

ANNUAL REPORT 2004

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 directed primarily through its three task groups – the task groups on Diversity and Equity, on Institutional Planning and on Institutional Culture. The task groups are complemented by *ad hoc* groups when necessary. The mandate of the task groups is to investigate as incisively as possible those matters assigned 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 28 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 Committee of Head Students appointed by the Committee of Head Students, one member appointed 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.

Activities

General

During 2004, the IF built on the process of systematising its method of operation. Certain stumbling blocks remain, particularly in the liaison with the University Management, but these will be sorted out in 2005. The expectation is that this process will be finalised during 2005, and that the position of the IF as a forum advising the University Council will be properly established.

In the year under review, the IF advised the University Council on several aspects by providing it with formal reports.

SU policy on people with disabilities

The IF was pleased to be able to contribute to such an important document. Several amendments were suggested and noted by Council, with the necessary adjustments to the policy being included in the final version.

Policy on placement in residences

Although, for various administrative reasons, no comment was made on the policy for placement in residences itself during 2004, the IF did, in fact, inform Council of its concerns about several aspects of the policy.

SU policy on community interaction

The general impression of this document was that sections of it were vague. The IF engaged Council in dialogue on those points of advice supplied by the IF that were not accepted by Council, the chief aspect of which was the IF's proposal that the broad spectrum of community interaction be categorised into at least two hierarchical levels.

Reappointment of the Vice-Rector (Operations)

In terms of the regulations governing the appointment of a vice-chancellor and vice-rectors, the IF was required to voice its opinion on procedural aspects and the capacity for reappointment of the incumbent Vice-Rector (Operations). This request was fulfilled.

SU policy on the exploitation of intellectual property

The proposed policy was discussed in depth, and was accepted as being well reasoned and well composed. However, concern was expressed at the fact that the policy had been openly

discussed in all the faculties. Several amendments were proposed, some of which were accepted by Council.

In conclusion

In 2004, the IF built on the notion that it should not be employed for obtaining speedy approval, shorn of all criticism, but that it should rather be regarded as a forum where issues are discussed thoroughly. In order to achieve this goal, it is essential that issues be referred to the IF timeously, thereby ensuring that internal mechanisms, based on previously compiled schedules, can be maintained. These issues, as well as others, are then discussed with the University Management prior to every IF meeting. Once a year, the IF engages the executive committee of the University Council in direct dialogue on administrative and other issues.

In general, the IF participates actively in discussions on all issues affecting Stellenbosch University, and maintains an open invitation to anyone to bring any matter concerning policy, culture or planning at the University to its attention for discussion.

The IF is satisfied that it made a meaningful contribution to the activities of the University during 2004, judging in particular by the Council's positive reaction to several aspects of the advice given to Council.

Mr Le Roux Burrows

Chairperson