

SECTION 7: QUALITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

This section responds primarily to
Criteria 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10 and 18.

7.1 BACKGROUND TO COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service has been an intrinsic element of the mission and values of the UFS for many years. Up to the late 1990s, however, most staff members did not have a clear understanding of what should be regarded as community service and how such activities could be integrated with the other core functions of teaching/learning and research. This section of the Institutional Audit Report reflects on the transformation process which the UFS has embarked on to progress from community service typically regarded as an "add on" to the notion of "integrated community service learning and research" and beyond.

7.1.1 Recent history of community service at the UFS

Under the heading "From add-on to integration - the adoption of a policy for Community Service at the UFS" (*CommTalk 1: 2*), the Chief Director: Community Service, Rev. C.D. Jaftha, sketches the "road map" that was followed to progress from the establishment of a Portfolio Committee for Sustainable Human Development (September 1997) to the official launch of the first UFS Policy for Community Service in October 2002. What is particularly noteworthy in this overview is the fact that considerable effort was put into ensuring that the process was a consultative, inclusive endeavour, with the explicit aim to achieve and enhance ownership among UFS staff members, as well as external stakeholders.

An important component of the history of community service at the UFS is represented by the Mangaung-University of the Free State Community Partnership Programme (MUCPP) and all that it has stood for over the 16 years of its existence. MUCPP is a flagship partnership programme of the UFS which established an off-campus learning site for community service in one of the local communities. The partnership comprises the Mangaung community, various Free State provincial government departments, the Mangaung local authority, the private sector, the UFS and other institutions of higher education. In the document: *MUCPP - Health for all: Building our nation together* (1996:9-10), the following statement refers to the impetus behind the ideal of developing a unique, holistic and integrated model for development in the MUCPP: "In order to develop a strong and powerful South Africa, it is very important that we develop strong and powerful communities and regions." Extensive reporting on the development of this remarkable project was published in *CommTalk 5*¹, the Community Service newsletter of the UFS.

Another important milestone on the road to integrated community service learning and research was the establishment of the CHESP² Core (Partnership) Group in 1999, with

¹ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for *CommTalk 5: Extensive reporting on the development of the MUCPP*.

² The acronym CHESP refers to the national Community - Higher Education - Service Partnerships programme of the Joint Education Trust.

the support of the Joint Education Trust (JET) and the Ford Foundation. The significance of the role that the CHESP programme has played throughout the process in which the UFS increasingly focused on achieving an integration of community service with the other core functions of teaching/learning and research, can hardly be overemphasised. By funding several academic and research programmes over the years, and by involving various UFS staff members in a variety of national projects, the CHESP initiative of (what is currently known as) JET Education Services has been one of the driving forces behind the considerable progress that the UFS has made towards establishing itself as an excellent, innovative and actively engaged South African and African university.

In September 2001, the first Chief Director: Community Service was appointed, officially establishing a dedicated management structure for community service activities with its Chief Director representing this core function of the University at Executive Management level. The purposeful leadership of the Chief Director, as well as the creation of dedicated organisational structures that followed from this and subsequent appointments within the Chief Directorate, has provided an enabling environment within which the community engagement thrust could develop, taking the UFS to the current stage where it has established itself as a higher education institution with a real commitment to engage the communities it serves.

7.1.2 The first Community Service Policy

The renewed focus on community service (CS), as a core function of the University of the Free State (UFS), manifested itself in the adoption of a first Community Service policy in 2002³. What was different from the previous commitment to CS was the emergent realisation of the importance of integrating CS with teaching, learning and research, and that this would unequivocally establish CS as an indispensable component of the University's work and scholarly activities. Proof that the UFS has been heeding the call of government to transform this specific field in the higher education (HE) system can be found in the preamble of the policy mentioned above, as well as other documents that have been produced since 2002. Several papers, presentations and publications⁴ of staff members have indicated that the UFS endorses the three pillars on which Government's HE transformation agenda rests, namely:

- *Increased participation*: The democratisation of and increased participation in the HE system by an ever-increasing diversity of interest groups, an approach which aims to eradicate the inequalities of the past.
- *Greater responsiveness*: The ability and willingness to respond to a wide variety of social and economic challenges, as well as a commitment to seeking solutions to societal problems, which, in turn, require adjustments to teaching and learning methods and curricula.
- *Increased co-operation and partnerships*: Increasing co-operation and partnerships between institutions of HE and all sectors of society (i.e. with the community, public

³ Available at http://www.uovs.ac.za/community_service/Docs/AUG2002-Eng.doc

⁴ For example, a paper presented at the international conference: EMSU 2002 in Africa, Environmental Management for Sustainable Universities: The Role of Higher Education in Sustainable Development, 11-13 September 2002, Rhodes University, Grahamstown. A reworked and updated version of the paper is available at http://www.uovs.ac.za/documents/community_service/2005-5/2005_09_Community_service_sustainable_development_policy_web.pdf

and private sectors) for the sake of mutual trust, as well as increased accountability and transparency in the HE sector.

7.1.3 Institutional commitment

The integrated approach of what was referred to in the first CS policy as "Community Service Learning and Research" (CSL & R) is a response to the goals referred to above, as well as government's call for increasing the levels of social responsibility of both students and higher education institutions. Learning from its experience of over a century of working closely with partners in the Free State region, the UFS currently remains convinced that an approach based on co-operative partnerships is essential, making joint initiatives more conducive to sustainability by means of the shared responsibility and accountability of all involved. In adopting the above-mentioned Community Service policy (August 2002), the UFS has officially identified community service as "a strategic priority and a core function, which must progressively be integrated with teaching, learning and research as mainstream activities of the University and its students".

What was unique about the UFS approach from the outset was the high level of institutional commitment that was declared openly by key members of Executive Management at the institution. The following are examples of public endorsement and purposeful leadership in this regard:

- The Rector and Vice-Chancellor has made his commitment to community engagement, and community service learning in particular, public on various occasions; for example, in his inauguration speech⁵ in February 2003 he stated: "One special area to mention is our current approach to community service, i.e. in the form of community service learning and community service research. Pioneering work has been done, in a very inclusive and inquiring process, to develop a solid policy to underpin this approach. This approach has the immense benefit that it doesn't define community service as an 'add-on', but as an integral part of the core activities of the university. In the normal course of their studies, students would complete community service modules, learning from applying knowledge in a community service context."
- Not only the Rector, but also the Vice-Rector: Academic Planning, and the Chief Director: Community Service, are often invited to present the University's stance on and progress with academically integrated community engagement at national forums. In the course of 2005, the University of Stellenbosch (US) requested the Vice-Rector: Academic Planning to serve on a peer review panel conducting an external review of the US's Matie Community Service.

As mentioned above, the appointment of a Chief Director: Community Service at executive level was another crucial element in the way that the UFS positioned itself as a civic-minded, socially-responsible HE institution intent on playing a meaningful role in reconstructing and developing the Free State Province. From his position in Executive Management, the Chief Director has been able to steer the process of policy

⁵ Available at: http://www.uovs.ac.za/documents/2003-02/2003_inaugural_speech_fourie.pdf

development for and implementation of the objectives set in the first policy document, with exceptional success over the past four years.

What is required now is, firstly, consistently maintaining what has been achieved and developed thus far, and secondly, providing clear guidelines about quality management arrangements (policies, structures, procedures) that will allow the UFS and its stakeholders to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of CS initiatives and gauge the impact of such collaborative activities on an ongoing basis. This approach recognises the public role which the UFS has deliberately adopted, and that as an institution, it places an increasingly high premium on public accountability.

What this report wishes to achieve is to provide a brief overview of the state of CS at the UFS, including quality management arrangements that are already in place; to reflect critically on the gaps that exist within these arrangements; and to describe some of the processes and arrangements that are still being put in place or need to be developed in the near future.

7.2 ARRANGEMENTS FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

In the following outline and description of quality management arrangements, the institutional self-evaluation instrument that forms part of the *Good Practice Guide and Self-Evaluation Instruments for the Development and Management of the Quality of Service-Learning*⁶, will serve as the broad, inclusive framework for both CS generally, and CSL in particular. The discussion relates to quality arrangements for the four evaluative stages of the core function activities of HE institutions, in this instance CS:

- Input required for the development of CS.
- Process-related arrangements for implementation.
- Output and impact for monitoring and evaluation.
- Review of maintaining and securing the sustainability of CS.

Indicators recommended in the above-mentioned Guide will be selected with reference to existing quality management arrangements, and examples of evidence will be cited. In such cases where adequate mechanisms do not exist, there will be an indication of what would be required in future.

7.3 QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF INPUT FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

The first evaluative stage bears reference to the input that is required for the development of CS, and indicators include how the institution's commitment to CS is reflected in its mission statement and values; policies and regulations; structures; resources; strategic and action plans. What follows is a concise overview of what is in place and quality arrangements for these input indicators.

⁶ A team of QM experts from the UFS, co-ordinated by the Senior Lecturer: CS of the CDCS, was involved in the further development and finalisation of this document which started as an inclusive initiative involving several other HE institutions. It was developed under the auspices of the HEQC, in collaboration with the JET Education Services' CHESP (Community - Higher Education - Service Partnership) initiative. See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.2 for a *Good Practice guide*.

7.3.1 Terminology used by the UFS

The UFS is currently still in the process of negotiating and interrogating the conceptualisation and concomitant use of terminology⁷. The concepts and definitions that the Chief Directorate: Community Service (CDCS) proposes at this stage are elucidated in full in the draft CS policy document (review of the 2002 policy) that is currently being discussed by role-players on and off campus. The following four definitions contained in the draft CS Policy document (version dated: 01/06/2006) are considered essential for purposes of situating this report within the current conceptual discourse:

- **Community engagement:** Continuously negotiated collaborations and partnerships between the UFS and the constituencies that it interacts with, aimed at building and exchanging the knowledge, skills, expertise and resources required to develop and sustain society.
- **Community service:** Employing the scholarly expertise and resources of the UFS to render mutually beneficial services to communities within a collaborative partnership context.
- **Community:** "Communities" refer to those specific, local, collective interest groups who participate, or could potentially participate, in the community service activities of the institution. They are regarded as partners who have a full say in the identification of service needs and development challenges. They also participate in defining the community service and development outcomes; identify the relevant assets at their disposal; evaluate the impact of community service; and contribute substantially to the mutual search for sustainable solutions to challenges and service needs.
- **Community service learning ("service-learning"):** An educational approach involving curriculum-based, credit-bearing learning experiences in which students (a) participate in contextualised, well-structured and organised service activities aimed at addressing identified service needs in a community, and (b) reflect on the service experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community life, as well as achieve personal growth and a sense of social responsibility. It requires a collaborative partnership context that enhances mutual, reciprocal teaching and learning among all members of the partnership (lecturers and students, members of the communities and representatives of the service sector).

The development, implementation and maintenance of its community service learning (CSL) initiatives are regarded by the UFS as key indicators of the effective integration of service with teaching and learning, hence the special emphasis on this component of its CS work.

7.3.2 Vision, mission and strategic priorities

The vision and mission statements of the UFS refer to the institution's commitment "to be an excellent, equitable and innovative university", and "the pursuit of scholarship as embodied in the creation, integration, application and transmission of knowledge by

⁷ Definitions of CS-related concepts that have been published on the CS webpage during 2005 are available at: <http://www.uovs.ac.za/documents/community_service/2005-05/2005-05%20DEFINING%20RELEVANT%20CONCEPTS.pdf>

promoting the following within the ambit of financial sustainability: an academic culture, critical scientific reflection, relevant scientific education, pure and applied research, community service and development of the total student as part of its academic culture”.

The Strategic Plan for 2005 - 2007 mentioned a renewed focus on engagement for the UFS: "It must also be a model of an engaged university that uses its academic capacities and functions to make a significant difference to the condition of its region, country and continent, helping to eradicate the legacies of underdevelopment, poverty, colonialism and apartheid." In the Strategic Plan for 2006 – 2008, the UFS defines academic work as "integrating several forms of scholarship: the scholarship of research, the scholarship of teaching and learning, **the scholarship of engagement (...)**"; an indication that community engagement and community service are becoming increasingly scholarship-based and embedded in the academic work of the institution.

As far as strategic priorities with regard to transformation goals for the near future are concerned, the following quotation from the brief of the Transformation Plan Task Team is interpreted by this Task Team as also referring to the role of an academically-integrated CS:

"Academic transformation with emphasis on increased South African and African relevance (teaching and learning modes and methods; academic programmes and curricula; research foci)."

7.3.3 Inclusion of CS in policy documents

The widely publicised and distributed first Community Service Policy, as well as the Foundational Document on which it was based⁸, can be regarded as a strength of the approach to CS. An inclusive, participatory development process was followed and the eight objectives for implementation, contained in the CS Policy document, have served as effective drivers over the past three years. These objectives and strategies are also being revised currently.

The CDCS deliberately took part in discussions on and the development of related policies of the UFS in order to ensure that the commitment to the inclusion of CS in its core activities is reflected in such policies. Examples of policies are the Education Policy (see 4.3 of the policy), the Assessment Policy and the Quality Assurance Policy (see 5.3 of the policy).

During the past three years in which the number of CSL modules increased considerably, it became apparent that both a comprehensive policy and a plan for the management of risks and liability were required. Such a policy has not been adopted yet, but important steps towards effective risk management have been taken and the CDCS has committed itself to taking this matter further in the near future.

⁸ UFS staff and the the public may view this policy document on the website of the UFS, <http://www.uovs.ac.za> , go to "Community Service", and the text is found under the sub-heading "Documents".

7.3.4 Management structures and resource allocation

Management structures responsible for CS are being developed as this portfolio grows. CS forms part of the functions of the Chief Director: Community Service who is a member of Executive Management, an arrangement which has proven to be a particular strength. A broad, representative forum referred to as the Central Community Service Committee was created in early 2002. Each faculty has a Community Service Portfolio Committee by means of which its CS activities are managed and steered. Since 2004, a Community Service Management Committee (CSMC) has been operational. In 2006 the CSMC was extended to include all chairpersons of Faculty CS Portfolio Committees, faculty CS co-ordinators, as well as co-ordinators of key CS delivery sites (or: "flagship" projects). Subsequently, the CSMC has become a decision-making body which is fully representative of all the faculties and the various "flagship" sites.

Resource allocation for CS currently includes remuneration packages for the following positions⁹:

- Permanent staff:
 - Chief Director: Community Service
 - Senior Secretary
 - Senior Lecturer: CSL (Development and Implementation)
 - Research and Administrative Assistant
 - Community Development Officer (since February 2006)
- Positions subsidised by the CDCS for a three-year period (partly co-funded by the respective faculties):
 - The CS Co-ordinator in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (permanent position)
 - The CS Co-ordinator in the Faculty of the Humanities (three-year contract appointment)
- Part-time staff:
 - Financial and administrative assistant (student)
- Positions in the "flagships" (i.e. key implementation sites for CS and CSL)
 - MUCPP (Mangaung-University Community Partnership Programme)
 - Site Manager
 - 2 Project Managers(Note: A new funding formula has been provided for a Site Manager and 2 Project Managers for the period 1 Jan 2006 - 31 Dec 2008.)
 - FSRDPP (Free State Rural Development Partnership Programme):
 - Part of the package of the Co-ordinator
 - Part-time student assistant

As far as the allocation of operational funding is concerned, all the above offices are financially supported to function efficiently. Additional funding is provided for special projects like the publication of a newsletter, the hosting of conferences and workshops.

⁹ Information about staff members is available under the heading "Staff" on the Community Service website.

Special funds are also strategically ring-fenced for CS initiatives/projects which will enforce and enhance the strategic priorities of the UFS, especially focusing on the outward thrust priority.

As mentioned under paragraph 7.1, the UFS has participated in the national CHESP programme of JET from its inception in 1999. CHESP support for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of CSL modules contributed significantly to the field over the period 2001-2004. When this funding phase of the CHESP initiative ended, the UFS resolved to take CSL forward by allocating institutional funding for this purpose. UFS funding for CSL modules currently stands at an amount of R 480 000 which has been allocated for the development and implementation of new modules, as well as for the maintenance of existing modules¹⁰, over the past two years.

The UFS document “Vertrekpunte met betrekking tot befondsing vir SD en SDL”¹¹ (Points of departure with regard to funding of CS and CSL) provides a detailed outline of the UFS's approach to the funding of CSL modules in the faculties for the three-year period 2004-2006. The matter of how the funding process should be taken forward after 2006 will be under consideration in the course of this year. A sustainable longer-term strategy for the allocation and effective utilisation of funding for the implementation of CSL modules will determine the future of this pedagogy at the UFS.

7.3.5 Cooperative partnerships

As stated above, the establishment and maintenance of cooperative partnerships is a *sine qua non* of CS. In the CS policy that is currently under revision, the CDCS for the first time includes a definition of what this often contested term means: A partnership can be defined as a collaborative effort between two or more parties sharing a similar vision, aimed at reaching a common goal by devising and implementing a cooperative *modus operandi* while maintaining their respective identities and agendas. A partnership entails pooling and sharing skills and resources, as well as risks and benefits, thus enabling such partnerships to accomplish goals beyond the capability of the individual parties. In the context of community service learning, a partnership entails knowledge-based collaborations between a university, an identified community and the service sector, where all partners contribute to the mutual search for sustainable solutions to challenges and service needs. Such partnerships do not only focus on the intended outcomes but also on reciprocal teaching and learning, development, knowledge production and change that occur during the process.

It remains to be seen how this definition will be received by the various role-players and stakeholders.

A particularly noteworthy strategy that the UFS has adopted is the establishment of "flagship" or key delivery sites for CS (see paragraph 7.3.4 above). The main purpose is to create empowering, collaborative "spaces" where staff, students and external participants may meet in order to engage in productive, multi-disciplinary and multi-

¹⁰ A list of the CSL modules that were funded through the CHESP initiative during 2004 is available in Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.3 *CHESP UFS Compliance Table (modules funded by CHESP in 2004)*.

¹¹ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.3 for “Vertrekpunte met betrekking tot befondsing vir SD en SDL”.

sectoral interaction, within an environment where at least some of the "terms of engagement" have already been negotiated and a high level of mutual trust has been established.

During 2005 negotiations took place to draw up a Memorandum of Understanding for a co-operative partnership between the UFS and various constituencies within one of these key implementation sites, the FSRDPP.¹² An independent body, Khula Xhariep Partnership (KXP), was formed to facilitate the cooperation. In 2006 the founding document and a Memorandum of Understanding with the UFS was approved by the KXP (see <http://www.khulaxhariep.co.za>). In cases where such agreements exist, management of the quality of collaborative CS initiatives indeed becomes a shared responsibility of all parties involved. Therefore, the CDCS advocates, and will increasingly support, the formation of such partnerships, *inter alia*, by providing guidelines for partnership agreements such as those proposed in the discussion document entitled "A Checklist for Developing a Community Service Partnership Agreement"¹³.

Over the past ten or more years, the MUCPP has also been one of the key implementation sites for CS. A new funding framework for this initiative was adopted by Executive Management recently. There are a considerable number of well-established CS partnerships within each of the faculties of the UFS, *inter alia*, Boyden Observatory and the Lengau Agri Centre (Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences); the Law Clinic (Faculty of Law); partnerships between the Department of Health and the Faculty of Health Sciences; the National KhoiSan Consultative Conference (Faculty of the Humanities), to name but a few. Quality arrangements for CS activities within all these partnerships are a joint responsibility of the specific faculty and the partners involved. Information about such partnerships are required to be made available on the University's website by the individual faculties (see e.g. <http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/index.php?FCCode=04&DCCode=113&DivCode=D015>
<http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/content.php?id=3631&FCCode=01>
<http://www.uovs.ac.a/faculties/content.php?d=4481&FCCode=06>
<http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/index.php?FCCode=03>)

7.3.6 Areas for improvement

In recent years, the need for leadership at the UFS to enter into agreements with the service sectors, at the level of Executive Management, has been expressed by many working at the coal-face or at "grass-roots" level, such as academic staff who offer CSL modules. The following quotation from the UFS CHESP Narrative Report for 2003¹⁴ still rings true:

"The writer of this Report is of the opinion that the rather ad-hoc and fragmented nature of UFS–community–service sector collaboration is not conducive to sustainable partnership building. Fortunately the "flagship" projects (MUCPP, FSRDPP and Qwaqwa Campus) of the UFS hold the promise of finding ways of addressing this challenge. However, an inclusive, overall regional collaboration agreement among the main stakeholders needs to

¹² See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.2 for *Memorandum of Understanding between the UFS and the FSRDPP*.

¹³ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.2 for *Checklist for the Development of a CS Partnership*.

¹⁴ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.1 for *CHESP Narrative Report 2003*.

be negotiated (or re-negotiated since such an agreement actually already exists) at executive management level. Several staff members involved in CSL and other CS projects have expressed an urgent need for some official agreement regarding cooperation and collaboration in the region.”

One of the promising developments in this regard is the Tri-campus Project (see Section 5, paragraph 5.4.4) which is under discussion by various stakeholders in the region. It is obvious that CS initiatives of the UFS should be linked and integrated with the objectives of this project in future. The role that the Free State Higher Education Consortium (FSHEC) plays in this regard bodes well for similar regional development-focused partnerships, and should increasingly be linked to CS and CSL initiatives in future.

One of the remedial initiatives regarding the fragmented nature of CS that the CDCS has embarked on is to focus increasingly on partnership formation, specifically with regard to forming alliances with local and district municipalities, provincial government, the business sector and community structures. The recently formed Khula Xhariep Partnership (see paragraph 7.2.5) serves as an example of this strategy. Discussions with Mangaung Local Municipality that could lead to the formation of a strategic partnership have commenced in the first semester of 2006; the CDCS will embark on discussions in preparation of a similar framework for collaboration with Motheo District Municipality during the second half of this year.

The main intended outcome of partnership formation with these and other local and district municipalities is ensuring that the UFS is represented on the Integrated Development Plan Representative Forum of these structures, in order to be in a position to engage with these municipalities in a robust way for more coherent and better coordinated collaboration. The effective functioning of the CSMC (see paragraph 7.3.4) will form an integral part of effective communication and coordination of the various collaborative initiatives.

7.4 QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF PROCESS-RELATED ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

Process-related arrangements for the implementation of CS include the key indicators of inclusion in management strategies such as effective communication and management information systems; capacity building and support for staff, students and partners; and support for relevance and responsiveness to societal challenges in teaching, learning and research.

7.4.1 Integration of CS with teaching and learning

Institutional support for excellence, innovation and relevance in teaching and learning by means of CSL pedagogy is apparent when taken into consideration that the number of CSL modules officially designated as "Community Service Learning" has increased from around ten (not all the modules were registered in 2004) to 26 over the past two years, with several more to be introduced during 2007. The second CS policy implementation strategy requires that a compulsory CSL module be included in all academic programmes; thus far the Faculty of the Humanities and the Faculty of Health Sciences have complied. Some of the modules originated from community-based education (CBE) courses, clinical practice or fieldwork activities, but several have also been developed

from scratch.¹⁵ By setting minimum requirements for CSL modules to be funded by the UFS, the CDCS has been providing some guidelines for the development and implementation of such modules¹⁶. It should be noted, however, that the allocation of start-up funding for CSL modules is not a mere "numbers game", but is approached as a collaborative exercise, involving partners, with a view to achieving quality, cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

7.4.2 Participatory community-orientated research

Institutional support and capacity building for participatory, collaborative, community-oriented research are undertaken in close collaboration with the DRD and CHESD. Special attention has been given to capacity building in appropriate research designs such as Participatory Action Research (PAR), *inter alia* through workshops by international specialists in this field.

The 2003 CS Conference of the UFS was dedicated to the Integration of Research and CSL¹⁷. From this conference, a special volume of the academic journal *Acta Academica Supplementum*¹⁸ appeared as a joint initiative of the CDCS and Prof. Robert Bringle of Indiana University-Purdue University (Indianapolis). The title of the volume is *Research and (Community) Service Learning in South African Higher Education Institutions*. After a protracted process in which some of the articles that were submitted met with rather harsh criticism, the volume was published in May 2006. In view of the fact that many South African scholars might not be quite ready to accept applied research outputs as academic work, this volume could be regarded as a significant achievement in the field, adding considerably to the rather limited South African body of peer-reviewed, accredited research articles on CSL.

7.4.3 Communication and information management

It has been acknowledged by the UFS that effective communication, both internally and externally, is a cornerstone of accountability and transparency with regard to all its CS endeavours. The Community Service webpage, which forms part of the UFS website, is where much of the information regarding CS is currently available. A database¹⁹ with details of 67 CS projects and CSL modules represents a first effort at providing an inventory. The usefulness of this database for tracking the progress and growth of CSL in particular has proven to be limited, due to the fact that it has not been designed as a properly coded and tagged resource for purposes of executing specific queries. Thus, it has become obvious that a comprehensive web-based management information system (MIS) is required, especially for the effective management of CSL, and tracking its

¹⁵ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.2 for a complete list of *CSL modules registered for 2006*.

¹⁶ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.3 for *The application form for funding of a CSL module and the letter explaining the procedure*.

¹⁷ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for the Programme of the CS Conference in the Integration of CSL and Research; and Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for *CommTalk 4: Conference of Research and CSL*. This newsletter has largely been dedicated to reporting on this Conference.

¹⁸ The table of contents is available at Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for *Acta Academica Supplementum 2005 3*.

¹⁹ Available at <http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/content.php?id=3790&FCODE=Z1>

development. Such a database structure has already been designed by an expert²⁰ in the field and the application was built by UFS Computer Services in the first semester of 2006. The following are some of the intended functions and benefits of this MIS for CSL:

- It will be linked to the existing HEMIS Analyser and PeopleSoft System.
- Quality management of CSL will be built into it from the outset.
- Queries and cross-tabulation of entries will allow for more effective coordination of CSL efforts.
- Longitudinal comparisons for programme evaluation (annual surveys etc.) will be possible since data will be archived per year.
- The database will be managed jointly by the CDCS and the various faculties, allowing for increasing decentralisation of the management of CSL initiatives where relevant.
- Impact studies could be undertaken on an ongoing basis by means of the effective use of this MIS for CS.

The newsletter *CommTalk*, as well as the FSRDPP's *Triangle* and others, forms the backbone of communication with staff, external stakeholders and other interested parties. Regular media coverage is received with the assistance of the Division: Strategic Communication by way of the provincial and national printed and electronic media. UFS publications such as *BULT*, *Dumela* and the UFS website are also utilised for the dissemination of information regarding CS activities. One area where improvement is required is representation of the student voice, which could be achieved through closer collaboration with the student newspaper *IRAWA*.

Highlights of regional and local engagement activities of 2005 form part of the annual report, *Transformation for excellence. Die verhaal van die UV in 2005/The story of the UFS in 2005*, under the apt heading "Bridging the gap with the community". Those CS initiatives that have received attention in the printed media during 2006 may be viewed on the UFS website under *Media releases: 2006*. Examples include the following:

- 09 March: *From disregard to acknowledgement – the role of the Griekwa in South Africa* (Department of Anthropology)
- 17 March: *A play to inform on how to build houses using earth bricks* (Department of Architecture – Unit for Earth Construction)
- 09 May: *UFS first to mechanise antique agricultural technique* (Department of Soil, Crop and Climate Sciences)
- 05 June: *Training workshop for Heidedal parents* (Research Institute for Education Planning)
- 06 June: *UFS involved in project to light up townships* (Department of Physics)
- 20 June: *UFS takes lead in improving quality of training in economics in schools* (Department of Agricultural Economics)
- 11 July: *Nguni cattle project* (Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences)

Several of the above-mentioned projects and programmes have also been highlighted in *CommTalk* 7 (01-2006) (see http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/documents/Z1/Newsletter/11154-2006_01_CommTalk.pdf)

²⁰ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.3 for *The Entity-Relationship Diagram for Quality Service Learning*. The full Database Dictionary is a comprehensive document which will be made available on request.

These are but a few of the many community engagement initiatives that are undertaken by academic staff members in the faculties, and in many instances also by support service staff and students.

7.4.4 Support and capacity building for staff

Support for staff (inter alia by means of capacity-building programmes, equitable performance management, recognition and incentives) is another area on which the CDCS has been focusing over the past three years.

The dedicated Community Service Learning module (HOS717²¹), offered at the UFS, forms part of the Master's Programme in Higher Education Studies offered by CHESD. This forms the backbone of the capacity-building programme for staff which the Senior Lecturer: Community Service Learning has been designated to develop since 2004. Eight UFS staff members successfully completed the module in 2005 and ten more have enrolled for 2006. The CHESD Resource Centre provides access to a growing collection of books, journals and other documents focusing on CSL.

The UFS participates in the Service-Learning Capacity-Building Programme (SLCBP) of JET-CHESP. By means of this programme, funding is allocated by JET Education Services to support eight academic members of staff of the UFS to participate in its capacity-building programme and to develop or refine a CSL module in the process. The publication, *Service Learning in the Curriculum: a resource for HE institutions*, (June 2006) that was developed by the HEQC (CHE), JET Education Services and a small group of mostly South African CSL practitioners (which included a UFS staff member from the Department of Psychology), will be the most important resource for the SLCBP²².

7.4.5 Performance appraisal and conditions of service

A very important area in which some tentative provision has been made for CS and CSL by way of interventions by the CDCS, is the performance management system. The current Performance Management System (PMS) document does specify the role of "Community Service" and refers to "service learning" under the Teaching and Learning Role. However, CSL is explicitly excluded under the role referred to as "Scholarly Service to the Community", and it is becoming increasingly evident that the need is felt by staff working in the field that CSL should also be included, and that this particular role should be weighted appropriately. This issue is still under consideration and will be taken further in the course of 2006.

7.4.6 Areas for improvement

A matter that has come to the attention of the CDCS is the fact that the Conditions of Service for Lecturing Staff (1 August 2004) refers to CS under the section devoted to "Duties of Staff Members" in such a way that it could not be regarded as being in alignment with the pronounced community and regional engagement thrust that the UFS

²¹ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.2 for *The Study Guide of HOS717*.

²² See http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/documents/Z1/Service-Learning_Resources/11799-Service-Learning%20in%20the%20Curriculum%20-%20A%20Resource%20for%20HEIs.pdf

has developed since 2002 when the first CS Policy was adopted. The only reference to CS in the Conditions of Service document is the following (see section in bold letters):

“By virtue of the mission of the University, the work assignment of the staff member, comprises of the following:

- Teaching
- Research
- **Supplementary community service within his/her field of study if and as agreed upon.**
- Rendering service within University context...”

Discussions and negotiations aimed at addressing this obvious discrepancy will begin in June 2006. The following reference to this matter, as well as the issue of a fair weighting system for CS, has been included in the draft CS policy document:

“Tangible acknowledgement of and credit for involvement of staff in community service will be integrated into the performance management system of the UFS, ensuring growth in the status of community service in line with that of teaching and research and equalising the recognition given to staff members in this regard. A sub-minimum weighting for community service will be determined for all academic staff members of the UFS and will be reflected in their conditions of service.”

Currently, support, development and recognition of CS undertaken by students are mainly co-ordinated by initiatives not managed by the CDCS, such as KOVSCOM (the volunteer CS programme of the UFS), the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) initiative and others. Support and development of students involved in CSL rest with the individual staff members offering such modules. Recognition of excellent contributions to CSL is an area where the CDCS and the various faculties should focus on more in future.

Support, development and recognition for partners involved in CS and CSL are currently mostly indirect and have not been monitored or evaluated adequately yet. This aspect of its CS endeavour should certainly receive more focused attention in future.

7.5 QUALITY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS IN RESPECT OF THE OUTPUT AND IMPACT OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

Continuous monitoring and evaluation to gauge the output and impact of CS are regarded as critical by the CDCS. After the first three-year cycle of policy implementation, practitioners at the UFS are ready and willing to refine existing mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of CS in general, but with particular emphasis on CSL. A comprehensive quality management system is now provided in the *Good Practice Guide* of the HEQC and JET-CHESP, which has already been referred to (paragraph 7.1)²³. This Institutional QM Report for the UFS is the result of a first run undertaken by two staff members of the CDCS for purposes of pilot-testing the instrument during the development phase of the Guide towards the end of 2005.

²³ See Additional Documentation (Institutional) file 2.3.1.2.3 for an example of how the self-evaluation instrument for quality management (QM) at the institutional level may be utilised.

7.5.1 Monitoring and evaluation of CSL

The integration of CS QM arrangements with those of teaching and learning is mainly facilitated by arrangements developed for CSL. The HEQC/JET-CHESP self-evaluation instruments for the faculty, programme and module levels provide comprehensive guidelines for such integration at each of these levels (see the *Good Practice Guide* mentioned earlier). During the pilot-testing phase of these instruments, self-evaluation reports were compiled by the Faculty of the Humanities²⁴, the B.A. Studies Programme²⁵ and CSL in the Humanities module²⁶. Two lecturers who offer CSL modules at the Central University of Technology (CUT) also participated in the pilot-testing.

At micro-level, a comprehensive set of instruments for monitoring and evaluation (M & E) were introduced at CSL module level via the Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (MERP), conducted for CHESP by the then Evaluation Research Agency (ERA) of Prof. Johann Mouton of Stellenbosch University. The findings of the MERP have been captured in an article by Wildschut and Mouton which will be published in a volume of *Acta Academica Supplementum* 2005(3) mentioned above. The ERA-run CHESP M & E regime set the tone for and raised awareness of the need to focus on quality management of CSL activities for and by all participants. UFS module convenors participated in the MERP for three years. Updated and refined versions of these instruments have since been developed for institutional purposes. The original MERP pre- and post-implementation questionnaires for students which were further developed at the UFS to incorporate most indicators of the *Good Practice Guide*, have recently been included in the SLCBP of CHESP.

Four academic staff members of the UFS who offer CSL modules have been requested to submit their CSL case studies for a publication of JET-CHESP which is due to appear in 2006²⁷.

7.5.2 Areas for improvement

Despite large strides already taken by the UFS, quality arrangements are still lacking with regard to gauging the impact of CSL on student recruitment, retention and throughput. Arrangements (e.g. collaborative studies) to gauge the impact on external partners are also still rather fragmented and need to be developed further by experts in programme evaluation and development studies. Such future studies will also have to include the development of procedures to evaluate the contribution of CS in response to national, regional and local priorities. More public forums have to be created by the UFS to allow broader society to take part in discussions around the contribution that the UFS is or should be making, in the form of CS conferences, symposiums, workshops and public hearings.

²⁴ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional Guide), file 2.3.1.2.2 for *UFS pilot-testing of Faculty Level Self-evaluation Instrument of the Good Practice*.

²⁵ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional Guide), file 2.3.1.2.2 for *UFS pilot-testing of Faculty Level Self-evaluation Instrument of the Good Practice*.

²⁶ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional Guide), file 2.3.1.2.2 for *UFS pilot-testing of Module Level Self-evaluation Instrument of the Good Practice Guide*.

²⁷ Two of the case studies are available at Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.2.

7.6 REVIEW AND BENCHMARKING OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

This evaluative stage provides indicators for the review of CS which is aimed at continuous improvement and innovation. In the case of the UFS, a formalised cycle of review of the CS policy and implementation plan was drawn up and approved in the first CS Policy.

7.6.1 First policy review

The first three-year cycle after the adoption of the CS policy ended in 2005 and the CDCS resolved to embark on an inclusive, participatory process to review the policy. The following is an excerpt from the invitation by the Chief Director: CS to the first CS policy review work seminar:

On 2 February 2005, the UFS Exco granted approval for a work seminar on community service to be held on 25 and 26 May 2005. The title of the seminar was: *Community Service – the way forward*.

The following serves as background information for this work seminar (we quote from the Exco agenda):

- *As part of the Exco, Senate and Council's approval process of the UFS's Community Service Policy on 12, 13 and 14 August 2002, the Chief Directorate: Community Service undertook to review the policy after three years.*
- *The proposed work seminar creates an opportunity to take stock of the progress made since August 2002, to determine what critical input is needed to facilitate further expansion, development and implementation and how Community Service Learning and Research can take shape within the UFS's strategic plans and priorities for 2005 – 2007.*

A comprehensive programme²⁸ was drawn up and followed for the Work Seminar in order to include the full range of high profile to "grass-roots" participants. In the first report²⁹ that was submitted to Executive Management of the UFS after the event, the Chief Director: CS stated the following:

"The work seminar was a great success. Eighty files containing documentation were prepared and handed to participants, although there were even more persons who attended the seminar on an informal basis. The outline of people who attended the seminar is as follows:

Exco (7); EM (3) [in addition to the Exco members and deans]; deans (3); Qwaqwa (4); academic personnel (43); support services (5); SRC presidents (2) [Qwaqwa and Vista]; MUCPP (7); FSRDPP (4); students (6); and other visitors (10).

²⁸ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for *The programme of the CS Work Seminar*.

²⁹ See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for *The Report to Exco on the CS Work Seminar*.

The CDCS is convinced that the revised CS Policy will become an important steering mechanism for CS at the UFS for the 2006-2008 period³⁰.

7.6.2 Strategies for improvement

Strategies for improvement were identified in the course of 2006 in discussions that were held on the policy and negotiations regarding objectives for future implementation of policy stipulations and goals. The responsibility for taking recommendations forward will largely rest with the CDCS, in close collaboration with CS Portfolio Committees in the faculties, as well as partnership structures such as the FSRDPP, MUCPP and others. A more inclusive management structure was proposed during the annual CS Work Summit during February 2006, namely a CS Management Committee which will also include chairpersons of Faculty Portfolio Committees. These CS Work Summits represent an effort to encourage broader participation and are aimed at providing a forum for in-depth discussions of strategic planning and implementation issues.

7.6.3 Benchmarking

As far as the broader CE and CS profile of the UFS is concerned, projects and community engagement initiatives of the Centre for Development Support, SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise), MUCPP, Boyden Observatory, and many more that resort under the various faculties and support services, have earned national and international recognition. Regarding CSL in particular, the following may be mentioned:

- In 2004, an Honorary Doctorate was awarded to Prof. Robert G. Bringle (IUPUI) by the UFS for his exceptional contribution to the development of CSL in South Africa, mainly through his participation in the CHESP initiative.
- Regular fact-finding visits by colleagues from other HE institutions indicate that the UFS is regarded as one of the leaders in the field of CS (and CSL in particular) by peers.
- Visits by lecturers and students from the USA also bear testimony to the significant CS profile of the institution.
- Through consistent participation in CHESP and its national initiatives since 1999 the UFS has been able to compare and benchmark its CSL work on an ongoing basis.

Benchmarking of CS at the UFS has taken various forms in the past. One example is its participation in the benchmarking programme of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), which specifically focused on "Engagement with Community and Region" in 2004. The results of this benchmarking initiative of the ACU have been less than favourable with regard to CE at the UFS. This could probably at least partly be attributed to the fact that the indicators used in the community engagement benchmarking checklist did not reflect the specific, contextualised CS mission, goals and objectives of the UFS.

A more recent development in the area of benchmarking pertains to the participation (since April 2006) of the Vice-Rector: Academic Planning and the Senior Lecturer: CSL in developing a *South African Survey Instrument for Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions*, a project undertaken by JET-CHESP. In future such close

³⁰ Available at Additional documentation (Institutional) file 2.3.1.1.4 for the *Progress Report: CS Policy Review (February 2006)*.

collaboration with other South African HE institutions working in this field will hopefully lead to even more useful and development-driven CS/CE benchmarking exercises.

7.7 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

It could be stated, without fear of contradiction, that the UFS has responded well to the need to expand the management structures (see 7.3.4 above) and procedural arrangements (e.g. partnership development, see 7.3.5) for the delivery of quality CS and CSL. The inclusive, participatory approach to the development of an academically integrated CS agenda which has been followed over the past three years (e.g. the policy review process, see paragraph 7.5.1) is currently bearing fruit. Considerable progress has been made towards increasing the levels of "buy-in" and ownership among staff members, although it is acknowledged that some academics will never accept that CS can be fully integrated with the (other) scholarly activities of a university.

The CDCS is intent on linking and synchronising CS activities with current and future broad initiatives of the UFS, including the Strategic Priorities, the Transformation Plan, the Focus Group strategy and the Tri-campus Project.

Recruiting adequate support for, and securing the participation of the relevant external stakeholders represent, and always will, a tremendous challenge in an environment where so many demands are made on the time and resources of the public sector in particular. Without their full co-operation and support, CS remains a demanding, even risky endeavour. However, the participatory, reciprocal ethos of CS at the UFS requires that it should be based firmly in broad, cooperative partnerships where all parties pull their resources together to build a better province and region.

In conclusion, we cite the following statement³¹ which defines the UFS commitment to quality delivery of academically integrated community service:

In South Africa we currently need courageous scholars with a firm commitment to the "public good", as defined democratically by all those who are involved. These scholars should not be afraid either to leave the comfort zones of their laboratory or lecture room, or to give up the hegemonic position of scientific knowledge. They should be brave enough to take outcomes-based education one (inevitable) step further; that is, to include the responsive, collaborative and interdisciplinary approach of community service which is fully integrated with teaching, learning and research. In this regard the UFS intends to take incremental steps from policy to practice so that an enabling environment is available to its staff, students and partners.

³¹ For example, a paper presented at the international conference: EMSU 2002 in Africa, Environmental Management for Sustainable Universities: The Role of Higher Education in Sustainable Development, 11-13 September 2002, Rhodes University, Grahamstown. A reworked and updated version of the paper is available at http://www.uovs.ac.za/documents/community_service/2005-5/2005_09_Community_service_sustainable_development_policy_web.pdf