

ANNUAL REPORT 2002

THE INSTITUTIONAL FORUM

Composition

The Institutional Forum (IF) has twenty-eight members, seven from each of the following groupings: the governance sector, the staff sector, the student sector and the community sector. This representation is made up as follows:

Governance sector: Two members of Council elected by Council; three members of Senate elected by Senate; one member of management appointed by management; and the Registrar or a person appointed by the Registrar.

Staff sector: Two members elected from their own ranks by the permanent non-professional academic staff; one person appointed from their own ranks by the academic support services; two members elected from their own ranks by recognized trade unions; and two members elected from their own ranks by administrative support services.

Student sector: Two members of the Students' Representative Council elected by the Students' Representative Council; two members of the Committee of Head Students appointed by the Committee of Head Students; one member appointed from their own ranks by the student societies; and two members of the Academic Affairs Council appointed by the Academic Affairs Council.

Community Sector: Two members of Convocation appointed by the President of Convocation; and five persons appointed from their own ranks by the representative bodies of civil society.

Report of the Institutional Forum

In 2002, the Institutional Forum of the University continued to build on the work of the previous roughly two years. Relations with the Rectorate were broadened and strengthened thanks to the regular meetings that were held between the Executive Committee members and the Rectorate. Here, issues as to the rewriting of policy documents, the drafting of new policy, channels of communication, plans and intentions were discussed.

The executive committees of the Council and the IF also met informally. The fruits of this meeting include better communication and two-way feedback on matters of interest.

The IF's functioning, and the role it plays in the University, are to a large degree laid down by the Higher Education Act. Over the past three years, and last year in particular, the IF has demonstrated that a forum of this kind, in which divergent views are given voice, makes valuable contributions in the formation of policy and culture.

The IF advised the Council on a number of matters in the course of the year.

The first case, as contained in Report 1/2002A, was on amendments to the rules for the appointment of the Rector and Vice-Rectors, on the appointment of senior management members and on the definition of senior management. The dual focus of the IF's advice in all three these instances was the extent to which the University community

participated in such appointments and the range of post levels at which such appointments ought to be made in the public eye. The advice on the senior appointments was in large part accepted, and the accepted recommendations were carried into effect in the process that led to the appointment of Profs Botman and Claassen as the Vice-Rectors for teaching and research, respectively.

The second case, as contained in Report 3/2002MA, dealt with assistance to needy students and with amendments to the University's policy on religious worship. The IF recommended that more mechanisms should be looked into for giving needy students assistance that would enable them to carry on with their studies. In the matter of religious worship, the IF eventual recommendation was that the religious policy should be looked at both in terms of the SA Constitution Act and in relation to the reality of the presence on our campuses of diverse religious convictions.

But the most conspicuous matters of the year were the language policy and the language plan. The IF sent delegates to Prof de Stadler's task group and in the end, in Report 6/2002MA, recommended the adoption of the proposed policy, with the proviso that the idea of the development of isiXhosa as a language of science and an academic medium needed perhaps to be reconsidered, especially in view of the cost of such development. What the IF recommended, instead, was that isiXhosa should be promoted at the University as a practical medium.

Overall, the IF actively involves itself in discussions on all issues affecting the University. It reiterates, too, its standing invitation: where any matter relates to policy, culture or planning at the University, anyone is welcome to bring such matter to the notice of the IF for investigation, debate and discussion.

Leonie Overbeek
Chairperson