Report concerning student leadership structure at Stellenbosch University

SLK
July 2007
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**Introduction**

This project was launched by the SRC to investigate how the representation of the student union could be improved. The project had two goals:

1. To investigate the status of, and perceptions about student leadership structures at the university, and
2. to list the needs of the student union.

It was foreseen that the project should also investigate the effectiveness of the representation of the needs, but due to time constraints this could not be done.

To facilitate the project the SRC appointed the Student Leadership Commission (SLK), chaired by Jacobus Diener.

**Organogram**

Initially the perceptions regarding student leadership structures amongst former student leaders were tested. These former student leaders were representative of all the campuses of the university. They were requested to voice their opinion regarding the campus culture and activities on the various campuses as well as the representation of different leadership structures on the different campuses.

From this opinion the SLK drew an organogram of student leadership structures and presented it, as a first opinion, to the SRC. The SRC accepted this document as an first opinion.

**Students’ needs**

The opinion of current and former student leaders was asked during the compilation of the list of students’ needs.

**Further consultation**

The organogram and the list of students’ needs were distributed amongst student leadership structures. With the support of the SRC and Student Affairs a feedback session with representatives of the following structures were also held:

- SRC
- Academic Affairs Council
- Prim Committee
- Tygerberg Student Council
- Societies Council
- House Committees (Residences and PSO wards)
- Societies
- Student Faculty Committees
- RAG Committee
- Die Matie
- Student Affairs

(Representatives of the Military were also specifically invited, but could unfortunately not attend.)
The organogram and the list of students’ needs were discussed at the feedback session. Various resolutions were adopted at the feedback session. These resolutions (Addendum A) were presented to the SLK.

In the compilation of this the report the SLK, consisting of Huba Boshoff, Lourens du Plessis, Jacobus Diener, Roelof Nel and Barry Smith, gave due consideration to the opinions expressed and the resolutions adopted during the feedback session and the initial documentation. The report is structured as followed:

1. The revised organogram of current student leadership structures.
2. The list of students’ needs.
3. Recommendations on how the current structures and representation could be improved.
4. Suggestions on how some of the recommendations could be implemented.
Organogram of student leadership structures

Statutory A

The Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) specifies that each university must have one (and only one) representative student council. This body is the highest decision-making and representative authority of the students at the university. In the case of the SU, it is the Student Representative Council (SRC).

The SRC is therefore the highest decision making and representative structure regarding student activities and interests as well as the representative and defender of the interest of all members of the student union. The SRC is the body to which all structures at the university are accountable with regards to service delivery to students. As such all student activities fall under the auspice of the SRC and therefore the SRC also has the responsibility to support all student leadership structures.

For the SRC to be effective it must efficiently manage student activities to the end that the SRC interacts with students on all levels and fronts and also encourages interaction between students. The rights, duties and responsibilities of the SRC are stated in the Student Union Constitution.

Statutory B

Structures with ex officio representation on the SRC define the next level in student leadership. These structures are the Academic Affairs Council (AAC), the Military Academy Student Representative Council (MASC), the Prim Committee (PC), the Tygerberg Student Representative Council (TSRC) and the Societies Council (SC). These structures represent specific interest groups within the student union. In general their role is to advise the SRC regarding issues within these interest groups. The rights, duties and responsibilities of these structures are stated in the Student Union Constitution and in the structure’s constitution.

The Student Court and the Convenor of the SRC election lie on the same level as the above-mentioned structures, but independent of the SRC. The rights, duties and responsibilities of the Student Court and the Convenor of the SRC election are stated in the Student Union Constitution.

Student Bodies

Student bodies have very important roles as facilitators between the SRC and the student union, but these structures are not directly represented on the SRC. They are all Student Faculty committees, House Committees of residences and PSO wards and Societies’ committees. The Tygerberg Academic Affairs Council (TAAC) is classified as a student faculty committee and the Tygerberg Prim Affairs Committee (TGB PC) are seen to be on the same level as the House Committees.

The RAG committee receives administrational support from Student Affairs and are currently independent of the SRC.

Subject/ Departmental Societies fall under the dean of the specific faculty and are currently independent of the SRC.

Sport Societies fall under Sport’s Buro and are currently independent of the SRC.
Die Matie is classified to be independent of any structure.

**Organogram**

The organogram is divided in four horizontal sections and two vertical columns.

The horizontal sections represent different levels of student leadership, but no distinction is made within any given level.

The horizontal sections (Statutory A and B) reflect the statutory bodies, as constituted in the Higher Education Act, the Student Union Constitution or the Statute of the University of Stellenbosch.

All the student bodies that are not constituted in the above mentioned follow in the next two horizontal sections (Student bodies or Student interest bodies).

The column on the left refers to student structures that fall under the SRC.

The column on the right refers to student structures that are independent within the university’s structure or not constituted within any official documentation of the University of Stellenbosch.
# Student’s needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Specific needs within year</th>
<th>Generic needs (across the board)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First year</td>
<td>To feel welcome&lt;br&gt;Explore possibilities&lt;br&gt;Social interaction&amp;friends&lt;br&gt;To be informed &amp; connected (academically and socially)&lt;br&gt;To belong and initiated into the student union&lt;br&gt;To find their feet in a new environment.&lt;br&gt;Adept life- and study style to be successful</td>
<td>That constitutional rights are respected&lt;br&gt;That an individual’s culture is respected&lt;br&gt;To study successfully&lt;br&gt;To feel and be safe&lt;br&gt;Accommodation&lt;br&gt;Food&lt;br&gt;Transport (on&amp;from campus, parking)&lt;br&gt;Conducive study environment&lt;br&gt;Chance to relax&lt;br&gt;Sport facilities&lt;br&gt;To belong to/identity (residence, society, religious, Maties)&lt;br&gt;To be informed&lt;br&gt;Finances&lt;br&gt;To be in control of your own destiny&lt;br&gt;To feel represented&lt;br&gt;To be treated as clients&lt;br&gt;Balance between social and academic interaction&lt;br&gt;To develop an social conscience and responsibility&lt;br&gt;For a platform for open and honest discussions&lt;br&gt;To grasp the national needs&lt;br&gt;To be informed politically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>continued success and if not, how to handle the situation successfully (e.g. how to <em>sleep vakke</em>)&lt;br&gt;personal and leadership development&lt;br&gt;to be prepared for the job market&lt;br&gt;to explore possibilities in job market and elsewhere&lt;br&gt;looking for the edge, the advantage over other graduates&lt;br&gt;build networks&lt;br&gt;mentorship (received)&lt;br&gt;identity within faculty&lt;br&gt;contact/ exposure to other universities</td>
<td> That constitutional rights are respected&lt;br&gt;That an individual’s culture is respected&lt;br&gt;To study successfully&lt;br&gt;To feel and be safe&lt;br&gt;Accommodation&lt;br&gt;Food&lt;br&gt;Transport (on&amp;from campus, parking)&lt;br&gt;Conducive study environment&lt;br&gt;Chance to relax&lt;br&gt;Sport facilities&lt;br&gt;To belong to/identity (residence, society, religious, Maties)&lt;br&gt;To be informed&lt;br&gt;Finances&lt;br&gt;To be in control of your own destiny&lt;br&gt;To feel represented&lt;br&gt;To be treated as clients&lt;br&gt;Balance between social and academic interaction&lt;br&gt;To develop an social conscience and responsibility&lt;br&gt;For a platform for open and honest discussions&lt;br&gt;To grasp the national needs&lt;br&gt;To be informed politically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-grad</td>
<td>interaction with other post-grads&lt;br&gt;contact/ exposure to other universities and industry&lt;br&gt;expanding communication skills, especially within the context of research&lt;br&gt;good research environment&lt;br&gt;share their experience&lt;br&gt;mentorship (received/give)</td>
<td> That constitutional rights are respected&lt;br&gt;That an individual’s culture is respected&lt;br&gt;To study successfully&lt;br&gt;To feel and be safe&lt;br&gt;Accommodation&lt;br&gt;Food&lt;br&gt;Transport (on&amp;from campus, parking)&lt;br&gt;Conducive study environment&lt;br&gt;Chance to relax&lt;br&gt;Sport facilities&lt;br&gt;To belong to/identity (residence, society, religious, Maties)&lt;br&gt;To be informed&lt;br&gt;Finances&lt;br&gt;To be in control of your own destiny&lt;br&gt;To feel represented&lt;br&gt;To be treated as clients&lt;br&gt;Balance between social and academic interaction&lt;br&gt;To develop an social conscience and responsibility&lt;br&gt;For a platform for open and honest discussions&lt;br&gt;To grasp the national needs&lt;br&gt;To be informed politically</td>
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Recommendations and suggestions

Recommendations

1. The SRC should consolidate and affirm its position as the most influential student structure

The SRC’s position, as a structure, with regards to other student structures is clear. The SLK recommends that the SRC affirms and consolidates this position to the end that the SRC can effectively carry out their duties and responsibilities.

The SRC has the responsibility to organise certain events, but the running of these events are not the primary responsibility of the SRC nor should it take up most of the SRC’s time. The SRC’s primary focus should be to be involved in all levels of student activities and discussions so that students can be effectively represented.

2. Student representation and the organogram of leadership structures

The SLK recommends that the relationships between the SRC and its substructures (as in the attached organogram) be investigated

2.1. to ensure that effective communication can take place between all structures,
2.2. to ensure there are effective channels for communication to and from the SRC in place, and
2.3. to ensure the image of the SRC and its substructures are effectively managed.

3. Voter’s expectation on satellite-campuses and voter education

Every year the question why students on satellite-campuses should vote for the SRC is posed to the SRC candidates. It can thus be reasonably assumed that the SRC’s position with regards to the student leadership structures on satellite campuses is unclear.

3.1. The SLK recommends that the position of the SRC with regards to satellite-campuses be clarified.
3.2. The SLK recommends that the expectations of voters on satellite campuses be investigated to establish if these expectations are valid and if the SRC or one of its substructures addresses them.
3.3. The SLK recommends that voter education programmes be launched on all campuses, to inform voters of their rights and to explain the duties and the responsibilities of the SRC and its substructures.

4. Representation of the MILAK

The SLK acknowledges importance of direct representation of the students of the Military Academy (MILAK) on the SRC, but the SLK is concerned about the effectiveness of the current representation scheme.

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1 See the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997), the Statute and the Student Union Constitution
For the past three years the Student Captain of the MILAK held an ex officio seat on the SRC. In principle this seat affords the students of the Military Academy direct representation on the SRC, but in practice this system seems to be inefficient. The reasons for this seem to be the distance between the MILAK and the other campuses as well as the differences in the cultures of decision-making between the campuses.

The SLK recommends that the input from the MASC and the students of the MILAK to the SRC be investigated to ensure effective representation of the Saldanha campus on the SRC.

5. Leadership development

The SLK is concerned that there is currently no conscious emphasis on leadership skills or the development of such skills amongst students at this institution.

The SLK recommends that a leadership development program should be launched at the university. This program should aim to develop leaders on every level in student leadership as well as encourage the through flow of leaders from ground level to the SRC. This program should develop a social conscience and responsibility amongst students and also empower students to be able to be effective leaders outside of the existing structures.

The SLK acknowledges the efforts currently being made by the SRC to address this problem. But the SLK would like to emphasise that the leadership development program should be institutionally driven, with input from the student leadership structures and other agencies concerned with student development at the university.

6. Academic grant year and the workload of student leaders

The SLK is concerned that too much is expected of student leaders and in order to fulfil all that is required of them student leaders spend less time studying. The SLK is of the opinion that the Division for Student Affairs should give sufficient institutional support and that student leaders’ commitments should be scheduled around their academic commitments.

The SLK recommends that student representation be investigated to find mechanisms to lighten the expected workload of student leaders, so that the academic grant year should not be seen as given.

7. Input of former student leaders

Continuity within most student leadership structures is lacking and the SLK recommends that this issue should be addressed. Student representation at the top structures of the university is considerably hampered by the lack of institutional memory amongst representatives.

The SLK recommends that former student leaders should be involved in student representation, especially in an advisory role.

8. Students’ needs

The SLK recommends that the representation of students’ needs should be investigated in the following ways:

8.1. The SRC should audit its substructures to establish if students’ needs are effectively represented as well as to establish if there is any duplication amongst leadership structures in the representation of these needs.
8.2. Attention should also be given to the representation

8.2.1. to the generic needs of students, specifically with regard to safety and security, and

8.2.2. to the needs of post-graduate students.

8.3. The SLK would also like to recommend that the SRC, in conjunction with the university’s student support structures, compile a profile of all the skills that Maties should ideally develop during the course of their studies. This profile should be considered during any decision making or planning session pertaining to student activities.

9. Commercial development

9.1. The SLK recommends that the necessary mechanisms are developed to ensure that students’ interests are represented or considered in any commercial initiatives of the university.

This will include that the SRC has input to the development and planning of any facility or area that is commonly utilised by students. In this regard two areas have been identified where student input is currently lacking: Commercialisation of the Langenhoven Student Centre and Residences.

9.2. The SLK recommends that MFM should in future not be considered as a student initiative. This station functions as a community radio station with the infrastructure of the university, but independent of student structures.

10. Institutional support

Sufficient institutional and administrative support is vital to enable student structures to carry out all their duties effectively. The SLK is of the opinion that the Division for Student Affairs should provide this institutional support. Unfortunately this division has lessened the administrative support provided to student structures by requiring certain services of the SRC’s personnel. It has had the effect that the SRC currently requires even more administrative support for which they appoint students out of their own budget.

The SLK is gravely concerned by the fact that there is no central archive of policy documents pertaining to student structures leading to doubt about the status of certain policy documents.

The SLK is also concerned about the lack of technical support with regards to information technology and communication since this inhibit the SRC and its substructures to effectively communicate with students.

10.1. The SLK recommends that the role and duties of the Division for Student Affairs are investigated to improve the support provided to the SRC and its substructures.

10.2. It is recommended that a central (preferably electronic) archive be created to store all policy documents of the SRC and its substructures in such a way that the process is independent of the continuity within the SRC.

10.3. It is recommend that the support given to student structures with regards to information technology and communication is improved. Areas identified in this regard are the
support given to societies to host their own web pages and to the SRC to send out electronic communication to all students (e.g. the K-mail)

11. **RAG committee**

The SLK recommends that the RAG committee resides under the SRC. The current situation is not in tune with current legislative or policy framework, where the central responsibility for all student activities falls on the SRC. The status quo denies the student union (in the SRC) a vital mechanism to effect transformation of the campus culture with regards to community interaction and the culture within residences. The RAG committee has no institutional status of representation to effect these changes and any such efforts would be in conflict with the current legislative and policy framework at the university.

12. **MCS and student structures**

There is currently no formal interaction between Maties Community Service (MCS) and student structures despite the fact that many community interaction projects are driven and organised by student structures.

The SLK recommends, in an effort to improve the cooperation between the different structures, that the relationship between MCS and student structures be formalised.

13. **Sport and Subject/Departmental Societies**

The SLK recommends that all student societies and organisations reside under the SRC.
Suggestions to implement some of the recommendations

1. RAG committee

1.1. A meeting of representatives of the SRC, RAG committee, Student Faculty committees and House Committee, chaired by the chairperson of the RAG committee, should be held in the third quarter. The purpose of this meeting should be to establish the function of RAG and how the RAG and ALFA programs could be better integrated during the RAG week.

2. Input of former student leaders

2.1. The SRC should appoint a statutory form consisting of former student leaders to advise the SRC on a permanent basis.

2.2. It should be investigated if some of the terms of office of a student representative on the Council, the IF and the Senate should be altered to ensure better continuity in the student representation on these bodies.

3. Academic grant year and the workload of student leaders

3.1. The SRC should appoint managers to organise events. The SRC would be responsible for all fundamental/policy decisions regarding events and the managers would be responsible to implement the decisions. The relationship between the SRC and the managers would be analogous to that between a minister and the director-general in government. The minister is responsible for all policy decisions and the director-general is responsible for the day to day running of the ministry.

4. Representation of the MILAK

4.1. Die Matie should be distributed on the Saldanha campus.

5. The SRC should consolidate and affirm their position as the most influential student structure

5.1. The issues that the SRC would like to address and specific goals that the SRC would like to achieve during its term of office should be publicly advertised at the beginning of each SRC-term. These goals would direct the SRC throughout their term of office and could serve as the basis for the SRC evaluation done by Die Matie at the end of the first semester.

5.2. Currently some confusion exists amongst student leaders as to the difference between the function and goals of the SRC as a whole and the function and goals of the individual SRC members. The above-mentioned suggestion would go some way to giving the SRC more legitimacy through accountability.

6. MCS and student structures

6.1. Mechanisms should be developed for societies that partially or wholly focus on community interaction to cooperate with and/or receive project support from MCS.
Addendum A

Resolution of the SLK feedback session 12 May 2007

Resolution 1: Investigate perceptions and expectations of voters on different campuses (i.e. have a clear write-up of roles of the SRC, TSRC and MASC)

Resolution 2: Linkages between institutional structures should be investigated for practicality.

Resolution 3: Investigate structural representation and accountability for RAG and Sport on the SRC, for example considering the possibility of an ex officio position or a communication protocol. Regarding RAG also investigate the relationship to MCS.

Resolution 4: AAC, PK and SC have the same level of representation on SRC

Resolution 5: HK’s, Faculty Committees, Society Committees and TABR are on the same level within student leadership structures

Resolution 6: Student Parliament is a programme not an institution

Resolution 7: Door guards and patrol guards are not considered as student structures.

Resolution 8: MFM is not considered as a student structure.

Resolution 9: Recommend that non-academic faculty societies register as student societies and membership of these societies is voluntary. The possibility of a special type of society (one with representation on the SC and on a Faculty Committee) should be investigated.

Resolution 10: Distinguish between management and representation roles (“job description”) within leadership structures.

Resolution 11: Develop transparent feedback methods

Resolution 12: Investigate PSO representation

Resolution 13: Propose a meeting between HK’s, RAG and Faculty committees (and all other stack holders) on the overall strategy during Welcoming week (programmatic intervention).

Resolution 14: Request meeting of leadership stack holder to coordinate strategy to market leadership development amongst students across the board. Also investigate the coordination of leadership development at this university

Resolution 15: Create portfolio (and portfolio committee) on SRC for security issues.

Resolution 16: These resolutions and inputs should be discussed on next meeting of all leadership structures.