



**Stellenbosch**

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forward together  
sonke siya phambili  
saam vorentoe

**HIGHLIGHTS**  
**from the**  
**RECTOR'S MANAGEMENT REPORT**  
**to**  
**COUNCIL**

Monday 15 April 2024

**Prof Wim de Villiers,**  
**Rector and Vice-Chancellor**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **A challenging start to the year**

The 2024 academic year got off to a challenging start when staff members discovered two rooms in Wilgenhof residence containing items and depictions that are deeply distressing. The contents of the rooms seemingly point to practices at the residence that run counter to the University's values. Given the imminent arrival of seniors at the residence to prepare for the official welcoming of our newcomer students, the rooms were cleared and the contents secured with a view to launching a thorough investigation. This was to occur against the backdrop of the ongoing transformation of our residence culture to promote and protect human dignity and mutual respect and to foster a sense of camaraderie and belonging.

The Rectorate subsequently appointed a panel of investigation into the discovery, with the following objectives:

- To understand the historical, cultural and symbolic dimensions of the contents and functions of the two rooms, consider this against the background of enculturation practices at Wilgenhof, and advise the Rectorate accordingly.
- To consider in detail the significance of the contents and functions of the two rooms within the broader institutional culture and operations of SU residences.
- To assess whether and to what extent the records, practices and general culture of Wilgenhof are inimical to the values of the University and may involve infringement of the human dignity of current and past SU students and staff.
- To establish whether unacceptable practices at Wilgenhof over time have been protected or covered up by University staff, alumni or students.
- To assess whether there is evidence of conduct in contravention of any SU policies, regulations, rules or the Disciplinary Code for Students of SU by past and/or current student leaders and/or management of Wilgenhof.

The panel is chaired by senior counsel Advocate Nick de Jager. He is assisted by Dr Derek Swemmer, the former registrar of the universities of the Witwatersrand and Free State, and Ms Penny van der Bank, SU's Deputy Registrar: Governance. We have made available to the panel academic and professional expertise at the University to consult on various aspects relating to the history, tradition, sociology, psychology and culture of SU and its residences.

I will provide an update on the progress or outcome of the panel's work at the Council meeting in April.

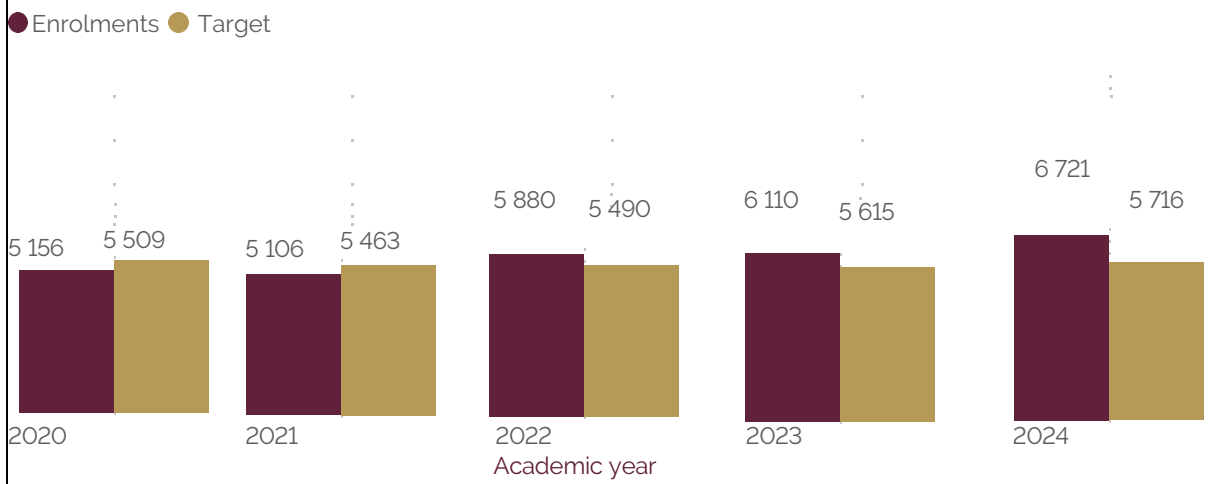
### **A mega-successful newcomer welcoming event**

Despite the media frenzy on the Wilgenhof matter, the official 2024 welcoming event at Coetzenburg stadium and the customary Dreamwalk on Thursday 1 February can undoubtedly be regarded as one of the biggest and best in years.

### **Newcomer enrolments for 2024**

This year was the first time that SUNStudent was used to manage student registrations. A few technical challenges and system glitches did surface. Notwithstanding these, however, the team at the Registrar's Division managed to keep registrations ticking over at a healthy pace. At the close of the formal registration period for newcomers, registrations exceeded 6 700 – a good 17,6% over the enrolment management target for 2024. This compares very well with previous years, as the following chart shows:

### Actual enrolments vs targets by academic year



Academic year	Deviation from target – number	Deviation from target – percentage
2020	-353	-6,4% ▼
2021	-357	-6,5% ▼
2022	390	7,1% ▲
2023	495	8,8% ▲
2024	1 005	17,6% ●

### 'Walk-ins' and the student accommodation crisis

Efforts to increase the diversity of our demographic profile in recent years have seen a steady increase in first-generation students, who at times are not fully informed of University enrolment processes. This leads to an increasing number of 'walk-ins' – students who arrive on campus without confirmed accommodation for the year.

To provide for this trend, we proactively created emergency housing facilities for 100 students with a view to the 2024 academic year. However, 518 students arrived on campus without accommodation.

Through the combined efforts of the Registrar's Division, Student Affairs and our student leadership structures, SU spaces and amenities were made available as an emergency measure to house these students in safety until appropriate placement could be arranged. At the time of writing this report, 480 students had been placed in University and private accommodation around town.

The remaining 38 were returning students without any funding support. This complicated placement in private accommodation, which generally requires upfront deposits. It is this group who decided to stage a sit-in at the main entrance of Admin B. The plight of these 'homeless' students received wide coverage in local newspapers and on social media. It also attracted a series of on-site visits by government representatives from the Public Protector, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), and the Human Rights Commission, as well as enquiries from Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation. The students eventually

accepted a local congregation's offer of temporary accommodation while efforts continue to find them suitable lodging.

We clearly underestimated SU's appeal as a preferred institution of higher learning to our new generation of students. On the one hand, this bodes well for our university as we move into the future; on the other, it is disheartening to know that serious cutbacks in government grants for infrastructure development, including student housing, will make it extremely challenging to accommodate everyone.

At present, we have 8 000 beds in University residences, of which 1 500 are earmarked for our first-year newcomers. We are doing everything we can to speed up work on the two new student residences that commenced last year. These will add an additional 400 beds to meet the increasing demand for student accommodation. Thus, SU should be better positioned to cope with the greater demand for placement in our residences in 2025.

## December 2023 and March 2024 graduations

At the December graduation ceremonies, we conferred 5 809 qualifications. While the final graduation numbers for March are still being finalised, it looks like our autumn graduation series will take us over the 9 000-mark in terms of qualifications awarded for the 2023 academic year. Data also shows that more than 95% of SU graduates find good employment, which is significant against the backdrop of our country's high youth unemployment rate of approximately 50%.

## Solidly en route to becoming the leading research-intensive university in Africa

According to official DHET figures in 2023, SU remains among South Africa's top three research-intensive universities, both per capita and in terms of total research output. Our research contracts continue to grow, with over 1 450 signed contracts reported last year, while we also submitted 3 055 research articles to DHET for subsidy purposes – our highest number yet.

To keep track of our contribution to global science, however, we need to gauge SU's research output in relation to that of other leading contemporaries. In this regard, our Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Sibusiso Moyo, commissioned a bibliometric analysis of the University's research performance. Some of [the key findings in the report](#), which was released only recently, are as follows:

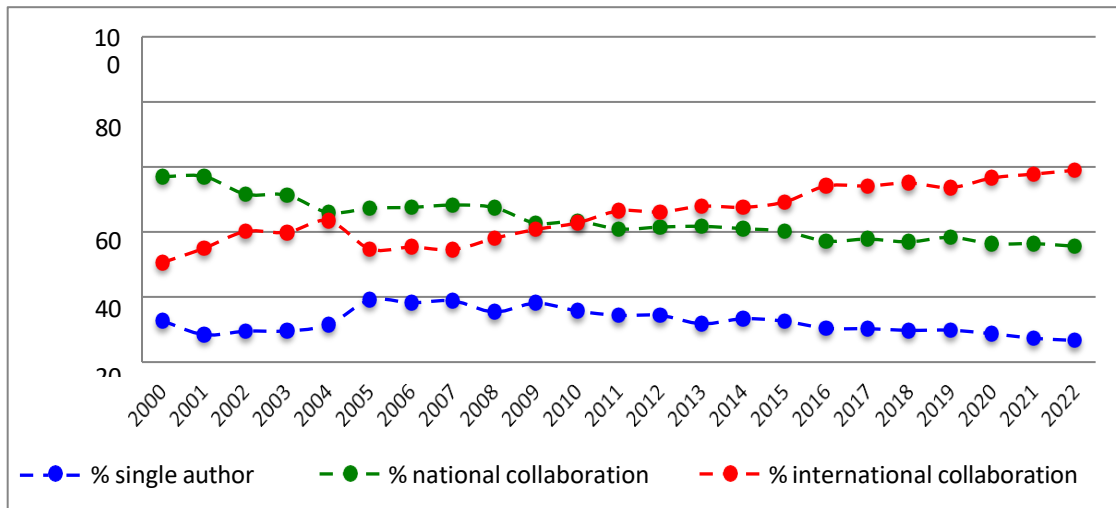
- Since the first major revision of the DHET funding framework in 2005, SU has maintained a **consistent and steady increase in total publication output** (journal articles, books, book chapters and published conference proceedings). The summary table below shows how the output subsidy units in each individual category increased from 2005 to 2022, and at what rate:

	2005	2022	Growth rate
Journal article units	789,4	1 750,52	4,86%
Book and book chapter units	14,0	397,54	21,8%
Conference proceedings	22,74	78,67	7,57%
Total publication units	826,1	2 255,12	6,87%

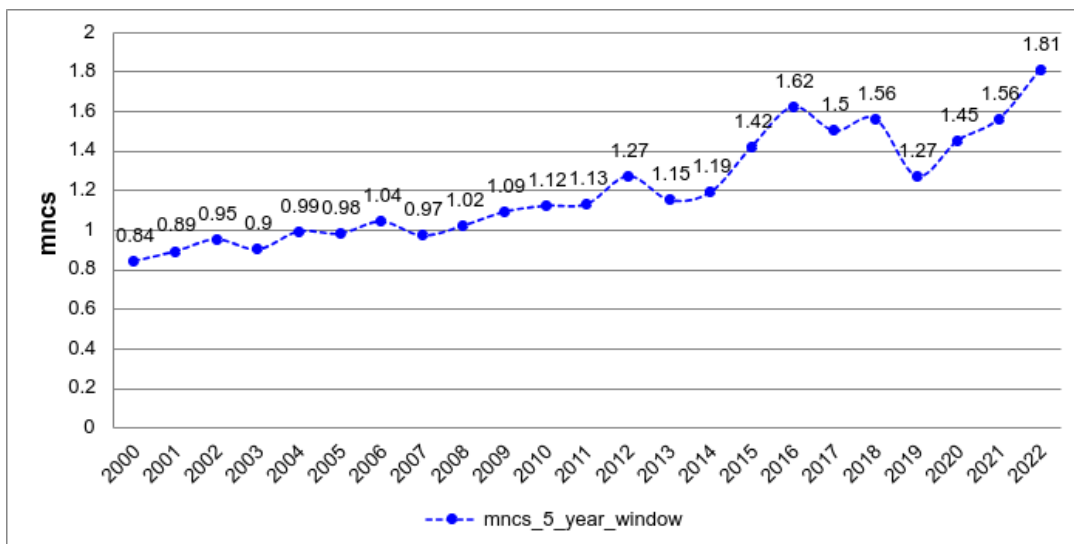
- SU has maintained **an above-average rate of increase in the annual production of journal articles**. Over the past 18 years, our authors have produced 34 289 articles in accredited journals, translating into 22 543,83 article subsidy units. The number of

journals in which SU authors publish, in turn, increased threefold from 525 in 2005 to 1 579 in 2022. This also reflects the year-on-year increase in the number of accredited journals, especially those indexed in the <sup>CA</sup>Web of Science and Scopus (since 2015).

- We have **more than doubled our research master's graduates** from around 400 in 2005 to the recent figures of approximately 900.
- The University maintains a **significant presence across multiple scientific fields**.
- **Foreign research collaboration at our institution is growing** (measured in terms of co-authorship). The graph below shows how SU staff have increasingly collaborated with foreign scientists and scholars over the past two decades:



- SU has **significantly increased the citation impact of its article output**, achieving the third highest impact score of all South African universities in 2022.



In her annual report to be tabled at the Council meeting in April, Prof Moyo is sure to elaborate further on this very useful analysis, which was done by our DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Scientometrics and Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (SciSTIP).

## Institutional Planning Forum (IPF) 2024

We have established a very successful pattern of gathering the broader leadership of our university at the start of every academic year to take stock, assess progress and plan ahead. The IPF held on 7 and 8 February again brought together more than 60 senior members of staff to refocus and prioritise activities aimed at sustaining and further enhancing our success well into the future.

Some of the **salient decisions** taken during the two-day deliberations were to:

- build on our research successes and international multidisciplinary partnerships on some of the biggest challenges of our time;
- give further impetus to the approved institutional gamechangers, with specific reference to academic renewal and the role of artificial intelligence in SU's future academic project;
- further align strategic management indicators between responsibility centres and faculties to propel SU towards attaining its vision; and
- pay renewed attention to entrepreneurship and innovation, and consider the possibility of a school dedicated to this field.

## Ongoing sectoral challenges

All indications are that **loadshedding** will be a permanent feature of the academic year ahead. The work of our contingency committee continues to ensure that we safeguard our academic and research activities as best we can.

In addition, the problems encountered with **National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding** for qualifying students last year are clearly far from resolved. In fact, this is among the reasons for the accommodation crisis referred to above, as students are left wondering whether and when they will receive funding. To compound matters even further, the NSFAS board has not only decided to continue utilising the services of the now discredited disbursement agencies, but also to allocate different accommodation allowances to metro and rural institutions. SU has applied to be considered for metro status and is awaiting NSFAS's response.

As is our custom, a member of the Rectorate is afforded the opportunity to submit an annual report to Council every quarter. This time, it is the turn of the DVC: Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Sibusiso Moyo, to report on activities in her responsibility centre this past year.

For this reason, I will share only selected highlights from her portfolio. I encourage you to read Prof Moyo's separate report for more details. My report covers the period November 2023 to February 2024, unless stated otherwise. My fellow members of management and I welcome this opportunity to engage with Council.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE RECTOR'S MANAGEMENT REPORT

In the following paragraphs, I provide highlights from my management report. For an in-depth look at contributions from the various responsibility centres, please turn to the addendum.

### 1. SUNFin officially out of 'hypercare'

The three-month 'hypercare' period that followed formal implementation of SUNFin ended in November. We have now transferred all support operations to the various subject matter experts and the Financial Systems Support and Training subdivision. Our

implementation partner, Visions, is still taking the lead on the required process-specific tweaks.

According to the SUNFin service desk, which is fully operational, 92% of requests for assistance have been resolved. Since going live at the end of July 2023, 4 188 tickets have been logged. The team is hard at work to close long outstanding items.

### **Progress with modules**

- The rollout of SUNFin's Projects and Grants module is progressing steadily, and user uptake is significant.
- Finance successfully loaded the University's 2024 budget onto the new system. The 2023 year-end processes for Tera (our operating system to execute and complete financial reporting and transactions) and SUNFin are under way, being the primary focus for the upcoming annual external audit.
- In the area of data warehousing, significant work is being done together with the divisions of Research Development as well as Strategic Initiatives and Information Governance. The aim is to provide end users with simplified financial information for research reporting purposes. Further feedback will be provided once the solution has been tested.
- In terms of the Procurement and Accounts Payable (creditors) module, too, the team has made good progress to reduce the backlog and build capacity for business-as-usual operations.

### **Updates**

Since system implementation, the SUNFin team has rolled out three updates with no system downtime or interruption. The last update was completed on 20 and 21 January, and the next one is scheduled for April.

### **Dedicated Senate work group**

We've established a SUNFin Senate work group, whose terms of reference were finalised at the end of January. The group will focus on managing any substantial operational issues that users may experience.

## **2. Registration in SUNStudent 'baptism of fire'**

The focus of the SUNStudent project over the past few months was to ensure that all the capabilities required for registration 2024 were ready. These included Registrations, Student Fees, Services (Fees), Postgraduate Management, versions 1 of Financial Aid, Residence Management, and Scheduling, as well as Societies and Sport Clubs Management.

### **Go-live for registration**

Our Bellville Park campus (Stellenbosch Business School and School of Public Leadership) kicked off the go-live on 4 December 2023 with staff carrying out registrations on students' behalf. Tygerberg campus started with registration and residence management on 2 January 2024, comprising a combination of student self-registration and staff-assisted registration. Registration for Stellenbosch campus and Military Sciences also opened on 2 January, with the big milestone being the commencement of online registration for returning students on 15 January.

Student Fees, Services (Fees) and Financial Aid, all of which are inextricably linked to registration, were rolled out during the January registration period.

### **Challenges**



The registration period proved extremely challenging. Access and log-in issues, incomplete module lists as well as users' unfamiliarity with the business processes and functionality of the new system were some of the issues that resulted in a slow start. These issues were addressed as they occurred over the course of the first term, with several key actions planned to improve both future implementation practices and system functionality.

### Ongoing improvement

Rigorous analyses of the root causes of incidents, the rollout of fixes and patches to address these, along with daily contact with end users and regular communication with prospective and current students, led to a steady increase in registration volumes as time progressed. By the end of the registration period 23 420 undergraduate students had enrolled, including the 6 943 first-year students.

Work now continues to prepare the next capabilities, which will go live during the rest of 2024 as required by the student administration cycle.

Read Registrar's memo to Council [here](#).

See Presentation from Registrar [here](#).

## 3. Photovoltaic project to future-proof our campuses

We have commenced with an extensive photovoltaic (PV) project across our campuses. The first installation under this project was fitted on the roof of the **Biomedical Research Institute's North and South buildings** (see "Addendum to the Rector's Management Report to Council" for more).

Various roof strengthening projects are under way on our campuses to ensure that roof structures can handle the additional weight of the PV panels to be installed. Among others, the overall project will include the **installation of various PV systems on constructed carports**. The results of a feasibility study for this project are expected in March 2024.

Moreover, in October 2023, a new work request was submitted for the registration of a project called **SUN Solar PV: North Campus**, incorporating all previously registered Stellenbosch rooftop PV solar installations into a single project. Availability of funding has since been confirmed. SUN Solar PV: North Campus aims to achieve economies of scale by providing a total system output of 1 051,60 kW. Assessments of all affected roofs have been concluded, and all tie-in points have been identified.

Rooftop panels will be installed on the following buildings:

- Facilities Management
- Maintenance
- Information and Communications Technology
- SU LaunchLab
- Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering
- Engineering Knowledge Centre
- PO Sauer
- Industrial Engineering

The installation of the R28 500 000 project will be executed in sections. Work is planned to start in April and conclude by October. Procurement is under way, and the preferred contractor was appointed on 26 January after the tender adjudication process was completed.

#### 4. Introducing the Maties Coffee Hub

From 1 March, the Maties Coffee Hub, located in the Matie Shop at the Neelsie student centre, will be offering a quality coffee experience for SU students and the surrounding community. In partnership with roastery CoffeeMM, Maties Coffee Hub aims to become more than a coffee spot, however; it aspires to be a gathering place for the Maties community. The hub stands out for its convenient location, sustainable practices, and commitment to providing a welcoming space for all. Coffee, smoothies and fresh eats are on offer at competitive, student-friendly prices. The emphasis is on ethical sourcing, fair trade, and sustainability. Biodegradable cups underline SU's commitment to eco-friendliness.



*Left: The Maties Coffee Hub in the Neelsie-based Matie Shop has a serving and seating area outside, next to the Jan Mouton Learning Centre.*

#### 5. USSA December 2023 a triumph for Maties Sport

Maties Sport had a [successful University Sport South Africa \(USSA\) campaign in December](#), claiming the following titles:

Gold	Silver	Bronze
Water polo (women)	Chess (women individual)	Golf (men's team)
Water polo (men)	Golf (women individual)	Table tennis (men's team)
Football (men – B section)	Sailing (team)	
Chess (men and women individual)		
Golf (women individual)		



**USSA 2023 winners:**  
Maties Golf (left) and Maties Chess (right).



Maties Football (left) and Maties Water Polo women's team (right).



## 6. Lückhoff Living Museum moves forward with workstreams

The Lückhoff Living Museum does powerful work in giving meaningful substance to the concept of restitution, positioning it as visual redress, visible and living change, inclusion, equity, and access. There is also broad consensus that, as an act of memorialisation, the museum must play a leading role in fostering ongoing engagement on the issue of restitution.

To this end, the following two workstreams (*pictured below*) have been set up:

- **Restitution as memorialisation:** This workstream will focus on projects that promote the memorialisation of Die Vlakte (the area in the centre of Stellenbosch from where residents were forcibly removed under apartheid law), recording oral histories and creating an open, inclusive and engaging space for participation.

- **Critical pedagogy:** This workstream will collaborate to advance meaningful inclusion and access to SU, recognising that the latent impact of apartheid continues to create barriers to entry to higher education for people of colour. It will also create a critical and inclusive ethos for knowledge practices, teaching, learning and research at the University within the context of the Khampepe report findings and recommendations.



The workstreams comprise both SU staff members and community leaders.

## 7. SOAR spreads its wings

In 2023, our university's first-generation programme, SOAR, supported some 60 newcomer students with their transition to university life. This year, that number has doubled to 125 students.

SOAR (an acronym for strengths, opportunities, agency and resilience) was set up by Student Affairs in 2020, shortly before the Covid-19 lockdown. The aim is to better acclimatise students who do not come from families with a history of studying at SU or any other tertiary institution.

In addition, the programme has broadened its focus this year. SOAR now collaborates with partners such as TRAC South Africa (SU's national, non-profit Mathematics and Physical Science intervention programme in secondary schools), SciMathUS (our second-chance programme for learners to improve their final matric results in Mathematics and Physical Science so as to qualify for university admission) and the Thuthuka bursary fund of the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants. In this way, SOAR seeks to expand the school-to-university pipeline for first-generation students.

## 8. Renewed focus on strengthening the Student Affairs environment

Recent developments in our Division of Student Affairs (DSAf) are bringing us ever closer to our strategic objective of providing a transformative student experience.

As also emphasised in the Khampepe report, a transformative student experience would imply that every student at SU is offered the chance to acquire essential competencies in social justice and democracy. The newly established **Leadership Development Planning Committee (LDPC)** will support just that. A formal structure of DSAf, the LDPC is responsible for overseeing all leadership development and training offered to students. In addition, the committee is expected to advise DSAf's senior director, Dr Choice Makhetha, and our DVC: Learning and Teaching, Prof Deresh Ramjugernath, should a leadership development offering be misaligned with our vision of a

transformative student experience or fail to develop specific graduate attributes or empower student leaders to facilitate matters of diversity and inclusion at SU.

The LDPC is chaired by Dr Heidi October, deputy director of Leadership in the newly formed Centre for Student Life and Learning (CSLL) (*see "Addendum to the Rector's Management Report to Council" for more*). In addition to its reporting lines to Dr Makhetha and Prof Ramjugernath, the committee also has a communication channel to CIRCoRe (our Committee for the Institutional Response to the (Khampepe) Commission's Recommendations). The LDPC's terms of reference were finalised on 6 December 2023.

Moreover, one of the new dedicated focus areas of the CSLL is **staff development**, ensuring that our Student Affairs practitioners have the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their roles with distinction. To this end, CSLL staff were recently invited to participate in a survey to gain deeper insight into their different development needs. The aim of the staff development portfolio is to build a stronger Student Affairs community of practice and streamline processes to support staff with their respective professional needs, including funding applications to attend workshops, conferences and other portfolio-related opportunities. Opportunities for support services staff to take part in international research-related work will also be explored in collaboration with SU International. By investing in the development of our Student Affairs practitioners, we can ensure that the broader student body benefits from an integrated, seamless, transformational service.

## 9. An update on CIRCoRe

The Committee in Response to the Recommendations of the Commission (CIRCoRe) has provided Council with a comprehensive report on the activities of its respective Workstreams and how their divergent activities relate to key recommendations of the Khampepe Commission. The report is available [here](#).

## CONCLUSION

There can be little doubt that we face a challenging year on many fronts. However, given our leadership's enthusiasm for the task at hand, and the proactive approach to challenges that has become our hallmark, I remain convinced that SU is well poised to deliver on its strategic goals in service of society.

## CONTRIBUTORS

*The Rector's Management Report was compiled by the Executive Communication support team in collaboration with Rector and Vice-Chancellor Prof Wim de Villiers, Mohamed Shaikh, executive manager in the Rectorate, as well as Melissa Douman, manager of Executive Communication. Editing and translation services were coordinated by the SU Language Centre and provided by their collaborator Hendrien Swanepoel. We also acknowledge the following contributors, listed by SU responsibility centre:*

**Learning and Teaching:** Prof Deresh Ramjugernath, Dr Choice Makhetha, Yeki Mosomothane, Lynne Rippenaar-Moses, Dr Antoinette van der Merwe, Dr Karin Cattell-Holden, Dr Anthea Jacobs, Sim Ntwasa, Johara Khan, Claudia Swart-Jansen van Vuuren, Charmaine van der Merwe, Dr Nicoline Herman, Dr Gert Young, Morris Samuels, Dr Sonja Strydom, Zainab Suliman, Dr Vernita Beukes, Dr Arné Binneman, Sanet de Jager, Fatima Halday, Susan Lotz, Marsanne Neethling, Michelle Pieters, Dr Rose Richards, Juanli Theron, Dr Kim Wallmach, André Müller, Lisinda de Jager, Yeki Mosomothane, Dr Heidi October, Benita van Zyl, Jaco Greeff-Brink, Qaqamba Mdaka, Michelle Munro

**Operations and Finance:** Prof Stan du Plessis, Finance (Manie Lombard & team), Facilities Management (Nicolette van den Eijkel & team), Information Technology (Joe Smit & team), Maties Sport (Ilhaam Groenewald & team), and Innovus (Anita Nel & team)

**Registrar:** Dr Ronel Retief, Dr Celeste Nel, Bruce Banda, Ashmind Daniels, Farah Fredericks, Anne Havemann-Serfontein, Freek Truter, Beire Kramer, Salot Hanekom, Penny van der Bank, Charmaine Wing, Che Bermosky, Felecia van Rooi, Robert Young, Jonathan-Dale Blanckenberg

**Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies:** Prof Sibusiso Moyo, Prof Johann Mouton, Maryke Hunter-Hüsselmann, Sibusiso Lukhele

**Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel:** Prof Nico Koopman, Dr Jo-Anne Kirby, Dr Lynne Julie, Sue Crumpton, Dr Haidee Williams, Dr Ryno Botha, Sr Anneke van Heerden, Dr Craig Thompson, Dr Pierre Viviers, Shibu Mamabolo, Ulrich Wolff, Ricky Brecht, Johannes Adams, Elvandre Galant, Dr Marietjie Oelofsen, Natasha Coltman, Renee Hector-Kannemeyer, Chevaan Peters, Jubelian Korkie, Katlego Letlonkane, Shanté Neff, Dr Zethu Mkhize, Dr Leslie van Rooi, Joanne Williams

**Strategy, Global and Corporate Affairs:** Prof Hester Klopper, Dr Wayne Muller, Christelle Feyt, Tertia Kruger, Cristal Peterson, Naudé van der Merwe, Amira Brown, Marguerite Cloete, Marick Hornsveld, Candes Keating, Michelle Swart, Martin Viljoen, Dr Alec Basson, Magdel Pretorius, Leon Eygelaar, Jerall Toi, Dr Barbara Pool, Lidia du Plessis, Dr Nico Elema, Prof Sarah Howie, Sarah van der Westhuizen