



Uit die Rektor se kantoor From the Rector's office



[Afrikaans](#)

8 February 2016

Dear Colleague

Over the weekend, Stellenbosch University was in the news after photographs were posted on social media leading to allegations of 'clearly blackfacing' at a social event in Heemstede residence. More photographs followed, and the outcry has since changed to 'clearly not blackfacing'.

This highlights the complexity of these issues and how diverse and fickle views on social media can be.

In such matters we are guided by our *Disciplinary Code for Students*. The University cannot act on comments or photographs in the media, on social media, or individual opinions. If there are allegations of misconduct, or if the name of the University or the maintenance of order and discipline is prejudiced, the University has a responsibility to investigate. We have also given the undertaking that the units involved in the investigation would be representative in terms of race and gender.

There has to be an investigation so that all the facts can be presented and properly considered. That was set in motion by suspending the two students in question from their residence pending the investigation. This is standard practice for investigations, not only at SU. It is important to note that an investigation does not imply a guilty verdict.

Both students were supported by the University's crisis services on Friday, and a general invitation has been extended to the whole campus community to seek counselling if necessary.

Friday evening, the matter was discussed at the residence by students, student leaders, the house committee and residents of Heemstede, staff of our Student Affairs division and members of Management – Prof Nico Koopman, Acting Vice-Rector: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel; and Prof Arnold Schoonwinkel, Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching. Subsequently, facilitated discussions were organised in our residences across campus. These were robust and frank, but constructive.

Stellenbosch University is not a secluded enclave isolated from the rest of South Africa. We form part of the rest of society and the higher education sector. We take cognisance of national debates on racism and the lived experiences of students. In light of 'black face' incidents at SU and other universities in 2014, and the negative impact that had, we do take any such allegations seriously.

I am very proud of our students that have engaged on the issue of transformation in such a positive manner. That is how we develop as thought leaders. I would like to appeal to everyone to give the investigation the opportunity to run its course in fairness to all involved without further speculation, threats or victimisation.

Kind regards

Prof Wim De Villiers
Rector and Vice-Chancellor

8 Februarie 2016

Beste Kollega

Oor die naweek was die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US) in die nuus nadat foto's op sosiale media aanleiding gegee het tot bewerings van 'duidelike blackfacing' by h sosiale geleentheid in Heemstede-koshuis. Nog foto's het gevolg en sedertdien het die luidkeelse protes verander na 'duidelik nie blackfacing nie'.

Dit plaas die kollig op die kompleksiteit van sulke kwessies en hoe uiteenlopend en wispelturig standpunte op sosiale media kan wees.

In sulke sake word ons gelei deur ons *Dissiplinêre Kode vir Studente*. Die Universiteit kan nie optree op grond van menings of foto's in die media, op sosiale media of individuele standpunte nie. Wanneer daar bewerings van wangedrag gemaak word, of as die naam van die Universiteit, of die handhawing van orde en dissipline in gedrang kom, het die Universiteit die verantwoordelikheid om die saak te ondersoek. Ons het ook die onderneming gegee dat die eenhede wat die ondersoek behartig verteenwoordigend sal wees in terme van ras en geslag.

Die ondersoek moet plaasvind sodat al die feite voorgelê en deeglik oorweeg kan word. Die proses is in werking gestel met die skorsing van die betrokke twee studente uit hul koshuis terwyl die ondersoek aan die gang is. Dit is standaardpraktyk vir ondersoeke, nie net aan die US nie. Dit is belangrik om in ag te neem dat h ondersoek nie gelykstaande is aan h skuldigbevinding nie.

Albei studente is Vrydag deur die Universiteit se krisisdienste ondersteun, en daar is ook h algemene uitnodiging aan die hele kampusgemeenskap gerig om van die beradingsdiens gebruik te maak indien nodig.

Vrydagaand het studente, studenteleiers, die huiskomitee en inwoners van Heemstede, personeel van die afdeling Studentesake en lede van Bestuur – prof Nico Koopman, Waarnemende Viserektor: Sosiale Impak, Transformasie en Personeel, en prof Arnold Schoonwinkel, Viserektor: Leer en Onderrig – die saak in die koshuis bespreek. Vervolgens is gefasiliteerde gesprekke in koshuise regoor die kampus georganiseer. Hierdie debatte was openhartig, eerlik en konstruktief.

Die Universiteit Stellenbosch is nie h afgesonderde enklawe wat van die res van Suid-Afrika geïsoleer is nie. Ons maak deel uit van die res van die samelewing en die hoërondwyssektor. Ons neem kennis van nasionale debatte en die geleefde ervarings van studente. In die lig van 'black face'-voorvalle aan die US en by ander universiteite in 2014, en die negatiewe impak wat dit gehad het, neem ons sulke bewerings ernstig op.

Ek is baie trots op ons studente wat met so h positiewe gesindheid oor die kwessie van transformasie met mekaar in gesprek getree het. Dit is hoe ons as denkleiers ontwikkel. Ek wil op almal h beroep doen om die proses sy gang te laat gaan ter wille van billikheid teenoor al die betrokkenes, sonder verdere spekulاسie, dreigemente of viktimisering.

Vriendelike groete

Prof Wim de Villiers
Rektor en Visekanselier