

## REPORT OF THE VICE-RECTOR (COMMUNITY INTERACTION AND PERSONNEL)

THE PORTFOLIO OF THE VICE-RECTOR (COMMUNITY INTERACTION AND PERSONNEL) (VR: CI&P) COVERS VARIOUS ENABLING SUPPORT SERVICES. GROUPED INTO EIGHT SECTIONS, THESE ALL CONTRIBUTE IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER TO THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE IN GENERAL YET FOCUS ON THE HOPE PROJECT IN PARTICULAR. THIS IS WHY A COMBINATION OF THE FIVE THEMES UNDERPINNING THE PROJECT MAY BE RECOGNISED IN EACH SECTION: COMMUNITY INTERACTION; HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT; EMPLOYMENT EQUITY AND DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT; MATIES SPORT; HIV/AIDS COORDINATION; CAMPUS HEALTH SERVICES; LEGAL SERVICES; AND THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM. THE MOST DIRECT AND MOST SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNIVERSITY'S CORE ACTIVITIES COMES, HOWEVER, FROM COMMUNITY INTERACTION (CI).

The broad aim of community interaction is to set up, foster and manage knowledge-based partnerships with external communities. Such partnerships can help build an environment where student learning is enriched, research relevance is enhanced and the University is able to practise good corporate citizenship in tangible ways. But to make gains like these is of course to carry out our institutional commitments to reciprocity, redress, development and transformation. Here, then, is a prime example of the creation of hope based on the expertise of our staff and on the scientific knowledge discovered, transferred and applied by and through the University.

### PARTNERSHIPS REFLECTING THE UNIVERSITY'S VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

At a local level, Stellenbosch University (SU) is an important role player in the life of a divided town that faces huge development challenges. Challenges are pinpointed and taken on through the monthly Rector-Mayor Forum, an initiative of SU and Stellenbosch Municipality, the other major institution in town. The two bodies last year drove various joint projects. Among these were student volunteer programmes, the bringing together of researchers and community members to reflect on solutions to local problems, professional academic support towards a land reform policy, and initiatives to do with the Soccer World Cup. The Forum draws on the expertise of staff in the SU support services as well as the expertise of SU academics in a range of disciplines.

The University also maintains sound relations with civil society bodies locally, e.g. nongovernmental (NGO), non-profit (NPO) and faith-based organisations (FBO). It plays a leading role in a local network of NGOs known as the Stellenbosch Welfare and Development Coordination Committee (SWOKK). Through the celebration of national days such as Human Rights Day, Youth Day and Heritage Day, SU strives to build a sense of community with its local partners, with their different back-grounds. A major milestone at the local level in 2010 was the establishment of the Lückhoff Advisory Board. This step formalised community participation in the management of the old Lückhoff School in Banghoek Road. It was the culmination of years of intensive talks with the community of "Die Vlakte" (as it was once known); for them, the school building holds a special meaning as a beacon of hope.

One of the newer civil society responses to emerge was the Stellenbosch Social Cohesion Movement. Its aim is to promote social cohesion within the Stellenbosch municipal area. Its

mandate is to preserve a common sense of purpose and keep alive the discussions on anti-racism, unity, peace, reconciliation, justice, shared values. The movement has the support of both University and Municipality, with SU in a leading role.

At a regional level, a highlight of 2010 was the decision by the Rector's Management Team to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Drakenstein Municipality. The focus of the cooperation will be on skills development through short courses and on joint research projects tying in with the Sustainable Drakenstein Project. MoUs with Cape Town City and the Western Cape Provincial Government are already in place. In terms of these, the Cape Higher Education Consortium (with the SU VR: CI&P as Board Chairman) undertook various joint projects in 2010. The Consortium played a vital role, too, in promoting cooperation between the four universities of the region and the various levels of government.

Besides the regional partnerships, the VR: CI&P facilitated and managed a number of dedicated partnerships. These are with churches (Faculty of Theology), the Health Department (Faculty of Health Sciences) and the Defence Department (Faculty of Military Science).

SU played a leading role in the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF), the national network of engaged universities. The SU Senior Director: CI is the inaugural and current chairman of SAHECEF. Members of the SU Division for Community Interaction were invited to play an active role in developing community interaction on a national scale. The Senior Director: CI, the Deputy Director: CI and the Management Information Officer were all invited by other higher education institutions to share their community interaction expertise.

At an international level, SU is part of a worldwide network of engaged universities, the Talloires Network. SU benefits from all the opportunities this offers; e.g., in March the Rector, Prof Russel Botman, was invited to read a paper at a major conference in Bellagio, Italy. SU is also a member of the Association of African Universities (AAU) and of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU). In 2010, SU was a co-host of the ACU Conference in Cape Town.

In schools partnerships, a very special type of partnership, SU is entering an exciting new phase. Under its Strategic Framework, SU is committed to supporting the SA school system, especially in the fields of science and mathematics.

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After consultations with parties inside the University, Education Department officials, headmasters and teachers, a detailed new framework for schools partnerships was devised.

The sterling work that student volunteers, organised through the one-stop service of Matie Community Service, performed in partnership with a range of local NGOs, NPOs and FBOs merits special mention. In 2010, 650 students in 39 projects lent assistance to community organisations in the areas of life skills, mentoring (after-school programmes), arts and crafts, sports and preventive primary health care programmes. The Volunteer Programme makes for reciprocal learning that is vital to our students' growth as socially responsible citizens.

All these partnerships, wherever located, are based on the University's academic expertise. Tying in with development agendas at various levels, they portray Stellenbosch University, not in terms of its past identity, but as a beacon of hope for the present and the future. They are vital to our social sustainability as an institution.

### PROMOTING ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP AND POPULARISING THE SCIENCES

The Division for Community Interaction actively capacitated academic staff members for their community interaction role. In 2010 the credit-bearing Short Programme for Service-Learning and Community Engagement was offered for the second time. Staff of the Community Interaction Division and graduates from this course took part in the Colloquium on Hopeful Pedagogies, and in the Teaching and Learning Conference arranged by the SU Centre for Teaching and Learning.

A new collaboration between the Divisions for Research Development and Community Interaction is leading to the presentation of a capacity-building course for academics on community-based research methodologies. Working together with a foundation from abroad, the two divisions carried out a trial run that produced a community assessment for Railton in Swellendam. The proposed course has benefited from insights gained here and from the input by the academics who took part.

In 2010 the University held a second highly successful CI Symposium, at the Sustainability Institute (Lynedoch), on the theme *Portraits of hope through engagement*. The symposium set out, amongst other things, to mobilise a community of practice focused on CI in Higher Education in SA; to display examples of the University's different types of CI activities; to assess the institutional management and governance arrangements supporting CI; and to link our CI initiatives with our vision, our mission and our HOPE Project. In future, the symposium will be a regular item on the institutional calendar.

Particularly promising in the CI work at the University is an emerging focus on the popularisation of science. In 2010 the first SU *High science meets high school learners* session was held at the Kayamandi Corridor. Prof Eugene Cloete, our Dean of Science, had made international news with his innovative design for a water filter. This has the potential to

change the lives of communities that are at risk of disease from water pollution in their areas. The event thus saw a high-ranking researcher from SU present his outstanding research findings and innovation to local secondary school learners (grade 6). The presentation formed part of a drive to inspire learners to consider careers in research and science. Plans are being made in conjunction with the Division for Research Development to take the popularisation of science further. This will still include learners, but will also aim at the Stellenbosch public.

The interactions noted above have two broad aims. One is to capacitate academics to do academic work in community settings. The other is to make the work of the University accessible to community members. A mutual understanding between the groups of their differing life-worlds is essential to wholesome co-existence. It is equally vital to the University's social sustainability as an institution.

### INSTITUTIONALISING OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The strategic course being taken by Stellenbosch University is clear. It is clear from the HOPE Project and its five themes drawn from the Millennium Development Goals, the Overarching Strategic Plan and the emerging Vision 2015. In 2010, 131 community interaction projects, representative of all five HOPE Project themes, were registered on our CI Database. Clearly, too, therefore our current strategic direction makes for an environment in which CI is able to flourish.

### CONCLUSION

CI is closely aligned with the strategic objectives of the University. The structures, procedures and policies to support CI as one of its core functions are in place. This long-term commitment to CI is vital to the social sustainability of our institution.

