

MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
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SAASSAP ENTERS A NEW ERA OF RELEVANCE AND IMPACT (2025–2028)

The South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals (SAASSAP) has entered a new era of relevance and impact, charting a bold direction for the period 2025–2028. Meeting in Durban for its National Executive Committee (NEC) Strategic Planning Workshop, the association's leadership – representing senior Student Affairs executives from across South Africa's universities – reflected on the profession's growth, the changing higher education landscape, and SAASSAP's renewed commitment to shaping a transformative student experience across the sector.

In his opening address, SAASSAP President, **Mr. Jerome September**, described the gathering as a defining moment in the life of the association – an opportunity to build on solid foundations and reimagine the future. "We gather not merely to plan, but to imagine – to imagine what SAASSAP must become in this new term, an era built on the dedication and hard work of those who came before us," he said. "This is SAASSAP's time, not just to exist, but to matter."

The President paid tribute to the outgoing NEC, led by Prof. Sibusiso Chalufu, for laying the groundwork that now enables the association to move forward with confidence. Under their stewardship, SAASSAP consolidated its membership base, enhanced its governance, deepened its partnerships, and strengthened its voice within the national higher education discourse. Among these achievements are expanded institutional participation, a partnership with the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA)*, which resulted in a special edition, and the development of a Student Governance Framework currently under consideration by the Minister of Higher Education.

The workshop took place at a time when higher education in South Africa faces both profound challenges and new possibilities. Mr. September reminded the gathering that Student Affairs professionals lead in a world defined by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity – what he called a "VUCA reality." He emphasised that effective leadership today must be adaptive, ethical, and deeply human. Issues such as student debt, food insecurity, mental health pressures, and gender-based violence continue to test the resilience of both students and the institutions that serve them. "Student Affairs is not peripheral," he said. "We are custodians of the human experience of higher education – partners in learning, in transformation, and in hope."

Over two days of reflection and rigorous discussion, the NEC adopted a renewed mission, vision, and set of five strategic focus areas that will guide the association's work until 2028. These include advancing thought leadership and advocacy; building professional development and knowledge systems; strengthening collaboration and partnerships; ensuring organisational sustainability and capacity; and centring integrity, ethics, and leadership development across all SAASSAP activities.

The strategic plan commits SAASSAP to deepening its influence as the national voice of Student Affairs in South Africa, strengthening professional learning through the establishment of a SAASSAP Academy,

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (NEC)

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broadening partnerships across higher education and the private sector, and enhancing governance and financial sustainability through innovation and strategic resource mobilisation. It also calls for the association to lead with moral courage, placing ethical leadership and servant stewardship at the heart of the profession.

Reflecting on the significance of the workshop, President September noted that SAASSAP's mission remains inseparable from the broader project of transformation and nation-building. "We are shaping a profession that touches every hope, fear, and dream of our students. We are not just practitioners of policy; we are architects of human possibility," he said. "Let us lead with purpose, act with courage, and make this era count – for our students, our institutions, our country, and our continent."

The National Executive Committee expressed gratitude to the University of KwaZulu-Natal for hosting the Strategic Planning Workshop and reaffirmed its collective commitment to implementing the outcomes of the new strategy with focus, accountability, and unity of purpose.

Issued by:

The National Executive Committee

South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals (SAASSAP)

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