
Progress Report On the State of the Association – November 2020

This report is an overview of the state of the South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals (SAASSAP) since the progress report of July 2020.

THE SOCIAL COMPACT

South African universities are receiving students back onto their campuses. They have adopted the national public health protocols to curb the spread of the Coronavirus. However, the prevention of outbreaks of COVID-19 on the campuses depends on the cooperative behaviour of staff and students in abiding by the well laid out public health protocols. In the recent months, higher education institutions (HEIs) have been experiencing an increase in infection rates on their campuses. This is as a result of students being reintegrated onto campus accommodation, and continuing with normal student life activity (off-campus social events such as parties and night club activities, amongst others).

It is within this context that SAASSAP has partnered with Universities South Africa (USAf), Higher Health (HH) and the South African Union of Students (SAUS) to formulate a social compact that can inspire cooperative behaviour of staff and students. The establishment meeting with all stakeholders occurred on the 06 October 2020. The meeting resolved to form two task teams: the first team focusing on the development of a social compact document and the second task team focuses on the modalities of compacts which institutions may use to implement the social compact.

The Secretary General (SG)'s Office can confirm with both excitement and a great deal of optimism that there is good progress across both established task teams, and information on the document and modalities will be shared with members in due course.

MEMBERSHIP

The SAASSAP membership currently consists of twenty (20) institutional affiliations in good standing. Of the six (6) unaffiliated HEIs, three (3) are currently in the process of finalizing their affiliation, with two (2) of these three having recently welcomed new incumbents. With the finalisation of the membership affiliation process, members in good standing may form part of task teams of the Association's various focus areas and themes. Members are encouraged to identify themes which they can volunteer to join according to their strengths, expertise and interests. Once members have expressed their choice(s), they should inform the Office of the SG.

The Association has recently established a membership WhatsApp group with all members in good standing. The new SAASSAP WhatsApp group would be used as a critical communication platform for relevant and related matters, preferably in a more structured and systematic way. The WhatsApp group shall follow the following measures:

- Requests for information on particular matters will be sent through the Office of the SG - as previously suggested;
- There will be a dedicated individual (Ms Hlophe) in the Secretariat with a dedicated SAASSAP e-mail address, who will coordinate all inputs.
- Colleagues will be requested through the WhatsApp group to please send their 1-pager or so responses to the request using the dedicated e-mail address and be given a particular deadline.
- The dedicated secretariat individual would then consolidate and collate all the responses into a singular document, which will then be shared with members and stored as part of our Student Affairs Online Resources/Knowledge-base.
- Over time, the collected and collated information will be analysed for trends and used for focused research projects to further inform our understanding and increase our knowledge-base in the sub-sector.
- Such knowledge could also be used to write papers for publishing.

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

The first challenge was membership affiliation over the past months, due to the unique complexities being confronted by the sector with members operating from home. Thus, the Finance departments being unable to process payment as efficiently as they would be expected to under normal circumstance. The push back in affiliation meant that the AGM planning had to be halted, as it requires members in good standing to be in attendance. The second challenge was organisational commitment and/or availability of some NEC members due to various institutional and personal challenges. The abrupt movement to virtual platforms has been overwhelming even though we made the best out of it. Dedicating time for SAASSAP work has been challenging due to uncertainties and complexities within our institutional environments that presented numerous contradictions. The net effect has been that the aspiration of SP2024 in some instances had to be deferred.

SAASSAP NEC ACTIVITIES

Despite the challenges faced by NEC members who work as full-time executives and senior managers in their respective institutions, portfolio work has continued unabated with the different SAASSAP portfolio holders hard at work with various projects.

Great progress has been made towards building programmatic partnerships with various organizations and associations, more particularly with Universities South Africa (USAf)'s Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) programme, Higher Health (HH) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). We are also building critical partnerships with international organizations and associations such as the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS).

Work is also at an advanced stage with respect to SAASSAP social media presence. Our SAASSAP Media and Liaison Officer is finalizing the development of the SAASSAP webpage which will also include an e-mail account package. Members will be informed in due course once the process has been finalized.

Information was shared with members pertaining to, *inter alia*, the book: Student Affairs and Services in Higher Education: Global Foundations, Issues and Best Practices (3rd Edition); the UNDP Human Development Working Paper on Gender Inequality and the COVID-19 Crisis; Higher Health Protocol on Managing Clusters of Outbreak of COVID-19 within the PSET Institutions; the American College Personnel Association/International Association of Student Affairs and Services (ACPA/IASAS) Webinar on Pathways to Student Affairs and Services Around the Globe; and the South African Journal of Higher Education (SAJHE) latest issue on enhancing academic success through student involvement in quality assurance and promotion in higher education.

The SAASSAP President also attended and participated in the IASAS Global Association Meeting which was comprised of a total of 23 Student Affairs and Services (SAS) Associations across the globe, including SAASSAP. The purpose of the meeting was to: establish a global network of associations in SAS; establish a community of practice with the aim of information sharing, communication flow and support; to look at current challenges and opportunities; and networking and relationship building.

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