

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

THE INSTITUTIONAL FORUM

The Institutional Forum (IF) is an advisory body that, in terms of the Higher Education Act (Section 31(1) of Act 101 of 1997), 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 group 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 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 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

The activities of the IF over the past few years can be divided into two parts. On the one hand there are the normal duties of advising the University Council and commenting on Management's implementation of the Higher Education Act, Act 101 of 1997. On the other hand, the IF has been involved on a continuous basis over a number of years in discussions on what its role should be. These discussions are concerned in particular with whether the IF should remain strictly within its legally prescribed duties and responsibilities, or whether there should be more focused involvement in specific issues, such as community interaction. This second aspect will remain on the agenda until a satisfactory answer has been found.

In 2007, the IF advised the University Council in the form of formal reports on the following aspects:

Appointment of the Vice-Rector (Teaching) and the Vice-Rector (Research)

In accordance with the University's Rules of Procedure regarding the Appointment of a Rector and of Vice-Rectors, the IF advised Council on the suitability for appointment of the people on the two shortlists and on the selection of a preferred candidate for each post.

The University's policy on students with special learning needs or disabilities

The IF expressed its appreciation for the fact that such a policy had been formulated and for the content and format of the policy. It is a well-considered and well-formulated policy and only a few changes were recommended.

The University's policy in respect of the presentation of short courses

The IF considered the policy and expressed the following general reservations.

1. That the University's image of quality should not be damaged by the presentation of such courses.
2. That the interests of current students should be entrenched with regard to the availability of teaching staff and physical facilities.
3. That courses should not clash with the academic offering of the University.
4. That a balance is maintained between community interaction and the normal duties of teaching staff.
5. That it is ensured that teaching staff who present such short courses in their private capacity cannot issue a certificate carrying the University's trademark.
6. That a proper needs assessment is undertaken by the departments concerned.

Discussion document: Language Policy of Stellenbosch University, second draft

After introductory comments by experts, the document was discussed on the basis of the following motion that was proposed by members of the meeting. The motion was accepted by a majority of members:

The IF does not support the proposed language policy of the University as set out in the second draft of the discussion document dated 9 November 2007 and proposes that it should be compiled from scratch.

In conclusion

During 2007, the IF continued to build on the notion that it should be known as a forum where matters can be discussed thoroughly. To achieve this goal, it continued to carry out self-examination of its role on campus.

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

The IF is satisfied that it made a meaningful contribution to the activities of the University during 2007.

Le Roux Burrows

Chairperson