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SRC

Students' Representative Council
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Studenteraad



SRC TERM 2 REPORT

Prim Committee Vice-Chairperson



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Foreword

DEAR STUDENTS,

It has been a great privilege thus far to serve my fellow students, and student communities, on the Prim Committee and the SRC. Since my election in August 2022, I have made it my mission to represent the needs of student communities on various platforms and to provide the necessary support to student leaders in community spaces.

Through my experience as a HC member and then as Prim, I have learnt the skills required to effectively manage the workload of being a student leaders. It is my hope that I can equip others with these skills so that they may become the future leaders on campus, and thrive whilst doing so.

I look forward to continuing my journey as an ex-officio member on the SRC to creating a better time and Stellenbosch University for all students!

Warm regards,

Rudi Claassen

Constitutional Responsibilities

As per SU Statute:

Section 68:

"**Prim Committee**' means the committee of head students of the various residences and in the private student organisation of the University".

As per Student Constitution:

Chapter 9 of the Student Constitution deals with the Prim Committee (PC) and sets out the composition, powers and duties of the PC.

Section 100: Constitutional mandate

"The Prim Committee has a constitutional mandate to:

- (1) Actively promote the rights of students contained in CHAPTER 2, and specifically the right, under s8(1), to an enabling campus environment in which student success and academic excellence are encouraged and pursued.
- (2) Serve as a forum of house committee leaders that strives to protect and further the interests of all students, by advising the SRC via the Prim Committee chairperson and vice-chairperson."

As per Prim Committee Constitution:

The PC Constitution, as amended in 2022, provides the mission, vision and core values of the Prim Committee. It also organises the affairs of the PC in respect of its meeting procedures, rights and duties, and code of conduct.

Section 5: Vision

"To sustainably foster a collaborative, advisory, and accountable relationship between Communities as well as to advocate for the needs of the students within these Communities in any and all bodies necessary."

Section 6: Mission

"To ensure that the values of the university are not only reflected within Communities but upheld intentionally when representing students within said communities. The Prim Committee does this through its collaborative and deliberative engagements."

Section 7: Nature of the Prim Committee

- (1) The Prim Committee is established by the Student Constitution as an autonomous student representational body and grants it all the powers necessary for that function.
- (2) The Prim Committee functions in partnership with the CSC to facilitate the advocacy of community-based needs to the CSC, SRC, and relevant university management.
- (3) The Prim Committee also serves as an adequate relay of information between university structures and the Prims of the houses, through the presence of the Prim Committee Executive members on various relevant bodies.
- (4) The Prim Committee Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson function as *ex-officio* members of the SRC and thus, form a chain between the Centre for Student Governance and the CSC.
- (5) The Prim Committee functions to ensure that all Communities represented in the committee function in alignment with the student constitution as well as residence rules. Any community deviating from these documents shall be held accountable.

Portfolio Overview

The Prim Committee is an *ex-officio* structure to the SRC. The Vice-Chairperson's basic duties are outlined in the PC Constitution, which includes the duty of ensuring that all student communities operate to their full potential. As per the PC Constitution, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the PC must be the representative of either PSOs or residences. For the 2022/23 term, the Vice-Chairperson is the representative of residences.

The PC serves as a platform where any student in a community space may raise a query through their respective House Committees and Prims, who then reports it to the PC meeting. The PC Executive will then deal with the matter directly or refer it to the relevant structure where appropriate. The Vice-Chairperson's duty is to ensure that all queries in the residence spaces are heard and then resolved as expeditiously as possible. If the matter can't be resolved on PC level, the matter will be referred to either the SRC or CSC.

PC Constitution section 46(2):

"The Vice-Chairperson of the Prim Committee deputises the Chairperson and is at least responsible for –

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- (a) The duties of the Chairperson in the event of the Chairperson being ill or unavailable.
- (b) Supporting the Chairperson in all administrative roles.
- (c) Representing the interests of all Communities on the Students' Representative Council as an *ex officio* member.
- (d) The evaluation and monitoring of all Communities.
- (e) Meeting all their obligations and duties, as determined by the Executive Committee.
- (f) Appointing and performing oversight over all subcommittees created by the Executive Committee or the Prim Committee and appoints their chairpersons, subject to the procedures in addendum D.
- (g) The handling of any disciplinary matter within the Prim Committee.
- (h) The internal relations of the Prim Committee.
- (i) Nominating and submitting the list of candidates from which the delegates who represent the Prim Committee on institutional bodies are appointed, by either the Prim Committee or the Executive Committee – subject to the procedures in Addendum D.
- (j) Being the Caretaker of either Residences or PSOs and fulfilling all the duties necessary for that special representational capacity.
- (k) The transitional arrangements, alongside the Administrative Officer, between the outgoing Executive Committee and the newly elected Executive Committee."

Committees/Task Teams

In my capacity as Vice-Chairperson of the Prim Committee, I serve on the following Committees and/or Task Teams:

1) Institutional Forum (IF)

Per the SU Statute, the IF's core responsibility is to advise the Council on various matters, including the implementation of race and gender equality policies, the selection of candidates for senior management positions, the fostering of institutional culture which promotes respect for human rights and creates an appropriate environment for learning teach and research, etc. To that end, the IF also advises the Council on institutional transformation matters. The IF consists of 23 members,

comprised of representatives from the governance and management, staff, students and community sectors.

I was appointed by the Prim Committee to represent its interests on the IF. There was no IF meeting during our second term in office. A meeting was scheduled to take place on 21 February 2023, but was cancelled as no agenda points were submitted for consideration.

All IF members were invited to attend a special joint-sitting of IF and Senate on the institutional response to the findings of the Khampepe Report. This will entail a two-year committee-led process to develop and implement SU's institutional response. The committee is called the Committee for the Institutional Response to the Commission's Recommendations (CIRCoRe). CIRCoRe will further consist of five separate workstreams, each addressing a particular focus area of reform. Each workstream will have student representation.

2) Student Communities Advisory Committee (SCAC)

The SCAC, previously named the 'Student Housing Committee', serves as a platform where any matters concerning student communities are discussed. These include maintenance or upgrades to residence spaces, the construction of Cluster HUBs and the like. The committee is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching, Prof Ramjugernath, and consists of various members from facilities management, finance department, SUNCOM, the Centre for Student Communities (CSC) and student leaders.

There was a SCAC meeting on 1 March 2023. The meeting once again commenced with a report by facilities management on various upgrade and maintenance being undertaken at various residences. Notably, SCAC received positive feedback on the construction of two new residences being built near Goldfields which are set to come online in January 2024. It was also confirmed that the construction of the Victoria Hub is complete and is set to have its official launch in April 2023. Finally, the Committee engaged on the importance of ensuring that bathrooms are upgraded, especially in

men's residence, to give effect properly to the rights to privacy and dignity of all residents.

SCAC was briefed by Dr Ronel Retief (Registrar) and Dr Celeste Nel (Director: Admissions & Residence Placement) on the decision by the Rectorate to make more residence spaces available to female students. This was the first time student leaders were formally briefed on the decision as well. At the direction of Prof Ramjugernath, a working group was established, chaired by Dr Choice Makhetha, to present a proposal to SCAC at its next meeting on 12 April 2023 on how this decision of the Rectorate can be implemented. *(See below for further information)*

Other matters for discussion included a brief on the NSFAS cap and shortage of accommodation on campus, 2022 housing results and a memorandum presented by DSAf for renovations to the offices on the third floor of the Neelsie. These matters were only discussed very briefly.

3) Welcoming Programme Committee

The Welcoming Programme Committee is chaired by the Director of the Centre for Student Communities and consists of representatives of all faculties, as well as the CSC and student leadership. The purpose of the committee is to collaborate on the programme for Welcoming and to ensure that all stakeholders are adequately prepared for Welcoming.

The Committee completed its work in respect of the 2023 Welcoming period and the next meeting is only scheduled for 28 July 2023 to commence planning for the 2024 Welcoming.

(See below for an overview of the 2023 Welcoming period)

4) Working group on 60/40 residence placements

The working group was established by the chairperson of the SCAC, Prof Deresh Ramjugernath, to look at proposals for implementing the Rectorate's decision to shift the ratio of men:women in undergraduate residence on Stellenbosch campus to a 60:40 ratio. The working group consists of representatives of all interested parties,

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including Division Student Affairs, Centre for Student Communities, Placement Office, Facilities Management, SUNCOM and the Prim Committee. I serve on the working group together with the Chair of the Prim Committee.

The working group had one meeting on 30 March 2023 to discuss the feedback it would present to the SCAC on 12 April. The proposal currently on the table has the effect that no undergraduate residences, apart from Goldfields, will be impacted in the 2024 placement to ensure adequate time for consultation. It is envisaged that thorough consultation should take place from September 2023 - April 2024 in respect of the residence placements for 2025. The new residence spaces becoming available near Goldfields will in the meantime be utilised both for junior and senior residential purposes. The junior residence will form part of the Goldfields community.

It should be noted that at the time of writing this report, this proposal was yet to serve before the SCAC and the contents thereof may change by the time the next term report is due. See below a quote from a statement issued by Prof Ramjugernath on 17 March on the process:

"The working group will engage on various solutions to the reconfiguration of residences on the Stellenbosch Campus from 2024. They will consider financial considerations and infrastructure requirements, as well as student community environments. It will then refer recommendations to the Rectorate so that there can be a gradual shift in gender placement in residences, starting with the 2024 intake."

5) **Monitors' Advisory Committee (MAC)**

The MAC Committee reviews complaints lodged by cluster monitors during the welcoming period. The Committee consists of various members of management, including the Senior Director: Division Student Affairs, the Director: Centre for Student Communities, Manager: Media, the Chairperson of the SRC and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Prim Committee.

Stellenbosch University strives to welcome all newcomers in the friendliest and most welcoming manner possible by ensuring that the values of the University are embodied by the various communities during the welcoming period. The monitors are intended to report objectively on any activity/behaviour which they deem to be

potentially unwelcoming or problematic. This is reported to the head monitor who then in turn reports to the MAC Committee. The MAC Committee then reviews the complaints and decide on the most appropriate action moving forward. It is then expected of the Vice-Chairperson to engage with the Prims of the various communities on these potential issues and provide feedback to the MAC Committee.

There were only a few matters reported to the Committee that were of relative concern but all were speedily resolved after engagement with the leadership of the implicated communities. None of the reports were of a very concerning nature. Communities were generally open to feedback and were willing to cooperate with the Committee to ensure that the Welcoming was as successful and enjoyable as possible.

In my capacity as SRC member, I serve on the following committee(s):

1) **Senate**

Per the SU Statute, the Senate is responsible for the academic and research function of the University. The Senate regulate the learning, teaching, research and academic support functions at SU and makes recommendations to the Council in respect of policies concerning academic matters. The Senate is further empowered to advise the Council on various other academic matters. The Senate is chaired by the Rector, Prof Wim de Villiers, and is composed of the rectorate, the COO, various academic personnel, administrative and support staff, and student leaders from the SRC and AAC.

There was one Senate meeting during the second term in office which took place on 24 March 2023. As the agenda and contents of Senate meetings are confidential, I am unable to disclose the details of the meeting. The Senate did, however, pass "a motion of confidence in and support of the Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Wim de Villiers, and his management team in their pursuit of inclusivity and multilingualism at SU". The motion was tabled on by Prof Geo Quinot and seconded by Prof Mbulungeni Madiba, and was supported by an overwhelming majority of the members of Senate. For more information on the motion, see the news release issued by Senate which can be found at <https://www.sun.ac.za/english/Lists/news/DispForm.aspx?ID=9820>.

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The Senate also had a special joint-sitting with IF to discuss the institutional response to the findings of the Khampepe Report. See under '*Institutional Forum (IF)*' for feedback on the discussion at the joint-sitting.

Term 2 Overview

The biggest highlight of the second term in office was certainly the Welcoming period. After a lot of planning and preparation during the latter part of 2022, it was amazing to see that all aspects fall into place. The work did not let up after this, however, and there were several matters for the Prim Committee's attention.

1. **Matie Shop action plan**

After receiving several concerns from Prims, the Prim Committee approached the **Matie Shop** to engage with senior management on the huge increase in merchandise prices. We obtained information from student communities and the CSC to present to the Manager of the Matie Shop, as well as the Senior Director of SUNCOM. Although several matters stood over for further discussion, we managed to obtain a 5% discount on the prices of Welcoming merchandise for student communities for 2023.

However, during Welcoming we received several complaints from Prims that the merchandise was not up to standard and despite the high prices, the quality of the merchandise did not correlate. Several items of newcomer merchandise also only arrived after completion of the Welcoming period. To address this issue, the Prim Committee undertook to establish an advisory committee to address common themes of concern in respect of the Matie Shop. In this regard, each community was requested to submit a comprehensive report. Further, each cluster nominated a Prim as its representative and compiled a consolidated report of merchandise affairs within the cluster.

Not all communities and clusters submitted their reports timeously. Once all reports are received, the Prim Committee will set up a meeting between representatives from the Matie Shop, the cluster representatives and the Prim Committee Executive.

2. Prim Committee Task Teams

In terms of the PC Constitution, the Vice-Chairperson is responsible for setting up and overseeing task teams that aid the effective functioning of the Prim Committee. In accordance with these provisions, and after consultation with the Prim Committee Executive, we established the following task teams for 2023:

- Constitution Appraisal
- Crisis Management
- Student Wellness
- Finance

These task teams have been appointed in accordance with the PC Constitution and commenced its functions in February 2023. The following members were appointed as chairpersons of the task teams:

- **Constitution appraisal:** Margeaux Wassenaar (Administrative Officer)
- **Crisis Management:** Erin Cameron (Aurora Prim)
- **Student Wellness:** Courtney de Klerk (Aristea Prim)
- **Finance:** John van Niekerk (Financial Manager)

The Student Wellness task team presented comprehensive feedback on its first meeting at the PC meeting of 23 March. The rest of the task teams are set to give feedback to the PC at its meeting of 11 April.

3. Welcoming 2023

I formed part of the SRC Roadshow working group for the Welcoming period and was a presenter at various communities. The purpose of the Roadshow was to introduce newcomers to the SRC, its members, functions and projects. We had members conducting an ice-breaker that was geared towards testing newcomers' knowledge of the SRC before the presentation in a fun and interactive way, after which one or two members would conduct a presentation and Q&A. The roadshow was generally well received and important feedback and data was obtained by our Research and Data Analytics Manager.

When not busy with Roadshow sessions, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the PC arranged check-ins with all Prims throughout the Welcoming period. These check-ins were very useful to gauge the Prims' wellness during the very busy period and to offer assistance with any matters that fell within our jurisdiction.

4. Rectorate decision to shift residence placement ratio to 60:40

See under 'Committees / Task Teams' for feedback on SCAC and Working Group.

As stated above, the PC Chair and Vice-Chair were first formally informed of the decision by the Rectorate at the SCAC meeting of 1 March 2023. On 2 March at 17:30 a meeting, led by Mr Pieter Kloppers, Director: Centre for Student Communities, was held with all Prims of men's residences to inform them of the decision and the possible implication for men's residence in implementing the decision. The same day, at 19:30, the remainder of the Prims were also informed of the decision.

The decision was met with mixed views. Some were opposed to the possibility that some men's residences may have to become co-ed residences. Others welcomed the decision, but raised serious concerns in implementing it on such short notice with inadequate time to prepare the transitioning residences, especially in relation to the safety of female students in these mixed spaces.

The PC Chair and Vice-Chair arranged a follow-up meeting with men's residence Prims on 3 March to gauge their response after being allowed time to discuss the matter with their constituencies. After hearing some of their concerns, a meeting was scheduled with Prof Ramjugernath to get greater clarity on the Rectorate's decision. We were reassured that the decision of the Rectorate was not that a 60:40 ratio had to be obtained by 2024, rather that the implementation of the decision should be commenced in 2024 and be worked towards in a phased approach. The following extract from a statement issued by Prof Ramjugernath best captures the content of the decision:

"In an acknowledgement of the demographic realities, national and global trends and subsequently this expanding pool of female students, SU is looking at ways to adjust the number of places reserved for female students in its residences so that it reflects a more equitable 60/40 split."

At a recent meeting of the Rectorate, an agreement was reached on the need to engage with relevant stakeholders on ways in which to phase in more places for female students in residences on the Stellenbosch campus.

*...
As the consultative process is still underway, no decision has been made on how this phased-in 60/40 placement will be achieved, nor have any residences been identified for reconfiguration. The gender breakdown of the two new residences being built next to Goldfields and scheduled to open in 2024, has also not been confirmed."*

Plans for Next Term

In the third term of any leadership tenure is always important

1. Meeting with Matie Shop representatives

As stated above, once all cluster feedback reports have been received, the PC Exec will facilitate a meeting with representatives from the Matie Shop to engage on the unsatisfactory service delivery.

2. Task Teams

The Task Teams will continue with their meetings and mandates during the second term of 2023.

3. House Committee Dance

For the first time in several years, the Prim Committee will be hosting a dance for all house committee members at the Stellenbosch Municipality City Hall. This dance will hope to forge closer relations between the difference student communities and provide the HCs with a well-deserved break after Welcoming.

A date has finally been confirmed and the dance is set to take place on the 5th of May.

4. PC Meeting with Stellenbosch Municipal Council

Due to circumstance beyond our control, the meeting with the Stellenbosch Municipal Council had to be postponed. It is now scheduled to take place on 11 April 2023. This meeting will facilitate cooperation between the student communities and the municipality, and

hopefully provide the Prims with the platform to raise issues pertinent to their community with the Council.

5. **Connect 2023 feedback**

Following some unhappiness on the part of Prims in respect of the logistics surrounding Connect 2023, the PC Exec sent out a MS Form to gauge the experience of student leaders so that we are able to take up the relevant concerns with the CSC. This report will be finalised and passed on to the CSC management for consideration before commencing their planning for Connect 2024.

SUBMITTED BY:



Rudi Claassen

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