

REPORT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL FORUM 2011

Mr Le Roux Burrows

Chair: Institutional Forum

The Institutional Forum (IF) is an advisory body which, in terms of the Higher Education Act (Section 31(1) of Act 101 of 1997), advises the University Council on policy matters, including the implementation of this Act and of the national policy on higher education.

The activities of the IF involve not only meetings where advice to Council is considered, but also discussions between the Executive Committee of the IF and the Rector and his Management Team. The members of the IF are divided into three task groups, namely Diversity and Equity, Institutional Planning, and Institutional Culture. When necessary, the task groups are supplemented by ad hoc groups. The task groups are vested with the power to investigate thoroughly any matters assigned to them. They then report back to the IF in order that the IF may render well-considered advice to Council.

COMPOSITION

The amended Statute of the University was approved by the Minister of Higher Education on 31 August 2011 and published in the Government Gazette. Most noticeable to us was the amendment to the composition of the Institutional Forum; this used to be 28 members, seven from each of the four sectors, namely governance and management, staff, students, and the community; now it is 32 members with eight from each of the four sectors. The manner of election of the eight members of each group was also slightly adjusted. Next most noticeable to us was one of the amendments to the composition of the US Council; in terms of this, the IF is now only allowed to consider for Council representative those IF members who to date have had no ties with the University. In short, the IF must appoint one from among not more than six such persons.

ACTIVITIES

The IF carries out its normal duties by advising the Council on policy documents and commenting on the University Management's implementation of the above-mentioned Act. In addition, the IF has decided not to remain strictly within its legally prescribed duties and responsibilities, but also to focus on specific issues which arise from time to time, with the aim of providing proactive advice to the Council for its deliberation and further investigation.

PROPOSED POLICIES

In its formal reports, the IF primarily advised on new policies. University policies that came up for discussion were the Policy on Bursaries and Loans with Discriminatory Criteria; the HIV/Aids Policy for Students and Staff; and the Policy on Recording and Monitoring Closed-circuit Television Images.

REAPPOINTMENT OF THE RECTOR: SHORTENED PROCEDURE

In accordance with the US Rules of Procedure for the Appointment of a Rector and Vice-Rectors, the IF voted by closed ballot-papers, and supported the appointment of Prof HR Botman for a further term.

APPOINTMENT OF DEANS

In accordance with the University's Rules of Procedure for the Appointment of Full-time Deans, the IF appointed representatives to serve on the selection committees for the appointment of a Dean for the Faculty of Military Science, a Dean for the Faculty of Education, and a Dean for the Faculty of Law.

IF COMMENTARY ON POLICIES AND FORMAL REQUESTS

The Institutional Forum welcomes the suggested HIV/Aids policy, and believes that it can make a significant contribution to creating an environment in which people living with HIV/Aids can be free of stigma and discrimination. The fair treatment of such people means, among other things, that they ought to enjoy strictly no fewer rights than persons with comparably severe medical conditions. What is more, the IF acknowledges the importance of reasonable cooperation from staff as a principle of Labour Law.

Further, the Institutional Forum formally requests Council for attention to be given by the University Management to the serious problem of alcohol abuse among SU students, with particular reference to the question: What is this a symptom of?

WORKING PROCEDURES OF THE IF

This year, the IF twice revised its own working procedures and submitted the revision to Council. The first of these revisions was needed to bring our working procedures into line with the reduced number of annual IF meetings. The second was needed to reflect the changes to the IF's composition, for instance, as laid down in the new Statute.

CONCLUSION

The IF worked hard throughout to live up to its reputation as a forum where matters can be discussed in depth. Constant self-examination about the IF's role on campus is a natural outcome of this.

In general, the IF takes an active part in discussions of matters affecting the University. In this spirit, we extend an open invitation to all to bring to the IF's notice, for discussion, any issue relating to policy, culture or planning at the University.