CSC, as each of them in turn formed strong partnerships with residence heads, cluster co-ordinators, Prims, Vice Prims, HK members and students.

Greg and Pieter, and many other exemplars of excellence in residential education, share many similarities despite their differences in age, personality, nationality and professional training. They both:

- Believe that tolerance between people is the lowest bar—that it is all about elevating the bar to the level of true connection and relationship;
- Stretch the imaginations of students using different methods;
- Coach and mentor students, individually and in groups;
- Value dialogue and use questions to encourage critical engagement;
- Convene conversations with strategic intentions and in the service of change;
- Constantly expand the range of topics and enlarge spaces for discussions;
- Have the courage to risk difficult conversations and the patience to know that change takes time;
- Cultivate the soils which grow the student's ability to ask their own questions and ultimately harvest their own wisdom through leadership in action;
- Invite students to re-imagine possibilities beyond conventional boundaries—for themselves as individuals, for their student communities, for Stellenbosch University and beyond, for South Africa and the world.

Furthermore, it is important to further differentiate each of their competencies. Pieter, together with his transformation partners, has been the champion for value-driven leadership at SU. He designs and restructures spaces for ever-widening communities. Within these, ideas are seeded, connections are made, relationships grown and conversations are hosted by many—whether by Prims, Vice Prims, HK members or first-year students. He has been attuned to the importance of investing in physical structures, such as the hubs<sup>22</sup> on campus, but also initiating new forms of social architecture in the service of inclusivity and transformation. Clusters<sup>23</sup> and the LLL initiative are examples of his innovative ability in this arena. Over many years, such initiatives design increasingly wider circles for conversation, connection and engagement.

Greg on the other hand, has forty years of experience in multicultural education and student affairs, and, as this booklet will reveal, his gifts are diverse. He is charismatic, energetic, politically strategic, relational, and intuitive. He brings a fluid, emotionally intelligent and responsive approach to his work—sometimes gently affirming, other times challenging students to think critically yet in an empowering way. Greg carries with him a toolbox of workshops and a treasure chest of critical engagement techniques collected and practised over many years. These he adapts and applies in various settings, from one-on-one conversations to small groups to crowds of a hundred or more people. Most importantly, Greg brings love and appreciation for everyone he meets, and has an uncanny ability to make everybody feel unique and special.

The relationship between Pieter Kloppers and Greg Ricks models the potential for change that is brought about through collaboration but also demonstrates the results of embracing partnership, co-creation and collaboration. Importantly the pair demonstrates how **new connections which embrace diversity act to nourish the seeds of potential that eventually grow into a better future.**

<sup>22</sup>Hubs refer to physical meeting places, strategically situated in every SU cluster, such as coffee shops and cafés. These provide a platform for students from different residences and PSOs to meet and connect with others in their cluster.

<sup>23</sup>Clusters are groupings of residences and PSOs within the larger collective of SU student communities that are drawn together for creating more integrative and effective networks for connecting students.



Once there is a change in the range and nature of co-creative relationships in an increasingly diverse ecosystem of a modern community, there is a stronger chance of moving towards a more dynamic and inclusive narrative for the collective. In different but complementary ways, and each of them collaborating with many other partners, Pieter and Greg have cultivated and sustained many trusted partnerships over time. And then with every cohort of student, they develop fresh partnerships linking new students with those with more experience. Each in their own way broaden the circles of conversation, they facilitate and deepen connections between students, and they build teams of people; tilling the soils in which more inclusive student communities can flourish. Through their respective styles of catalytic leadership, they have enabled thousands of students every year within the residences and PSOs to think about new possibilities in their families and communities. They have shifted the individual and collective awareness on campus, one Jaargesprek<sup>24</sup> at a time, one POPS camp<sup>25</sup> at a time, one workshop at a time, one coffee at a time, one conversation at a time, one person Crossing the Line<sup>26</sup> at a time.

### 1.3. Transformation and the Drivers of Change

A kaleidoscope is a very apt metaphor for thinking about the ecosystem of student communities at SU. A subtle turn of the kaleidoscope reveals different shapes and patterns. Just imagine – the whole ecosystem of SU is a living system, clusters of diversity living within a single kaleidoscope: the patterns you see reflect static and dynamic elements; local and national forces; drivers and catalysts for change, as well as elements which resist change; structures which sustain the past, and platforms for dynamic innovation. All of these reshape images and experiences within the kaleidoscope, and within the ecosystem. Just like a kaleidoscope captures the ever-changing moments in time, the different aspects of a layered and multifaceted ecosystem emerge as people, histories, structures, protest, radical and traditional forces intermingle.

<sup>24</sup>Jaargesprek is a visioning tool Pieter uses for conversations with students.

<sup>25</sup>POPS (Prims, Onderprims en Sameroepers / Prims, Vice Prims and Convenors) camp is an annual camp for newly elected SU student leaders.

<sup>26</sup>Cross the Line has become a signature workshop offered by Greg. It is a method for building connection and vulnerability in safe group settings.

**When transformation happens: A big part of that which is transforming is internal to each human being.**

In the past, I used judgement to make sense of the world. My thinking was conservative, yet my values are more liberal. In my own journey, my thinking and values became more integrated. I started a process to get rid of the boxes in my mind and realised that transformation was much more than numbers. Instead, it is how you transform as a person. It is not a formal process, it is informal. We grow and we learn when we push each other, when we share living space and respect someone else's journey. We can't build bridges over walls. It's about dismantling the boxes and walls both inside and outside.



**Folkers Tulkki-Williams**  
**(Former Prim and Assistant Residence Head Academia Residence;**  
**Programme Co-ordinator, FVZS Institute)**

In the vibrant kaleidoscope of SU, the figure of Greg Ricks stands out. He has been a driver of change his entire career. We celebrate the privilege of his presence as a powerful transformational catalyst.

**The changing picture – transformation.** SU has conceptualised transformation as a purposive, systemic process. The 2017 Transformation Implementation Plan states that: *This [transformation] implies that all dimensions of university life are involved in the transformation and renewal process.*

Turning to a more theoretical and philosophical perspective, it is the view of the author that, however intentionally transformation is framed by leaders and policies, it flourishes when there is alignment between good leadership, enabling policies, strategic partnerships, and relationships that both spontaneously emerge and are cultivated within the in between spaces.

Amongst others, Steve McIntosh (2007)<sup>27</sup>, Margaret Wheatley (2006)<sup>28</sup> and Verna Allee (2003)<sup>29</sup> elaborate on the idea that it is in the spaces **in between** people that the promise of a different future is held. In the evolution of culture and consciousness (whether in organisations or societies), development is for the most part, invisible. Outward manifestations of consciousness can be visible in behaviour or artefacts or traditions or buildings, but what we learn from integral philosophy<sup>30</sup> helps us see is that “a big part of that which is actually evolving is internal to each human being”. What we learn from Richard Barrett, an early advocate of values-driven leadership – is the idea that organisations don't change, people change<sup>31</sup>.

What transforms and evolves human organisations is the quality and reach of the network of interpersonal connections underlying interactions in the organisation. This points to the co-creation of shared values, relationships and mutual understandings. Transformation and cultural evolution are similar in this sense, as both are slow and intangible processes. One can often see and feel a transformative moment when it arises, but these moments are difficult to measure. Within the CSC, specifically, conversation, connection and community are key philosophical pillars which guide programming and action (for more on these three focus elements, see page 28 & 29).

Considering the work and impact of Greg Ricks, it is clear that he has a great understanding of this thing that is transformation, as well as the rare ability to affect it. We now turn to consider in more detail a transformational catalyst Greg Ricks– what inspires him, what methods he uses in his work and what impact he has had.

<sup>27</sup>McIntosh, S. (2007) *Integral Consciousness and the future of evolution: how the integral worldview is transforming politics, culture and spirituality*. Paragon House, St Paul

<sup>28</sup>Wheatley, M. (2006). *Leadership and the new sciences*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

<sup>29</sup>Allee, V. (2003). *The Future of Knowledge: Increasing Prosperity through ValueNetworks*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.

<sup>30</sup>McIntosh, S (2007)

<sup>31</sup>Barrett, R. (1998). *Liberating the corporate soul*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth Heinemann.

## 2. GREG RICKS : INSPIRATION, METHODS AND IMPACT

In a beautiful tribute by Jurie Jean van de Vyver, Greg is described by the way he “colours” a student's life.

He works like an artist, in nuanced ways; suspended between present, past and future; *always chiselling away at the routine to discover the novel in a way that shapes the course of your life.* (Page 38)

From Greg's own testimony, his own life has been “coloured” by many unique influences, from his parent's involvement in politics sparking a life-long interest in politics; to his involvement with the civil rights movement as a young student and his participation in anti-apartheid protests on US campuses. Many opportunities have blessed his life. His wealth of experience and exposure to many multicultural contexts has given him an ability to appreciate the multiple perspectives that exist in any given moment and situation (and to inspire others to see them as well). Identity has been a topic of great interest for him from his earliest days, and experiences throughout his personal and professional life have given him an understanding of the many layers that make up our separate and shared identities.

Implicit in his own self-understanding and reflections regarding identity, is that he himself also grapples with the very tough questions he asks his students. He had the privilege of attending a private school, in a white area, when he was the only black child in high school. He understands discomfort well and is unafraid to surface what is normally unspoken in multicultural settings.

Whether by destiny or design, Greg has built close relationships with countless work partners in his life. He is a strong team player, thrives on collaboration, always views his own journey as fortunate, and always values connection with others. This includes relationships with students he has met on various campuses, both in the USA and South Africa.

Greg is a loving person who likes to create safe spaces in which everybody can flourish. Very dear to his heart were his student years at Hampton College in Virginia, which was 90% black at the time he studied there. Designed to cater for previously disadvantaged black students, it was there that he discovered what it meant to be nurtured, mentored and coached, whether by the football coach, or the professors. There he experienced the difference that they made in his life. This is an important part of Greg's story because his experience of this nurturing has inspired him to pay it forward. He gives of himself, he coaches and empowers those around him because he wants the people in his life to be successful.

## 2.1. Purpose and Inspiration

Greg's vitality and energy is palpable and fuelled by his profound enjoyment of the fact that he is making a difference in others and in his own words: “experiencing the difference that people make in me.” He loves making people realise their dreams. His consistent connection to his purpose inspires him to do what he does. He takes on the role of being a catalyst for transformation naturally — he is blessed with a loving nature, a curious mind and an engaging personality.

Greg describes himself with these words:

*I decided very early in my career, that my legacy was going to be student empowerment. So, I've got plenty of time for students and I've been able to make students my day job and my night job ... I can spend the whole day in the Botanical Gardens<sup>32</sup> and see ten students and have had an incredible powerful day.*

Greg's leadership and contribution has been described in various ways: as a catalyst, activator, collaborator, convenor, mentor, multicultural expert, strategist, networker, mover and shaker, and more. He co-creates, inspires and empowers others, and has a natural talent for facilitating safe spaces and offering experiential workshops which promote inclusion. Since his days at Stanford he has been passionate about advising students one-on-one, and this love for empowering others has been a golden thread, woven throughout his life.

He is also tactical, strategic and bold — unafraid of power and able to communicate at all levels of a system. Greg's unique mix of talent, relational yet strategic and politically savvy, has also meant that he is a man of influence, working behind the scenes as an institutional whisperer. He “whispers institutional strategy into existence.”<sup>33</sup>

This phrase, coined by Pieter Kloppers, describes a mix of skills. An institutional whisperer, like a horse whisperer, is more than a trainer. Whereas a trainer may use force, a whisperer uses subtle forms of communication, which is a well-honed soft skill. An institutional whisperer invests in relationships and then leverages them in strategic ways. He has the sensitivity to realise what message to share within the context of each relationship at different levels of an institutional hierarchy, and each message is appropriately adapted for the audience. This is a subtle and invisible skill not easily quantifiable and at the same time impactful.

As an institutional whisperer Greg earns trust with people by creating safe spaces in all parts of a system and at the same time blends his capacity to read the environment with a strong belief that he can shape change. He enjoys applying his political skills in service of values he holds dear: his commitment to inclusivity, diversity, transformation and social justice. These values have been central to Greg's career path. In his own words, it was thus very easy for him to buy into Pieter's vision at Stellenbosch to create an environment in which relationships could flourish, and where the building blocks of a different university and a vibrant socially cohesive society could be crafted, because it aligned with his personal values.

<sup>32</sup>This refers to a restaurant located in the botanical gardens of Stellenbosch.

<sup>33</sup>Interview with Pieter Kloppers, September 2017

## 2.2. Methods and Qualities

Greg is known both for his more formal teaching and methodologies and workshops and his informal one-on-one mentoring of staff and students. His signature workshop is Cross the Line, which will be described in more detail later in this section. A long history in multicultural education has helped him accumulate a treasure chest of workshops aimed at working with diversity and fostering inclusivity. These include Stand and Declare, Cover Story, and the widely familiar Cross the Line workshop. (Table A lists all of Greg's workshops). He not only facilitates them himself, but over the years has trained students to facilitate them as well.

Workshops
<b>1. Warm-up techniques</b>
a. <b>Stand-up, sit-down</b>
b. <b>Switch-swatch</b>
c. <b>One truth, one lie</b>
d. <b>The talking stick</b>
<b>2. Identity circle / work styles</b>
<b>3. Cross the line</b>
<b>4. The party</b>
<b>5. Stand and declare</b>
<b>6. The privilege line</b>
<b>7. Gender alliance</b>
<b>8. Leadership compass</b>
<b>9. Cover story</b>
<b>10. Critical thinking through film</b>

**Table A: Workshops offered by Greg Ricks**

It is important to understand the mixture of generosity, flexibility and style that characterise Greg's workshops and to acknowledge the range of skills and competencies that his vast experience brings. He has a tacit competence to intuitively read a group situation and to offer a creative and appropriate response. Regarding this facilitative mastery, Monica du Toit (a colleague) states that:

*Greg's workshops were about how growth comes from experiential learning. Greg's workshops were about opening up new forms of connectedness and vulnerability. His approach was that through understanding differences you need to step out of your own lens of seeing things, and become an ally for someone else that has different experiences. And it was about having an experience, and then deciding on how you want to act differently. He simply presented workshops and the workshops would open up opportunities and spaces and discussions that would change the conversation.*

*Greg is well known for his quote "the more you share, the more you learn". He combines that with an ability to surface the invisible issues that would be hidden in the Stellenbosch context. His workshops used techniques to make invisible experiences more visible to one another. Once topics became more visible, then students could really work and engage with them. In my view, the impact of his best-known workshop, Cross the Line, is that it helps us to experience vulnerability. We realize that we are all so different – we come from such different places. And we also see that we share these almost unending number of characteristics and experiences. Knowing this creates solidarity.*

## Emotional Intelligence, Listening, Painting with Stories and Reading the Room

Greg could intuitively read a group situation and offer creative, yet perfectly apt, responses. A frequently mentioned quality that describes Greg is his uncanny ability to navigate uncomfortable conversations. He has a wonderful way of putting difficult things on the table; of naming the elephant in the room; of surfacing issues, feelings and vulnerabilities that have been unspoken. His methodologies provide opportunities for honest and sometimes cathartic interactions in safe and well-facilitated spaces where people can release fears and secrets, revealing discomforts and owning both differences and similarities.

For Pieter Kloppers, Greg's great gift is his ability to intuitively work with what is in the collective unconscious. His ability to read a group, listen astutely, and know what is going on, makes him a master at surfacing issues that lie unspoken in the collective. This is an important quality in a society where the social structures have entrenched separation, and political correctness further prevents the naming of uncomfortable topics. His style is usually to begin by creating gentle safe spaces, in his own words "to rub the nut". Then, when necessary to challenge students more directly, he cracks open the nut and draws out the much-needed answers.

Another aspect of Greg's emotional intelligence is the charisma he has and his ability to empower and activate students. His feedback and encouragement is real, authentic and affirming.

**Cross the Line.** Greg has been facilitating Cross the Line for decades, and considers it his most powerful programme by far, because it allows students to share who they are, without having to explain or defend it. It gets people talking and listening to each other and allows participants to see that, even though their identity is very uniquely theirs, everyone has come through adversity in one form or another. The intention of the workshops is not only to encourage each person to be themselves individually and authentically, but to build trust and fostering healing in groups.

This being his signature workshop, Greg leads many Cross the Line workshops every year with different groupings in the SU student community. It is both a popular and controversial process. Yet many residences request this workshop, particularly during welcoming week, as a way for first year students to get to know each other quickly.

The groups can be as large as two hundred or as small as twenty. Safety and confidentiality is established right at the beginning. A line is placed centrally in the room, usually black masking tape stretching out the length of the floor.

One hundred very diverse questions are asked, starting out with non-threatening questions such as "How many of you were head girl at your high school? How many of you have spoken to audiences of more than 3,000? How many of you have lost a parent?" As the session progresses, the questions become more edgy. "How many of you have seen violence in your homes? How many of you have lived in a shack? How many of you are from rich families? And from poor families?"

Participants are encouraged to think carefully so that they are sure they want to cross the line and make themselves vulnerable. In the process, they choose to reveal something personal in a visible way to others. Once they cross the line, participants see and feel both the diversity and the similarities that show up with people that they had (usually) assumed to be quite different. By walking across the line on many very diverse questions, people learn a great deal about each other. Rich and poor students discover that they have both seen violence in the home; racially diverse students discover that half the first-year group in a residence were head boy in high school; students from economically disadvantaged groups find each other and feel less alone because they create more solidarity. There is both vulnerability inherent in revealing unseen layers of the self, and a sense of connection and mutual strength



when similarities and diversities are revealed. Commenting on inclusivity Greg reflects: “I think all the questions produce inclusivity, because at the end of each session there is always a time slot of 45 minutes allocated to processing the feelings which have come up. The processing is an essential part of the workshop and Greg also avails himself for one-on-one sessions with students needing further support after the workshop.

The need to have conversations is very clear at this University and many others like it. But the key question then becomes: how will we ever be able to have the hundreds of conversations that we need to have in order to touch on all the topics that need to be covered? Through Cross the line Greg has introduced an efficient way to host conversations with up to two hundred people within an hour, yet in a very meaningful way. Even with just one hundred people in the room and up to one hundred questions asked, the methodology allows for the powerful, yet subtle, presence of more than a thousand implicit discussions occurring as people cross the line. Through this technique Greg has created a way to have many of the much-needed conversations effectively and, in doing so, he has accelerated the pace of transformational change.

Greg explains that, when diversity is celebrated within many conversations in this manner, inclusivity will happen within the diverse group and then ripple out to the entire community. Change happens both at an individual level and at a collective level. Many students report that due to this experience, “The light went on in my mind and heart towards understanding and appreciating the difference. Everyone gets to see themselves in someone else!” Furthermore, after such a session, there is a critical mass of people on campus, carrying a collective understanding around celebrating diversity. As new understandings form and solidarities are discovered, these invisible effects reach across the campus thus supporting transformation in a subtle yet profound way. Without exception student groups that completed this activity reported that they felt much closer to their group mates.

**Multicultural expert.** Greg has been working as a multicultural expert for more than forty years. He first experimented with a variety of methods at Stanford University. A brief scan of interviews hosted on the internet during his tenure at this university, evokes a strong sense of his longstanding commitment to work he has applied and refined over decades. His approach in Stellenbosch is consistent with his approaches at universities in the USA.

In terms of multiculturalism, he is not only a skilled and sensitive professional, but an embodiment of the lived experience of inclusion – not only of marginalized people, but of mainstream students. In his work, he has always had the capacity to understand that white students are an equally important part of multicultural education. At SU as well, he has recognized that white people need help to understand what it means to be white in a multicultural community. His wisdom acknowledges that even the white heterosexual male— that class that has become the stereotype of dominance – may feel disconnected and marginalized by multiculturalism and thus needs attention as well.

**Talent Scout and Motivator.** Initially facilitative leadership education was envisaged as a vehicle for training students to present the workshops that Greg brought to the university. As Greg's workshops became more popular over the years, he and Monica du Toit recognized the need to train more people, so that the workshops could be delivered to the scale of the need. Increasingly complex conversations were being held and demanded and a much wider network of facilitators to effectively engage with students. Greg has trained a number of students to conduct workshops, such as Cross the Line, to address the need. Monica du Toit tells the story:

*At the time, FVZS was the logical platform to host facilitative leadership programmes and I think the young movers and shakers at that time began to be involved.*



*Greg did not only act as a role model of how to facilitate the workshops, but he was one of the key people to network and identify talent. If he recognised potential he would suggest to students that “I think you would be great at taking a course in facilitative leadership” or “we would so like to have you on our team...” As much as you want to do workshops and great competency work, you also need someone that could change the status of what that competency is. Greg would play a motivational role, he would offer a confidence boost to students and say: “The course will make you a great leader. If you could lead this, if you can open up these important conversations...” I think more so than just modelling the course content, Greg was very intentional in having individual conversations with students. And I think he had a knack for really making a student understand that even if you are super talented, you haven't actually reached your greatest potential until you have entered the social justice arena.*

Greg's capacity for being an effective talent scout, as described in Monica's words, is strengthened by his understanding of the big picture, and his strategic savvy.

**Strategic and supportive.** Greg manages to balance being highly strategic, yet very supportive at all levels of a hierarchy. He is a holistic thinker who understands both rationally and intuitively how diversity can and must be leveraged in an institutional ecosystem. Renee Hector-Kannemeyer (Deputy-Director for Social Impact, and head of Matie Community Service at SU) summarizes these qualities very well:

*Although Greg is deeply relational in his approach with staff and students, he is also a strategic thinker who engages with the senior management of the University, holding discussions around the University's contribution towards the injustices of the past, and the commitment to appropriate redress and development initiatives.*

According to Monica du Toit:

*Greg also understood that for effective facilitation in the transformation space, you need the right combination of change agents, in terms of gender, race and other kinds of representivity. That you don't just look at the voices on the margin. That you need to move closer to the students more in the centre, who at that stage influenced leadership.*

This strategic metaview, which is intrinsic to the way Greg operates, was to have positive effects for residence heads. The emergence of increasingly complex conversations on campus and in residences, whether related to race, gender, sexuality or #FeesMustFall has necessitated more skills and competencies among resident heads. With an expanding pool of competent facilitators, over time, residence heads have been able to draw on a diverse range of Greg's skilled student facilitators. For example, Annette du Plessis at Nerina<sup>34</sup> described the greater freedom she had to draw on Ashanti Kunene the black female Prim at Metanoia, to help her facilitate a racially charged conversation during a debate on transformation during the #FeesMustFall protests.

It was also an important strategy of Greg's to always offer support to the leaders and facilitators who received training from the CSC. Monica mentions that most of his work involved providing support for these students — either himself, or by building networks of support for those he had trained. This is part of the mix of skill and personal qualities he has brought to his role: emotional intelligence, empowering and activating students, boosting the confidence of all, filtering in his ability to spot talent and link people with each other.

<sup>34</sup> A womens residence in Stellenbosch where Annette is the residence head

Leveraging a strong network within and beyond Stellenbosch University. Clearly, one of Greg's core strategies is to support students and staff through building networks and communities among the people he mentors. He boasts an impressive local and global network, ranging from Athol Fugard to Oprah Winfrey and Bill Clinton, to many students both in South Africa and the USA. He utilises this network with political savvy – he effortlessly connects the dots, weaving new acquaintances into an established network of extensive relationships. By doing so, he not only helps students to expand the reach of their own networks, but also elevates their self-confidence and increases their sense of personal agency.

Pieter Kloppers gives us a window into how Greg's weaving together within and between networks enriches the lives of many:

*He brings his conversations with presidents of different countries, educators from all over the world and activists in social justices and just many many more into the conversations and opens those networks in some way to those that he engages with. When a student once told him that Athol Fugard is currently residing at STIAS, Greg asked "the playwright? I have to see him." It turns out that Athol Fugard stayed at his home in Dartmouth in the 1980s when the campus was involved in demonstrations to force divestment from South African interests. It is this network of connections that serendipitously placed him at Stanford at the same time that the Vice-Rector Prof Arnold Schoonwinkel was there to complete his Ph. D and makes him an equal and valuable partner even for the top management of the institution. It is this kind of seamless movement that lands him in the Premier of the Western Cape's office and there inspire her to start the Year Beyond programme for youth. He has shared his network with many of the LLL students through the shared meals where they host invited guests".*

Greg has a capacity to work with people, both through formal structures, as well as informally, with an almost intentional disregard for boundaries. This quality frees him to think out of the box and see possibilities that other people may not see.

**Fluidity in informal mentoring and community building.** Greg will often see beyond the limiting silos and departmental lines that often characterise organisations. This ability to flow between structures and departmental units is part of his magic. His mind moves like quicksilver from the issues raised by an individual person to the bigger picture of the organisation.

Greg has held over 1,500 individual coffee sessions during the time he has been here in Stellenbosch, but he also supports his mentees in other ways, both informal workshops, such as a guided discussion of a movie, or by role-modelling what it means to simply rest and take time to connect with each other. He occasionally at his own expense will take groups of students away for weekends.

**An advocate of feminism.** Greg has not limited his focus to issues of racial inclusivity and ethnic diversity. During his time at SU, he has created many platforms for feminine voices to be heard, frequently bringing top gender equality experts such as Professor Amanda Gouws and former Constitutional Court Judge Yvonne Mokgoro and other outstanding feminists, to speak to the various groups he works with.

But, more than that, Greg transcends his role as an inclusivity, diversity and multicultural specialist. As the title of this booklet implies, he is a transformational catalyst. What are the qualities which make Greg a transformational catalyst? How has he contributed to radical change within student communities in Stellenbosch?

### **Fluidity and Flexibility as an essential quality**

The University needs to replicate the kind of chemistry and fluidity that Greg embodies – both activating, flexible and at the same time stabilising. **Dr Johan Groenewald**

### **Changes in the students reach the parents of the students**

The impact of our transformation work at Tygerberg, stretches further than the walls of our residences and into the space of the campus. I once went to a medical conference and witnessed two medical students at our residence. One black and one white. They were both attending the conference with their fathers, who were also doctors. The Afrikaans father started talking in Afrikaans and his son responded in English. The Afrikaans father asked why he was talking in English and the son kindly corrected him. His father changed to English. The more we shift behaviour among our students, the more that extends to the wider circle of their parents and families.

**Dr Johan Groenewald**



### **Women's empowerment voices are stronger**

Women's empowerment voices have become stronger in the residences. Their voices are stirring up conversation and this trend needs to increase in the future.

**Christine Groenewald**



## 2.3. Impact

**Being a catalyst.** Reflecting on Greg's role as the energiser referred to earlier by Monica du Toit, Dr Johan Groenewald, residence head of Tygerberg residence, uses an interesting and apt metaphor. He described Greg's role as that of a catalyst. Using terms from the science of chemistry:

*A catalyst is a substance that can increase the rate of a reaction. The catalyst itself remains unchanged at the end of the reaction it catalyses, and only a very small amount of catalyst is needed to increase the rate of reaction between large amounts of reactants. In our case the reactants are the in-class environment and the out-of-class environment, where most students spend around 80% of their time. Greg is not with us for long periods of time, but when he is here he energises key role players to connect and creates huge learning opportunities in the out-of-class environment that will last, by changing the ways that students think. Some of that type of learning will happen by default through our structures, but with Greg's influence the "rate of reaction" increases— and the result is a more fluid learning environment, as well as a more inclusive culture especially in our res spaces.*

*The area in which this analogy fails is in the unchanging nature of the catalyst. By being part of these conversations, our stories become Greg's stories, and by that he is forever changed as well, being part of creating a brighter future for our students.*

**Legitimising and supporting culture change.** It is difficult to measure Greg's impact in tangible terms. For Pieter Kloppers:

*He legitimised the conversation with students, checking in, understanding both what the university would want to do, and also how we want to change the culture to better support student success, to better support the institutional culture to be more inclusive...Greg wasn't given a job to do in that sense, he was given an opportunity to showcase how somebody with his skills could augment the university's capacity to transform.*

*He achieved this with many conversations, legitimising the efforts of the university in the eyes of the students. If you want a big group of students, of student communities, to work together, they must feel that it is a legitimate cause that they are working towards. And he managed to accomplish that in a way that nobody else could.*

**Engagement with past injustices, empowerment, and empathy.** Greg is also appreciated for encouraging what Renee Hector-Kannemayer refers to as "*a healthy balance between empowerment and empathy when teaching about 'Othered' identities within the Stellenbosch context.*"

One of Greg's attributes is that he always brings his global experience with him, using it as a lens to inspire people to take responsibility for past injustices and to become local and global citizens.

**Encouraging a global perspective, and taking local and global responsibility.** Greg is acknowledged for the breadth and richness of the global perspective that he imparts to Stellenbosch's students. He has encountered systemic oppression first hand in the USA, and he is profoundly articulate about how to face and discuss issues of racism. And so, he is able to elevate the discussion, by giving it global context.

The impact that Greg has had on the institution that is Stellenbosch University cannot be fully captured on paper, much less through a short booklet and through a single voice. In the spirit of many pens and many voices, a number Greg's close collaborators and colleagues offer additional perspectives in the tributes that can be found on pages 46 to 49. These shed further light on a multi-talented man.

However, to really understand the contribution that Greg has made and the reach of his work, it is necessary to understand the nature of his partnership with Pieter Kloppers, his key connection to SU. For the purposes of this publication and space constraints, the next section will be brief, but is presented to enable the reader to develop an introductory understanding of another catalyst of change in the transformation process at SU.



**Greg Ricks giving a workshop to students**

### 3. PIETER KLOPPERS : A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The inherent humility and strong Calvinist tendencies make it difficult to acknowledge Pieter's impact on transformation at SU, without significant resistance from him. However, in the service of a truthful rendering of the story, this author has opted to share a couple of the impressions of others about Pieter's role.

*Pieter was way ahead of his time. My friends, and people who were on house committees, had great respect for Pieter's initiative to bring in the value-driven leadership discussions. By doing that he changed the whole way in which people thought about leadership, and about the potential for residences on campus to become spaces where student leaders are formed. The way in which that formation had to take place, was through values.*

*I don't think his is an easy role. I think especially with young people, who have their own idea, and don't necessarily want that kind of input, it could not have been easy. But I also know that there was a lot of appreciation for exactly that. It opened many people's eyes to what leadership really is. So, I think Pieter has left a legacy that will remain long after he is gone. It will play an important role and will shape students for generations to come. I think that the shift to value-based leadership, and value-based residence cultures, I think that's been crucial. Someone had to do it and he was the right person to do it.*

**–Dr Nadia Marais (Stellenbosch graduate, previous SRC leader and lecturer in theology at SU)**

*Pieter is an exceptional visionary. He is not only a classical visionary, but he is also someone who understands systems and processes and functions. So, I would say a classical visionary is someone who doesn't really care about systems, processes and structures. But Pieter does that well. So, his visions can easily be connected to processes and systems.*

**–Leslie van Rooi, Senior Director Social Impact and Social Transformation (SU)**

Pieter is inspired by a profound love for South Africa, the potential for shifting culture through replacing power hierarchies by values, and by the highest ideals of our constitutional democracy. Since his student years at Stellenbosch University Pieter has been inspired by the vision of building a better South Africa. He is motivated by the questions *How can I love?* and *How can I be?* Rather than *What can I do?*

In his mind, values shift power hierarchies and conversation and provide the fuel for transformation and community. The potential of values-driven leadership to contribute to democratic renewal drives him.

**Understanding of power hierarchies.** His main passion and purpose is to unpack the traditional power hierarchies in the South African context, by educating students and staff to appreciate value-driven leadership as an alternative to traditional top-down authority. Devoted to building diverse and inclusive communities, he re-imagines the society he wishes to see by designing and continuously widening student communities and leadership. Every year when new student leaders are elected to house committees, he invites dialogue and collective re-imagining of what Stellenbosch could become, using the *Jaargesprek* visioning tool. Through asking powerful questions, he educates and mentors. He inspires thinking among the students and staff by asking powerful questions.



## The art of powerful questions

“I learned that too often our community asks the question “what are the things I should do?” instead of asking a very different fundamental question, “Who shall I be”. When you have a problem, the first question you should ask is, “Whom should I love?” “And once you understand that question, then you just go about loving that person and then solutions come more easily. If you think about love as a driving force, then conversations about how to live a moral life presents another question: So, do I enhance trust? Or do I detract from trust?”

**Pieter Kloppers (Director, Centre for Student Communities SU)**



**Pieter Kloppers**



**Dr Ludolph Botha**

*The South African society functions in a way where, within both formal management structures and informal social and non-positional structures, one party is subservient to the other. It takes conscious effort to come out of this programming. But to be on the receiving side of hierarchical power is clearly disadvantageous. This principle, however, is so ingrained that no alternative is being investigated. It is a subjective understanding of how an environment should "function" that plays itself out in decisions, traditions, in how problems are addressed, how challenges are discussed. It plays out in every environment where people come together or live together. In every environment, there is a striving for power and someone who suffers from it.*

—Pieter Kloppers, on how power operates in South African society

The CSC has been profoundly impacted by Pieter's vision, and the main goals that have shaped the CSC are:

- 1 fostering the social cohesion required for a robust South Africa;
- 2 building new social networks;
- 3 fostering student success; and
- 4 providing co-curricular learning at Stellenbosch University

The Centre's work is founded on three pillars: conversation, connection and community.

### Three pillars of the CSC

On Connection, Community and Conversation

#### Connection

*I'm intrigued by connection, and I'm intrigued by creating possibilities for connection in the world that normalises disconnect in a number of different layers or fragments of our identities. As a consequence, I think we share parts of our identities and we don't share the whole. This could be because of fears around disconnect, or connection. I believe that's why I'm invested in the facilitation work that I do. Because I think that the work creates an opportunity for people to find connection again in a world that says we are not connected.*

—Wayde Groep (former facilitator at the FVZS Institute)

*What is our purpose? We are the electricity, the circuit that connects. We as leaders build a pathway for the connection to be made. We are vital for achieving success, we are vital for purpose. How would you ask me, how do we connect? Part of being successful is learning from your experiences and using your knowledge in such a way that each connection is more meaningful.<sup>35</sup>*

—Tarina Nel (staff member, CSC)



<sup>35</sup>Part of Speech given at Validus Cluster Event, STIAS, September 13, 2017



## Conversation

*When you abandon a power hierarchy and want to effect change, the ability to order the change is no longer present. As such a new approach is called for – one of conversation rather than directives. Conversations, however, are far more complex, they involve people, evolve ideas and don't always produce conclusions. As an alternative way to implement change and “manage” people, conversations are both unpredictable and messy. Yet, they are also incredibly effective. When there is buy-in, they translate into action. At the same time, they reduce the blindness that occurs all too often in power hierarchies. In the very best sense, decisions are intrinsically co-created and consequently represent a more flexible and inclusive institutional culture.*

*– Mathew Smorenburg (staff member, CSC)*

## Community

*The idea of building community is central to the work of CSC. Communities are not only little groupings of people in rural villages, but rather the many formal and informal groupings in which we each navigate in our daily lives. They are the substrate of our society allowing people to connect and find belonging. Building healthy, inclusive communities requires intention and a conscious decision to contribute time, energy and other resources. The history of South Africa has imposed significant lasting divisions, based largely on race, on the formation of cohesive diverse communities. These entrenched divisions have hampered our ability to navigate within and between other communities. It is for this reason that understanding and being able to influence the substrate of the communities on campus, is essential to the overall transformation of SU. At CSC, it has been an explicit philosophy that, in shaping healthy communities, we engage in conversation to foster connection. This connection, in turn, enriches and transforms community.*

*–Mathew Smorenburg (staff member, CSC)*



Transformation takes place in many ways. Ideas and programmes are cultivated, both formally and informally, through partnerships and relationships such as those modelled by Pieter and Greg. Over time, these spread through institutional networks and become formal programmes, enmeshed in the institutional fabric. Eventually, the landmark nature of such changes becomes clear. The next section takes a wide-angle lens to briefly look at what the greatest landmarks of change have been in the CSC.

## 4. LANDMARKS OF CHANGE

The landmarks summarised below distil some of the key achievements of the CSC over the past twenty years. Due to space constraints, the discussion is but brief. In truth, each landmark deserves a booklet to tell the full story and to celebrate the many individual and collective achievements co-created by many committed staff members and students. All merit significant acknowledgement and celebration. The items with an \* represent those achievements where the primary involvement can be attributed to Greg Ricks. These will be discussed more fully in the next section.

DATES	LANDMARK	WHAT HAPPENED
1996–2002	Goldfields residence	Development of a value-driven management approach.
2006	Metanoia residence opens	First undergraduate co-ed res encouraging diversity
2007	Clusters introduced	Integrated PSO and residence students into networks benefiting both PSOs and day students, which generated a broader sense of inclusion into a wider social network. Notably, clusters have increased the capacity of women's residences to increase their engagement with diversity.
2007–current	ResEd	Start of the thrust of co-curriculum, critical thinking (led by Pieter), dialogue-based development; POPS camps; and training of Prims. Explicit focus on building inclusive communities; Challenging the dominance of legacy students; interactive, multicultural workshops.
2007–current	*Workshops	Under Greg's leadership, these provided practical training for transformation.
2009	First LLL houses open	Making social cohesion in South Africa. Students to sit and share, and invite people into the conversations. It became a niche environment where diversity and transformation was not only something in planning, but lay in the experiences of those who stayed in the LLL houses.  Today, 1500 people have passed through LLL and there are now 27 houses. This investment in building a modern village signalled that the university fully embraced LLL.  LLL also allowed a deliberate space for a group of diverse students to sit and share, and invite people into the conversations. It became a niche environment where diversity and transformation was not only something in planning, but laying who stayed there.
2012	Enabling Policies for Residential placements	For the CSC, residential placement policies helped to build the community we wanted to see, by changing the mindset about the meaning of diversity; moving from apartheid-style divisions into a new multi-faceted description.
2012–2014	*Awêness First Generation Camp	Changed the narrative of black, coloured and Indian students to include and support everyone in need of a little more institutional grounding.
2012 and beyond	Hubs	One of Greg's contributions was to be an effective institutional whisperer to harness support for Clusters and Hubs.
2013–current	*Facilitation skills training	Collaboration with the Transformation Office to initiate facilitation skills workshop, training student facilitators.
Growth in representation in 2016	Increased representation on HK	Reflected the growth of diversity in SU student communities without setting quotas.  The graphs on the pages to follow indicate growth from 2013, as figures in several residences were easily available for this, but this trend started earlier.
2015	Facilitation Skills Workshops	Greg collaborated with the Transformation Office to initiate facilitation skills workshop.

## Metanoia

“Metanoia will show us our future”



“Forward Ever, Backward Never” That was a slogan from the anti-apartheid movement. But for me it was so applicable to Metanoia. Because we had to stretch the limits. We had to go forward in this space that historically was problematic and we had to establish something new.

**Jerome Slammat**

**(First Res Head of Metanoia; Executive Management, Rectorate, SU)**



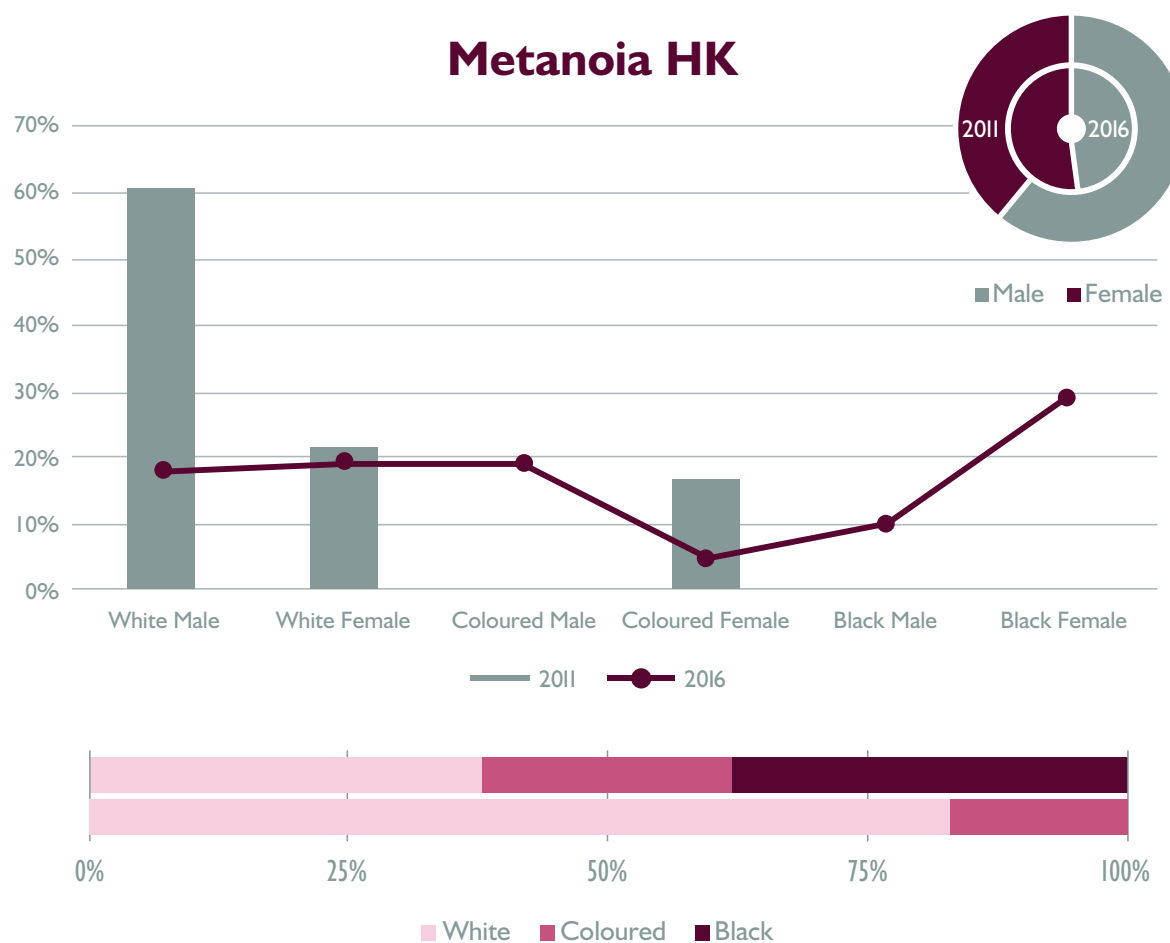
My vision for Metanoia, is that we will be the first residence at Stellenbosch University to deliver a president to South Africa and to the rest of Africa, to assist in rolling out democracies in other African countries. We've got some political systems that are not democratic, but we've got good people. I've seen it in Metanoia, where we have a big component of African students from across the continent. And they've got great potential. Someday, it's my dream, even if it's in a wheelchair, to be at the inauguration of a democratically elected president – in any country in Africa – and say: “But they've been in Metanoia”.

**Gareth Cornelissen (Res Head, Metanoia; Deputy Director, CSC)**

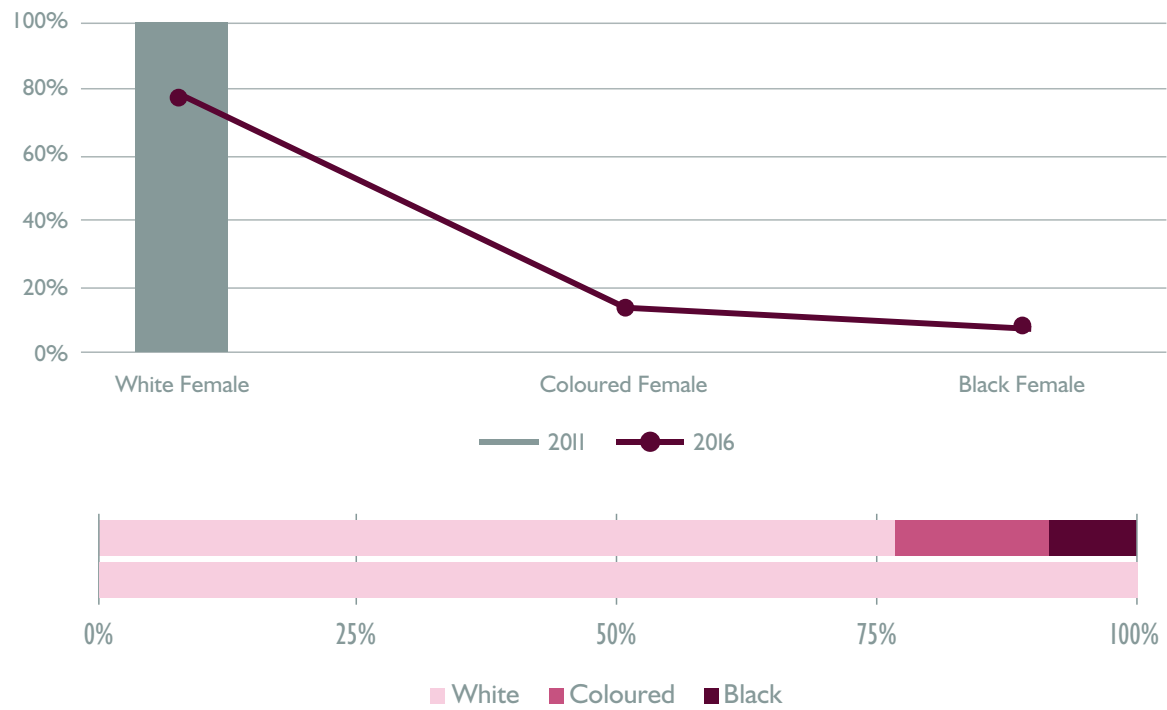
## 4.1.Changes in Representation – Race and Gender

- *From exclusion to greater inclusivity and diversity– the increasing numbers of representivity.*
- *Changes in HK composition; greater representation of Prims and Vice Prims:*

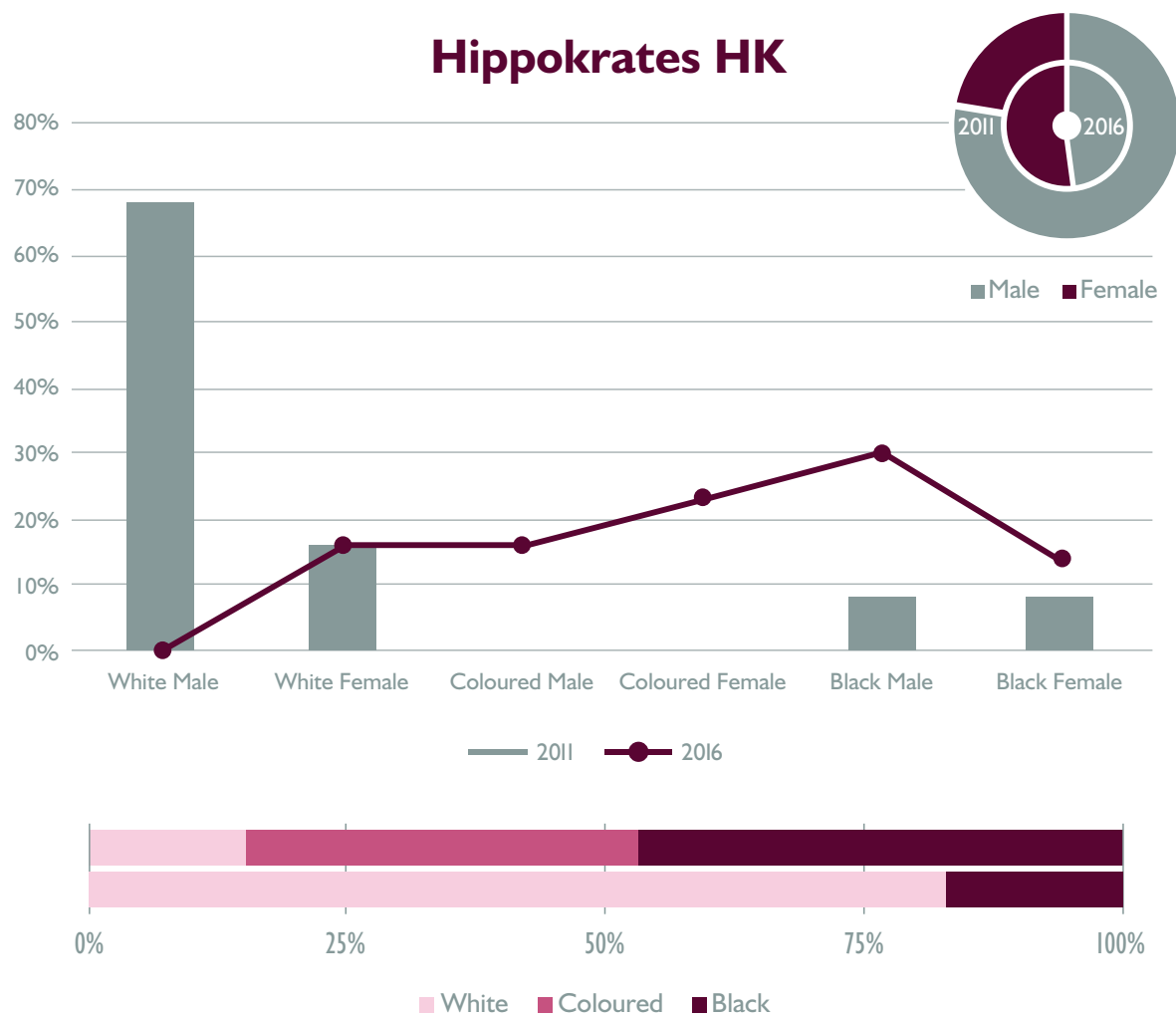
Numbers are not the sole indicator of transformation, but they reflect important changes in how admission policies have altered the demographics in residences. They also offer evidence that the CSC has been successful in shifting mindsets through residential placement practices. The significant increase in people of colour elected to HK positions indicates the impact and success of the first-year students attending the Awêness camp. The tables below illustrate the changing demographics in three residences, Metanoia, Nerina and Hippokrates. They compare 2011 to 2016, and indicate the percentage of people of colour in HK committee members. This is just a small sample out of the total number of 40 residences, and we do not have the space to elaborate here, but want to indicate a trend.



## Nerina HK



## Hippokrates HK



## 4.2. Educational and Cultural Shifts in Residences<sup>37</sup>

Like the kaleidoscope mentioned earlier, the graphs offer one view of how change is happening. In fact, there are a variety of cultural shifts which are happening that merit greater attention in subsequent documentation of the collective achievements of the CSC. Future publications of the CSC could explore these significant shifts in more detail.

We now explore how the work of Greg Ricks has translated into a legacy through the voices of students whose lives he has touched. Greg inspired all the students who share their stories in the next section. Some were also mentored by Pieter Kloppers.

<sup>37</sup>This section requires elaboration and further attention. In the appendix, a summary of qualitative changes is given. This is preliminary work

## 5. THE LEGACY : MANY VOICES, MANY PENS, MANY PARTNERSHIPS: STELLENBOSCH STUDENTS SPEAK

*We want to be the place where students and staff members become thought leaders of the future.*

**–Professor Russel Botman**

In many ways, the stories that follow represent the realisation of Russel Botman's wishes. The stories of students in this section demonstrate exactly the kind of place Botman wanted SU to be. Students became the change they wanted to be as a result of exposure to many influences within the eco-system of Stellenbosch – which is exactly what vibrant systems should be.

These students share their narrative on the freedom they have had to take up their own calling as leaders and agents of change. Their voices bear witness to how they have been empowered, in part through their partnerships with Greg. Their stories indicate the success of not only the CSC as a powerful community, hosting their growth during the past ten years, but also acknowledge the influence of other stakeholders in the journey of collective transformation. This section starts out with the Awêness Camp and then continues with the voices of some of Greg's mentees. Carlo McConney attended the camp as a first-year student, and Nadine was a Village Leader and curriculum developer for the camp. This section is followed by the reflections of a former Prim, Wilgenhof Jurie van de Vyver.

### 5.1. Awêness Camp: The First-Generation Success Camp

Greg Ricks was instrumental in creating the first Awêness camp<sup>38</sup>, which was an educational opportunity created to support first generation students. He had been involved with similar initiatives during his early career at Northeastern University. During that time 90% of students who attended first generation camps at Northeastern University graduated successfully. He did this with consummate creativity, integrating what he had learned from those years and adapting it to the context and needs of first generation students coming to SU. Greg has a naturally inclusive style in leading new initiatives and a gift for convening people. He not only brought together first generation thought leaders to conceptualise the content for the camp, but worked with them to organise the strategic framework; from recruitment of students, to curriculum development; from selecting inspirational speakers to the training of co-facilitators. In the first year alone 225 students attended the camp. Greg drew on first generation role models from all races, including Stellenbosch alumni such as Professor Eugene Cloete and Constitutional Court Judge Edwin Cameron. Part of Greg's philosophy is to introduce fun and confidence-building activities into his work. Talent shows became a hallmark of the camps and students were often gifted musicians, athletes, stand-up comics and dancers.

**Carlo McConney** gives the inside story of a young man who grew up in the Cape Flats and came to the First-Generation camp of 2012. He went on to complete a BCom and BCom Hons in Actuarial Science in 2016. During his student career, he took on several leadership roles.

His story speaks to the need for the camp and the meaningful impact it had on his life as a student. It also exemplifies several values that underscore the core work of the CSC: what it takes to include and build community for all students; and how appropriate curriculum, mentorship and support coalesce to make a difference in the life of a single student.

<sup>38</sup>Awê is a greeting used on the Cape Flats and was used as a double play on words, both to greet and to build awareness

*I'm from Bonteheuwel in the Cape Flats. I think coming to Stellenbosch University I was incredibly scared. I was the first generation in my immediate family to study. My grandparents didn't study, my aunts and uncles didn't study and most of my cousins just started with high school and they didn't finish. My mother wanted something more for me.*

*Growing up in my community, many kids my age were involved in gangsterism and drugs. My mother wanted me to break the cycle and encouraged me to study, especially since she didn't have the opportunities to do so. I remember when I was in Grade 7, I asked her to help me with my math homework. She wasn't able to as she was not mathematically literate. This memory frightened me before going to university. I was afraid of being around all these clever people, and not being able to cope. I think what the Aweness camp really provided, was a platform to neutralize that anxiety. That first day just calmed me down and allowed me to see there are other students, other kids who come from similar backgrounds to me. There was a feeling that we are all in this together sort of a thing. It was very comforting to know that there were other first-generation students, especially those coming from black, coloured or Indian communities. For many of us, there was a lot of concern attached to it. We had large expectations on our shoulders and didn't have buddies we could speak to. Coming to Stellenbosch University meant leaving our homes and support systems behind. The Aweness Camp helped us to be put at ease – it showed us that it's going to be okay. It showed us the support systems in place to help us succeed at university.*

*The stories Greg told at the camp were the stories I could take forward in my life and share with others. The main message I received was that "it doesn't matter where you come from or what opportunities you may have had or not have while growing up, you just got to make the best of it. With the right attitude, you will succeed in your field." Greg was a role model for me, as a man of colour who overcame difficulties in his life to become a Dean at Stanford. Representation is incredibly important in a developing mind and seeing this, helped me see that I could become something meaningful. Coming to Stellenbosch University, most of the lecturers are white and Afrikaans too. I didn't have academics of colour I could look up to at the University and Greg Ricks played an important role for me.*

*The Awêness camp helped me to build up a strong network so I could then also leverage my social capital. In that group of students there were students from many residences who I could lean towards for help. Activities such as Crossing the Line helped us realise how different we are, but also how similar the circumstances are that we come from. This helped me to reach out when I needed help. It helped me to learn about important factors affecting students – especially topics not generally spoken about, like funding and bursaries. After the camp, I had developed a network of students who I could speak to about getting money for books, for food and they could speak to me. We knew we were going through the same situations so we could support each other.*

*The camp also raised my level of confidence and belief in myself. At the camp, we heard many stories from students that were in leadership positions – mentors; house committee leaders and Prims. They showed us what was possible at university and this encouraged me to reach out to my mentors and house committee leaders when I was in residence. I think the camp encouraged me to be involved while at university. It's almost like you had these HK mentors that were doing all this good stuff. So, I challenged myself, why can't I do the same?*

*Also, what helped about the Awêness camp is you build up social capital and build a network of people. And in that group of students, there were students from Metanoia, from Nerina, from Helshoogte, from Simonsberg, from the different residences. And when we met each other during welcoming week, you go on these skakels, and there was always at least one person, at least one familiar face. I really think that helped me as a student. Because lots of the social anxiety was minimised because we had developed these friendships before welcoming week. So, leaving the Awareness camp and then arriving at Metanoia, made settling in much easier. It made the transition much easier than coming straight from home to Metanoia.*



*Stellenbosch University has changed over the years I have been here. In the Stellenbosch of today, I see more students of colour in classes than I did as a first-year. We're not walking to classes with our heads down or simply living in our residence rooms. We're owning our space. We are a part of the community. And I think I've developed this. Even in business, in spaces that have not traditionally been welcoming to me, I am able to collaborate with confidence and engage at a professional level as I have learnt how to while at Stellenbosch University. This has not only been reflected in my own life, but also in the life of others around me. My confidence has spread out onto my peers at the office and this has resulted in them making contributions that are more meaningful as well. All in all, I think, Stellenbosch University has been a really good place for me to develop over the past couple of years. The Awêness Camp helped me to feel like I belong here as it put so many of the stresses associated with coming to university at ease. And Greg was an invaluable role model. For that, I will be forever grateful. The Awareness camp really helped me to feel like I belong here. It put so much at ease, and felt as though this historically white Afrikaans university was a place where I could feel at home, and I think that's where I am at today.*



**Steve Biko Village Group at Awêness Camp**



**Carlo McConney**

Carlo went on to become a village leader at Awêness camp for the next two years. His story illustrates how multiple forces enabled him to grow into the person he has now become: the camp, the relationship with Greg, his relationships with peers, his leadership experience on the Metanoia HK, the personal growth and confidence which resulted from engagement in a variety of student communities, (and not mentioned in the published story, but emerging in the interview, was the mentorship he received from other staff: Mathew Smorenburg, Lana Davids and Wayde Groep). During his honours year, Carlo lectured Statistics and Theory of Interest to first-year students at Stellenbosch University. He also managed to attend a short course in Finance, Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Hohenheim University, Stuttgart Germany. He is currently a part of the international Swiss Re graduate programme and is busy completing his Master's degree in Actuarial Science.

Nadine Moodie studied at Stellenbosch University and graduated with a BA (International Studies) and BPhil (Journalism); she is now working at McKinsey & Company, Africa.

She partnered with Greg Ricks as a curriculum writer and Village Leader during the Awêness Camp. According to Nadine:

*The biggest impact of the Awêness Camp was that it transferred the crucial and skills needed at university, from senior students to incoming first-generation students. The curriculum included skills such as navigating the library and becoming acquainted with university structures. Students were introduced to their lecturers and the deans of their faculties. Fireside chats were held with interesting alumni and people at the university who were first generation and made a success of their time at the university. Each student had a mentor who checked in on them monthly to ensure that they were adapting to their new environment.*

*The results since that first camp were amazing:*

- ~70% of the students completed their degrees on time
- ~60% the students became student leaders, through democratic peer-election processes.

*The camp killed the myth that first generation students can't succeed at university. It proved that, in fact, they will, if they're given the right skills and tools which enable them to.*

We now move to the reflections of another student leader, Jurie Jean (JJ) van de Vyver.



## 5.2.A Silver Thread

Jurie Jean (JJ) van de Vyver, served as HK member (2010/2011) and Primarius (2011/2012) on the Wilgenhof House Committee. He currently works at Monitor Deloitte in Johannesburg, following accreditation as a chartered accountant in 2016. He was inspired by Greg Ricks and mentored by Pieter Kloppers and, through his imaginative reflections.

*The eating hall sat in silence as he spoke, the guest made welcome in this most esteemed of traditions: lunch. Around the rectangular room, filled from entrance to kitchen with tables of eight or ten, the myriad of faces focused upon the man with the microphone. Behind him to the left and right, on either side of the entrance, years and years of annual residence photos adorned the walls. Above him, overseeing the archways, paintings gazed down upon the eetsaal. Jan Rabie, Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, Beyers Naude – amongst others; all with a hint of a smile that celebrated the diversity of the individual inspiring the residents today: African American, English-speaking, former Dean of Stanford, from the West Coast of the United States. It was a sight that could not be in the time when the painted sat upon the chairs that now faced Greg Ricks in unison.*

*They say that university is the best four years of your life. Well – I'm here to tell you that this crazy belief is outdated. Why aren't we aiming to make the next four years the best of your life? And then the four years after that? And after that?*

*Greg's nuanced influence on a Stellenbosch student's life is coloured with moments such as the above: a moment that hangs suspended between established precedent and the inviting unknown; an encounter that chisels away at the routine to discover the novel; a serendipity that shapes the course of your life.*

*It was Greg who challenged us to invite Steve Jobs to a TED-esque speaking platform at the University, blowing the lid off the assumed limits of our reach. It was Greg who led the Cross the Line evening at our residence, extending the boundaries of the participants' empathy and forever changing our relationships with others. It was Greg who encouraged a group of ex-students to meet once a season to weather the storms of inertia in our working lives, leading to the establishment of a non-profit organisation, an online magazine and a podcast (to date).*

*He has this way of viewing both the world and the potential of young people to shape it that can make obstacles appear irrelevant. Obviously, this inspiration meets the hard reality of time and effort, but the spirit carries through. And now, looking back, it has always carried through – a silver thread woven into the tapestries that are out there right now, aspiring fearlessly within their communities towards that which they find meaningful.*

*This one is for you Greg, and to the next four years.*

### 5.3. Embodying Multicultural Skills

**Lana Davids** is the current co-ordinator of Stellenbosch University's Listen, Live and Learn programme, and was a LLL resident herself in 2013. She reflects on what she's learnt from the programme:

*I was in LLL in 2013. My house mates and I knew each other somewhat before moving in together– we were all cluster convenors. Personally, it was my first time living with people that were different to me. I've always had a diverse group of friends, but living with a group of such diverse people was completely different. One of my main take-aways from LLL that year was that I questioned my own beliefs. I started questioning myself regarding my thoughts and beliefs regarding marriage, sexuality, religion, my understanding of race relations, and more. 2013 was about understanding the nuances of various areas of social dynamics.*

*When I think about my experiences on a personal note, my work in LLL is also influenced by that year. LLL has taught me and continues to teach me the value of self- reflection and self-reflexivity. My year was filled with questions often related to my own prejudices and biases, my strongly held beliefs, and even about the possibilities of living with four very different individuals from very different walks of life. I learnt that we often make assumptions and complete the stories about others before they tell us. This robs us of the opportunities to learn and develop meaningful connections with people. Today I try to emulate an openness to listening to the stories others have to tell and to move on from tolerance to acceptance. My years of experience with LLL, both as a resident and now as a Co-ordinator, has made me a lot more empathetic. When I hear of any instance where there is a perpetrator and victim, or any social huge instance, increasingly my go-to place is never reactive. It is never rage, or making a knee-jerk judgement that something right or wrong. I try to think about everything, and how different people might experience the same situation. It is a lot of thinking, and it takes me time to process it. But because I understand that the work that I do in the context of the multicultural group of LLL students, it requires me to understand nuances of society and that there is no one size that fits everybody. I need to be able to meet people where they are at.*

### **Lana Davids: Co-ordinator Listen Live and Learn Initiative**

One of the key components and aspects of the LLL programme is the intentionality in its approach to fostering a sense of social cohesion and people understanding each other. The diversity within LLL is attributable to four key proxies. These are gender, field of study, race and nationality. While these are the four proxies identified, it is important to note that within the composition of houses people bring different stories and experiences and other identities to the programme as well. It also shifts the conversations about diversity away from only being associated with race. This is what differentiates the LLL Initiative.



**Lana Davids**

The intentionality also brings with it various challenges related to how people engage with differences.

LLL in many ways aims to foster engagement beyond the limitations and stereotypes associated with different identities. What this means in practice is that the uncomfortable conversations need to be had. These conversations can vary from issues related to sexuality and religion to political ideologies and student apathy. What comes of these conversations is often not necessarily a “conversion” from one idea or belief to the other, but a renewed appreciation in the plurality that exists within our understanding of the world that is very often influenced by experiences and engagements.



**Professor Arnold Schoonwinkel participating in drumming to celebrate LLL 10th year anniversary. Formal dance September 2017.**



We now move to Farai Mubaiwa, whose leadership journey started out as a HK member in 2014/15 in Sonop, and who lived in a LLL house while on the SRC. Her story ends with her appointment as a Queen's leader, and visiting the Queen at Buckingham palace in July 2017.



## 5.4. Farai Mubaiwa — From Sonop HK member to Queen's Leader

*I've definitely come a long way in terms of leadership and so has Sonop. Being able to serve on the HK, and the reason I decided to run for HK was because, just as much as I didn't want to initially, I got so much encouragement from people who said to me "Farai, you're really going to change a narrative of someone if you're going to run for HK. You're going to change the point of other women of colour to enter this space if you run for HK." And I did, and I wanted the first year's portfolio. Just because of my own interactions with Greg and the amount of training, and mentorship and workshops we had. I realised that the best way for me to really shape the space of the residence is to really influence a lot of how the new first years think, in terms of diversity, in terms of gender equality. So, the way in which I was able to bring about change in the res was that I completely changed the welcoming programme, I themed it to look at three things: women empowerment, sisterhood, and racial equality. And after the program we made sure those pillars were reinforced. So as the HK, we had a lot of workshops with the first years.*

After her term on Sonop's HK, Farai went on to become an SRC leader in 2015/16. She later started Africa Matters, an initiative which uses workshops and an online platform to reframe a different narrative about Africa. Her establishment of this initiative was one of the reasons she was awarded a Rector's Award for Leadership in 2016. She also received a Queen's Leaders award and joining 50 other Queen's Leaders from the Commonwealth, she got to meet Queen Elizabeth in person at Buckingham Palace. She was awarded an RMB scholarship and will be starting a Master's degree in the Political Economy of Emerging Markets in London in October 2017.

Reflecting on the changes she has seen at Stellenbosch, she says:

*I initially refused to let my sister go to Sonop, or even Stellenbosch. And despite all my concerns, I realised that by 2017, Stellenbosch had changed significantly. I saw that after a while my sister would be able to attend Sonop, she'll be able to attend Stellenbosch. Because I had done everything I could to change the space. And now she's started university this year. There's been the ongoing feminist committee since I left, and my sister is now the vice-chair of the feminist committee at Sonop.*

Another dynamic leadership figure, raised up at SU and mentored by Greg Ricks, is Wayde Groep.



## 5.5. Wayde Groep: Facilitative Leadership — Evolving a Skill for Deep Meaningful Change

Wayde started out as Vice Prim in Aurora in 2012/13, and went on to become a gifted facilitator working with residences and PSOs from his position at FVZS. He has recently left the Institute, where he worked in collaboration with Monica du Toit of the Transformation Office. Monica and Wayde built on some of the Facilitation Skills workshops that Greg initiated, and together they have crafted a new era of facilitation skills. During the past four years, they have spawned a network of hundreds of facilitators at SU.

Here Wayne reflects on how facilitation evolved from the first workshops into advanced facilitation courses. He demonstrates how his own evolution has been shaped by a number of experiences and connections with various stakeholders in the ecosystem:

*About four years ago, an idea was birthed to maximise the potential of Residence Education within the Stellenbosch University student community. Residence education at Stellenbosch had already picked up significant ground through the work and particularly the workshops introduced into the community by Greg Ricks. Of course, ResEd is more than that and there is an evolving understanding of what it looks like in practice at Stellenbosch. One key component of ResEd was that it was an intentional platform created for engagement on the many questions this institution grapples with. It is more than just two-hour workshops in student communities. ResEd manifests itself and ripples out through conversations, dinners, film studies and student leader conference sessions.*

*The Facilitation Skills course today has produced more than 300 participants. Our facilitation courses provide basic to intermediary skills to participants so that they are able to facilitate work related to inclusion, diversity and multiculturalism within their own communities in Stellenbosch and beyond. It also affords opportunities to reflect on the status quo, the need for the skills today, what those skills look like and more importantly understanding what positionality means within different conversations. Over the past four years the course has moved from solely equipping leaders with the structured workshop frameworks on race, power, conflict and even vulnerability, and now includes strong focus on understanding the dynamics of groups, nuances in unpacking themes and topics and diversity in mechanisms used to do transformation work. The order of business has changed. The dynamics of the conversations, who leads them and how they look have changed. The art of facilitation will also continue to change. What this art will look like, means asking different questions and engaging with new techniques and methodologies, a real understanding of the realities of the time, an acknowledgment of all the powers at play and how these need dismantling and most importantly equipping facilitators who are committed to real and deep meaningful change.*

## 5.6. Innovation: The Story of Olympus, a new PSO: Lloyd Blake

Lloyd Blake was inspired by Greg and mentored by Pieter Kloppers. He worked at the FVZS Institute as a staff member. Here he tells the story about how he started a new PSO – and his story illustrates how he grew to become a transformational catalyst shaped by a variety of mentors and ultimately driven by his own unique vision.



*The energy to start Olympus was driven out of frustration. My frustration was that university moved too slowly. I said to Pieter, let's just take the PSOs and liquidate some of them, dissolve them. Because they're not delivering and it's going to get worse. He said, "I've got a better idea. Why don't you prove that you can do it better on your own?"*

*My agreement was that I would do it, I would create a new mixed gender PSO. There's a lot of stigma in Stellenbosch about having a strong male or a strong female identity as a house or PSO. And my thing was, you can have a strong identity regardless of gender.*

*The first step for me was looking at some of the international models. Not just the models, but international successes. I reframed the ideal PSO and wanted to create even more community. I changed the idea of this being a platform of excellence where most residences would want you to be the best within their residence. But I said, Olympus should want to be the best, they shouldn't want you to be the best Olympian, but the best Matie. Be the best Matie, be the best citizen you can be, and do it through us.*

*Immediately there was interest from people who had no idea what Olympus was. They started coming in, and we started having conversations. So, the initial point was just to get enough people to organise it. We had older experienced student leaders apply: an ex-SRC member, former HK members.*

*Excitement oozed and more people just started applying. With a diversity of minds and lots of conversations, we took it to the next step of planning. The first step was creating values. We sat down and we spent an entire day just looking at values that we thought were key to us. We started to group them, narrowed them down and identified overarching identities. The first one was individuality within community. That idea was: humans by nature thrive better in communities.*

*Something that I think Stellenbosch University struggles with is that they've gone from a very historic system, and then tried to introduce new ways of doing things. They've introduced a value-driven system that sits alongside a rule-driven system. So, there is a double signal—please live your life by values, but if you do something wrong, we'll punish you with rules. And that's always a difficult one. If you're walking in, and you throw rubbish on the floor, you're going against your values.*

*Instead of correcting with values, we correct you with discipline which is the rule of law. So, that was something that I've always found very difficult when looking at values in such a strict environment. You don't get the mark right, we'll mark you down. But when you go home, it's not about how you get the mark right, it's about how you discuss the question. And for us, having a starting point of values and feeding everything else off of that, was a way to break away from all those pre-conceived ideas of what you do with your first years.*

*Pieter supported me throughout the process. In a sense that, we'd have weekly catch-ups which were outside any scope of work, just him and I would catch up. He would have talking points and we'd talk through. He would do the same thing, so he would mention something, and I'd get quite passionate about it and speak, and he'd say like well why don't you go and work on that? Go and run with it. If you need funds to pay for something an outing or something, or to get people involved, or if you need a space or whatever, if you need support, let me know and it's there.*

*By doing that, I broke away from all the stereotypes, and he fully supported me with it. Simply by students didn't want change coming from senior management. And he'd found someone who was a student leader, who was involved, who was passionate, and who had the scope and the ability to get things implemented. I was talking to Pieter, and I had this idea... And he knew how to empower people, completely.*

*We were founded in 2011 and received our first intake of first years in 2012. Our first year, on the first day we had something like 70 first-year students and we went from 70 to 90, to 120 to 150 to 190 and eventually we had to say, we can't take any more people. Stellenbosch University never tried to own Olympus. It should always be left to the students, because I suppose with enough insights in the beginning, and the correct values in place, it's just going to keep growing.*



## 6. MOUNTAINS STILL TO CLIMB

It was Greg's request that this book ends with an honest facing and naming of remaining challenges. While we celebrate his achievements and legacy and the accomplishments of the CSC it is essential that we are still aware of what needs to be done.

Towards the end of his book, *Long Walk to Freedom*,<sup>39</sup> Nelson Mandela wrote “after climbing a great hill one only finds that there are more hills to climb.” Stellenbosch University is literally surrounded and blessed by many beautiful mountains – some flatter than others, while many are precipitous and rocky. If we think of transformation as a long climb up a steep mountain, how far have we come? While all the people interviewed acknowledge that many steps have been taken it is clear that collectively speaking we have a long way to go. Words such as transformation and even inclusivity are contested words. For some they evoke resistance; for some, it is an umbrella for political correctness, for others such words have not been sufficiently reflected in the essential conversation which needs to happen, and the collective ownership that they require. Decolonisation is seen by some as an important aspect of transformation that merits ongoing attention. Depending on what mountain you are climbing each person will have different perspectives of the journey ahead and a different view of what other hills and mountains you see. Here is an attempt to present the views emerging from interviews held about the challenges of the future. The themes mentioned below are not exhaustive. They offer a sense of selected views drawn from staff members at Stellenbosch University.

*One challenge is that too many people do not take transformation seriously enough. They see it as something that is about breaking down rather than an opportunity to build something new. It should be everybody's responsibility to be involved in transformation.*

**– Folkers Williams**

*To witness transformation is about how we make each other feel. I cannot be part of transformation if transformation is not happening within us. If I have an understanding of difference, the more grace I have in my heart... Changing a culture must come from the people not from just policies. We can do this by encouraging more difficult conversations... Deep ingrained thinking still resides in the dominant culture. While most black students have learned how to conduct themselves in a multicultural space, too often we don't see why it is necessary to understand the black culture.*

**–Christine Groenewald**

*For many one of the largest barriers to resistance lies with the resistance that parents inculcate in their children... The Institutional culture is changing, but unfortunately not fast enough. Too many people still feel unwelcome.*

**–Leslie van Rooi**

*In Stellenbosch, we have not yet dealt adequately with the gender issues. And structurally, we suffer because of that. We're a little bit better.*

**–Pieter Kloppeers, Director, Centre for Student Communities**

*Unfortunately, the physical structure at Hippokrates residence does not support the social architecture we need to support transformation.*

**–Dr Johan Groenewald**

*We need to move from tolerance to relationship.*

**– Greg Ricks**

<sup>39</sup>Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom (1995, Back Bay Books)

Several residence heads have given voice to the idea that more nuanced forms of dialogue need to be embraced. Some mentioned that part of the challenge for inclusivity will involve dialogue within racial groups – that work needs to be done separately – within black groups to clarify what work still needs to be done and at the same time, white people need the space to talk about what learning they need to undertake during this part of the journey towards transformation. Others mentioned that dialogue between coloured and black people is increasingly needed; and dialogue between different ethnic groups for example, Venda and Xhosa is required.

And from that sober note, we turn again towards celebration. The following tributes are offered by students and staff whose lives have been touched by Greg.



*"My best wishes accompany Greg Ricks as he steps into the next years of his career. When looking back at his 11-year journey at Stellenbosch University may he be filled by the joy that we have greatness in our leaders"*

**Sherril February, Residence Head, Heemstede**

## 7. TRIBUTES TO GREG RICKS

### 7.1. A Tribute by Farai Mubaiwa

Gregory Ricks is a leader, an inspiration, a mentor and a father figure in my life. My first encounter with Greg was at the Awêness camp 2014 where we did Cross the Line activity as a group. In those moments of vulnerability, I realized for the first time that I was not the only one who was struggling with the difficult Stellenbosch environment. This was a major breakthrough for me and so many others who were on the brink of giving up. From that moment on I listened very carefully to the teachings of Greg, which strengthened my determination to create tangible change on campus so that buzzwords like “diversity” and “inclusivity” are brought into effect. At many times throughout my university career Greg believed in me more than I believed in myself. From applying to Abe Bailey, to deciding whether or not I should run for SRC, and even when applying for Master's programmes abroad, Greg was a constant light and source of support.

Aside from the greatness that Greg helped me uncover, he has also played a significant role in the more human and personal aspects of my life. Greg has been a father figure during difficult times in my life, giving me the guidance I needed. He has also been a beacon of support to my mother and sister.

In the three and a half years that I have known Greg he has become a colleague and a close friend. I am incredibly privileged to have Greg in my life and to be a part of his life. It is rare in this world to meet someone who dedicates their lives to uplifting and elevating others. May Greg be celebrated for his commitment to tangible change.

### 7.2. A Tribute by Lloyd Blake

**Lloyd started the Olympus PSO and helped to reshape SU Leads. He graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce with Honours in Management Accounting in 2011 and is now working at Rand Merchant Bank as a Cost Accountant.**

Greg's gift was that he could ask the questions that other people couldn't. He was a leader without a title. He used crass language, “I don't give a shit. Let's talk about this.” People were sitting there saying “you can't say shit, then he'd say, well I can. I'm from America, and I'm going to do this now.” It was just about getting people to listen. By doing this, he could then throw in other words. He'd get your mind going, either through frustration or excitement and you'd be listening so carefully to hear exactly what you don't want to hear about. Or you'd be sitting there eventually thinking it's about time Stellenbosch spoke about this topic. Whether it was through his own insight, or hosting the right conversations with students on campus, or with the right individuals at Stellenbosch. He really found topics that were globally relevant, and that needed to be discussed around campus. His willingness to have those conversations was a strength that excited a lot of people and encouraged those people to have those conversations as well. If Greg can do it, and the University has got him here, then I can do it. There can't be repercussions for me, if there can't be repercussions for Greg. It gave students a bit more confidence to feel like they could also have Greg conversations.

Just by using the right workshops and tools, Greg would get people to speak. One of them was about stereotypes, where you write down 20 stereotypes and you walked around and stick one on everyone's forehead. This workshop really broke through a lot of stereotypes. Greg always wanted to change the conversation, and change their identities. Through a process of self-discovery, he allowed people to learn, grow and understand. Greg's skills I found were boundless. He always had a workshop to address an issue. And if he didn't, he'd amend it or change it. It wasn't always about having the right resources, he could always make it work. He could always get the right conversations to take place with people.

### 7.3. A Tribute by Elzet Kirsten Blaauw

**Elzet graduated from SU in 2012 with an MPhil in Translation Studies. She worked with Greg Ricks for two years and is now living in Cape Town where she works as Operations Manager of a boutique management consulting company.**

Greg Ricks is a valued mentor, a special friend and the best co-worker I have ever had.

I met Greg early in his career at Stellenbosch University in 2007 when I was a first-year student. We started working together in 2011 when I was jointly appointed by the Centre for Student Communities and the FVZS Leadership Institute as Mentor Co-ordinator and Multicultural Facilitator. It was during this time that we became fast friends and co-workers, or as we like to refer to it, “partners in crime”.

A major reason why Greg and I work together so well is because he practises and models his belief in multiculturalism through his way of working. Greg taught me to leverage the differences between us in such a way that our relationship was strengthened rather than marred by it. Our differences also became a powerful tool to further the cause of multiculturalism at Stellenbosch University as we modelled the “unity in diversity” that we taught through our partnership.

True multiculturalism is often hampered by its own proponents, who discriminate against those who believe or do differently than themselves. Greg is one of the very few who does not make this mistake.

Because Greg accepts every person for who he or she is, he is able to appreciate their strengths and to coach them to bring their best to a team setting. Greg is a team player. More than that, he is a creator, coach and leader of teams that win at what they set out to do. Through watching Greg, I learnt how powerful it is to pull together a diverse team by communicating a compelling vision and enabling that team to win through building strong, personal relationships and never losing sight of its purpose.

## 7.4. A Tribute by Faith Pienaar

**Faith Pienaar studied a BSc Agric (Viticulture and Oenology) and then a post-graduate diploma in Marketing. Faith worked as a Project Co-ordinator at the Transformation Office at Stellenbosch University from November 2015 to February 2017. She is currently participating in a social impact fellowship aimed at addressing the most pressing social issues in the ASEAN region.**

“I met Greg through Elzet Kirsten sometime in 2012. At the time, Elzet was very involved in student leadership development. We became friends because of our shared love for music and from our participation in the Goldfields Ser<sup>40</sup>. She knew that by introducing Greg to me he would play a supportive role during my time at Stellenbosch. At the time I was lost, felt ostracized and really struggled to find my place at university. This I suspect Elzet knew well, even though at the that time I did not quite have the words to articulate what an overwhelmingly white Stellenbosch felt like for a young black woman. It is no secret that Stellenbosch is one of the many communities in South Africa that continues to grapple with everyday racism and is also trying to make sense of our nation's inherited legacy.

I met Greg sometime between my lectures, one morning at the Blue Room (a restaurant at the time, now housing Farga<sup>41</sup>) on the top floor of the Neelsie Student Centre. Greg used the space to facilitate meetings with students and it became quite popular for students to schedule lunch time meetings with him. I was quite taken back by the presence and attention that he demanded. For me he illustrates why representation is so important in spaces like universities. In him I saw what I could be and how I could use my voice to do transformative work. It was in this initial meeting that I shared with Greg, the kind of person I wanted to be and my dreams for a different, better Stellenbosch. And since that day, he journeyed with me, helping me to re-imagine a different Stellenbosch. He is trusted friend, a mentor and a colleague.

I think Greg understands two things quite well in life. He understands what a university is and what it can be when it functions at its best. And he really understands the story of the marginalised student. Being someone who found himself at the margins of institutions himself, he resonates deeply with the stories and lives we don't hear about too often. He was for me, someone who helped to bring some of the narratives that remain at the outskirts of Stellenbosch University to the centre. These are the first-generation students, black students, queer students, financially destitute, very poor students. He then amplified them with his voice, using innovative workshop tools to encourage deep reflection and understanding. What I have appreciated the most, is that he has validated my story as a young, black woman navigating higher education, which can be particularly hard. And he's been a soft place to fall when times at the Institution did get tough especially when the sector engaged with students advocating for accessible higher education in ways that were unimaginable.

Throughout my time at Stellenbosch, he has always treated me as a professional. In the work that I've done with him, facilitating conversations with student leaders, he's given me the platform to find my own voice, encouraging me to create open and resilient learning spaces in higher education.

<sup>40</sup>SER is a singing competition for choirs held at Stellenbosch and other universities

<sup>41</sup>A computer user centre

## 7.5. A Tribute by Renee Hector-Kannemeyer

From my personal observations Greg plays a unique role within the Stellenbosch context because he truly understands the complexity of an historically oppressive environment. He understands the reasons that SU is not easy to navigate as a person of colour. Greg has the ability to engage with theories of difference from his lengthy experience in transformation on both an international and national level. He is the safe space to fall for staff and students of colour who need to be able to have an authentic conversation about challenges particularly related to race, gender, disability and language. His understanding of various levels of power dynamics, rooted in his own experience and years of consultation on multiculturalism within various South African and international universities, is a huge gift to us as a University.



## 7.6. Reflections from Johan Groenewald (Residence Head, Hippokrates Tygerberg<sup>42</sup>), and Christine Groenewald (Visiting Head, Ubuntu House Tygerberg)

We all have our reasons for the awe we have for Greg. His warm, embracing, genius, caring smile is infectious. Seeing him engaged in serious courageous and transformative conversations, and the sincerity in listening to understand, is what we genuinely admire about Greg. Most of all, he is inspired by the wonderful stories of students and staff and avails himself to listen to those stories in the late hours of weekday nights and weekends. Always ready for a coffee or quick phone call, just to touch base, and build on relationships.

Greg has been a tremendous friend and mentor. A friend that genuinely cares! Cares about your life, your career and the impact and potential he sees in people, whether students or staff. A friend that really cares about Stellenbosch University and our country and who believes that each one of us has the power to catalyze change for the good in our spheres of influence.

Stellenbosch University is turning a hundred years old next year. Greg has had a tremendous impact the past ten of those hundred years, something that only comes to light if you look back to where we came from. We truly believe that he has been the right person to build bridges in this time of transition, because he is the “outsider” with no agenda, but to create a transformed, inclusive, innovative and inspiring world-class university. He shows no bias towards any group of people, but rather offers a celebration of our personal differences and finds a way to create wonderful learning opportunities for the individual, not only our students, but also our staff members. He inspires everybody to be confident players on the world stage.

Greg's strategic understanding of the strength of every student and staff he engages with, is something to be really admired. We often had long strategic conversations about various challenges and opportunities that face us in the Tyger-Maties Cluster. His wisdom has always been there at the right time.

## 7.7. A thank-you to Greg from Tonia Overmeyer (Director: Student Leadership Structures and Dean of Students SU)

Over your stay last year and this year, I have benefited from your mentoring and guidance. You are so generous in sharing the benefit of your experience internationally and here at Stellenbosch. Your perspective as someone close to the Institution, but yet on the outside makes you a great confidant. I value the role you play in supporting the student leaders, too and the helpful role you have played as a trusted mediator in difficult processes. I have been able to apply the understanding and insight you have offered me and this has helped accelerate my learning.

<sup>42</sup>Also, ResED Coordinator for Tygerberg Campus

## 8. AFTERWORD

### 8.1. Greg Ricks

The phrase "young people are the leaders of tomorrow" has always been troubling. In my 46 years as a Dean, I have worked closely with many students who violated that understanding. They have led on hundreds of initiatives that improved universities. I have found this to be true especially here at Stellenbosch. I don't believe students should be managed, rather they should be coached, inspired, motivated, scholars both on the academic side and on the co-curricular side. The work of student leaders in the many initiatives I had the opportunity to work on was often led by students. Facilitative Leadership Workshops, the First-Generation Success camp, HKs, Mentors, Discourse Cafes, SU Leads, Open Stellenbosch and #FeesMustFallCampaigns. To the many staff and faculty that made significant contributions to transformation, I salute you and thank you for your support. My ten years at Stellenbosch have been the most vital and rewarding of my career. The partnership with Pieter Kloppers has been, and will continue to be, a highlight of my work. I believe we have a strong beginning on the long road to transformation. For Stellenbosch to truly become a world-class university it must stay on this path and become even more aggressive and committed to making the tough decisions. Tolerance must be only the baseline while relationships must be the goal!

Thank you, Stellenbosch, for making this African American whole.

### 8.2. Pieter Kloppers

#### *Reflecting on the work Greg Ricks has done at Stellenbosch University*

I met Greg as the expert he is in multicultural education and that is how his contribution to Stellenbosch University started. Whilst multicultural education was his entry point his influence to whisper institutional understanding and change into existence is his real legacy. Greg turned out to be a multicultural educator of a special kind.

When we first met he clearly understood what contribution he could make to Stellenbosch University in transition. Stellenbosch University at the time hoped for such an influence, but could not imagine what it would look like. So, his journey started in a very non-traditional way. We agreed that he would be contracted for three days to engage with students on multicultural education and that his contract will be extended as long as students demanded his services in that semester. It was only the start of the exams five weeks later that made the requests for his education slow down.

He gave us an understanding of what multicultural education could look like when you educate the mind and the heart. He also started to impact students and the Institution in many ways. He influenced students to believe that they themselves, their community and the community at large can be better off if they take their role in social justice seriously. He inspired students to live up to being a world-class university.

Greg has a special gift that makes every student and staff member believe that they have an equally important role to play in being truly multicultural and thus gets around the most difficult pitfall of this kind of work – the ease with which multicultural education results in a conversation of winners and losers or the idea that some group is not important in the work and should wait on the side lines for others to do the work. The student communities of Stellenbosch would have been a lot worse off and spaces of much less trust without someone with Greg's presence, charisma and experience to embody this kind of multicultural education.



Whilst multicultural education brought him to Stellenbosch University it is his ability to empathise with the people in the room and connect them to many other parts of the world that allows them to grow. He uses that same ability to sense resistance to the many institutional changes that happened in student communities over the past 13 years and to change perspectives and dissolves resistance. When you want to change the hearts and minds of students a voice like that of Greg is indispensable. He could have conversations that none of the staff could have with students. Firstly, because he has those conversations till after midnight, secondly because he built the trust at the multicultural workshops and thirdly because he can also claim to be an outsider voice. There are many institutional strategies that would not have been accepted if it was not for his whisperings to both students and staff.

What I really appreciate about Greg is the friendship, partnership and trust that we share. He also uses trust as one of the most important parts of his work. He translates the need of the institution at a moment in time into an action. At a time when the student communities grew resistant to the *Jaargesprekke* he made sure that there is a panel discussion about *Jaargesprekke* with all the Prims and Vice-Prims present. After the panel discussion, the *Jaargesprekke* was suddenly fully embraced. That embracing still lasts.

I am asked from time to time how will Stellenbosch replace Greg when he is not here anymore. This is not a helpful question once you get a glimpse of his contribution. We might be able to put someone else in the role of facilitating multicultural workshops, however, Greg has done more. We cannot think about Greg with a question of replacement. Our response in time to come will not be questions, it will be gratitude and longing. Something like: Stellenbosch University and her students are truly blessed because of Greg's influence and we wish he was still here.



## APPENDIX

### Educational and Cultural shifts in Residences:

Like the kaleidoscope mentioned earlier, many cultural shifts may initially happen in isolation – but then diffuse organically into the larger institutional environment. Resistance and shifts are part of the same kaleidoscope. This gives a broad-brush outline in some of the changes that have occurred. This section summarises both the impact and change in ethos of Centre's work at an institutional level: connection, collaboration, community and change. Future publications of the CSC could explore these significant shifts in more detail.

- Co-curricular focus and increasing co-curricular spaces
- Leadership; Learning and Mentoring
- Reduction in initiation practices – parties, drinking culture – to greater critical engagement and focus on leadership
- Increasing attention given to feminist issues; sexuality; gender-equality; awareness of rape culture
- Decolonisation – happening in conversations – sexuality, women's empowerment
- Transformative commitment of new architects and visionaries of change – students become champions of a changing culture
- Increasing space for leadership voices: people of colour and conservatives
- Change of language policy in residences
- Increasing network of facilitators available to residence heads, emerging from workshops and training courses.

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## BARBARA NUSSBAUM: BIO

Barbara was born in Zimbabwe and has lived for many years both in the USA and South Africa. She has been based in Stellenbosch since 2014 and began working as an independent consultant to the Centre for Student Communities. She feels privileged to be offering her **Finding Us in Music** workshops rather the Listen Live and Learn Initiative and to members of various HKs both on main campus and at Tygerberg.

She received a BA from UCT and was awarded a Beit Scholarship to study social policy at the London School of Economics receiving an MSc Econ degree in 1978. After emigrating to the USA, Barbara graduated with a Master's in Creative Arts Therapies from Drexel University, Philadelphia. Under the auspices of Wits Business School, she co-authored with Dr. Ronnie Lessem *Sawubona Africa: Embracing Four Worlds in South African Management* (Zebra Press 1996) and was the lead author in *Personal Growth African Style* (Penguin 2010). Her core writing interests during the past 20 years have included; Ubuntu; conscious leadership; African management and leadership; new paradigm thinking in business; organisations of the 21st century and the role of music in group engagement. She has authored more than 40 articles and is a member of PEN South Africa. She was invited to start the first Ashoka Innovators for the Public in Africa and for many years has partnered with innovators in her consulting work and in her writing. She has pioneered a creative methodology which uses music as a pathway to understand self and other. Her most recent writing *Finding Us in Music: A Method for Deeper Group Engagement* will be published in a chapter in the *Handbook on Personal and Organizational Development* J Neale (ed) (Springer International Publishing, forthcoming November 2017).



