



FROM THE DIRECTORS DESK

We are starting the New Year within the context of exciting developments for the Post School education and training sector. At a national level we started the New Year with the passing into law of the Higher Education Amendment Act 9 of 2016. This amendment will, inter alia, provide for setting of transformation policy and goals transformation oversight for the Public Higher Education Sector and the strengthening of the role of Institutional Forums. Also we received the Human Rights Commission Report on Transformation at Public Universities in South Africa which require public universities to respond to its recommendations. This year will also see many public universities develop their Transformation Barometers based on the USAf template. This will mark a significant milestone in the self-regulation of South Africa's 26 Public Universities. Sadly, on the morning of Tuesday 28 March 2017 we woke up to the news of the sad passing of the liberation struggle activist, Rivonia trialst , Robben Islander and Isithwalandwe, comrade Ahmed Kathrada.

Institutional Transformation

One of the strategic objectives of the Vaal University of Technology is institutional transformation and to this end this function is driven from the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Governance and Organisational Transformation. The Social Justice and Transformation Department is responsible for the day to day implementation of VUT's transformation agenda.

Activities

For this reporting period, the SJT Department was involved with the following activities towards fulfilment of its goals.

1. First Year Student Orientation, 23 January 2017



As part of raising awareness amongst the student university community, the SJT participated for the second year in the First Year Student Orientation. The department was visible in manning a stall where media paraphernalia and information about our services was shared. The Director also addressed the more than 1000 first year students who had assembled in a tent at the VUT Izak Steyl Stadium

2. International Students Orientation, 26 January



The Department also participated for the first time in the orientation of International Students. Services offered by the department including disability services for students were shared with the audience. The orientation organised by International Relations and Advancement Department was held at Auditorium 200, at the main campus.

3. DAC Retreat Workshop, 22-24 February

The SJT was also represented in the 3 day workshop organised by the Department of Arts and Culture. The purpose of the retreat included exploring Outcome 14 gaps and social cohesion vision, strategic indicator setting, models of social cohesion (regional/International experience) and disability, equality and sign language.

Employment Equity Draft VUT Employment Equity Plan

The draft VUT Employment Equity Plan was tabled for discussion at the Remuneration Human Resources Committee (RHRCC) held on 14 February 2017. The next step is to table the VUT EE Plan at the next Council meeting in for approval.

4. Faculty EE Stakeholder Engagements, February

One of the outcomes of the SJT strategic planning held in December 2016 was to improve the services rendered to faculties as far as effective implementation of employment equity is concerned. During February, meetings were held with faculty Deans and their Heads of Department on the following issues: EE Playing fields, people with disabilities and opportunities for students with disabilities. These engagements have proven valuable and have given us better insights on the challenges some faculties are experiencing including facilities which are not fully accessible to people with disabilities.

5. Armscor Funding

The SJT endeavours to generate additional income through sourcing external funding from various organisations. Following on a lead from a staff member, we have made contact with Armscor who are currently considering our request for bursaries for engineering students with disabilities. The goal is to level between 20% to 30% of our operational budget from external sources.

6. Disability Services: Students with Disabilities

The SJT has assisted new and returning students with disabilities. There are currently 5 new first year registered students with disability types ranging from visual impairment to physical disabilities. The new first year students were also oriented around campus including lecture rooms. Two students have already been assisted with text conversion. This is a service involving the conversion of material such as text books into accessible format for visually impaired students.

Awareness Campaign, 17 March



The department held an awareness campaign on Friday 17 March under the theme: "The Only Disability is a Bad Attitude", the campaign had these objectives: to raise awareness about students with disabilities, but also to raise awareness about the hardship students with disabilities experience due to vandalism of lifts on the main campus. The event held in front of the Library was well attended by students, the primary target of the event.

7. Human Rights Colloquium, 10 March

During this quarter, the SJT conducted a joint human rights colloquium with the national Department of Arts and Culture. The Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Irene Moutlana welcomed the guests which included: Prof Siphamandla Zondi,

HoD: Political Science, UP, who spoke on the topic: Breaking Bread with OR Tambo and Steve Biko: The Question of Mzansi; Yasmin Sooka, Executive Director: Foundation for Human Rights, and Neville Felix from Sedibeng District Municipality and Dr Abraham Serote from the Department of Arts and Culture. This event which received widespread media coverage formed part of the Human Rights Month activities which culminated with a Provincial Human Rights Day (addressed by the Gauteng Premier) held at Sharpeville on 21 March. The human rights colloquium was held under the theme "The Year of Oliver Tambo: Unity in Action in Advancing Human Rights."



Disability Services Building. "By all means enjoy the fruits of freedom, but don't forget your responsibility" Ahmed Kathrada

8. Staff with Disabilities

At the beginning of the year the EEA1 form was distributed to all staff. The purpose of the form is to capture information on staff who have not declared their disability. This information will ensure that VUT is in a position to provide reasonable accommodations.

Disability Service Building



The construction of the Disability Services and African Languages Building completion date continues to shift. The latest is that it might be completed by end of March 2017. The procurement of furniture is currently underway.