



12 May 2015

Statement to Stellenbosch University Students

Dear Student of Stellenbosch University

It is undeniable that our university is in need of decisive transformation. It would be ignorant to deny this. It is also clear that we as students have to be the advocates and driving force of this transformation. We need to see to it that this university is a home to all its students. As the SRC we wish to highlight all aspects of this institution in need of transformation to the university management. We take it upon ourselves to engage with all stakeholders in order to represent the best interests of all studying at this institution.

In light of recent gatherings and protests on campus by the Open Stellenbosch movement, we deemed it necessary to take a firm stance. We have made it clear at the most recent sitting of Student Parliament that we do not endorse any form of illegitimate protests or mass movements at this university. The purposeful disregard of procedure and protocol has led to havoc and disrespect. It has been perceived that certain individuals associating themselves with Open Stellenbosch wish to break down instead of build-up. They aim to divide, instead of unite as one voice against all discrimination on campus. We as an SRC remain unmoved in our commitment to unity and therefore cannot support any actions that would undermine this.

The issue that pains the SRC most is that many students within the movement have been raising legitimate concerns, some of which the SRC has already started addressing and some still awaiting implementation. The problem with the manner in which these concerns were brought about, makes it easy for the cause to be discredited altogether. We will concede that bureaucratic challenges are often problematic at this institution, which hampers the efficiency of some initiatives. One cannot however heal a system by breaking it.

This becomes even worse when parties from outside the Stellenbosch community are invited in by these students under the guise of solidarity. They disrupt campus life without facing the threat of disciplinary action and misbehave, knowing that they can't be kept accountable for their actions. Under this pretence, individuals from outside this institution are not welcome here.

That being said, we call on all students of Stellenbosch University to actively participate in the processes on campus and to voice their concerns in an appropriate manner. We regret that the climate on campus has come to this and believe that peaceful resolutions can still be achieved if the proper channels are followed i.e. approaching the SRC. We acknowledge that



independent movements such as the Rhodes Must Fall-campaign created an expectation across South African universities for students to rise up against authority. However, challenging authority for the sake of doing so, without even considering legitimate remedies, will not bring about meaningful change.

We therefore urge those regarding themselves as the leadership of Open Stellenbosch, to contact us directly in order to schedule a meeting. All students at Stellenbosch University have the right to voice their concerns and we, as the SRC, are always willing to listen. This was evident in the March for Reaffirming Human Dignity where the SRC assisted in the organisation thereof, after concerned students approached us. In the beginning of 2015, SRC members met with the Bursaries and Loans Office for hours on end to reach a fair and equitable solution with regards to the NSFAS shortfall. This effectively allowed students the opportunity to study at this university, after we received the details of those affected by the shortfall from the SASCO Maties executive. These are but a few examples of what can be achieved if the proper procedures are followed.

With regards to Open Stellenbosch, we suggest that the movement registers as a society. We challenge the movement to show campus that its intentions are in fact for the greater good of all students. Legitimacy can be achieved if an organisation subjects itself to rules by which it can be held accountable for its deeds and to its constituents. Until such a time, the SRC as well as the students we represent will assume that the intentions of this movement are destructive. We encourage the movement to set out clear, tangible and measurable goals; one cannot operate in obscurity, hoping that it would assist your cause.

Finally, we would like to extend the olive branch yet again and invite them to communicate with us. Thus far they have chosen not to meet with the SRC and to close down all channels of communication. We remain willing to listen to their concerns and to find an amicable way forward.

After the sitting of Student Parliament on the 5th of May, we approached Prof Schoonwinkel, requesting a public clarification on the comments made at the sitting. Correspondence between the professor and the Speaker of Student Parliament has made it clear that such a clarification will come about in the next Student Parliament communications.

The revised language policy is a very clear example of transformation at this university. During his inaugural address, Prof De Villiers said the following:

“Stellenbosch is not an Afrikaans university; Stellenbosch is not an English University; Stellenbosch is not a Xhosa university; Stellenbosch is a multilingual South African university.”

We share this view and aim to keep the university management to account.

If any student of the University of Stellenbosch has any concerns or issues, we urge you to contact us at sr@sun.ac.za. This is our official email address and we welcome all input and enquiries.

Yours faithfully

The Students' Representative Council of Stellenbosch University