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Second Term Report of the [Speaker/Chairperson]

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# Introduction

This is the term report of the Speaker of Student Parliament written in accordance with the Student Constitution and Student Parliament Constitution of the University of Stellenbosch. This report will speak of the goals achieved by Student Parliament in the second academic term. This term report will also critically analyse the milestones set out and achieved by Student Parliament, the challenges we faced in our second term as well as our plans and goals for the third term.

# Second term overview

My second term as Speaker was one which came with its fair share of challenges and triumphs. From the goals set out in previous report, I am proud to announce that the following was achieved by Student Parliament this past term—

We had a very successful second sitting, which reinvigorated my belief in the important role that Student Parliament plays. This second sitting allowed our fellow maties to properly and constructively excavate their grievances with the SRC and effectively hold them accountable. It allowed for healthy debate and dialogue to take place between the SRC and their constituents. It was a small achievement of the values which we as Student Parliament champion, namley accountability and transparency.

Additionally, we set out to elect our two review committees, our internal Constitutional Review Committee, which we were able to successfully achieve as well as the Constitutional Compliance Committee. I once more want to congratulate Tamara Foyn and Tajme Maharaj, I look forward to working with these members in successfully constructing a new Student Parliament Constitution. Unfortunately, we were unable to elect a Constitutional Compliance Committee as envisioned by the SRC Constituional Review Committee, I will elaborate on this point a bit further down this report.

Our Social media engagement and visibility has increased tremendously this past term, this was largely due to gaining access to all our social media accounts, facebook, Twitter and Instagram. I want to thank Ms Chikoti for all her hard work on that front, as well as streamlining our social media names ensuring excellent brand recognition and continuity.

A further goal we set out but failed to meet was the completion of our co curriculum application. Admittedly this was a large goal and was not feasible in the short time frame I had set out for it. However, this application will be completed in the coming weeks. I also want to thank Ms Roodt for all the support she’s provided during this application process and with the 4-week plan set out by the co curriculum office, I have the outmost faith that this application will be completed this term.

Lastly, I set out to increase bonds among my committee me members. This has sadly been harder to achieve than I thought. This is largely due to the Student Parliament family growing and stretching past just my immediate committee. Student Parliament now consists of the Student Parliament committee, the Accountability Committee as well as the Constitutional Review committee, having taken more members has spread my time thin and has made creating meaningful connections significantly harder. My main goal for this coming term is to improve these bonds and working relations, not only a micro scale but on a macro scale and across the entirety of Student Parliament and not only in the indivual silos of each subcommittee.

# Second Sitting

The second sitting took place on the 17th of June 2021, on teams at 18:00. This sitting was the first where members of the matie community showed a real vested interest in. This was clear from the agenda points submissions that came from out fellow maties and not only from the Student Parliament Committee. We saw a large increase in the number of attendees during this sitting, which is something I hope to build on with our remaining sittings. I want to thank my fellow Maties for their level of engagement and robust conversations during this sitting. Some of the challenges that I’m experiencing with online sittings is mostly administrative. During the past 2 sittings we have failed to properly produce an attendance register, this has been a large oversight on my part as well as my communications officer. We assumed that an attendance register would automatically be generated by MS teams but have since noticed that that is not the case. We have put in the necessary systems to ensure that this is recitified going forward.

Not having an attendance register has made it difficult to hold elected officials accountable for lack of attendance, as there are several SRC members who have failed to attend our sittings, but I have nothing tangible to substantiate that claim with. Hence our focus going forward will be placed on effectively taking register at the start of each sitting.

Lastly, sittings are being treated as optional by some of our members and I really want to urge them to show a larger vested interest in attending sittings and in engaging with their constituents as this is one of the few platforms that our students can engage with their elected officials. Going forward I hope to see our elected officials prioritizing these sittings in their calendars.

# Constitutional Complaince Committee

It was envisioned by the SRC Review Committee that Student Parliament creates a Constitutional Compliance Committee (CCC), which would have been tasked with overseeing constitutional compliance for all constitutionally recognized structures. Considering some of the large changes made in the proposed amended Student Constitution, we as parliament saw this committee as vital in ensuring a successful transition from our old to new constitution. After applications were opened for this committee, we received no applicants. As such we as a committee decided that it would be best that the mandate of this committee be absorbed by the Policy Unit. This resolution was accepted by the committee and as such our Policy Officer, Deputy Speaker Kritzinger has assumed the responsibility of overseeing compliance of these recognised structures during her Policy forum, which is set to take place on the 21st of August 2021, this will be the first of two forums that she will host to ensure effective Constitutional compliance by these structures.

Ensuring compliance after each constitutional review seems to be something that has slipped through the cracks, we as a committee wholeheartedly understand the importance of ensuring there is a structure present to oversee this process hence the decisions to have this mandate abosorded by our Policy Officer.

# Constitution Review Committee (CRC)

This is an internal body of Student Parliament tasked with ensuring our very own constitutional review. However, it has been a bit challenging to realise this committees mandate. This is due to the ineffective communication from the SRC review committee and a lack of transparency on the processes and the status of this newly amended constitution. As it stands the Constitution has not been ratified by court nor has council accepted it yet. However, the imposed date of complaince by this committee is scheduled to be the 1st of September 2021, is one which can not and will not be met. This is a hopelessly short timeline. The changes made in this proposed amended constitution calls for an overhaul of Parliaments current systems and process, which can not be achieved in the proposed timeline. This has been properly articulated to the SRC Review Committee and to date we have not received an appropriate response from them. This is an important process and one which can not be rushed, further it would be a massive violation of separation of powers if the task to construct a new Student Parliament Constitution is left to the SRC to finalise, which is the current proposed resolution should we fail to meet the set deadline.

Our proposed resolution is to build in a suspensive time clause of 6 months to allow Student Parliament to construct their own constitution. We hope an amicable resolution will be reached soon.

# Challenges

## SRC:

Communication with the SRC has taken a turn for the worst. Not only between Student Parliament but also with their constituents. As such it raises questions of transparency on their side.

Communication to me, is a two-way street. Unfortunately, the SRC has not attempted to meet us halfway. Communication betweeen these two structures seem to solely rest on the shoulders of Student Parliament, which should not be the case. Getting a hold of basic documents has been very difficult, this is due to them not being made available by the SRC on their website. It is disheartening that this close to the end of terms that we’re experiencing these communication breakdowns. I hope we will be able to salvage a healthy working relationship with the SRC before the end of our terms.

## Student Parliament Committee:

With the growth of the SP family, I am finding my time stretched quite thin, and I’m struggling to fully realise meaningful connections with each of my committee members. This is further complicated by the various processes of Parliament which are occurring sulmentationsly. It’s become near impossible for me to be fully present in each meeting and I’m both starting to see and feel the working relations I’ve worked hard to cultivate withering away.

## Finance

Financial processes have been hopelessly slow. I’m struggling to properly identify where the bottlenecks in these processes lie. Payments and reimbursements take up to 2 months to properly complete. It is unfortunate that I cannot take on these processes myself and rely on the efforts if my financial officer who has expressed great difficulty in being able to fully realise his mandate and complete payments in an efficient manner.

## Third term goals:

* Elect a new Speaker
* Host two sittings
* Complete the co curriculum application
* Have a social outing with SPC at large
* Salvage communication with the SRC
* Design Student Parliament merchandise

# Conclusion

It has been a challenging second term, but one that had its triumphs- the main one being that I’ve remained consistent in my mandate. Going forward I hope to figure out better ways of navigating the communications issues that we’ve been facing, applying different techniques and approaches and relying more on the support available to us from student governance. I want to thank my SPC for making this term a little bit easier and I look forward to wrapping up this year with this amazing group of people.