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Social Impact Symposium

Report 2024

Defining understanding and
implementing Social Impact at
Stellenbosch University



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Symposium 2024

Session 1

1



Mr Mawethu Nyakatya

On Friday 30 August 2024 the annual Social Impact Symposium took place at the Sada Oms Hall, Goldfields Residence Stellenbosch University.

The Social Impact Symposium is an annual event aimed at exploring and creating platforms for external societal stakeholders to engage with the university on the kinds of sustainable relationships which can be forged as partners working together to address societal challenges.

The event directed by Engaged Scholarship and Social Impact Manager, Mr Mawethu Nyakatya, explored the theme, Defining, understanding and implementing Social Impact at Stellenbosch University.

Opening and welcoming



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Dr Zethu Mkhize

Dr Zethu Mkhize, Director for Transformation at Stellenbosch University (SU), opened and welcomed the guests to the 2024 Social Impact Symposium. Professor Koopman and Dr Leslie Van Rooi were absent due to other institutional obligations. Dr Mkhize acknowledged Professor Sibusiso Moyo (Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation at Stellenbosch University as well as the keynote speakers.

She noted that the symposium was an exhibition opportunity for the work of the SU Social Impact team and its stakeholders. Dr Mkhize further explained that the Social Impact and Transformation offices were in the process of transitioning, to one center with two imperatives.

She explained that Social Impact is one of the core functions of the university, with this event taking place at a time where the offices are working on a draft Social Impact policy, which aims to provide a framework for all social initiatives at SU.

In her conclusion, Dr Mkhize emphasised that the symposium aimed to enhance the mutually beneficial collaboration between SU, its partners and communities.

Brief History of the venue



Following the welcoming and opening Ms Karabo Xutywa, Social Impact and Transformation office administration officer relayed the history of Sada Oms, after whom the venue hosting the symposium was named. She highlighted how the relevance of the renaming of the venue showed the strides the University had taken towards transformation. Ms Xutywa further explained the renaming of the hall was part of SU's visual redress which recognizes the wrongs of the past by removing symbols of social injustice, hurt and misrepresentation.

Ms Karabo Xutywa

Keynote Address

Prof Darren Lortan



Professor Darren Lortan,

Professor Darren Lortan, Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics and the Chair of the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF) was one of the keynote speakers of the day. His talk, entitled Firsting Seconding and Lasting, explored the activities of social impact in the communities. He explained how people needed to do away with positioning themselves in communities to enable an environment of freedom and accessibility for all.

Prof Lortan described the relationship of the university to the community as a crucial one that needed to be maintained. He encouraged the audience to try to assist the communities even with small activities that could have a lasting impact on their lives. In his conclusion Prof Lortan, reminded the participants that the University had more impact on the community than they can imagine. He emphasised that social impact efforts were about appreciating the value of the ivory in a living elephant.

Keynote Address 2

Dr David Harrison



Dr David Harrison

The second keynote speaker, Dr David Harrison CEO of the DG Murray Trust (DGMT), presented the Three Stories of Public Innovation. He highlighted the different ways in which DGMT had advocated for communities on issues around alcohol abuse, free mobile data and investment in early childhood development learning programmes.

The keynotes were followed by a question and answer session for engagement with the audience around the topics of the presentations.

The panel discussion followed which provided the selected panellists an opportunity to present a brief overview of their social impact work . The presentations provided the audience with an indication of where SU was in terms of its commitment to social impact in the surrounding communities.

Session 2

Panel Response

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Professor Anthony Naidoo and Dr Therese Fish

Professor Anthony Naidoo from the faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University led the panel discussions on social impact with a brief story on the route he used to becoming a psychologist. He explained that his main mandate when he came to Stellenbosch in 2000 was to change the mindsets of the surrounding communities. Initially, having been tasked with developing youth empowerment programmes in the community he was proud to share that 24 years later the clinic he was tasked with managing when he came to Stellenbosch now runs multiple youth and women empowerment programmes.

Dr Therese Fish, faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences encouraged students and staff to speak their truth and understand the real impact of these initiatives and efforts. She reported that she had been working at SU for many years and had seen a great improvement in Social Impact initiatives in the institution however she stated she would love to see even stronger goals and outcomes to show that the university is dedicated to being in service of the communities it serves. She mentioned the four principles of social impact and how the university needed to take a stronger stance in gearing students for social impact initiatives

Session 2

Panel Response

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Miss Skylar Thorton and Professor Theo Broodryk

Miss Skylar Thorton, a sustainable development student represented the Eco-Maties, she explained how the society used sustainable agriculture to start a garden in 2020. Skylar emphasised that the main priority of the Eco-Maties society was to ensure that both students and communities understood that there is no co-existence without the environment.

Professor Theo Broodryk represented the Law faculty at SU stating its achievements especially when working with community members. He stated that their biggest achievement as the faculty so far was being accredited as a law firm that now services approximately 2500 students.



Leading up to the final session of the day, Mr Mawethu Nyakatya highlighted the strides the Social Impact Division had taken in building and strengthening relationships with the communities over the last couple of years. SU Social Impact partners presented their work to the audience.

Mr Mawethu Nyakatya

Phaphama Small Enterprise Development Initiative (SEDI)



Miss Sihlelelwe Nzima

First to present was Miss Sihlelelwe Nzima of the Phaphama Small Enterprise Development Initiative (SEDI). She started off by highlighting how the Phaphama programme works within communities to equip would-be entrepreneurs with the relevant skills needed to start or grow a business. She shared a few success stories of Phaphama participants who had managed to learn from the organisation and had successfully managed to get the university to accredit Phaphama participation on Student records. She said some of the challenges the programme faced included not having enough mentors from the programmes as well as funding the overhead costs to keep the programme running.

Session 3

Presentations

Jala Peo Initiative



Mrs Sunet Anderson

Sunet Anderson, of the Jala Peo Initiative, explained that the term Jala Peo adapted from the Sesotho language means "to plant a seed". She said the focus of the programme was to provide garden support at schools and act as a vehicle for the National School Nutrition Programme. The programme was designed to promote nutrition education and garden support to ensure gardening skills aren't only used at school but also practiced in home environments.

Adapt 2 Move Initiative



Dr Candace Vermaak, of the Faculty of Health represented the Adapt to Move initiative, focused on working with people with disabilities offering them assistance in adapting after amputation, blindness and intellectual impairment. She said this initiative created volunteer opportunities and community education by training community members in the work they do while managing resource constraints.

Dr Candace Vermaak

Session 3

Presentations

Proud of my town Initiative

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Dr Ilse Eigelaar-Meets

Dr Ilse Eigelaar-Meets of the Proud of my town initiative shared the work that she had spearheaded in her hometown of Grabouw. She highlighted the aim of this initiative was to train and expose community members on how to conduct fieldwork, to process and analyse the data collected. She explained how upon completion of the training the community members received a formal certificate. However Dr Eigelaar-Meets reported some of the challenges she encountered in the programme included non-payments to fieldworkers and service providers for food and accommodation while working on the project which included the SU system not being set up to work directly with communities

Closing Remarks

An engagement opportunity with the audience opened discussion on the importance of building fair and respectful relationships between students and lecturers with communities.

Dr Mkhize closed the programme by thanking the speakers for their presentations and the guests for attending the symposium. Emphasising the need for SU to keep these relationships with the communities functional.

Thank you for attending
the 2024 Social Impact
Symposium



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forward together
sonke siya phambili
saam vorentoe