

SU receives report into alleged racism - Khampepe Commission of Inquiry

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The rector and vice-chancellor of Stellenbosch University (SU), Prof Wim de Villiers, has received the report of the independent Khampepe Commission of Inquiry into alleged racism at SU.

The Khampepe Commission, led by respected retired Judge Sisi Khampepe, formally commenced its work on 13 June 2022. The university leadership requested this external independent inquiry into alleged racism at the university in May this year as part of SU's commitment to root out racism and discrimination.

"The Report of the Khampepe Commission, with its findings and recommendations, is a tipping point for SU. In appointing the commission and requesting the inquiry, SU made itself vulnerable and exposed itself to possible criticism. However, with a view to the future, we regard this commission as an important investment in the wellness of our University," says Prof. De Villiers. "We are in a process of studying the report and we fully engage with the findings and recommendations. This is a top priority for the university."

"This is a sobering moment for the university. It is evident that black staff members and students do not feel welcome here, despite our deliberate transformation efforts to date. We must face the reality that there is a gap between our intentions with regards to various transformation initiatives and the implementation thereof. We have to work hard to align our institutional commitments with what is happening in practice and on ground level," says Prof De Villiers.

As part of the inquiry, of which the brief also included past reported incidents, the university envisaged a review of the culture at SU in its entirety, coupled with a review and audit of SU policies, operating procedures, and responses. In formulating its recommendations on improving the University's racial diversity, equity and inclusion, the commission considered the following:

- Incidents of alleged racism at the university.
- The current state of racial diversity, equity and inclusion in the campus culture, with specific reference to racism and resultant prejudice.
- Given the university's stance of zero tolerance towards racism, whether the current structures of the university and its policies, rules and processes are sufficient to most effectively address the lived experience of students and staff concerning racism.
- Related issues and concerns that arose during the inquiry, including the need for further investigation or consideration of related issues.

The commission conducted the investigation by means of closed proceedings to provide confidence in the process and to enable candid participation on a broad basis. At its own discretion, the commissioner received evidence that was relevant to her mandate from any person and manner that was determined by the commission. This included interviews, presentations and written submissions. The SU community was also invited to submit their submissions. The identity, other personal information and evidence of witnesses are to be kept confidential by the commission.

The commission's complete Terms of Reference is available here:

<https://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/2022/Rules-of-the-Commission-of-Inquiry-into-Allegations-of-Racism-at-Stellenbosch-University.pdf>

"Although there is much in the report for the university to take heart from, specific fault lines have also been identified. There is a lot of work to do across SU, in the interest of all our students and staff, in the sincere spirit of being welcoming

and inclusive. Justice Khampepe made various recommendations that we are now studying deeper. We will evaluate the findings and implement action plans to address the areas for improvement as identified in the commission's recommendations," says Prof De Villiers.

The university will communicate further on the findings and subsequently the action plans and the way forward as soon as it has been finalised.

The report

The Khampepe Report is available here: <https://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/2022/Commission-of-Inquiry-into-Allegations-of-Racism-at-Stellenbosch-University-Report.pdf>

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