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HIGHLIGHTS
from the
RECTOR'S MANAGEMENT REPORT
to
COUNCIL

Monday 19 June 2023

Prof Wim de Villiers,
Rector and Vice-Chancellor

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Executive summary

Council's second meeting for the year takes place while the glow of a significant milestone for our university still lingers. I am referring to the official opening of the Biomedical Research Institute (BMRI) at our Tygerberg campus on 19 April. This state-of-the-art

research facility not only speaks volumes about our unwavering commitment to be the leading research-intensive university on the continent, but also embodies our deliberate approach to ensure the sustained academic and research excellence of Stellenbosch University (SU) well into the future.

It is particularly heart-warming to reflect on the words of Prof Stefan Kaufmann, a world-renowned immunologist and microbiologist, and keynote speaker at the BMRI launch, who described the facility as “a place where scientific excellence flourishes”. Emphasising two key tenets of our academic endeavour – interdisciplinary research and excellence – he said: “To address complex problems, collaborations between researchers from different disciplines are crucial. Interdisciplinarity not only means different scientific disciplines, but also different religions and people of diverse backgrounds, all working together towards the common goal to better understand the challenges and to find appropriate solutions. It is these interactions that lead to new and innovative ideas that would not have been possible through a single discipline. Importantly, this will automatically improve research quality.

“This kind of science does not end at the drawing board; rather, it moves forward to the real world, where it provides the tools needed for approaching and eventually solving major health challenges, [such as] better treatments, better prevention measures, better diagnostics, better integration into communities, and better public policies.”

Prof Kaufmann’s assessment of the BMRI and the promise it holds for the future typifies the spirit and essence of scientific inquiry that underpins the entire academic project at SU. By integrating world-class knowledge production and cutting-edge technological innovation, we are a thriving, vibrant, transformative and systemically sustainable university with an increasingly embedded culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and agile responsiveness to the needs of society and the communities we serve.

This has not happened by chance. It is the outcome of a purposeful approach to our core activities of learning and teaching, research, and social impact. In my previous report to Council, I reported extensively on some of the foundations of our success. These include our formidable campus renewal and infrastructure plans to gear SU for the challenges of the future, creating new learning spaces for the digital age and offering augmented learning as part of our programme of academic renewal.

I have just returned from a collaboration-seeking visit to some of the most prominent universities in the United States (Harvard’s Business School and its Institute for Global Law and Policy, Notre Dame University in Illinois, as well as the Harvey Institute for Global Health at Northwestern University). At these institutions, like elsewhere in the world, service to society is enjoying renewed attention.

In the post-Covid-19 era, universities globally are honing their missions to confront complex global challenges and make the world a better place. A key feature of this pursuit is research excellence that transcends disciplinary and geographical boundaries, with a focus on the needs of society and the particular communities a university serves. Relevant and impactful research collaborations with a direct bearing on learning and teaching have become the hallmark of leading universities.

In this regard SU’s multipronged approach to achieve our vision of being the leading research-intensive university on the continent (globally recognised as excellent, inclusive and innovative, where we advance knowledge in service of society) is delivering significant

results and firmly cementing our institution as a reliable research partner locally and on a transcontinental scale.

A stronger focus on internationalisation

Since we established our Internationalisation portfolio in 2015 in pursuit of our mission to be a place connected to the world, SU has joined prestigious formal international networks such as the Global Alliance of Universities on Climate (GAUC), the Consortium of Universities for Global Health (CUGH), the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA), the European Guild of Research-Intensive Universities, and Venice International University. Moreover, the number of partner institutions abroad participating in our dual degree programmes and split-site degree offerings is growing each year. These deliberate networks and partnerships have proven instrumental in our quest to deliver research with global impact.

Strengthening our presence in prominent glocal research networks and collaborations

Thanks to our researchers' excellent work across our strategic research focuses, our university continues to be a valued partner in various national and international networks and collaborations.

Our involvement in the partnership between the African Research University Alliance (ARUA) and the Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities, for instance, sees us bidding for clusters of excellence in line with our strengths and the priorities of the African Union-European Union Innovation Agenda. The latter includes a concentrated focus on public health, green transitions, innovation and technology, and capacities for science.

SU has also joined the Alliance of Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities (GISU). Other members include Guangzhou University (China), Linköping University (Sweden), the University of Coimbra (Portugal), Université du Québec à Montréal (Canada), the University of Padua (Italy), Tampere University (Finland), Western Sydney University (Australia) and Guangzhou Medical University (China). As a result, our membership of GISU strengthens our collaboration footprint in not only the Asia-Pacific region, but also the global north. Our staff and students are already benefiting from the Digital and Entrepreneurship Academy opportunities offered by the network.

Our Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) and the Centre of Excellence in Scientometrics and Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (SciSTIP) have collectively been allocated approximately R66 million in funding. In addition, our South African Centre of Epidemiological Modelling and Analysis (SACEMA) has received its final award of R2,2 million for 2023/24 from the National Research Foundation (NRF). By the second quarter, contractual commitments with our centres of excellence exceeded R86,3 million in grants from the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), the NRF and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Advancing sustainable development

SU is serious about helping to promote the sustainable development agendas of our country, continent and the rest of the world. Our *Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–*

2024 was developed with due regard to South Africa's National Development Plan, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs).

In 2022, we also established the SDG/2063 Impact Hub. The Hub coordinates and tracks the sustainable development work of our research chairs, centres of excellence, institutes, type-2 schools and academic research programmes to ensure that we help deliver solutions to some of the world's greatest sustainability challenges. This is just another way in which SU strives to be relevant to its context and of service to South Africa, Africa and the globe.

Growing our research chairs

We have recently increased our total research chairs to 48, having acquired another four to strengthen our pursuit of research for impact. The new additions are:

- two chairs in green energy, namely a tier-1 DSI/NRF Sasol research chair in green hydrogen and a tier-2 SARChi NRF chair in power systems simulation;
- a chair in Afrikaans creative writing valued at R1,5 million per year for the next five years starting in 2023; and
- the Gys Steyn chair in financial regulation in our Faculty of Law.

All indications are that a chair in computational astronomy will also be added later in the year.

Research chairs, which are supported by targeted funding from an agency or benefactor, enable SU to advance knowledge by producing high-quality postgraduate students and research outputs. Serving as incubation spaces for research and emerging researchers to launch their careers under the guidance of lead scientists, our chairs also bolster our vigorous pursuit of research excellence and the development of local and global scholarly capacity.

Sharpening our research and innovation focus for the future

It is generally accepted that SU is known for what we are good at (our academic and research achievements). Judging by international trends, however, it has become imperative to pivot towards what SU is good for (our service to society, and being a development-oriented university). To this end, we are actively working on the University's Research and Innovation Blueprint 2030. This will be a roadmap to guide our research and innovation efforts from 2023 up until 2030, with annual targets and indicators. The blueprint will be aligned with the National Development Plan, the SDGs, the African Union's Agenda 2063, South Africa's new White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation and the Decadal Plan, as well as the Western Cape Strategic Plan.

Key to this endeavour is creating an enabling environment for our academic and research community to thrive (such as the state-of-the-art facilities at the BMRI, and the expansive infrastructure developments that I have reported on previously). It would also be imperative

to offer opportunities for accelerated professional and personal growth (for instance by introducing SUNRISE, a mid-career capacity development intervention aimed at growing the diversity of SU's future professoriate; doubling our postdoctoral numbers over the next five years through Project 600, and introducing an SU-based Future Professors Programme).

External factors affecting university operations

NSFAS challenges

Council is aware that student grievances pertaining to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) have led to ongoing protest action on university campuses across the country. Protests relate to matters such as the capping of the accommodation allowance, a reduction in food and subsistence allowances in favour of a stationery allowance, as well as incidents of defunding of students who previously received NSFAS support.

We continue to liaise with our student leadership structures and the authorities on DHET's decision to cap accommodation allowances. Although the matter has not been resolved completely, we managed to implement [alternative arrangements](#) to address the affected students' immediate needs. All of them were placed timeously in SU residences and student houses or accredited student accommodation.

Moreover, we provided DHET with extensive information on all areas of concern regarding student accommodation and received a site visit by high-ranking DHET officials on 13 April. Hopefully, this will help inform a possible review of the decision to cap accommodation allowances, as also requested by Universities South Africa (USAf) on behalf of the sector earlier this year.

At the time of writing this report, the students' representative councils of all South African universities staged a joint march and protest action to the NSFAS offices in Cape Town to demand a response to their grievances. This coincided with the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation's budget speech in Parliament. The sector is now eagerly awaiting government's response to the call for a review of the NSFAS policy and guidelines.

Loadshedding

To date, we have successfully managed the disruptive effect of loadshedding on our academic and research activities. With the evident deterioration of national power supply and current talk of possible grid failure, we have established an Electricity Crisis Contingency Committee (ECCC) to proactively manage the growing power crisis and mitigate the impact on our activities.

The ECCC is tasked with reviewing, reporting and making decisions on the interventions required to mitigate the impact of extraordinary loadshedding or a possible complete shutdown of the national electrical grid on the continued operations of the University. It will report to the Rectorate. More specifically, the ECCC will be required to:

- determine all university activities that may be affected by prolonged and continuous periods of loadshedding;
- develop and streamline procedures that will ensure operational continuity;
- prioritise those operations that require backup power;
- have insight into the implementation of green energy projects and their effect on the measures to be implemented;
- establish streamlined alternative measures for extraordinary circumstances; and
- effectively communicate all planned operations to the campus community.

The Committee for the Institutional Response to the Commission's Recommendations (CIRCoRe)

Following CIRCoRe's inaugural meeting on 20 April, five workstreams were constituted on 13 May. The first workstream will concentrate on the entire spectrum of student life and will be led by Prof Ronelle Carolissen. The second workstream, headed by Prof Lis Lange, will explore how we could intentionally enrich our curriculum to embed the constitutional values of human rights, non-racialism, dignity and respect. The third workstream, with Prof Kopano Ratele at the helm, will focus on the interaction between our complex transformation infrastructure, including the legal, policy and regulatory dimensions, and the softer aspects of our institution's functioning. Prof Dion Forster will lead the fourth workstream, on race, human categorisation and science, which will help SU reimagine its academic work within a democratic and human rights-oriented society. Finally, the fifth stream will work on simplifying and aligning SU's structures, policies and regulations to deal more effectively with transformation matters and will be directed by Dr Leslie van Rooi. The respective workstreams are currently finalising their terms of reference.

As is customary, a member of the Rectorate is afforded the opportunity to report to Council. This time, our Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): **Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel, Prof Nico Koopman**, will table a report on activities in his responsibility centre over the past year. To avoid duplication as far as possible, I will be sharing only a few highlights from Prof Koopman's portfolio. Should you require more information, please consult his separate report. My fellow members of management and I welcome this opportunity to engage with Council on events in the period February to May.

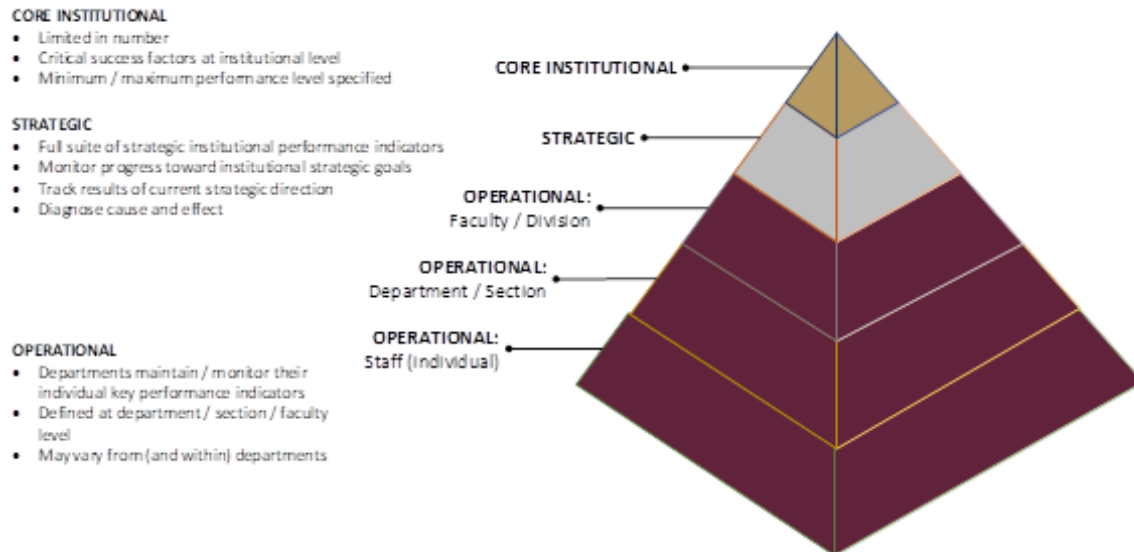
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE RECTOR'S MANAGEMENT REPORT

In the following paragraphs, I provide highlights from my management report. For an in-depth look at contributions from the various responsibility centres, please turn to the addendum.

1. Institutional scorecard and core indicators

After the approval of *Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024*, we defined a range of strategic management indicators (SMIs) to ascertain the extent to which we realise the goals and objectives linked to our core strategic themes. This has become known as our scorecard.

However, to assess the status of the institution at a glance and enable Council and the Rectorate to make swift, data-informed decisions, we needed to 'translate' the full suite of SMIs into a select set of core institutional indicators (*as illustrated below*). The core indicators represent the critical factors for SU to achieve success at an institutional level.



On 22 March, the Rectorate considered and approved the following eight potential core indicators:

- Coloured, black, Indian and Asian (CBIA) staff as a percentage of all staff
- Weighted research output units per full-time-equivalent senior-lecturer-equivalent academic (FTE-SLE-C1) staff member
- CBIA students as a percentage of all enrolled students (excluding international students, who are exempt from population group self-reporting)
- International students as a percentage of total enrolled students
- Weighted module pass rate for undergraduate students (based on module credits)
- Net surplus/deficit as per SU's consolidated income statement
- Spend on maintenance and acquisition of equipment as a percentage of total income
- Social impact (as a placeholder while a definition is being finalised)

Based on these, SU can now build an annual thematic scorecard for the Rectorate, which, in turn, will serve as a point of departure for developing a scorecard that Council can use in performing its governance function. A first version of these scorecards will be tabled at the Council meeting in June for discussion and input.

2. Ongoing transformation and inclusion

Importantly, while CIRCoRe's work will inform the ongoing institutional transformation of the University, it is not replacing our formal transformation processes. Over the next two years, the CIRCoRe processes will run in tandem with the normal, ongoing transformation work in all SU environments. CIRCoRe's work will consistently feed into these processes to enhance and accelerate transformation, and where recommendations from the CIRCoRe structures have an impact on our policies, these will follow the normal approval route via the Rectorate.

Pilot project on restitution

In 2022, the Transformation Office and the Centre for the Study of the Afterlife of Violence and the Reparative Quest (AVReQ) launched a pilot project to help realise SU's [restitution statement](#). When the project concluded in early 2023, participants realised that what had initially been intended as a short-term initiative presented a longer-term opportunity to help deepen transformation at SU through the lens of the restitution statement. To this end, the following three working groups have now been established:

- Restitution statement exhibition: Participants have generated a range of suggestions to redesign SU's current Centenary exhibition.
- Practical amends/restitutional action: Participants would like to contribute to the practical implementation of the restitution statement by complementing existing actions at the University.
- Research: AVReQ will lead an academic research effort to flesh out each of the sections of the restitution statement and explore how the statement ties in with SU's values. This research will inform the redesign of the Centenary exhibition. The Transformation Office will serve as co-researcher.

Institutional Transformation Committee (ITC)

The Rectorate has approved the revised terms of reference of the ITC. The ITC was also invited to nominate two members to represent the structure on CIRCoRe and subsequently delegated Ms Ellen Tise (senior director of SU's Library and Information Service) and Mr Wayde Davidse (senior procurement buyer).

Transformation Policy review

The Transformation Policy Task Team produced a second draft of our proposed Transformation Policy. The document has since served before the ITC as well as the Rectorate for input and comments, with specific reference to the newly (re)developed definitions for Africanisation, decolonisation, restitution and transformation. In April, the policy was made available for comments more broadly, and consultative sessions with our governance structures are under way.

3. Building communities through multilingualism

The Language Centre has introduced the workshop "Building communities through multilingualism". The three-hour session offers participants a space to reframe conversations about language, discover the richness of their own and others' language journeys, and explore how a [multilingual mindset](#) ties in with the values of integrity, respect and tolerance.

The workshop was facilitated 23 times in April and May to afford all SU residence heads, House Committee members and mentors an opportunity to attend the session.

Pictures from session with residence heads on 5 April.



4. African Commuter Student Network (ACSN) conference

One of the most pertinent trends in modern-day higher education is an increase in commuter students. In this regard, our Centre for Student Communities hosted the inaugural ACSN conference in March (*see pictures below*), where universities from across Africa explored how day students may be better supported and integrated into campus life.

The aim of the newly formed ACSN is for universities on the continent to learn from one another and co-create solutions to ensure that their commuter students have as good a chance of success and an equally transformative experience as their resident peers.



5. StellenboschX pilot course a winner

In June 2022, we partnered with massive open online course provider edX to increase access to our academic offerings. The result was the virtual entity StellenboschX, under which banner we are developing an exciting, multidisciplinary online course portfolio.

Our first offering, the [Professional Certificate in Strategic Human Resources Management](#), has proven extremely popular and a great start in terms of establishing the StellenboschX portfolio. The course is based on, and could therefore serve as a marketing tool for, our existing hybrid-learning, credit-bearing [Postgraduate Diploma in Strategic Human Resources Management](#).

From June 2022 until April 2023, close to 6 000 edX students from 178 countries or regions enrolled for the fully online offering. Of these, 778 enrolled in the “verified track”, which means that they opted to pay for the course in order to receive a StellenboschX certificate upon completion.

The interest in the course has underscored the potential value of the edX-SU partnership in terms of both reach for our institution and access for students, who can either complete the course for free (as a non-certificate-bearing, open online offering) or as a paid-for, certificate-bearing programme. The latter results in some welcome third-stream income for the relevant department. In addition, our hybrid-learning team greatly benefits from the StellenboschX student profile data, as it helps them understand the global learn-and-earn market and shape their digital marketing strategies for both edX-based and hybrid-learning offerings.

Further StellenboschX courses across multiple disciplines are being developed and will be launched throughout this year.

6. March 2023 graduations and pledge ceremonies

The responsibility centre of the Registrar and the divisions of Corporate Communication and Marketing, Development and Alumni Relations as well as Facilities Management collaborated to arrange the March 2023 graduation ceremonies. For the first time, the graduation series took the form of an open-air event at Coetzenburg stadium to allow for essential renovations at Coetzenburg centre.

The [graduation website](#) recorded 36 068 views in the weeks leading up to the March ceremonies. Pre-graduation newsletters containing all logistical arrangements were sent to all graduates, and a special graduation edition of the newsletter *news@StellenboschUni* was distributed internally. Graduates' achievements were also highlighted in news articles on our website, social media channels and in the local and national media.



Among those crossing the stage were one BCom and 23 BEng graduates from the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP). For the 2022 academic year, SU proudly delivered a total of 68 ISFAP graduates – our third cohort since this comprehensive bursary support programme was launched at our institution in 2018.

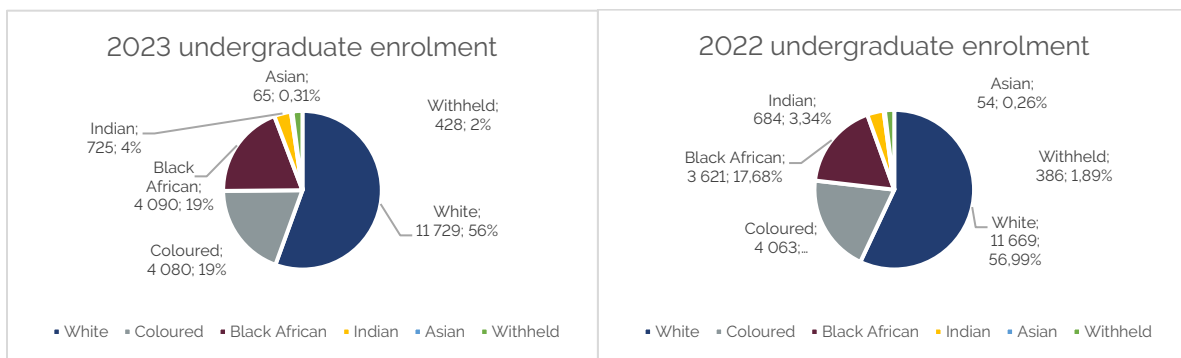
Left: Some of the March 2023 ISFAP graduates pictured with the bursary programme support team, ISFAP chief executive Morné du Toit (back, third from right) and SU's head of Undergraduate Bursaries and Loans, Lerato Moyo (fifth from right).

Also in March, 13 Biokinetics honours students and undergraduates made their interdisciplinary public pledge to uphold the values of both the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and the health professions they were joining.

7. Enrolments for 2023

Undergraduate enrolments

The figures below compare South African undergraduate enrolments at SU by population group at the end of the 2023 and 2022 registration periods respectively. (International students do not have to disclose their population group.)



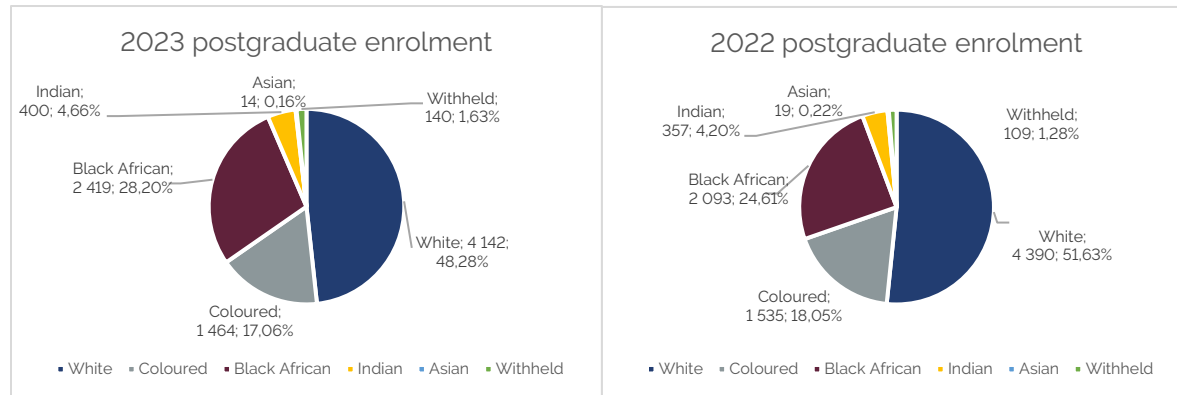
The most prominent trends emerging from this comparison are that:

- enrolments from all population groups increased;
- black African enrolments increased by 12,95% from 3 621 to 4 090;
- Indian enrolments increased by 5,99% from 684 to 725; and
- Asian enrolments increased by 20,37% from 54 to 65.

For more information, peruse our Division of Information Governance's [full undergraduate enrolment report](#).

Postgraduate enrolments

A similar comparison of South African postgraduate enrolments at SU in 2023 and 2022 appears below. Among others, it shows that black African enrolments increased by 15,58% from 2 093 to 2 419.



Do consult Information Governance's [full postgraduate enrolment report](#) for more.

8. Open Day 2023

Our online Open Day website - the third edition since we initiated this platform to overcome pandemic restrictions – went live on 1 April. With all restrictions a thing of the past, we were also delighted to host our on-campus Open Day, which took place on 6 May.

Our Open Day events are key institution-wide student recruitment tools that allow us to position our university as the preferred tertiary institution for prospective students.

The Open Day website will be available until the end of July and hosts information sessions, videos, brochures and answers to frequently asked questions to enable Grade 12 learners to make informed decisions. At the time of reporting, the site had recorded 92 380 views (90 542 in 2022), with 14 288 unique website users (11 999 in 2022).

The on-campus event, hosted on both Stellenbosch and Tygerberg campus, is organised by the Division of Student Recruitment, but relies heavily on university-wide partnerships. More than 20 000 tickets were booked for the individual information sessions held in the course of the day. A full Open Day guide was distributed to guests to help them navigate the programme and assist prospective students with their applications.

9. SUNFin and SUNStudent soldier on

Testing and sign-off of the Oracle Cloud Financial solution that makes up our new SUNFin system continues. While testing to date has had favourable outcomes and managed to create greater enthusiasm about the new system among its core users, progress has been slower than planned. Therefore, the steering committee has approved additional testing time, which will delay the SUNFin go-live by about a month, into July 2023. The expected delay will not have any budget implications.

Even so, SUNFin is set to go live before the SUNStudent capabilities of Registrations, Student Fees and Services, Residence Management as well as Financial Aid, which are

expected to come online in December 2023. This has required some clever footwork from the SUNFin team to establish appropriate processes to manage student financials for the rest of 2023. Should SUNStudent experience any further delays beyond December 2023, the SUNFin team will have to return to the drawing board to devise further short-term solutions.

Meanwhile, a number of activities are under way to validate the SUNStudent steering committee's decision in November 2022 to postpone the initial go-live of the new student information system to December 2023. These include a revised budget for approval, and validation exercises by independent assurance partners.

The Applications and Admissions module on SUNStudent continues to serve us well. On 5 April, the Stellenbosch Business School also migrated to the system with their MBA applications and admissions. Migration of other Business School programmes followed on 12 April.

10. Strategic Fund

Since 2019, a total of R489,7 million from the institutional budget has been allocated to the Strategic Fund. Of this, R438,1 million has been awarded across the three fund categories of strategic initiatives, projects and appointments (*see table below*). Unallocated funding in any category is carried over to the following year for reallocation.

Applications funded (2019-2022)			
Category		Number of applications funded	Value
A	Strategic initiatives	43	R326 701 862
B	Strategic high-rise and public-square projects	2	R39 999 999
C.1.1	Strategic appointments	31	R71 414 505

This year, R100 million has been earmarked for allocation. Applications closed on 13 April, and the Strategic Fund Committee met on 24 May. Visit the [Strategic Fund website](#) for more information.

Conclusion

The highlights shared in this report and the additional information contained in the addendum underscore SU's commitment to capacitate future generations to deliver a better world. As such, nothing will distract us from our mission to be a research-intensive university that attracts outstanding students, employs talented staff and provides a world-class environment – a place connected to the world, while enriching and transforming local, continental and global communities.

Contributors

The Rector's Management Report was compiled by the Executive Communication support team in collaboration with Rector and Vice-Chancellor Prof Wim de Villiers, Mohamed Shaikh, executive manager in the Rectorate, as well as Melissa Douman, manager of Executive Communication. Editing and translation services were coordinated by the SU Language Centre and provided by their collaborator Hendrien Swanepoel. We also acknowledge the following contributors, listed by SU responsibility centre:

Learning and Teaching: Deresh Ramjugernath, the Division of Learning and Teaching Enhancement (Antoinette van der Merwe, Claudia Swart-Jansen van Vuuren, Charmaine van der Merwe, Anthea Jacobs, Jean Lee Farmer, Hanelie Adendorff, Nicoline Herman, Sim Ntwasa, Karin Cattell-Holden, Sonja Strydom, Morris Samuels, Vernita Beukes, Arné Binneman, Marisca Coetzee, Selene Deport, Fatima Halday, Anne-Mari Lackay, Susan Lotz, Michelle Pieters, Rose Richards, Helga Sykstus, Juanli Theron, Kim Wallmach and Miné de Klerk), the Division of Student Affairs (Choice Makhetha, Nosipiwo Matiwane, Rabia Omar, Yeki Mosomothane, Khaironisa Foflonker, Jethro Georgiades, Ruth Andrews and Lynne Rippenaar-Moses), the Equality Unit (Jaco Greeff Brink, Nadine Christians and Larona Matee), Maretha Joyce

Operations and Finance: Prof Stan du Plessis, the Finance Division (Manie Lombard & team), the Facilities Management Division (Nicolette van den Eijkel & team), the Information Technology Division (Denisha Jairam-Owthar & team), Maties Sport (Ilhaam Groenewald & team) and Innovus (Anita Nel & team)

Registrar: Dr Ronel Retief, Gerhard Lipp, Dr Celeste Nel, Bruce Banda, Ashmind Daniels, Farah Fredericks, Anne Havemann-Serfontein, Freek Truter, Beire Kramer, Salot Hanekom, Penny van der Bank, Charmaine Wing, Che Bermosky, Felecia van Rooi, Robert Young, Jonathan-Dale Blanckenberg

Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies: Prof Sibusiso Moyo, Prof Johann Mouton, Maryke Hunter-Hüsselmann

Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel: Prof Nico Koopman, Bongani Mgijima, Ulrich Wolff, Ricky Brecht, Johannes Adams, Natasha Coltman, Elvandré Galant, Awethu Fatyela, Dr Claire Kelly, Katlego Letlonkane, Shanté Neff, Dr Zethu Mkhize, Jubelian Korkie, Chevaan Peters, Mawethu Nyakatya, Renee Hector-Kannemeyer, Michelle Pietersen, Ernestine Meyer-Adams, Saartjie Botha, Candice Andries, Dr Craig Thompson, Dr Lynne Julie, Dr Haidee Williams, Dr Jo-Anne Kirby, Sister Anneke van Heerden, Susan Crumpton, Dr Pierre Viviers, Lieze-Carli Roux, Carmen Paynter, Shibu Mamabolo, Ebrahiem Abrahams, Venessa Williams, Joanne Williams

Strategy, Global and Corporate Affairs: Prof Hester Klopper, Dr Wayne Muller, Christelle Feyt, Tertia Kruger, Cristal Petersen, Marick Hornsveld, Candes Keating, Naudé van der Merwe, Amira Brown, Marguerite Cloete, Michelle Swart, Martin Viljoen, Dr Alec Basson, Magdel Pretorius, Leon Eygelaar, Jerall Toi, Dr Barbara Pool, Lidia du Plessis, Dr Nico Elema, Prof Sarah Howie, Sarah van der Westhuizen