

ANNUAL REPORT 2003

REPORT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL FORUM

The Institutional Forum (IF) is an advisory body that is constituted in terms of the Higher Education Act (Section 31(1) of Act 101 of 1997) and advises the University Council on policy matters, including the execution of the provisions of the above-mentioned act and national policy on higher education.

The activities of the IF are channelled primarily through its three task groups – the task groups on Diversity and Equity, Institutional Planning and Institutional Culture. When necessary, the task groups are supplemented by ad hoc groups. The mandate of the task groups is to thoroughly investigate matters that are referred to them. They then report back to the IF and advise it, so that well-considered advice can be given to Council.

Composition

The Institutional Forum consists of twenty-eight members, seven from each of the four sectors, which are comprised 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-professorial academic staff, one member appointed from their own ranks by the academic support services, two members elected from their own ranks by recognised trade unions, and two members elected from their own ranks by the administrative support services.

Student sector: Two members of the Students' Representative Council elected by the Students' Representative Council, two members of the Prim Committee appointed by the Prim Committee, 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 the Convocation appointed by the President of the Convocation, and five people appointed from their own ranks by the representative bodies of civil society.

Report of the Institutional Forum on its activities in 2003

General

The IF systematised its activities in 2003 by informing all interested parties in advance of specific due dates for documents and issues that had to be discussed. To a certain extent, this arrangement was also the final rounding off of the IF in the process of thoroughly establishing it as the advisory forum of the University Council.

The firm links that were forged with the different environments within the University during the past few years have started to bear fruit. The procedure and advisory processes of the IF were systematically refined so that the forum can now reap the maximum benefits of these inputs.

The IF advised the University Council on a number of matters in the year under review:

Stellenbosch University's Institutional Plan for the planning phase 2004 – 2006

The IF was impressed by the thorough and complete document that was compiled by a task team under the leadership of Prof Groenewald.

Conceptualisation of a diversity plan

Although this is not yet a final policy document, the IF was requested to discuss it. In addition to objections that were raised about the title, a number of (primarily editorial) changes were also suggested. The diversity plan is still receiving further decentralised attention in faculties and divisions and the IF supports the general line of thought.

Future vision

The general impression was that certain aspects of this document were vague. Nevertheless, just as in the case of the diversity plan, the IF supports the general principles contained in the document.

Rules for the appointment of deans

According to a decision by Council, the rules regarding the appointment of deans had to be reviewed. This amended regulation was discussed in detail and recommendations were made.

Amendments to the Institutional Statute

The proposed amendments to the *Statute of the University of Stellenbosch* were discussed. A few further amendments were proposed, some of which were accepted by Council. The primary purpose of the amendments to the Statute was to fill the gaps that would arise from the Private Act on the University of Stellenbosch (Act 107 of 1992) being abolished.

Language policy

Comment was made on two associated documents, viz. (i) *Summary: Language policy and plan*; and (ii) *Code of Conduct for Language in the Classroom*. A few clarifications were requested, but both documents are supported by the IF.

In conclusion

In general, the IF strongly recommends that the body should not be viewed as a rubber stamp, but rather as a forum where issues can be discussed in detail. To be able to achieve this purpose, it is necessary that matters are referred to the IF in time so that its internal functioning, based on time scales that were compiled in advance, can be maintained.

The IF generally takes active part in discussions on all issues affecting the University and its invitation remains that anyone is welcome to bring matters dealing with policy, culture or planning to its attention for discussion.

The IF is satisfied that it made a meaningful contribution to the working procedures of the University in 2003, especially when measured against the positive reaction from Council to many aspects of the advice given to Council.

Leonie Overbeek

Le Roux Burrows

Chairperson until September 2003

Chairperson since October 2003