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DEPUTY SPEAKER, ACCOUNTABILITY CHAIR

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Third Term Report of the [DEPUTY SPEAKER AND ACCOUNTABILITY CHAIRPERSON]

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# **Introduction**

This is the term report of the Deputy Speaker of the Tygerberg Student Parliament written in accordance with the Student Constitution and Student Parliament Constitution and Tygerberg Student Parliament Constitution of the University of Stellenbosch.

2. **First Term**

I was appointed to the portfolio of the Deputy Speaker on the 21st of January 2021 after my interview. My main goals for the term were to firstly understand my role as the Deputy Speaker of the Tygerberg Parliament. As I was still new in the sphere of student leadership, I also wanted to familiarize myself with the working process of my body and that of other leadership structures on campus and the University at large. Secondly, I wanted to mobilize students about the Parliament, make them understand the importance and role of the parliament on campus and to urge them to actively participate in carrying the mandates of the Student Parliament on behalf of the Tygerberg Student Union. I also wanted to meet with relevant leaders in the spirit of cooperative student leadership like the chairperson of the Stellenbosch Student Court etc. Lastly, I as the Accountability Chairperson had a goal of supporting my Speaker and also hold him accountable in instances where I feel it is appropriate to do so. As a collective we were all looking forward to a very interactive and successful first sitting.

**2.1. Understanding the Role of my Portfolio**

As my first goal of which was to understand my role as the Deputy Speaker and that of the Tygerberg Student Parliament. I then took upon myself to go through all the relevant documents; the Tygerberg Student Parliament Constitution, The Stellenbosch Student Constitution etc. This gave me a good chance to be able to understand my role and hence execute it effectively.

**2.2. Informing Students of the TSP**

From my observation when I was still a first-year student, I have seen that there is a very great lack of engagement of students particularly in the Tygerberg Student Parliament and more especially in the Parliamentary Sittings. It was therefore of paramount importance to play my part on ensuring to encourage fellow students to participate in the processes of the Parliament because the Parliament is for the students. I have used all possible channels to mobilise students about the Parliament and its mandate, and why it is important that we get participation from them.

**2.3. Meeting with other Student Leaders**

Provided how short the first term was my plans to individually meet with other student leaders did not materialise. I had however reached out to some leaders including the Chairperson of the Student Court, which I hope I would be able to meet with in the Second term.

**3. First Sitting**

As the Tygerberg Student Parliament we had our first sitting on the 26th of April 2021, 18:00. We had given students time to submit agenda point of which none were received. Nevertheless, the First Sitting was conducted successfully. I would really love to commend everyone in the committee for the collective effort that was put in making sure the first sitting runs smoothly.

**4. COCURRICULAR APPLICATION**

Following the resignation of Tarryn Pangel(Secretary General) from the Co-Curricular Application Committee, she then nominated me to take over from her. I then accepted the nomination. Thus far I have not met with other team members, but I have taken it upon myself to read the Application Document.

**5. Second Term**

The second was rather a very short one a not so many activities were done during this period.

This was due to the fact that we had our Mid-year holiday during this time and since the year started late, the term was therefore shorter than normal. Nonetheless, it was very successful term.

**5.1 Team Building**

As the team we felt that having a team building session at the Robben Island would be very ideal for the TSPEC. The reason was that we can have an in-person interaction with each other, form a working relationship with each other as a committee and also get to know each other as we were going to work together for the year. In addition, the location of this session was going to benefit us a lot as young student leaders. This historic site which held South Africa’s prominent freedom fighters during the years of Apartheid is very important site for the country as a whole and has invaluable history. We believed that learning about this history would benefit us a lot in knowing where we are coming from as a country, where we are now and where we should lead our country to.

This Session unfortunately did not materialise, and we therefore did not go to Robben Island. This was because we could not get a response from Robben Island with regards to purchasing tickets for the tour, and the country was moved to a stricter lockdown level; this meant some gatherings were prohibited and the Stellenbosch University also prohibited such gathering on efforts to curb the spread the COVID-19 amongst students. We therefore had to cancel this trip.

**5.2 Resignation of Financial Officer**

On May 6, 2021, the TSP secretary received a resignation letter from our Financial Officer, Silindokuhle Chonco. As the committee we then decided to open application for this vacant position. Unfortunately, there was no application after two rounds of position offers to students. We therefore had to find a way to work with a 4-member team and adjust our team in order to accommodate the position of the Financial Officer and ensure that the tasks of this portfolio are accomplished. This was very important because as a body that from time to time uses funds, we could not cancel this portfolio all together. We then decided that I would take the duties of the Financial Officer. This meant I will hold both the portfolio of Deputy Speaker and Financial Officer. Taking into consideration that this was not an easy task, we resolve that although I will be an office holder of this portfolio all members will assist me should I need addition assistance in this regard. I then spent most of this time on getting to understand the working of the Treasurer Portfolio and how the duties are performed.

**5.3TeraTerms and Financial Literacy**

As I had taken up the portfolio of Financial Officer, I had to be orientated on different processes that the treasurer performs especially with regards to payments and finance related processes. To achieve this, I had to listen to Teams Recordings of Training Sessions held earlier in the year to train Financial Officers. I did not have permission to these recordings and hence could not go through necessary training. In addition to that I also was not granted access to Tera Term. I have since requested to have access to the above, but I was not granted access. We then decided that we will ask for assistance from Student Governance(Ms Yolanda and later Mr Mpanza) with the processing of payments.

**6. Third Term**

The third term was particularly very busy, and a lot of activities were carried out by my portfolio and by the TSP as a whole. We also had our Second Ordinary Sitting during this term.

**6.1 Acting Speaker**

During the period of the Tygerberg Student Representative(TSR) Elections, the TSP received yet another letter of resignation from the Speaker on August 4, 2021. This was because Mr Andre Pillay wanted to run for the position in the TSR. This meant he cannot run while he is a speaker of the body that holds the TSR accountable which he was running for, therefore he was compelled to resign. I then had to assume the position of Speaker of TSP; this was because it was too late to facilitate the election of a new Speaker with only one term remaining. In addition, as a committee again we decided to split some of the duties amongst ourselves. I had a full support of the Committee on carrying out the tasks during this period.

I also consulted with constitution and MR Mdepa on how to proceed as we were only left with 3 members in the committee. The constitution was not explicit on how to act in this scenario. I personally backed our resolution as it meant the TSP was at risk of collapsing.

During this period, I spearheaded the planning of the third TSP Ordinary Sitting and the Priority points submission to the TSR.

I was also then admitted as an Ex-officio member of they Stellenbosch Student Parliament. During this time, I had to regularly meet with the executive members of the Committee, and also be involved in the Co-curricular application that I was already part of.

**6.2 Readmission of the Speaker**

On 1 September 2021, the TSP received an application of readmission from the speaker Mr Andre Pillay. This was because he did not make it to the TSR. It was hard decision for me to take as this scenario as well was not explicitly catered for in the TSP constitution. After extensive reading of the constitution, I felt the readmission of the Speaker did not go against any part of our constitution hence I felt it was correct decision to have him back. Another reason was that our committee desperately needed an extra hand as we were already short of 2 people. I also consulted with MR Mdepa in this regard. We then took a collective decision as the Committee to reinstate the Speaker back to his position. I facilitated this process. I then briefed the Speaker on the developments that took place while he was away

**6.3 Third Sitting**

We planned for third ordinary Sitting of the TSP.

Agenda point submission were then opened to Students.

The following points were sent by the Tygerberg Student Union

1. Request to extend Library hours.
2. The Pedestrian crossing and Access Points.

The third Sitting took place on 27 September 2021. We engaged the TSR on these agenda points during the third sitting.

**6.4 Priority Points to TSR**

As per our Constitution, the TSP is required to furnish the incoming TSR with Priority Points. These are pointing that the student community feel are of priority and the TSR should act on them. These points were brought up by TSPEC members during out committee meeting.

I brought up points that were relating to 1. Mental Health 2. TSS food Prices; specifically, the previously proposed food tuck 3. Communication from Lecturers to Class representatives to Students.

I presented these points to the TSR during the TSP third ordinary Sitting, I also made them available to the TSR chair and Deputy Chair via email.

The following are the points that were presented to the TSR

1. **Mental Health**

Mental health is a very huge problem facing our society, more especially the youth. It is even more prevalent in the health care workers and students in the healthcare field alike. It is therefore of paramount importance that the incoming TSR prioritises the mental health of all students in the Tygerberg Campus. As the TSP we recognise the measurements that have been put in place to achieve this, but we believe more work still needs to be done. While counselling services are widely available on campus, access to them must be made easier to students and should not take a very long time to reach the students. In addition, most students who will seek help from these services are mostly likely to be already affected or suffering from a mental health issue, therefore we would like the TSR to put forward preventative measures to ensure that it does not reach that point: prevention is always better than cure. We believe more mental health awareness programmes will help in this regard.

1. **TSS Food Prices**

The current prices at the TSS shops are very high especially in the student community setting, where a large number of students depend on ample NSFAS and Bursary allowances. We would like the TSR to engage with Fedics in this regard and take this into consideration when setting up their prices, and not only consider maximising profit. In addition, the lack of other shops contributes to these high prices because Fedics enjoys its sole competition. We therefore feel an introduction of additional shops in the TSS would help a great deal and will allow students to have a privilege of choices. The previous TSR was working on bringing food trucks on some days of the week, it would be great if the current TSR can implement this initiative.

1. **Hydro boils in Lecture Halls**

 This would be ideal for students who make use of the lecture halls when studying especially during winter nights. We believe that this will be very convenient because students would have to walk all the way to their residences just to make coffee or have hot water.

1. **Parking Prices**

The students who make use of the parking spaces on campus feel that the prices for parking cars are very expensive. We therefore request the TSR to engage with relevant structures on behalf of these students to lower these prices, or at least provide an explanation as to why the prices are this high.

1. **Transition from Online to Physical Contacts**

As you all are aware that it has been more than a year that we had to do everything online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students have since had minimal physical contact with each other, more especially 2020 and 2021 first years. These students have not had a full experience of the Campus life and interaction with their colleagues. As the country is relaxing the lockdown regulation and increasing the vaccine roll-out programme we will be moving back to normal soon. It is for this reason that we feel the TSR has to put up programmes that will help the student community in transitioning from online interactions to physical contact. We would love to see more sporting events between residences and even external campuses.

1. **Class Representative and Faculty Communication.**

The communication between students, the class representatives and the Lecturers has been poor especially for students who tested positive for COVID-19 who were left in the dark on measures put in place for them not to lose out on their academics during quarantine. We would like that this communication gap be looked into by the TSR and class representatives.

1. **Security on Campus.**

It is very important that students feel safe on campus. We have received some complaints from some students concerning their safety on campus and residence spaces. They have complained that fights have occurred during curfew hours, and some were involving students that are not even residents. This is not only a safety risk but also a health risk in a time of a COVID pandemic. We would like the TSR to consult with campus security on measures to tighten security on campus.

1. **COB closing date**

We have some enquiries from students as to why there must be a closing date to load for food quota, as this means students will not be able to make use of COB should they run out of quota before the end of the year, and this can have implications on food security. We are however cognisance that this is due to the University finances and financial policies. In this regard, the students would like that adequate continuous  communication must be in place about these deadlines to ensure that the students do not miss them.

**6.5 TSR Evaluation**

As a body that holds the TSR accountable. It is very crucial that we also take part on their evaluation in whether their duties were performed.

These were members of the TSR that I evaluated.

1. Hugh Seton for Sports portfolio
2. Abdul-Mutakabir Aziz for Student Facilities
3. Amore Arends for Culture
4. Kamva-Qama Tambekile for Strategic Communication and
5. Tshiamo Ngcobo for Vice Chairperson

Upon reading the individual reports of these TSR members, I was satisfied with the work they have done during the term, and I evaluated them as such.

**6.6 TSR x TSP Meeting**

On the 30th of September 2021 I had a meeting on behalf of the TSP with a member of the TSR. As a policy Chair of TSP, I met with the Policy Chair of the TSR, Mr Keaton Harris. This was meeting served as an introductory session with the incoming TSR Policy Unit Chair, secondly to relay some communication to the TSR following the Third Ordinary Sitting, thirdly to discuss the progress of the TSP on the drafting and amendment of the current constitution and lastly to touch on the priority points that were presented to the TSR and discuss a way forward on the engagement of the points between these bodies.

The resolution of this meeting was.

1. Mr Keaton Harris will meet with his committee and discuss these points
2. They will then evaluate the practicability of these points and give feedback to the TSP
3. We will then have a joint engagement on these points

**6.7 Team Building Session**

As already mentioned above that earlier in the year we planned for a team building session as the TSPEC. We wanted to go to Robben Island, but this could not happen due to lack of response from the Robben Island and that the country was moved to a stricter lockdown restriction.

We then decided that to rather have a team session at Durbanville Hills Wines.

I organised this session.

The reasons for these sessions were as follows.

Initially the committee had planned to go to Robben Island Museum for this team building session. We felt that going to this historic site will help us a lot as young upcoming student leaders to understand the very important past of our country and we could use this knowledge to pave the future, moreover this would help us to get together as a committee and discuss plans we have for the TSP and get to know each other better, this would contribute a lot to our working relationship.

However, this could not take place due to the Lockdown. We therefore decided to hold this session now towards the end of our term. This session will serve as firstly our farewell function for the term, secondly it will give us an opportunity as outgoing committee members to reflect on the work we did during our term, give each other constructive feedback and general advice on how each one of us can improve their leadership skills in future. Secondly most of our committee members are

aspiring to run for another term in the TSP and possibly other leadership structures in the student community, so we are of the view that this session would help a great deal in sharing ideas to each on how we can better the TSP and the student community at large.

Lastly as a committee we spent all our term without ever seeing each other physically, this will be a great opportunity to have a human contact with each other that we have long been longing for.

This session was indeed a success, and we made the most from it.

**6.8 Design for Transformative Experimental Learning 2021**

As I form part of the Co-curricular Committee, I have had to attend the programme training on this. This was the Design for Transformative Experimental Learning(DTEL). We have been holding weekly workshops once a week every Friday.

The purpose of these workshops was to teach us as student leaders on leadership and leadership values that are in alignment with Stellenbosch University.

It was very crucial that we undergo this training programme as we are in the process of application for Curricular Recognition as TSP.

**7. Finances**

The portfolio of the Deputy Speaker has thus far utilised R3000,00. All this was spent during the team session at Durbanville Hills Wine. In addition, we booked the University Vehicle for this.