



SRC 2020/2021 Term I Report

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Constitutional Responsibilities

As per Section 22 of the Stellenbosch University Student Constitution 2018, the Chairperson –

- (a) is the chief executive officer of the SRC;
- (b) acts as spokesperson for the SRC;
- (c) is ultimately responsible for the finances of the SRC; and
- (d) ensures that the SRC fulfil their mandate.

Portfolio Overview

In terms of:

SRC

The portfolio of chairperson is responsible to bring a group of diverse leaders together and channel their energy and skills to successfully achieve the mandate of the SRC. Chairperson is responsible to ensure that words becomes actions and support members where possible to ensure execution. The chairperson acts as custodian of the Student Constitution. The chairperson acts as spokesperson for the SRC and the students the SRC represents.

Stellenbosch University

The chairperson is a direct line of contact and information for staff and management in the university. Although the chairperson is the students' representative, the chairperson is also a representative of the larger Stellenbosch University. The chairperson's mandate is to ensure that the needs of students are placed first in the university and works in collaboration with different stakeholders such as SU Staff, the municipality, other universities etc.

South Africa





The chairperson's role in terms of South Africa is to act as custodian of the South African Constitution, on ground level at Stellenbosch University. Together with the SRC as a team, the chairperson must drive a vision & mission that are conscious of South Africa's diverse cultural heritage and the historical context of Stellenbosch University and work hard to unite to build a multicultural and democratic South Africa. As the Student Constitution of 2018's preamble states: "We acknowledge our responsibility to participate in the democratic structures recognised by this Constitution. Subject to the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Higher Education Act, the Statute of Stellenbosch University and University regulations, we accept this as our binding Constitution."

Committees / Task Teams

- **SU Council.**
- **Institutional Committee for Business Continuity (ICBC).**
- **Honorary Degrees Committee.**
- **Language Policy Revision Work Group.**
- **Anti-GBV Steering Committee.**

Term Overview

(Term overview covers period between Sept 2020 – December 2020)

Handover

Much of the Handover processes were conducted with assistance from Student Governance. Each member had the opportunity of engaging with their predecessor on portfolio related developments. The process itself may need a bit more formalisation as predecessors (often the previous SRCs) may be reluctant to engage on the process and as such the process will then have to be pre-empted so that its operations are more effective and capitalise on the buy-in at the time.

SRC Development Training

Majority of the SRC trainings (in collaborations with the Tygerberg Student Council) were held over three weekends on MSTeams and were encompassing several topics such as:





- Stress Management
- Higher Education Context
- Governance and Communication
- Student Leadership Context
- Constitutional Literacy
- POPI Act
- Communications and Branding
- Financial Literacy
- Event and Risk Management
- Contracts
- Anti – GBV Training & Awareness
- Cooperative Governance (between structures)

The learning outcomes of the trainings were as follows:

- To establish our own vision and mission for our term in office through;
- Understanding of the various contexts involved in the governance of higher education and the alignment to society.
- Understanding of Constitutional literacy which will guide our journey and our role in student leadership.
- To learn about financial literacy that will be accompanied by proper budgeting and thorough planning.
- Induction on various institutional processes and procurements.

South African Union of Students (SAUS)

The SRC was invited to two engagements through SAUS:

I. NSFAS Capacity Building Workshop in Cape Town (11 Sept)

The workshop covered the points below:

- a) An overview of the NSFAS mandate.
- b) The framework for the implementation of the DHET Bursary Scheme in Universities.
- c) Understanding the NSFAS Value chain.





- d) Outline the roles and responsibilities of all implementing partners and bursary recipients. e) Collectively formulating mechanisms to resolve challenges.

The conversations at the workshop were not as fruitful as one would hope. This was due to the circulatory nature of the engagements between the SRCs and NSFAS delegates. The NSFAS could not provide clear answers to many relevant questions which were posed and as a result rendered the engagement fruitless.

2. Student Health & Welfare of Differently Abled Students Program of SAUS (30 – 31 Oct)

Please see minutes of the program as Annexure A.

Plans for next term

Much of the next term will be focused on leading the registration initiatives that SRC will be embarking on and providing the utmost support. Furthermore, along with the Vice Chairperson, the plan is have one-on-one sessions with all SRC members as a way to check-in with them.

Important Contacts

Dr Choice Makhetha – choicemakhetha@sun.ac.za (Senior Director: Student Affairs)

Ms Tonia Overmeyer – toniaovermeyer@sun.ac.za (Dean of Students)

Mr Anele Mdepa – anelemdepa@sun.ac.za (Student Governance: Manager)

Ms Sharine Dowries – sharine@sun.ac.za (Student Governance: Administrator)

Mr Thulani Hlatshwayo – thulani@sun.ac.za (Student Governance: Coordinator)

Ms Kira Alberts – kca@sun.ac.za (SRC Vice Chairperson)





ANNEXURE A

SAUS Engagement

30 & 31 October 2020 | Hilton Durban Hotel, Durban

Below is the program that will be followed for the duration of the **Student Health & Welfare of Differently Abled Students Program of the South African Union of Students**. This document has been drafted for the purpose of reporting back to all relevant stakeholders at Stellenbosch University, including the Students' Representative Council.



SOUTH AFRICAN UNION OF STUDENTS

Student Health & Wellness Programme

Day One: 30th October 2020: Student Health and safety

Time	Activity	Speakers
08h00 – 09h00	Screening & Registration	Screeners
09h00 – 09h30	Welcoming Remarks	MUT Vice Chancellor
09h30 – 10h00	Opening Remarks	SAUS President
10h00 – 11h00	Guest Speaker	Deputy Minister of Higher Education
11h00 – 12h00	Keynote Address	Minister of Health
12h00 – 13h00	Discussions	SRC Members
13h00 – 14h00	Lunch	Everyone
14h00 – 15h00	Presentation by Higher health	Higher Health CEO
15h00 – 16h00	Inputs from Students	SRC Members
16h00 – 16h30	Closing Remarks	SAUS DSG

Day Two: 31st of October 2020: Welfare of differently Abled Students

Time	Activity	Speakers
08h00 – 09h00	Screening & Registration	Screeners
09h00 – 09h30	Welcoming Remarks	SRC President of MUT
09h30 – 10h30	Keynote Address	Minister of Youth, Women and Persons with disabilities
10h30 - 11h30	Higher Health	Higher Health Manager
11h30 – 12h30	Discussions	SRC Members
12h00 – 13h00	Closing Remarks	SAUS SG
13h00 – 14h00	Lunch	Everyone





Welcoming Remarks by the MUT Vice Chancellor:

The Vice Chancellor's welcoming message was based on the following excerpt from John F. Kennedy's inaugural address in 1961: "to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle ... against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself...". The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on humanity.

He included a quote of Robert J. Kibbee which read that "the quality of a university is measured more by the kind of student it turns out than the kind it takes in.". Too many universities are more concerned with the former than the latter. The Mangosuthu University of Technology has banned alcohol on campus in recognition of its adverse impact on the student body. "A sober student is a healthy student". The university has observed the general positive result this decision has had on its student body.

Opening Remarks by the SAUS President:

The President of the South African Union of Students appreciated the Vice Chancellor of MUT's willingness to host and engage with student leaders as student representatives and not as enemies. He further acknowledged the good work that has been done by Professor Ramneek Ahluwalia, CEO of Higher Health. He expressed his sincere gratitude to the other speakers who will be presenting during this conference, the SAUS NEC, the sub-committee on Student Support Services and SRC Presidents and SRC Secretary-Generals (SAUS NGC members). He raised several questions which he would like to see addressed during the course of the program, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Why are students committing crimes against other students (including murder)?
- What is the relationship between gender, sex, and sexual orientation?
- Should men sacrifice societal benefits (including leadership positions) in recognition of the need to dismantle patriarchal structures in society?





- What are the main causes of suicides on campus?
- Why do campuses not make adequate provision for campus facilities for differentlyabled students? Why are universities neglecting the interests of these students?
- Why causes the conflicting relationship between feminism and patriarchy?
- What is the relationship between privilege and power?
- Why is the safety of students not being sufficiently prioritised?

Presentation by the Deputy Minister of Higher Education (Zoom):

The COVID-19 Response Task Team was established by the Department of Higher Education for the purpose of responding [combatting] the pandemic in the higher education environment. The Department has also worked with Higher Health in this regard. The Minister has published several guidelines to be implemented in universities during the various levels of lockdown.

Many students' academic aspiration has been negatively impacted as they were not prepared (or sufficiently equipped) to pursue online learning. Gender based violence and femicide have increased during the lockdown. Binge drinking (as a mechanism for coping with the adverse effect of lockdown) has also posed to be a problem amongst students.

Programs and policies that recognise inequalities and intersectionality in universities [and society at large] should be drafted and implemented. It is critical to plan ahead for a post-COVID-19 order in the sector [and world]. This society should be founded on social justice.

The Department (and the agency of Higher Health) is planning to further engage with universities and TVET colleges on substance abuse, GBV, and other societal injustices on campuses. The health, wellness, and safety have to be prioritised, and student leaders have a role to play in making sure this becomes a reality. This merely serves as a very brief summary





of the presentation and should not be construed as a comprehensive record of what was covered during the Deputy Minister's speech.

The SAUS President highlighted that issues raised during the conference will be forwarded to the Deputy Minister's office.

Deputy Director-General of the Department of Health:

The Minister of Health, on the 19th of October 2020, was tested positive for the coronavirus and will not be in attendance of the current event. The Deputy Director-General (hereafter the 'DDG') will be speaking on the Minister's behalf, moreover the Department of Health.

There is empirical evidence that the COVID-19 virus had a negative impact on the physical and psychological welfare of students to the extent that students have abandoned their studies. The DDG elaborated on the existence, causes, and impact of mental illnesses on campuses. She also covered the statistics of gender-based violence, HIV, unplanned pregnancies and depression in the tertiary education environment.

The Department proposed that mental health research programs should be better funded. The general population should be educated on mental health and matters incidental thereto and persons in leadership positions should receive more support. The above is by no means intended to be an exhaustive coverage of all that was conveyed during the presentation and merely serves as a very brief summary of the speech.

Presentation by Higher Health CEO:

Professor Ramneek Ahluwalia, Higher Health CEO, presented on Higher Health's Student Health and Wellness Programme for the Post School Education & Training System.





He highlighted that South Africa is not a privileged country. Student leaders will have to build a nation where students are equipped to form families where domestic abuse is not a reality. Student leaders play a significant role in the following three respects:

- For the “hope of a mother”.
- Advancement of the economy.
- Building a generation.

The CEO mentioned the following serious issues which plague our educational environment:

8.1 million South Africans have HIV, of which most persons are considered to be youth. These young people are in universities and other institutions of higher learning.

Suicide is the second largest cause of death in South Africa. (45% of South African students have suicidal thoughts at least once during the course of their studies).

Gender-based violence is also a critical issue. If perpetrators are not apprehended and dealt with, they will continue roaming in residences and classes. 65% of violence is prompted by substance abuse. This statistic in South Africa is the highest in the world.

32% of girls fall pregnant during the course of their studies (75% of which are unplanned).

By adhering to lockdown regulations, you are breaking the chain of transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Many students are not aware of the comorbidities present in their bodies. Higher Health offers training at universities and TVET institutions on appropriate protocols to implement on campuses to combat the spread of the virus. The CEO encourages student leaders (SRC's) to participate in this course which could in turn be conveyed to the rest of student bodies. Higher Health offers their full support to SRC's.

During lockdown, Higher Health continued to provide essential services including HIV testing, TB and STI services, linkage to care through:





1. Running First Things First silent activations for HTS, contraceptives.
2. Establishment of Higher Health mobile fleets bringing routine HTS services during the lockdown.
3. Higher Health HIV risk screening tool kit administered via recruitment of AGYW and ABYM at entry points as they complete COVID-19 screening at COVID-19 screening stations; scheduled services delivery at residences (both on campus and off-campus accommodation); and at exit points to lecture hall as well as in class at the end of lectures (i.e. providing IEC material, schedule appointments and administer HIV risk assessment tool kit).

Higher Health is attempting to enable campuses to write sit-down exams. Although COVID-19 survives on a skin for up to 9 hours, there is evidence to show that it can survive on paper for 12 hours. Higher Health is attempting to find ways to restrict contact with paper. How can invigilators be trained to facilitate adherence to regulations and protocols during exams? How can congestion at lecture hall entrances be prevented before the writing of exams? These are some of the questions and factors which have been considered by Higher Health in their attempt to enable campuses to facilitate sit-down exams.

A total amount of frontline staff who have returned to campuses is 13 332. The total Management and Service staff capacitated is 12 000. Student volunteers who have been established is 5 200. These are some of the statistics of people in the higher education environment who have returned to campuses.

The Higher Health CEO briefly explained the Health Check application.

Higher Health District Health and Wellness Mobile Clinic Health Care programme was also explained during the presentation. **Higher Health Clinics were launched after lunch.** Higher Health has also started a 24-hour TOLL FREE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS HELPLINE





(launched in August 2020). 1100 calls have been received in the past two months. **Dial 0800 36 36 36**
OR SMS 43336.

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Call the **HIGHER HEALTH 24 hr toll free student and staff help line**

Help is available in all 11 official languages

Toll-Free Call: 0800 36 36 36 SMS: 43336

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU ANYTIME, DAY OR NIGHT.

Higher Health has committed itself to a policy framework on gender-based violence and should be employed in the higher education sector.

Input from Students (SRC's) [and responses by the Higher Health CEO]:

The following input has been offered by some of the attendees (SRC members). Where applicable, the Higher Health CEO has responded, and these responses have been included below.

- Higher Health should be focused (in addition to the commendable work that they have been doing) on the creation of employment opportunities.
- In terms of the question on the eligibility of men to participate in conversations surrounding





gender-based violence, it was noted that men should first be appreciative of the fact that they are the primary perpetrators thereof. Gender-based violence should be distinguished (but not removed) from other intersectional issues such as class and race.

- An inquiry was made about student participation in Higher Health. The Higher Health CEO responded that 40 positions are available to graduates from TVET colleges (this was done as they are primarily in the health care sector). He explained that they have adapted their recruitment process during COVID-19.
- The SRC's present are all representatives of student constituencies of different institutions and this tends to burden student leaders. A question was raised, in terms of student volunteering at Higher Health, training programs are available to such student leaders to manage the weight referred to above. The Higher Health CEO referred to the toll-free number above which may be contacted. He also referred to a curriculum on mental health (a two-hour program) which SRC members could do.
- Domestic violence is intersectional with GBV. The two, however, should never be conflated. Higher Health offers a risk assessment to students for them to be able to understand whether they find themselves in an environment where different forms of violence manifest.

Closing Remarks by the SAUS Deputy Secretary-General:

The SAUS President envisions the creation of a policy document that would govern the welfare and health of students on campuses.





Day 2 (31 October 2020): Welfare of Differently Abled Students

Welcoming Remarks by former SRC President of MUT and SAUS NEC member:

The speaker welcomed everyone present, including all guest speakers, SRC members in their capacity as SAUS NGC members and all NEC members of SAUS. He asked that the meeting will be progressive one.

Presentation on ‘Welfare of Differently Abled Students: The Higher Health

Perspective’ by Higher Health Manager:

A regional manager of Higher Health provided a brief overview of Higher Health as well as their vision and mission. Higher Health supports 26 Public Universities, 50 Public TVET Colleges and 420 campuses (over two million students) across South Africa. Higher Health has seven priority areas, including differently abled students. Included in the Higher Health Training Manual is a section relating to differently abled students. The following key areas are based on research that has been done by Higher Health and is discussed in this part of the manual:

- Understanding what ‘differently abled’ means.
- Behavior and attitudes regarding differently abled students.
- Tackling stigma and discrimination associated with differently abled students.
- Sexual health of differently abled students.





- Contraception consideration for the differently abled.

Higher Health provides a grant to universities unlike TVET Colleges where implementations are made directly. The proposal submitted to Higher Health should cover implementation across all seven priority areas, including differently abled students. With respect to this focus area, a budget should be allocated from the grant for sensitisation of the general student population on this area as well as any ad hoc resources that will be needed. A motivation can be submitted, and approval can be sought for special workshops and activities for student cohorts on the subject matter of differently abled students. The implementation of the Higher Health University grant is led by either Campus Health or under the portfolio of the Dean of Students.

SRC members were encouraged to constructively engage with Higher Health grant 'implementors' at respective institutions to ensure that sufficient emphasis is placed on this priority area.

Contributions by SRC members:

- The contact details of Higher Health regional managers must be furnished to SRC members.
- Discussions must be had on the adaptation of the learning environment amidst COVID-19 to accommodate differently abled students.
- Differently abled students are not limited by their disabilities, but by their environments (there is a misconception on this issue). The latter should be focused on by SRC's and universities.
- There should be educational awareness on the special needs of students.





- A concern was raised that, when observing the percentage of differently abled students tertiary educational institutions, there might be systemic exclusions of differently abled students.
- The voice of differently abled students should be included in conversations like this. It is onthing to base a conversation on observations from an external perspective and another to base it on experience. We should not undermine the value of the latter.
- Universities need to refurbish infrastructure (if necessary) to accommodate differently abled students; provide assistive devices to students; install software on online learning devices and university computer facilities; study areas; tailored residence facilities etc.

Presentation by SRC members:

Two task teams were delegated by the SAUS NEC to work on a presentation covering grievances expressed on behalf of differently abled students and proposed solutions thereto.

Various contributions were made by student leaders to the presentation above, most of which have already been included or mentioned elsewhere above. The Task Team was granted an opportunity to respond to aforesaid contributions. The Task Team further undertook to include these contributions in the presentation document to be forwarded to SAUS (Luigia is part of task team).

Closing Remarks by the SAUS President:

The President of the South African Union of Students expressed his earnest gratitude for all the contributions that have been made over the course of the past two days. The draft document that has been prepared by the Task Teams, together with the proposed solutions





submitted by the floor, will form part of a final document which will be forwarded to the Minister of Higher Education, Vice Chancellors and Deans of Students across the country.

The following resolutions have been made during the course of today's program:

- It must be mandatory for SRC's to have at least one differently abled student on the Council.
- A campaign will be launched for the President of the Republic of South Africa to make available R1 billion for the development of infrastructure earmarked for differently abled students.
- Every university must have a disability unit catering for the needs of differently abled students and staff.
- SAUS is calling for teaching and learning methods that are compatible with the needs of differently abled students.
- SAUS must establish a disability structure led by a differently abled student.
- There must be a Student Rights Charter predominantly safeguarding the best interest of differently abled students.
- All university facilities must be re-designed to cater for differently abled students.
- Sign-language must be recognised as an official language of instruction.
- There must be bursary and other funding opportunities available to differently abled students.
- There must be social support and inclusion of differently abled students in the social activities of the university.
- Information should be accessible to students. This includes the improvement of communication channels to students.
- Academic exclusion rules must not apply to differently abled students until all other issues (including those listed above) have been resolved.





The President of SAUS urged student leaders to pledge solidarity to the resolutions listed above. He called on SRC members to be servant leaders and to be available to the students who elected them; to serve with humility and selflessness; to be transparent; to display ethical leadership; to be effective in communication; and lastly to be united when representing students.

I, Xola Njengele (SU SRC Chairperson) and Luigia Nicholas (SU SRC SpecialNeeds), hereby declare that these minutes serve as a true reflection of what transpired during this particular meeting.

