

Division Student Affairs

Report on the Implementation of the Khampepe Commission Report's recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Following the release of the final report from the Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of Racism at Stellenbosch University on 8 November 2022, the Division Student Affairs (DSAf) has prioritised the implementation of the report's key recommendations. This specific **report focuses on the key recommendations within the Khampepe Commission Report as it pertains to the DSAf environment and outlines the Division's actions in implementing those recommendations** to further enhance the transformative student experience for all Stellenbosch University (SU) students.

The implementation of the Khampepe Report recommendations are critical if SU is to address ongoing issues of exclusion and racism, realise its transformation goals, foster equity, and cultivate a social justice mindset among all student communities. In the report, Commission Chair, Emeritus Justice Sisi Khampepe, emphasises that while the "University has made impressive theoretical strides towards transformation," these advances do not "adequately translate into the lived experiences of students and staff" (Khampepe, 2022, p. 10).

DSAf has embraced these recommendations, aligning them with the Division's vision, mission, and strategic objectives; and Vision 2024 and the Strategic Framework 2019-2024, to make a tangible impact on the university experience for both students and staff. While there are specific recommendations that Justice Khampepe identified as critical to improving DSAf's work (see p. 174 – 180), the evidence provided by staff within and outside DSAf, and students, as well as the findings listed on pages 158-167, have influenced and directed our work since November 2022. The recommendations are categorised according to structural improvements, educational interventions, the student experience, the language policy, and incidental recommendations (p. 15).

Specific recommendations for the Division are listed on pages 2 to 4 of this report, and a finding that impacts on the work of the Unit for Experiential Learning (UEL) in the Centre for Student Life and Learning (CSLL) within DSAf's is listed under **Part 4: Findings** – Point c, *Transformation in practice*. The findings regarding the Shared Humanities module, which is presented by staff within UEL, have an impact on DSAf's work and must be taken into consideration as the Division implements recommendations.

One of the critical recommendations that DSAf implemented in 2023, and should be mentioned from the outset, was the successful merger of the Centre for Student Communities (CSC) and the Centre for Student Leadership, Experiential Education and Citizenship (CSLEEC) into the newly formed CSLL in September 2023. Since her appointment in 2019, Dr. Kelebogile Choice Makhetha, Senior Director: DSAf, had been considering how best to foster collaboration between these two Centres, whose work and objectives often overlapped. With the establishment of CSLL, DSAf has implemented one of Justice Khampepe's key recommendations for the environment.

The merger created a more integrated and streamlined structure that complements and strengthens the work of each of the five units within the CSLL and maximises the unique talents, experience, and expertise of staff members while unifying the Centres' missions, visions, and programme offerings. By consolidating these resources, CSLL can now effectively leverage staff strengths and deliver cohesive, impactful support to students,

while saving on duplicate costs. The report will further elaborate on this process and its significance for Student Affairs at the university. The centre was unveiled to the campus on 01 November 2023 ([read the story here](#)).

Given DSAf's central role in bringing one of the university's six core strategic themes – a 'transformative student experience' – to life, the focus of its Centres and Units is on creating enriching learning experiences for all students through the co-curricular programme, aimed at both residence and commuter students, and ensuring student accessibility to the support services and structures on SU's three campuses. The co-curricular programme plays a pivotal role in allowing students to access out-of-class learning opportunities that complements and enhances the knowledge they obtain via their degree programme, and allow them to develop Graduate Attributes that will benefit them during their studies and more so in the workplace.

This report documents both the progress DSAf has made, and the challenges encountered, as well as DSAf's continuous commitment to honouring Justice Khampepe's vision for a united and transformed campus as summed up in her words: "The solution is not to fight and defend the past, it is to unite and build a better future together".

** Please note that the recommendations in DSAf's Report have been edited for conciseness and to ensure clarity.*

Recommendations pertaining to DSAf

Specific recommendations pertaining to DSAf in **Part 5: Recommendations, points a to d**, have been listed below. There is only one finding, which impacts the Unit for Experiential Learning within CSLL.

Part 5: Recommendations, Point a – Educational interventions

- i. **Training for students and accessibility of information:** In-depth training must be provided to all students on the University's transformation apparatus and must take place during Welcoming, so every student is familiar with these important structures and documents. Information on the transformation apparatus must be accessible and visible in common areas, with electronic communication tools used to increase awareness and access as well.
- ii. **Introduction of a compulsory, core curriculum module:** The Shared Humanities Module needs to be redesigned and further developed. There exists a need to make the module compulsory to ensure that it does not only attract "students with a predisposition towards matters relating to transformation" but also those it is failing to reach to "impact the students with pre-existing beliefs and attitudes that harm the transformation project". Alternatively, the introduction of a new, compulsory first-year course aimed at introducing newcomers to concepts of transformation, equality, and social justice, among others, should also be considered.
- iii. **Collaboration between key role players:** CSLEEC and the CSC must strengthen their partnerships and collaborate more to provide an improved training experience to all students, while the partnership should also break down the divide between the Students' Representative Council (SRC) and the Community leaders to create a body of student leaders who are able to cooperate and work together for the common good of the University.
- iv. **The adoption of a Transformation Charter:** Various key stakeholders across the University community must be assembled to draft and create a Transformation Charter to be adopted by the University. The Charter must clarify what the University stands for and what measures are in place to hold it to its values.

Part 5: Recommendations, Point b – The student experience

- v. **Welcoming and Res Ed:** An urgent re-evaluation of the content, activities, and events comprising the Welcoming Programme needs to happen, with particular focus on first-generation students to facilitate their seamless transition into university life. The current programme focuses more on fun and socialisation rather than preparing students for University, with first-generation, underprivileged and NSFAS -funded students particularly disadvantaged in this case. The Res Ed (Residence Education programme) must also be revised, its contents improved and made more relevant and adapted to consist of compulsory sessions provided to first-year students throughout the year.
- vi. **Student communities:** Considering the problems that have been identified in the Student Communities, of which the continued existence of a "toxic and exclusionary culture in many of the residences" (p.13), in particular male residences, the University must undertake a rigorous process to ensure that the rules and constitutions of all the Student Communities are aligned with the University's values. The appointment processes of Residence Heads and the procedures for lodging grievances against Residence Heads must be reviewed and clarified to ensure that all Residence Heads are capable of and suited to meeting the demands of their positions.
- vii. **Training for student leaders:** Training provided to all student leaders must be improved, and "should not be superficial...and should include practical content as well as critical engagement and skills development" (a student recommendation made to the panel and quoted by Judge Khampepe, p. 177 and 178). There is a greater need for enhanced collaboration among DSAf Centres and Units, in particular the Centre for Student Leadership, Experiential Education and Citizenship (CSLEEC) and the Centre for Student Communities (CSC) to leverage the expertise, knowledge, and experience of staff, and prevent a "perceived divide that filters through to community leaders and the SRC and results in the student leaders receiving inconsistent and insufficient training" (Khampepe, 2022, p. 13).
- viii. **Mentorship and support for students:** DSAf needs to increase awareness among students across all Stellenbosch University's (SU) campuses regarding opportunities for students, such as leadership and personal skills development training, as well as support services available to them within the broader DSAf environment. A mentorship programme must be implemented to enhance student leaders' development, "including specialised mentorship programmes for Black student leaders to assist them with building confidence and overcoming the various challenges that are outlined in the Commissions' report" (p. 18), to increase their confidence to run for leadership positions.

Part 4: Findings, Point c – Transformation on paper

- ix. **The Shared Humanities Module:** Justice Khampepe raised concerns about the Shared Humanities Module, which is regarded by some as a "fundamental pathway to transforming the University" and by others as a "fanciful aspiration, doomed to never work in practice" (p.158), and has therefore only been implemented as an optional, pilot module for students. Because it is a voluntary module, many students are not incentivised to attend, only those who already are interested in talking about inclusivity, diversity and transformation. She advised that the University consider implementing a compulsory course like the Shared Humanities Module or develop another course, but that the course is designed to captivate

and interest students and not teach them what to think, but how to think. Experiential learning would be the best method to teach the course.

How the Division Student Affairs implemented recommendations pertaining to its environment

PART 5: Recommendations

b) Educational interventions

TRAINING FOR STUDENTS AND ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION

- [511] In-depth training must be provided to all students on the University's transformation apparatus. This ought to take place during Welcoming to ensure that every student is familiar with these important structures and documents.
- [512] Ensure accessibility of information: the University must make concerted efforts to place visible reminder of its transformation apparatus around the campus, and especially in common areas in residences and faculties. Any additional electronic means of increasing awareness of and access to the University's transformation apparatus ought to be taken as well.

The Unit for Student Governance (USG)

While training on transformation has not yet been provided to all students at SU, training regarding the University's transformation apparatus is provided to newly-elected student leaders serving on student governance structures such as the Students' Representative Council (SRC), the Military Academy Student Council (MASC) and the Tygerberg Students' Council (TSC) among others by the Unit for Student Governance within the Centre for Student Life and Learning (CSLL). The same training, albeit it amended for the specific environment, is done with the Prim Committee, and student leaders within residences and commuter students organisations by the Unit for Student Residence Communities. (USRC).

Since 2023 and continuing in 2024, the wider DSAf environment has placed even more emphasis on growing a social justice mindset among student leaders, and equipping them with the critical thinking skills they require to advance transformation, inclusivity, and belonging within the SU space, and beyond, and do so in concrete ways. Through student leaders serving on governance structures, information has filtered through to newcomers in 2023 and 2024. The intention is to focus on developing such a mindset and skills in all students in future.

USG has played a pivotal role in ensuring that DSAf has met recommendations 511 and 512 in 2024 through the mechanisms below, and has continued to partner with other SU environments focused on transformation in the training it offers to student leaders.

Institutional training programmes offered by USG

- In 2024, institutional training programmes were delivered to the SRC and the Tygerberg Students' Representative Council (TSRC), with the Transformation Office invited to present a dedicated session on transformation to TSRC student leaders. This session offered essential context by unpacking Vision 2040, the Strategic

Framework 2019–2024, and the University's six core strategic themes, illustrating how each support SU's commitment to fostering a transformative student experience.

- The Unit also facilitates discussions on the Restitution Statement during institutional training for the SRC and TSRC, helping student leaders understand SU's history and support its efforts to foster an inclusive student community.

SRC representation on institutional and statutory bodies where transformation is discussed

The SRC is represented on several institutional and statutory bodies focused on transformation, or where matters related to transformation forms part of their mandate. The Unit works together with institutional stakeholders to facilitates student representation on various university statutory and institutional bodies such as:

- Council
- Institutional Forum
- Senate
- SRC Executive and Rectorate Meetings
- SRC Executive and DSAf Management Meetings
- DSAf Transformation Forum
- Welcoming Committees
 - Institutional Welcoming Committee
 - Tygerberg Welcoming Committee
- Institutional Advisory Committee
- FMHS Faculty Board
- Dean's Management Team – Tygerberg campus
- Advisory Committee for Tygerberg Student Affairs
- Dean's Advisory Committee on Transformation – Tygerberg campus
- Undergraduate Academic Check-in – Tygerberg
- Student Affairs Selection Committee
- Student Communities Advisory Committee

Participation in CIRCoRe RHCS Workstream: Controversies in the use of race and other human categorisations in the South African higher education sector

The Coordinator of Student Governance (Stellenbosch campus) is part of the Committee for the Institutional Response to the Commission's Recommendations (CIRCoRe) Workstream on Race, Human Categorisation and Science. Through his involvement in this specific workstream, he has shared this expertise and knowledge to inform the work by this workstream. He was also involved in the planning and programme design of a national conference held by CIRCoRE on 12 and 13 June 2024. The conference was held at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), which "invests in experts who work across disciplinary borders to tackle issues ranging from health equity to complexity theory, and the effects of race to quantum information", among other research with the long-term view" to develop a "critical mass of expertise on a broad range of issues" that is "crucial to the wellbeing of future generations".

The focus of this conference was on "The Controversies in the Use of Race and other Human Categorisations in the South African Higher Education Sector. In pursuit of the objective to bring more student voices into the wider DSAf environment and other spaces at the University, one of the panel discussions involved student leaders who shared their insights of student life and experiences as it related to the topic.

Promotion of Transformation Dialogues with University leaders

Student Governance has created a platform for student leaders to discuss transformation matters with the University's top management, with Prof. Deresh Ramjugernath, Deputy Vice Chancellor: Learning and Teaching, serving as convenor of the dialogues at the Stellenbosch and Tygerberg campuses. He also facilitates conversations on transformation with the Rectorate and student leaders. Though these dialogues student leaders can discuss issues around transformation that impact on the student body and give top management insights into the real struggles, challenges and needs of students on the ground that hinder the University's transformation objectives and works against creating inclusivity and belonging.

SRC Transformation initiatives

The SRC have a dedicated Transformation Portfolio that advocates for transformation dialogues with the student community and staff members on campus. The student governance structure has also established the SRC Transformation Indaba, which was established by the SRC in collaboration with the Transformation Office. It has helped create a platform for SU students and staff members to engage with each other about transformation matters at the institution, bring both academic and support staff into conversation with the student population. The Indaba promotes understanding between students and staff regarding the challenges they experience in their environments when implementing transformation and become aware of the possible intersections of their separate goals, and how they can enhance those intersections for greater impact.

TSRC Transformation Framework

The TSRC Transformation Framework sets out the procedure for all decisions, documents, rules, and projects implemented and drafted by TSRC members, their sub-committees as well as ex-officio bodies of the TSRC as it relates to transformation. The framework was implemented to serve as a guide to help facilitate a needed change concerning transformation in the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences and to promote transformation throughout all student processes. Please find the framework attached [here](#).

Constitutional Review

In 2024 there have been constitutional amendment processes, led by the SRC, in amending the Student Constitution to align it to the Khampepe Recommendations. This process is still ongoing until it is tabled at the Rectorate and Council. The new Student Constitution seeks to implement the Khampepe recommendations which elevates the role of the SRC as the highest legislative body that represents all students at Stellenbosch University. The Tygerberg Student Constitution amendments were also undergone this year, also in line with the Student Constitution. The MASC Constitution was also amended this year, with the process being led by the Military Academy Student Council (MASC) and also the MASC Constitution is in alignment with the Student Constitution.

The Unit for Experiential Learning (UEL)

Experiential learning as a strategic approach to advance transformation at the University

In October 2024, Dr. Ruth Andrews, Manager: Unit for Experiential Learning (UEL), facilitated a seminar for CIRCoRe, titled *Experiential Learning as Pedagogy Towards*

Institutional Transformation. The event formed part of the CIRCoRE Workstream 2: Curriculum offerings (CO) Embedded in the Process of Teaching and Learning Renewal, and explored how experiential learning can be used as a strategic approach to advance the University's transformation agenda.

This seminar was imperative considering that the Khampepe Report had highlighted concerns regarding a disconnect between the University's transformation policy and practice, fragmented transformation efforts, and had highlighted experiential learning as a critical area for improvement. Experiential learning has the potential to enhance inclusivity by engaging students in hands-on, reflective experiences with real-world social issues.

The seminar explored the role of experiential learning at SU, its impact on inclusivity and transformation, and strategies for enhancing experiential learning in response to the report's findings. It also served as a platform for sharing insights through dialogue, with actionable steps identified for integrating experiential learning more effectively across the University's curricula and student life.

Three institutional partners shared evidence-based practices and strategic insights into the role of experiential learning in addressing systemic inequities and fostering a more inclusive, cohesive institutional culture.

The aim of the seminar was to:

- To critically examine the Khampepe Report's findings concerning experiential learning.
- To explore how experiential learning can be integrated into the University's curricula to support its transformation goals.
- To identify actionable strategies for using experiential learning to foster inclusivity and bridge cultural and racial divides.

The seminar focused on integrating experiential learning into curricula to bridge theory and practice, fostering an inclusive University environment that promotes diversity, equity, and social justice.

Discussions during this seminar therefore directly addressed several key recommendations from the Khampepe Report, particularly the need for a more integrated approach to transformation at the institution. Below follows a breakdown of how the key recommendations from the report informed the focus of discussions.

- **Experiential Learning as a Bridge Between Theory and Practice:** All three speakers emphasised that experiential learning provides a mechanism to translate the University's theoretical commitments to diversity and equity into tangible outcomes. This approach aligns with the Khampepe Report's call for educational practices that directly engage students in addressing systemic inequalities.
- **Building Capacity for Inclusive Education:** The seminar highlighted the importance of equipping faculty and student leaders with the skills needed to facilitate experiential learning programmes. This approach addresses the Report's critique of fragmented efforts and the need for consistent training to ensure that all members of the university community can contribute to transformation efforts.
- **Addressing Structural Barriers to Transformation:** The seminar also acknowledged the challenges associated with implementing experiential learning at scale, such as limited resources and varying levels of faculty engagement. These

barriers were identified in the Khampepe Report as significant obstacles to achieving meaningful transformation.

Recommendations and Practical Applications

Based on the insights from the Experiential Learning Seminar, the following recommendations are proposed, along with practical applications aligned with the speakers' insights:

Recommendation 1: Strengthen Faculty Development Programmes Application

- Establish a series of workshops and training sessions for faculty focused on integrating experiential learning into their courses. These sessions could include methods for facilitating reflective discussions, using storytelling as a pedagogical tool, and designing service-learning projects that align with academic content.
- Dr. Jean Farmer, Programme Manager: Division Transformation and Social Impact, emphasis on faculty engagement suggests that involving educators in co-designing experiential learning initiatives can foster greater buy-in and ensure that these programmes are tailored to the unique needs of each department.

Recommendation 2: Expand and Diversify Experiential Learning Programmes Application

- Develop cross-disciplinary experiential learning modules that allow students from different faculties to collaborate on real-world projects, such as community-based research or environmental sustainability initiatives. Dr. Itumeleng Moroenyane's example of the Science Ambassadors Programme could be adapted to other disciplines, ensuring that all students have access to practical learning opportunities.
- The University should promote pathways for recognising experiential learning on academic transcripts, making experiential learning opportunities more visible and valued within the academic framework. Examples of such initiatives include projects like Sibiya's Toastmasters Programme and Lead with Disability, which helps students develop public speaking and leadership skills.

Recommendation 3: Leverage Storytelling and Digital Media for Inclusivity Application

- Create a multimedia initiative featuring short videos that capture the diverse experiences of students at Stellenbosch University. These videos could be used as discussion starters in workshops, encouraging students to reflect on their perspectives and engage in dialogue about inclusivity and social justice.
- PhD candidate in the AgriScience Faculty, Zimbili Sibiya, shared how she uses storytelling as a tool for building empathy, demonstrating the kind of innovative approaches that can be applied in transformation work outlined in the Khampepe Report. By centring student voices, the University can create a more inclusive culture that acknowledges the lived experiences of all its members.

Recommendation 4: Address Structural Barriers to Implementation Application

- Secure additional funding for experiential learning programmes through partnerships with industry and for-profit organisations. Funding could support initiatives like the Science Ambassadors Programme and expand access to experiential learning for students across all faculties.

- Develop a mentorship Programme where experienced faculty members guide newer staff in incorporating experiential learning into their teaching. This approach could help address the (five) 5 inconsistencies in faculty engagement noted by the Khampepe Report and ensure that all students benefit from enriched learning experiences.

THE INTRODUCTION OF A COMPULSORY CORE CURRICULUM MODULE

- [513] The university seriously consider implementing a compulsory module for all first-year students. This module may be based on the existing Shared Humanities module, but modified to optimise its efficiency where taught to a large group of students.
- [514] The University has ample academic and human resources to at its disposal to design and optimise this course. I recommend that it utilises the resources to the best of its ability. These experts are best placed to advise the University as to whether this course ought to be credit bearing.

The Shared Humanity module: How it can help SU meet its “transformative student experience” theme through campus-wide expansion

In 2023, the former Centre for Student Leadership, Experiential Education and Citizenship's (CSLEEC) Shared Humanity: Lessons in Critical Thinking module was expanded, with aspects of the module included in the compulsory Doctors as Change Agents Module completed by fourth-year MBChB degree students in the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences' (FMHS). The Shared Humanity module provides students with an experiential learning opportunity to engage with complex global issues facing humanity from a multidisciplinary perspective.

A total of 300 students participated in the bespoke *Session 5: Visual Arts in responding to the critical question – How do I find my space and place in the world in 2023?*

The core module learning comprised of three parts:

- **Part 1:** Principles and practices of a social justice advocate was arranged according to the themes Knowledge, Values, Resilience, Social Structures, Cultural Sensitivity, and Diffraction, and led by subject matter experts that included Prof. George Sefa Dei, Prof. Nico Koopman, Prof. Ashraf Kagee, Prof. Aslam Fataar, Qaqamba Mdaka and Dr. Jill Ryan, and Prof. Vivienne Bozalek.
- **Part 2:** Design thinking as social justice advocacy was led by the late Prof. Elmarie Costandius and Dr. Ruth Andrews and involved the concept of storytelling leading to the imagining of a new curriculum as part of the CIRCoRe institutional process. It also involved the Painting Respect activity as demonstrated by the attached images as students visualised what respect would look like.
- **Part 3:** Embodiment of social justice advocacy led by Amelda Brand from the Drama Department saw students utilise their bodies as a medium of expression for difficult concepts creating pathways for neural connectivity in the area of the brain that deals with introspection, memory and self-monitoring.

In lead up to the sessions, students had to view the Shared Humanity *Session 4: Social justice concepts and theories* seminar led by Prof. Thuli Madonsela.

Feedback from students were overwhelmingly positive, as captured below:

"My view on the medical industry has been drastically altered by learning about the Principles and Practises of a Social Justice Advocate, Design Thinking as Social Justice Advocacy, and the Embodiment of Social Justice Advocacy. I once thought that the practise of medicine was simply concerned with identifying and treating diseases, but this educational opportunity has widened my perspective on the field. I've learned through reading and understanding the Principles and Practises of a Social Justice Advocate that medicine is about more than simply treating sick people; it's also about addressing structural health inequities. I've learnt how to tackle healthcare concerns with creativity, empathy, and a focus on equity thanks to Design Thinking as Social Justice Advocacy."

"After completing the lectures on Social Justice Advocacy, I have realized the importance of considering a patient's culture, religion, and spirituality in their treatment. It has become clear that, as a health Professional, I have mainly focused on treating illnesses and may have neglected the holistic approach to understanding the patient. Furthermore, I have identified the values I hold dear, such as integrity, kindness, and compassion, and how they relate to my role as a health worker."

"I think for me the one thing that stood out for me was knowledge, social structures and cultural sensitivity as principle and practice. I saw that I did have knowledge gaps when it came to understanding the different cultures and personalities that I come across on a daily basis. And coming from an area that's not really multi-diverse, it's so easy for me to assume or make up my own conclusion when it comes to culture and social structures. It made me realise that for most parts, I never really gave myself the opportunity to seek knowledge when it came to the different cultures and social structures."

While the module may have come to an end, UEL has found other initiatives to continue its work and bring in aspects of the Shared Humanity Module to enrich the training of students participating in the programme. See below.

Building international connections focused on lifelong learning and international curriculum development that benefit students too



The students and staff along with their SU counterparts on a hike.

While the Unit for Experiential Learning's work is embedded in the Transformative Student Experience, it also has a strong focus on Collaborative Teaching and Learning, and Fostering Purposeful Partnerships and Inclusive Networks. To this end, the Unit partnered with VUC Storstrøm, a Danish adult learning organisation, on a project focused on lifelong learning and international curriculum development.

The project is funded by the Globus Project as a Local and International Global Goals (LIV) project with the theme, *Culture as Catalyst for Building Inclusive, Innovative and Resilient Communities*.

Students and staff from VUC Storstrøm visited SU from 02-08 April 2024 and again from 04-09 September 2024. The first cohort of the Danish-SU student exchange involved 10 Danish students, two Danish educators and six SU staff members and 10 students, while the exchange for cohort two took place from 04-09 September 2024, with the same number of Danish participants and seven SU staff and 10 students participating. Students came from a cross section of faculties, including the faculties of Science; Medical Health Sciences; Theology; Economic and Management Sciences; Law; Education; and Arts and Social Sciences.



Danish exchange students and SU students work together.

The theoretical approach used in this experiential learning opportunity included Paulo Freire's (1970) and Mezirow's (2009) work on social justice and transformational learning, as well as Paul and Elder's (2020) Critical Thinking Model and Kolb's (2014) theory of experiential learning, which focuses on learning by transforming experience into knowledge.



The Local and International Global Goals can be seen in the picture above.

The following objectives were set for the project:

- Building a global north-south connection by exploring similar conditions within the educational systems that limit social mobility among marginalised, underserved people.
- Developing relational capability between individuals with similar life chances and backgrounds so participants can understand the similarities and differences in global contexts toward recognising human dignity and belonging irrespective of social positioning.
- Expanding the LIV Learning Partners' worldviews and perceptions so that individuals contribute to building a collective social consciousness and a global community of shared human dignity, peace and prosperity for all.
- To explore how to respond to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) notably SDGs 04: Quality Education; 12: Responsible Consumption and Production and 13: Climate Action.



The Danish students visited four local schools to teach learners more about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



Earlier this year the Danish Ambassador and VUC Storstrøm leadership, met with the Rectorate and the Division Student Affairs and the Unit for Experiential Learning to explore a collaborative partnership between Denmark and SU.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN KEY ROLE PLAYERS

[518] Strongly recommend that the CSLC and CSC strengthen their partnership and collaborate more to provide an improved training experience to all student leaders. This partnership should also be geared towards breaking down the divide between the SRC and the Community leaders to build a body of student leaders who are able to cooperate and work together for the common good of the University.

Merging CSLEEC and CSC into the Centre for Student Life and Learning



In March 2023, the first joint team meeting as part of an initiative to explore a formal merger was held between the Centre for Student Communities (CSC) and the Centre for Student Leadership, Experiential Education, and Citizenship (CSLEEC), with Dr. Kelebogile Choice Makhetha, Senior Director: DSAf, facilitating discussions. The meeting was followed by smaller group sessions with the Centres' administrative and management teams, leadership development staff, and Residential Education Coordinators, aimed at fostering collaboration and understanding among the teams regarding the need to merge.

Exploration of the merger

On 2 June 2023, the staff from both CSC and CSLEEC were formally informed of the decision to explore the potential merger. Dr. Makhetha, communicated her gradual approach to the deliberation process. She emphasised that while change presents opportunities, its success depends on careful management, inclusivity, and addressing any concerns from stakeholders, whether the final outcome was that the centre would merge or that they would be kept as separate entities.

Consultation and envisioning process

Between 5 June and 14 July 2023, various meetings with all staff within the greater DSAf environment was held, some of which included HR, one-on-one meetings with Dr. Makhetha, and written submissions. This allowed staff members to express concerns, and Dr. Makhetha to respond to their submissions in writing, addressing any uncertainties. On 27 June, a full envisioning day was held to provide a comprehensive view of the scope of work within both Centres and identify areas of alignment.

Following these consultations, final submissions regarding any remaining concerns were addressed before the proposal to merge the Centres was submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Deresh Ramjugernath, for approval.

Key benefits of the merger

DSAf has seen several benefits resulting from this merger, including the renaming of the new entity to the Centre for Student Life and Learning (CSLL), a title that reflects the core work and objectives of both Centres and their respective units. The limited resources available, the merger is expected to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness within the Centre ([*read the news story on the merger*](#)).

The merger of CSC and CSLEEC into the Centre for Student Life and Learning represents a strategic move towards an integrated approach to supporting student growth and fostering a transformative student experience.

The CIRCoRe Workstream 2 Experiential Learning Seminar was conceptualised and offered by Dr. Ruth Andrews, Manager: Unit for Experiential Learning. Some of the seminar report recommendations include examples of the work being done within UEL to address the Khampepe Report recommendations.

In addition to the Experiential Learning Seminar Report, UEL has built a reciprocal relationship through the Danish SU Local and International Global Goals programme, which focuses on diversity and intercultural engagement.

Organisational structure of the new centre

CSLL is led by Mr. Pieter Kloppers, former Director of CSC, now Director of CSLL, with Mr. Gareth Cornelissen as Deputy Director of Operations, and Dr. Heidi October, previously Acting Director of CSLEEC, serving as Deputy Director of Leadership.

The new Centre is organised into five units:

1. **Unit for Residence Student Communities** - Managed by Ms. Benita van Zyl
2. **Unit for Commuter Student Communities** - Managed by Mr. Jethro Georgiades
3. **Unit for Student Governance** - Managed by Mr. Anele Mdepa
4. **Unit for Leadership, Diversity, and Inclusion** - Managed by Mr. Yeki Mosomothane
5. **Unit for Experiential Learning** - Managed by Dr. Ruth Andrews

TRAINING FOR MEMBERS OF STAFF

Ongoing Staff Development and Operational Adjustments

Within CSLL, the Centre that hosts the monthly Residential Head Forums, staff with the Unit for Residence Student Communities have since 2023 continuously expanded the

mandate of the forum, which has been identified as a mechanism for staff development where topics covered relates to the recommendations made in the report pertaining to residence heads. Additionally, the Centre has also provided staff presenting the research that underpins their work with funding to attend the ACUHO-I summits and conferences in the rest of Africa and other overseas countries. Each year, residence heads and CSC coordinators are funded to attend the ACUHO-I SAC (the South African chapter) Roelf Visser Student Housing Training Institute (STHI) to attend the weeklong Basic or Advanced STHI.

Below are some of the topics and training offered through the Residence Head Forum:

- Multilingualism and Student Leadership
- Alcohol and Visitor Policies
- Feedback from Welcoming Monitors
- Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Services in Idas Valley and how use it to support students who have experienced GBV and sexual violence.
- Residence Placement Policy Review
- Residence Infrastructure (safety reviews and locked doors inspection)
- Wilgenhof Residence discussions and the introduction of Pride Flag conversations
- CIRCoRe and CSLEEC/CSC merger updates
- Leadership training adjustments
- Annual reviews of alcohol rules and community constitutions

Additionally, CSLL staff attend the **ACUHO-I SAC Conferences and Colloquiums** to further personal and professional growth as student affairs practitioners through the South African chapter of **ACUHO-I, a Professional international association for student affairs practitioners within the higher education sector**.

ADOPTION OF A TRANSFORMATION CHARTER

- [519] Recommend that the various key stakeholders across the University community be assembled to draft and create a Transformation Charter to be adopted by the University.
- [520] This Charter ought to clarify what the University stands for and what measures are in place to hold it to its values. The process of creating the Charter should be leveraged to spark University-wide discourse.

The DSAf Transformation Charter

The DSAf Transformation Charter and the Transformation Pledge were developed before the Commission was established in May 2022, with input from all staff across the DSAf environment. On 11 March 2022, the Division's Transformation Summit was unveiled. It was shared with the Commission as supporting documentation in the Division's submission.

The aim of the Charter is to align the Republic of South Africa's Constitution, 1996; SU's Vision 2040 and the Strategic Framework 2019-2024 to serve the needs of a diverse student body, and a key requirement for SU's transformation.

Of the Charter, Justice Khampepe said: "The charter is phrased in broad and vague terms and is only applicable to the Division of Student Affairs. However, it is an example of a deliberate effort being made by an environment within the University to accept responsibility for and proactively partake in the transformation project" (p. 44).

Below follows the first few paragraphs of the Charter.

The Division Student Affairs (DSAf) acknowledges the privileged roots that Stellenbosch University (SU) has been borne out of. Many communities have been adversely affected by the previously forced separation and degradation of the majority of South Africans based on various factors including, apartheid, colonialism, and subsequently unequal access to education and resources. With reference to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, this Transformation Charter (the "Charter") therefore recognises the importance of equity, inclusivity, universal access, and the lived experience of both the staff and students we serve.

Aligning the institutional culture of the university to serve the needs of a diverse student body is a key requirement for the university's transformation.

The aims of this Charter are to:

- i. to create awareness around decolonization and transformation within DSAf;
- ii. to foster an inclusive and supportive culture to facilitate intentional and purposeful engagement between stakeholders from various environments, i.e., students and staff, and the surrounding communities of the university;
- iii. to give impetus to coordinated institutional efforts to redress, and build a society envisioned by the post-apartheid stakeholders; and
- iv. to promote and to affirm our unwavering commitment towards building a culture of courage and solidarity in doing transformational work DSAf. This culture celebrates differences, challenges, prejudices and ensures fairness.

At DSAf, we aspire to create a transformative learning experience for our students and staff that is all-inclusive regardless of socio-economic status, age, race, gender, ability, sexuality, marital status, belief, ethnic or social origin, culture, nationality, and language, as well as operationalising universal access and respect for one's multiple and varied identities and expressions thereof.

On 18 November 2022, all staff within DSAf were invited to add their thumb print on a copy of the DSAf Transformation Charter Pledge as a symbol of their commitment to:

- i. provide a learning home for all persons to thrive and be treated with respect and humanity;
- ii. foster a space where our staff and students have a safe space to be themselves; and
- iii. inculcate a sense of shared humanity and human dignity.

Part 5: Recommendations, Point c – The Student Experience

Part 5: Recommendations focuses on the *Student Experience* (p. 145) as a category. One of SU's core strategic goals, is creating a "transformative student experience" for all students. It can be summed up "the journey that the student will take from coming into the institution to graduating at the institution", and their "experiences not just within the classroom, but also within the social and living spaces on the campus" (p. 64).

While Justice Khampepe highlighted some of the negative aspects of student experience, she also shared the positive impact that training and student support structures have on the student community. DSAf has listened to both the criticism from students and the positive feedback and has used this information to inform training updates and changes, improve support services and empower students to access support within the University and through external partners and organisation. In addition a concerted effort has been made to also increase students' knowledge and understanding of various topics through events, training, dialogues, and panel discussions focused on human rights, democracy (with a special focus on the national elections in 2024 and several events focused on *Celebrating 30 years of Democracy*), engaged citizenship, the LGBTQIA+ community and the discrimination they experience, gender inclusivity, disability awareness and ensuring accessibility, and understanding SU's core values and how to implement it in student communities, among others.

Additionally, like all higher education institutions, SU has also faced many challenges related to a lack of student accommodation (exacerbated by the extraordinary higher pricing of accommodation in Stellenbosch), student hunger, the impact of poor governance at the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), and the resulting financial difficulties it places on NSFAS-funded students, as well as the financial struggles of 'missing middle' students wanting to complete a degree at SU.

One of the initiatives that the Communications Coordinator at DSAf drove, was the #MoneySavvyMaties financial education campaign that sought to address the financial challenges that students face through financial literacy skills, sharing tips on how to reduce monthly expenses by making better and informed decisions regarding how money is spent. This initiative was one of the first steps taken by the Institutional Task Team on NSFAS to communicate with and support NSFAS students who are or may experience funding shortfalls due to the funding cap introduced by NSFAS in 2023.

HOW TO CREATE A BUDGET PLAN?

7 STEPS TO BUDGET



1) NOTE IT DOWN

In order to create a budget plan, you first need to track your income and expenses. Decide what tools to use. You can make use of apps such as Balance After Bills.



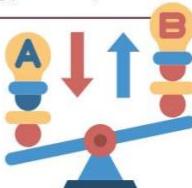
2) PLAN OUT YOUR SPENDING

Create a plan that works for you. 50% of your spending can go towards your needs, 30% towards your wants and 20% you can save.



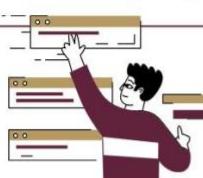
3) MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS

Monitor your progress by tracking your spending and comparing it to your budget. When you track your spendings, you can see where you are spending your money.



4) COMPARE

Compare your monthly spendings to the previous week. This can help you to see where your spendings are going and help to identify areas where you may be overspending.



5) ADJUST

Adjust where necessary. Maybe cut costs or look for alternative ways to help you save money.



6) TRIAL AND ERROR

It can take a while before you find what works for you. Its through trial and error that we learn.



7) STICK TO THE PLAN

Sticking to your budget can be hard. You may have a few stumbles along the way, that's normal. Just remember to stick to the plan.

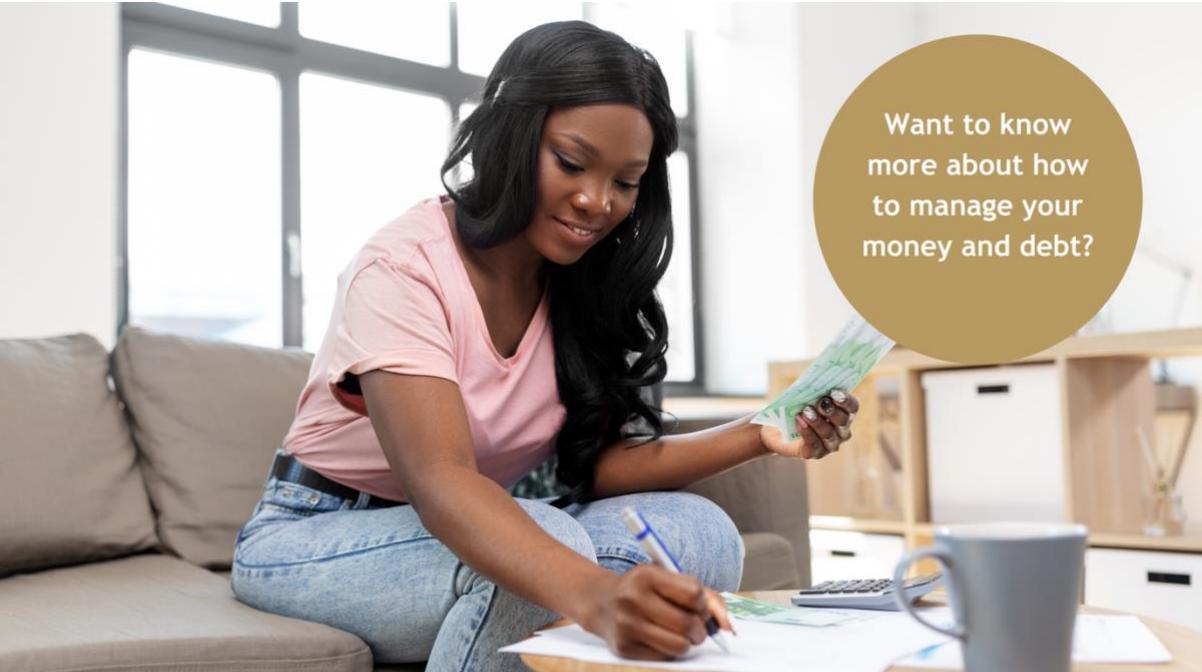


#MoneySavvyMatie

One of the online posters used in the #MoneySavvyMates campaign to share savings tips on the DSAf and SU social media platforms.

However, it was also relevant to other funded students who did not have sufficient funds to pay for all study costs, or were wasting money that impacted their ability to complete their studies. The campaign was therefore focused on the whole student population.

In 2023 and 2024, thanks to the two social workers responsible for the Food Support Programme within CSCD, interactive Financial Literacy for Tertiary Students workshops were presented to students by the Financial Sector Conduct Authority (FSCA). The workshops were marketed through a communications campaign focused on drawing a significant number of students to attend the workshops and on financial literacy education. The workshops were presented in hybrid format, allowing undergraduate students at the Tygerberg and Saldanha campuses as well as postgraduate students to participate. The FSCA's Consumer Education Department's objective is to empower students by increasing their financial literacy and preventing them from accumulating debt while studying. In 2023 and 2024 more than 600 students attended the in-person and online sessions, with the majority of students choosing to attend in-person.



Want to know more about how to manage your money and debt?

Then don't miss out on the Financial Sector Conduct Authority's Financial Literacy workshops on 25 and 26 April 2023 at Stellenbosch University!

In these 1-hour interactive workshops, you'll acquire the necessary financial skills to enable you to manage your finances better. And once you have completed the session, you'll know how to competently deal with daily financial decisions such as saving, budgeting, managing debt, investing, and planning for your financial future. You'll also learn about all the pitfalls that can lead to bad financial decisions.

Date: 25 April 2023
Topic: Money Management: Saving, Budgeting, Spending Wisely, Debt and Debt Management, Credit and Credit Records
Venue: Krotoa building, Room 3001

Date: 26 April 2023
Topic: Wealth Creation: Pros and Cons of Investment, Starting a Business, and Entrepreneurship
Venue: Krotoa building, Room 1001

There'll be goodie bags for all students attending in person as well as prizes up for grabs, so make sure you [book your spot here](#).



According to the FSCA, "tertiary students encounter a multitude of financial decisions that can significantly impact their futures", with many students often becoming entrapped in debt while studying - be it by accumulating credit card or store card debt - and making

uninformed financial decisions as they do not have access to proper financial guidance or knowledge. These workshops will continue in 2025 and beyond.

Welcoming and Res Ed

- [522] DSAf plays a greater role in designing the Welcoming Programme to ensure that it meets the needs of all incoming students, with careful attention being given to students who are most likely to struggle with the adjustment to university life.

In referring to point 522, Judge Khampepe quoted from the memorandum on "Addressing Social Injustices at Stellenbosch University" that students submitted to Rectorate on 22 August 2022, and which contains various recommendations that have been crafted through the collaboration of all student leaders at the University" (p. 176). It reads:

"There must be a review of the welcoming programme that focuses less on community building and more on actual practical tools needed to be orientated in a new environment, specifically an institute of higher education. The structure of the programme should take into consideration the socio-economic and related issues that that students face. It should thereby allocate time for mentors to take newcomers to the various support offices on campus to be introduced to the assistance available to them. Finally, this reviewed Programme must be cognisant of commuter students unable to arrive early in the morning or travel late at night to attend." (p. 176)

- [523] Attention should be given to improving the Res Ed programme.

Justice Khampepe again referenced the student witnesses' memo:

"ResEd sessions should be compulsory throughout the year for first years where the progress is tracked via a SUNLearn module. The programme should be updated to include qualified facilitators and presented by qualified experts. In this review, the name should be changed to include PSO students but also to remove the already negative connotations to it. These sessions should however not be purely theoretical but rather based in the practical context of SU." (p. 176)

- [524] Justice Khampepe agreed with student leaders recommendations in relation to the involvement of faculty transformation committees in the student experience, both during the Welcoming Programme and in general, quoting the following from the leaders' memo: "(f)aculty transformation committees should have a session during Welcoming where they engage with newcomers on current initiatives related to social justice and transformation" and "(c)ritical engagements must take place through faculty committees to integrate these conversation in all spaces on campus".

Here Justice Khampepe recommended that designing a programme that meets the needs of all incoming students, with careful attention being given to students who are most likely to struggle with adjustment to university life. This is based on a recommendation made by student leaders who testified before the Commission and stated:

"The structure of the programme should take into consideration the socio-economic and related issues student face. It should thereby allocate time for mentors to take newcomers to the various support offices on campus to be introduced to assistance available to them."

Finally this reviewed Programme should be cognisant of commuter students unable to arrive early in the morning or travel late at night to attend." (Section C: 522 on page 176)

In her findings regarding the Res Ed programme, Justice Khampepe concluded that "the Res Ed programme could be vastly improved" as the "evidence indicates that the programme is currently performing inconsistently because its successful implementation depends entirely on the HC of each Community". Students are also expected to facilitate the Res Ed sessions, which is problematic considering that students leaders are not adequately trained, equipped or supported to run these sessions effectively or appropriately". She further advised that the programme would be more effective if it included additional compulsory sessions...throughout the year" (p. 162).

A start to re-envisioning the Welcoming Guide for Newcomers 2023

At the end of 2022, DSAf decided to re-envision its Welcoming Guide for Newcomers for 2023 to align the publication's messaging to the University's Vision 2040, the Strategic Framework 2019-20204, and DSAf's strategic goals, with more emphasis placed on growing a social justice mindset amongst newcomers from the moment they step onto the campus.



Welcome
to Stellenbosch
University
and the
Maties family!

Congratulations!
You're officially a
Matie. As you embark
on this journey
at Stellenbosch
University, you can
look forward to a
truly transformative
student experience.

Here at Maties, we believe in a
human rights culture grounded
in social justice. We base all we
do at this institution on fulfilling
the vision, mission and objectives
set out in the Constitution of the
Republic of South Africa, Act 108
of 1996; the university's Vision
2040 and its Strategic Framework
2019-2024; as well as the Division
Student Affairs' Transformation
Charter. At the same time, we
also aim to fulfill the Sustainable

The main goals were to:

- introduce students to the university vision, mission, and values, the DSAf Transformation Charter and pledge, and the services offered on campus to support students.

- rewriting existing content and using simple student friendly language content that is concise, engaging and promotes a social justice mindset, and values .
- adding new content to the guide that was not previously included and is critical to students' easy transition into University life.
- removing unnecessary content that made the publication text heavy and could easily be accessed by incorporating QR codes and links for newcomers to use to find information.
- revamping the design and layout of the publication to create an appealing student-centred design and layout.

The primary goal of this project was to clearly communicate the university's ethos and the Division's values from the very beginning to newcomers – "we believe in a human rights' culture grounded in social justice".

Approximately 5 500 guides were printed and distributed to all newcomers in all SU's residences and commuter student communities at the start of the Welcoming programme. A digital copy of the guide can be found at www.sun.ac.za/welcome.

These changes were also implemented taking into consideration the Khampepe Report findings and recommendations, paying particular attention to student complaints that the Welcoming Programme focuses too heavily on social activities, and neglects to provide students with practical, real-world information on navigating university life, for example, providing students with information on how to find and access student support services, as well as understanding academic systems and processes that are key to their adaptation to the university environment and to starting the year off with a good foundation to make a success of their studies.

Partnering with government to work on social cohesion on campus, and business to counter binge drinking

In previous years, SU's Welcoming Programme concluded with first-year residence and commuter student performances showcased at an event known as Vensters. This event allowed the public to explore campus spaces and view various student productions. However, towards the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Vensters format was modified to support social distancing, with each residence and commuter community performing sequentially on a single stage. This arrangement has continued post-pandemic, as it is both cost-effective and enhances social cohesion.

Historically, students would continue their celebrations at local bars and clubs following Vensters, leading to binge drinking and unsafe behaviours, often with serious consequences. To address these issues and promote safer social engagement, DSAf, in collaboration with Maties Connect, introduced the inaugural Maties Connect Festival (MC Fest) on 11 February 2023. This music festival aimed to foster social cohesion through a diverse lineup of local and international musicians and DJs, covering various genres. The event was funded by the Department of Sport, Arts, and Culture (DSAC) through a partnership with the government and Maties Connect. [Read the full story here.](#)

Through collaboration with Newlands Spring Brewery Co. and SABSharp, South African Breweries' responsible drinking initiative launched in 2021—responsible alcohol consumption was promoted at MC Fest. Only low-alcohol beers were available, and SAB provided water hydration stations, online access to its responsible drinking platform, and sponsored additional items necessary for the festival.



Mr Vusithemba Ndima, the Director-General of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (centre) with the Senior Director: DSAf, Dr. Choice Makhetha (third from the right), Mr Charl Davids, Director: CSCD (second from the left), Mr Yeki Mosomothane, the Multicultural Engagement Educator and Coordinator in CSC, and Mr Edwin Cleophas, Secretary General for the Social Cohesion Advocates Programme in DSAC at the MC Fest. (Lynne Rippenaar-Moses)

Strengthening relationships with SU's Military Academy during 2023 and beyond

DSAf has been intentional about building a stronger relationship with students on campuses outside Stellenbosch campus to ensure that students on other campuses do not feel cut-off or isolated from this campus, and to extend a welcoming culture amongst environments too.

One of biggest achievements during Welcoming 2023 for DSAf was that we were able to get newcomers and the Military Academy Student Council (MASC) members based at SU's Saldanha campus to arrive on campus earlier to meet DSAf staff from all the centres over a welcoming lunch and give them the opportunity to have their own Dream Walk in Victoria Street.

Feedback from students in the past indicated that they felt isolated and uneasy when attending the Rector's Welcoming as they felt like outsiders. Military Academy students were also never able to participate in the Dream Walk as their schedule did not allow them to remain for the event, which only starts late in the evening. This year, we were able to give students a taste of what the Dream Walk entails by allowing them to do the walk on the pavement of Victoria Street (the road had not been closed as yet) and photos were taken to commemorate the event, which will now happen annually.



The Military Academy Student Council and the Student Representative Council at the Stellenbosch campus with Dr. Choice Makhetha, Senior Director: DSAf, and Mr Anele Mdepa, Manager: Student Governance during the MASC's attendance of the Welcoming by the Rector in 2023.



The Military Academy Student Council and some members of the Students' Representative Council at the Stellenbosch campus with Dr. Choice Makhetha, Senior Director: DSAf, and Mr Anele Mdepa, Manager: Student Governance during the MASC's attendance of the Welcoming by the Rector in 2024.



Military Academy newcomers and the MASC participated in the university's Dream Walk for the first time in 2023.

Students were very appreciative and discussions were held between DSAf and the student leadership to invite the leadership to the SU campus again for more engagement.



Dr. Choice Makhetha (centre) during an event at the Military Academy in 2023. DSAf has been strengthen relationships with students and staff at all SU's campuses in an effort to further improve collaboration and provide students with a "transformative student experience".

This engagement took place midway in 2023, when the MASC visited DSAf and the Student Governance office to discuss the logistics around their Exercise Trans Enduro which takes place in November this year and will pass through Stellenbosch. Dr. Choice Makhetha, Senior Director: DSAf, was also invited as a guest speaker to the Military Academy Gala Dinner for 3rd year students on 8 September 2023.

Centre for Student Life and Learning (CSLL) activities related to recommendations made

CSLL Election Theatre Project Sparks Conversations on Democracy

The commemoration of 30 years of democracy and South Africa's election year provided an important opportunity for student communities to reflect on their civic engagement, priorities, and role in shaping the country's future. In collaboration with renowned playwright Mike van Graan, the Centre for Student Life and Learning (CSLL) hosted six theatre productions from April 30 to May 3. These included two satirical revues titled "My Fellow South Africans" and "Change Starts Just Now."

The productions aimed to educate and inspire participation in the upcoming elections by inviting students and staff to reflect on the shared challenges and triumphs of our democracy. Attendees from diverse backgrounds—across class, race, gender, religion, and political views—booked 380 complimentary tickets, showcasing broad engagement across generations.

Audience members praised the productions for tackling collective anxieties while offering new perspectives and hope for South Africans. After each performance, facilitated Q&A sessions provided space for meaningful dialogue between the audience and actors, encouraging deeper reflection on issues raised in the shows.

Woordfees Student Audience Appreciation Project

In September 2024, the Corporate Communication and Marketing Division (CCMD) and CSLL launched a Student Audience Development Project during the Woordfees Festival, reaffirming Stellenbosch University's commitment to fostering a transformative student experience. This initiative sought to promote appreciation for the performing arts, encouraging students to explore theatre, music, and visual arts as avenues for understanding multilingual and multicultural perspectives.

Through this project, approximately 130 students, many with limited exposure to the arts, joined staff and student leaders to attend 57 performances spanning a variety of music and theatre genres. The project also aimed to promote inclusivity and critical engagement with social and political themes through the lens of artistic expression.

The initiative provided R50,000 in funding and 420 sponsored tickets, with students encouraged to review performances, share photos, and reflect on the impact and accessibility of the events.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with students noting that the storytelling fostered a sense of identity and belonging. They appreciated how the performances addressed difficult themes like racial oppression, power dynamics, gender inequality, and lessons from history. Students also expressed a renewed interest in supporting the arts and indicated that shared artistic experiences deepened connections within the university community.

Ubulumko Student Community Leadership Training

The Ubulumko ngePortfolio Training, held on 8-9 September 2024, introduced an enhanced leadership development Programme designed to equip student leaders in both commuter and residential student communities with practical tools and skills.

"Ubulumko", meaning "wisdom" in an African context, emphasises more than knowledge. At Stellenbosch University, it reflects the importance of shared experiences, sound judgment, and academic resources in building resilient communities.

This year, 487 elected leaders participated in 21 themed sessions and networking events, each tailored to their leadership responsibilities. Themes included:

- Meeting psychologists and ER24 staff for crisis management
- Facilitating multilingualism and critical conversations in student communities
- Collaborating with maintenance staff and exploring sustainability
- Engaging with wellness, sport, social impact, disability, and cultural activities
- Strengthening connections with alumni and managing events, safety, communication, and social media

The Programme placed significant emphasis on collaboration within clusters, with a networking breakfast and planning sessions to define the vision, goals, and themes for each cluster in the coming year. Leaders also engaged in case study discussions based on real-life experiences to broaden their practical understanding of leadership.

Sessions were facilitated by a diverse group, including CSLL staff, the Language Centre, Campus Security, Facilities Management, and Transformation and Social Impact, supported by student assistants.

Feedback highlighted the value of interactive methods like breakaway groups and opportunities to connect with other leaders. Participants appreciated meeting university staff and learning how to engage effectively with campus initiatives.

Student feedback included:

- *"A highlight was drawing on a page about our culture shocks."* (Culture Portfolio Session)
- *"All relevant contact details for sports and events were clearly communicated."*
- *"The small-group discussions followed by feedback sessions worked well."*
- *"It stood out to me that leaders are expected to act as support systems rather than problem solvers."*
- *"The training motivated me, gave me a new outlook on leadership, and made me appreciate my role."*
- *"I was impacted by the power of social impact initiatives and their ability to give hope to marginalized students."*

Facilitators found the participants dedicated, enthusiastic, and realistic about the challenges posed by a dynamic environment. The Ubulumko training followed the 2-day NELC training, concluding four days of intensive leadership development and reinforcing the university's focus on servant leadership.

The below point relates to **Part 3: The Evidence – Viva Voce Evidence, point b** that relates to *The evidence of staff members responsible for transformation* and points 113, 146, 148, 164, 189, 390, 448, 450 (between pages 50 and 157), which also include **Part 4: Findings – The Commission's mandate (point a), and Efficacy of key policies.**

Addressing residence culture: Inappropriate practices at Wilgenhof Residence

The USC, together with residence staff, cluster leaders, and student representatives, responded to serious concerns raised about practices at Wilgenhof Residence in January 2024.

Reflective discussions were held with Residence Heads, followed by conversations with key student leaders from the Victoria Cluster, the Prim Committee, the SRC, and other student communities. These discussions highlighted several key themes:

- The normalisation of deceptive practices in certain student environments
- The importance of clear guidelines, consistent rules, and regular audits of student spaces
- Developing guidance on how to contextualize residence histories and allowing external engagement with archives, traditions, and storytelling
- Establishing accountability, boundaries, and consequences for communities maintaining closed networks
- Setting firm limits on alumni involvement in student communities

The threat of legal action complicated efforts to engage openly with students and communities, delaying decisive interventions. In response, the Unit for Student Communities drafted a concept document outlining criteria for identifying and addressing unhealthy community interactions.

The challenges raised by Wilgenhof re-emerged during annual year-end reviews and were taken into consideration in the revision of residence rules. These ongoing efforts reflect the university's commitment to promoting healthy, inclusive communities and ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all students.

This version improves clarity, organization, and tone while aligning with the values and mission of the Centre for Student Life and Learning at Stellenbosch University.

STUDENT COMMUNITIES

- [525] The University must undertake a rigorous process to ensure that the rules and constitutions of all the Student Communities align with the University's values.
- [526] Careful attention must be given to the procedures that affect the appointment and regulation of Residence Heads.
- [527] Referencing student leaders who made several insightful recommendations, which are explained below in the leaders own voices:

“Residence Heads should have a cap on the number of terms they can serve in a particular Community and as a Res Head in general. A review panel must be created that will investigate the effectiveness of a Res Head before an additional term is approved. It should further be investigated whether an annual feedback mechanism can be created for a Community to evaluate their residence head’s performance.”

“A unique process to report allegations against Res Heads must be created that takes into consideration the unique role of the position. This process must be clearly conveyed to relevant student leaders.”

“PSO Coordinators must be appointed in the same manner as Res Heads to singular Communities as the alternative has led to overworked and underperforming coordinators.” (pg. 177)

- [528] With regards to the third quote above, Justice Khampepe’s final recommendation was that the alternative management structure for PSOs has led to unfair burden and lack of support of PSO leaders.

Updating of all residence and commuter student constitutions to align it to the SU Student Constitution

Preceding the election of new house committees for residence-based and commuter student communities in August 2023, DSAf requested that all communities review and ensure its constitutions are aligned to the principles set out in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, as well as the university’s Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024, its Student Constitution, Residence Rules, and the Disciplinary Code for Students of SU. This was done in direct response to point 525.

Ms. Lisinda de Jager, ResEd Group Coordinator at CSLL, developed a Constitution template for student communities to utilise during the drafting, editing, and updating process of their respective constitutions. The template was then distributed to student leaders. After students completed their constitution drafts, edits, or updates, they were reviewed by the community’s residence head or the Commuter Student Community (CSC) Coordinators before submission to the ResEd Coordinator of the respective cluster, who would submit it to De Jager. After De Jager reviewed the constitution, feedback, where necessary, are provided to the cluster’s ResEd Coordinator, and amendments communicated to the Residence Head or CSC Coordinator who has to inform the student leaders. The leaders are responsible for making the recommended changes and resubmit it for approval. A community’s constitution only becomes valid upon approval from CSLL.

Approval of the Regulation for the Appointment of Residence Heads in Secondary Positions

With reference to point 526 and 527, the Regulation for the Appointment of Residence Heads in Secondary Positions was approved and implemented with immediate effect on 3 October 2023. The regulation ensures that any individual who applies to serve as a Residence Head may only serve two terms of four years in the same community, and that once the appointed Residence Head’s first four-year terms ends, an open application process is followed to fill the position and the head whose term has come to an end may reapply for the position and compete with others for the position.

An individual who has served as a Residence Head for two four-year terms, may apply for a third term, but may not apply in the same community they have already served for two terms.

The selection panel for the appointment of Residence Heads will consist of five (5) to (7) members within the greater DSAf environment and external members, including a Human Resources and Employment Equity representatives.

Management structure of Commuter Student Communities (CSC) by the Unit for Commuter Student Communities (UCSC)

The historical development of SU as a residential University meant that the co-curricular developmental opportunities and access to support services have always been deployed through the organisational principles of residences and thus positioned residences as vehicles for access. Commuter Student Communities (previously Private Student Organisations or PSOs) were added at a later stage to include commuting students. The landscape has however shifted significantly. Where in 1971 SU housed 4 000 students in residences and 4 500 were commuters, in 2023 8 000 students were allocated to residences, with 24 000 students making up the commuting population.

While the growth of commuting students has grown exponentially, SU has not kept pace in developing the equitable staff capacity and administrative infrastructure needed to support and develop these systems. Commuting students, like all other SU students should be given equitable opportunity to attain personal and academic success and this has also been the opinion of Justice Khampepe. The current design (deployment of funds, mobility systems, institutional administrative infrastructure to name a few) is however heavily skewed in favour of residential students and does not do enough to ensure equitable access for commuting students too.

Considering feedback from commuter student leaders regarding the unfair burden placed on them and the lack of staff support from the understaffed Unit for Commuter Student Communities (UCSC), Justice Khampepe recommended (point 527) "PSO Coordinators must be appointed in the same manner as Res Heads to singular Communities as the alternative has led to overworked and underperforming coordinators" (p.177).

The UCSC agrees that more capacity is needed to support commuter students but does not agree that the management structure of CSCs should be the same as residences. done in the same manner as cannot be done in the same way as Residences. The population dynamics, contextual needs and day to day experiences of the two cohorts are fundamentally different. A differentiated approach is needed where the core principles and values of the SU community life are kept but the delivery method, administrative infrastructure and relevant staffing is designed around the contextual needs of commuting students. Commuting students need to be engaged where they are and should not be expected to meet us where the residential students are.

Since the CSC and CSLEEC merger and the consequent establishment of the UCSC significant strides have been made in improving the experiences of commuter students. This includes:

Communication and Language: Efforts have been made to ensure communication is inclusive, respectful, and empowering for commuter students. The .Nets initiative has been instrumental in welcoming and integration senior postgraduate commuter students and university staff, a group which was previously excluded from SU community life.

Access to Campus Spaces: Increased development of and access to essential campus facilities, such as study areas, deli's, lounges, and dining halls, has been prioritised. Quiet spaces and accommodations for students with disabilities have also been created. Hybrid communities combining online and offline interactions – through webinars, podcasts, and workshops – have been developed to facilitate engagement. One only needs to stroll by

the Victoria hub at any time of the day to see what a beacon for diverse integration it is for SU. Creating spaces where commuting students have access and feel welcome creates an environment more conducive to community building. The development of this hub was stopped in 2020 and was only put back on the table through intervention by the CSCU and Commuter Student Community Leaders.

Welcoming and Orientation Programmes: These programmes have been enhanced to provide a more informative and interactive experience for new students. Initiatives include a pre-arrival programme and online elections for student representatives, ensuring a smooth transition into university life and leadership.

Data and Trend Analysis: Regular data collection through surveys and focus groups has been utilised to monitor the effectiveness of interventions on commuter student satisfaction, retention, and success. The findings have been shared at various conferences, contributing to the exchange of best practices across African universities.

Transformation through intentionally welcoming communities: Due to the placement criteria in SU's Placement Policy and transformation initiatives in residences, a higher proportion of white students are typically placed in the commuter student community (CSC) pool. Despite this, in 2024, most student leaders in the CSCs – such as Prims, Vice Prims, House Committee members, and mentors – are students of colour. This diverse group of leaders better reflects the demographic makeup of the SU student body and, by extension, South Africa's population. In contrast, students of colour remain a minority on leadership bodies within residences. The CSCs exemplify transformation at SU, highlighting the need to further explore why a more diverse group of students feels welcome and empowered to pursue leadership roles in these communities.

In 2023, SU hosted the first African Commuter Student Network Conference in Stellenbosch from 27-30 March under the theme "*Together, creating a commuter student transformative experience*".

Various universities across the African continent such as the University of Botswana, Sol Plaatje University, the University of the Witwatersrand, University of the Kwazulu-Natal, Durban University of Technology, University of the Free State, Tshwane University of Technology, University of Namibia, Nelson Mandela University, STAG African, University of Mauritius.

The event brought together higher education sector officials, student affairs educators and professionals, commuting student organisations, general commuting students and others from across the African continent for the first time to reflect, share and benchmark issues that exist in the commuting student's space.

This initiative was the brainchild of the coordinators that head up the UCSC, and included student participants who contributed invaluable insights on how to bring the CSC offering on par with residences and ensure a transformative student experience for commuter students too.



Staff working with commuter student communities across the world attended the first ever African Commuter Student Network Conference established by the Unit for Commuter Student Communities at SU.

Constitutional Review

In 2024 there have been constitutional amendment processes, led by the SRC, in amending the Student Constitution to align it to the Khampepe Recommendations. This process is still ongoing until it is tabled at the Rectorate and Council. The new Student Constitution seeks to implement the Khampepe recommendations which elevates the role of the SRC as the highest legislative body that represents all students at Stellenbosch University. The Tygerberg Student Constitution amendments were also undergone this year, also in line with the Student Constitution. The MASC Constitution was also amended this year, with the process being led by the Military Academy Student Council and also the MASC Constitution is in alignment with the Student Constitution.

TRAINING FOR STUDENT LEADERS

- [529] Another crucial recommendation was that improved training needs to be provided to all students leaders, and particularly Community leaders. Justice Khampepe supported the recommendation by student leaders that "Student leadership trainings, particularly House Committee trainings should not be superficial and should include practical content as well as critical engagement and skills development" (p. 178).
- [530] DSAf must investigate ways of utilising collaborate partnerships between different role players at the University who are able to equip student leaders to grapple with their duties. This must commence with CLSEEC and CSC, but could also include the Centre for the Study of the Afterlife of Violence and the Reparative quest, and possibly the Transformation Office.

The information below has been arranged according to the work that falls under each unit with CSLL.

The Unit for Residence Student Communities (URSC)

The Unit for Residence Student Communities (URSC) in CSLL fosters inclusive, values-driven environments. It integrates students into healthy communities that promote academic and social success while developing innovative, people-centred leaders and lifelong learners.

The URSC contributes to local, national, and global priorities through four core themes:

1. Student Integration, Belonging, and Campus Life
2. Academic Excellence, Skills Development, and Lifelong Learning
3. Healthy Community Cultures and Leadership
4. Student and Staff Wellness and Support

Key activities and focus areas

- **Administrative streamlining:** Removing red tape to enhance efficiency
- **Hybrid engagement and communication:** Use of digital platforms to connect students and staff
- **Promoting equity:** Ensuring fair support and experiences across all communities
- **Community well-being:** Fostering environments where both students and staff can thrive
- **Open communication and partnerships:** Encouraging collaboration across teams and stakeholders
- **Emphasising creativity and innovation:** Using arts and performance to unlock educational potential
- **Research and Documentation:** Expanding recognition for communities of practice

Implementing Change and Fostering Belonging

Since 2023, the URSC has adopted proactive measures to shift focus from individual residences to clusters as communities. This transition aligns with broader campus objectives and emphasises connectedness.

- **Annual Cluster Conversations:** Each cluster participates in a two-hour dialogue to build shared understanding. In 2024, the focus was *Cultivating a Sense of Belonging: Building Inclusive and Connected Communities*.
- **Leadership Training for Pre-Welcoming:** Preparations included diverse portfolios such as Social Media, Sustainability, Financial Management, Sport, and First Aid, ensuring leaders were equipped for the 2024 Welcoming Period.
- **Let's Talk (ResEd) sessions:** These facilitated courageous conversations during Welcoming, with added focus on mentoring to aid new students' transition from high school to university life.

Leadership Structure and Governance

The Cluster Prim Committee plays a key role in student governance by promoting collaboration among leaders and ensuring continuous dialogue with the Managers of Residence and Commuter Student Communities. This structure encourages shared learning, feedback, and accountability throughout the year.

This report highlights the URSC's contributions to building connected, inclusive, and vibrant communities in line with the CIRCoRe recommendations, driving positive change on campus.

Constitutional Welcoming Training

This workshop is designed for the newly elected student leaders who will play a pivotal role in planning the welcoming of newcomers to Stellenbosch University in 2025.

This session will focus on generating ideas for the welcoming process while deepening the understanding of what it truly means to welcome newcomers to our university. The role of this group of leaders of diverse student communities, including residence, commuter, and cluster communities, role is crucial in facilitating the integration of newcomers into both the institutional and academic dimensions of university life.

Additionally, the leaders help newcomers navigate administrative tasks and find their place within the social fabric of the university and town.

The purpose of this workshop is to equip leaders with a thorough understanding of the ethos that Stellenbosch University wishes to embody during the welcoming period. It is vital to recognise that student leaders, welcome students on behalf of the University, not just your individual communities. Therefore, leaders always have to think how the university would want me to act now, even if the activity pertains to only a section of your student community.

The importance of balancing all aspects of the welcoming process to ensure that no one element overshadows the others will be explored ([read the full story here](#)).

The Unit for Leadership, Diversity, and Inclusion

Over the last two years, the Unit for Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion (ULDI) has worked on improving its training opportunities. Those improved training opportunities are listed below.

Supporting Student Leaders and Advancing Transformation

The final Khampepe Commission Report underscored the overwhelming demands and expectations placed on student leaders, particularly those involved in transformation work, such as Critical Engagement portfolio holders within House Committees (HCs). The report also highlighted how these leaders often encounter resistance, disinterest, and a lack of support from their peers and the broader institutional structures, leaving them without support and adequate avenues to access for guidance and assistance (point 479). Responding to these recommendations, DSAf has initiated several structural and programmatic interventions to support student leaders and enhance their capacity to lead effectively amidst challenges.

Establishment of the Critical Engagement Forum (CEF)

To address the gap in peer support and to combat the isolation experienced by student leaders involved in transformation, The creation of the Critical Engagement Forum (CEF) was initiated as an informal structure to bring together student leaders. The CEF serves as a peer-driven platform where portfolio holders can share experiences, exchange strategies, and receive from the leadership, diversity and inclusion unit (old multicultural education portfolio) and the transformation office. The forum also promotes collaborative problem-solving and ensures that leaders do not feel isolated in their efforts to drive change within their respective communities. The forum meets once a term and these meetings foster a sense of solidarity, affirming that the challenges leaders face are part of broader systemic issues, not personal failures.

Leadership development and capacity building

Recognising the need for structured leadership development, a series of workshops and training sessions tailored for transformation-focused and social justice themes and experiential learning opportunities and excursions were made available to student leaders. These sessions emphasise emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and adaptive leadership, equipping leaders with tools to navigate resistance and engage their peers effectively.

Proactive engagement with House Committees and institutional partners

In some communities, there were facilitated conversations between HC members and Critical Engagement portfolio holders to address resistance and misalignment within committees. The goal of these dialogues was to build a shared understanding of the transformation mandate and cultivate an inclusive mindset among all members. Furthermore, collaboration with institutional partners such as the equality unit, the disability unit and the visual arts department to streamline processes for portfolio holders, reduce administrative burdens and ensure alignment between transformation efforts at different levels of the institution were undertaken

Tailored support through sense-making conversations with portfolio holders

To address the report's recommendation of providing accessible support and guidance, we have continued throughout the term of office of the portfolio holders to provide strategic advice, emotional support, and referral to experts on key topics that the students want to have to ensure and sustain their leadership efforts.

Challenges and opportunities identified by ULDI as they move forward with training

Despite these efforts, challenges remain. Sustaining engagement among HC members and fostering a deeper commitment to transformation work requires continuous advocacy and cultural change. Resistance from some House Committee members persist, highlighting the need for ongoing education and awareness-raising initiatives. Additionally, ensuring equitable access to leadership opportunities and balancing academic and leadership responsibilities remain areas for improvement.

Looking forward, we see opportunities to strengthen cross-campus collaborations to promote inter-community and cluster learning and dialogue. Expanding the CEF to include regular feedback loops with university management can also ensure that student leaders' voices influence institutional policies. Furthermore, integrating transformation work into the formal co-curricular academic transcript recognition programmes could help normalize student activism as part of the broader educational experience.

HC Development Programme aligned to Khampepe Report recommendations

The HC Development Programme is designed to support House Committee members of student communities in their leadership journey. This online Programme is designed to run concurrently with the daily leadership journey and will equip them with the emotional resilience needed to foster a sense of belonging and care within your diverse community. Emotional and personal wellness are at the core of the HC Development experience. By the end of this programme, HCs will be able to demonstrate the emotional resilience needed to navigate the dynamic environments of student communities. They will develop the skills to resolve conflicts within their teams and communities, helping to create constructive and healthy living and learning spaces. Additionally, the HC Development Programme will equip HCs with proven principles of teamwork and collaboration, ensuring that as they complete their leadership cycle, they will be able to effectively pass on knowledge and maintain the continuity of initiatives for future leaders.

In response to the recommendations of the Khampepe Report, with specific mentioning of changes needed in Student Communities (refer to sections 529, 541 and 545), the HC Development Programme was designed after a thorough consultation with staff and students in CSLL. The programme's design responded to staff and students' requests for basic interpersonal communication skills (especially after a trend of post-covid asocial behaviours was reported), and guidance on productive collaborations in diverse student settings. These requests aligned directly with the Khampepe report recommendations, which requested a move away from superficial student leadership training, to training that equips student leaders to address toxic residential cultures. A deep need for opportunities for black and white students to understand each other in terms of similarities rather than differences – one of the Khampepe report recommendations – furthermore informed the design process of the HC Development programme.

The HC Development programme hence was designed based on four key competencies.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

- **Networking and Relationship Building:** Establishing and maintaining strong connections within the community
- **Programme Development:** Designing and implementing initiatives that strengthen community bonds
- **Sustainability and Engagement:** Ensuring long-term engagement and participation in community activities.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- **Self-awareness:** Recognising and understanding one's own emotions.
- **Self-Regulation:** Managing one's emotional responses appropriately
- **Social awareness:** Accurately perceiving and empathising with others' emotions
- **Relationship Management:** Building and maintaining healthy relationships through effective communication and conflict resolution

TEAM BUILDING

- **Leadership and motivation:** Inspiring and guiding team members towards common goals.
- **Collaboration and Delegation:** Facilitating effective teamwork and distributing tasks based on team members' strengths.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Addressing and resolving conflicts within the team constructively.

FOSTERING A SENSE OF BELONGING

- **Inclusivity and Diversity:** Creating an environment where all members feel valued and included.
- **Empathy and Support:** Demonstrating understanding and providing support to team members.
- **Recognition and Appreciation:** Acknowledging and celebrating the contributions of team members.

Leadership Summit for Aspiring Leaders and NELC 2024: Providing student leadership development training to prepare students for realities of leading



A total of 612 students signed up for the Leadership Summit for Aspiring Leaders (LSAL), of which 485 attended in person and 127 online in 2024.

In 2024, the CSLL's key achievement was the piloting of its first integrated leadership development offering combining training for both aspiring and newly elected student leaders. The integrated offer was presented under the theme, *Change/Growth is the name of the game...what we value and how we work together*, which is based on the idea that the definition, practice and needs of leadership is ever changing, and that growth can only take place through change, hence the selection of the final slogan for the programme – CHANGE AS A CATALYST FOR GROWTH.

The programme focused on two key areas: first, exploring the concept and philosophy of leadership, with an emphasis on societal betterment for aspiring leaders; and second, providing experiential learning and practical leadership skills within various contexts, targeting elected leaders.

The integrated offering was delivered in two phases:

Phase 1: Leadership Summit for Aspiring Leaders (LSAL) that took place on 27 July 2024

The Leadership Summit for Aspiring Leaders (LSAL) kickstarted the conversation with engagement on how students can make collective sense of growth, and their own growth. Students were empowered with tools on how to create a thinking environment where their communities can collaborate, flourish and learn together constructively. A total of 612 students attended the conference (485 in person and 127 online). As part of their continued learning, 144 students also completed a reflective activity after the Summit that focused on how to create a thinking environment as a meaningful way to enhance growth.

In 2023, in response to the recommendations of the Khampepe Report, the theme for LSAL was *Cultivating the leader within US* to introduce participants to the concept as well as formation of culture, specifically relating to institutional culture, and its role in the operation and achievement of the goals of institutions of higher learning, specifically relating to inclusivity and diversity. During the Summit, students also unpacked institutional culture as it relates to the understanding and practice of student leadership, and to explore the role of student leaders in the formation of institutional leadership practices, and finally, the potential impact or not, if institutional cultures do not keep pace with student and institutional needs. Approximately 600 students signed up for LSAL, the highest figure ever since the summit was first presented in 2020.

Phase 2: Newly Elected Leaders Celebration (NELC) that took place on 6 and 7 September 2024 (falls under the ULDI)

The leadership and growth journey continued with the Newly Elected Leaders Celebration (NELC), where elected leaders had an opportunity to engage in what growth would look like in their various contexts. NELC brought together 594 elected student leaders on 6 and 7 September 2024, to engage with each other on how growth requires vulnerability and connection, and how that is modelled. On 7 September, students divided into groups of 50 to engage with each other on themes like Emotional Intelligence, Mediation and Conflict, and how to be comfortable with discomfort. The knowledge they gained in these sessions will aid them in their personal leadership development as well as collective growth and development.

CSLL brings the International Youth Think Tank (IYTT) and Nobel Symposia in Africa programme to the African continent for the first time

Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert (FVZS) Honorary Lecture forms an integral part of the 2024 Symposia



Above: Prof. Deresh Ramjugernath, Deputy Vice Chancellor: Learning and Teaching (3rd from the right) attended the 12th annual FVZS Honorary Lecture which was incorporated into the IYTT and Nobel Symposia in Africa programme this year. From the left is Ms. Rabia Abba Omar, Coordinator Citizenship Engagement at the FVZS Institute, Dr. Choice Makhetha, Senior Director: DSAf, Ms. Tawakkol Karman, a Yemeni journalist and human rights activist and a 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate, Prof. Cheryl Hendricks, Executive Director Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Prof. Ramjugernath, Lize-Marie Doubell, SU and FVZS Alumna and Legal practitioner, and Dr. Heidi October, Deputy Director: Leadership (CSLL) & Head: FVZS Institute.

The [**International Youth Think Tank \(IYTT\) and Nobel Symposia in Africa**](#) (*click on name to read story*) hosted by the Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert (FVZS) Institute from 25-30 August 2024 at STIAS, marked the first time the Think Tank was held on the African continent, thanks to Deputy Director, Dr. Heidi October's efforts. Twenty-four graduates from across Africa participated.

In 2024, the [**12th annual FVZS Honorary Lecture**](#) (*click on name to read story*) formed part of the IYTT programme, a significant milestone for CSCD's FVZS Institute as Ms. Tawakkol Karman, Nobel Peace Laureate 2011, was the first Nobel Laureate to deliver this prestigious lecture.



Above: Ms. Tawakkol Karman, a Yemeni journalist and human rights activist and a 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate, delivered the 2024 FVZS Honorary Lecture.

Sadly, Ms. Namatai Kwekweza, the 2023 Kofi Annan NextGen Democracy Prize winner, was unable to participate in the lecture due to her detention in a Zimbabwean prison alongside other youth democracy activists. This incident underscored the critical role of youth in promoting democracy, particularly in Africa. Ms. Kwekweza's arrest, while unfortunate, highlighted her relevance as a speaker on the complexities of democracy in Africa. Her situation directly ties to this year's lecture theme *Reflecting on 30 Years of Democracy in South Africa: How African Youth Can Demonstrate Citizen Leadership Through Constitutionalism*, and makes tangible graduate attributes – engaged citizenship, an enquiring mind, and being a pro-active change agent committed to social justice.

The 2024 FVZS Honorary Lecture was linked to IYTT, with the theme, *African Youth Show the Way Towards Peace and Democracy*, and was funded by the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation. The Institute also partnered with Stellenbosch University International to host the lecture during its 6th South Africa Japan University (SAJU) Forum.

The IYTT, founded in 2019, has been hosted in various cities in Europe over the past five

years, and challenges youths between 18 and 28 years to engage on globally democracy issues. Some of the outputs of the IYTT participants includes, a handbook for innovative democracy, a short play, the concept "conversations with strangers", arts exhibitions and expressions of empowerment and engagement with policy makers, IYTT fellows stay engaged after the Symposia and share their proposals through working papers and policy briefs. The 2024 cohort will be invited to join the global IYTT network and will explore potential engagement opportunities with the African Union and African Research University Association (ARUA) etc.

More than 200 applications were received, with 24 participants selected from Botswana, Nigeria, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Uganda, and registered students at various South African universities.

The IYTT scientific committee, Convenor, Prof. Urban Strandberg (Managing Director and Co-founder of the IYTT, and Professor in political science at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden) and Co-convenor, Dr. Heidi October (Head: FVZS Institute/Deputy Director: Leadership, CSLL) together with Prof. Olav Njølstad (Director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute) liaised with Stias fellows to incorporate national and international scholars to engage with the 24 selected participants on democracy issues. This "purposeful partnership" aligns with SU's vision and the FVZS Institute's mission to foster leadership in Africa for a socially just and sustainable society with its global network and leadership programme offering.

Unit for Student Governance (USG)

Line management changes with establishment of CSLL

Since the formation of CSLL, USG has been reporting to CSLL Director, Mr. Pieter Kloppers. This has allowed greater integration within student spaces and that the recommendations of the Khampepe Report as it relates to student governance are implemented. The Director of Operations, Mr. Gareth Cornelissen, has also been supportive in terms of making financial provision for permanent or contract staff to improve operations of the Unit and to assist with budgeting. USG is also working closely with the Deputy Director for Leadership on leadership development and training programmes.

TygerMaties Strategic Conference

Considering the merger of CSLEEC and CSC, as was the recommendation of the Khampepe report for greater student leaders collaboration and reform within the Division Student Affairs, the Tygerberg leadership cohort met on the 30th of September to have their strategic planning session as a campus. Prof. Ramjugernath was present at this event. The conference worked at aligning the projects and timelines of the TSRC and its ex-officio structures with that of the student communities at Tygerberg. This is to foster a solid working relationship between student leaders and implement initiatives as a collective and to share resources and ideas on how to better represent the Tygerberg student union.

MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- [531] The University must take deliberate steps to ensure that all student leaders at the University have access to support and guidance, especially during times of crisis, and take deliberate steps to ensure that these channels of support are understood by and accessible to the student leaders.

- [532] The University must consider implementing a mentorship programmes for student leaders to enhance their development, and consider implementing specialised mentorship programmes for Black student leaders to assist them with building confidence and overcoming the various challenges that have been outlined in the Report.

SOAR Mentor Programme helps first-generation students reach the sky



SOAR students who graduated in 2023 celebrate their achievement with the SOAR programme co-designers and facilitators, Ms. Delicia Davids (second from the left), and Ms. Joy Petersen (second from the right).

With 40% of SU's first-year intake consisting of first-generation students, the **SOAR Programme** specifically focuses on needs of first-generation students¹ whose parents/guardians have not pursued higher education after Grade 12, and helps these students transition to university life. It also contributes to transformation at SU, increases diversity amongst students, and promotes inclusivity. The programme was established in 2020 and helps students use their (S) strengths, leverage the (O) opportunities of higher education, activate their (A) agency and enhance their (R) resilience when entering university. It takes place annually just before the newcomer Welcoming Programme kicks off in January/February.

In 2023, about 100 students took part in the SOAR programme, which involved various social activities and discussions on relevant issues such as how to appreciate diversity on campus with regards to gender, race, languages, lived experiences, economic background, and social standing; how to unlock personal strengths and resilience; and how to practice holistic wellness such as empathy and self-compassion. Several workshops were conducted to enhance student engagement, featuring enjoyable group activities such as Zumba. Additionally, students participated in creating vision boards to inspire them to envision the future attainable through obtaining a degree. Cultural events were also organised to facilitate mutual understanding of each other's cultures.

By the end of the year, 56 first generation students from the 2020 cohort of SOAR students studying in various faculties across the university received their degrees.

Students who have benefited from the SOAR programme, often get involved in the programme afterwards by offering their time as mentors to new cohorts. In 2023, 42 students applied to be SOAR mentors.

In the same year, the co-designers and facilitators of the programme, Ms. Joy Petersen from ULDI, and Ms. Delicia Davids, a lecturer in the Faculty of Education, were selected to attend the European First Year Experience conference in Dundee, Scotland to share more about this innovative programme with audiences from across the world ([Read full story here](#)).

In 2024, CSLL doubled the number of participants in the Programme since its inception by placing a greater focus on recruiting students that come through SU's existing school mobility pipeline like TRAC, WOW and SchiMathUS. ULDI has continued its close collaboration with the Thutuka – whose entire cohort of newcomers have been joining us since 2021. We have compiled an extensive 2020-2023 report at the beginning of the year to help us source additional funding. This year we have also placed greater emphasis on personal development and leadership training for the SOAR Mentors.

	2020	2021
Registered SOAR students	61	62
Throughput (proceeded to next year)	51	45
Retention	57	52
Discontinued studies at SU	4	10
Re-applications	2	1
Graduated students	0	0

Above, graph of SOAR students' progress starting with the 2020 cohort. Figures for 2023 and 2024 will only be available later in the year.

Developing an SU Mentor Guidelines publication

At the start of the second semester in 2024, before the leadership selections, ULDI developed the SU Mentor Guidelines. The guidelines encapsulate the vision and mission of the Programme and are grounded in the University's values. The SU Mentor Guidelines are aligned with the Residence Rules and provide the residential educators and mentors with overarching guidance on the overall functioning and operation of the SU Peer Mentor Programme.

This year ULDI also implemented a standardised application form for all the communities that participate in the SU Mentor Programme. The application form is aligned to the Residence Rules and outlines the recruitment process and selection criteria, and the roles and responsibilities of the head mentors and mentors. Before this, each community followed a unique and separate approach to mentoring.

Anti-Gender-Based Violence and Positive Masculinity Campaign

In September 2024, four Anti-GBV and Positive Masculinity Dialogues were hosted by the DSAf Tygerberg office in collaboration with the Equality Unit. The campaign is based on a literature review mapping Anti-GBV interventions across the country as well as current literature regarding positive masculinity.

This literature review informed the aims of the campaign which are as follows:

- To create a safe space for dialogue for all men (queer, cis, etc.) to share their lived experiences and be vulnerable.
- To understand how men on campus think about masculinity and Gender-based violence (GBV).
- To foster anti-GBV awareness inclusion.

This campaign is part of SU's Anti-GBV campaign in collaboration with DSAf (Stellenbosch campus), the Equality Unit and SU's Corporate Communication and Marketing Division.

This year, four dialogues were facilitated by expert facilitators from SU and the University of Cape Town. One of these dialogues included a screening of the short film "Lost Hope" and a discussion with one of the filmmakers.

The first two dialogues, scheduled for 18 September, only included students who identified as male to ensure that they had a safe space to be vulnerable. The third and fourth dialogues scheduled for 23 September and included mixed-gender groups where students of all genders, non-binary identity, and all sexualities were welcome. Furthermore, two dialogues were scheduled during the lunch time to ensure that commuter students could attend, and two dialogues were hosted in the evening with a focus on, but not limited to, residential students.

The campaign was co-sponsored by DSAf and the Equality Unit who have generously offered Higher Health funding.



It's time to create safe spaces for people identifying as men to

EXPLORE POSITIVE MASCULINITY

and

STAND AGAINST

Gender-based Violence (GBV)!

Dialogues for *people who identify as men

Date: 18 September 2024

Times: 12:15 – 13:15 OR 17:00 – 19:00

*Attendees identifying as men are welcome to join ONE session on 18 September and ONE on 23 September 2024.

Dialogues for *all genders

Date: 23 September 2024

Times: 12:15 – 13:15 OR 17:00 – 19:00

*Attendees of all genders are welcome to join ONE session on 23 September 2024.



SCAN ABOVE or VISIT <https://bit.ly/3ZhTIB0>
to book your seat by 16:00 on 16 September 2024

For enquiries, e-mail Labeekah at labeekah@sun.ac.za

The dialogues are presented in collaboration with Stellenbosch University's Division of Student Affairs (Tygerberg campus), the Equality Unit, and Higher Health.



Invite sent to all students at Tygerberg to attend the event.

It is important to note that this campaign strives to be inclusive of all genders, races, and sexualities. The timing of this campaign, after women's month, is also significant as it is critical that SU does not only focus on the challenges of GBV and sexism during August. Instead, it is an ongoing commitment throughout the year to raise awareness, eliminate harmful stereotypes, and offer safe and courageous spaces for our students to engage on societal problems.

Given the feedback received from participants, there is a need for these dialogues in small groups. Depending on funding, the campaign will therefore be extended into 2025.

Connecting students to employers to access internships and employment opportunities

The annual Careers Fair is organised by the Unit for Graduand Career Services and offers students an invaluable opportunity to build connections with potential employers, gain insight into essential skills employers expect them to have upon entering the workplace,

and gain access to internship opportunities. This year, 99 companies participated in the Fair.



The tents housing the 99 companies during the Careers Fair was filled every day as students grabbed the opportunity to engage with potential employers.

The Unit's engagement with employers indicates that while employers may need to develop soft skills in new graduates entering the job market, the notion of a broad skills gap is overstated. Data indicates that graduates who are first-generation students, completed their schooling in under-resourced schools, and/or come from difficult socioeconomic circumstances, are inevitably negatively affected through the range of skills they can bring to the job market. Research also indicate that the real challenge facing new graduates is not necessarily a lack of skills but rather a communication gap as graduates often fail to clearly articulate their skills on their CVs, making it difficult for employers to assess their suitability for roles. In a highly competitive market, where employers may receive many applications, it becomes even more important for candidates to present their abilities clearly.

These issues, amongst others, are addressed by the Unit, which helps students learn the language of the Professional world, and offers workshops on CV writing and how to optimise LinkedIn profiles amongst others.



Students engage with Mulilo, one of the 99 companies that participated in the Careers Fair of the Unit for Graduand Career Services.

Over the three-day Careers Fair, 99 companies participated with one day focused on general career opportunities and more specialised opportunities in auditing and engineering on day two and three respectively.

Open Days hosted at Tygerberg and Stellenbosch campuses to create awareness of DSAf offerings and support



The first open Open Day held on the Stellenbosch campus was a roaring success!

The Division Student Affairs (DSAf) hosted its first-ever Open Day at Stellenbosch campus, attracting hundreds of students eager to explore leadership development opportunities and various support services offered by the Division's two centres and nine units.

The stalls, which were set up on the Rooiplein between 12:00 and 14:00 on 17 September, were buzzing with hundreds of students seeking more information on how to enhance their university experience both personally and academically. This event follows the success of

the last three open days held at the Tygerberg campus annually since 2022, and initiated by Ms. Khairoonisa Foflonker, Manager of DSAf's Tygerberg office. The goal with establishing an Open Day focused on the Student Affairs environment, was to ensure that students have easy access to vital information and to address the diverse needs of students pursuing different degrees. The Khampepe Report recommendations underscored the need for students to become aware

Staff, student assistants, and interns from the Centre for Student Life and Learning (CSLL) and the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) were joined by Pokkel, Stellenbosch University's (SU) beloved mascot, who challenged some students to a dance-off. And Matie students did not disappoint! Several brave students stepped up to the challenge, giving Pokkel some serious competition.

CSLL offers leadership and personal development opportunities to students through its five units – the Unit for Commuter Students, Unit for Student Governance, Unit for Residence Student Communities, Unit for Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion, and the Unit for Experiential Learning.. Meanwhile, CSCD provides essential support services through its four units: the Unit for Graduand Career Services, the Disability Unit, the Unit for Academic Counselling and Development, and the Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services.

Students who visited the stalls had the opportunity to speak directly with staff about leadership development programmes, workshops, and masterclasses, amongst others. They also engaged with student assistants and interns, hearing firsthand how DSAf's offerings have positively impacted and enhanced their academic success, leadership skills, mental health, and overall well-being, and cope at university with visible and invisible disabilities ([Read the story online](#)).

Tygerberg campus Open Day: A resounding success



The Division Student Affairs (DSAf) annual Open Day at Stellenbosch University's Tygerberg campus has once again proven to be a resounding success in providing students with valuable information, fostering engagement, and creating a sense of belonging for all students within the university community.

On 16 April 2024, DSAf hosted its third Open Day at the campus. The event provides an opportunity for DSAf staff from the Stellenbosch campus to join their Tygerberg counterparts in interacting with undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as staff from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. The aim is to raise awareness of the comprehensive range of support services, leadership development training, and co-curricular offerings within DSAf that are available to students throughout their academic journey.

The DSAf Open Day initiative was conceptualised by Ms. Khairoonisa Foflonker, Manager of DSAf's Tygerberg office, to ensure students have easy access to information and address the diverse needs of students pursuing different degrees.



Staff from the DSAf offices at Tygerberg and Stellenbosch campus enjoy the Tygerberg DSAf Open Day with students leaders and students.

Increasing the visibility of our co-curricular offerings ensures that students are developed in a holistic manner in line with SU's Graduate Attributes. It also fosters awareness around our support services which includes, but is not limited to, food security, and mental health support, and accessibility awareness," explained Foflonker. [Read full story online.](#)



Invite to the 2024 DSAf Open Day at Tygerberg campus.

Centre for Student Counselling and Development: Providing emotional, academic, disability, food, and job search support to students

The Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services (UPSS) conducted various training sessions with student leaders across both the Tygerberg and Stellenbosch campuses in 2024. These sessions aimed to equip leaders with essential skills to effectively communicate information about campus resources, including the services offered by the CSCD, and how to access them. Additionally, they were guided through case studies to help them navigate complex situations with their mentees.

As part of the Senior Student Leadership Development and Training Programme, the Unit for Academic Counselling and Development conducts an annual work session on Stress Management for Leaders. This session addresses the unique challenges of stress and anxiety that student leaders face, offering practical strategies for managing overwhelming expectations and balancing the demands of leadership and academics. Participants learn to recognise the signs of stress and anxiety, develop healthy coping mechanisms, and establish supportive routines. The session equips student leaders with tools to improve focus, handle pressure effectively, and maintain mental well-being. Information about the CSCD's services is also provided, encouraging leaders to access available support resources.

In February 2024, ECP (Extended Curriculum Programme) practitioners from the CSCD uncertainties, share concerns, and role-play anticipated case scenarios to enhance the quality of mentor-mentee-companion relationships while maintaining sustainable

personal boundaries. During the sessions, each participant was given an inspirational quote to attach to their keycard holder with a QR code for instant access to supports and contact details of both internal SU campus-based resources and external community-based services. Following the training, mentor-companions were encouraged to book individual consultations with ECP practitioners at the CSCD to debrief, reflect on their progress, and access support and counselling as needed. Feedback from respective ECP co-ordinators conveyed that their mentor-companions valued the training they had received, were equipped and confident to assist their mentee's in accessing timeous support, and were willing to reach out, or refer mentee's to CSCD, when necessary. Furthermore, CSCD statistics reflect that several mentors across faculties, followed up by booking counselling sessions at the CSCD for individualized support throughout the year.

Enhancing student support and success through technological innovation

The CSCD, in collaboration with SU's Division for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (DLTE), developed the [Selfhelp.sun.ac.za](http://selfhelp.sun.ac.za) web application, aligning with the university's commitment to a Transformative Student Experience. This centralised platform serves as the first point of support for students, offering essential guidance on topics critical to student success, including adjusting to university life, career advice, mental health, food security, and support for students with disabilities. The Selfhelp Web app was activated just before the June exams, but development work, content enhancement, and continuous improvement of the user experience are ongoing.

By harnessing technology, the CSCD ensures that vital resources are easily accessible, helping students thrive both academically and personally. Furthermore, data on student engagement and usage patterns with the platform allows the university to shape future strategies and interventions that promote student wellness and success.



Disability Unit: Creating awareness to empower students to work towards access for disabled students where they are

Over the last two years, the Disability Unit (DU) has made a point of improving accessibility for students with visible (physical disabilities like being deaf or blind) and invisible (mental health challenges such as Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder, depression or anxiety) disabilities. The work of this Unit allows students who are not disabled to become aware of how disabilities can become a barrier to success, not because of the disability itself, but due to accessibility, whether in the design of buildings, participation in residence and commuter student activities, a lack of awareness amongst students of the difficulties disabled students face and a lack of knowledge on how to amend activities to be inclusive.

Through their work, staff within the Unit is able to implement a transformative student experience for disabled and able-bodied individuals, foster belonging and inclusion, and

contribute to students attaining Graduate Attributes that prepare them for the workplace, but also make other staff within the workplace aware of those for whom an inaccessible workplace can negatively affect job performance and output, lead to conflict amongst staff, and who with the right knowledge could address challenges easily by understanding what their disabled peers need in order to level the playing field (in other words, how to ensure equity) perform optimally in the workplace.

Presented by HR and the Disability Unit

All SU staff are invited to an opportunity to learn more about disability as it relates to our everyday working environment at SU. This programme helps create meaningful awareness around disability and offers tools and knowledge that enable staff to engage competently and consciously with disability. The programme will share insights that will empower staff to make our working environments inclusive of people with disabilities. Staff are free and encouraged to register for all sessions.

Session 1: Staff experiences
Session 2: Disclosure and how we use it (POPIA), the legal imperatives of inclusion
Session 3: Student experiences
Session 4: Universal access and why it's important
Session 5: Service dogs
Session 6: Reflections on knowledge learnt and way forward for you

VENUE
 Hybrid: Den Bosch, 39 Victoria Street and MS Teams

DATES
 4 & 25 April 2024
 9 & 23 May 2024
 6 & 20 June 2024

TIME
 10h00 - 12h00

Building a disability-conscious and competent SU

To register and notify us of any accessibility needs, contact luigian@sun.ac.za
 Registrations close 30 March 2024

Stellenbosch UNIVERSITY STADT UNIVERSITÄT UNIVERSITEIT

The DU also offers a free, recognised transcript programme, *Lead with Disability*, designed for all staff and registered students over six weekly, one-hour sessions, each addressing a key topic related to disability inclusion and awareness. The programme runs in both the first and second semesters.

Students who successfully complete the programme receive transcript recognition upon graduation, which highlights their commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. The curriculum provides participants with essential practical tools and guidelines to promote inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities, ultimately creating a more inclusive university experience in a supportive campus community.

The Programme topics for 2024 included *Engaging with Individuals with Disabilities*; *Universal Access and Why it's Important*; *Universal Design for Learning*; and *Disclosure and how we use it (POPIA): Legal imperatives of inclusion*, amongst others. Attendees were also able to learn more about service dogs and how they improve access for individuals with disabilities, as well as listen to the experiences of students with disabilities on campus. In 2024, approximately 60 students participated in the first semester, followed by 52 students in the second semester.

Additionally, DU offers tailored sessions specifically for student leaders, including members from the SRC, house committees, and mentors. These specialised sessions cover the services available for students with disabilities at SU, provide awareness and a general understanding of disability, and equip leaders with practical strategies to enhance inclusivity on campus.

These initiatives are conducted in collaboration with other university units, such as the Unit for Student Communities and the Unit for Student Governance, ensuring a comprehensive approach to creating an accessible and supportive university environment.

Through the *Lead with Disability Programme* and other related activities, like Casual Day, the DU focuses on providing a transformative student experience to all students in which students are able to develop graduate attributes, such as social justice leadership, implement proactive change, and are committed to care. This awareness turns able-bodied students into informed allies, who recognise inclusivity and accessibility challenges faced by disabled students, and works towards eliminating it.

PROMOTING INTENTIONAL MULTILINGUALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM

Initiatives to promote multilingualism and multiculturalism among students, especially in residences, were introduced in 2023. Staff at CSLL worked in partnership with SU's Language Centre, based in the DLTE, to organise workshops and conversations with student leaders concerning multilingualism. These sessions empowered newly-elected student leaders in 2023 on language and diversity when implementing the SU Language Policy (2021).

CONCLUSION

DSAf is critical to ensuring that SU achieves its transformation objectives. Through improved leadership training, residence culture reforms, and enhanced collaboration, and the elimination of overlaps, among others, DSAf can play a pivotal role in fostering a more inclusive and welcoming university environment.

This report was compiled with contributions by Dr. Choice Makhetha, Dr. Ruth Andrews, Dr. Elmien Sinclair, Dr. Liezl Dick, Dr. Marcia Lyner-Cleophas, Ms. Luigia Nicholas, Ms. Benita van Zyl, Ms. Monica du Toit, Ms. Khairoonisa Foflonker, Ms. Joy Petersen, Ms. Lynne Rippenaar-Moses, Mr. Jethro Georgiades, Mr. Anele Mdepa, Mr. Thulani Hlatswayo, and Mr. Yeki Mosomothane,