Report on the South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals, South Africa: Current State of Affairs

September 2019

A Report Commissioned by the SAASSAP Meeting of 4th and 5th July 2019

Task Team Members:

Mr Pura Mgolombane – **Convener**
Dr Matete Madiba
Mr Luthando Jack
Mr Lufuno Tshikhudo
Ms Zoleka Dotwana

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1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

At its Special Meeting of the 4th and 5th of July 2019 held at the University of Pretoria, the South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals (SAASSAP) resolved that a Task Team should be convened and tasked with the responsibility of mapping a way forward for the Association with respect to re-imagining SAASSAP as a new association with a mandate that is responsive and relevant to the ever-changing South African Higher Education context.

The following members formed part of the Task Team:

Mr Pura Mgolombane – Convener
Dr Matete Madiba
Mr Luthando Jack
Mr Lufuno Tshikhudo
Ms Zoleka Dotwana.

The Task Team proceeded with its work virtually with the convenor, Mr Mgolombane, preparing the first draft which was circulated to the Task Team members for comments. Following the inputs from the Task Team members, the convenor consolidated the inputs and requested the General Secretary, Dr Pakiso Tondi, to circulate the consolidated report to the broader SAASSAP membership for further comments prior to the AGM. The report was discussed at the SAASSAP AGM which took place in Cape Town on the 29th of November 2019.

2. PROFESSIONALISING STUDENT AFFAIRS AND SERVICES

The recognition of the need to ensure the personal development of students outside of education faculties at institutions of higher education has seen the ever-expanding roles and responsibilities for student affairs professionals. These growing expectations have made it imperative that student affairs be professionalised. This, as argued by Pansiri and Sinkwamba (2017), requires standards to be incorporated so as to achieve greater visibility and add the highest value to the profession. This requires the adoption of standards that will ensure the development of programmes of a high quality that produce desired results and ultimately reflect best practice (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 2006)[1].

There are presently over 160 student affairs organizations worldwide some with national, regional and international reach. Organizations such as the National Association for Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA) which was founded in 1918, are well established and have had a long history of contributing to the professional development of student affairs practitioners through "leadership, scholarship, professional development, and advocacy for student affairs."

As a profession, student affairs in South Africa is growing in relevance and visibility through the establishment of various associations which cater to a variety of student service niches. However, while there have been some notable achievements, the challenges facing the profession as a whole are many including limited research outputs and poor local theory development (Speckman and Mandew, 2014). For the South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals, the current challenge is the mandate to re-focus, re-orient and re-launch itself so as to establish itself as a key role player in the student affairs domain in South Africa.

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[1]See https://www.cas.edu/standards

This report seeks to evaluate SAASSAP by firstly conducting a situational analysis and contextualising student affairs in South Africa. This is then followed by an in-depth look at the key principles and critical issues that need to be incorporated before exploring key themes and finally making some key recommendations as to the way forward for the organisation.

2.1 SITUATION ANALYSIS

The situation analysis gives an overview of the state of the organization currently and provides a basis for developing the future strategy. This overview will include an internal and external analysis as well as a SWOT Analysis. It must be noted that within this context, there was very little historical information available on SAASSAP and this is further illuminated below as being one of the key challenges that the organization has faced in the past.

2.1.1 Overview of SASSAAP: History and Background

The South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals (SAASSAP) was formed in August 2000. At a Deans' Forum workshop convened by the Centre for Higher Education and Transformation (CHET) in Port Elizabeth, a decision was taken to form an association for student affairs. The Association was formed to represent the senior student affairs professionals of all universities in South Africa, including the then Technikons. The Association's first Annual Conference was hosted in 2001 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

In 2008, under the auspices of the national executive committee (NEC) the organization undertook to reinvent itself in terms of its image, message, strategies and programmes. In the words of the NEC, this transformation admittedly fell short of what was envisaged but there were some definite improvements. A follow up process ensued at the 2012 annual general meeting (AGM) spearheaded by the then Research and Development portfolio incumbent. One of the key recommendations included in the plan of action, at that time, was the establishment of a South African Student Affairs Board and the development of a professional qualification for student affairs professionals. The organization currently finds itself in a similar position as it was in 2008, where it needs to reinvent itself so as to be relevant and impactful in the sphere of Student Affairs at institutions of higher learning in South Africa.

Vision and Mission
The vision statement provides a picture of the future position of the Association, while the mission statement outlines the objectives of the institution, primarily that which it is focussed on doing in the present. In line with the identified niche and future strategic plans, the vision and mission may need to be revised.

The current vision and the mission as well as the organizational structure of the Association are outlined below:

The vision of SAASSAP is "to be a vibrant, context driven and world renowned, professional association for Student Affairs."

The mission of SAASSAP is "to provide strategic leadership amongst Student Affairs Professionals, build capacity and share knowledge for the benefit of students in accordance with national imperatives and global trends.

Values

The Association does not appear to be guided by a set of values which are clearly spelled out. Organizational values are vital in so far as they drive or motivate organizational behaviour. Collectively the behaviours of all members constitute the organizational culture.

Organizational values are critical and need to be both understood and demonstrated by every member in the organization. The role of leadership in this regard is vital and is foremost, to model the organizational values and to inspire members of the organization to live up to these values. Organizational values such as *integrity*, *respect*, *inclusion*, *innovation*, are some of the fundamental values of importance for the majority of organizations.

The Structure of SAASSAP

The Association is headed by a national executive committee (NEC) consisting of eight (8) members. According to the Constitution, the office bearers are elected at the national AGM which takes place annually. The term of office lasts for two years and the incumbents may only serve a maximum of two consecutive terms.

Those who serve as office bearers are not permanent staff of SAASSAP. Thus while they serve the Association, they also concurrently occupy various other campus portfolios at various higher education institutions on a full time basis. NEC members admittedly often face time constraints that impact on their ability to do little more than just the basic KPAs. This, among other reasons, appears to be one of the main reasons for the difficulty in convening NEC meetings with a full quorum of participants.

The current structure of the organisation is shown in the diagram below.
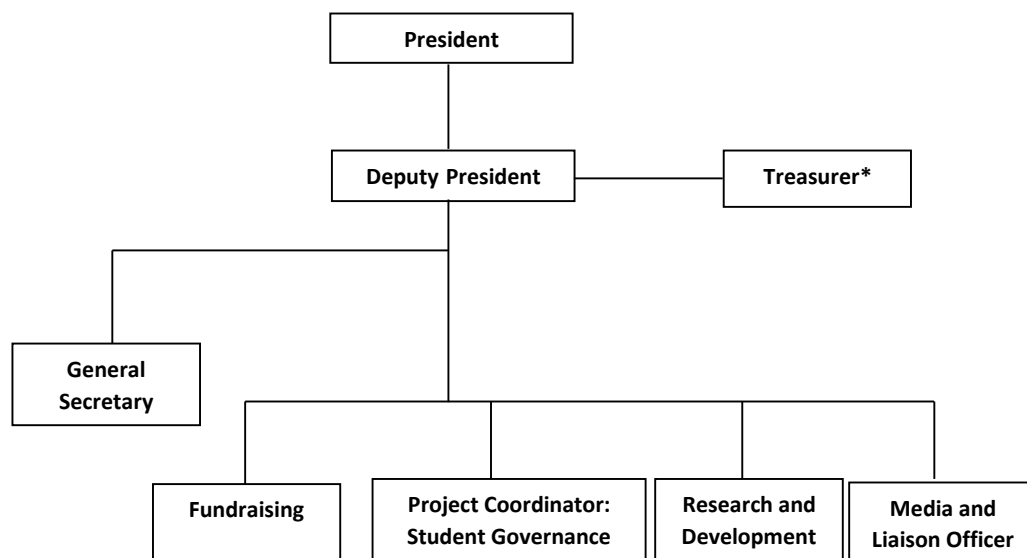
*The Treasurer reports directly to the Deputy President of the Association

Some of the key questions regarding the structure of the organization are; i) whether the structure is appropriate given its strategic future and, ii) whether there is a possibility of hiring permanent staff to support the work of the Association. Given the strategic future of the organization that is proposed, the structure in its current form will not be sufficient. (See the recommendation section).

Election of Office Bearers

The National Executive Committee (NEC) office bearers are elected at an elective conference/AGM every second year in October. The nomination of the President is done 90 days before the Annual General Meeting with nominations closing 30 days before the AGM. The election of the new office bearers takes place on the last session on the day before closing day of the conference.

Mandate of Office Bearers

The following outlines some of the main functions of the office bearers. As per findings, the mandate of the office bearers is defined by terms of reference. Again, with the exception of the research and development portfolio, no other terms of reference are available (with the exception of a brief outline of duties and responsibilities set out in the Constitution). This means that for each incumbent's portfolio, terms of reference in line with the strategic and operational plans and themes of the Association will need to be revisited.

The following are some of the responsibilities of the office bearers:

- The NEC is responsible for the approval of an annual programme of action. Planning meetings appear to be convened once a year (?).
- All expenditure by the Association is approved by the NEC.
- Members of the NEC are expected to ensure effective functioning of regions in their provinces, namely, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, North West, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

The sub-mandates of the region however are not spelled out and there is no clarity of structure in the various provinces, the leadership of these clusters and the institutions that they serve.

None of the work of the regional committees is on record.

There is mention of regional offices but no further information on these, e.g., where these offices are located.

Convening of Meetings of the NEC

The convening of meetings is hampered by a number of challenges:

- Decreased institutional funding for student affairs impacting on funds available for NEC members to travel to meetings.
- As most members are employed in various HEIs, in which they report to various line heads, they need to have formal invitations to meetings so as to be able to request travel subsistence.
- A quorum of members is often not achieved due to, *inter alia*, family and institutional commitments.

Suggestions raised by the NEC to ameliorate these challenges include a push to find alternative methods for convening meetings. In addition, travel funds and privileges for members of the NEC could be availed through the Association, subject to necessary approvals.

Local Organising Committees (LOCs)

LOCs are mainly responsible for convening annual conferences and report to the NEC. The LOCs appear to be region specific. The structure of these LOCs is not clearly spelled out, however the membership appears to be entirely voluntary and mainly focussed on conference planning.

Responsibilities of LOCs among others include:

- *Recommendation of conference theme*
- *Determining conference fees and conference budget*
- *Identifying keynote speakers*
- *Drafting of conference programme*
- *Advertising of conference dates*
- *Call for papers following adoption of conference theme and initial review of abstracts*
- *Responsible for all aspects of procurement of conference merchandise.*
- *Venue bookings, equipment hiring, accommodation and transport, media and marketing*
- *Catering, décor, photography, videography*
- *Securing attendance of VCs/DVCs and presentations.*

Finances

The management and administration of finances is done in accordance with SAASSAP guidelines. The following information was on record regarding the state of finances:

i.   There is one main banking account held by Standard Bank at Brandwag.
ii. The NEC noted a need for more funding and support from DHET (NEC - 23.3.12)
iii. Sizwe Ntsaluba Gobodo* are the Association's auditing firm. However, there is no record of audited finances.
iv. Delays in financial reporting by LOCs noted (NEC- 28.9.12)
v.   Financial challenges impacting on proposed visits to regions for seminars and workshops focusing on staff and student leadership.

SAASSAP Stakeholders

The following diagram outlines stakeholders with a vested interest in SAASSAP.

SAASSAP STAKEHOLDERS
• Students • Student Representative Councils • Student Unions • Management and faculty of HEIs • Various higher education institutions
• SAASSAP members • Key, local, regional and international student affairs partners and institutions • Affiliated NGOs, iNGOs, CBOs
• Research Institutes • Potential donor organisations

The priority stakeholders of the Association include:
- o *Vice-Chancellors*
- o *Minister of Higher Education and Training*
- o *Chairperson of HESA, now known as Universities South Africa (USAf)*
- o *Universities and FETs*
- o *Southern African Federation for Student Affairs and Services (SAFSAS)*
- o *Donor organisations.*

Publications/Conference Issues

While the conferences hosted by the Association appear to have been quite successful over the years, one of main challenges that has been noted is that very little of the research presented at conferences has made its way to publishing houses. This is a notable challenge given the need for student affairs to base its programmes and interventions on evidence-based research as well as to become a leading voice in student affairs. Various ways and means need to be established to ensure that these opportunities are capitalised on. Some of these recommendations are explored in the recommendations section. Below are some the major issues pertinent to conferences and publications.

- o Papers presented at conferences become SAASSAP property and are published on the Association's website (website not functional at present).
- o Challenges encountered include failure of presenters to rewrite their papers and submit them in a publishable state. A very high attrition rate is noted.
- o The SAASSAP journal, Thuso, which was launched in 2003 was apparently stillborn.
- o SAASSAP Resource Series 1 proposed as a resource tool for practitioners.
- o Questions have been raised about funding for editing of articles (possible sponsorship??)
- o The R&D incumbents noted a need to provide access to resources for members including SA student affairs theory as well as other research
- o Noted need to develop and nurture research culture among members so as to develop local body of knowledge.

Previous Conference Themes

There was not much information available on conferences apart from the *13ᵗʰ Annual Conference held in Stellenbosch.*

- • Theme – "Student-centred and Caring Universities. Implications for Student Affairs Professionals at Higher Education Institutions in South Africa
- • Sub themes
  - ▪ Unpacking student-centredness
  - ▪ Unpacking caring and justice
  - ▪ Advocacy for the rights and responsibilities of students
  - ▪ Developing mechanisms for implementing student-centredness
  - ▪ Changing institutional culture
  - ▪ Implications for the participation of student governance.

Conference Fees:

R2000 early bird registration
R2500 per delegate
R1800 if 5 or more from same institution.

2.1.2 SWOT Analysis

The following section outlines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The section of threats incorporates threats which apply to the South African student affairs domain in general.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Committee members have vast experience in student affairs • Organization has a long history in South Africa • Strategic partnerships with other student affairs organisations • Strong LOCs particularly with respect to conference planning	• Lack of strategic planning • Failure to generate a sufficient and rigorous body of research • Poor institutional memory and knowledge management • Lack of adequate systems, policies and procedures • Poor visibility • Lack of advocacy and marketing strategies and skills • Insufficient financial and human resources • Failure to adequately mobilise resources • Poor asset portfolio
Opportunities	**Threats**
• To contribute to literature and research that is contextual to South Africa including explicit theory development and a well-articulated philosophical framework • To strengthen links with international community of professionals • To expand network of relationships with donor partners as well as local, regional and international partnerships • Opportunity to contribute to the transformation agenda in South Africa • To capitalise on rapid technological advancement and the knowledge economy • To capitalise on intensified collaboration between countries of the South	• An ever-changing, unstable local and global context. • Deteriorating socio-economic and political environment • Failure to reflect on local best practice or produce new knowledge has opened up a huge gap for the proliferation of foreign, particularly American, models and theories. • Reduced state funding. • Disparate fragmented student services • Failure to establish standards of practice. • Massification of higher education

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2.1.3 Brief Overview of the South African Context for Higher Education and Student Affairs

The following overview considers the historical context of South Africa and the main challenges confronting HEIs and student affairs in general.

South Africa faces a huge challenge of inequality. South Africa's legacy of apartheid, which resulted in institutionalised racism characterised by discrimination and segregation, manifested in inferior education (Speckman and Mandew, 2014). This system of oppression still has a strong influence on institutions of higher education in South Africa to this day. Despite having attained its independence

some 20 years ago, South Africa still faces a huge challenge with inequalities with the black population still suffering disproportionately. The transformation agenda with respect to access, availability and representation initiated by former president Nelson Mandela in 1994 has been agonisingly slow.

South Africa is also confronted with a growing unemployment problem. According to Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), the unemployment rate in 2017 was approximately 27%. Among graduates this rate was 11.9% in 2018 (Stats SA, 2018). The massification of higher education contributes to this problem in part (Schreiber, Moja and Leuscher, 2016) but the lack of growth in the economy and skills mismatch are also important factors.

While routine student protests over access and tuition fees have been ongoing since 1994, 2015 and 2016 saw the development of large scale protests driven mainly by concerns over the rising cost of tuition – as a consequence of reduced government funding to universities (Motala, 2017). The proportion of government funding decreased from 49% in 2000 to 40% in 2014 resulting in the fee increase of 42% between 2010 and 2014 (Cloete, 2016). The Fees Must Fall protest also incorporated a call for the decolonisation and greater transformation of institutions for higher education. While access remains a challenge, as equally challenging is student success and completion rates which also remain racially skewed. Some research shows that among students entering three year degrees, less than half successfully complete their studies with poor outcomes mainly in the non-white population (Council for Higher Education, 2013). This brings into sharp focus the need for programmes for student development and success with an emphasis on the integrated and holistic development of students (Madiba, 2015).

South African institutions of higher education remain strongly connected to the politics of the nation. Important student formations of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the South African Students Organization (SASO) in the 60s and 70s set a key precedent for student activism and governance. HEIs continue to be the grounds for contestations between various political parties which in some instances have resulted in the burning and destruction of infrastructure (Cloete, 2017). In this context, the role of student affairs has mainly been one of conflict management. Cloete (2017:6) makes the point that universities which are the "strategic location in the contestation for resources (both material and social capital) remain on a knife edge."

It is within this highly contested space that student affairs in South Africa and in turn SAASSAP needs to finds its voice and ensure its visibility.

3. KEY PRINCIPLES

3.1 Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is leadership which can drive reforms. It concerns itself with planning, implementing and evaluating strategies. Strategic leadership is concerned with accomplishing the objectives outlined in the strategic plan and which considers the unstable and complex environment in which the organization exists. (See the recommendation section).

3.2 Establishing a Community of Practice

"A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly."

Communities of practice (COPs) are very useful for building a sustainable competitive advantage and for driving knowledge-management strategies. Opportunities should be availed for SASSAAP members to participate in both online and/or offline communities.

A good community of practice is established on:

- *Purpose* – to provide a platform for networking, sharing knowledge and ideas on student affairs development as well as to contribute to professional development.
- *Buy-In* – people must be able to buy in to the community. Members must have a vested interest in being part of the community.
- *Good content* – the content needs to be relevant and appropriate – can be created or curated but most importantly, contextualised.
- *Appropriate channels* – can be in the form of webinars, newsletters, meetings, interviews, etc.
- *Meeting frequency* – monthly, quarterly, etc.

3.3 Influencing Government Policy

A need to debate on key national reports and issues relevant to policy is critical to student affairs. Participation in this regard is framed within the context of cooperative governance which advanced through the National Commission on Higher Education. The main principle being, those affected by any decisions which are made should participate in them, i.e., a bottom up approach.

The Association takes note that for student affairs to thrive, the Association needs to have a vested interest in influencing the macro context in which decisions are made as they also have a resulting impact on the very students it caters for.

There is need for the Association to increase its relevance and significance within the HE sector as well as national discourse and policies while simultaneously attending to issues of academic development and professionalization. A proactive rather than reactive stance will serve the student affairs community well.

4. CRITICAL ISSUES

The following are regarded as critical issues which need to become a part of the institutional culture of the Association.

4.1 Succession Planning and Management

The long term sustainability of any organisation is dependent on succession planning. Leadership continuity is regarded as vital for the sustainability and success of any institution. Succession planning must therefore be intentional on the part of senior leadership. Succession planning must be deliberate and systematic with a focus on the retention and development of intellectual capital for the future (Rothwell, 2010).

Succession planning includes the advancement of specifically selected individuals, the idea of which is to "stretch" those identified as having leadership capacities (Barton, 2019). To be successful, the process of selecting individuals must be a systematic, transparent and replicable process that engenders trust. Ultimately succession planning should offer a smooth leadership transition.

A diversified pool of candidates with higher leadership capacity can be developed and nurtured through various pathways including mentoring and coaching, education and strategic placement. Diversity means different skills and perspectives are brought together to enhance decision making and tactical strategies to cope with the predicted future changes or challenges (Barton, 2019). Succession planning can also be used to advance issues of gender or colour which is important in the context of the transformation agenda in South Africa. For the sake of continuity, overall assessment of the programme and the individuals selected in any leadership capacity development programme should also be done on a consistent basis.

The succession planning strategy involves the analysis of the current leadership composition versus the emerging needs of the institution. According Barton (2019:48) such planning will involve:

(a) the identification of critical positions,

(b) an analysis of the current depth and breadth of leadership talent,

(c) the expected future needs of the institution in various areas of leadership, and

(d) a risk assessment of any associated gap.

Succession planning can also be regarded as a means of preserving institutional knowledge.

4.2   Institutional Knowledge and Management

Institutional knowledge consists of both tangible and intangible assets. As highlighted above, succession planning forms a critical component of preserving institutional knowledge.

Poor preservation of institution knowledge is one of the main challenges affecting SAASSAP.

   i.   *Tangible assets of the institution include:*
   - Publication, reports, procedures, policies, internal standards
   - Administrative information, strategic reports

   ii.   *Intangible assets include:*
   - Websites, databases, logos, etc.

   iii. *Knowledge exchange and capture (institutional wisdom):*
   - This refers to formal and informal processes of knowledge sharing at the institution. This references the sharing of knowledge by professionals leaving the institution and passing this on to incoming professionals.

An important process is developing an organisational culture in which sharing of knowledge and information is common as well as having easily accessible links and tools to information. The development of a corporate digital information repository utilising a centralised document management system such as *Sharepoint or Google cloud for instance, may be useful.

4.3 Marketing and Communication Strategy (Blogs, Website, Newsletter, Journals, etc.)

The marketing and communication strategy takes into account the following:

The objectives

- To create awareness of SAASSAP as a key role player in student affairs.
- To raise awareness of the central role that student affairs plays in higher education.
- To ensure the targeted audience is kept up to date on important and relevant developments in the field of student affairs.

The target audience
All stakeholders (internal and external) of the Association are the primary target audience.

Key messages

- The vision and the mission of the Association.
- Organisational values.
- Role in student affairs e.g. opportunities for professional development, communities of practice, focus on student experience and success, advocacy, lobbying etc.

Communication Tools

- Social Media – LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook
- e-Newsletters, blogs
- Website
- Local media (public relations)
- Targeted emails
- Events.

5. THEMES

5.1 Policy Development

One of the key areas identified in which the Association must play a greater role is that of policy development. This includes influencing government priorities (Cloete, 2016). Some of these policy areas could include free higher education.

There must also be a deliberate aim to strengthen policy analysis as a skill.

5.2 Professional Development and Research

Professional development can be promoted through the Association in various ways such as:

- Providing members with opportunities for mentorship
- Providing links to resources and information that is of central concern to the work of student affairs such as scholarly journals, research findings, etc.
- Providing opportunities to share ideas with fellow student affairs practitioners through discussion forums, workshops, webinars and conferences.
- Online training programmes.

The focus of professional development should be to develop and strengthen various skills that are vital to the role of a student affairs practitioner. Such skills are important to the student affairs professionals who often come into the profession with limited experience and very little exposure. Core topics could include some of the following:

- Transformational Leadership
- Conflict Management and Negotiation
- Management skills – human resources, financial, etc.
- Technical/IT skills
- Conceptual skills
- Interpersonal skills.

5.3   Student Experience and Success

Student development and success are predicated on how well student development programmes can be continuously adapted to respond to an ever-changing environment. Critically such programmes should be informed by the local context, produce theoretically based knowledge and propose solutions that are both implementable and practical. However, there is still a need for student affairs practitioners in South Africa to clearly delineate what constitutes and determines student success. The Strange Framework for Student Development (Strange, 1999) identifies relational skills, technical skills and self-development skills as being important.

Given the historical context of poor access and current challenges with throughput, student success is highly important. Student development needs to be based on lifelong learning and the development of flexible critical skills.

5.4   Stakeholder Management

All stakeholders are important to the Association and regular communication with these stakeholders is essential. Stakeholder management, however, must particularly be directed at those stakeholders who are regarded as having a high level of influence and a high level of interest in the affairs of the Association. The priority stakeholders for SAASSAP include: Vice-Chancellors, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Universities South Africa (USAf), Universities and FETs, SAASSAP members, the Southern African Federation for Student Affairs and Services (SAFSAS), student unions, key partners and donor organisations.

Through the stakeholder management plan, a process of communicating and working with stakeholders to address issues as they arise and ensuring that stakeholders' various needs and expectations are met is developed. Through the same, there can be identification of opportunities to share successes and significant milestones.

5.5 Continental and International Partnerships

Establishing sustainable, mutually beneficial, in-depth relationships with continental and international partnerships is vital. Partnerships across different stakeholder groups and joint continental/regional activities can help to promote student affairs expertise. Importantly it can assist in facilitating access to different projects as well as access to funding. There can also be opportunities for leadership exchanges as part of an intentional programme to develop leadership capacity within the Association. Knowledge exchange and innovation will serve to strengthen student affairs. Partnerships should be strategic and based on common interest.

The main objectives of these partnerships will be to:

- Influence and contribute to student affairs policy agendas
- Contribute to strengthening local, regional and international capacity in student affairs
- Positioning SAASSAP as a key role player in student affairs
- Contribute to evidence-based research, innovation and engagements with partners
- Facilitate and enhance collaboration.

N.B.: A list of associations linked to student affairs is provided in a separate excel spreadsheet.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section outlines some of the recommendations arising from the discussions in the previous sections.

6.1 Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is the most effective and most appropriate response in an environment of rapid and constant change. Strategic planning refers to a long term strategy which is developed to meet the mission and objectives of the organisation but which may be reviewed time and again in line with changes in the environment. Operational plans can be derived from strategic plans and in turn the operational plans could form the foundation for a formalised performance management system.

One of the key challenges noted impacting on plans of action by SAASSAP is lack of long term planning and poor follow through. It would appear that each NEC cohort to some extent determines its own priority areas of focus (see NEC 04.12.12).

Lack of follow through and the determination of new priority areas by each NEC cohort can be overcome through the development of a 5-year strategic plan to which at least two successive NECs/Boards can adhere for the sake of focus and continuity. These plans can be reviewed yearly to determine if the Association is on track in terms of its long term plans.

6.2   SAASSAP Niche

Among the various student affairs service portfolios including residences, sports and recreation, counselling, health, judicial services and campus protection, one area that lacks specifically trained student affairs professionals is the area of *student governance*. This niche is also not currently occupied by any association in South Africa whereas all other service areas are catered for by various different organizations as outlined below.

- Residences – Association of College and University Housing Officials International - South African Chapter (ACUHO-I-SAC)
- Health – South African Association of Campus Health Services (SAACHS)
- Protection – Campus Protection Society of Southern Africa (CAMPROSA)
- Finances – Financial Aid Practitioners of Southern Africa (FAPSA)
- Sports and recreation – South African Students Sports Union (SASSU)
- Counselling – Southern African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education (SAACHDE)
- Disability services – Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association (HEDSA).

It is suggested that student governance become one of the *niche areas* that is considered by SAASSAP. This is an area that NASDEV is engaged in but not as a critical focus area.

Depending on the outcome of this decision, there may be a need to revise the vision and the mission of the Association.

6.3   Structure of the Association

It is recommended that there be a SAASSAP Board (structured as per the previous NEC) and for this board to be complemented by a core executive committee responsible for the day to day running of the Association (who may be permanently employed).

The Board will be the decision making body attending to the strategic plan, governance issues, decisions on memberships, suspensions, etc. For the sake of institutional memory and knowledge management it is recommended that the outgoing board chair be retained on the board as an executive member.

Each thematic area, that is, policy development, professional development, student experience and success, continental and international partnerships must be assigned portfolios with specific terms of reference and KPAs. It is suggested that the membership of the board be expanded to approximately 15 members.

SAASSAP Proposed New Leadership Structure
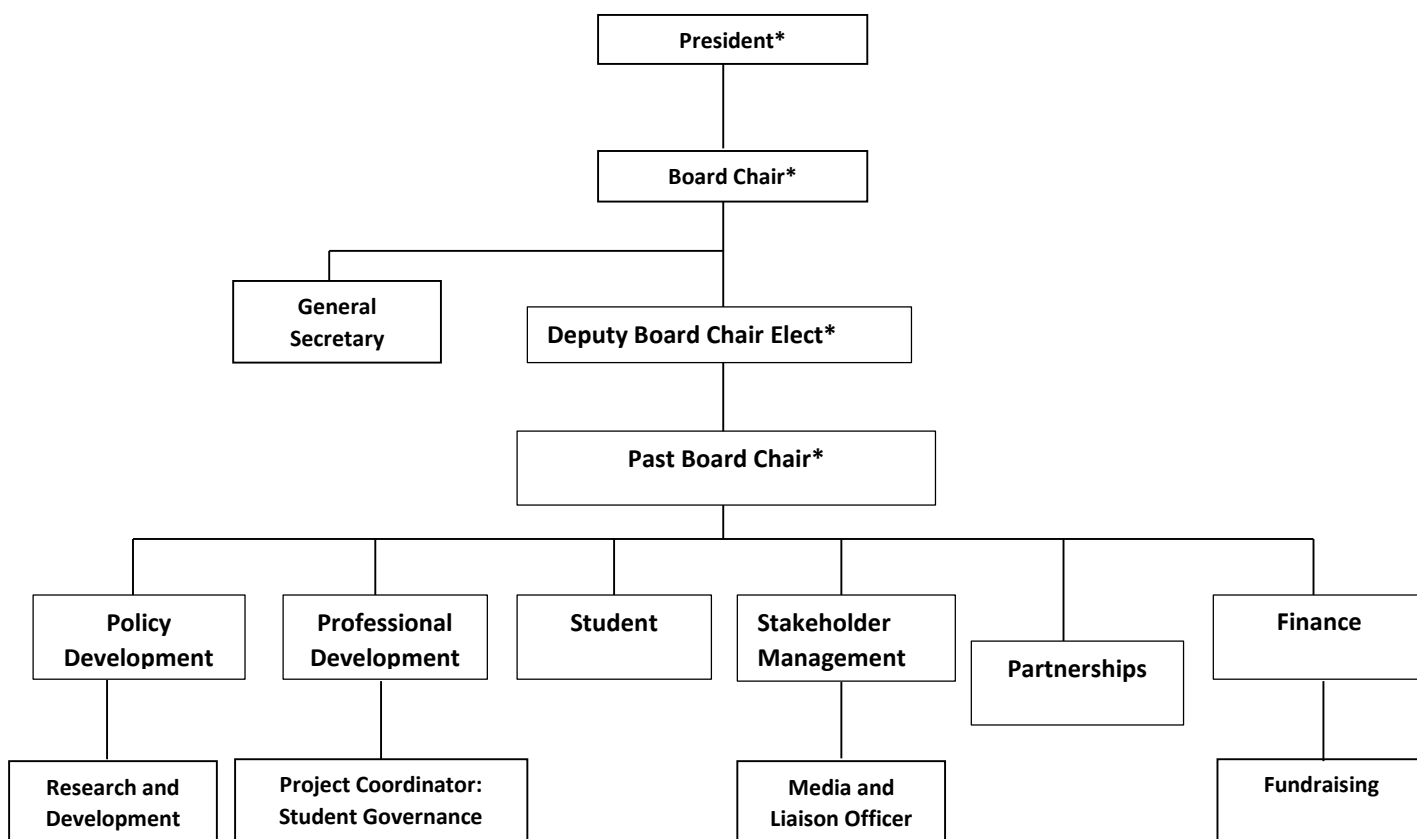
* Denotes Executive Members

6.3.1 Regional Committees

The regional committees' mandates need to be clearly specified.

6.3.2 The LOC Committees

While the main mandate of the LOCs appears to be the planning and preparation for annual conferencing by region, an expanded mandate may be considered. The structure of the LOCs as well as their responsibilities/terms of reference will also need to be clarified.

6.3.3 Finance Committee

It is recommended that a finance committee be set up to manage the finances of the organization. The financial oversight of the Association should include among others, financial planning, development of internal controls, approval of conferencing budgets and payments, travel policies, etc.

6.4 Internships/Volunteerism

It is recommended that a structured programme be devised under which interns will be co-opted into the organisation to gain working experience in the area of student affairs. Interns can be assigned various portfolio including, research, marketing and communication, event and workshop planning, etc.

A strong volunteer system must also be promoted through which members can also gain exposure to different aspects of the student affairs as part of their professional development.

6.5 Mobilisation of Funding

Funding appears to be a huge challenge for the Association. It is anticipated that with an expanded membership portfolio, more funding will be availed through membership fees. However, it will be important for the Association to seek to raise funds through alternative means including donor funding/corporate sponsorship, affiliate marketing opportunities, etc. Some of this funding must be channelled into increasing research output.

6.6 Membership and Membership Benefits of SAASSAP

It is recommended that SAASSAP expand its membership to the following:

Institutional Membership – higher education administrators, student affairs administrators at member institutions, get full membership services and are eligible to be voted into positions of leadership.

Proposed membership fees per institution – R50 000 per year

Individual Membership which can further be broken into:
- Undergraduate – **Proposed membership fee – R850**
- Graduate membership – **Proposed membership fee – R1 500 per year**
- Faculty membership – **Proposed membership fee R3 500 per year**
- Emeritus membership – which will refer to retired members of represented institutions – **Proposed membership fee – R1 500 per year**

N.B.: Undergraduate student and emeritus membership categories receive the largest discounts.

Membership Fees and Benefits of Membership
For institutional membership, the benefit package could consist of the following;
- *Discounted membership for the most senior professional*
- *Discounted fees for conferences and workshops*
- *Leadership opportunities*
- *Access to research findings and scholarly journals.*
- *Access to a searchable student affairs practitioners' online database.*

For student and professional membership, the benefit package could consist of the following:
- *Access to an online job portal*
- *Access to research findings and scholarly journals*
- *Access to programmes, events and publications (newsletters, webinars, etc.) supporting personal development.*

Potential Journal Resources include:

- Journal of Student Affairs in Africa
- Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice (NASPA)
- Journal of College Student Development (American College Personnel Association [ACPA])
- Journal of Student Affairs (Colorado University/New York University)
- European Journal of Higher Education
- Teaching in Higher Education and Reflective Practice (focus on internationalisation, study abroad, student satisfaction, teaching and learning, higher education policy, governance, psychology and pedagogic in higher education)
- Education as Change
- Journal of Higher Education
- Journal of Psychology
- African Journal of Psychology
- JSAA - Journal of Student Affairs in Africa
- JCSD - The Journal of College Student Development
- SAASSAP Resource Series One.

6.7   SAASSAP Constitution

The Constitution would require to be amended in line with the approved changes suggested above.

Notable amendments would be with respect to:

- Membership
- Composition and Functions of the Board, appointments, resignations, etc.
- The finances of the Association – including issues of bank signatories.

6.8   Developing Standards of Practice within Student Affairs

It will be very important for the Association to develop standards of practice. Setting standards can be equated to the professionalisation of student affairs (Pansiri and Sinkamba, 2017). In this regard the key question will be, what nature and what form should these standards take? As a benchmark, the Association should refer to the Council for the Advancement of Standards. There remains a golden opportunity to contextualise standards to the local South African context. These standards could incorporate standards for the competencies of student affairs practitioners as well as taking ethical standards into consideration. As mentioned above, scholarship will also play a huge role in this regard.

6.9   Advocacy and Lobbying

Advocacy means taking up a particular cause, whereas lobbying refers to supporting specific policies. It is important that SAASSAP take up this important advocacy mandate of representing student interest in issues of national interest. Advocacy is a key mandate for student affairs as the higher education domain is one which is characterised by competing interests (Harrison, 2010). A strong advocacy mandate must ensure that the rights of students are protected and, that their welfare and concerns are taken into consideration.

SAASSSAP may also consider forming 'advocacy coalitions' with other student affairs organizations, thereby applying pressure on key issues over an extended period of time (Bailey, 2010:14).

Lobbying is strongly linked to the role SAASSAP (and its members) must play in policy analysis and policy development. Lobbying may involve direct contact with legislative bodies or actively participating in the drafting of internal higher education policies.

6.10 Scholarship

One of the key areas that has been lacking for SAASSAP is its poor output in terms of research. This has been impacted in part by funding issues. It is expected that an improved financial position will assist with improving publication rates as more funding is channelled towards research and publication. Carpenter and Haber-Curran (2013) highlight how research must be peer-reviewed and published in accredited journals as a means to establish legitimacy. It is upon this foundation that scholarship can contribute immensely to programmes for professional development and to the overall professionalization of student affairs.

SAASSAP should also consider partnering with various research institutions and others, to increase research output that is local and contextualised. In addition, there can be a greater thrust for research interns and volunteers to conduct research on key focus areas of benefit to the affairs of the organization. SAASSAP members could also be capacitated to improve their research skills as part of professional development with an aim to improve research output. Furthermore, as the Association strengthens its partnership with regional and international institutions, there will be opportunities availed to collaborate on research projects.

6.11 Renaming of SAASSAP

In line with the recommendations given, it is suggested that the name of the institution be changed. Suggestions include:

- South African Student Affairs Practitioners Association (SASAPA)
- Association for Student Affairs Practitioners in South Africa (ASAPSA)
- South Africa National Association for Student Affairs Practitioners (SANASAP)
- National Association for Student Affairs Practitioners South Africa (NASAPSA)
- Student Affairs Practitioners in South Africa (SAPSA)
- Student Affairs Practitioners in Higher Education South Africa (SAPHESA)
- South African Association of Student Affairs Professionals (SAASAP).

7. CONCLUSION

It is suggested that SAASSAP must be entirely reconstituted. In its current form the organisation is not capacitated fully to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves in the South African student affairs context. The organization should have a greater voice in issues of higher education and this requires completely professionalising the institution by incorporating standards to increase visibility as well as to add the highest value to the profession.