

From the Director's Desk

It is amazing how time flies, we are already in the throes of the winter season. Looking back we can see that we are rapidly making good progress in institutionalising the transformation project at the Vaal University of Technology. In this, our second newsletter, we reflect on the stakeholder consultation process to date, particularly the road show that we undertook to our satellite campus i.e. Science and Technology Park in Sebokeng, the value of the roadshow and stakeholder engagement is immeasurable. What has been common throughout the SJT roadshows to date has been the warm welcome that we have received from both staff and students. Stakeholders, staff and students have welcomed the SJT staff and have made valuable input with regard to the main purpose of our roadshows, to share on progress made to date as well as to garner support and input from our stakeholders as to what needs to go into our revised strategic documents i.e. the VUT Integrated Transformation Plan and the VUT Employment Equity Plan. Furthermore, the road shows, have also been an opportunity to introduce the SJT staff and to share with our stakeholders the activities which the SJT Division is responsible for. These activities range from Stakeholder Engagement, Advocacy and Awareness, to Public Dialogues such as Public Lectures and celebration of significant calendar events such as the inaugural Africa Day celebrations which took place at the main campus in Vanderbijlpark, as part of our predetermined objectives. We were also able to report to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) on the types of activities we were involved with during the first semester in fostering social inclusion and contributing to building social cohesion within the university community, What has also been significant in some of these roadshows we undertook as the Social Justice and Transformation Unit, has been the presence of Prof Gordon Zide, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Governance and Organisational Transformation. As part of our advocacy work various activities were under way including resuscitating the Disability Forum and the Gender Desk, the Restorative Dignity Project which covers issues ranging from a Code of Conduct for Service Providers to Food Insecurity for our students. This support we do not take for granted. We trust that you will find the second instalment on the work of social justice and transformation informative whilst at the same time keeping you our valuable stakeholders informed. It will be appreciated if you could share the newsletter with fellow students and staff. In due course we hope to have our quarterly newsletters on the Social Justice and Transformation web page.

1. VUT Stance Against Xenophobia 5 May 2015



The Social Justice and Transformation Unit also played an active role in the activities against xenophobia including being a founding member of the Social Inclusion Coordinating Committee (SICC), an initiative of the Vice Chancellor. Through the SICC, the Social Justice and Transformation Unit actively participated in the various activities which included VUT staff and students converging at the Isak Steyl Stadium where various VUT stakeholders condemned the recent xenophobic attacks that took place in Kwazulu Natal and Gauteng. The mass meeting was then followed with a VUT March to the Emfuleni Local Municipal Offices, Vanderbijlpark where a memorandum was read by the Vice Chancellor on behalf of the Vaal University of Technology community.

2. Draft Strategy for People with Disabilities, 15 May 2015

The Social Justice and Transformation Unit has spearheaded the development of a draft strategy which has been tabled at various platforms such as the Disability Forum, Employment Equity and Diversity Committee (EEDC) as well as the Institutional Forum, the latter an advisory body to Council on issues of race and equity in higher education.

3. Social Justice and Transformation Roadshow Science and Technology Park -19 May 2015

The Social Justice and Transformation Unit hosted a roadshow at Science and Technology Park Delivery Site in Sebokeng. It was the second roadshow after the first one that was held in Uppington Delivery Site on the 19 of March 2015. The Unit had just been fully capacitated late last year (2014), in terms of personnel, therefore the aim and the purpose of the roadshow is to introduce the Social Jus-

tice and Transformation Unit Team to all campuses of the Vaal University of Technology. The thrust of the SJT Unit was presented as follows:

To give/provide strategic advice on Higher Education transformation issues, execute the university's transformation mandate as per the VUT's strategic direction and to review and monitor the development and implementation of the Integrated Transformation Plan and execute the VUT Employment Equity Plan, as well as stakeholder engagement plus roadshows. The Unit's strategic and special projects were also outlined.

4. Public Lecture, Africa Day, 25 May 2015



This was the first time that the university celebrated the importance of Africa Day. Held on the Main campus in Vanderbijlpark, the event, which was well attended was addressed by stalwarts of our legal fraternity and the liberation struggle, Adv. George Bizos, SC (legal representative during the 1946 Nelson Mandela treason trial) and retired Judge Yvonne Mokgoro. The event was also reported in our local media including on the news of one of the commercial radio stations, be Power FM as well as our own student radio station, VUT FM.

5. Tekkie Tax Day Campaign, 29 May 2015

The VUT participated in the annual national campaign where staff and students paid R10 for a sticker. Those who bought the sticker earned the right to wear their tekkies to work/class on Friday 29 May 2015. The Social Justice and Transformation Unit was allocated 240 stickers and sold 170 stickers to the value of R1700. The stickers were sold via office visits over a period of three days and some were left at the main reception.

6. Community Engagement Projects, 18 -19 June 2015 EV2 (Emerging Voices) Research Event



nology Park was organised in partnership with CERT/University of Johannesburg, VUT and EV2. The purpose of the workshop was to share research findings from different youth community organisations. The discussions were rich and the dialogues were highly productive. Internally the partnership was managed by the Social Justice and Transformation and Research Directorate. This was a community engagement project which was highly successful and well attended.

7. Vaal Youth Summit, 19 June 2015



The Vaal University of Technology played host to the Vaal Youth Summit held on 19 June. The event (formed part of celebrating Youth Month) was addressed by the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mduzuzi Manana on the topic :DHET: Achievements and Challenges: 5 Years Later. Some of the achievements include the development of A Draft Social Inclusion Policy Framework which "would enable the DHET to report on constitutional rights and monitor PSET attempts aimed at addressing transformation priorities of race, class, disability, gender, HIV and AIDS, age, geography and citizenship in its broader sense. Speaking on university transformation, Manana noted " on-going and unresolved debates in Higher Education Institutions on the meanings of "transformation", "social cohesion" and "inclusion", and the role of a developmental state in ensuring that universities contribute to strengthening of democracy, nation-building and social cohesion." On disability, he mentioned that the department has appointed a Ministerial Committee to develop a Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the post school education and training system.

Speaking on challenges, Manana acknowledged that "the challenge is to make education and training accessible to all who need it. He cautioned that "This [access] comes at great cost, and has to be managed within an environment where the national fiscus is seriously constrained to make funds increasingly available against the many competing demands of all South Africans."

The Social Justice and Transformation (SJT)Unit also played a central role in the conceptualisation and recording of the student commissions which were designed to elicit student voices on the following themes: Student Learning Experience, Student Living Experience, Student Leadership, Governance and Management Experience and Student Administrative and Transformation Experience. More than 300 youth from post school education institutions in Sedibeng including VUT, NWU Vaal campus and Sedibeng TVET College attended. The SJT Unit will compile the inputs from the commissions for submission to university management.