Minutes

Students’ Representative Council Meeting

Date: 2021-04-21 | Time: 18:00 | Venue: Microsoft Teams (Hybrid)

# Attendance & Apologies

* Present
  + Xola
  + Kira
  + Philip
  + Eduard
  + Gina
  + Unathi
  + Viwe
  + Ayesha
  + Joshua
  + Masixole
  + Alme
  + Nomzamo
  + Precious
  + Thimna
* Absent
  + Sarah
  + Kristen
  + Maki
  + Luigia
  + Leone
  + Jarryd
* Apologies
  + Sarah
  + Kristen
  + Maki
  + Luigia
  + Leone
  + Jarryd (proxy vote to Kira)

# Setting of the agenda

Additional agenda points

* + Matie Alumni Invitation
  + Check in with Student Governance.
  + Request for assistance with court case
  + Sharing of DSAf & Management minutes
  + Proposed Scope of Communications Policy
  + “Constitutional Review” changed to “Constitutional voting in”

# Portfolio Feedback

## Viwe

* Requested volunteers for the rehabilitation task team
  + Two spaces available
  + Members from societies council welcome to participate as well
* The transformation reports will become a more interactive process, focusing on houses with a more urgent need for transformation.
  + The idea is to evaluate areas in houses and in SU in which there is an urgent need for transformation, and to engage with those leaders – making recommendations and collaborating to facilitate change.
* Prof. Kloppers felt that the Centre for Student Communities should be involved, to offer help and advice with this initiative.
* Joshua suggested that houses be compared against each other regarding transformation, but also evaluate itself internally.
  + A rigorous framework with good questions are also needed to gauge how transformative members of a house feel their house is.
* It will be necessary for CSC to impose some sanctions against houses that are persistently uncooperative in transformation, but there is not currently a policy or framework in place
* The intention is to evaluate these reports in conjunction with the houses’ reports and the CSC’s reports, and articulate which changes are necessary at higher structures like the Institutional Transformation Committee and SU Management.
* Although there is a report by DHET regarding transformation at various universities, details on specific transformation activities within institutions and within SU are limited.
* Viwe will present this at the next Institutional Forum meeting on 4 May.

## Policy Officer

Nomzamo met with Dr Retief (registrar) to discuss the revised student constitution.

Feedback was mostly positive. There are no apparent contradictions with SU’s statute. It has sufficient flexibility. It will likely get passed by council, but it must be sent to council some time before their meeting to allow sufficient time for evaluation.

The Constitutional Review committee will consult the Chair of Council, the Institutional Forum and members of the Law Faculty beforehand, to pre-emptively identify any problematic amendments, such that they can be made before the referendum and prevent a back and forth process.

# Die Matie request for comment: Anglo-Afrikaner Union’s plans to register as a society

Die Matie requested the SRC to comment on the Anglo-Afrikaner Union’s intention to register as a society at SU, which is controversial due to the Nazi-era-themed posters that were circulated several years ago.

Nomzamo confirmed that an application has not yet been received, as applications only open in August.

As such, the SRC will not comment at this time as it is not yet within our ambit and would be too speculative.

# SRC & SU Management meeting feedback

* The SRC Exec requested SU Management and the CSCD to commit to employing psychologists of colour, as it is important for students to be able to have a therapist with whom they feel familiar and comfortable.
  + The CSCD pointed out that the main challenge with this is the scarcity of black psychologists in South Africa, and the high rates they command, because they are in high demand in the private sector.
  + Prof. Ramjugernath supported and committed to the diversification of the CSCD.
* The Huis Marais matter was raised in a bid for clarity and a way forward, as it is unclear what the SRC’s role is and who is ultimately responsibility.
  + Prof Du Plessis requested the point to be removed from the agenda, asserting that those meetings are not a platform to level accusations. However, whether Leone’s tone was accusative is subjective.
* The occupation of residence rooms meant for isolating students by healthy students was brought to SU Management’s attention.
  + The Registrar confirmed that the database does not show overbooked residences and there should not be any non-isolating students in those rooms, requesting us to refer individual cases to her.
* The lack of reporting on COVID-19 numbers on campus was raised, upon which Prof Du Plessis confirmed that the institutional cases (staff & students) would be published on SU’s Coronavirus webpage.
* Philip provided feedback on the registration bursary outcomes, and sought clarity on which groups of students, if any were excluded.
  + The registrar confirmed that ALL students who were financially excluded and barred from registering at the time, were awarded the registration bursary.
* In the unveiling of SU’s new logo, only English and Afrikaans were used, despite SU’s Language Policy indicating that isiXhosa should also be used where reasonably practicable.
  + Given the magnitude and budget of the project, it should indeed have been reasonably practicable to include isiXhosa.
  + Prof. Kloppers acknowledged the error, indicating that the Chair of Council requested an immediate unveiling of the logo once it had been selected.
* The SRC raised the enduring issues with EduRoam network stability and requested SU to provide data to compensate for this.
  + Prof. Du Plessis asserted that data would not be provided, as all students are expected to be back on campus, and the network is continually being evaluated and improved.
* The Residence Placement Policy review process will directly and interactively involve the SRC.
* SAUS will conduct an institutional visit and requested various members of the SRC and SU Management to be present. However, on account of short notice, no members of SU Management indicated that they could attend.

# Agenda points for SRC & DSAf meeting

* Lack of communication from DSAf, especially regarding the transformation summit
* Policy for Student Governance
  + Student Governance currently has a framework but might not be sufficient to govern their actions and implement accountability.
* Lack of ongoing mentorship with SRC mentors
  + Very few SRC members have an ongoing relationship with the mentors they indicated on their application. SRC members would benefit from more formalised mentorship and check-ins.

# Matie Alumni Invitation

* Development & Alumni Relations has invited the SRC and various other leadership structures to the unveiling of the upgraded “Die Stal”. Xola reminded members to RSVP and encouraged them to join.
  + It was requested that the TSR, or at least their Exec, are invited.

# Check-in with Student Governance

* Student Governance requested check-in sessions with the SRC before the end of the term. Kira suggested that it be done in groups.
* Kira invited SRC members to submit their comments on the DSAf’s Framework for Student Governance structures.
  + The SRC is concerned about possible redundancy of this policy (as there are other value-based policies in the institution applying to student leaders) and possible undermining of the Student Constitution (if there are confliction notions in the two documents).

# External request for support in court case against SU

A service provider to SU is involved in a legal dispute with the university, and requested the SRC to become involved in various capacities.

The SRC decided not to become involved in the matter, as it does not involve any students, and therefore is not within our ambit, and because it is prudent to distance ourselves from ongoing legal action.

# Sharing of DSAf & Management Minutes

* Eduard enquired whether there is a need / desire for minutes from DSAf meetings to be shared with the SRC
  + The SRC welcomed this suggestion and minutes will be shared with SRC members only going forward.

# Proposed scope of the Communication Policy

* Eduard & Almé represent students on SU’s communication policy task team. This is a new task team developing a new policy for SU from scratch.
* The task team is very rigorous in its deliberations but is consequently still deciding the scope of the policy.
* The SRC was invited to comment on what they think the scope of the policy should be, and to mention any issues that should be addressed in the task team:
  + Social media etiquette, slander and the mechanisms to address it and hold culprits accountable.
  + Accountability for individuals who slander / discriminate / commit other transgressions on WhatsApp group chats (considering that it is not always class representatives or lecturers who are admins of a group).

# Constitutional Voting in

* The decision to adopt the constitution prior to the referendum to students was put to a vote.
  + One proxy vote was held by Kira.
  + 12 members voted and quorum was met.
  + 11 members voted yes, One member voted no.
* The SRC adopted the revised Student Constitution.