



Stellenbosch

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SRC

Students' Representative Council
Ibhunga elimele abaFundi
Studenteraad



SRC 2024 TERM 2 REPORT

SRC CHAIRPERSON & Student Financial Access

Students' Representative Council

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SRC Chairperson & Student Financial Access – srcchair@sun.ac.za



Foreword

To my Dearest Maties,

As I embark on my final year as a student and a student leader, it is a bitter sweet moment for me. I have lived, learnt and loved in Stellies I have spent most of young adult life in Stellies and I have no regrets. Through the time that I have been here, the best piece of advice that I can give you is, stay true to yourself and always remember you are capable! There is a point I was at my lowest and conflicted during this years registration period and what has kept me going are the words of Dr Choice “When in doubt allow your conscious to lead you Phiwo”. It is indeed easier said than done however as long as you stick to your principles you will know your heart is in the right place.

This year is a very important year for our country I would like to once again encourage all young people to ensure they are registered to VOTE. This is a chance for us to change our country for the better as they say every generation has its own battle, political freedom without economic freedom is meaningless 2024 is our 1994! As I do believe South Africa can be the country we want to see if we play our part.

I wish you all a wonderful and progressive 2024.

Constitutional Responsibilities - Chairperson

According to the student constitution by constitutional responsibilities are the following:

The Chairperson –

- (a) Serves as the Chairperson at meetings of the SRC and SRC Executive Committee.
- (b) Acts as spokesperson for the SRC, in consultation with the Communications Officer.
- (c) Is responsible for the finances of the SRC alongside the SRC Executive Committee.
- (d) Ensures that the SRC fulfils its mandate.
- (e) Is responsible for oversight over the activities of the SRC.

Constitutional Responsibilities – Student Financial Access

As per the Student Constitution my role/duties as the Student Financial Access portfolio holder of the SRC includes:

- To act in the best interest of students and to actively promote students' rights under CHAPTER 2.
- To represent students at – (a) The University Council. (b) The Senate. (c) The Institutional Forum. (d) Other committees, structures, and functionaries of the University. (e) National and international student structures.
- To evaluate the University policy and give input in the formulation thereof.
- To formulate and maintain policy to ensure that the SRC performs its functions and duties effectively.
- To facilitate projects and initiatives to the benefit of students.
- To inform students continuously, and obtain feedback, about its activities.

Portfolio Overview - Chairperson

The Chairperson acts as the Spokesperson of the SRC. The Chairperson ensures that the SRC fulfills their mandate, and they are also responsible for coordinating the SRC's relationship with its various stakeholders. It is the Chairpersons role to lead with respect, to support the SRC and to ensure that the needs of students are prioritized.

Portfolio Overview – Student Financial Access

The duties and responsibilities as Student Financial Access head include Liaising with Funding offices and social workers, providing financial literacy programmes/workshops for students (especially vulnerable students). Ensuring accessibility of work opportunities on campuses, educating SRC members on funding matters and processes. Being a port of call for students with financial exclusion and difficulty concerns, generally working on improving financial accessibility in the institution.

Committees/Task Teams – Chairperson & Student Financial Access

I serve on the following Committees and or Task Teams:

Council

- This is the highest governance body of Stellenbosch University. It oversees Management and holds them to account. Appoints management of the institution. It further takes strategic decisions and approves policies of the institution.
- There are no compulsory portfolios that must sit on this committee all the elected SRC members have the opportunity to stand for a seat at Council.
- Council is currently chaired by the acting chairperson Nicky Newton-King and the secretariat Dr Ronel Retief.
- Throughout my term I will only sit in a total of 4 meetings. I have sat two the first meeting was in September 2023 and in December 2023.
- The Council agenda is typically made up of over 400 pages. So, it is important that we go through the agenda and identify points that we would like to argue in the best of the institution.
- Unfortunately, most of the information tabled at this committee is regarded as confidential.
- In the meeting to follow in Feb we will be attending the strategy planning meeting where management will be presenting their plans and timeline.

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- First official meeting taking place on the 15th of April 2024.

Registration Planning

- I would not necessarily call this one a committee but rather a task team. That deals with the planning of registration and ensuring it runs as smoothly as possible. The task team was chaired by Mr Ashmind the Deputy Registrar.
- The team held meetings every Wednesday from the beginning of this year until registration was nearing an end. Representatives from Faculty administrators, Centre of Students Communities, Finance Division, Admission etc, where all part of these meetings.
- The meetings were to discuss any problems that arise during registration and share any information that we believe is necessary. We raised many of the issues that students on the ground were experiencing. Such issues relayed to readmission feedback, registration glitches, final offers for first years and postgraduate students.

South African Union of Students (SAUS)

South African Union of Students (SAUS) is a students' structure that was officially launched in April of 2006, led by President: Yandisa Ndzoyiya, Secretary General: Lukhanyo Daweti. SAUS aims to consolidate and strengthen students' view in the governance and enhancement of Higher Education and Training in South Africa. They are committed to building a unified, equitable, non-sexist, non-racial, democratic and well governed education system that is appropriate and responsive to the needs of South Africa, Africa and the world and which provides a conducive environment for learning, teaching and research and community service.

They believe that education, through excellence in learning, teaching and research and community service, must positively respond to the needs of both students and the economic, social, cultural and political development imperatives and needs of our country, region, continent and the world. Their objectives are to promote the development of an education system that provides equity of access, opportunity and outcomes and positively responds to the needs of both students and economic, social, cultural and needs of our country, region, and continent. All 26 public universities form part of this Union. It is a very powerful platform if used correctly. It is important to note that it is a very political space. So if you are not one used robust engagements you will not like the space because you simply will not understand how

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comrades behave. I strongly believe that every institution should be affiliated to this union because the engagements held there are extremely important. And you form relations with other institutions where crucial knowledge is shared.

Student Debt Working Group (SDWG)

- The SDWG is an institutional committee that deals with student debt in order to assist students' clear their debt so that they can register. Undergraduate Bursaries Office, Postgraduate Office, Student Fees as well as the Student Representative Council (SRC), are all represented on the Working Group.
- We meet every Tuesday and Thursdays for two hours to review each case.
- The committee began with a budget of R380 000.

Term 2 Overview

The start of the academic year was quite a difficult one. There still quite a number of students who did not have access to accommodation, the worse that I have seen over the years. There were certain factors that were responsible for some of the students not getting residence. Firstly, they may have been older than 27 years, do not have confirmed funding and lack in accommodation that is within the cap. For the first time in many years at SU private accommodation was full. We have still been advocating for this in all the spaces we find ourselves in. We still await for the major debrief that will involve the various stake holders that were involved in the emergency accommodation. We hope that this will allow the institution to prepare better for next year.

Electoral Commission

This term, one of the major tasks that was expected from the SRC Executive to ensure that the Electoral Commission is appointed. This was done through an interview process. This process was started late last year before the examination period began. We started last year because I know what it does to elect the Electoral commission late. Last year they had a difficult time trying to meet all the deadlines. We managed to host the interviews successfully. The Electoral commission was appointed. Reagan Johnson was responsible for the entire process by ensuring that there are candidates ready to interview. Mo and I

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began a guidebook for the entire process because at the beginning we were not sure what was expected of us. I will hand over the handbook to my successor. We managed to appoint the Electoral CEO and Chairperson towards the end of February.

Wilgenhof

Although the communication that was released by the institution indicated that a report looking into the contents that was found in the two rooms would be published by the end of February there was a need to extend the submissions to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. I would like to reassure the student body that the investigating panel is still hard at work, nothing is being swept under the carpet.

SRC Meetings

I am still a bit worried about the attendance to SRC meetings. I am pleased with the SRC meetings attendance of our colleagues. These meetings are an opportunity for us to give feedback on what we have been busy with during the week. Our research and analysis manager will explore conducting a study to investigate how we can improve in order to increase attendance. The formal attire to the meetings seems to be doing well and believe that it is something you should continue.

SDWG

We will forever remain grateful for the donation that is made by the Motsepe Foundation valued at R800 000. The SRC Executive took the decision to donate this full amount to the SDWG because that is the greatest need for our SRC we find that at SU the biggest barrier for one to continue their studies is student debt. It is disheartening to see the number of students that are unable to complete their studies because of Debt. I have taken the chance to start the SRC Fundraising committee that will include student leaders from other structures as well. This committee will look at raising funds for student debt, and any other initiatives that may arise.

March Graduation

For the 2023 December and March Graduations our institution has seen over 8 000 graduation ceremonies. The SRC executive took a conscious decision last year that we would attend all graduations in order to increase our visibility and show up for all of our students through the good and the bad times. This term we attended all 11 graduation ceremonies, and it was truly an honour, for the first time in many years the SRC is now part of the graduation ceremonies. I do hope that this is something that will continue however in order to lessen the number of days you are out of class I do believe that the SRC executive should take turns as to which members will be present but there should be a member of two present each day. I have personally also ensured that I am present at every Rugby match we are extremely proud of our boys!

Council Language Committee

This term I had the pleasure of being of the council members elected to the language committee, this committee monitors the language policy implementation across the institution. It was reported back to the committee that currently the institution is in the process of translating our policies into isiXhosa. Which is a huge step for our institution. They also reported back on the successful training have been having with student's leaders. Although student leader's structures are not required to translate into all three languages it is good practise. I have recommended that the communications portfolio holder ensure that atleast the important statements are translated into Afrikaans and isiXhosa.

Naming Committee.

I further also joined the Naming Committee this committee is responsible for the renaming and naming of buildings on our campus. So far there has been no new building that will be renamed however the committee did speak on the naming of the two new residences. It was suggested that both of the residences be named after people that were forcefully removed from that farm back in the late 1800s. We do plan on actively writing to the committee about the possibility of renaming the Wilgenof residence.

NSFAS

Nsfas is proving to be a continuous battle for our students. The scheme is currently a mess and this particular matter has taken most of my time because of the countless number of meetings that we have

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had yet there is still no resolution. One of the challenges for our students is the R41k cap on accommodation allowances, this is negatively impacting our students because many are facing evictions because they cannot afford the rent. The institution did submit a thorough application justifying the deviation, We, would also like to qualify for the R50k cap. But it is proving to be difficult to get answers there has been no response from NSFAS. I have written to the CEO asking for meeting with the NSFAS Executive however there has been response. Another great worry is the number of students that are going to face hunger due to the fact that their quotas have been depleted. We will be having a meeting with management on the 17th of April 2024 to find out how we are going to tackle these issues to ensure our students do not go to classes on empty stomachs. I have also taken several students to the law clinic to assist them with landlords that are trying to threaten them into staying into leases they cannot afford. So far there has been no matter taken to court it is just scare tactics of chance takers trying to scam our students.

Team Dynamics

More than anything I have been my team's mental health first. The previous term was quite a challenging one for us and to ensure that everyone is re-energized, the team was given a week to work from home just to recharge and get into the mood of being SRC members rather than a crisis management team. It proved to be effective because the team has been in full operation with events. I believe in order to thrive in your work environment there has to be a healthy relationship and that has been my top priority. Our lease agreement ended with Humargra for the laptops in our office space. Thulani and myself went on a mission to find sponsors for the new computers. IT has decided to sponsor us with new computers, and we are extremely grateful as that computer area is not only used by us but also our fellow students when we need to assist them with anything that will need the internet. I have had a few check-ins and that has assisted me knowing where the mood and energy is with my team. I am able to spot when members are feeling fatigued early on. I would have loved to meet with other structures my only problem is time, I am booked out on most days and when I do find free time I am working on my research.

Overall this term felt quite short there was so much to do and attend. I believe it was a successful term and my team and I are trying by all means to serve the student population the best way possible. I have been continuing my overall presence on our campuses with the particular focus on Tygerberg this past

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time. The collaboration with the other institutions is going great especially WC universities we are able to bounce off ideas on each other.

Budget

- Gifts for SRC member R531
- Vehicle booking R1000 (Trips to UCT and NSFAS offices)

Resignations

We have had two members leave us due to taking offers from other institutions to study their postgrad studies. Ms Caitlyn Schuller (Visibility) and Qiniso Sithole (SPC Chair). The Visibility portfolio will be handled by Reagan and Emma. The SPC is currently looking for a replacement.

Plans for Next Term

I plan on doing the following:

1. Finalising the SRC Fundraising Committee and submitting SRC Gala dinner proposal to DSAF.
2. Handing out chomps in different study areas during the exam season wishing our students best of luck.
3. Planning the handover process.
4. Lecturer series around Politics and 30 years into democracy.