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SRC

Students' Representative Council
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Studenteraad



SRC TERM 3 REPORT



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SRC SPECIAL NEEDS MANAGER

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Foreword

Good day, fellow Maties!

I sincerely hope that you are all doing well and are excited for the memories to be made and experiences to be had during the 2nd academic semester of 2023.

I would like to, once again, start off by thanking you for taking the time to read the Special Needs Portfolio term report. This report will provide you with a summary of what I, the Special Needs Manager of the SRC, have been busy with during my second term in office.

During the course of this term, my primary focus has been the reviewing of the Disability Access Policy (“DAP”) and the acquiring of resources which will help provide the SRC with the capacity to provide greater assistance to the community of Maties with Special Needs. The primary aim of the DAP is to provide for an environment in which the well-being of Maties with disabilities is prioritised and furthered. Having served as part of the Disability Access Policy Project team and as a serving member of the Student Institutional Transformation Committee, I hope to promote the interests of the community of Maties with special needs, of which I am a proud member. The acquiring of greater resources will assist the SRC, particularly during next year’s welcoming period, in ensuring that no student is left behind.

With the continued support of the Disability Unit, my fellow SRC Members and other relevant stakeholders, I am eager to continue serving you, my fellow Maties, as I head into my third term in office.

Early last year, during a residence education session on Special Needs hosted by the SRC, I finally felt comfortable expressing, in a public space, that I have Spectrum Disorder. I have never felt uncomfortable with this part of myself, but was always concerned with how others would react to it. That day I decided that I would commit myself to improving the well-being of others like myself.

As the Manager for Special Needs I shall continue, with this commitment. “The greatest honour in life is to help others overcome the challenges which you too have striven to overcome”.

Constitutional Responsibilities

According to the student constitution, my constitutional responsibilities are the following:

- I am required to attend at least one SRC meeting per academic term.
- It is my responsibility to prepare the Special Needs Portfolio budget for my term in office.

Portfolio Overview

The following is the function of the Special Needs Manager within the SRC leadership structure and the student body, as per the 'student leadership job description' document of the SRC:

“The main function of this role is to entrench representation and advocate for the issues of students with disabilities within the SRC structure. In addition, it is also about furthering their integration into the SU campus and general society at large. Achieving the above imperative entails working with various structures that seek to represent matters of minority communities on campus, such as the Disability Unit, Equality Unit and Transformation Office.”

In addition to the above, I believe that the acquisition of knowledge and insight regarding the grievances and recommendations of Maties with special needs in terms of facilities and support available is of utmost importance. I shall, therefore, be working closely with the Dis Maties Council and the Disability Unit to plan possible means of improving channels through which grievances and recommendations can be obtained and documented, allowing for effective strategies to be implemented and plans drafted in future.

The following goals have also been outlined as part of the Special Needs Portfolio year plan:

- Ensuring students are provided a platform to engage in self-advocacy.
- Facilitating communication and providing input so that students with disabilities are at the centre of decisions that affect them.
- Full participation in campus life and academic activities are granted to every disabled student.
- Ensuring all aspects of the disabled student are considered when decisions are made.
- Promote inclusivity in language, structure, and facilities.

Committees/Task Teams

Special Needs Subcommittee

During my first term in office, I established a Special Needs subcommittee. The purpose of this committee is to assist the Manager for Special Needs with various aspects of the portfolio including administration, financial planning and the management of social media accounts and marketing. To ensure an effective committee and efficient communication, I opted to limit the size of the committee to three people, including myself. The membership of the committee includes the Deputy Speaker of Student Parliament and a member of the Second Year Committee of Harmonie Residence. This allows for access to a larger student base and a greater range of perspectives regarding Special Needs on the various campuses of Stellenbosch University.

Roadshow Task Team

During the period of registration and 1st year induction, I served as part of the Roadshow Committee. The members of this committee had the duty of travelling to different residences and PSOs and presenting the SRC as a student leadership body to the 1st year students in a fun and interactive manner.

Disability Access Policy Project

During my second term in office, I served as a member of the Disability Access Policy Project. The role of this project was the review of the outgoing Disability Access Policy, and the formulation of recommendations to be submitted to and considered by the Disability Unit in respect of the formulation of a renewed Disability Access Policy. This project, led by the Students for Law and Social Justice (“SLSJ”) student organisation, started in February, and concluded by the end of March.

Student Institutional Transformation Committee

During my second term in office, I was appointed to serve as a member of the SITC. This is a new leadership structure formulated by the Transformation Office which aims to address all transformation-related challenges and issues experienced by the broader Stellenbosch University student population. I serve on the SITC in the capacity of an interest group representative. At our first sitting, the function and

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purpose of the SITC was discussed. The role of the SITC in organising the upcoming Transformation Indaba was also discussed, with more clarity on this to be provided at our next meeting.

Student Life/Communities workstream on the CIRCoRe project following the Khampepe Report

In my third term in office, I was approached by the Disability Unit to serve in the Student Life/Communities workstream on the CIRCoRe project which was established following the Khampepe Report. I am most excited for what can be done to improve the well-being of Maties with Special Needs through their representation and consideration as part of this project.

Transformation Indaba Planning Committee

In my third term in office, I have volunteered to serve as a member of the Planning Committee for the Transformation Indaba. This Committee is responsible for the planning of and preparing for the Indaba as well as deciding on the theme for the event. This was discussed in greater detail at the second meeting of the SITC and I am most excited for our work to get underway.

Term 3 Overview

Student Institutional Transformation Committee

As previously mentioned, I was appointed to serve as a member of the SITC. This is a new leadership structure formulated by the Transformation Office which aims to address all transformation-related challenges and issues experienced by the broader Stellenbosch University student population. I serve on the SITC in the capacity of an interest group representative. At our first sitting, the function and purpose of the SITC was discussed. The role of the SITC in organizing the upcoming Transformation Indaba was also discussed. At our first meeting, the members of the SITC introduced themselves and the position they hold within student governance. We were informed that the Transformation Indaba will provide a space for the community of Maties to bring forward their grievances and recommendations to the Transformation Office and other structures of Stellenbosch University. At our second sitting, we discussed the theme for the Transformation Indaba. This is most important to establish early on as this theme will guide the proceedings of the event itself.

Transformation Indaba Planning Committee

I have volunteered to serve as a member of the TIPC. This Committee is responsible for the planning of and preparing for the Transformation Indaba. I am honoured to serve as part of this committee and am actively promoting the interests of the community of Maties with Special Needs through my involvement. I have already begun with the drafting of various proposals for submission to and consideration by the TIPC and the greater SITC. These proposals are in relation to the theme proposed and agreed upon at the second sitting of the SITC, which will be announced in due time.

Provision of Portfolio Feedback

As an appointed Manager of the SRC, I have a constitutional obligation to attend one SRC meeting per academic term. At one of said meetings, I provided feedback on the Special Needs Portfolio regarding my second term in office. This can be found in my 2nd Term Report on the SRC website. At this meeting, I also provided my fellow SRC Members with insight into several of the struggles experienced by Maties

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with special needs as well as the work I am actively engaged in to improve the lot of Maties with special needs. It is my hope that through the creation of awareness, greater emphasis will be placed on the well-being of Maties with special needs.

Disability Awareness

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to take part in a photoshoot along with other members of the community of Maties with Special Needs. The purpose of this photoshoot was to showcase the diversity of Maties at Stellenbosch University, especially for future 1st year students. The photoshoot also demonstrates that one need not shy away from one's uniqueness. Stellenbosch University, as an institution striving for inclusivity and diversity, should be a place where all students feel that they belong. As the Chairperson of the SRC made clear in her inaugural address earlier this year, no student should ever be left behind.

Acquiring of Wheelchairs

It came to my attention during the welcoming period that, as the Student Representative Council, we were ill equipped to assist student with physical disabilities. This was largely because of a lack of access to wheelchairs. Being a student with a disability, I understand the anxiety that can be experienced by a newcomer student because of feeling excluded and not catered for. I made use of a donation provided by DTConsult to acquire 2 brand new wheelchairs for use by SRC members in assisting students when necessary. At an internal SRC meeting during this next term in office, I shall discuss the acquisition of the 2 wheelchairs with my fellow SRC colleagues.

Other Matters:

As a result of the Concessions Awareness talks that I conducted at several residences and PSOs, as part of the SRC Roadshow Task Team, I have been able to assist several students with the sourcing of the required concessions applications forms. I have also managed to assist a student in the submission of the required concessions applications forms after the closing date for submissions. As matters pertaining to

Special Needs arise, whether in relation to residence spaces or facilities, to mention but two, I make sure to inform the relevant university structures of said matters. The duty of an SRC member to serve as a voice for students within student governance and relevant university institutions is one which I feel passionately about.

Plans for Next Term

My last three terms in office have taught me that no plan can ever be set in stone. As situations regarding Special Needs arise across Stellenbosch University's campuses, I consider it an opportunity to further the interests and well-being of my fellow Maties with special needs. This is a lesson which I shall always hold dear.

With the above in mind, the main point on my agenda is to continue with the finalisation of the renewed Disability Access Policy. I have engaged with the Disability Unit regarding the above and await further communication. Considering said policy, and its purpose of furthering the interests and well-being of Maties with special needs, it is vital that great emphasis is placed on the implementation of its provisions, with this being the responsibility of the Disability Unit. I have availed myself to assist wherever needed. I am most eager for the Transformation Indaba, and gaining a better understanding of the perspectives of my fellow Maties regarding the transformation of the University into a place where all Maties are included, represented, and respected. As part of the Indaba Planning Committee, I look forward to working closely together with my dedicated colleagues to ensure that the above vision becomes a reality and that the challenges faced by my fellow Maties are brought to the fore.

As mentioned in my initial budget, an amount of R10,000 has been secured through my efforts. The funds are required to be used in furthering the accessibility of university residences. This may only be a small amount, but it is important to commence with this endeavour. I shall continue with discussions in this regard with the Disability Unit. With the assistance and continued support of my fellow SRC Members, my hope is that this endeavour can commence as soon as possible.