

2
0
2
2



ANNUAL REPORT

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

T: +27 51 401 2819 | E: wahlwp@ufs.ac.za | www.ufs.ac.za

*Inspiring excellence,
transforming lives
through quality,
impact, and care.*

VISION **130**
*Renew and Reimagine
for 2034*

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



UFS
STUDENT AFFAIRS
STUDENTESAKE
DITABA TSA BATHUTI

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
--------------------	---

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS	2
-----------------------------	---

<i>Reflecting on success</i>	2
------------------------------------	---



STUDENT SUCCESS	4
-----------------------	---

<i>2022 progress towards strategic goals</i>	5
--	---



STUDENT WELLBEING	10
-------------------------	----

<i>2022 progress towards strategic goals</i>	11
--	----



STUDENT DEVELOPMENT	23
---------------------------	----

<i>2022 progress towards strategic goals</i>	24
--	----



STUDENT EXPERIENCE	27
--------------------------	----

<i>2022 progress towards strategic goals</i>	28
--	----

NEW CULTURE AND STRUCTURE	32
---------------------------------	----

CONCLUSION	35
------------------	----



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: DSA Strategic focus areas	1
Figure 2: DSA Functional Areas	3
Figure 3: Number of students registered with CUADS in 2022 by campus	6
Figure 4: Student participation in FTEN events	29
Figure 5: DSA Circles.....	32

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Student success objectives.....	4
Table 2: Student success anticipated outcomes	4
Table 3: Number of FTEN accommodated in on-campus residences 2022	5
Table 4: Student wellbeing objectives	10
Table 5: Student wellbeing anticipated outcomes.....	10
Table 6: Student and staff sports achievements	13
Table 7: Overview of activities to promote student wellbeing in 2022.....	18
Table 8: Student counselling and development sessions booked and attended	19
Table 9: Number of emergency sessions booked and attended	20
Table 10: Number of calls to SADAG by month, gender, race, and campus	20
Table 11: Student development objectives	23
Table 12: Student development anticipated outcomes	23
Table 13: Student experience objectives	27
Table 14: Student experience anticipated outcomes	27



INTRODUCTION

The work of the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) is central to the academic project of the University of the Free State (UFS). In support of the academic project, DSA aims to create a socially just student life environment conducive to student academic success, wellbeing, experience and development.

DSA offers aligned services on all three University campuses to all students at the University. DSA strives to provide services and projects that humanise the student environment and aims to deliver DSA's Strategic Key Areas in support of the University's strategic objectives.

In 2021 DSA developed its strategy (DSA 2022-2026), which committed the Division to realising the Institutional Transformation Plan. The DSA Strategy articulates the aspirations and commitment of all its departments to ensure an alignment with the UFS strategy.

The DSA aims to align itself accurately with the vision of the UFS: The UFS is a research-led, student-centred and regionally-engaged university that contributes to development and social justice through the production of globally competitive graduates and knowledge.

One aspect of this vision that is highly relevant to the specific institutional role of the DSA is the vision to be a student-centred university. Therefore, the strategic direction and organisational structure of the DSA are underpinned by a vision to be student-centred.

THIS ASPIRATION HAS THREE IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS.

- Firstly, it implies nurturing a disposition to deeply understand and respond to students' learning and developmental needs. This is important for the DSA, as it wishes to contribute to the *"production of globally competitive graduates"*.
- Secondly, it implies the strategic alignment of DSA departments, centres, offices, programmes and services to enable sufficient agility and flexibility to address students' learning and developmental needs effectively.
- Thirdly, it implies that the DSA will position itself as a leader in the various areas represented by different functional areas, and in the process enhance the impact and visibility of the UFS.

The DSA Strategy identifies four strategic focus areas (see Figure 1). The key achievements regarding and progress within these strategic focus areas are the focal point of this annual report.

During 2021 DSA underwent a structural change due to the incorporation of Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA), Kopsie Sport and Kopsie Health into the Division. The expansion necessitated revisiting the DSA's strategic objectives and structure. On 28 and 29 October 2021, the Department of Student Affairs underwent a strategic planning session to set a renewal trajectory in response to the Division's external review report and the changes recently introduced in the Division, including the integration of the three incorporated departments and the DSA's alignment to the University's Multi-Campus Management Model. The two-day strategic planning session produced a strategic document which gave rise to a new DSA organisational structure and related realignments.

The new Student Affairs structure is premised on Circles, Focus Areas, Cross-Functional Teams and Communities of Practice. It aims to create an effective, single DSA across the entire University to enhance alignment and offer equitable services to all three delivery sites. In addition to progress related to the five strategic areas, this report provides an overview of the progress towards establishing a new culture within DSA.

Figure 1: DSA Strategic focus areas





STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

REFLECTING ON SUCCESS

The DSA aims to achieve specific impact, outcomes, and outputs for each key strategic area.

Impact refers to the long-term systemic changes the DSA intends to see in the organisation, the University community, and the higher education sector. *Outcomes* refer to specific medium-term (3< years) changes in individual staff and students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. *Outputs* refer to specific short-term (1-2 years) projects resulting in tangible products (e.g., documents, publications, webinars, awareness campaigns, etc.).

It is envisaged that the effective implementation of short-term outputs would result in achieving medium-term outcomes. Furthermore, achieving medium-term outcomes would result in the long-term impact that the DSA envisions.

To achieve impact and understand how outputs and activities contribute to change, specific objectives have been identified for the four strategic areas.

The four sections below provide a summary of each key strategic area. The summary provides an overview of the expected impact in each focus area, a narrative description of what the strategic focus area encompasses, and the objectives and expected outcomes. These summaries represent a framework within which the annual progress of the Division can be understood. A descriptive narrative of progress and key achievements for 2022 follows the summaries.

Data for this annual report has been drawn from the quarterly reports prepared by the functional DSA areas during 2022.

Figure 2: DSA Functional Areas

 <p>Health & Wellness Centre</p>	 <p>Housing and Residence Affairs</p>	 <p>Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS)</p>	 <p>KovsieSport</p>
 <p>Social Support Office</p>	 <p>Student Governance Office</p>	 <p>Student Counselling and Development</p>	 <p>Arts and Culture Office</p>
 <p>Career Services Office</p>	 <p>Food Environment Office</p>	 <p>Leadership Development</p>	 <p>First Year Orientation</p>
 <p>Student Media</p>	 <p>Dialotuges Office</p>	 <p>Peer Mentoring</p>	 <p>Kovsie ACT</p>

STUDENT SUCCESS



UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028 alignment

Ensuring the efficiency of academic programmes, offerings and academic support systems.

Objective 4.4

Envisaged impact

“An environment that is conducive to the learning and success of students.

DSA forms part of an integrated infrastructure of student success.”

This strategic area focuses on students’ academic success and contributing towards closing the achievement gap. To this end, the DSA aims to create an **environment conducive to all students’ learning and success** on all three UFS campuses. The DSA, therefore, builds **close collaboration with academic centres and faculties** to create a student success infrastructure at the UFS. Furthermore, it is essential to provide **more and better student representation in academic affairs** to facilitate the co-creation of an academically conducive environment. Finally, the DSA aspires to **use data and data analytics** in an integrated and collaborative way, to enhance success.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the objectives identified for this strategic focus area.

Table 1: Student success objectives

OBJECTIVES		
Objective 1.1 A holistic and integrated success infrastructure established.	Objective 1.2 More and better student representation in academic affairs.	Objective 1.3 Use of data and data analytics to enhance student success increased.

The set of outcomes related to the student success focus area is summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Student success anticipated outcomes

CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS	CHANGES IN BEHAVIOURS AND SKILLS	CHANGES IN ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION
Within DSA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data and analytics to understand and respond to the needs of students. Establish a knowledge base on student learning and success. Raise awareness and create an understanding among coaches and sport managers about academic support for students. Raise awareness and create an understanding among staff about the necessity to create a holistic and integrated support structure for student success. 	Within DSA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create integrated and holistic support systems around relevant needs areas. Build collaboration and partnerships with faculties, academic entities, and other support divisions. Upskill and reskill support and academic staff. 	Within DSA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value collaboration and data-driven praxis. Value the role of Faculty Councils and relevant sub-structures to make the faculty environment more conducive to student learning and success. Value and advance the social dimensions of learning.
Within UFS student community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness among students about the availability of support throughout the student journey. 	Within UFS student community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise academic excellence. Use colleges as learning communities to integrate the social and academic contexts of the student experience. 	Within UFS student community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivate students toward success by exposing them to healthy role models.

2022 PROGRESS TOWARDS STRATEGIC GOALS

In line with the strategic objectives, there have been several highlights related to promoting student success in 2022.

Holistic and integrated success infrastructure

During 2022 the various functional areas within DSA worked towards establishing an environment conducive to all students' learning and success on all three UFS campuses (Objective 1.1). There were several key achievements, as highlighted below.

Appropriate living environment

Appropriate living spaces ensure that students are in an environment that is conducive to their academic success. Adequate on- and off-campus accommodation is thus an important component of creating a holistic and integrated success infrastructure.



Through a dedicated, focused approach, the percentage of first-time entering (FTEN) students living in campus residences was increased in 2022. More than a third (36%) of the 9045 FTENs registered for 2022 resided in UFS residences. This increase aligns with the UFS drive to accommodate as many FTENs as possible in residence. Table 3 shows the number of FTEN students accommodated in on-campus residences per campus.

Table 3: Number of FTEN accommodated in on-campus residences 2022

CAMPUS	FTEN TARGET	ACTUAL INTAKE
Bloemfontein	1 800	1 991
Qwaqwa	636	745
South	624	557
Total	3 060	3 293

Residence placement and the uptake of beds stabilised on all three campuses in Quarter 2. Compared to 2020 and 2021 (where it was not possible to fill residences to capacity), all efforts were focused on reaching full capacity in 2022. On both Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa campuses, occupancy exceeded 90%, while on the South Campus, occupancy reached 83%. In the second semester, occupancy steadily increased to 97% and 99.8% on the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa campuses, respectively, while on the South Campus, occupancy was 79.8%.

A steady flow of postdoctoral students arrived at the UFS, enabling Accommodation Administration to accommodate more than 50 researchers. This represents the highest number of postdoctoral students ever accommodated on campus.

A survey for South Campus residence students was undertaken in Quarter 2. The overall feedback received was positive, and the necessary steps were taken to address the matters raised.

In 2022, HRA was approached by Sol Plaatje University to benchmark on residence life, its operations, different residence life staff, duties and responsibilities, salaries, residence life dynamics, etc. The benchmarking was well received.

Staff in the off-campus office (in Bloemfontein) played a significant role in ensuring that private student accommodation met the requirements of the national norms and standards through accreditation (including inspections of student addresses). This process will further be supported by the municipal By-Law on Student Accommodation, promulgated towards the end of 2021 by ensuring that private student accommodation is more regulated. Up to the end of June 2022, more than 850 addresses were visited to accredit and provisionally accredit as many student accommodation establishments as possible. The inspection process was concluded

towards the end of August. More than 1 400 addresses were visited, and 1 407 student addresses had been either provisionally or fully accredited. These addresses represent 16 667 beds and 580 service providers. With the extension of the closing date to 30 September 2022, a few late inspections were conducted, ensuring service providers' payment.

On the Qwaqwa campus, service providers began submitting application forms, and 833 were processed by the end of Quarter 3. A new office for off-campus accommodation was established at South Campus in 2022.



Social support to enhance academic success

The Social Support Office (SSO) created an integrated infrastructure of support to advance students' academic success by providing support during the registration period through meals, residence placements and other relevant support.

Throughout the academic year, the office writes motivations to faculties for students during academic exclusions and recommends extra support to the students to ensure academic success.



Support to promote success among students with disabilities

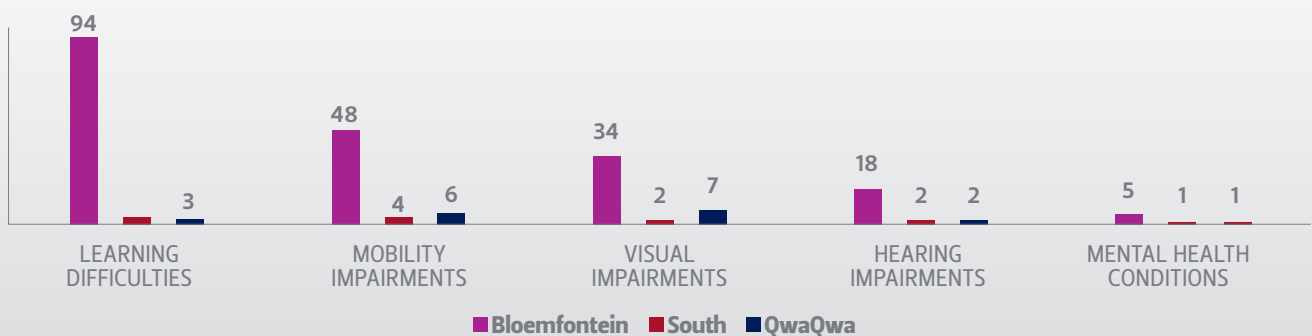
Ongoing progress is being made to support students with disabilities on all three campuses through the services of CUADS. CUADS' WhatsApp number is a convenient way for students to communicate when they need assistance around campus directly or indirectly relating to their academics.

Regarding physical infrastructure, a new venue in the Bloemfontein Modlec Building was allocated for alternative assessment arrangements, and the CUADS office on the Qwaqwa campus was moved to the ground floor to improve accessibility.

CUADS registered 19 first years (9 visual impairments, 5 mobility impairments, 4 hearing impairments, and 1 mental health condition), with 15 on the Bloemfontein campus and four on the South Campus. There were 12 Deaf students registered at the UFS, the largest number since establishing a Sign Language interpreter service in 2005.

Figure 3 shows the number of students registered with CUADS across the three campuses in 2022.

Figure 3: Number of students registered with CUADS in 2022 by campus



Support provided to students during their time on campus has yielded benefits. There were 63 students with disabilities who obtained their qualifications in 2022.

Safe, reliable transport to and from campus

On the Qwaqwa campus, a student transport agreement was negotiated for transporting off-campus students. A contract between Management and QWAUTA was agreed on. The transport arrangement was implemented, with costs subtracted from students' meal allowances.

The South Campus Student Transport Services ran a trial period between 21-25 March 2022. The purpose was to observe how many students would use the bus and whether the numbers would be sufficient to ensure that the bus could run and be financially feasible. During the trial period, the numbers gradually rose, and more than 60 students were using the student transport. The trial was successful, and the decision was made to proceed with a 114-seater bus daily. The South Campus Student Transport Service provides transport to students who commute from Bloemfontein or neighbouring areas to the South Campus for academic activities. The service ensures that the students are safe and have access to transport at a reasonable rate. The bus service costs students R12 a trip and R24 a day. These costs are more reasonable than the standard R56 that a normal taxi would cost.

Targeted Activities To Promote Academic Success

In Quarter 2, on the Qwaqwa campus, lecture rooms were opened to allow off-campus students to study following power outages off-campus, including at the 24hr study facilities.

Workshops on how to study effectively were presented both on the Qwaqwa campus and in the virtual space through weekly talks on Q-Lit (the campus radio station). Weekly slots were scheduled on the radio to assist students in focusing on their studies and improving their academic performance. Examination preparation camps were organised in collaboration with the Academic Council, where refreshment stalls were provided to keep students nourished during their study time.

Peer supporters on the Qwaqwa campus were trained in collaboration with the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to assist students with academic and social support.

Sports practices are scheduled to not clash with students' core academic activities. In some cases where student-athletes were under academic pressure, arrangements were made for them to attend fewer practices to allow them to focus on their studies.

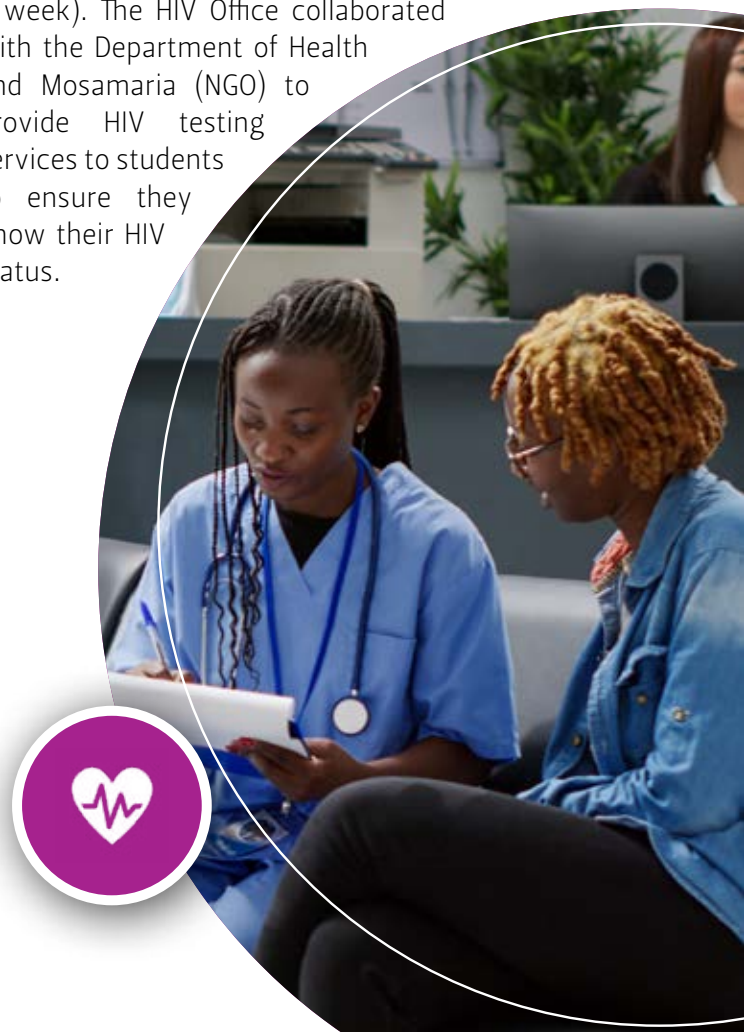
COLLABORATION ACROSS CAMPUS TO PROMOTE SUCCESS

DSA must build close collaboration with academic centers and faculties to establish a holistic and integrated success infrastructure. Many collaborations are ongoing and well-established, and in 2022 new collaborations were initiated. Collaboration occurs across functional areas within DSA and with the broader UFS community. Examples of key collaborations from 2022 are provided below.

The Health and Wellness Centre collaborated with internal UFS departments such as CUADS, Student Counselling and Development (SCD), the Gender Equality and Anti-discrimination Office (GEADO), and the Department of Social Work to train peer educators on the integrated health and wellness programme.

The Centre worked with SCD, the SSO, the CTL, the Food Environment Office (FEO) and academic departments to create awareness of health and wellness matters.

The HIV Office collaborates with the Student Support Service Department and external partners in rendering health and wellness programmes on the UFS campuses. In collaboration with SCD, a counsellor/social worker was allocated to Health and Wellness who specifically supported the HIV-positive students regarding mental health (10 hours a week). The HIV Office collaborated with the Department of Health and Mosamaria (NGO) to provide HIV testing services to students to ensure they know their HIV status.





CUADS planned and coordinated Sign Language interpreters with Interpreter Services for communication access for students with hearing impairments. Coordination of individual tutor support commenced in cooperation with different Faculty Teaching and Learning Coordinators. In the second semester, tutor services were coordinated for eight CUADS students in 14 modules.

Every month, CUADS presents information on their services to newly appointed staff through Human Resources' (HR) onboarding programme. The Center was invited to present at CTL's New Academic Staff Orientation workshop for newly appointed academic staff on universal access, and the support provided to students with disabilities and classroom accommodations. The Center was also invited to the Faculty of Humanities' Support Staff meeting to share a brief presentation on CUADS services and engage regarding disability support within the faculties. Discussions with CTL took place to look at the rollout of Blackboard Ally, which will assist in providing accessible study material.



The SSO collaborated with the Student Representative Council (SRC), Protection Services, and HRA to respond to students' accommodation. The Office collaborated with faculties as they welcomed first-year students, presenting and raising awareness about available support services throughout their student journey.

The Office works towards creating integrated and holistic support systems with the FEO and collaborates with faculties, HRA and external partners (pregnancy crisis center) to accommodate support pregnant students to ensure academic success.



SCD is in regular contact with CTL on possible collaborations on how to support students in a more integrative way. Interaction with the academic advisers is ongoing.



The Arts and Culture Office was invited to present to tutors within CTL on cultural diversity and cultural competencies. The engagement focused on how the arts is an excellent tool in bridging gaps between individuals and how art assists in building cultural competencies.

STUDENT REPRESENTATION IN ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

In line with Objective 1.2, Faculty Student Council (FSC) is a mechanism for increasing student representation in academic affairs.

FSC elections were conducted online through the Evasys platform between 25 and 26 April 2022.

During Quarter 1, operational training was conducted for newly elected FSC members on the Bloemfontein campus. Year plans were set up for the FSCs, and a strategic workshop was held for FSC chairpersons.

On the South Campus, the Economic and Management Sciences FSC held a meet and greet on 27 July 2022. The purpose was to officially introduce the South Campus FSC to the management of the Faculty on the Bloemfontein campus. The Humanities FSC held a meet and greet on 4 August 2022 with the management of the Humanities Faculty from the Bloemfontein campus. The FSC, in both meetings, were provided the platform to engage on academic issues at the South Campus and to seek recommendations on how they can effectively assist students moving forward. Information sessions were held in Quarter 3 in the Faculties of the Humanities and Natural and Agricultural Sciences.

There remains some resistance towards the recognition and acknowledgement of Class Reps as well as FSCs within faculties. There is also a lack of documentation about FSC representation in various campus and institutional committees. This results in uncertainty about their legitimacy in campus and institutional governance structures.

Representation from student governance structures within Faculty Readmission Appeals Committee (RAC) meetings is still unsatisfactory. However, Economic and Management Sciences, Natural and Agricultural Sciences as well as the Humanities have extended invitations to their RAC meetings.


RECOGNISING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Rewarding academic and other forms of excellence is an important motivator for students. In 2022 the HRA Coordinators and College Coordinators reviewed the Residence Committee “Excellence Awards Criteria” to be used for the Residence Committee (RC) Awards. This project was facilitated through a workshop and engaged other offices such as Sports, Arts and Culture.

In Quarter 3, the top 50 students were acknowledged for their academic excellence in their colleges and on the South Campus.

On the Qwaqwa campus (15 September 2022), the Golden Key International Honour Society Recognition ceremony was held with the National Office. At the ceremony, 110 new Golden Key members were inducted.

STUDENT WELLBEING



UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028 alignment

Ensuring the efficiency of academic programmes, offerings, and academic support systems.

Objective 4.4

Envisaged impact

An environment that enables the biopsychosocial flourishing of students.

The focus of this strategic area is the **holistic wellbeing of students**. In this regard, it is essential to provide greater access to services and opportunities that will **promote students' physical and mental wellbeing**. The DSA aspires to **use data and data analytics to understand students' biopsychosocial needs and respond accurately** and appropriately. Additionally, **providing accurate and appropriate information** to students and staff is crucial to establishing equitable services on all three UFS campuses. Furthermore, the DSA aspires to work collaboratively with various stakeholders to **enhance the safety and security of students**.

Table 4 below provides an overview of the objectives identified for this strategic focus area.

Table 4: Student wellbeing objectives

OBJECTIVES		
Objective 2.1 Students' physical wellbeing increased.	Objective 2.2 Students' mental wellbeing increased.	Objective 2.3 Students' safety and security increased.

The set of outcomes related to the student success focus area is summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Student wellbeing anticipated outcomes

CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS	CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR AND SKILLS	CHANGES IN ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION
Within DSA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data and data analytics to understand the needs of students. Provide accurate and appropriate information to staff on relevant topics. 	Within DSA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create integrated and holistic support systems around relevant needs areas. Use technology and digitalisation to open access and scale services. Create and implement a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) policy. Partner with provincial and national entities. Create systems of support in student communities through peer mentors and peer educators. Implement a multi-user programme for shared facilities. 	Within DSA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value collaboration and data-driven praxis. Value equitable services on all three UFS campuses. Prioritise a safe and secure environment for students. Value the alignment and coordination of sport and recreational activities within the capacity of available resources and technology.
Among UFS students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide accurate and appropriate information to students on relevant topics. 	Within UFS student community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation of all FTEN students in the Peer Mentor Programme. Provide access to all to sport. Enhance student physical activity. 	Within UFS student community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> De-stigmatise mental health.

2022 PROGRESS TOWARDS STRATEGIC GOALS

The focus of this strategic area is the holistic wellbeing of students. In this regard, it is essential to provide greater access to services and opportunities that will promote students' physical, social, and mental wellbeing.

In line with the strategic objectives, there have been several highlights related to student wellbeing in 2022.

PHYSICAL WELLBEING

In line with Objective 2.1, several activities and initiatives were implemented to promote the physical wellbeing of students – including initiatives to ensure food security, promote physical activity and participation in sports, and supporting students' physical health and social needs.

Promoting food security



The reopening of the South Campus Dining Hall under the management of HRA in January 2022 provided healthy, affordable meals to students, which meant they did not need to go off-campus to purchase food. It also provided a safe space for students to gather and socialise. In the second semester, a new initiative was launched where students could bring their own containers to buy the meal of the day for a lower price. This initiative helped students financially and protected the environment (as there were fewer takeaway containers and plastics).



The FEO established an online application system where food-insecure students on all three UFS campuses can apply for a No Student Hungry (NSH) bursary and food parcels. The system also enables data capturing.

The FEO began operating in the new store at Student Centre (Bloemfontein campus) in Quarter 1. In Quarter 2, a student assistant was appointed to manage store/office on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with Gift of the Givers for the Qwaqwa campus, and two deliveries were made in Quarter 1. On the Qwaqwa campus, the Gift of the Givers committed to sponsoring 200 packs of nutritional food monthly for a year. On the Bloemfontein campus, Gift of the Givers delivered 200 food parcels in June to the value of R48 000.00. An MOU was signed for 2023.

The MOU with Tiger Brands was renewed in Quarter 1, and three food deliveries were made.

In Quarter 2, a R130 000 donation was received for NSH, and food was secured from Rise Against Hunger to the value of R60 000. The total of value of food stock received in Quarter 2 was R750 000. In Quarter 3, a R45 000 donation was received for the NSH programme along with 800 food items for the food bank.

In the first three quarters of 2022, 5295 food parcels were distributed across the three campuses.

Other initiatives in the FEO were a Recipe Booklet distributed with food parcels and a Digital Storytelling workshop for students who are food insecure.

In the second semester, HRA on the Qwaqwa campus engaged the residences per college on food security. During these sessions, a quiz was held where meal vouchers for the dining halls were up for grabs.

The SSO and the FEO worked together on food security concerns. The 'Meal of the Day Programme' was established in 2022 at the South Campus. The office allocates meal vouchers to students who do not have any source of funding. This initiative offers an allowance to provide one balanced meal per day to students.



HRA worked closely with the SSO to provide discounted meal vouchers during the registration period (including emergency accommodation period) for those students who were financially unable to provide for themselves. During the registration period sanitary packs and hot meals, as part of the meal of the Day programme, were provided to students as an immediate response. A total of 1216 meals were provided to students in distress on the Bloemfontein and South campuses.



The UFS Food Environment Community Gardens are managed under the auspices of Kopsie ACT. RCs work together to keep the garden beds clean and maintained, and necessary maintenance on the food tunnels was done in 2022. From 24 January – 07 February, a total of 196kg of fresh produce was harvested. This fresh produce and 1002 non-perishable food items were distributed to students to help with food security. From April to June, 402,5kg of fresh produce was harvested, and over 1800 seedlings were planted. In Quarter 3, 330kg of produce was harvested, and a compost bed was created to make fertiliser. New hinges were installed and wax applied as part of the vegetable tunnel maintenance.



The collection of Santa's Shoebox ended on 31 January 2022. All items collected for this initiative were distributed by the FEO, targeting first years with vulnerable backgrounds.

On the Qwaqwa campus, DSA provided food support for students writing exams to ensure that no student sits for exams in discomfort, due to a lack of nutrition. Gas stoves were also provided to students in the residences to mitigate the electricity shutdown by Eskom. This circumvented a protest as students struggled to access energy to prepare their meals while preparing for exams.



ENSURING STUDENT HEALTH

In addition to providing their ongoing services during 2022, the Health and Wellness Centre held numerous events to promote students' health. These included:

- Four events to raise awareness around various HIV-related topics – one led by peer educators.
- First things first campaign (on all campuses) to increase knowledge and eliminate misinformation around communicable and non-communicable diseases (Quarters 1 and 3).
- Five HIV testing campaigns were held on the Bloemfontein campus in Quarter 3 in partnership with the Free State Department of Health (O2D).
- Several residences invited Professional nurses to "Teekan" sessions to talk about health matters and concerns in the specific residence.
- Two information sessions on mental health services.

At the testing campaigns, students were educated, tested, and screened for HIV and other health-related matters. Those who tested positive or were found to be at risk were referred to the Kopsie Health clinics.

There is an HIV support group for students infected or affected by HIV. There is regular engagement with the group, and additional supplements (e.g., food with the necessary nutrients) are provided to them – working closely with the FEO. In Quarter 2, the HIV support group had an art class where they shared stories and painted. In Quarter 3, they had a story telling session. A buddy system is in place where a student supports a student, especially supporting a newly diagnosed student. The buddy reports to the professional nurse should there be any problems.

The HIV Office partnered with Tholwana e Molemo (NGO) to support the University's LGBTQI programme.

An important milestone in 2022 was the approval of the HIV policy by the Rectorate in September.

In February, the Clinic on the Qwaqwa campus was assessed by the District Environmental Inspector and was approved to operate in 2022. The Manapo Hospital Laboratory trained three professional nurses to conduct the Rapid Antigen test and data capturing (CSA) on the COVID-19 software. In Quarter 1, 1311 students received service from the clinic. During student protests, the clinic was burnt down on the 4th of April 2022. The non-availability of services was a major setback, as students struggled to access medication, and nurses did not have space to work for almost two months.

PROMOTING AN ACTIVE AND FIT LIFESTYLE

A wide range of opportunities are available to students to promote a fit and active lifestyle.

KopsieFit (on the Bloemfontein campus) is fully operational and had an influx of members in Quarter 1 of 2022. Membership in Quarter 1 was 549, of which 413 were staff or student contracts. During March KopsieFit issued 189 new staff and student packages. In Quarter 2, KopsieFit saw a drop in the number of new members – this was expected as a major part of the term was dedicated to exams. However, membership increased in the second semester after a Women's Day promotion.

In Quarter 2, a proposal for access to campus for sports events was approved. The COVID-19 screening protocols allowed all sports to continue in an organised and safe environment to benefit students.

A KopsieSport staff member was transferred to the South Campus. A meeting with South Campus staff clarified the communication channels, line functions and implementation plan to allow an integrated approach for activating and developing sports on the South Campus.

KopsieFun, a recreational programme, was implemented in the second semester to allow all students to become more active. Various residences participated in these sessions.

More than 200 students participated in the Kopsie Gala held in the second semester.

The Qwaqwa campus hosted the Director's Tournament (semester 2), which was open for competitive and non-competitive sports, inclusive of indigenous games. Student Affairs staff also played against a selected team of on- and off-campus students.

Intra-campus Tournament finals took place at South Campus on 13 August 2022 for the first time.

Beyond the recreational aspects, students and staff excelled in various sporting activities during 2022 – as illustrated in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Student and staff sports achievements

SPORT	QUARTER	ACHIEVEMENT
ATHLETICS	1	Joane Gerber qualified to be considered in the national squad for long jump World Junior Championships.
	2	<p>Thirty (30) student-athletes were selected to represent the province at the ASA SA Senior Track and Field Championships. The Free State team won four medals, all by UFS students.</p> <p>Yolandi Stander won gold in the Women's Discus Throw</p> <p>Lizandre Mulder won silver in the Women 3000m Steeplechase and Casey Bosman bronze in the event.</p> <p>Peter Makgato won bronze in the Long Jump for men.</p> <p>Yolandi Stander and Lerato Sechele represented South Africa and Lesotho at Mauritius's CAA African Track and Field Championships.</p> <p>Thirty-Five (35) athletes - fifteen females, twenty males and one (1) guide - were selected to represent the UFS at the University Sports South Africa (USSA) Championship. KopsieAthletics accumulated four (4) gold, two (2) silver and five (5) bronze medals and finished in 6th position at this championship.</p>
		<p>IAAF World Juniors Athletic Championship (U/20): Four KopsieAthletics members were selected for the national team. The championships took place in Columbia (1-6 August 2022). Mine de Klerk achieved 2nd place in the women's discus throw.</p> <p>CUCSA Games: Eight UFS students were selected for the CUCSA Games 2022 held in Malawi (28 August - 3 September 2022).</p> <p>Athletics Free State Cross-country Championship (13 August 2022): Thirty- nine UFS athletes participated and obtained eight gold, three silver and four bronze medals.</p> <p>ASA SA Cross-country Championship (17 September 2022), Bergsig Akademie, Rustenburg: Twenty-four athletes were selected for participation. Lizandre Mulder finished 3rd in the Senior Women's 4km race.</p> <p>USSA cross-country championships: The championship was hosted by the University of North-west at their Mafikeng campus (29 September - 01 October 2022). KopsieAthletics entered 18 athletes. The team finished 4th overall, with three medals - two silver for women and one bronze for the men. The women finished 5th, while the men made 4th position overall. Ts'epang Sello obtained a silver medal in the 10km for women. The women's 10km team finished 2nd. Victor Makhebesela obtained the bronze medal in the 10km men's individual competition.</p>
BADMINTON	1	Two students (Robert Summers and Caden Kakora) formed part of the National Team that participated in the Thomas and Uber Cup African Championships in Uganda in February 2022. They finished third in the team competition.
	2	Robert Summers and Caden Kakora were part of the team that participated in the Commonwealth Games in England.



SPORT	QUARTER	ACHIEVEMENT
BASKETBALL	3/4	The UFS team participated in the USSA qualifiers in September. Both men's and women's teams participated in the national tournament in December.
BODYBUILDING	3/4	Three bodybuilding athletes qualified to compete at the Bodybuilding Nationals - Karabo Mokoena, Mthokozisi Makhoba and Thandolwethu Shezi.
CRICKET	1	Women's player, Annerie Dercksen, played for the Emerging Women's team against Zimbabwe.
FENCING	2	Reiner Veitch represented South Africa at the 2022 Africa Fencing Championship in Morocco.
	3	Renier Veitch participated in the Fencing Senior National tournament in Durban in September.
FOOTBALL	1	Staff member Godfrey Tenoff was reinstated as USSA Men's National Head Coach for 2022. UFS student, Bongane Tshabalala, was selected to represent the Free State at the National Championships in Johannesburg (March).
	2	UFS ladies' players, Mating Monkoane (Captain) and Montseng Matete were called to the Lesotho National training camp to prepare for the Cosafa Games from August 28 to September 11. Staff members Katleho Lechoo, Goodman Mazibuko and Ntando Nhlapho all served in the USSA Free State Football Interim PEC as Chairperson, Treasurer and Development Officer respectively.
	3	UFS men's team played in the Varsity Football semifinals and finished in third position. UFS women's team finished second in the SASOL Free State Provincial League Stream A. Sello Diphoko received a scholarship to attend the University of Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas, US.
HOCKEY	1	Shindre-Lee Simmons represented the SA Women's team at the Africa Cup in Ghana in January. Braam van Wyk (staff member) was selected as the new President of SFSHA during the 2022 AGM in February. He is also an Executive Member of the USSA Hockey Board. The dominance of UFS hockey within the Free State keeps growing, with 18 players (six ladies and 12 men), three coaches selected for Free State u21 teams.
	2	Sare Loubcher represented the SA u21 ladies' team in the Junior World Cup played in Potchefstroom. Luke Makeleni (staff member) was the assistant coach for the team. Shindre-Lee Simmons was selected to represent the South African Women's Hockey team in the World Championships.

SPORT	QUARTER	ACHIEVEMENT
	3	<p>International and National Participation:</p> <p>Shindre-Lee Simmons represented South Africa during the 2022 World Cup held in Spain and The Netherlands. She also represented South Africa during the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.</p> <p>Izaiah April represented the SA U21 team during the 2022 Senior IPT held in Pretoria from 29 August-3 September 2022 where they received a bronze medal.</p> <p>Nine students were selected for the Free State men's team that participated in the Interprovincial tournament from 29 August-3 September.</p> <p>Seven students were selected to participate in the Womens' Interprovincial tournament. Sulette Kotze was the assistant coach of the Free State womens' team.</p> <p>District/Metro participation: The UFS entered four teams into the Free State Hockey Association (FSHA) League: Blues mens' team, as well as the Reds women's team won their respective leagues for a record 16th consecutive year.</p> <p>USSA Participation: The UFS men's and women's teams participated in their respective A-section tournaments held in Cape Town in July. The men finished in sixth position and the women fifth.</p>
JUDO	3	Muzi Mosese qualified to participate at the National Judo Ranking Tournament.
KARATE	2	Elmien Viljoen participated in the African Karate Federation (UFAK) Region 5 Championship in Durban and won a silver medal.
	3/4	<p>Elmien Viljoen participated in the Commonwealth Games held in Birmingham from 12 September.</p> <p>Luvuyo Shoco was part of the USSA Karate National Squad that participated at the FISU University World Cup Combat Sports in Turkey from 27-30 September.</p>
NETBALL	1	<p>Four players were invited to the Protea training camp, with Refloe Nketsa included in the South African squad for final selection for Commonwealth Games in August 2022 in England.</p> <p>Sixteen students represented their respective teams (Free State Crinums, Mpumalanga Sunbirds, and Northern Cape Diamonds) in the Telkom Netball League.</p>
	2	<p>Refloe Nketsa and Kowsie Alumni, Lefebre Rademan, Khanyisa Chawane and Karla Pretorius received National Contracts from Netball South Africa.</p> <p>Khanyisa and Lefebre were part of the squad of 15 for the Commonwealth Games during August 2022 in England.</p>
		<p>Lefebre Rademan and former Kowsie, Khanyisa Chawane, were part of the netball team at the Commonwealth Games.</p> <p>Four Kowsie players represented the USSA netball team at the CUCSA Games in Malawi and won a gold medal.</p> <p>Two players, Xandri Fourie and Refloe Nketsa, were included in the Protea Fast5 team.</p> <p>Several Kowsie players were included in SA squads after the SA Championships.</p> <p>KowsieNetball won the bronze medal at the annual USSA tournament in Pretoria.</p>

SPORT	QUARTER	ACHIEVEMENT
RUGBY	2	Jooste Nel was included in the SA u/20 training squad after the Varsity Cup. Eighteen (18) players from the UFS were included in the Free State u/21 squad.
	3	The Kovsies Sevens Team (Impimpies) played in the USSA Sevens Tournament in Kimberley on 23-25 September 2022. They finished in 7th position overall. The team qualified for Varsity Sports 2023.
SWIMMING	3/4	The UFS women finished in 4th position with one gold, one silver and one bronze medal at the USSA Championships where the men finished in 9th position with one gold medal. Combined, the UFS finished in 6th position, with a silver medal in the 200m mixed freestyle relay and a bronze medal in the 200m medley relay.
TENNIS	3	Women's team won gold and men bronze at an Inter-University tennis tournament in Potchefstroom.
TABLE TENNIS	1	The UFS team participated in the USSA tournament in Kimberley. The men and ladies won silver in the team event and also won three gold and two silver medals in the individual events.
VOLLEYBALL	3	Mmamoloko Malema represented the Free State Volleyball team in the VSA National League.

KovsieSoccer approached SCD to establish the second pillar of the Empower high-performance programme. The focus falls on the holistic development of the student-athlete, aiding students outside the sport environment. SCD presented three workshops in the second semester for identity, self-image, and coping with stress. The other component of the development programme is related to sports performance, where student counselling will offer a programme called GROW. This is designed to develop resilience in an individual – speaking to the overall wellbeing of students.

KovsieSoccer will be the pilot project and, when proven successful will be rolled out to other sports codes.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

In advancing the wellbeing of students, the SSO held 546 individual consultations in Quarter 1 with students on psychosocial issues such as pregnancy, harassment, family matters, academic exclusions, NSFAS, bus tickets, meal vouchers and toiletries. All students were assisted with the SSO intervention platforms.

In Quarter 2, 620 individual consultations with students were held on issues such as pregnancy, family challenges, bus tickets, meal vouchers and toiletries.

In the second semester, 698 individual consultations with students were held on issues such as pregnancy, family challenges, bus tickets, meal vouchers, toiletries, drug abuse and bereavement.

During 2022, social work services were extended to students on the South Campus on an appointment basis. Faculties, staff, or students concerned about another student, or who needs a consultation, or assistance regarding a referral, are now contacting the SSO.

All three campuses were allocated an intern in the SSO. This assisted in reducing the workload for employees and has increased productivity, and is a temporary relief to the challenge of staff capacity at the SSO. It has also assisted the office in achieving one of its strategies, which is student development, and results in increasing the interns' skills and experience in the workplace.

The approved Rectorate cash donation for bereaved families became operational.

On the Qwaqwa campus, Social Support Week was held from 8-11 March (Quarter 1). In Quarter 2, HRA, in partnership with Health and Wellness, facilitated successful programmes on health and wellness (e.g., HIV and AIDS awareness, advocacy and training). A social drive was activated within the residences, whereby the leadership and students started to collect sanitary towels and distribute them to those in need. The Golden Key society students collected sanitary towels in August 2022 and donated these to the SSO.

On the Bloemfontein campus, the Social Support Week was hosted from 10-13 August 2022 in collaboration with stakeholders such as Protection Services, the HIV and AIDS office, GEADO, and the SCD. The purpose of the week was to inform students about the services offered by the SSO and to discuss all forms of safety precautions necessary to ensure a safe campus.



CREATING AWARENESS ON KEY TOPICS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Providing accurate and appropriate information to students and staff is crucial to ensure that students are aware of the support available to them. This is one of the outcomes identified within the Student Wellbeing focus area that contributes to advancing all three objectives. Several important actions were taken in 2022 to achieve this outcome. Table 7 summarises some of the key events – across various functional areas – targeted at creating awareness among students on important topics related to their wellbeing.

Table 7: Overview of activities to promote student wellbeing in 2022

MONTH	ACTIVITY	REACH	DEPARTMENT/UNIT/CENTRE
Feb 14-19	Vooma Campaign (to promote COVID-19 policy)		
March 8	HIV workshop at Outeniqua residence		Health and Wellness Centre
10	HIV prevention virtual webinar		Health and Wellness Centre
11	Sex and Sexuality Dialogue (Equitas Auditorium)	160 students	Health and Wellness Centre
14-18	First Things First campaign Bloemfontein campus	261 students (tested for HIV)	Health and Wellness Centre
22-25	First Things First Campaign South Campus	220 students (tested for HIV)	Health and Wellness Centre
23-25	First Things First Campaign Qwaqwa campus	154 students tested for HIV	Health and Wellness Centre
30	HIV awareness – Qwaqwa campus		Health and Wellness Centre
May 18	Information sessions on mental health services Ardour residence	36 students	Health and Wellness Centre
20	Information session on mental health services Outeniqua residence	67 students	Health and Wellness Centre
21	HIV prevention and sexuality dialogue led by peer educators at ResPublica Lincoln House	32 students	Health and Wellness Centre
Sept	First Things First campaign (Bloemfontein campus)	1333 students	Health and Wellness Centre
	First Things First Campaign (South Campus)	327 students	Health and Wellness Centre
	HIV awareness (Bloemfontein campus)	2862 students	Health and Wellness Centre
	HIV awareness (South Campus)	2062 students	SSO
	Alcohol and substance abuse (Bloemfontein campus)	275 students	SSO
	Alcohol and substance abuse (South Campus)	1258 student	SSO
	Deaf awareness (Bloemfontein campus)	102 students	
	Deaf awareness (South Campus)	136 students	
13-15 Sept	Substance and Drugs Abuse Campaign		SSO

In Quarter 1, the SSO advanced the biopsychosocial wellbeing of students by collaborating with the National, Regional and Provincial Department of Social Development in raising awareness around issues of GBV, substance abuse (drugs) and alcohol, which led to a change in behaviour. The Department of Social Development had a slogan for this campaign: “*Don’t hang the dream, hang the bottle*”, which was its way of advising students not to take drugs but to concentrate on their studies.



The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Awareness event was hosted from 13–15 September 2022 across all three campuses. The Office collaborated with the SCD office, the HIV and AIDS office, Protection Services, the Free State Liquor Board, AURORA, and the expertise of a financial adviser. This event aimed to raise awareness and sensitise students about alcohol and drug abuse. The sessions covered the definition of substance abuse, the causes of substance dependency and addiction, the dangers of drinking and driving, and the various avenues through which those struggling with substance abuse can go for help. The Office reached about 5 000 students across all three campuses.

MENTAL HEALTH

Individual, confidential counselling on various psychological, emotional, and developmental issues is provided to students through SCD. This aims to support students in resolving challenges that may impede the fulfilment of their potential. Individual sessions are held with students on an appointment basis. During the hard lockdown and level 1 status of South Africa, the platforms utilised in individual sessions were in accordance with the preference of and resources available to the students. They included telephonic, online video, face-to-face, and email counselling.



The demand for mental health support remains high across campuses, and several actions were taken in 2022 to improve student support. On the Qwaqwa campus, consolidating the SCD offices into a less noisy area improved the environment for effective counselling sessions. SCD added a junior and a senior psychologist to the Unit on the Qwaqwa campus in Quarter 1 of 2022. An administrative intern was also secured to assist. The SCD reception and offices at South Campus were refurbished with the doors painted, a fully-furnished reception area, as well as a space for psychometric assessments.

The three colleagues appointed on external funding from the Moshal Foundation were appointed permanently with SCD funding during 2022 on Bloemfontein Campus. In addition, three administrative interns (funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)) joined SCD on the Bloemfontein and South Campuses.

Table 8 below shows the number of counselling and development sessions booked and attended across the three UFS campuses for 2022.

Table 8: Student counselling and development sessions booked and attended

	QUARTER 1				QUARTER 2				QUARTER 3				QUARTER 4			
	Bfn	S	QQ	Total	Bfn	S	QQ	Total	Bfn	S	QQ	Total	Bfn	S	QQ	Total
Total Sessions Booked	669	35	82	786	1308	102	377	1787	1399	127	348	1874	1680	147	458	6744
Total Sessions Attended	464	18	48	530	852	58	238	1148	916	78	264	1258	1055	81	296	4388
Difference	205	17	34	256	456	44	139	639	483	9	84	616	625	66	162	2356
Cancelled by Student	69	5	7	81	124	19	27	170	112	17	22	151	142	16	39	599
Cancelled (Other)	47	5	12	64	82	14	75	171	74	2	9	85	67	14	18	427
Missed by Students	89	7	15	111	250	11	37	298	297	0	53	380	417	36	107	1349
Total	205	17	34	256	456	44	139	639	483	9	84	616	626	66	164	2375
New Students Booked	196	17	45	258	327	19	164	510	303	30	177	510	438	20	172	1969
New Students Attended	157	7	30	194	260	14	115	389	216	25	141	382	326	16	123	1475

Individual appointments are set aside for emergency sessions (e.g., suicide attempts, suicidal thoughts, trauma), to assess and contain the emergency and make the relevant referrals. Table 9 shows the number of emergency sessions booked and attended across the three UFS campuses for 2022.

Table 9: Number of emergency sessions booked and attended

	QUARTER 1				QUARTER 2				QUARTER 3				QUARTER 4			
	Bfn	S	QQ	Total	Bfn	S	QQ	Total	Bfn	S	QQ	Total	Bfn	S	QQ	Total
Sessions booked	47	1	0	48	124	5	9	138	113	12	9	134	44	12	10	66
Sessions attended	36	1	0	37	111	4	9	124	98	10	9	117	38	9	10	71

The dedicated, toll-free student mental health careline, operated by the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), took effect on 1 September 2020. This helpline provides free telephonic counselling, containment, crisis intervention and support, as well as referrals to mental health professionals and other psychosocial resources to all registered UFS students. Each student caller's details and location are recorded, along with a detailed description of the nature of the difficulties the student is experiencing, as well as the support provided in terms of referrals / advice on how best to manage their situation. According to the case management principles applied by SADAG, follow-up calls are made for students in crisis to track their situation and ensure they are making positive progress.

Since 1 September 2021, SADAG also took over the screening process from SCD. This means that SADAG first contacts every student who contacts SCD for a session and an initial screening session is conducted telephonically. From these calls/sessions, SADAG will then refer students to SCD if the student is still in need of further counselling or intervention. If a student is not referred to SCD for further intervention, the student has been sufficiently assisted. The number of students assisted by month, gender, race, and campus is shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Number of calls to SADAG by month, gender, race, and campus

MONTH		JAN-22		FEB-22		MAR-22		APR-22		MAY-22		JUN-22		JUL-22		AUG-22		SEP-22		OCT-22		NOV-22		DEC-22	
NUMBER OF CALLS		367		375		392		409		392		416		402		434		486		502		538		389	
GENDER (%)		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
		73	27	80	20	78	22	79	21	76	24	75	25	81	19	76	24	76	24	70	30	71	29	83	17
RACE	African	75%		87%		93%		79%		83%		74%		74%		64%		71%		72%		85		89%	
	White	9%		8%		2%		19%		8%		11%		14%		33%		12%		15%		9%		0%	
	Coloured	11%		4%		4%		2%		4%		6%		8%		3%		15%		8%		6%		11%	
	Indian	5%		1%		1%		0%		5%		9%		4%		0%		2%		5%		0%		0%	
CAMPUS	BFN	55%		77%		78%		39%		52%		59%		64%		52%		52%		54%		59%		50%	
	QQ	36%		21%		17%		2%		1%		8%		5%		1%		5%		3%		4%		33%	
	South	9%		2%		5%		0%		2%		1%		1%		2%		2%		2%		3%		0%	
	Unknown							59%		45%		32%		30%		45%		41%		41%		34%		17%	

In 2022, SCD successfully established an agreement with ER24 to provide a dedicated, comprehensive, and integrated 24-hour emergency service for mental and medical emergencies. A pilot project for a 24/7 emergency service focusing on trauma counselling, too, started on 1 October for six months. During the ad hoc assistance of ER24 during August and September 2022, 21 and 18 students in crisis could be assisted in the respective months. During October 22 individual students received trauma counselling and one group session

was conducted. During November 25 individual trauma counselling sessions were conducted. Furthermore, an application was submitted to the Health Professions Council in South Africa (HPCSA) in August to be accredited as a host facility to train Counselling Psychology Interns. This was approved and during November three Counselling Psychology Interns could be appointed for 2023.



The need for mental health support arises for many students while they are in their residences, and Residence Heads need to provide support. Yet, they feel ill-equipped to do so. To address this gap, HRA and SCD collaborated to offer a workshop tailor-made for Residence Heads, “Assisting staff to help students in distress”. SCD facilitated the workshop. This created an appetite to collaborate and strengthen the relationship between the two offices, as there is a strong commitment from both divisions to positively contribute to student wellbeing. This was the first step in rekindling the partnership between SCD and HRA, specifically with Residence Heads, and can be regarded as a major achievement. This includes the campus residences as well as day houses. The training was conducted with South and Bloemfontein campus colleagues during March and Qwaqwa colleagues during April. The focus was on dealing with distressed students and how to practically manage this in a residential space. It was also determined that SCD would be attending the meetings of the Residential Heads regularly to ensure continuous interaction.

In addition to the above, SCD also offers career counselling to registered students and Grade 11 / 12 learners to help them make career, educational, and life decisions. The career counselling process includes a complete psychometric evaluation of aptitude, interests, and personality as well as an intake interview and intensive decision-making process followed by a counselling psychologist.

Group sessions are presented to impart skills and support students in the resolution of challenges that may impede the fulfilment of their potential. The various group sessions are presented in-house at the request of UFS Faculties, Departments and Residences. In Quarter 1, ten workshops were presented, with a total of 690 students attending.

In Quarter 2, the REBT (Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy) programme was launched. The REBT programme is a practical, action-oriented approach to assisting individuals in overcoming and coping with adversity, achieving goals, and enhancing personal growth by addressing attitudes, unhealthy emotions and maladaptive thought patterns and behaviours. During 2022, the programme had 543 registrations, with 87 students completing the programme. SCD presented 100 workshops/webinars during the year, reaching 3005 students. Topics included coping with stress, mental health survival guide, suicide awareness, test and exam anxiety, self-care, and emotional intelligence.

The self-esteem workshop was presented in the first and the second semester. Thirty-nine students signed up, and 28 completed and received the certificate. SCD presented a two-day Career Counselling and Trauma training course for eight UFS Industrial Psychology students (13 – 14 July). Three workshops were offered on the South Campus by SCD’s Counselling Psychology interns, and more than 80 students attended each workshop.

SCD also runs the On the Red Couch workshop. These sessions create valuable discussions with staff about SCD’s role, mandate and how to assist distressed students. SCD presented eight sessions during the year, reaching 108 staff members.

Other interventions to support students’ wellbeing were implemented in 2022. During the second quarter a pre-exam session with SAS, SCD and CTL was held (27th of May) at the Qwaqwa campus, to prepare students for their exams. Debriefing sessions were held to support the first years traumatised by the continuous and violent student protests.

During Quarter 3, the Career Development Project was implemented by SCD and attended by 25 students. The hybrid model allowed South Campus participants to engage with Qwaqwa campus participants.

The Power Club, a support group on the Qwaqwa campus, is an ongoing project taking place every Friday. Seven students regularly participated in the group.

Students facing academic challenges due to learning difficulties can apply for assessment concessions. The process is followed in collaboration with CUADS and the Occupational Therapy Department. During 2022 **101 concession reports** were provided to respective students.. From the end of 2022, this function moved to CUADS and SCD will collaborate where needed on these matters.



Peer Mentorship Programme

Participation in the Peer Mentorship Programme is one of the outcomes identified in the strategic plan to support the wellbeing of first-year students.

Each Peer Mentor group, comprised of several first-year students and a mentor, is structured according to campus, resident or commuter student and faculty. In so doing, this programme aims to embrace and maintain the structure of existing student communities but more importantly, to develop trusting relationships within these communities between first-year students, their peers, and mentors to provide all students with the necessary socio-emotional support they require.

The programme commenced through Blackboard discussions on 21 February 2022. The programme was implemented across all three campuses, coordinated from the Bloemfontein campus.

Safety and security

To advance Objective 2.3, the DSA aspires to work collaboratively with various stakeholders to enhance the safety and security of students, including through efforts to eliminate GBV and ensure safe housing.

Eliminating GBV

During 2022, a GBV Awareness Series (in collaboration with the GEADO) was implemented by SCD.

On the Qwaqwa campus, a group of students received training through the Higher Health Grant as advocates for promoting a stop to GBV in May. In Quarter 3, a conversation on GBV was hosted on 30 August.

Safe housing

Providing quality maintenance in the shortest possible turnaround time ensures students' safe living and learning environments.

The residences have been facing challenges with internet connectivity in the past, but a project headed by ICT commenced in Quarter 1 to install a new infrastructure improving WiFi connectivity.

Several repairs and maintenance projects were initiated and completed in 2022. These included upgrades at Vergeet-My-Nie residence to bathrooms and kitchens, painting to the exterior and replacing the hot water system of Abraham Fischer residence and refurbishing staff housing on the Qwaqwa campus. A waterwise garden was laid out at Madelief residence. Processes for reporting breakages were improved on South Campus.

Two new hot water plant rooms that provide hot water were completed for Reitz Mia Casa, Villa Bravado, Eagles Nest, Beyers Naude, and Armentum residences. The system is more efficient and easier to maintain. A heater project at Reitz Mia Casa was completed in February 2022. All central heating at Reitz Mia Casa was removed and replaced with new electrical heaters.

Housekeeping services maintain a high standard of housekeeping to ensure a hygienic, clean environment for the wellbeing of students. A Hygiene Audit was conducted during Quarter 2 and the division passed with 98%.



STUDENT DEVELOPMENT



UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028 alignment

Ensuring the efficiency of academic programmes, offerings, and academic support systems.

Objective 4.4

Envisaged impact

UFS graduates possess the necessary attributes to be ethical and transformational leaders in society.

The focus of this strategic area is on **developing graduates** who are ethical transformational leaders in society. To this end, the DSA aims to **create experiences through co-curricular and extracurricular programmes** that will **develop graduate attributes, employability, and entrepreneurship**. The DSA aspires to **implement high-impact educational practices** that are constructively aligned with the UFS Graduate Attributes Framework and assessment criteria. In this regard, the DSA **positions college communities** as specific contexts of programme delivery. **High Performance (HP) sports and recreational sports** are specific institutional capital assets enabling the holistic development of students. The DSA also aspires to form **strong collaborative partnerships** to implement its holistic and integrated approach to student development.

Table 11 below provides an overview of the objectives identified for this strategic focus area.

Table 11: Student development objectives

OBJECTIVES		
<p>Objective 3.1</p> <p>An out-of-class curriculum established.</p>	<p>Objective 3.2</p> <p>Student participation in co-curricular and extracurricular programmes increased.</p>	<p>Objective 3.3</p> <p>An integrated system of career development established.</p>

The set of outcomes related to the student success focus area is summarised in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Student development anticipated outcomes

CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS	CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR AND SKILLS	CHANGES IN ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION
<p>Within DSA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish knowledge and understanding of the UFS Graduate Attributes Framework. Apply knowledge on the constructive alignment of the DSA Co-Curricular Alignment Canvas. Create knowledge and understanding on career development, employability, and entrepreneurship. <p>Among UFS students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the digital literacy of students. Raise awareness among students of DSA co-curricular and extracurricular programmes. 	<p>Within DSA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use DSA Alignment Canvas to align all co-curricular programmes with Graduate Attributes framework and e-Portfolios. Map DSA co-curricular programmes. Link co-curricular programmes with the development of solutions for glocal challenges in communities. Develop and implement a differentiated but systemic-holistic leadership-development framework. Use technology/software to enhance access & scale co-curricular programmes. Track student participation in co- and extracurricular programmes. Use college communities as “delivery sites” of programmes. Develop the competencies to enable value-added propositions, product development and partnerships/joint ventures for HP sport. 	<p>Within DSA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivate students to participate in co-curricular and extracurricular programmes. Value the constructive alignment of all co-curricular programmes with graduate attributes and assessment criteria. Value the societal impact of co-curricular and extracurricular programmes (engaged scholarship). Value and prioritise partnerships and collaboration. Value data-driven praxis.

2022 PROGRESS TOWARDS STRATEGIC GOALS

This strategic area focuses on developing graduates who are ethical transformational leaders in society.

The DSA aims to create experiences through co-curricular and extracurricular programmes that will develop graduate attributes, employability, and entrepreneurship. The DSA positions college communities as specific contexts of programme delivery.

Developing ethical transformational leaders in society

Multiple initiatives and activities across DSA portfolios contribute to leadership development. A key activity in this area is the work of the leadership development office. Other opportunities for students to take up leadership and service roles include the RCs, the peer educator's initiative, peer mentorship opportunities and the Gateway Mentors.



Student Leadership office

The flagship programme in the Student Leadership Office is the FutureLEAD challenge (FLC). In 2022, FLC took in a new cohort and ran an extended programme (for 2021 participants who had not completed). Programmes commenced in April and were completed by the end of May for the first semester.

In the 2022 cohort, there were 469 enrolled students, of whom 356 were active in Module 1 and 407 were active in Module 2. Modules 3 and 4 were completed in the second semester, with 424 students active in these two modules. There were 127 enrolled students in the extended programme, with 77 and 101 active in Modules 1 and 2, respectively. In the second semester, there were 106 students active in Modules 3 and 4.

After engaging with the content students participated in a journal, with 136 students completing the journal in the 2022 cohort, and 12 students completing the journal in the extended programme.

The Student Leadership Office facilitated a blended Induction Training for Associations, Organisations and Faculty Councils, combined with Pre-Election Training for Student Governance candidates in July 2022. On average, 450 students across the three campuses attended the three-day training.

Residence committees



The RC Training was conducted in a blended mode and facilitated to all three UFS campuses (September 2022). In total, 417 student leaders attended.

A questionnaire was distributed via email to student leaders who attended the training, and 120 responses were received. The RCs indicated that the training was very helpful, assisting them in understanding their portfolios, its aim, and their roles.

A process is underway to formalise the RC training content with outcomes and assessments. During Quarter 2, RC Coordinators worked on a rubric and evaluation for the RC. Although this evaluation was only for the Bloemfontein and South Campus, it will also be incorporated for the Qwaqwa campus.

Peer educators



Peer Educators were recruited and trained on three campuses by the HIV Office. The training was done in collaboration with departments such as CUADS, SCD, GEADO, and the Department of Social Work to train the peer educators on the integrated health and wellness programme. The training was done according to Higher Health's modules for peer educator training on topics such as GBV, LGBTQI, HIV, women's, and men's health. Their main responsibilities are to educate their peers on health- and wellness-related issues through workshops, dialogues, and awareness campaigns. A total of 103 peer educators were trained – 51 on the Bloemfontein campus, 23 on South Campus and 29 on the Qwaqwa campus.

SCD influencers

SCD Influencers, a new project, was started in Quarter 3, where peer mentors are trained and developed as the voices of SCD. They assist us in marketing the services of SCD, give feedback on marketing attempts, assist in reaching students and giving feedback on what the trends are on campus. Graduate attributes like critical thinking, community engagement and an entrepreneurial mindset are developed in this way.

Peer mentors

During Quarter 3, the Peer Mentorship Programme received 1834 applications from prospective 2023 mentors (1331 from the Bloemfontein campus, 23 from South Campus and 456 from the Qwaqwa campus).

The Peer Mentorship Programme office held several meetings with the Resident Heads, RC First Years and

the Campus Coordinators to successfully plan and implement the application process. Communication and engagement with stakeholders have been strengthened significantly.



Gateway mentors and first-year experience crew

Twenty-nine Gateway Mentors were trained on the QQ campus by the Student Government Office (SGO) to prepare for the Gateway Orientation Activities Programme for 2022 first years.

FYO Crew are trained to interact with first-entry students and the University community. They were also trained in self- and brand awareness. The training focused on brand awareness, professionalism, office processes, and how to interact with first-year students.

DEVELOPING GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

Through participation in the projects and programmes offered by DSA, students can develop skills in critical thinking, community engagement, written and oral communication, problem-solving, ethical reasoning, and entrepreneurial mindset.

Developing graduate attributes is a key focus of the curricular and co-curricular efforts at UFS. Co-curricular mapping of DSA programmes in alignment with the UFS graduate attributes was completed in May/June. This was undertaken in collaboration with CTL.

Several community engagement activities were undertaken during 2022.



Community engagement

HRA on the Qwaqwa campus successfully embarked on a #LendingAHelpingHand Community Outreach Programme as part of their marketing efforts. Five Schools from the deep rural parts of Qwaqwa were assisted with applications, especially for on-campus accommodation.

In Quarter 2, Qwaqwa campus students embarked on the “Campus Cleaning Campaign” to celebrate World Earth Day on the 22nd of April 2022.

Residences have created a Green Saturday project for students to participate in keeping their environment clean and green. Students were involved in the awareness of health hazards, such as air pollution, which could affect their health.

The Student Life portfolio led a multi-stakeholder support group to provide social support to victims of the Jagersfontein disaster. This initiative resulted in the following donations: 1609 food items (with

an additional 50 boxes of food from Rise Against Hunger), 30 mattresses, 773 sanitary products, and 2108 clothing items. A student volunteer team also visited Jagersfontein to provide practical cleaning assistance on 6 October 2022.

The first Ubuntu Street was hosted at Turflaagte, Lesedi Centre of Hope, where about 750 clothing items were donated to the community. The Soup Kitchen also provided 205 loaves of bread and 20 litres of soup.



STRENGTHENING EMPLOYABILITY

The varied activities of the Career Services Office aim to contribute to the implementation of an integrated system of career development.

The formal work-readiness programme consisted of eight topics. It was presented to various cohorts during career weeks or as part of the academic programme (for example, in the Quantity Surveying Honours). Some topics and activities' marks were academically recognised by faculties, and this serves as co-curricular engagement for students.

Four career weeks were held in Quarter 1 of 2022 in the Faculty of Health Sciences (25–28 January), the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (14–18 March), the Faculty of Law (22–24 March) and the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (4–8 April). All career weeks were presented in a blended approach to accommodate students on all three campuses. The online platform and recordings allowed those who could not attend in person, to join virtually or listen to recordings afterwards (e.g. working students). The division arranged diverse speakers and selected diverse topics, in accordance to the specific needs of the respective faculty or industry.

The Career Development Programme was launched on 11 March 2023 with 500 signed-up students. The programme was marketed to all Humanities students (on all three campuses) and is closely monitored to mark e-portfolios and provide coaching sessions as needed.



Other opportunities also promote employability. The use of Residence Assistants (RAs) during the registration period aimed to provide students with skills and work experience. Students were allowed to work within the various divisions of HRA, which allowed them to earn an income and develop their skills, which plays a significant role in future work opportunities. Students continue to be employed part-time by HRA throughout the year.

KovsieSoccer's social media team is headed by Angelo Arendse, a student doing his master's degree in Business Management, specialising in marketing. Arendse is also the captain of the UFS men's team. He led a team of four students: a photographer, a journalist, a content creator, and a PR ambassador. Additions to the team are made according to the scope of the project.

The Local Organising Committee for the Varsity Football competition included students in important roles - the MC, the chaperone, and the Red Bull ambassador. UFS was the only institution to host a Red Bull Fan Park at the Rag farm, because these students were willing to go out and generate student interest for the fan park. After seeing the engagement, Red Bull joined marketing to further develop and support the idea.



NURTURING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In ensuring that residence students are exposed to opportunities, the Qwaqwa campus Residence Life Office contributed to establishing a structure on Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE), and three members from HRA are part of this structure. The aim of this collaboration is to expose interested students in residences and off-campus to entrepreneurial opportunities.

The first meeting was held virtually on 01 February 2022 for the EDHE Entrepreneurship Intervarsity 2022 Launch, and Qwaqwa campus received recognition for their role in the initiative. The participation of UFS students in the DHET EDHE Project has provided an opportunity for students to explore their entrepreneurial skills. Two were selected to participate in the finals. Faculties collaborated with DSA in assisting students in preparing their projects for the competition.

CO-CURRICULAR AND EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMMES

Multiple DSA functional areas create opportunities for students to participate in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Highlights from the 2022 year are discussed below.



The Arts and Culture Office facilitated the provision of student artists for several events in Quarter 1, including the International Office 2022 welcoming function and the postgraduate 2022 welcoming function.

Human Rights Day was commemorated through a multi-campus "Thou ART Human" competition.

Choir performances were done at the Human Rights Day celebration, the DSA strategic planning lunch, and the postgraduate 2022 welcoming function. The choir was invited to join "The Island 2022 Legacy Tour" with Dr Jerry Mofokeng wa Makhetha in Qwaqwa. Quarter 2 performances included the Choral Celebrations Festival Series 2022 (South Campus) and Handel's Messiah (Bloemfontein campus).

In quarter 2, the Stage-door event was hosted in partnership with and with the support of the SRC Arts and Culture. In addition, Africa Day Celebrations were held across three campuses in collaboration with International Office Choir.

In Quarter 3, the Arts and Culture Office presented the play "A Broken Sarafina" at the Free State Arts Festival. This office and the Student Experience Office also hosted the KovsieFM balcony sessions on Friday afternoons to create a fun atmosphere for students on the Thakaneng Bridge.

In Quarter 3, the first annual South Campus talent showcase was held (August 2022).




The Eco-vehicle project aims to implement, within the context of a higher education institution, a new innovative skills development solution to the challenge of sustainable resources and to rigorously evaluate the efficacy and impact of this programme. Eight Engineering students and two Kovsie ACT Executive committee members completed the Mediated Learning Experiences course on Blackboard to equip themselves as Engineering Mediators for the Eco-Vehicle Skills Programme. The Qwaqwa campus and South Campus teams were successfully enrolled in the Eco-Vehicle Skills Programme, and from 17-19 February, the Qwaqwa campus had its first training and workshop for the Eco-Vehicle Skills Programme. In March, two cycles of the skills programme were assessed, and 97% of the Eco-vehicle participants completed cycle assessments and reflections. Participating students received safety and certified fire training in May. The Eco-vehicle race was hosted on 14 May.



In 2022, 54 new students joined the KovsieFM team. One of the presenters joined KayaFM as an intern. On the Qwaqwa campus, Q-Lit commenced operations again in February 2022, and the station has a growing online presence. KovsieTV appointed a new channel manager, and an entirely new team was selected.

In Quarter 3, Student Media partnered with the Directorate of Community Engagement to assist final-year Nursing, Honours, and master's Psychology students in producing podcasts. These podcasts were integrated into their learning curriculum. These students were taught how to prepare, record, and distribute podcasts.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE



UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028 alignment

Becoming a home for students and staff from diverse backgrounds

Envisaged impact

“A sense of belonging that creates a lifetime of interconnectedness between the University community and its graduates.”

This strategic area focuses on creating a culture of care and a sense of belonging for students on all three UFS campuses to establish **a lifetime of interconnectedness** between the University community and its graduates. In this regard, the DSA aspires to strengthen the social systems embedded in the multi-tiered college communities on all three UFS campuses.

Furthermore, the DSA will prioritise establishing effective and representative student governance structures to enhance the quality of the general student experience. To this end, intentional engagement with students through dialogues, conversations and awareness campaigns remain paramount for the DSA.

It is also crucial that students with disabilities feel valued and accepted through the application of universal access principles.

Table 13 below provides an overview of the objectives identified for this strategic focus area.

Table 13: Student experience objectives

OBJECTIVES AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS		
<p>Objective 4.1</p> <p>A multi-layered system of student communities established in colleges and student formations.</p>	<p>Objective 4.2</p> <p>An effective and representative student governance structure provided.</p>	<p>Objective 4.3</p> <p>The application of universal access principles increased</p>

The set of outcomes related to the student success focus area is summarised in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Student experience anticipated outcomes

CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS	CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR AND SKILLS	CHANGES IN ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION
<p>Within DSA</p> <p>Use data and data analytics to understand the student experience and areas of transformation.</p> <p>Establish knowledge on Generation Z communication preferences.</p> <p>Raise an awareness and understanding of needs and expectations of prospective, undergraduate, and postgraduate students.</p> <p>Among UFS students</p> <p>Raise awareness among students regarding the DSA and all its associated functional areas.</p>	<p>Use the social systems embedded in colleges to create a sense of belonging for all students on all three campuses.</p> <p>Engage with students through dialogues and conversations.</p> <p>Optimise advocacy and awareness campaigns.</p> <p>Create inspirational experiences for students.</p> <p>Communicate with students in a relevant and coherent way as DSA.</p> <p>Create opportunities to enhance the student experience through participation in recreational sport, organised mainstream sport, and high-performance sport.</p>	<p>Value engagement and involvement of students – embody inclusion, not exclusion.</p> <p>Value the role of co-curricular and extracurricular participation and support to enhance social cohesion.</p> <p>Value data-driven praxis.</p>

2022 PROGRESS TOWARDS STRATEGIC GOALS

A culture of care and a sense of belonging

All DSA functional areas work towards creating a culture of care and a sense of belonging.



The strict application of the Placement Policy regarding random placement, and only one offer per student, ensures diverse student residence communities.

Due to the extended registration period, students are expected to stay on campus (Bloemfontein and South Campus). However, due to human rights concerns, this was not possible. Therefore, emergency accommodation arrangements were made with several off-campus accommodation service providers to assist with accommodation and transportation.



During registration, the SSO provided emotional, financial, and informative support to prospective and returning students. Through this assistance, the office was able to reaffirm to students the humanising care that exists within UFS's institutional values. Most of the students we assisted during this

period were from remote rural areas of the country and had travelled long hours to access campus. Collaborating with relevant stakeholders to provide a roof and meals positively impacted their experience of the institution, setting a humanising tone for the duration of their university stay. The SSO assisted emotionally distressed students who had received university offers that were later withdrawn. The offers were withdrawn despite students having met the requirements for admission. These students were referred to relevant support structures of the institution. In addition, they were supported with transportation to return home.

From 14-18 February, a thrift store was hosted by Kowsie ACT to sell clothes from R10 to R90 to all students. This event was a success, and first years had an opportunity to buy clothes and visit the Kowsie ACT office.

On the Qwaqwa campus, an amount of R200 000 was approved for the Campus Student Representative Councils (CSRC) to provide loans to students who were performing well academically but were struggling to register. Mainly final-year students were assisted through the venture.



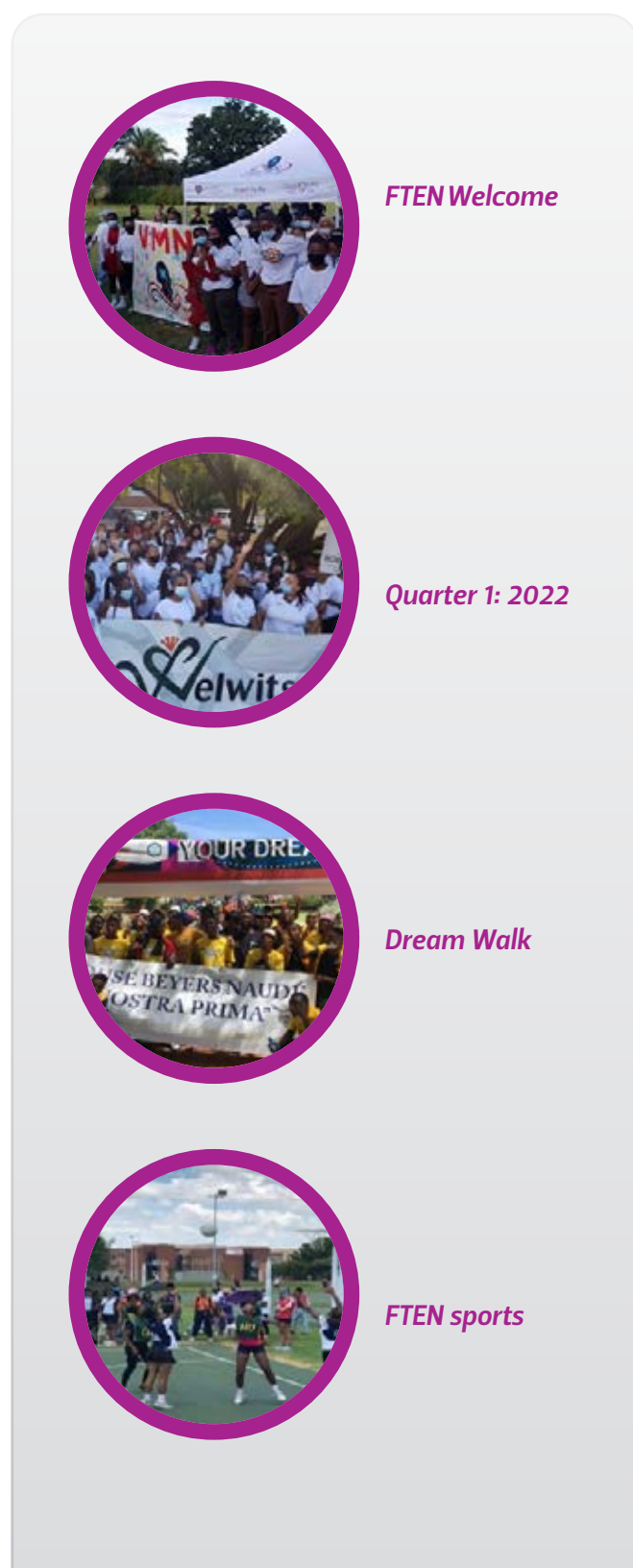
Each college arranged a welcoming event for their FTENs. All Residence Heads and RCs ensured that the welcoming of FTENs was of a high standard. The reality for the UFS is that most students bring themselves to the campus, unlike in the past when parents brought their children to campus.

With these demographic changes, support was provided through the allocation of mentors and academic preparation talks during the first two weeks of student check-ins. It was challenging for those who arrived late, but most RCs created mini meetings for them.



Activities during the first-year orientation help to create a sense of belonging on campus. The Gateway programme created a sense of belonging and impacted the experience of first-year students. A high-impact example is the Gateway dream walk. All FTENs in residences participated in this special event. The office of Residence Life extended the invitation to off-campus accredited accommodation establishments, and ResPublica was able to bring its FTENs to share the experience.

Figure 4: Student participation in FTEN events



As one of the efforts to establish a data-driven praxis, a benchmarking of First Year Orientation Programmes was done with the University of Johannesburg (UJ). The exercise provided insight into how UJ runs their programme. In addition, a physical benchmarking visit was undertaken during January/February 2023 to observe the practical rollout of the programme.

Focus group interviews were conducted with first-year students to understand their experiences of the orientation programme. A total of 46 students attended the group interviews across the three campuses.

Campus-wide sports events create opportunities for students to participate in activities alongside their peers. These play an important role in creating a sense of community. Participation in residence leagues creates opportunities for social engagement among players and supporters.

In 2022, on the Bloemfontein campus, residence FTENs participated in the swimming gala during Quarter 1.

The FTENs sports tournament was held in 2022, allowing all the residences to participate. It was a unique event as it included South Campus. On the Qwaqwa campus, after postponing the event due to student protests, the FTEN sports tournament was held on 11 and 12 March. More than 150 students participated in football (male and female), basketball (male and female), netball, table tennis and chess. The SRC played a football match with staff.

The internal house indaba is a residential programme where dialogues are facilitated to revisit residence values and symbols. The allocation of houses within different Day Residences was planned to enhance off-campus students' participation in residences and increase the number of service providers involved in colleges. These were efforts to encourage a sense of belonging among all UFS students.

In Quarter 3, the Student Experience Office ran the "I Love my Kovies" campaign. The campaign carried messages demonstrating that students are a part of a Kovie-community and that the community cares about each student, acknowledges what they have done, and provides pride and validation. Messages of validation were communicated to students linking the "I Love my Kovies" to a central idea: Kovies cares about you, and we validate you. These messages were carried on social media, KovieFM, Q-Lit throughout the term.

EFFECTIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE STUDENT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Institutional Student Representative Council (ISRC) Induction Training for the 2022 SRC was conducted by the Student Development Office in Quarter 1. There were 250 attendees. This annual training event seeks to prepare student leaders (SRCs, RAs, RCs) for their roles. Open discussions were held after each session where the SRC would discuss and provide inputs or questions to the topic at hand. Arrangements were also made for personal coaching sessions for ISRC Executive members.

Training for SRC members involved a broad range of stakeholders, including SGO, KovsieSport, CUADS, SCD, SSO, Health and Wellness, as well as faculties, finances, GEADO, the Library and Protection Services.

The Governance Office on the Qwaqwa campus benchmarked with former SRCs from UJ and the University of Pretoria between 8 to 12 August 2022.

In Quarter 3, the greatest accomplishment for the SGO was the successful completion of the respective CSRC elections, as well as the ISRC election in August 2022.

On 1 September 2022, the Qwaqwa campus SRC Inauguration and First Sitting Establishment was held, and the SRC term of office commenced. On 6-7 September 2022, SRC Induction and Orientation was held. Finally, strategic planning for the CSRC was held on 16-17 September 2022.

On the Qwaqwa campus, the student protest forced a postponement of SRC training from 29-30 September to 15-17 October 2022.

The South Campus CSRC inauguration was held on 2 September, followed by strategic planning on 7 September.

INTENTIONAL ENGAGEMENT WITH STUDENTS

Intentional engagement with students is facilitated through intentional dialogues and conversations.



Dialogue office

The Dialogue Office's work is particularly relevant to this strategic area. All the Office programmes are underpinned by principles of interconnection and social solidarity using participatory methods and deep, authentic engagement. Specific methodologies enhance the development of empathy and

humanisation across boundaries.

In Quarter 1, the office conducted two four-week Digital Storytelling workshops for students. The office also co-presented an arts-based workshop for students living with HIV/AIDS. The workshop aimed to create fun, creative activities to engender group cohesion.

A webinar on Digital Storytelling as a methodology was presented to the Library and Information Association of South Africa.

On the Qwaqwa campus, a proposal on UNESCO Story Circles as a methodology to address trauma was presented. Storytelling Circles develop critical thinking, oral communication, ethical reasoning, as well as building listening skills and empathy.

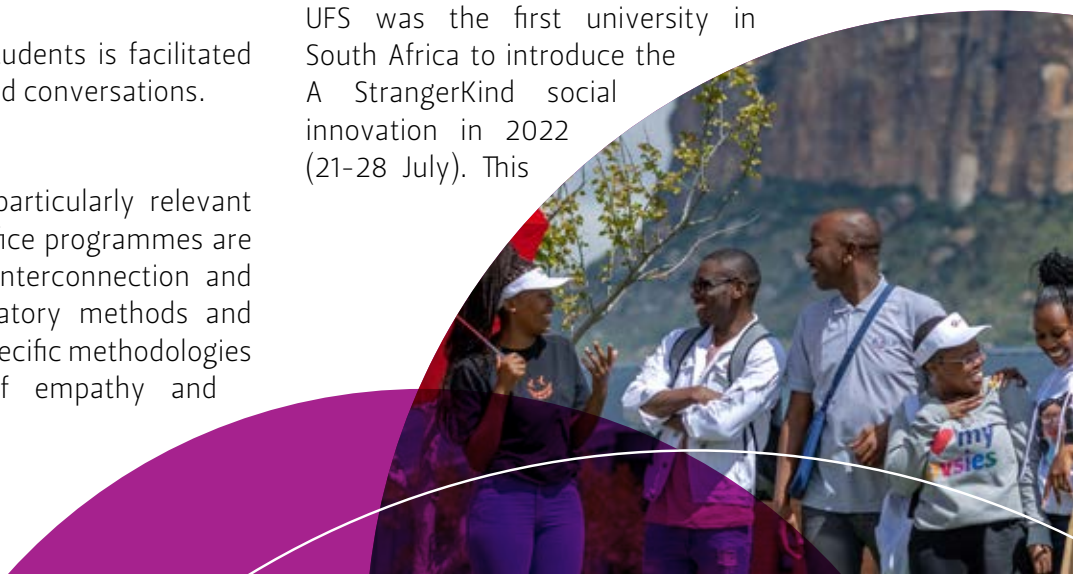
The Office worked on co-developing a workshop for students on the theme of consent. The development was through a collaboration with the Dialogue Office, Protection Services, HRA, GEADO, and an external consultant specialising in drama and theatre. The three-day workshop was presented to students. The workshop equipped students with critical thinking, reflective practices, and practical skills through collaboration and co-learning.

A training programme in dialogue methods for Primes and Residence Heads was also developed.

In Quarter 2, the Office introduced DSA staff to the experience of Story Circles by hosting a "Tipping Point: What's in a Name?" on 8 April 2022. A total of 44 staff members attended. To give DSA staff on the Qwaqwa campus an opportunity to debrief following the violent protests on their campus, the Dialogue Office, in collaboration with Mr Willem Ellis, presented a week-long engagement through Story Circles.

An inter-disciplinary, cross-departmental project on Mobile Filmmaking for students was initiated in Quarter 2.

UFS was the first university in South Africa to introduce the A StrangerKind social innovation in 2022 (21-28 July). This



attracted the attention of Stellenbosch University (US), and a team of US delegates visited the Bloemfontein campus to observe the methodology.

The event engaged students and staff in unconventional conversations on various topics that promoted curiosity, diversity, and social cohesion. Student volunteers from “UFS ASKcampus” represented the University at an “A StrangerKind” event in Johannesburg as part of Heritage Day celebrations.

The Office submitted a proposal for a chapter in the book project for Teaching Digital Storytelling: Inspiring Voices Through Online Narratives for Rowman & Littlefield.

The Dialogue Office collaborated with Community Engagement and the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies on establishing a research and action project on Peace Structures.

Other activities

The Student Leadership Development office presented a talk under the umbrella of “What Students Should Know” in April. The blended format event was attended by 48 students with the theme ‘Human Rights and Protesting’.

In Quarter 3, the “What Students Should Know” talk focused on ‘Sustainable Development’. The blended format event was attended by 74 students.

On the Qwaqwa campus, Africa Day Celebrations saw the SRC Postgraduate successfully host an online dialogue on “Collaboration among African Researchers”. The Director presented as a panellist on “The importance of student engagement in Higher Education in promoting Africa”. The activities provided a platform for postgraduate students to host round table discussions on the student’s participation in promoting collaborations between African countries during the Africa Celebration Week.

On the South Campus, the SAUS Protest Causality Dialogue (ISRC) aimed to help students find ways to handle student protests in institutions of higher learning with a better approach than in the past, where we ended up seeing cases of arson reported, assault, injuries and destruction of property. This dialogue enabled

the students to understand the different types of student protests and to identify the stakeholders involved in the protest, such as the role of law enforcement, University management, student leadership, as well as students’ roles.

The Economic and Management Science FSC hosted the socio-economic campus debate (2 August 2022). The debate served as a platform where students debated contemporary socio-economic issues affecting young people and students in particular.

The “Break the Bias” Conversations (18 August 2022) served to educate students on South Campus about a wide range of topics related to mental health, safety, racial disparities, issues surrounding LGBTQI+ discrimination, sexual health stereotypes, and stigmatisation.

APPLICATION OF UNIVERSAL ACCESS PRINCIPLES

Friday, 2 September 2022, was Casual Day. Various UFS departments, faculties and students participated in the event by purchasing stickers from CUADS and observing the day with funky outfits and fun activities. Stickers were available for purchase at all three campuses.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing CUADS students collaborated with Peer Educators in the HIV office on a deaf awareness activation on 30 September 2022. The students taught hearing students basic SA Sign Language and engaged in fun, interactive games and activities. They also shared reading resources such as CUADS Guide to Supporting Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students and a Guide to Supporting Students with Communication and Speech Difficulties.

On the grounds of the Qwaqwa campus, Thiboloha School for the Deaf and Blind participated in celebrating International Sign Languages Day and Deaf Awareness Month.

A Short Learning Programme: Basic Introduction to Universal Design in Learning has been approved and will be rolled out in 2023.

CUADS has revamped its website to include information brochures on all disability categories, a universal access checklist for events, and a guide for lecturers to include students with disabilities.

An integrated strategy has been developed with Human Resources to also look at the inclusion of staff with disabilities.



NEW CULTURE AND STRUCTURE

The focus of this strategic area is on the kind of organisational culture and organisational structure DSA creates. It aspires to create an organisational culture allowing individuals and teams to thrive and develop their potential.

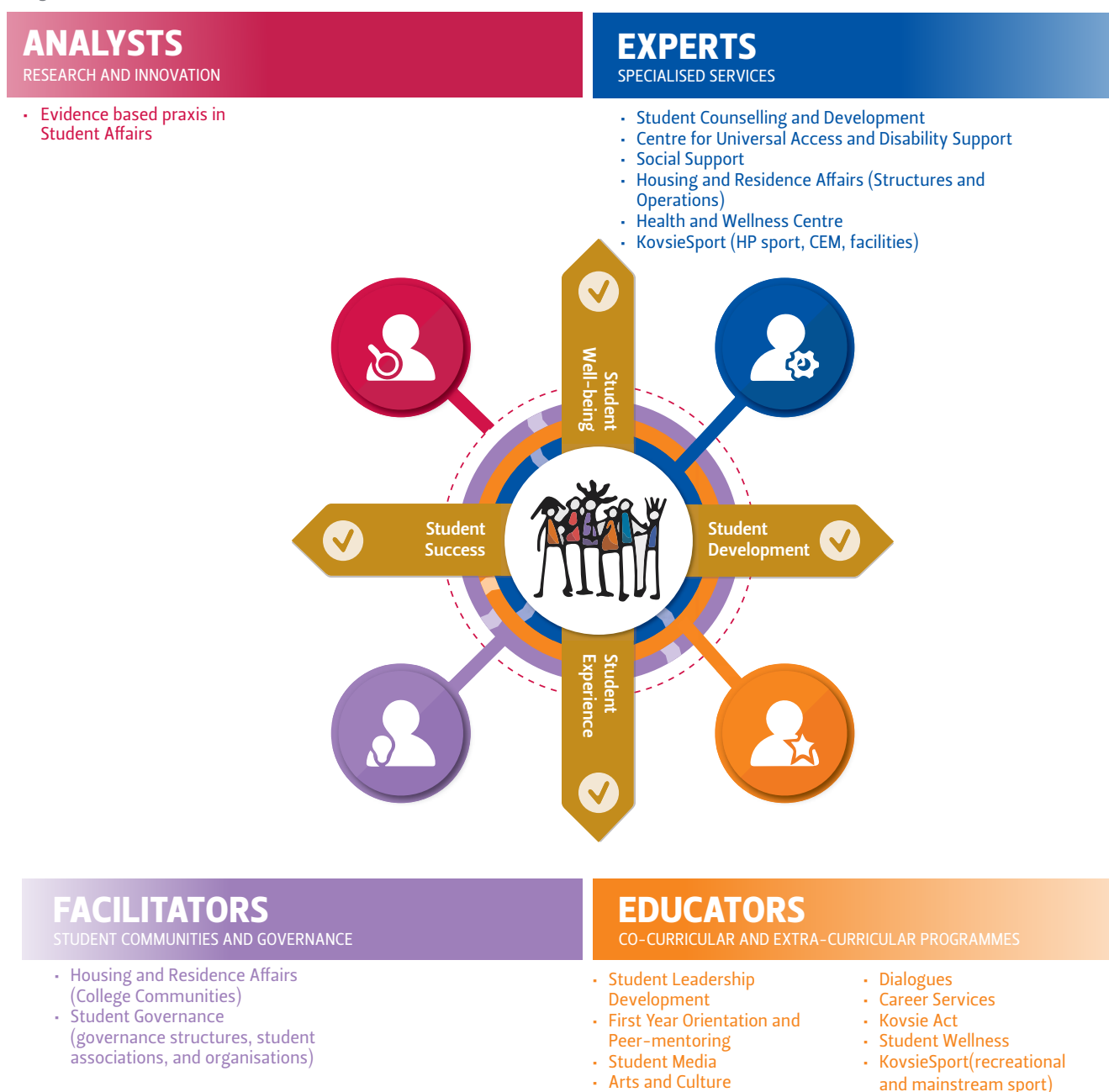
This organisational culture is envisioned to promote collaboration, ownership, wholeness, and a unique collective identity. The DSA, therefore, aims to eradicate the formation of silos and power hierarchies and aspires to establish an organisational structure that will foster mutual support, collegiality, and agility.

The organisational structure that will enable these aspirations hinges on two aspects: forming cross-functional teams and grouping functional areas into Circles, each with its relevant focus areas.

The purpose of cross-functional teams (also known as C-teams) is to give practical expression to the four key strategic areas discussed above through implementing strategic projects.

The aim of creating a new organisational framework is to move towards a system of interconnected Circles that is agile and collaborative to best support students. These Circles are formed by grouping similar functional areas together. The four Circles – analysts, experts, facilitators, and educators – are graphically illustrated in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: DSA Circles



The Circle of Experts comprises all functional areas that require expert knowledge and skills to provide a specialised service to students.

The Circle of Educators includes functional areas involved with the education, holistic development, and preparation of students. The primary mechanisms that this group uses to develop graduate attributes are co-curricular and extracurricular programmes.

The Circle of Facilitators includes all those functional areas concerned with facilitating complex processes associated with student communities, student associations, student organisations and their respective leadership structures. The DSA requires staff in these functional areas to be flexible, interactive, and agile because the contexts they are dealing with are often unpredictable and in constant flux.

The Circle of Analysts aims to advance the impact and visibility of the DSA (and the UFS) through design-based research. To this end, data-driven praxis is intentionally linked to innovation to solve complex problems and refine theoretical design principles. Firstly, this circle focuses on building internal capacity and systems within the DSA to advance its student-centred approach through data evidence and data analytics. Secondly, the Circle of Analysts stimulates innovation by linking design-based research with projects in cross-functional teams. Therefore, the Circle aims to enhance the impact of the DSA concerning its four strategic areas and position the UFS as a thought leader in the field. By incorporating the Circle of Analysts into its integrated organisational structure, the DSA confirms its commitment to building key partnerships and collaboration with relevant research and academic units and advancing the UFS's research and scholarly objectives.

To support the implementation of the DSA Strategic Plan, two additional key documents were developed in 2022 to guide the operationalisation of the strategy – a change management plan and a digitalisation strategy.

Interconnected Circles of collaboration

Significant progress was made in 2022 towards establishing a system of interconnected Circles that are agile and collaborative to best support students.

Throughout this report, a range of examples has been provided that demonstrates how team members from across functional areas have collaborated to

offer services to students within the four Circles. These collaborations include ongoing projects that have been strengthened, new collaborations that have been initiated, and collaborations that have been reinvigorated and rekindled.

Some notable examples that have been discussed in this report are summarised below. This list is not exhaustive but rather illustrates how collaboration is happening in all four strategic areas.

- **Training peer educators:** Health and Wellness Centre collaborated with CUADS and SCD (and other UFS departments).
- **Ensuring food security:** HRA, FEO, SSO and KopsieACT collaborate on several interventions to promote food security.
- **Empowering athletes:** KopsieSport and SCD collaborate on supporting performance of student athletes.
- **Intentional dialogue:** The Dialogue Office worked across several functional areas to facilitate conversations and develop skills for dialogue.

Data-driven praxis

The notion of data-driven praxis is embedded within the four DSA strategic focus areas. Staff within all functional units are encouraged to adopt an evidence-based approach to their work and services. Several examples have been provided within this report that illustrates how this is being operationalised across functional areas. Ongoing feedback is obtained from students on the various programmes and activities offered by DSA. The research office provides support for data collection. Feedback from students is used to reflect on the quality and effectiveness of programming and services and utilised to adjust programming in the future. Benchmarking activities conducted throughout the year have also contributed to this strategic priority.

A writing retreat for DSA staff was held. The retreat provided an environment where student affairs practitioners could develop academic writing skills, which will help increase the level of research output at the DSA.

The research office successfully hosted the annual Student Affairs Research Colloquium. The event showcased programmes in DSA, while encouraging a spirit of research-driven praxis to improve service to students.

The Writing Space was re-initiated in 2022. These Friday afternoon academic writing sessions for Student Affairs staff create a conducive environment for writing. Three pilot sessions were held.

A postdoctoral researcher was hosted in the research office for three months. Data was collected, and an ethics application was done for an article.

Staff from various departments shared their work on various national platforms. Six colleagues from SCD presented at the annual South African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education conference in Pretoria in September.

Staff development

Opportunities for staff within DSA to develop their professional skills contribute to an environment within which individuals can thrive and reach their full potential.

SCD implemented several activities to promote staff development and professionalisation. Henry Taylor presented DSM5 and Trauma training (July), Dr Henriette van den Berg presented Sharing the Journey of Survivors of Sexual Trauma (August), and Prof André Venter presented Adult ADHD (September). A communication and marketing development training series – called Thrive – was offered in the second semester. Training on working with transgender students, and assisting with their transitioning was presented by Jessica Lynn, a transgender speaker, educator, and advocate (August).

The social worker attended a workshop on “Social Work Professionalism: Reflecting on our Ethical Responsibilities” during Quarter 2. From 24 to 27 August, the SGO attended the Women in Leadership NASDEV Staff Development Programme at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

As the job profiles of SCD staff members did not truly reflect the practice of being a student affairs practitioner, we embarked on a journey to rectify this matter. First, several sessions with staff and HR were conducted, after which an adjusted job profile per staff member could be negotiated.

On the Qwaqwa campus, training on performance management was offered for all campus DSA Staff in February. Follow-up sessions with individual staff were held after the training. The introduction of shared activity plans created a platform for various Circles to participate in student activities through knowledge and skills sharing. This enhanced the quality of programme implementation, whilst eliminating duplication of activities by respective experts.



CONCLUSION

In 2022, across the DSA functional areas, several key actions have been taken towards achieving the DSA strategic goals. This report has detailed progress and milestones in the four strategic focus areas and regarding establishing a new organisational culture and structure.

The chapter on student success has highlighted progress towards creating a holistic and integrated success infrastructure (pages 6- 9) and improving student representation in academic affairs (page 9). Partnerships and collaboration with faculties, academic entities and other support divisions advanced in 2022, as described on pages 8 and 9.

The chapter on student wellbeing has described the significant efforts within the DSA to support students' physical and mental wellbeing across all three campuses. Across functional areas, teams have implemented initiatives to ensure food security (pages 11-12), promote physical activity and sports participation (pages 13-15) and support students' physical health (pages 12-13) and social needs (page 15). In addition, cross-campus initiatives to promote mental health and support students in crisis have been implemented (pages 17-20), and programmes to support students – such as the Peer Mentor Programme – continued (page 20). The safety and security of students, including actions taken to address GBV are detailed on pages 20-21.

The promotion of student development has been advanced in several ways. This report has described work undertaken around leadership development (pages 23-24), the development of graduate attributes (page 24-25), strengthening employability (page 25), and nurturing entrepreneurship (page 25). Co-curricular and extracurricular programmes (page 25) have contributed in multiple ways to attain student development outcomes – including those related to career development. DSA programmes and activities have been mapped against the UFS graduate attributes.

The chapter on the student experience has detailed how DSA has worked towards creating a culture of care and a sense of belonging (pages 28-29), ensuring effective and representative student governance (pages 29-30) and facilitated intentional engagement with student through dialogue and other activities (pages 30-31). Advances in ensuring the application of the principle of universal access are described on page 31.

Collaboration has advanced across functional areas through the Circles, actions were implemented to advanced data-driven praxis, and initiatives were implemented to promote staff development (page 33-35).

The development of the DSA strategic plan has provided a clear and ambitious framework for guiding the planning and implementation of activities across the functional areas. Moving forward, DSA will build on the successes of 2022 to further advance the strategic agenda from 2023 onward.

