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# Transformation Indaba Report 2024

*Accountability Matters*

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# Session 1

## Welcoming remarks

Prof Nico Koopman



More than 160 Stellenbosch University (SU) staff and students attended the Transformation Indaba 2024. The Indaba was hosted by Prof Nico Koopman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel, under the theme 'Accountability Matters' at the Protea Hotel in Techno Park on Wednesday, 25 October 2024.

In his welcoming address, Prof Koopman defined transformation in the context of SU before delving into the key contents of the 2024 draft Transformation Policy. He explained that transformation in the institution was a perpetual process with eight dimensions, namely the institution, talent, internationalisation, teaching and learning, the student experience, social impact, research, and leadership.

Prof Koopman differentiated between quantitative and qualitative transformation. He referred to quantitative transformation as a demographic change relating to underrepresentation in terms of race, socioeconomic status, gender, and disability, amongst others. It relates to matters that can be counted and expressed in data such as the diversification of staff, students, partnerships, clients, names of buildings, and institutional structures such as the Student Representative Council, Faculty Boards, Senate, the Institutional Forum, and Council.



He then explained qualitative transformation as referring to matters that could not be measured easily but could be weighed, felt, and experienced. He said it encompassed the feeling and experience of inclusion (both social and economic), co-ownership and co-definition of the University and its culture and customs, spaces, policies and practices.

Prof Koopman went on to explain and compare two terms in relation to transformation, namely 'systemic' and 'embedded'. He explained systemic transformation as the changing of systems at the University that are exclusionary (whether intentionally or unintentionally) to systems that are inclusionary and embedded transformation as implying that all the people of the University are involved in and responsible for transformation. Embedded transformation simultaneously implies that the process of transformation, change, and renewal is inspired, informed, and guided by specific institutional structures, entities, and functionaries.

Prof Koopman affirmed that over the years, he had seen improvement in transformation at the institution. He referred to the establishment of the CIRCoRe (Committee for the Institutional Response to the Commission's Recommendations) team and the considerations of the Khampepe Report. He said that real transformation was concerned with monitoring, accelerating, and aligning accountability at SU. He challenged the audience to question themselves on how they can do better in working towards the advancement of transformation at SU.

Prof Koopman concluded his welcoming by stating that mechanisms should be put in place for advancing accountability. He suggested that the institution create a safe space that would allow for courageous sharing for all, without threat of intimidation and victimisation, stigmatisation, and shaming. He also called for improved, credible, and integrated reporting and displaying of transformation work done as an institution internally and externally.



## Overview of the day



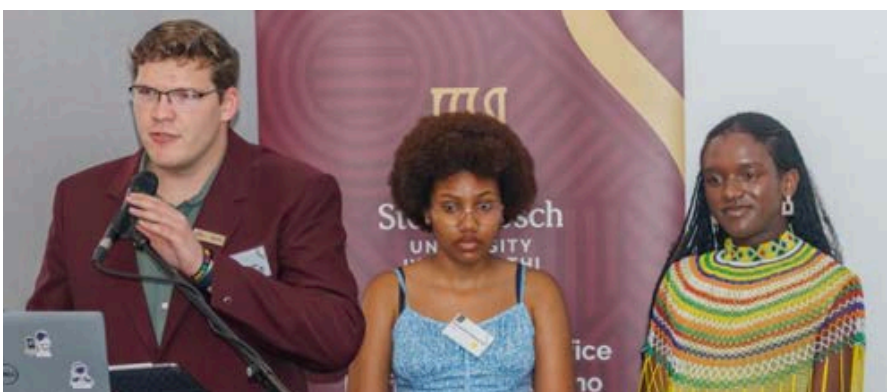
Dr Zethu Mkhize

Dr Zethu Mkhize, Director for Transformation Office, outlined the purpose of the day, noting that the Transformation Indaba is an annual event designed to assess the institution's progress in transformation over the past year. She explained what the Restitution Statement meant to the institution before giving an opportunity to three SU students to read the Restitution Statement in all three languages used at SU. Following the reading of the Restitution Statement, Dr Mkhize gave a brief biography to introduce the keynote speaker of the day.

## Reading of the Restitution Statement

Restitution statement (2018)	Ilizwi ngembuyiselo (2018)	Restitusistelling (2018)
<p>Stellenbosch University (SU) acknowledges its inextricable connection with generations past, present and future. In the 2018 Centenary Year, SU celebrates its many successes and achievements. SU simultaneously acknowledges its contribution towards the injustices of the past. For this we have deep regret. We apologise unreservedly to the communities and individuals who were excluded from the historical privileges that SU enjoyed and we honour the critical Matie voices of the time who would not be silenced. In responsibility towards the present and future generations, SU commits itself unconditionally to the ideal of an inclusive world-class university in and for Africa.</p>	<p>'IYunivesithi yaseStellenbosch (SU) iyavuma ngezinto ezingazange zisonjululwe phakathi kwayo nesizukulwana esidlulileyo, esangoku nezizayo. Kumnyaka ka-2018 wokugqiba iNkulungwane, i-SU ibhiyozela impumelelo nokufezekisa kwayo izinto ezininzi. Kwangaxeshanye, i-SU iyalivuma igalelo layo kwizenzo ezichasene nobulungisa zexesha elidlulileyo. Ngelo galelo siyazisola kakhulu. Siyaxolisa ngokungazenzisiyo kuluntu nakubantu abazivinjwayo iinyhweba zembali ezazisonwatyelwa yi-SU kwaye siwahlonipha kakhulu amazwi eeMatie angelo xesha angazange avume ukuvalwa imilomo. Ukubonakalisa inkathalo ngokujoliswe kwisizukulwana sangoku nesizayo, i-SU iyazibophelela ngokungagungqiyo ukubandakanya bonke abalungele ukuxhamla kwiYunivesithi equka wonke ubani nekwizinga lehlabathi, phakathi eAfrika neyeyeAfrika ngokunjalo.</p>	<p>Die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US) erken sy onlosmaaklike verbondenheid met die geslagte van die verlede, hede en toekoms. In die 2018 Eeufeesjaar vier die US sy talle suksesse en prestasies. Die US erken terselfdertyd sy bydrae tot die onreg van die verlede. Hieroor het ons diepe berou. Ons vra sonder voorbehoud om verskoning aan die gemeenskappe en individue wat uitgesluit was van die historiese voorregte wat die US geniet het en ons huldig die kritiese Matie-stemme wat nie tot swye gebring kon word nie. In verantwoordelikheid teenoor die huidige en toekomstige geslagte, verbind die US hom onvoorwaardelik tot die ideaal van 'n inklusiewe wêreldklas-universiteit in en vir Afrika.</p>

From Left: Liam Gillesen, Roceshia Februarie and Abongile Quthu





## Keynote address

Prof Saleem Badat, Research Professor at the University of the Free State, delivered a thought-provoking keynote address centred on the theme 'Accountability Matters'. His presentation explored the relationship between accountability and transformation, particularly within the context of SU.

Prof Badat commenced his address by explaining accountability as it relates to institutional transformation. He emphasised that accountability was meant to start meaningful conversations at SU. According to him, transformation encompasses not only institutional changes but also the dynamics of social relations both within the University and the broader community.

Prof Badat then challenged the audience to ask themselves to whom does SU account, how SU is accountable, and whether there are any sanctions in case the institution has not made any progress in transformation. He identified the Senate, Council, Institutional Forum, and Convocation as bodies that were supposed to hold the institution accountable; however, he asked to what extent these bodies held the University accountable.

Prof Badat went on to question whether the leaders of this institution were role models for transformation and whether they were consistent in their modelling of transformation. He reminded the audience that transformation could not be approached peacefully and that when pursuing transformation, a number of factors were important to consider.

He explained the importance of transformation in institutions of higher learning, placing emphasis on how law and policy were necessary for achieving social justice at SU. He argued that it was not enough for an institution to claim to have a policy in place because once the policy is in place, the actual work often stops.

He said that from his observations, SU had become diverse since previous years; however, diversity did not mean inclusivity. He explained how conversations about diversity needed to happen for certain matters to come into focus.



**Prof Saleem Badat**



Prof Badat questioned whether the institution could transform without decolonising, decentring Europe-centric value systems. Prof Badat went on to say that transformation and democratisation were interlinked terms but over the years, instead of transformation advancing in universities, it had regressed in terms of progress due to incessive and continued commodification of knowledge and corporatisation of universities. He lambasted academics for allowing this. He said that post 1994, academics had failed to contest ideologies and administrative power. He quoted philosopher Mara Singh, raising the questions of what academics imagine as public good and what public good is, and who is going to educate our educators about the transformative crisis at our universities.

Prof Badat said that universities were opting to keep quiet about matters that they should be vocal about because they fear losing funding and world rankings. He expressed sadness over universities' silence on the Palestinian genocide.

In his conclusion, Prof Badat said that students needed to think about how they were going to contribute in the journey towards transformation.



## Rendition of “Weeping”

Following the keynote address, Dr Zethu Mkhize thanked Prof Badat for speaking honestly about what accountability should mean in the context of higher education. Dr Mkhize then gave the stage to Kirsten Pienaar, an SU master's student, who delivered a moving rendition of the song 'Weeping', written by Dan Heymann in the mid-1980s and first recorded by Heymann and the South African group Bright Blue in 1987.



Artist: Kirsten Pienaar



# Session 2

## Plenary 1



Panelists from left Prof Thuli Madonsela, Dr Leslie van Rooi, Dr Cheryl Mohamed Sayeed, and Prof Hester Kloppe

The session, a panel discussion on accountability, was facilitated by Dr Leslie van Rooi, Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation.

Prof Hester Kloppe, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Strategy Global and Corporate Affairs, started on her topic titled Accountability as a value espoused by Stellenbosch University and its significance in the institutional transformation journey. According to Prof Kloppe, the term 'accountability' speaks to moral values and the responsibility that we have to deliver on promises and commitments that we have made at SU.

She acknowledged that accountability extends beyond mere compliance with policies to achieve predetermined targets; it also demands that we critique how well we are advancing in terms of goals set for ourselves. Prof Kloppe asserted that all students and employees were answerable for their actions and behaviours. She explained that SU was still grappling with a legacy of exclusion and inequality. She said that the journey towards transformation required us to confront structural and systemic barriers that have historically marginalised certain people.

Without accountability, there is no way of ensuring that progress is made. Accountability compels us to ask ourselves certain questions, for instance whether we are achieving the goals set for ourselves, whether our policies are making a tangible difference, what the root cause of inequality is, and how accountability can be rationalised at SU.



The presentation by Prof Thuli Madonsela, Director of the Centre for Social Justice was titled, the meaning of accountability in Social Justice. She opened with a compelling anecdote about an injustice that she had committed towards a colleague during a lecture, highlighting how none of the students had intervened to hold her accountable. This experience illustrated the difficulties of demanding accountability from those in power.

Prof Madonsela affirmed that social justice is based on two elements: fairness and equity. She said that social justice entails change and transformation. She noted that social justice is concerned with embracing the humanity of everyone through equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms, reflected in equitable benefits.

Prof Madonsela suggested that we help each other with finding a path of coexisting. White people need to mourn the loss of their historic privileges so that we can embrace a world that acknowledges the humanity of everyone. We need to cocreate this world.

Dr Cheryl Mohamed Sayeed, Senior Lecturer in Public Policy, College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, was the last speaker in this session. Her topic was titled Accountability and its implications for academic freedom.

She started by questioning what academic freedom is and what the relationship between academic freedom and accountability is.

She said that her definition of academic freedom was based on the University of Chicago's 'Kalven Report' of 1967 and implied that academics should have the freedom to teach and pursue knowledge on any subject that invokes our thinking. She lamented that academics were once drivers of change but over the years had lost their voice.

She pointed out that academics often hesitate to critique university administrations due to fear of the implications. Aligning with Prof Badat, she argued that the growing commodification of universities whereby third-stream income is prioritised undermines true academic freedom. Dr Sayeed expressed her concern that the ability to freely identify and research topics has been compromised, with sensitive subjects posing real threats to academics' safety and professional integrity. Universities should create an enabling environment that supports transformation and protects academic inquiry.



Prof Thuli Madonsela



Dr Cheryl Mohamed Sayeed

## Plenary 2



Panelists from left, CIRCoRe Steering Committee: Dr Phila Msimang, Dr Sharman Wickham, Prof Ronel Carolissen, Prof Kopano Ratele and Dr Leslie van Rooi

The second part of the panel discussion featured five members of the CIRCoRe. The committee is tasked with leading, implementing, overseeing, and monitoring the University's response to the recommendations of the Khampepe Commission Report.

Prof Ronel Carolissen, Professor in Psychology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, reported on the work of the CIRCoRe since it was established. She started by reporting on the De Lange Commission, responsible for investigating Wilgenhof residence. She reported how closing Wilgenhof and reimagining it was one of the recommendations of the commission. Prof Carolissen noted that since she had started working on the CIRCoRe Workstream, she had identified a need for proactive student platforms of engagement to discuss issues of race because students were petrified of talking about such issues on big platforms.

Prof Kopano Ratele, Professor in Psychology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, started by highlighting how hard it is to change institutional culture. Culture is strategy. It is not an aspect of the game; it is the game. He emphasised that in order to change the institutional culture, we need to understand the culture and how we are seen as an institution and come up with ways of changing the organisational culture.



Prof Kopano Ratele



Dr Leslie van Rooi, Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation, emphasised the need for improvements in Student Affairs to foster institutional culture change as part of a broader transformation effort. He highlighted the importance of simplifying and aligning case management, which currently prioritises significant cases. He recommended a two-fold approach to structuring these efforts.



Dr Leslie van Rooi

Dr Phila Msimang, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, reported on how race is understood and applied, particularly noting a concern in relation to the under-representation of Black students in Conservation Sciences. He gave a description of the infographic tool that his CIRCoRe workstream team had developed to trace the history and use of concepts over the last 150 years. This tool assists in the realisation that terms evolve with time.



Dr Phila Msimang

Dr Sharman Wickham reported on the co-curriculum workstream of the CIRCoRe and how the Khampepe Report had recommended creating a core module for all first-year students to facilitate learning and critical engagement in inequality and transformation. She suggested a series of seminars on the socially responsible curriculum and emphasised the importance of collaborative work.



Dr Sharman Wickham with microphone in hand



# Session 3

## Plenary 3



From left Shanté Neff, Abongile Quthu, Roceshia Februarie, Reagan Johnson, Dawn Manqoyi, and Andri Malan

The third and final session of the programme was facilitated by Shanté Neff, Transformation Programme Co-ordinator. The student panel discussion session formed part of the plenary session. The student leaders reflected on what accountability meant in their roles as student leaders. The leaders stated that they were accountable to the Student Parliament for all the decisions that they made on behalf of the students.

The student leaders voiced concern over how SU placed them in leadership positions but gave them minimal engaging and decision-making power regarding what is best for the students. The leaders also touched on the fact that students often do not understand where the role of student leaders ends. They said that they often found themselves having to deal with issues of food and accommodation, which do not fall under their mandate. They pleaded with the leadership to assist in sorting out issues of accommodation.

When asked what accountability entails in residence spaces, the student leaders stated that there was still a great deal of uncertainty around what transformation is. They said that to realise SU's Vision 2040 the transformative student experience, they needed more tools to equip them for transformation work and that the three conversations held at the beginning of the year were not enough to facilitate meaningful transformation in the residences. They highlighted that accountability mechanisms are not clear to the residence space.

## Breakaway sessions



Dr Jean Farmer

Dr Jean Farmer facilitated the final session of the day, namely the breakaway groups. The groups were distinguished by way of colour-coded stickers. Each group shared insights on their assigned topics, for engagement and reflection. The discussions included the following

**Breakaway 1:** Accountability as a value, led by Shanté Neff, Transformation Programme Coordinator: Transformation Office

The group discussed the importance of accountability as a core value within the organisation. The members emphasised the need for transparency and responsibility at all levels to promote trust and integrity.





**Breakaway 2:** Individual accountability in Stellenbosch university, led by Dr Jean Farmer, Programme Manager: Faculty Support, Monitoring and Evaluation, Transformation Office

The group discussed how they felt responsible to themselves, the institution, and society and how as members of SU, they took responsibility for promoting transformation in daily interactions. They also focused on encouraging themselves to foster an environment of diversity and excellence.



**Breakaway 3:** Accountability towards a welcoming environment and sustainability, led by Qaqamba Mdaka, Case Coordinator: Equality Unit

The group explored friendly gestures such as greeting in different languages as a starting point to creating a welcoming environment. This would include learning to say someone's name, as difficult as it may be, and looking someone in the eye when communicating with them. They suggested that SU needed to focus on matters such as welcoming both local and international students in the same way.



**Breakaway 4:** Institutional culture and accountability, led by Chevaan Peters, Manager: Knowledge Information Systems and Marketing, Division for Social Impact

The group discussed the fact that to foster institutional culture and accountability, SU needed to do the following:



- Enhance cultural orientation by implementing a comprehensive cultural orientation programme to promote understanding of and respect for diverse perspectives.
- Foster inclusive decision making by creating inclusive spaces where all members of the University community feel valued and involved in decision-making processes.
- Promote accountability by establishing clear mechanisms for reporting inappropriate behaviour, including anonymous channels for those fearing victimisation or bullying.



**Breakaway 5: Accountability and social justice, led by Jaco Greeff Brink, Head: Equality Unit**

The group explored how accountability mechanisms could be leveraged to address inequalities and promote equitable practices within institutions using common understanding and collective responsibility. The group identified that the logic of transformation was misunderstood and that conversations were needed to demystify the meaning and practice of the term. The group suggested that social justice be included in SU staff Key Performance Areas.



**Breakaway 6: Institutional culture and accountability, led by Renée Hector-Kannemeyer, Deputy Director: Division for Social Impact**

This discussion focused on institutional culture and how the culture of bullying and silencing was part of SU. The participants stressed the importance of aligning accountability with institutional values to foster a positive culture.



**Breakaway 7: Accountability and academic freedom, led by Dr Shaun Peters, Acting Director: Institute for Plant Biotechnology**

The group discussed how geopolitical conflict impacts academic freedom and described how the influence of geopolitical tensions could complicate academic freedom. In contexts where certain topics are politically charged, students and faculty may feel pressure not to engage in honest discussion. The group also mentioned how self-censorship was the greatest enemy to academic freedom at SU.



**Breakaway 8:** Accountability towards a welcoming environment and sustainability, led by Thulani Hlatswayo, Coordinator: Student Governance, Centre for Student Life and Learning, Division Student Affairs

The central theme of this discussion was maintaining agreements of accountability. The group discussed redefining excellence at SU, integrating diversity, and creating criteria for achieving diversity.



They mentioned the importance of raising issues of noncompliance to hold each other accountable. They also suggested working with colleagues across teams to gain a broader understanding of each other's roles. Furthermore, the group suggested multilingualism in campaigning and arranging social impact projects would create an inclusive approach to communication, ensuring that diverse linguistic communities are effectively reached and engaged. The breakaway groups, facilitated by Dr Jean Farmer, provided a valuable platform for participants to engage with different aspects of accountability

## Closing remarks and the way forward

Prof Nico Koopman concluded the conference by revisiting Prof Badat's speech earlier by noting three insights that he had taken away from the speech:

- Success with transformation can cause new challenges.
- We need to build more institutional capacities for transformation.
- If we talk transformation and decolonisation, we mean that we are no longer copies of Europe.

He urged the group to work towards accountability on all levels of the institution. Changes are happening quantitatively and qualitatively in the institution and the country; things are falling in place. He stated that the proposals from the breakaway groups would go a long way in helping the Institutional Transformation Committee to create a path in transformation. He quoted one of the breakaway groups, saying that empathy does not come automatically; we must acquire it. He concluded by saying that to invest energy is to build a new society; hence, there is no talking about transformation without talking integrity.





## Vote of thanks



### Ellen Tise

Ellen Tise, thanked Prof Saleem Badat in his absence for taking time to come and speak at SU and being direct in his keynote address. She also thanked Kirsten Pienaar for her rendition of 'Weeping'. She thanked the panellists for their engagement in the proceedings of the Indaba and the CIRCoRe team for bringing us up to date on how far they had come since taking on this responsibility. Lastly, she thanked Dr Mkhize for being the driver of the Transformation Indaba and the Transformation Office for making the Indaba a huge success.





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