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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY INTERACTION POLICY

1 Preamble

In its “Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond”, Stellenbosch University espouses the view that the task of a University is threefold:

- a. To create knowledge (research)
- b. To transfer knowledge (teaching)
- c. To apply knowledge (community interaction)

The Community Interaction Policy affirms the University’s commitment to and relationship with the communities in which it is rooted. The policy endorses the University’s acknowledgement of its “contribution to the injustices of the past” and its commitment to “appropriate redress and development initiatives”.

In support of its mission and within its selected focus areas the University aims to address community needs on a local, regional and national level, while always aspiring to be acknowledged as an asset to society.

The University undertakes to play a leading role in serving the community and in opening up new opportunities for the people of the community who wish to improve their standing in the South African dispensation.

The University therefore commits itself to the process of transformation in the higher education sector in South Africa and accepts the challenge extended to institutions of higher learning to play a bigger role in addressing the development needs of the society.

2 Community Interaction Model

The community interaction model adopted for Stellenbosch University is based on two focus areas:

2.1 Community partnerships between the University and community establishments that are relevant to local, regional and national priorities, as well as the focus areas of the University that aim to achieve mutually shared objectives.

2.2 Social responsiveness by integrating the broadening of knowledge (learning) and the discovery of knowledge (research) with community

realities (application), culminating in a systemic approach towards the implementation of the core functions within the University.

3 Policy Objectives

Interaction between Stellenbosch University and the broader community finds expression in a wide spectrum of activities. The focus of these activities is outlined by the policy and strategy for community interaction, developed in support of national education policy and of the University's Strategic Framework.

This policy is aimed at:

- 3.1 Structuring and strengthening the University's interaction with the community and managing all forms of interaction in a systematic and coordinated manner within the institution as a core process alongside teaching and research.
- 3.2 Encouraging civil responsibility in students by subjecting them to the realities of society as preparation for their participation in a democratic society.
- 3.3 Providing guidance to the implementation of community programmes by supporting the development of meaningful relationships with individuals, communities and institutions.

4 Terms and Definitions

The term "community service" is commonly used to describe the core activities involved in a university's engagement with the community. Community service generically refers to "planned and organised activities that form part of higher education and are aimed at benefiting a particular community."

However, Stellenbosch University prefers the term "**community interaction**" to describe in the broadest sense the interaction between the University and communities in society. The term includes the more limited notion of service-learning, while at the same time taking other service-oriented academic and non-academic community interactions into account. It also allows the University to give expression to alternative forms of social responsiveness.

The term "**community**" signifies the social grouping (qualified segment) involved in the interaction at any given moment.

5 Basic Policy Principles

- 5.1. The University accepts a new paradigm for community interaction where teaching, research and community interaction are better integrated and culminate in a multidisciplinary approach. The ongoing restructuring of academic programmes to include community interaction and community-based research is therefore encouraged and reinforced.

- 5.2. In accordance with the four main objectives of higher education,¹ priority will be given to transfer of knowledge to and the learning experiences of students, being the University's most important clientele. Community interaction aims therefore to add value to the development of critical thinking skills of students in synergy with teaching and research, thus contributing to their preparation for active participation as South African citizens in their future careers.
- 5.3. The University supports the inclusion of community interaction in the appraisal of its personnel, and the introduction of incentives for members of staff who actively contribute towards strengthening the University's role-playing in the community and the successful implementation of the University's community interaction policy and strategy.
- 5.4. The University supports the criteria, directives and stipulations of the Higher Education Quality Committee set for community interaction by higher education institutions. This policy endorses the inclusion of community interaction in departmental quality assessment as included in *Protokol, Departementele Evaluering (2004-2009 cycle)*. (Also see par. 7)
- 5.5. The University acknowledges the voluntary engagement with the community by staff and students as part of initiatives by their departments and sections. The continuation and autonomy of such activities are supported, but remain subject to the organised framework created by this policy.
- 5.6. The code of ethics for Community Interaction is grounded on the ethical values of the various professions and their practitioners participating in the interaction. In view of the value system of the University, a code of conduct for community activities is endorsed as a part of the community interaction plan.²
- 5.7. A database is maintained in which all community interaction activities are uniformly documented and updated for managing, monitoring and co-ordinating purposes. All community interaction projects or programmes are registered on the central project system of the University, irrespective of its relation to an academic programme. Projects overlapping with teaching and research are registered as one project but indicating the community interaction component.
- 5.8. All community interaction projects or programmes, whether internally or externally funded, are managed in compliance with the financial policy of the University. It is accepted that, for the purpose and implementation of this policy, community projects will as a rule not be

¹ See Chapter 1, par. 1.3 of reference 1.

² The ethical code will comprise of a separate document, which is being developed as part of the overall community interaction plan.

afforded on a full cost recovery basis. Lucrative community interactions will be co-ordinated in collaboration with the Manager: Innovation.

6 Management and Functions

6.1 Centre of responsibility and link with management

Community interaction is located in the responsibility centre of the Vice-Rector (Operations), thus ensuring direct access to the Rector and representation in Top Management, the Senate and the Council. It will also ensure close collaboration between the core functions, teaching, research, and community interaction.

6.2 Community Interaction Division

The Community Interaction Division functions directly under the Vice-Rector (Operations), who accepts institutional responsibility for community interaction. The division itself does not implement community projects, but has a supporting, co-ordinating, facilitating and empowering role, and functions as the primary centre of the University's community interaction function.

6.3 Community Interaction Committee

A Community Interaction Committee (similar to the Committee for Academic Planning and the Research Committee) is constituted of faculties, students and other experts. The committee offers a participatory forum for all sectors of the University and functions as sanctioning and co-ordinating body for community interaction strategies and policies. The committee is responsible for policy implementation, quality control and resource allocation, where applicable. It is also responsible for creating the opportunity for communities in society to have a voice in matters relating to the interaction between the University and the community it serves. This opportunity does not imply representation on the committee. The Community Interaction Division provides the administrative support and expertise for the functioning of the committee.

6.4 Faculty structure

Faculties and support service divisions make provision within their own management frameworks for putting community interaction alongside teaching and research into operation. Faculties and divisions are responsible for controlling and managing this function in accordance with the community interaction policy framework of the University. These environments themselves oversee that the prescribed ethical code is adhered to in all interactions with the community, and that the interests of the community are served. New projects or programmes that are initiated are approved by the relevant faculty/division before being submitted to the Community Interaction Committee and registered. Representatives serving on the committee on behalf of the faculty/division are also nominated here.

7 Monitoring and Evaluation of Community Service

- 7.1. All community projects or programmes under the auspices of the University are monitored and evaluated both before and after registration of the project/programme. Self-evaluation at faculty and division level constitutes the most important part of the evaluation process, which rests on community interaction criteria that is developed by each department as part of quality assurance protocol.
- 7.2. Annual progress, outcomes and financial management reports must be submitted in the prescribed format in respect of all projects/programmes. The registered project/programme leaders will assume responsibility for submitting these reports in the prescribed format.³
- 7.3. The evaluation of projects/programmes shall be done accordance with the directives of the Higher Education Quality Committee. The integration of community interaction with teaching and research, and inter-disciplinary co-operation between faculties/divisions are encouraged and promoted, also with regard to the evaluation process.
- 7.4. Project/programme selection shall be judged against national priorities and in accordance with identified needs.
- 7.5. Communities will be given the opportunity to evaluate the University's community interaction output and to judge the results thereof.

8 Funding of Community Interaction

- 8.1. The Vice-Rector (Operations), in collaboration with the Finance Division, is responsible for revising and reconstructing the funding base for community service within the University on a regular basis. Fund-raising for community projects are co-ordinated and aligned in accordance with the stipulations of this policy and in collaboration with the Stellenbosch Foundation.
- 8.2. An annual budget structured according to the objectives of the Community Interaction Division defrays the Division's expenses. Community projects are not as a rule to be funded from this budget.
- 8.3. In the case of partnerships with external role players, where programmes are not operated within the financial system of the University, the University should be clearly noted as co-owner of the project in which case it will only be assessed in terms of quality control.
- 8.4. The financial management of autonomous organisations that form part of the University structure will be the responsibility of the trust or board

³ The Community Interaction Committee in collaboration with the Community Interaction Division will develop a report-back format.

of control concerned, but always in compliance with the financial policy of the University.

References

1. Department of Education. 1997. *A programme for higher education transformation: Education White Paper no. 3. Government Gazette*, Volume 386, number 18207, Pretoria, July 1997.
2. Stellenbosch University. 2000. *Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond*.
3. Stellenbosch University. *Protokol, Departementele Evaluering (2004-2009 cycle)* February, 2004.