**Report of the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation on Its Oversight visit to Stellenbosch University, Dated 25 March 2022**

The Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation (hereafter referred to as the Committee), having conducted an oversight visit to Stellenbosch University (the University or SU) on 16 February 2022, reports as follows:

**1. DELEGATION LIST**

**1.1 Members of the Committee**

Ms NT Mkhatshwa: Chairperson (ANC), Ms D Mahlatsi (ANC), Ms JS Mananiso (ANC), Mr T Letsie (ANC), Ms D Sibiya (ANC), Mr BS Yabo (ANC), Ms C King (DA), Ms N Tarabella-Marchesi\* (DA) and Dr W Boshoff (FFP).

**1.2 Support staff:**

Mr A Kabingesi: Committee Secretary, Dr R Osborne-Mullins: Content Advisor, Dr A Arendse: Researcher, Mr J Majozi: Parliamentary Communications Officer (PCO) and Mr T Bottoman: Committee Assistant.

**2. INTRODUCTION**

The Committee, as part of its oversight mandate over the post-school education and training (PSET) system, conducted an oversight visit to Stellenbosch University on 16 February 2022. The purpose of the oversight visit was to engage with the University’s Management, Council and stakeholders on the progress made with the University’s transformation journey.

The Committee received presentations on the University’s state of readiness for the 2022 academic year, as well as an overview of governance, management, teaching and learning and related matters. As part of the meeting, the Department of Higher Education and Training (Department or DHET) presented the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions.

**3. Summary of the presentations**

**3.1 DHET**

Dr T Lewin: Acting Deputy Director-General (DDG) University Education led the presentation. She began the presentation by referring to the Colloquium hosted by Universities South Africa (USAf) on the New Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions on 29 September 2021. She said the Colloquium was attended by all the Vice-Chancellors of the 26 public universities and other stakeholders, and the discussions centred around the improvement of the policy and its implementation in the sector. She committed to share the report of the Colloquium with the Committee.

Dr Lewin said South Africa’s approach to multilingualism is embedded in the Constitution, which recognises 11 official languages. She referenced section 6 of the Constitution and section 29 of the Bill of Rights, which equally emphasises the rights of individuals to receive education in the official language of their choice. Dr Lewin stated that the review of the Language Policy Framework was mainly based on the following:

* Report of the *Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions, 2008* (the Soudien Report);
* The *Ministerial Advisory Panel on African Languages in Higher Education* (MAPAHLE), 2012 (Report in 2015);
* *The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) -* Transformation at Public Universities Report, December 2016; and
* Several processes of consultation within and outside the higher education sector.

In relation to the Language Policy Framework Imperatives, Dr Lewin indicated that the policy is embedded within these principles, namely:

* The need for higher education to value all official languages as sources of knowledge, capable of informing learning of the different disciplines in higher education;
* A recognition that languages are critical resources in the transmission of knowledge, cognitive development and effective participation in the knowledge economy;
* Enhancing people-centeredness in addressing the interests, needs and aspirations of a wide range of language communities through ongoing dialogue and debate; and
* The value of collaborative partnerships to promote multilingualism.

In relation to the policy commitments and requirements, Dr Lewin indicated that the policy commits to the development and study of all official South African (SA) languages, especially the historically marginalised, including the Khoi, Nama and San languages. The policy also articulates that demonstrable competencies that have been established in other languages other than English, should not be impeded but nurtured and encouraged, as long as they do not serve as barriers of access to speakers of other languages. The policy further articulates that institutional language policies and plans must indicate strategies that the universities will adopt to promote multilingualism and institutions are encouraged to foster collaborations in the development and strengthening of official African languages.

In conclusion, Dr Lewin said the Department is exploring the possibility of a collaborative implementation strategy for the Language Policy. In terms of the outline in the policy, the Department will establish and implement a funding model to enable the implementation of the Policy Framework and reporting by institutions will be used to determine the effect of policy implementation on achieving the desired results.

**3.2 Stellenbosch University**

**3.2.1 Council**

Mr A Moos: Chairperson of Council extended his warm welcome to the Committee for visiting the University. He presented the governance part of the presentation and noted that the University’s Statute was published in the Government Gazette of 16 August 2019. The University’s Statute is driven by the values underlying the Constitution, 1996, and promotes unity in diversity by inculcating tolerance of and respect for different perspectives and beliefs. The Council comprises 25 members and is the highest decision making structure in the University. Mr Moos gave highlights of the key decisions taken by Council since 2014 which included

* The appointment of Prof De Villiers as Rector and Vice-Chancellor (VC) in 2014 and 2019;
* The investment in the Campus Renewal Project in 2014;
* The elevation of transformation to the top-management level in 2015; the language policy in 2016 and 2021;
* The transformation plan in 2017; The admission policy in 2017; and
* The student disciplinary code in 2020.

**3.2.2 Management**

Prof W De Villiers: Rector and VC led the presentation on behalf of management. He said the University, in terms of its Vision 2040, would be Africa’s leading research-intensive university, globally recognised for excellence and innovation, and advancing knowledge in service of society. In terms of numbers, the VC said the University had 32 225 undergraduates, occasional and postgraduate students; 3 400 academic and professional and administrative support service (PASS) staff and 10 faculties.

Prof N Koopman: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel presented on transformation. He said transformation at the University is an intentional and structured process of profound change of the institution’s places, people and programme, aimed at dignity, healing of wounds, social justice, freedom and equality. Some measures to advance transformation included the: transformation key performance areas (KPAs), which constitute 20 to 25 percent of the total KPAs for all employees; the Rector’s Strategic Personnel Fund, the Staff Health and Wellbeing Plan and the building of transformation competencies.

In relation to the diversity and inclusion of staff, Prof De Villiers indicated that the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), which is one of five programmes of the Staffing South Africa’s Universities Framework (SSAUF), has assisted in the development of young and black academics. The University, since 2016, had 30 nGAP staff members of which 20 are currently with the University. The Rector’s Strategic Personnel Fund, which is aimed at accelerating the diversification of staff and the advancement of Black African, Coloured and Indian staff, had an allocation of R87.3 million.

In relation to the race and gender trends from 2017 to 2021 for academic staff, Prof De Villiers said African academic staff increased from 5 to 7 percent; Coloured staff from 12 to 14 percent and Indian staff from 2 to 3 percent. With regard to the professional and administrative support service staff (PASS), Coloured staff increased from 39 to 45 percent and Indian staff increased from 1 to 2 percent. Prof De Villiers provided a synopsis of the senior positions by race and indicated that the University had 685 senior personnel. In terms of demographics, 486 staff were White, followed by 79 Coloured, 64 foreign, 28 African and 21 Indian staff. In terms of distribution by gender since 2021, the University had 411 male senior personnel and 274 female senior personnel.

In relation to safety and security against gender-based violence (GBV), Prof De Villiers mentioned the measures to curb GBV, which included the staff being familiarised about the unacceptable conduct regarding GBV; employment of female staff members at all levels who are empowered to deal with GBV issues; strengthening the link between the SU Equality Unit and security staff; and ensuring that the Code of Conduct reflects a strong commitment to combat GBV.

Prof D Ramjugernath: DVC Learning and Teaching presented the teaching and learning part of the presentation. In terms of student enrolment statistics from 2012 to 2021, undergraduates increased by 23 percent and postgraduates by 7 percent, which translated into an overall increase of 16 percent. In reference to the enrolments by race and gender for undergraduates based on June 2021 data, Coloured female students were the majority at 61.9 percent, followed by Black African females at 58.9 percent, Indian females at 55 percent and White females at 53.3 percent. White males constituted 46.7 percent, followed by Indian males at 44.8 percent, Black African males at 41.8 percent and Coloured males at 38 percent. Between 2011 and 2020, the University produced 9 239 qualifications. The majority of students that received their qualifications during this period were Coloured females at 64.1 percent followed by Indian females at 62 percent.

In relation to the transformation support programme for students, Prof Ramjugernath said the University provides the necessary support for governance activities such as the Transformation Forum, Transformation Indaba and Student Institutional Transformation Committee. Other support programmes included the Strength, Opportunity, Agency and Resilience (SOAR) programme for first generation students and the annual Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Intersexual and Queer (LGBTIQ+) Round Table.

In reference to the Language Policy, Prof Ramjugenarth said the University utilises its Language Policy adopted in 2016. He indicated that the policy promotes multilingualism as a resource to facilitate cognitive development, epistemic access, inclusiveness, transformation, social cohesion and respect for all languages. University data has showed that fewer undergraduate students indicated Afrikaans as their home language, decreasing from 42 percent in 2017 to 37 percent in 2021, and in 2021, fewer first year students (20.4 percent) chose Afrikaans for learning and teaching. With respect to the 2022 academic year, Prof Ramjugenarth noted that the University received 55 252 applications for approximately 5 000 first year spaces, and this was a 143 percent increase in total applications received compared to the previous year. The majority of the applicants were Black Africans at 30 975, followed by 9 568 White applicants and 8 097 Coloured applicants.

Prof De Villiers provided an overview of the University’s finances. He said the total revenue of the University based on the 2020 Annual Report amounted to R6.1 billion and this was made up of R2.2 billion from the government grant, R1 billion from accommodation and other fees, R1 billion from Grants contracts, R966 million from realised profit on disposal of investments, R319 million from interest and dividends earned, R310 million from private donations, R147 million from sales services and products and R28 million from other sources. In terms of expenditure, the total recurring expenses amounted to R5.1 billion followed by staff costs at R2.8 billion and other operating expenditures. The total outstanding student fees of the University amounted to R298 million. In reference to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), the University had a total of 3 866 students that were funded by the scheme in 2020 at R431.5 million.

On student accommodation, Prof De Villiers indicated that the University accommodated 24 percent of all students in University-owned student housing and that 35 percent of these were undergraduates. He added that 55.6 percent of students in residences were female and 44.3 percent were male. The University had 58 infrastructure projects underway to the value of R2.3 billion.

**3.2.3 Student Representative Council (SRC)**

Ms V Kobokwana: Chairperson and Ms A Kekana: Secretary-General (SG) presented on behalf of the SRC. They noted that the SRC enjoyed a good working relationship with the University’s management and other stakeholders of the institution. They shared some of the general transformation strides, which included the shift from the Transformation Plan to a Policy; the willingness of staff to engage with students’ ideas; the SRC Transformation Framework, with policy questions and the Transformation and Critical Engagement Forum (TCE Forum), which comprised five learning activities.

In relation to student challenges, the SRC noted that some of the Forums created lacked tangible outcomes and that there was a lack of embedded transformation across the institution. In elucidating this point, they noted that transformation efforts seemed to be largely superficial and not focused enough on changing mindsets. The same could be said for initiatives focused on student leadership training. They added that the lack of cohesion has led to fractured transformation, resulting in students and staff having a different understanding of transformation. In addition, the transformation of the institution’s curriculums was not centrally promoted.

**3.2.4 Institutional Forum (IF)**

Mr B Bergsteedt: Chairperson of the IF led the presentation. He briefly explained the functions and powers of the IF, which are to advice Council on:

* The implementation of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997) and National Policy On Higher Education;
* Race and gender issues; the selection of candidates for senior management posts;
* The code of conduct;
* The fostering of institutional culture and any other matter determined by Council.

In respect of the composition of the IF, Mr Bergsteedt said the IF consists of 23 members from the following four sectors, namely: governance and management; staff; students and community members. He added that the IF remains committed to playing an active part in accelerating transformation, and establishing a culture of inclusivity on the University’s campuses.

In conclusion, Mr Bergsteedt said the IF represents a collaborative voice of management, staff, students and the community, and will continue to focus actively on encouraging discussion on aspects of diversity promotion and transformation, and on advising Council on these and other matters.

**3.2.5 Staff Representatives**

Dr L Qulu: Representative for Academic Staff and Mr W Davidse: Representative for PASS made the presentation. They noted that there has been progress in respect of transformation at the University and that staff representatives have a cordial working relationship with management. The one area where staff had concerns related to the issue of salary negotiations and increments.

In terms of progress on transformation, they noted the Employment Equity revised plan 2020 -2025; the code for employment equity and diversity (October 2019); the Rector’s strategic fund; the staff health and wellness plan and the staff well-being surveys that were conducted in 2017, 2019 and 2021.

**4. OBSERVATIONS**

The Committee, having undertaken an oversight visit to Stellenbosch University, made the following observations:

4.1 The Committee noted that transformation is a painful process, which requires intention and willingness. Thus, its implementation requires commitment from the University so that it can be fully embedded and integrated in the processes of the institution.

4.2 The Committee welcomed the intentions by stakeholders of the institution to work together and maintain good stakeholder relations.

4.3 The Committee acknowledged the historical disposition of the University as a former White Afrikaner institution. It was also noted that the institution appeared to be struggling to attract Black professionals to its senior management and academic levels, based on the demographic statistics represented. Therefore, the Committee enquired about the current factors that contributed to the status quo in respect of staff demographics.

4.4 The Committee noted with concern the inadequate representation of women in the senior management positions of the University, where women occupied only 40 percent of senior management positions. Furthermore, the low representation of Black African senior staff, which was 4 percent, remains a serious concern and not in line with the employment equity plan, which promotes reasonable equity in the workplace.

4.5 The Committee acknowledged the progress made in the representation of women in Council and implored the institution to achieve 50 percent representation.

4.6 The significant increase in the number of Black African applicants to the University was welcomed by the Committee. However, questioned how it does not translate to the enrolment demographics. It further enquired about the 144 percent increase in the number of applicants for the 2022 academic, and the impact thereof on admissions.

4.7 The Committee noted with concern the lack of detail on the representation of people with disabilities (PWD) in the presentations by the University.

4.8 The Committee acknowledged that the University is not fenced, but completely integrated with the town of Stellenbosch. The collaborative efforts between the University, the South African Police Service (SAPS) and municipality to create a safe student town were commended.

4.9 The Committee noted that gender-based violence (GBV) has become a scourge in society and that universities are microcosms of society. In this regard, the Committee enquired if the University screens employees for GBV-related cases. The Committee also asked if the institution has a sexual harassment policy for senior managers.

4.10 The Committee emphasised the importance of empowering small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and women-owned businesses in the infrastructure development projects of the University. In this regard, the Committee enquired about the number of SMMEs which participated in the University’s 58 infrastructure projects valued at R2.3 billion.

4.11 The Committee implored the staff representatives and the SRC to be more open about the challenges experienced by their respective constituencies. It was noted that the stakeholders should consider submitting additional information to the Committee, which provides a more detailed overview of the challenges experience by students and workers.

4.12 The Committee noted with concern the poor voter turn-out during the SRC elections, which symbolised inadequate orientation/education on the importance of the SRC as a key stakeholder in the governance structures of the University.

4.13 The Committee applauded the University for leading in the number of Doctorates produced in indigenous languages, and its efforts on institutionalising transformation.

4.14 The Committee noted that while the demand for Afrikaans as a language of instruction has been declining among undergraduates, the University needs to ensure that those who still require its services are catered for.

4.15 The Committee noted that the University’s presentation did not provide detail about the graduation and drop-out rates in terms race and gender, and requested that this information be submitted in writing.

4.16 It was noted that the University experienced slow growth in the number of postgraduate students between the period 2012 to 2021 (9 583 to 10 577). The Committee enquired about the reasons for the slow growth in postgraduate students.

**5. SUMMARY**

The Committee’s oversight visit to the University was aimed at assessing the progress made with respect to transformation and to engage the management, Council and stakeholders on this important topic. Other areas that were also discussed included, but were not limited to, governance, teaching and learning, and readiness for the 2022 academic year. The Committee welcomed the institution’s efforts to institutionalise transformation and putting systems in place to recognise its importance to redress its historical disposition, however stressed its concerns with the implementation of policies.

The Committee’s overall assessment of the state of transformation at the University was that it was very slow in terms of achieving equity among staff. The staff demographics presented to the Committee showed that the institution has a long way to go to change its hierarchy to be more inclusive and diverse in line with the employment equity plan goals. In respect of governance, teaching and learning and related matters, the Committee was pleased to observe that the University enjoyed stable governance and management, including cordial working relationships with its stakeholders. The University also enjoyed a stable financial position with good teaching and learning facilities, and student housing. The University had also put the necessary measures in place to ensure the smooth commencement of the 2022 academic year. The Committee undertook to continuously engage with the institution to ensure that meaningful transformation is realised.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee, having undertaken an oversight visit to Stellenbosch University, recommends the following:

**6.1 Stellenbosch University**

6.1.1 The University should intentionally work towards a translation of its transformation policies and plans to a lived reality and change for all students and stakeholders at the institution. The implementation of the transformation plan with clear targets and timeframes should be expedited to achieve meaningful transformation.

6.1.2 The University should prioritise the employment of women in senior management, including Black African academics, to improve equity in its staff demographics.

6.1.3 The University needs to improve its outreach programme towards educating students about the importance of the institutional governance structures such as the SRC. This programme will encourage students to participate during the voting period for SRC members.

6.1.4 The University needs to expand its own student housing capacity as part of the infrastructure development projects underway. In doing so, the appointment of SMMEs and women-owned businesses should be prioritised in the procurement processes.

**6.2 Department of Higher Education and Training**

6.2.1 The development of indigenous languages should be expedited and conditions be created for the strengthening of these languages as languages of meaningful academic discourse and sources of knowledge for various academic disciplines in higher education.

6.2.2 The Department should develop a national plan for the implementation of the Language Policy Framework and secure dedicated funding to assist with the development of indigenous languages as languages for teaching and learning.

6.2.3 Higher education institutions should follow the government’s position in relation to vaccination and refrain from introducing mandatory vaccination policies without reasonable consultation with all students and staff.

6.2.4 The implementation of transformation in higher education should be driven towards achieving a more equal and inclusive higher education sector. The status quo of having predominantly White and predominantly Black institutions needs to be addressed. The higher education sector needs to be attractive across the board for all races.

6.2.5 The Department, working with other Department’s such as the DSI to consider undertaking research to determine the viability of establishing lingua franca for the higher education sector.

6.2.6 The promotion of multilingualism in higher education should not be undertaken to the detriment of indigenous languages.

Report to be considered.