



## STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY INTERACTION POLICY

*Building sustainable knowledge partnerships with and in the community*

### 1 Preamble

1.1 The policy is framed within the context of transformation in the higher education sector in South Africa and the visionary strategic frameworks of Stellenbosch University<sup>1</sup> that envisages a university characterised by vibrant interaction between institution and community to the advantage of both.

1.2 Stellenbosch University (hereinafter called the University) exists to perform the following three core functions:

1.2.1 discovering and extending knowledge (research)<sup>2</sup>

1.2.2 facilitating quality teaching and effective opportunities for learning (teaching & learning)<sup>3</sup>

1.2.3 building sustainable knowledge partnerships in and with the community (community interaction)

1.3 Stellenbosch University strives to be an excellent, relevant and engaged university that commits itself to playing a significant role within South Africa, in Africa, and globally through its core functions. Aligned with international trends, the University actively engages in the local and global development challenges whilst producing socially robust knowledge<sup>4</sup> and civically minded graduates<sup>5</sup> in a democratic dispensation.

1.4 The Community Interaction Policy affirms the University's commitment to and relationship with the range of communities with whom it interacts. 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<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Framework 2000; Vision 2012 and Overarching Strategic Plan 2008-2015

<sup>2</sup> See SU research policy

<sup>3</sup> Excerpt from the SU Teaching and Learning Policy.

<sup>4</sup> Gibbons, M. 2006. Engagement as a Core Value in a Mode 2 Society. Paper presented at the CHE-HEQC/JET-CHESP Conference on Community Engagement in Higher Education. 3-5 September 2006. Cape Town.

<sup>5</sup> Bringle, R.G. & Hatcher, J.A. 2007. Civic Engagement and Service Learning: Implications for Higher Education in America and South Africa in *Education as Change*, Vol. 11(3).

<sup>6</sup> SU Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond. March 2000.

## 2 Purpose of policy

This policy aims to:

- 2.1 provide a rationale and context for the University's community interaction activities;
- 2.2 contribute to a conceptual framework and clarity in terms of which community interaction activities will be governed and managed within the University;
- 2.3 articulate the principles that will guide community interaction activities;
- 2.4 set out the institutional arrangements in terms of structure and support for community interaction at the University.

## 3. Rationale, Context & Role

### 3.1 Rationale

Community interaction (CI) as a core function of the university exists to nurture and manage partnerships with communities, thereby facilitating cooperation between communities and the university, and providing the means whereby both parties can actively discover knowledge, teach, and learn from each other.

It is envisaged that this will contribute to an environment where student learning is enriched and research relevance is enhanced. It supports the institutional commitments to reciprocity, redress, development and transformation.

### 3.2 Context

The macro context in which the CI activities take place is higher education (HE) frameworks on the global, national and institutional level as well as local, regional, national and international development agendas:

**3.2.1 In a global HE context**, the University adopts the "scholarship of engagement" (Boyer, 1990) as a model to become an engaged institution. According to this expanded view, scholarship is articulated as four overlapping functions: discovery of all forms of knowledge; integration (connections across disciplines); application as dialogue between theory and practice; and teaching.

**3.2.2 On a national HE level** the University acknowledges and this policy is aligned to the national government policy frameworks as articulated in the White Paper on Higher Education (1997), the quality assurance guidelines in the HEQC documents<sup>7</sup> and the specific guidelines pertaining to community engagement and service-learning<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Institutional Audit Framework & Institutional Audit Criteria, HEQC, June 2004; Criteria for Programme Accreditation, HEQC, Nov 2004; Founding Document, HEQC, 2001

<sup>8</sup> A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service-Learning (2006)

3.2.3 **On an institutional level** the Mission Statement and the Strategic Framework of the University lay the foundation for the interdependence and integration of the three core functions of the University, i.e. teaching and learning, research and CI. Vision 2012 outlines five main foci for the University of which the focus that states that the University “is an active role-player in the development of the South African society” mandates the core function of CI.

### 3.3 Role

In the formulation of the CI policy, its relevance to the teaching and learning and research policies of the University is acknowledged.

**In relation to development agendas**, the CI policy guides the University’s actions as:

3.3.1 an active role player in civil society

3.3.2 an important partner of industry

3.3.3 a local role player in local government Integrated Development Planning;

3.3.4 a provincial role player in the Provincial Development Strategy;

3.3.5 a national role player in National Development Strategies;

3.3.6 an international role player in terms of key Development Themes<sup>9</sup> emanating from the Millennium Development Goals.

## 4 **Conceptual Framework**

In order to prevent confusion, concepts and terminology used in this policy, and in terms of which CI activities will be governed and managed within the University, is clarified and described.

### 4.1 Community

The term “**community**” signifies a social grouping of society involved in an interaction at any given moment. Community refers to groups of people united by a common location, or to groups of people that are linked intellectually, professionally, and/or politically; that is, geographic communities, communities of interest and communities of practice. This broad definition allows the university to focus on marginalised groupings in society whilst at the same time including other community formations.

### 4.2 Criteria for Community Interaction

In order to distinguish CI activities from teaching and learning and research, such activities should adhere to the following criteria:

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<sup>9</sup> The combating of pandemic poverty; the promotion of human security (from food security to peace initiatives); the maintenance and promotion of human dignity; the promotion of democracy; and the promotion and maintenance of environmental sustainability.

4.2.1 The activity should be interactively linked to an identifiable group in a community outside the institution.<sup>10</sup>

4.2.2 Interaction should be actively linked to identifiable needs of both the University and the community. There should be a clearly identified benefit for the community and for the university.

4.2.3 The interaction should be a sustained activity within a mutually defined relationship/partnership.

4.2.4 Exclusive teaching and research activities that do not include a community component<sup>11</sup> cannot be part of CI.

### 4.3 Community Interaction

Internationally the term “community engagement” is commonly used to describe the mechanism through which teaching and research is integrated into a university’s engagement with and in society. The University prefers the term “**community interaction**” that offers in essence the same meaning as community engagement, but with an emphasis on reciprocity between the University and the community. The term includes the criteria listed in par 4.2 and describes in the broadest sense the process of interaction between the University and communities.

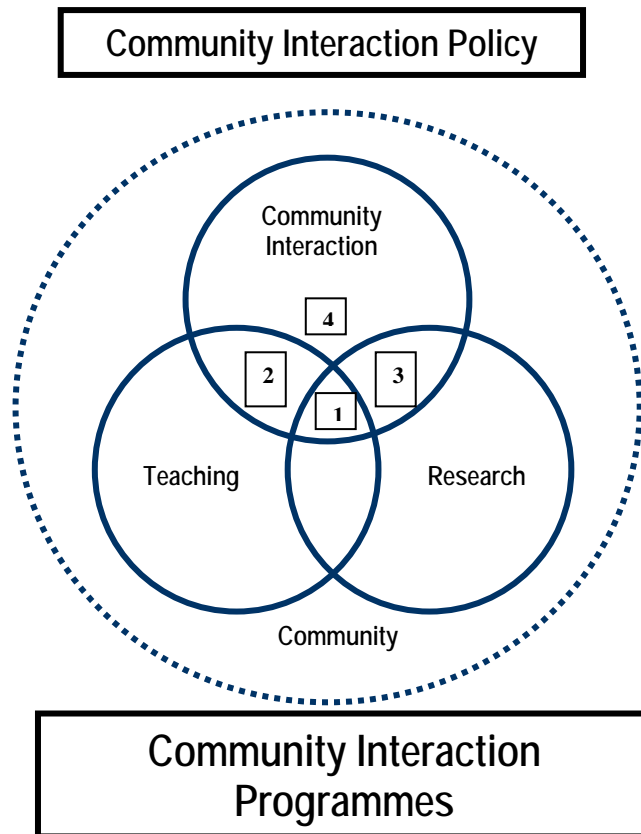
### 4.4 Types of Community Interaction

The University is committed through its Strategic Framework to the implementation of an integrative approach to research, teaching & learning and CI, thereby expressing a commitment to the scholarship of engagement. The diagram below represents the integration of CI with the other two core functions. This framework allows the University to give expression to different forms of social responsiveness at an institutional level. The four levels of integration signify the CI typology which may be used for the classification of CI activities at the University.

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<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this document, institution means students enrolled at the University in formal programs and staff employed by the university.

<sup>11</sup> Part of the learning activities of students in a particular module should be community based and research should include activities with and in the community to qualify as CI.



**Type 1:** Integration of Teaching and learning, Research & CI. In some rare occasions, this is achieved where projects integrate aspects of all three core functions.

**Type 2:** Integration of Teaching and learning and CI. Examples of this type of CI are service-learning<sup>12</sup> and short courses<sup>13</sup>.

**Type 3:** Integration of Research and CI. Examples of this type of CI are contract research, community-based research and science for society initiatives.

**Type 4:** Volunteerism and public service. Examples of this type of CI are student volunteerism, public service by faculty, community outreach and partnerships.

## 5 Basic Policy Principles Guiding Implementation

5.1. Through this policy, the University expects its staff and students to strive towards an appropriate integration of teaching and learning, research and CI providing for a diversity of approaches in different environments. The ongoing

<sup>12</sup> Service-Learning is a form of community-based experiential learning and a curriculum-based, credit-bearing and carefully structured educational experience in which students:

Participate in an organised community interaction activity that meets identified and agreed upon community goals, and

Reflect on the service activity in order to gain a deeper understanding of module content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of social responsibility towards society as a whole (adapted from Bringle and Hatcher, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Short courses is associated with continuing professional development involving “just in time” and “just enough” learning to meet a specific need in the workplace.

restructuring of academic programmes to include CI and community-based research is encouraged and reinforced.

- 5.2. In accordance with the objectives of higher education,<sup>14</sup> priority will be given to the learning experiences of students. CI aims to add value to the development of critical thinking skills of students in synergy with teaching and learning and research, thus contributing to their preparation for active participation as South African citizens in their future careers.
- 5.3. CI is included in the appraisal of staff. There are incentives and rewards in place for staff members who actively contribute towards strengthening the University's role-playing in the community and the successful implementation of the University's CI policy and strategy.
- 5.4. The University is committed to meet the criteria, directives and stipulations of the Higher Education Quality Committee set for CI of higher education institutions<sup>15</sup>.
- 5.5. The University acknowledges the voluntary engagement with the community by students and staff as part of initiatives by their departments, sections, residences and societies. The continuation and autonomy of such activities are supported, within the organised framework created by this policy.
- 5.6. In view of the value system of the University, an ethical code<sup>16</sup> for CI is in place as a separate document and is endorsed by this policy. The ethical code for CI provides for the observance of the ethical values of the various professions and their practitioners participating in the interaction.
- 5.7. An electronic institutional CI database is maintained in which all CI activities are uniformly documented and updated for managing, monitoring and co-ordinating purposes. The registration of CI projects is compulsory irrespective of its relation to an academic programme and serves as a requirement for eligibility for any award or financial assistance as well as departmental appraisal.
- 5.8. All CI projects or programmes, whether internally or externally funded, are managed in compliance with the financial policy<sup>17</sup> of the University. It is accepted that, for the purpose and implementation of this policy, community projects are as a rule not afforded on a full cost recovery basis. Entrepreneurial community interactions are co-ordinated in collaboration with the Executive Director: Finance and Operations.

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<sup>14</sup> Higher Education Act 1997. See also the White Paper 1997.

<sup>15</sup> HEQC Framework and Criteria for Institutional Audits (2003), HEQC Framework and Criteria for Programme (2003), Community Engagement in Higher Education - Proceedings of the Conference hosted by the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education and the Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships Initiative of JET Education Services (2006), Accreditation, Service-Learning in the Disciplines: Lessons from the Field (2008)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.sun.ac.za/gi/ci@su/policy%20documents.htm>

<sup>17</sup> SU Web Finance and Asset Management

## 6 Institutional Arrangements

### 6.1 Governance Structures

#### 6.1.1. Governance at Senate level

Since CI is a core academic function, its governance is per University Statute the responsibility of the Senate of the University. Senate has established a standing Community Interaction Committee of the Senate [CIC(S)]. The CIC(S) rules<sup>18</sup> stipulate the composition and mandate of the CIC(S).

Institutional incentives to promote or advance CI include the Rector's Award for Excellence in Community Interaction<sup>19</sup> and the awarding of CI Flagship Status. The Rector's Award is governed by the document "Rules for the Rector's Award for Excellence in Community Interaction"<sup>20</sup> and the CIC(S) awards CI flagship status based on a list of criteria<sup>21</sup>.

#### 6.1.2 Governance at Faculty Level

*Faculties and Support Services:* Faculties and support service divisions make provision within their own management frameworks for putting community interaction into operation alongside teaching and learning and research. Faculties and divisions are responsible for controlling and managing this function in accordance with the CI 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. Faculties and support service divisions shall make provision within their own management frameworks for consultation with communities through structures such as community advisory boards. Ethical queries that cannot be resolved at faculty or division level should be referred to the head of the Division for Community Interaction. New projects or programmes that are initiated are approved by the relevant faculty/division before being submitted for registration on the institutional CI database.

#### 6.1.3 Governance at Student Level

*Students:* Community Interaction amongst students is governed by a partnership between the Students' Representative Council (SRC), Maties RAG and Matie Community Service (MCS). Both MCS and RAG are governed by Management Boards, whereas the SRC is the highest body of student representation at the University. The student organizations are responsible for managing their own CI initiatives in accordance with the CI policy framework of the University with support and guidance from the One Stop Service of MCS. Adherence to the prescribed ethical code, as articulated in the CI Ethical Code<sup>22</sup> and the Rules<sup>23</sup> for students of Stellenbosch

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.sun.ac.za/gi/ci@su/policy%20documents.htm>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.sun.ac.za/gi/ci@su/policy%20documents.htm>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.sun.ac.za/gi/ci@su/policy%20documents.htm>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.sun.ac.za/gi/projects/CI%20Flagship%20Projects.asp>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.sun.ac.za/gi/ci@su/policy%20documents.htm>

University is the responsibility of each student organization, and is monitored by the One Stop Service of MCS. New projects or programmes that are initiated must first be endorsed by the relevant student organization prior to registration with the One Stop Service of MCS.

## 6.2 Management

The core function of CI is located within the Responsibility Centre of the Vice-Rector (Community Interaction and Personnel). This location ensures close collaboration between management responsible for the core functions of teaching and learning, research, and CI.

### 6.2.1 Vice-Rector: Community Interaction & Personnel (CI & P)

The Vice-Rector (CI & P) accepts institutional responsibility for CI.

### 6.2.2 Division for Community Interaction

The Division for Community Interaction reports to the Vice-Rector (CI & P). The Division functions as the primary centre of the University's CI function and fulfils a supporting, co-ordinating, facilitating and empowering role. The Division itself does not implement community projects. The main staff functions within the Division are:

6.2.2.1 policy development,

6.2.2.2 the management of partnerships,

6.2.2.3 the promotion of service-learning,

6.2.2.4 the maintenance of a CI database,

6.2.2.5 marketing and promotion of CI and

6.2.2.6 the management of the community centre located in the Lückhoff School in Banhoek Road.

## 7 **Monitoring and Evaluation of Community Interaction Projects**

- 7.1. CI initiatives shall address local, national, regional and international priorities in accordance with identified needs.
- 7.2. All community projects or programmes under the auspices of the University must be registered on the institutional CI database.

- 7.3. In order to be considered a fully registered and approved CI project of the university a project is subjected to an initial approval (quality assurance) process which involves the following steps:
- 7.3.1 The database administrator in the Division for Community Interaction approves the project in terms of completeness of information.
  - 7.3.2 The Head of Department approves the project in terms of validity and relevance in the department, ethical compliance and the information contained in the project record.
  - 7.3.3 The Dean of the Faculty approves the project in terms of validity and relevance in the faculty, ethical compliance and the information contained in the project record.
- 7.4. Project owners are required to update the details of their project each year on the database to ensure that the information is always relevant and accurate.
- 7.5. Self-evaluation at faculty and department level constitutes the most important part of the evaluation process. It is expected of each faculty and department to develop criteria for self evaluation. The Division for Community Interaction will assist where necessary.
- 7.6. Annual project reports are submitted to Heads of Departments or Deans. The registered project or programme leaders assume responsibility for submitting these reports.
- 7.7. The evaluation of CI projects takes place on the basis of the criteria developed by CICS and approved by Senate (taking into account the criteria used by the HEQC). The integration of CI with teaching and learning and research, and inter-disciplinary co-operation between faculties/divisions are encouraged and promoted, also with regard to the evaluation process.
- 7.8. The CIC(S) will regularly extend invitations to faculties and divisions to nominate CI initiatives in their environments for CI Flagship Status depending on the availability of central SU funds. Applications will be adjudicated by the CIC(S) on the basis of criteria developed for this purpose by the CIC(S). CI flagship projects will be evaluated at regular intervals by the CIC(S) and continued flagship status and funding will be dependent on a positive evaluation.
- 7.9. Feedback opportunities are envisaged to give communities the opportunity to evaluate the university's CI output and to judge the results thereof.

## **8 Funding of Community Interaction Projects**

- 8.1. The Vice-Rector (Community Interaction and Personnel) is responsible to ensure that the status of CI as a core function of the university is reflected in internal budgetary allocations and shall also advocate that the CI mandate is funded at national level.

- 8.2. The Vice-Rector (Community Interaction and Personnel), in collaboration with the Finance Division, is responsible for revising and reconstructing the funding base for CI within the University on a regular basis. Fundraising for CI projects are co-ordinated and aligned in accordance with the stipulations of this policy and in collaboration with the Stellenbosch Foundation.
- 8.3. An annual budget structured according to the objectives of the Division for Community Interaction defrays the Division's expenses. Community projects are not to be funded from this budget.
- 8.4. 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.
- 8.5. The financial management of autonomous organisations that form part of the University structure will be the responsibility of the trust or board of control concerned, but always in compliance with the financial policy of the University.