

Study Tour South Africa

November 2012







Introducing South Africa

South Africa is a nation of huge diversity. Its eventful history, rich natural environment and strategic location at the southern tip of Africa have shaped a country of striking contrasts. South Africa is today the powerhouse of Africa, the most advanced, broad-based economy on the continent, with infrastructure to match any first-world country. Famous for its wildlife and game reserves, the country also has some of the world's most spectacular scenery, ranging from

dominating mountains to deserts, from rolling veld to lush coasts.

South Africa is five times the size of the UK, fifteen times the size of Ireland, and as big as several European countries put together. The AUA / AHUA study tour was based in and around three major cities – Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town. Cape Town, on the southwest seaboard, is the oldest city and the legislative capital, where parliament sits. Pretoria, almost 1,000 miles to the north-east, is the executive capital, where the

government administration is housed. Next to Pretoria, and close enough that the outer suburbs merge, is the commercial centre of Johannesburg, once the world's greatest gold mining city, now dominated by modern financial and service sectors.

People and language

South Africa has a population of just over 50 million people with multiple origins, cultures, languages and beliefs. There are four main racial groups: black (African),



Pied Kingfisher



Musicians in cape town

white, coloured (people of mixed African, Asian and white descent) and Indian. Around 79% of South Africans are black, 9% are white, 9% are coloured, and 3% are Indian or Asian.

There are 11 official languages. The most widely spoken is Zulu, an indigenous African language which is the first language of nearly a quarter of the population, followed by Xhosa (pronounced coe-sa) at 18%, and Afrikaans, a derivative of Dutch, spoken by 13% of people. Most South Africans speak more than one language, and English is widely understood across the country. English is the language of business, politics and the media, and is the country's lingua franca.

Apartheid and democracy

Up until 1993, South Africa was known for apartheid, or white-minority rule. Racial segregation began in colonial times under the Dutch and British. Apartheid as an official policy was introduced following the general election of 1948. The apartheid regime included a separate system of education for African students, designed to prepare black people for lives as a labouring class. In 1959 separate universities were created for black, coloured and Indian people, and existing

universities were not permitted to enrol new black students.

Apartheid was dismantled in a series of negotiations from 1990 to 1993, culminating in elections in 1994, the first in South Africa with universal suffrage. Post-apartheid South Africa is a stable and progressive democracy focused on economic growth and improved quality of life for all. It has a vibrant multi-party political system and a government comprising all races.

Higher education and the transformation agenda

The higher education legacy of the apartheid era was a sector which was racially divided, of uneven quality, and suffering duplications

and inefficiencies. Historically white institutions were most favourably located and resourced, and conducted almost all research. There was a binary system of academic universities and vocational technikons (polytechnics). The new government drove a radical restructuring aimed at breaking down racial divides and transforming higher education. The binary divide was dismantled, and the number of universities was cut from 36 to 23 through mergers and campus incorporations, creating some very large universities.

Education became a key element of the transformation programme to redirect national priorities to address the results of apartheid. Universities were called upon to



At the Pilanesberg National Park

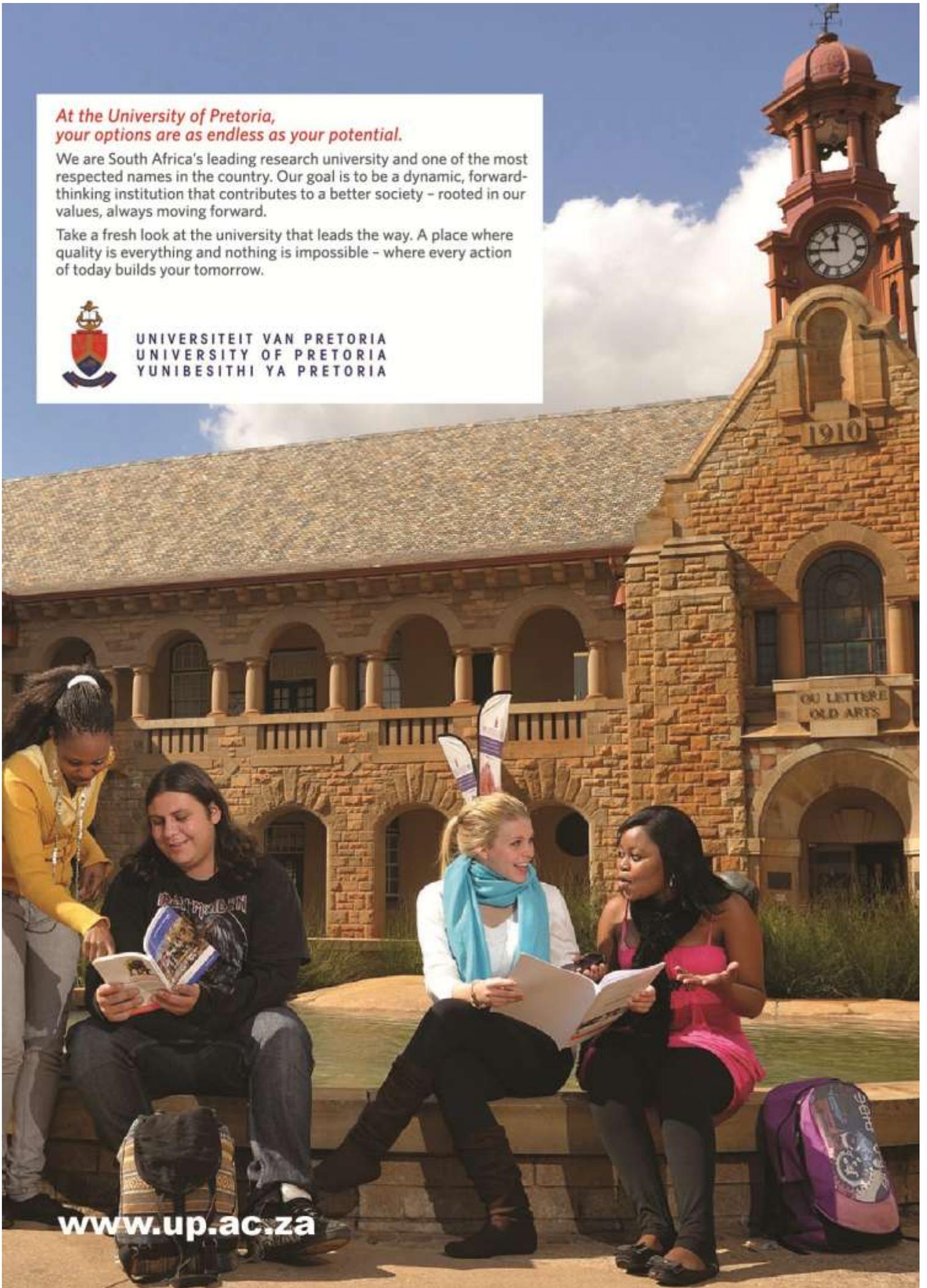
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open their doors to students of all races, transform curricula to be more relevant to the new society, train increasing numbers of the kinds of graduates essential to economic growth and development, and produce scholars able to undertake the research **needed to tackle South Africa's** problems.

Higher education today

At about 20% of total state expenditure, South Africa has one of the highest rates of public investment in education in the world. In the UK, 14% of total public spending goes on education, and in Ireland 16%. Education is compulsory for all South Africans from the age of seven (grade 1) to age 15 (grade 9). Completion of grade 12, and successful **matriculation or 'matric', is required** for university entry.

South Africa's university sector is the strongest and most diverse in Africa. Its 23 publicly-funded institutions comprise 11 traditional research-focused universities, six universities of technology, and six **'comprehensive' institutions** which combine academic and vocationally-orientated education. There are

115 private higher education providers which, although number many more than the public universities, are small in terms of student enrolments.

University student numbers have almost doubled since 1993 to the current student population of around 900,000 – which is just under half the size of the UK higher education student body. Participation in higher education amongst young South Africans is 18% (school leaver participation rates are 37% in the UK and 53% in Ireland), and the South African government aims to increase this

to 20%. Both increasing and widening participation in higher education are regarded as key to achieving a range of economic and social goals.

University outreach – the recruitment and selection of students

The many significant changes undergone by higher education in recent years have improved access to universities and increased the diversity of the student cohort. However, there is still more to be done and institutions are continuing to focus their efforts on attracting and selecting students from diverse racial and social backgrounds.

Whilst selection criteria vary from institution to institution, and even across faculties within an institution, a common form of testing being used by the majority is the National Benchmark Test. Originally devised to help **determine a student's ability once** registered in order to place them in an appropriate curricular route, it is now being used in combination with grade 12 matriculation results to help determine initial selection. Highly selective programmes may use this additional tool along with such things as personal statements and, in some cases, interviews. Some believe that the National



The cooling towers of the decommissioned Orlando Power Station

Employability

High unemployment is a serious issue in South Africa, with an average of 25%, rising to 51% of young people, out of work. Post-secondary education is considered crucial to employability, and graduates in South Africa enjoy a high employment rate – 95% of all South African graduates are employed, compared with 86% of all graduates in the UK.

However, at a time of great global economic uncertainty, the South African universities visited are putting an increasing emphasis on helping their students prepare for employment and find jobs. This is manifest in the growth of work integrated learning (more commonly known in the UK as work based learning), where students spend a proportion of their studies in the workplace, and in the further development of careers services, which generally perform the same functions as their counterparts in the UK.



Benchmark Test is not necessarily always a successful indicator of a **student's ability to do well on a programme**, but failure nevertheless has the potential to deny a student a place, even though they may have passed their matriculation examinations.

All the institutions visited shared excellent examples of their marketing material with the team, as well as their communication and promotion strategies to their targeted and under-represented groups. The information provided to potential students is impressive, and this has aided institutions in reaching their quotas.

Application and enrolment – the role of technology

Application and enrolment processes in South African institutions vary, but nearly all have the same problems associated with sheer numbers of applicants. The current system requires students to apply to each institution individually, allowing students to apply to several different places, in many cases with an application fee or deposit. Growing political pressure to increase student numbers, and the larger student populations resulting from institutional mergers, have put some strain on universities,

Outreach at Stellenbosch University

Stellenbosch University is committed to widening participation through the activities run by the Centre for Prospective Students, including programmes such as the First Generation Camp and Saturday Schools. Many of the activities focus on visiting disadvantaged students in their school environment, talking to both students and parents about their interests and inviting them to attend a three-day funded trip to the university campus. These visits enable the students to ask questions, see what life is like on campus, and gain first hand help in applying to study and for bursaries aimed at broadening access. The Centre has found that roughly 80% of participants in its various programmes go on to register at the University, simply through having experienced a few days in the life of a student.



especially on the IT infrastructure. Another issue for institutions is the need to predict accurately student enrolments, and we heard much of **the government's desire to** introduce a single transparent one-stop-shop for university applications.

In the UK and Ireland we are familiar with well-established centralised university applications and admissions services (UCAS and CAO respectively), but in South Africa there are still several matters that need to be addressed before implementing such a system. Ownership is a key issue, and universities naturally wish to retain

independence and control over their own selection policies. There is also a need for paper-based applications still to be handled, especially for those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and from rural areas, many of whom do not have access to computer facilities. However, there is no doubt that a centralised system would bring benefits.

At the time of the visit talks were underway to introduce a Central Application System. If this were to go ahead it would resolve many of the issues currently faced, ending physical walk-ins for last minute places and allowing student numbers to be predicted more



The learning commons in the library at Stellenbosch University



With Faculty of Applied Sciences staff at CPUT



Talking with students at UJ's Soweto campus



Client Service Centre at University of Pretoria

accurately. The introduction of such a system would be costly and, even if government funded, there **would be a demand on universities'** operating costs to maintain the compatibility of their own IT infrastructure with the new system. Features such as a universal closing date, a single standardised application fee, and the ability to apply for admission, accommodation and funding in one central space, are being debated. Although there is a precedence of a similar system operated by a group of universities at a provincial level, how a national system would work in practice is still unclear to many. A government backed system seems most probable, and South **Africa's Higher Education minister** has announced that the first phase will be up and running in 2013, despite questions over whether this is a realistic timeframe for establishing the system. The study tour team, and the South African institutions visited, look forward to seeing how this initiative develops and the many changes and improvements it could bring.

Accommodation

Finding good quality and affordable

housing is a significant challenge for the majority of students in South Africa. According to the 2011 *Report on the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Provision of Student Housing at South African Universities*, the number of beds in university-owned or managed residences in 2010 accommodated 20% of the total number of full-time contact students enrolled. This is slightly higher than in the UK, where 18% of full-time students have term-time accommodation in institution maintained property. Based on the **committee's recommended student** bed capacity of 50% to 80%, the estimated cost of making good the shortfall is R82.4 billion (£6 billion) over ten years. In comparison, the **South African government's total** subsidy to universities in 2012 was R20.9 billion (£1.5 billion).

The ministerial committee noted that the shortage of university residences has led in many cases to unmanaged and informal over-accommodation, resulting in over-use and decay of the estate. Around a quarter of all infrastructures, fixtures, fittings and dining hall facilities are regarded by the universities who own them as unsatisfactory or in a

The University of Pretoria's Client Service Centre

The University of Pretoria believes it gained a competitive advantage through introducing its Client Service Centre. The university recognised that students who contacted the centre wanted to know about everything, from course information to graduate recruitment to student accommodation. This centre allows a seamless response to enquiries from all the **university's clients (including** current and prospective students, parents and alumni) by providing a one-stop-shop accessible via a walk in service, call centre, email or website. It can provide recruitment advice, financial payments, access cards and lecturer material, amongst many other things. Having all these functions in one place has improved efficiency, effectiveness and overall student satisfaction alongside improved internal relations.



poor condition. Poor nutrition and student hunger are issues at all universities, including those where meals are provided. Away from campus, problems for students appear to be far greater. Although many universities engage in various ways to improve and regulate the quality of private accommodation for their students, the committee raised concerns about squalid living conditions, overcrowding, safety, security and location (both in metropolitan areas regarded as unsafe and rural areas far from campus). Much of the potential offered by the growth in enrolments among students from historically disadvantaged and under-represented groups is being wasted by these students living in conditions which jeopardise academic achievement.

Tour participants met staff with both strategic and operational responsibility for student



University of Pretoria

accommodation at many of the institutions we visited. Most of these institutions provided residential places for about one-fifth of their students, and were planning to increase the amount of suitable accommodation by building or leasing new property and working with private sector landlords to safeguard the quality of off-campus provision.

Innovations in accommodation

All of the institutions visited noted a correlation between academic achievement and good quality accommodation. At Stellenbosch University, for example, 80% of students housed in university residences complete their studies **compared with 60% of 'day students' or those who live off-campus**. Given the financial impediments to increasing the number of residences, the university has chosen to invest in a number of dedicated physical **spaces called 'clusters', where day students can study and socialise between lectures and tutorials and at break times**. The university hopes the clusters will become **what it calls the 'organising principle' for day students' academic and social affairs**, reflecting the role played by university residences for those students fortunate enough to

have a place.

The other institutions visited also recognised the role played by good quality student accommodation – both residential and spaces for students to congregate during the day – in raising student achievement. Staff spoke of their work to make student residences in **particular what they called 'co-curricular'** – extensions of the learning experiences students have in lectures and tutorials. At the University of the Western Cape, for instance, the co-curricular experience extends to discrete academic programmes in student residences led by a dedicated Academic Development Coordinator and ten development officers working in the Student Residence directorate, ResLife. The university has academic mentors in its student residences, mainly for the benefit of first year students, a system also employed at most of the other institutions we visited.

Student organisation and representation

Every university in South Africa is required by law to have a Student Representative Council (SRC). While each Council has its own constitution, the governance arrangements of the University of

UWC and the liberation struggle

The University of the Western Cape was established in 1959 as a university college for coloured students. In the 1970s and 1980s, student protests led the University to reject the apartheid foundations on which it was established, adopt an open admissions policy and encourage black Africans to enrol. It soon became a home of left-wing politics. The **University's stance attracted the ire of an increasingly embattled apartheid regime, but it carried on and produced a significant number of the leadership of the new democratic South Africa.**



FYE @ UJ

The University of Johannesburg (UJ) is addressing some of the issues surrounding dropout rates with its First Year Experience (FYE) programme. FYE @ UJ is an institutional response to the difficulties students often have with the transition from school to university. Whilst it is understood that it cannot fix the problems of society, it can address ethics, and the programme involves developing an ethos and a way of life that better invites first year student success. It maintains the university's high standard of pastoral care and provides financial assistance, for example through the provision of dry meal packs for first year students. It has a philosophy of open communication, making academic staff aware of students in difficulty and vice versa. In addition, an extended curricula scheme offers academically or educationally disadvantaged students the opportunity to complete a three year programme in up to five years. Current figures show a third of students completing in three years and the majority in four or five years.



Pretoria's SRC are typical of those encountered. Candidates representing various constituencies (which include faculties, residences and student societies) are elected annually to form a 92-member Student Parliament. The parliament elects a Student Representative Council, an executive body responsible for day to day governing of student affairs and accountable to the parliament. 15 of the 21 members of the UP

SRC are formal office bearers, including a President, Deputy President, Secretary General and Treasurer General. A proportion of seats in both the parliament and SRC are reserved for particular groups (including women and black students). At institutions with separate campuses, each campus might have its own parliament and SRC, operating within a university-wide coordinating structure.

The SRCs at all of the universities visited tended to be highly politicised. The origins of this politicisation lie in the apartheid era and the vital role played by non-white higher education institutions in providing their students with a relatively safe haven to engage in open political discourse and organisation. Student groups played a crucial part in the liberation struggle. Although it is now almost 20 years since the fall of apartheid, SRCs continue to influence, and be influenced by, events on the national stage. It is common for student representatives to stand as candidates for a group affiliated to one of the national parties. Indeed, at a recent election at one of the universities visited, students had been invited to vote for one of these groups rather than for named candidates; the office bearers were only appointed by the groups after the election results were announced. At the University of Johannesburg the SRC President was recalled by the national group he was affiliated to for reasons apparently entirely unconnected with student affairs at the University. The tour team heard about unrest on several campuses associated with political agitation.



Campus Tour with Staff at CPUT



AmaMaties Hub, Stellenbosch University

HIV/AIDS

South Africa is estimated to have more people living with HIV/AIDS than any other country in the world. About one in ten are thought to have the disease, and according to the UN AIDS programme, only about one-third of South Africans with advanced HIV/AIDS receive anti-retroviral treatment. Although the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among young South Africans is lower than in the population as a whole, the disease remains a major risk for students.

In 2011, a partnership led by HEAIDS (the Higher Education HIV/AIDS programme co-ordinated by Higher Education South Africa), launched the 'First Things First' campaign. This HIV counselling and testing campaign encourages students to know their HIV status, resist the stigma often associated with infection and fight the pandemic. First year students are a particular target of the campaign, given the heightened exposure to HIV/AIDS risks, including sexual intercourse and alcohol and substance abuse, which often accompany the transition from school to university. In 2012, all 23 universities participated in the First Things First campaign, and 57,000 students were tested. HEAIDS also works to encourage universities to provide intellectual leadership on the HIV/AIDS debate, to encourage research into treatment, prevention and cure, and to integrate HIV/AIDS into the curriculum across the subject spectrum.



Against this backdrop some staff are frustrated at the influence of national politics on local student representation, particularly where politics appear to distract student representatives from the interests of their local constituencies. Some staff spoke of their desire to have more independent candidates, and one university has banned candidates from standing on behalf of national groups altogether. Other staff were more sanguine about the role of politics in student representation and spoke of the need for universities to embrace the challenge of channelling **students' enthusiasm for political issues** towards positive ends.

Student societies

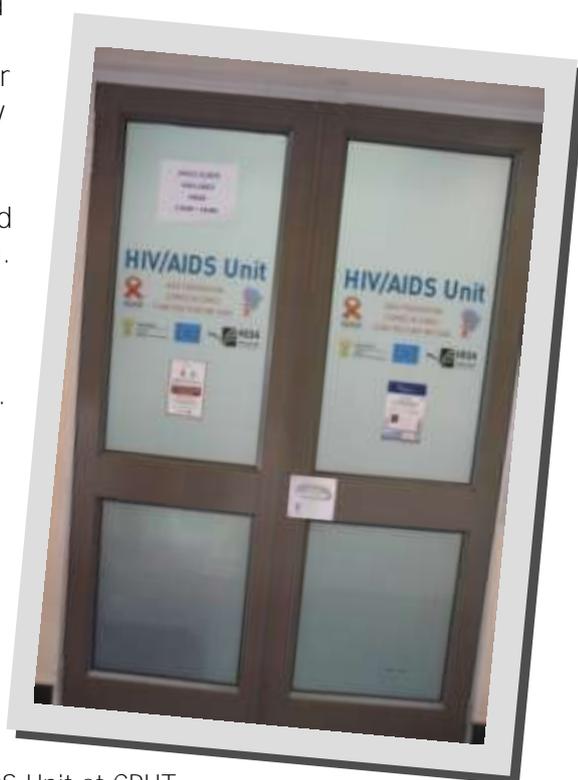
One of the responsibilities of a typical SRC is to oversee and support student societies. Student societies in South Africa are organised according to a wide range of recreational, sporting, academic, social, religious, cultural

and political interests. Societies must normally register with the home university and/or SRC to be formally recognised and have access to financial and other support. Societies can generate additional funds through membership fees and fundraising.

The University of Pretoria, comprising almost 60,000 contact students, has around 100 student societies registered with its SRC. Religious societies are the most numerous (34), closely followed by academic (32) and social (25). The Aeronautical society has the highest number of members (482), followed by BaPedi Ba Tuks (a community development orientated social society with 290 members) and the Wine Tasting society (278). About 60 societies have more than 100 members; societies with fewer than 60 members are not eligible for registration.

Student throughput – the education system and the disadvantaged

A disturbing 45% of South African students drop out from their programmes of study (compared with about 20% in both the UK and Ireland), undermining the access gains of universities. Coupled with a public funding model where a proportion **of universities' block grants is awarded based on the number of**



The award-winning HIV/AIDS Unit at CPUT

graduates produced, it was not surprising that student throughput (a term which encompasses achievement, progression and completion) was one of the main concerns raised in all the places visited.

Financial difficulties are largely to blame for the high attrition rate; the challenges are particularly acute for black students from disadvantaged households for whom loans and bursaries do not cover the full costs of study. Students may face the added pressure of living away from home, have dependants whom they must support or have health concerns. Institutions have developed a good understanding of the extra time and care needed by disadvantaged students, and have put in place support schemes and services to provide as much targeted help as possible.

Academic under-preparation of school leavers is a second major issue, and in an effort to raise academic success and bear down on dropout, many institutions have introduced selection procedures based on academic potential rather than matric results. All universities have put in place initiatives such as bridging, foundation or extended curriculum programmes, to help students overcome poor schooling and cope with learning in a second language, usually English. Most of the universities visited regarded a significant expansion of these programmes as key to making further progress. Indeed, some spoke of the need for the majority of new entrants to undertake longer programmes, notwithstanding the increased funding this would require. Promotion of other opportunities, such as those in further education and training, may also be part of the solution.

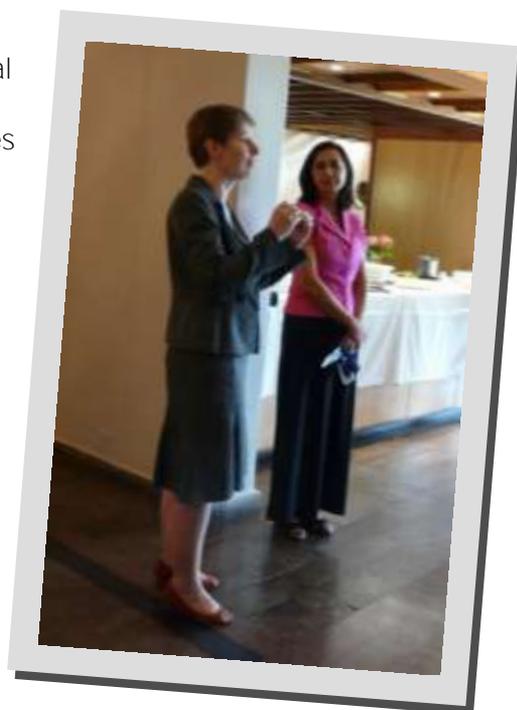
Equality and diversity

The picture that emerged from the

tour was unequivocal. However difficult it may be to meet the ideal of equal opportunity in higher education, and whatever the issues raised by the policies necessary to achieve this, in all of the universities visited there was an absolute commitment to the goals **and ambitions of the country's** transformation agenda. And unsurprisingly, given the enormity of the challenge facing South Africa and its higher education sector, it was equally clear that there are some very real difficulties arising from equality and diversity imperatives.

The make-up of the student body has improved, but there are still big differences in participation between racial groups. The proportion of African students is increasing, and has grown from 40% in 1993 to the current level of 65%. However, black South Africans continue to be the most under-represented in higher education in relation to their general prevalence in the population (about 80%). This can be seen more clearly in the participation rates for the different ethnic groups: some 60% of whites and more than half of Indians enter higher education, while just 14% of coloureds and 13% of Africans participate. It is commonly acknowledged that the primary reason for this ongoing disparity is the low quality of primary and secondary education for the under-represented groups.

Efforts to transform the profile of university staff have been slower. There has been a gradual increase in the proportion of black staff, and whilst white people still dominate the academic and professional groups, black people are in the majority in administration and service roles. Non-white (that is African, coloured and Indian) people account for 63% of all higher education staff, compared with 91% in the general population. Non-whites make up



Lunch with the Vice Chancellor at University of Pretoria

Company sponsorship

The University of Cape Town is experiencing a rise in numbers of students supported by private companies. Most of these students are black Africans and they contract to work for their sponsors for several years after graduation. This allows companies to meet government targets for the recruitment of workers from disadvantaged or under-represented groups, and opens the way to professional occupations for many students who may have faced insurmountable obstacles to those jobs hitherto. Sponsorship does also pose problems, however, for example for students who wish to change career path during, or soon after completing, their studies, and for students who due to academic failure lose their sponsorship, and are left unable to meet the cost of their studies.





Directions on main campus at University of Pretoria

Executive leadership development at the University of Johannesburg

The University of Johannesburg started at the top and developed a programme for the 26 members of its Executive Leadership Group which included coaching, team building, 360° assessment and identifying gaps in the practice of leadership within the team. Interestingly, the programme also included an element of leadership wellbeing, whereby each member of the team had a personalised wellness plan with regular health checks covering such things as weight and stress. The importance of leadership wellbeing was disseminated further within the institution, with a focus on identifying and developing its emerging leaders.

46% of academic staff and 70% of administrative staff. All the host institutions indicated that the embedded provision for equality and diversity in HR policies has led to improvements in the staff demographic profile, but in doing so has also led to many senior posts being held by relatively inexperienced individuals.

A recurrent overarching theme found at all the institutions visited, irrespective of type, was an ambition to develop an individual **'brand', and to enhance reputation** and respect, both nationally and

internationally. At the University of Pretoria (UP), a traditional university, the perspective is of two pillars of transformation. The first is **'inclusivity', with staff coming** from all walks of life, and a mixed staff profile not simply based on colour, but with regard also to background, creed and culture. **The second pillar is 'enabled', with** UP providing an environment that enables the individual to contribute, and encourages innovation and creativity. The University of Johannesburg, one of the new comprehensive universities, has embarked on a major change management

programme as a result of its formation through the merging of three institutions, and its strapline is **'Rethink Education, Reinvent Yourself'**.

Concerns have also been raised about progress on gender issues. An Association of Commonwealth Universities conference in 2010 heard that while South African universities had made advances in gender equality among students and staff, a recent ministerial report uncovered pervasive sexism (and racism) on campuses across the country. At the same event, Professor Cheryl de la Rey, Vice Chancellor of the University of Pretoria, noted that although women constitute 51% of the workforce in universities, they are concentrated in lower level jobs and only 36% of senior managers are women.

Issues of heritage in promoting equity

The origins and history of individual universities may also be a potential source of difficulty. Stellenbosch University remains committed to using and sustaining Afrikaans as an academic language in a multilingual context. So while predominantly Afrikaans, many courses are lectured bilingually, and students are allowed to write their assignments and exams in English. The same commitment to diversity and equality that was found in other universities is certainly present, but staff were clear that to work effectively at the university you need to be an Afrikaans speaker, and as this is a minority language it is not unreasonable to assume that it must be a limiting factor in staff recruitment.

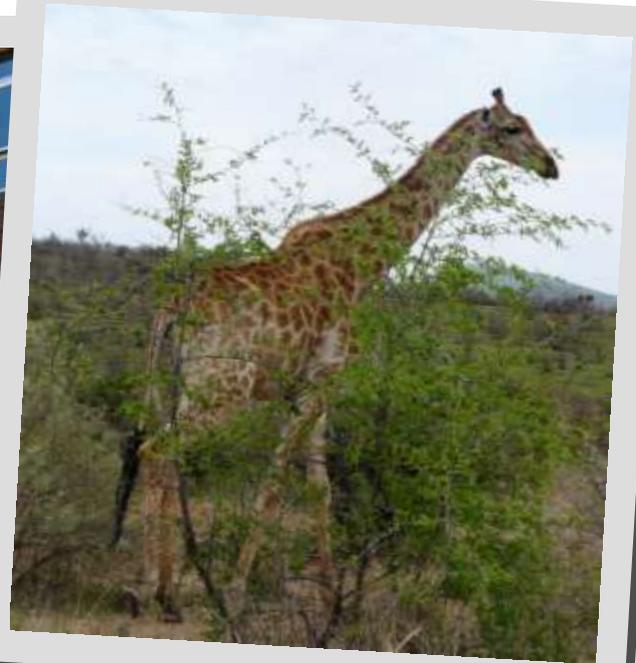


Ambition and leadership

Leadership ambition is evident in the developing cultures of many of the institutions visited on the tour, where it was universally recognised that a key element in achieving ambitious goals is the identification and development of leadership capability. A strong sense emerged of the focus on management and leadership development as a priority. This is accompanied by a shift in the role



Administrators Building at University of the Western Cape



Giraffe at Pilanesberg National Park

of the HR function from policing and processing to a much more strategic contribution to the development of the organisation, as illustrated by language used to describe HR departments such as **'talent development' and 'talent stewardship'**.

This shift in approach has been championed by the senior leadership groups within universities, many of which have been established as a result of mergers of sometimes quite diverse institutions, and which have needed to position themselves to respond to the **government's transformation** programme. At the University of the Western Cape an initiative led **from the Vice Chancellor's Office** focuses on the development of middle management through an internal leadership programme with three core modules mapping onto national imperatives around culture, communications and transformation. Some institutions collaborate to develop programmes, such as the four universities in the Western Cape working through CHEC, the Cape Higher Education Consortium, to develop leadership programmes for

staff. Funding is available via Sector Education and Training Authorities (most employers, including universities, pay a skills development levy of 1% of their salary bill, of which half is received back to support specific education and training activities) and universities have used this in various ways, for example employing staff within the area of talent management or developing growth opportunities for employees.

In the traditional universities in particular, there is a focus on moving institutions forward in terms of research output in order to be able to operate competitively, not just within Africa but increasingly beyond the African continent. Consequently, the attention is very much on the academic staff community, as universities see their current priority as enabling, up-skilling and enhancing the professional capability of the leadership of the organisation and the staff delivering the teaching and the research, and there was an acknowledgement that professional staff development sits further down

the priority list in most universities.

Talent development

All the institutions visited were open and focused on the support of individual career aspirations, and strongly focused on succession planning, realising that

Varsity College 'growing its own'

Varsity College, a private college which prides itself on being at the forefront of private tertiary education in South Africa, strives to attract, develop and retain its support staff. It offers professional development through national development programmes and short learning programmes. It feels its particular focus on promotion from within, and recruiting its own graduates to become part of **the college's support or academic staff**, truly disseminates the ethos of the college.



EUROSA

Four of the universities visited – Cape Peninsula University of Technology, University of Pretoria, Stellenbosch University and University of the Western Cape – are members of the Europe and South Africa Partnership for Human Development, an Erasmus Mundus programme funded by the European Commission which promotes mobility for students, researchers, academic and administrative staff from South Africa to Europe. Capacity building and human development are at the nucleus of the project. It promotes intercultural dialogue and international co-operation between the higher education institutions involved, is seen to be a valuable tool in talent development in general, and all levels of staff are actively encouraged to take part.

in order to be seen as a global player staff development is crucial. We learned that Stellenbosch University offers a legacy programme to support capacity building and the development of the next generation of senior staff. A system of mentoring is carried out by staff soon to retire, who stay in their role for a further five year period to impart their knowledge, skills and values to current staff who will fill these positions, thus ensuring continuity in the quality of work at the institution. However, a number of universities are principally concerned with becoming internationally recognised research driven institutions, and also in relation to leadership capability, the performance development of support staff is not driven forward

to the same extent as that of academic staff.

Many of the institutions visited choose not to link performance to financial reward. Their performance systems instead take on a strong developmental focus, are available to all staff, and are aimed at up-skilling and retention. Some institutions do offer attractive reward and recognition programmes for their support staff, and Stellenbosch University in particular has established a principle of performance based remuneration. It operates a scheme where each staff member has a personal development plan in which they highlight their aspirations for

further study or skill acquisition, and to date over 3,000 staff members have participated.

Recurring throughout the tour was the issue of a lack of professional development networks operating within South Africa which could offer support staff at all levels in the sector a source of information, exchange and learning. Whilst there are specialist networks, notably HEFAF, the Higher Education Faculty Administrators Forum co-ordinated by ITS Evula, all the hosts felt that they could benefit greatly from a broadly-based membership body for all those who work in professional services roles in higher education, such as the AUA.

Final thoughts

Despite the many challenges still **faced in South Africa's new higher education landscape**, a great deal has already been achieved. Since the 1990s the growth and transformation of the student population has been astonishing. Student numbers have nearly doubled and the racial composition



Varsity College, Pretoria Campus



The gardens of the Union Buildings

of the student body has radically improved.

The difficulties associated with disadvantage are certainly not just a South African issue, they are concerns that need to be addressed internationally. Members of the study tour felt that we in the UK can learn from the strategies and measures adopted by South African higher education institutions, and benefit from the dedication and commitment they have put in to helping and understanding their **students' needs**.

There is a strong focus on leadership and talent development of academic staff, and a heightened awareness that in order for South Africa to be a global player in higher education, staff must be developed to their full potential. However, staff development tends to concentrate on academic staff and senior managers, and for the most part the development of support staff is secondary.

Over the past few years the government has become increasingly focused on the role that universities play within society, and higher education is being called upon to play an even greater role in the development of the country. The sector is responding through a range of initiatives intended to ac-

celerate economic growth, reduce poverty and supply scarce skills.

Higher education continues to pursue the achievement of greater equity, efficiency and effectiveness within institutions and across the system. The impression left is that of an ambitious higher education sector supported by a highly motivated workforce who are collectively committed to responding to the needs of South Africa, its citizens and the global student and academic community.

Thanks and acknowledgements

The study tour team would like to thank all those who contributed to the tour.

We were privileged to receive such a tremendously warm welcome in South Africa, and to have had the opportunity to meet with colleagues so willing to share ideas and discuss issues openly with us. We are indebted to the hospitality of our hosts at all the institutions we visited, and very grateful to the many staff who gave generously of their time to deliver presentations, answer our many questions and introduce their campuses to us.

In particular, we would like to thank the Association of Heads of

Tour objectives

- To undertake a fact-finding mission which investigates major trends, pressures and future directions in higher education in South Africa
- To provide an opportunity for participants to compare contemporary issues and exchange ideas with colleagues in South Africa
- To develop the profile of the AUA, AHUA and ITS Evula in South African higher education institutions

University Administration for their continued financial support, and Peet du Plessis, Manager at ITS Evula, who was instrumental in arranging the tour and establishing contact with the organisations that hosted our visits.

About AUA study tours

International study tours are arranged on an annual basis on **behalf of the AUA's International Higher Education Network (IHEN)** with additional financial support from the Association of Heads of University Administration (AHUA). The tours provide development opportunities for members of the AUA based in the UK and Ireland,



With staff from the Division for Internationalisation, University of Johannesburg



Pre-departure orientation meeting at London Business School

Itinerary

The study tour ran from Sunday 11 to Tuesday 20 November 2012, with meetings at the following institutions and organisations:

- University of Pretoria
- Council on Higher Education (independent advisory body to the Minister of Education and responsible for quality assurance)
- University of Johannesburg
- Varsity College
- **Higher Education South Africa (vice chancellors' representative organisation)**
- Cape Peninsula University of Technology
- University of the Western Cape
- University of Cape Town
- Stellenbosch University



The Study Tour team

Study Tour Coordinator

Helen Uglow, Deputy Secretary,
London Business School

Getting in to university

Theme Leader: Caroline Baugh, Earth
Science and Engineering, Imperial
College London

Sally McKinley, Quality and Standards
Office, Brunel University

Sarah Moffat, Senior Faculty
Administrator, School of Biological
Sciences, Royal Holloway, University of
London

Life beyond the classroom

Theme Leader: Will Naylor, Deputy
Director, Reviews Group, Quality
Assurance Agency

Iain Pullar, Societies Development
Coordinator, London School of
Economics Students Union

Elizabeth Williams, Subject Librarian,
Research Support, Goldsmiths, University
of London

Professional Development

Theme leader: Marcella Keher,
Director of Operations, College of
Engineering and Physical Sciences,
University of Birmingham

Rebecca Boyle, Department of
Geography, National University of
Ireland, Maynooth

Linda Hockley, Director of Student
Services, University of Hull

and strengthen international
links between the AUA and
similar overseas organisations,
higher education institutions and
other groups with an interest in
higher education.

Tour themes

Getting in to university –
student application and
admission processes, setting
entry requirements and
developing selection methods,
availability of places and
dealing with under/over-
subscription, approaches to
increasing and widening
participation in higher
education, increasing access and
outreach to disadvantaged and
under-represented groups

Life beyond the classroom –
student unions/councils,
student clubs, sports, cultural
activities and campus social life,
safety and security on campus,
operating student residences
and other accommodation
services

Professional development –
issues in recruiting and
retaining managerial and
administrative staff,
development opportunities for
professional staff, addressing
diversity and equality in the
professional staff body,
under-represented groups in
executive and administrative

leadership of higher education,
the role of professional
associations in supporting and
developing managerial and
administrative staff

Blog

Read all about the participants
adventures as they toured South
Africa at
[auasouthafrica2012.
blogspot.co.uk/](http://auasouthafrica2012.blogspot.co.uk/)

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