



CASUAL DAY 2015 DISABILITY CAMPAIGN REPORT

A joint campaign by
the Disability Unit and AfriNEAD
in association with **Employee Wellness** and **Maties Parasport**



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Background

Stellenbosch University (SU) had a successful and thought-provoking disability campaign this year leading up to Casual Day 2015. This is thanks to a decision by the Rector's Management Team to allocate the planning of activities for the institutional Casual Day to the Disability Office (DU), which is based in the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) on the Stellenbosch campus, and the African Network for Evidence-to-Action in Disability (AfriNEAD), which is based at the Centre for Rehabilitation Studies at Tygerberg campus.

SU celebrates four national holidays at an institutional level: Human Rights' Day, Mandela Day or Youth Day, Casual Day and Women's Day.

Upon receiving this responsibility, the organisers decided to use the opportunity to widen the impact of Casual Day by launching a campus-wide campaign that would shift the spotlight to disability inclusion at SU. Previous campaigns have primarily focused on awareness activities on Casual Day alone.

The organising team chose to focus on sport, the academic environment and social matters in order to highlight how people with disabilities can participate in sport, academic and social activities no matter what their impairment might be. We find that it is often society's response to impairment that is more disabling and that leads to exclusion rather than the disability itself.

On 27 July Prof Wim de Villiers, the Rector and Vice-Chancellor of SU, officially launched the disability campaign that would lead up to Casual Day. The national theme for 2015 was "Spring into Action". The organisers arranged a number of activities that would create disability awareness on campus and would culminate in the Friday, 4 September 2015 Casual Day lunchtime event.

A range of activities took place which included the publication of articles written by alumni, current staff and students with and without disabilities, panel discussions and radio interviews, sport events and movie nights, and a vigorous social media campaign that focused on disability issues.



“Disability does not make you exceptional, but questioning what you think you know about disability does.”

– Mr Bongani Mapumulo, a second-year student completing a BA degree in Social Dynamics. Mapumulo is pictured here with the Rector, Prof Wim de Villiers.

In the media

Alumni and current students

South African cyclists, Ms Roxy Burns and Ms Toni Mould, wrote an interesting article on the challenges they have faced and the achievements they have reached as disabled athletes while training for events and cycling nationally and internationally. They also spoke of the support they received from SU staff which enabled their success. [Click here to read this article.](#) Burns is currently a postgraduate student while Mould is an alumnus.

Mr Rynhardt Kruger, who is currently completing his PhD, wrote about his doctoral research regarding assistive technologies. [Click here to read this article.](#) He is the first blind student on campus to do such a study in computer science.

Mr Bongani Mapumulo, who uses a wheelchair, and his friend Mr Isibonelo Esihle Sosibo, who is able-bodied and also a SU student, wrote a article on disability from their perspectives. [Click here to read this article.](#)

Academic and support staff

Articles were also written by SU staff members from the DU and AfriNEAD. Ms Marcia Lyner-Cleophas, the Head of the DU, wrote an article about innovation, which focused on how the Unit is supporting a deaf student by doing live captioning (in other words, providing her lecture in text format on her laptop in real time as the lecturer speaks) of classroom lectures for Ms Jody Bell, who requested verbatim class notes of her Genetics Honours class in 2015. [Click here to read this article.](#)

Dr Gubela Mji wrote an insightful article from an academic perspective on the need for disability inclusion across the curriculum. [Click here to read this article.](#)

Radio interviews

Interviews on our events were broadcasted on MFM 92.6, RSG and Cape Talk, while articles were published in the Kampusnuus, The Conversation, on News24 and on the SU website.

Marketing on Twitter (@sudisabilityupdate)

During the campaign we also tweeted about typical questions people ask about disability and provided answers to those questions.



Panel conversations to create awareness and share experiences

Three panel conversations took place and were attended by staff members, alumni, current students and invited stakeholders from the public.

The first panel conversation was held at the Braille Centre at HUMARGA on the Stellenbosch campus and focused on the different support technologies that are available for a range of disabilities. The aim of this session was to inform people of technologies that enable better access to living and working environments. The session was facilitated by Mr Jan Louw, the Head of HUMARGA, with Kruger, Mr Gerhard Erasmus (from Edit Microsystems) and Mr Bruno Savaria (from Sensory Solutions) serving as discussants.

During the panel discussion, Kruger focused on the value of support technologies in all settings and as a way for blind people to access information. Louw discussed the development of Braille services and technology use at SU, while Savaria spoke about the value of assistive technologies for blind people in particular. Products such as the Apex Braille reader was also displayed by Edit Microsystems, a supplier of educational and corporate technology solutions in Southern Africa, while Erasmus spoke about the benefits of the reader for blind people.

The second panel conversation focused on Employment and Disability. The conversation took place at the Tygerberg campus and was facilitated by Lyner-Cleophas. The discussants were Mr Annas Coetzee, a staff member with a disability; Ms Madri Engelbrecht (from Altitude Group), who works with prospective employees who are disabled as well as their prospective employers to assist both parties during the transition of an employee with a disability into the workplace; and Ms René Hanekom from the Cape Town Society for the Blind, who also assists prospective employees with obtaining meaningful work.

Questions that were covered during this talk included:

- labour law and the employment of people with disabilities,
- the type of disabilities that employers seem to more easily accommodate in the workplace,
- categories of disabilities that show the highest unemployment figures and the reasons for this, and
- companies' greatest fears when employing people with disabilities and company subsidies that could offset possible accessibility and infrastructural or technology costs.

Following this talk, it was clear that there was a need for further discussions on employment and disability in future. To this end, Hanekom continued to meet with graduates to discuss the difficulties they experienced while searching for employment. She intends to also meet with prospective employers regarding employment challenges for people who are blind.

The third panel conversation focused on universal design as a facilitator of universal access. This conversation took place at the Bellville campus of the University of Stellenbosch Business School (USB) and was facilitated by Lyner-Cleophas. The panel consisted of Ms Colette Fransolet (Universal Design Africa), Dr Diane Bell (USB-ED) and Dr Nina du Toit (Cape Peninsula University of Technology).

Issues raised included:

- the knowledge that architects have regarding the SABS Code of Conduct and building regulations that foster universal access,
- the knowledge that municipal building inspectors have about building regulations and how it impacts on persons with disabilities,
- what recourse the public has when there are transgressions of building guidelines as it relates to universal access, and
- what institutions such as universities should keep in mind when planning for universal design in order to make teaching and learning accessible in all its forms, be it through physical infrastructure or building projects, the curriculum, reading materials, computer software or general information provided to the public.



Movie nights

Two movie nights were held at the Pulp Cinema in the Neelsie, a venue which is easily accessible by wheelchair. The movie, *My Left Foot*, was screened with subtitles to make it accessible to people with a hearing impairment. A narrated version (with no pictures) of the movie *Pitch Perfect* was also presented at this cinema. The aim of the latter event was to let moviegoers experience what it is like to watch a movie as a blind person.

Sport

Sports events, which included goalball and boccia, were held at Tygerberg campus. Goalball is a sport played by visually impaired persons and boccia is played by people with severe spinal disabilities. The overall aim was to include teams from all three campuses in the sporting events. While we did not manage to get a full team from each campus, we believe that this will improve over time as awareness about disability issues increases on our campuses in future. The Worcester Goalball Club came to Stellenbosch to support the initiative and played a few games against the Maties team. Some of the goalball players as well as one or two staff members also took up the challenge to play boccia.

Casual Day

The campaign culminated in the nationally celebrated Casual Day, with Mr Grant Jefthas directing the lunchtime talk on the day. Guest speakers included Prof De Villiers, who also closed the campaign. Mr Russell Vollmer, a quadriplegic, shared ideas about what has driven him to achieve what he has despite an accident that caused him to become paralysed. Mr Phil Williams from the Stellenbosch Work Centre, which benefits from the funds raised by SU through the sale of Casual Day stickers, spoke about the value that SU adds to the Centre. Some of the employees at the Centre also had an opportunity to speak during the inspiring lunchtime session.

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Prizes, which included PULP movie tickets for residences and store gift vouchers for staff, were given to the SU department and residence that sold the most Casual Day stickers. The library, the CSCD and the Registrar's Office sold the most tickets and each received a gift voucher. Metanoia residence won a movie of their choice, which they can enjoy at a time that suits them.



Recommendations for a way forward at SU with regards to disability

by Ms Lieketseng Ned

Exclusion in educational environments, like any form of discrimination in society, is not just limited to fees or poverty. It also includes exclusion by disability, and in the same breath, race, gender and sexuality. In fact, these identity categories and other forms of our identity are so closely interwoven and interact with each other on so many levels that they end up contributing to social inequality and oppression that are felt in multiple forms of discrimination. It is also well documented that academic exclusion is a big issue for disabled people from primary to higher education institutions.

The 2015 Casual Day campaign took place at a very critical time in the academic space as student movements started questioning the transformation agenda at universities across South Africa. It created an environment which made it possible for disability activists across South Africa and at SU to use the opportunity to sensitise SU about the multiple layers of exclusion. As disability activists, it allowed us to reflect on our institution's understanding, culture and attitude when it comes to transformation issues and look at whether disability formed part of our institution's transformation agenda.

In order to address disability matters at institutional level, SU may find it useful to use Kaplan's (1999) framework of organisational change to assist it in establishing whether

there is coherence between the University's aims and objectives and its operational plan and strategies as it pertains to disability issues.

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According to Kaplan there are six elements of organisational capacity that have to be present and (also operationalised/synchronised) for an organisation to have capacity and be effective in facilitating transformation. These six elements of organisational capacity could serve as a good start to assist SU to be more reflective and sensitive about disability as a diversity issue which intersects with many other categories, for example race and gender.

“Through developing a clear understanding and a sense of responsibility, SU can also start developing an organisational vision and strategy.”



The six elements are:

1. Conceptual framework

The **conceptual framework** is a consistent frame of reference, a set of ideas or notions which allows the organisation to make sense of the world around it, to locate itself within that world, and to make decisions in relation to it. This framework is not a particular ideology or theory, it is not inevitably correct, and it is not left unaffected by critique and change. Spaces like Casual Day, where the understanding of disability and the complexity of disability issues are discussed, should not be once-off events, but SU should commit to continuous dialogues about issues of disability and human dignity as it pertains to the University's broader strategies. It is important for staff across all levels within the University to understand where the institution situates disability and how it understands disability, so that decisions are always made from this understanding. Continuously reflecting on disability and how the institution can reclaim and maintain the human dignity of disabled people within University spaces and beyond is one place to start in ensuring that issues of disability become part of the mainstream at SU.

2. Organisational attitude

Organisational attitude entails the confidence to act in and on the world...in a way that an organisation believes can be effective and have an impact (Kaplan, 1999).

The Hope Project, which is SU's institutional response to issues such as poverty and vulnerability in Africa, ties in closely to some of the issues highlighted in the different articles produced during the Casual Day campaign.

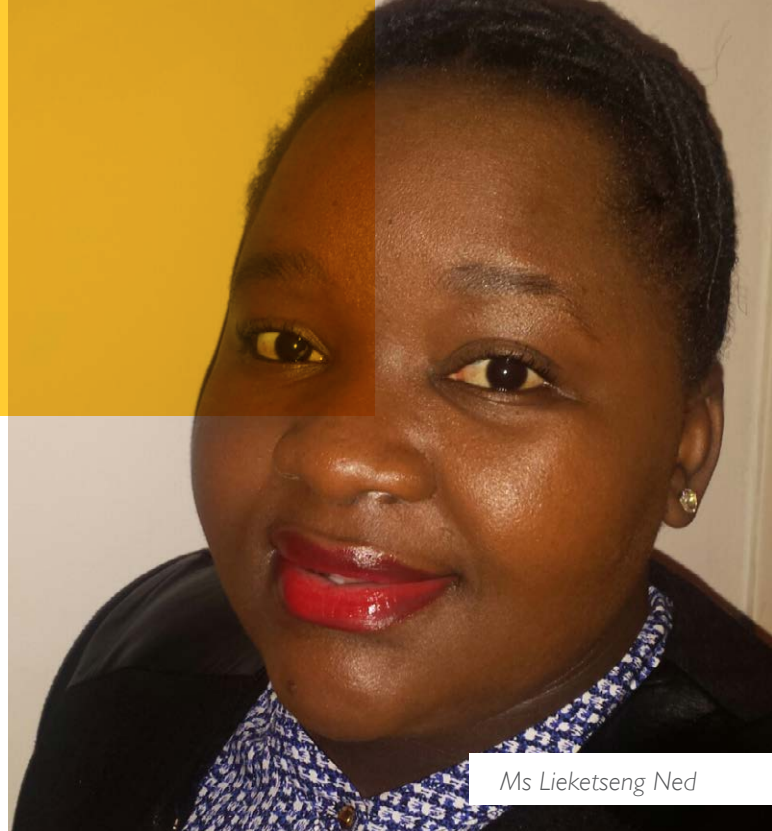
In addition, SU states in its Institutional Intent and Strategy 2013-2018 that its "strategic positioning for the 21st century is anchored in creating and sustaining an environment of inclusivity, transformation, innovation, diversity, and maintaining excellence with a focus on the future" and that this "positioning is anchored in four strategic focus areas" – "student success, diversity, the knowledge base and systemic sustainability". [Click here to read the full document.](#)

Based on this, the University needs to boldly acknowledge and recognise disability as a diversity issue, commit to lead and address issues of disability, and demonstrate inclusion of those with disabilities throughout the institution. Disability issues should become part of our transformation drive and we should shy away from vague strategies that do not explicitly indicate how the institution commits to addressing these multiple layers of exclusion, of which disability is but one part.

3. Organisational vision and strategy

Through developing a clear understanding and a sense of responsibility, SU can also start developing an **organisational vision and strategy**. A clear understanding of the institution's vision and strategy as it relates to disability issues will provide a sense of purpose and will in which the institution does not jump from one problem to the next, but manages to plan and implement a programme of action – which is also adaptable – with regards to disability issues.

Committing to afford disability the space it deserves within SU, does not mean that we only highlight disability issues on national and international awareness days, but that it is highlighted throughout the year and incorporated across all faculties in the curriculum we teach in order to sensitise students to disability. In this way, we can influence future leaders who will be more open to accommodating and integrating disabled people in various development spaces. SU has a role to play in raising the flag for disability and in making access to education easier for disabled people while at the same time addressing the physical, sensory and attitudinal barriers that disabled people face within the University. However, in order to do this, the University needs think carefully about its intent and look at how this is reflected in its vision and strategic planning documents.



Ms Lieketseng Ned

4. Organisational structures and procedures

As a result of SU's organisational vision and strategy, **organisational structures and systems** will be developed to accommodate that vision and strategy. Research by Fowler and Ubels (2010:14) shows us that "once organizational aims, strategy and culture are clear it becomes possible to structure the organization in such a way that roles and functions are clearly defined and differentiated, lines of communication and accountability untangled, and decision-making procedures transparent and functional".

The question we need to ask at this point is how, once the University's organisational vision and strategy is in place, it should operate and what structures and systems should be put in place to ensure the institution's commitment to disability? These choices should not be left operating unconsciously but the institution should make conscious choices about this. Structures and procedures that are developed should be clearly defined and differentiated to demonstrate the vision and strategies of the University.

It is imperative that SU's management makes disability issues core to its business by developing operational plans that stipulates throughout the year how the institution as a whole will promote awareness of these issues. Disability issues cannot only feature prominently on days like Casual Day or on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December and other such awareness days. Additionally, these days should not only be facilitated by units and centres like the DU and AfriNEAD merely because their core business is centered around disability issues, but should rotate and be a coordinated collaboration across the different faculties of the University as disability issues cut across all these environments. This process will serve as an awareness raising strategy for everyone to be involved in issues relating to disability. When addressing disability, we cannot afford to say it is only one unit's responsibility, but should rather move forward from the premise that it is everyone's responsibility.

5. Individual skills, abilities and competencies

The next step is the growth and extension of **individual skills, abilities and competencies**. Staff at SU need training on how to manage disability at work, how to provide reasonable accommodation to staff and students with a disability, as well as how to effectively integrate disabled students and staff within the institution. Kaplan again offers SU a solution by suggesting that training should be specific to an organisation. Training must therefore support the skills and competencies needed for our institution to reach its goals and through this training common challenges or problems, like whether SU lecturers are equipped with the necessary skills to accommodate a disabled person within a classroom environment, can be addressed.

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6. Human and material resources

Finally, our institution needs sufficient and appropriate **human and material resources** in the form of adequate budgets to address disability issues, equipment, office space, and so forth. Without an appropriate amount of these resources, the University will always remain, in an important sense, incapacitated. In addressing our level of material resources, we need to ask important and difficult questions regarding whether, for example, our communication resources ensure that information is easily accessible to disabled students and staff, whether resources are allocated to improve accessibility of buildings and pavements on campus, and whether there are sufficient assistive devices and services like Braille or interpreters on campus.