STUDENT COUNSELLING & DEVELOPMENT (SCD)
STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 - 2026

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

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

UFS
STUDENT AFFAIRS
STUDENTESAKE
DITABA TSA BAITHUTI
STUDENT COUNSELLING AND
DEVELOPMENT (SCD)

Table of Contents

1. Foreword

I am grateful to Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee and her team for the sterling work done under the period under review. Less than one year in the job, the Director, Dr Dunn-Coetzee, has re-imagined the work of SCD taking the unit to the next level. The work of Student Counselling and Development is central to DSA's key strategic areas aimed at ensuring the creation of a socially just student life environment conducive for academic excellence, student well-being, student experience and student development. Universities are a microcosm of the society where challenges of poverty, gender-based violence and general crime are common. Therefore, our university community will face similar challenges faced by our surrounding communities.

The impact of socio-psychological challenges necessitates intervention and mitigating strategies to ensure well-being of students and staff. I am excited about the intervention programmes SCD has introduced to address these challenges. This strategy document, 2022-2026, is a culmination of hard work by SCD to align the units' strategic objectives to that of DSA and UFS. EDSA will provide necessary support to ensure the realization of the strategy.

Mr Temba Hlasho
(Executive Director:
Division of Student Affairs)

2. Introduction

This document presents a five-year strategic plan for the Department of Student Counselling and Development (SCD) situated in the Division of Student Affairs (DSA), University of the Free State (UFS). It is the primary objective of the SCD to be a department focused on wellness, development and to offer mental health support.

The strategic plan has been informed by matters arising from previous years, priorities indicated by SCD staff during the formal planning in 2022, the DSA external review report of 2021, as well as the strategic direction provided by DSA. The document entitled Division of Student Affairs: Strategic Direction and Organizational Structure: Version 1 (2021), as approved by Mr Temba Hlasho (Executive Director: DSA, UFS) for 2022 to 2026, was the cornerstone of the SCD strategic process. The SCD's vision, mission, values, and objectives are closely aligned with the above.

Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee
Director: Student Counselling & Development

Contact me at:
DunnCoetzeeM@ufs.ac.za
051 401 2853

3. Mental Health:
The Global and National Context

In recent years there has been growing concern globally about a mental health crisis among university students (Brown 2018; Evans et al. 2018; Xiao et al. 2017). A World Health Organisation survey of university students across 21 countries found that one fifth (20.3%) met criteria for a mental disorder in the past year (Auerbach et al. 2016). The increase in mental health issues is due to a myriad of reasons, some intrinsic, some due to increase use and culture of social media, some due to the change in student profile, some reasons are related to the changes in service scope of universities, etc. Mental health support is one component of establishing a community of care to promote holistic student development and combat the potentially alienating effects of the increasing commodification of the higher education sector (Brooks 2018).

In addition, studying at an institution of higher education is associated with various transitions and stressors (Bowman & Payne in Fandie & Naudé, 2019). Mental health problems are common among university students globally, with the prevalence of 12-month common mental disorders estimated to be above 30% in many universities (Auerbach et al, 2018). In South Africa, a society in transition, the adjustment to higher education can be intensified by experiences of turmoil related to societal trauma, crime, violence, poverty, and health issues (Vogel in Fandie & Naudé, 2019).

Kuh (2020:228) sets the scene by indicating that students come to their studies with varying academic and personal qualities shaped by their families and cultures of origin and prior educational experiences. In recent years, students' mental and physical health has been a growing concern as more students enroll with severe mental health issues, chronic illnesses, or other debilitating conditions, all of which are obstacles to engagement, learning, and success. Yet virtually all students want to succeed. However, in many instances, student support services are not structured or resourced to respond adequately to students' needs and expectations.

Mental health care resources are particularly scarce in South Africa, and there is a significant mental health treatment gap; an estimated 15.9% of adults with mental health problems report receiving treatment (Bantjes & Kagee, 2018:4). In addition to lacking resources, awareness and stigma can also possibly play a role in help-seeking behaviour. The importance of psycho-education and awareness campaigns is evident.

The South African government sought to address the limitations of delivery and access to mental health care services through the decentralization of psychology in hospitals to community health centres and district hospitals. However, the scarcity of available and accessible practitioners as well as the lack of available resources remains an issue, particularly within the public health care sector. In contrast to high income countries such as the United States, where there are 33.3 psychologists per 100,000 of the population, in South Africa there are 2.5 psychologists per 100,000 of the population, which is well below the global average. This significantly impacts on access to mental health care (Padmanabhanunni, Jackson, Noordien, Pretorius & Bouchard, 2022). Applying this scenario to Higher Education, has dire implications for service delivery within student counselling.

Kaminer and Shabalala (2019) developed a policy on mental health for the University of Cape Town (UCT) in South Africa. From a health service framework, some UCT stakeholders argued that it is unrealistic to expect universities to provide a substitute mental health system capable of plugging the enormous gaps in state service provision.

In UCT's case, this would entail providing mental health services that can cater for a population of about 27 000 students, with little augmentation from the state health sector. Concurrently, the capacities of campus counselling services are outweighed by the mental health needs and demands of ever-increasing student populations, with a growing number of students experiencing mental health difficulties and struggling to negotiate the academic demands of higher education (Brown 2018, Gallagher 2014; Kaminer & Shabalala 2019).

SCD is proud of what it has achieved the past few years and we are proud to play a role in Student Affairs' key strategic areas – relating to student success, student health and wellness, student experience and student development. However, growing demands on the capacity and infrastructure of SCD, an ever-changing student profile, as well as new perspectives emerging within Higher Education necessitated a new approach to SCD's service delivery and strategic focus areas for the short, medium, and long term.

4. University of the Free State & The Division of Student Affairs

4.1 University of the Free State

> IN VERITATE SAPIENTIAE LUX
> (In Truth is the Light of Wisdom)

The University of the Free State (UFS) has a proud history as one of the oldest, most respected institutions of higher education in South Africa. It opened its doors in Bloemfontein in 1904 as the Grey University College, with six students in the Humanities. Today it is a multi-campus institution, with two diverse campuses in Bloemfontein and one in Qwaqwa in the scenic Eastern Free State, accommodating more than 40 000 students in its seven faculties, with an increasing number of international students and associates, and an ever-widening scope of active involvement in and contribution to its surrounding communities (UFS, 2022).

The Division of Student Affairs and SCD aim 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.

The UFS will pursue this vision through its goals:
- Improve student success and well-being
- Renew and transform the curriculum
- Increase UFS contribution to local, regional, and global knowledge
- Support development and social justice through engaged scholarship
- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of governance and support systems
- Achieve financial sustainability
- Advance an institutional culture that demonstrates the values of the UFS

The work of the Division of Student Affairs, which will be discussed accordingly, is central to the academic project of the University. In support of the academic project, Student Affairs aims to create a socially just student-life environment that is conducive to student academic success, student well-being, the student experience and student development (UFS, 2022).

4.2 Division of Student Affairs

In 2021 three significant changes influenced the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) at the University of the Free State (UFS) (DSA, 2021). Firstly, the executive leadership of the UFS initiated a process to reshape the DSA. To this end, it was decided to change the most senior leadership position at the DSA from Dean to Executive Director. This change also entailed the strategic repositioning of the Executive Director: Student Affairs to become a full member of the Rectorate that directly reports to the Rector and Vice-Chancellor.

The second aspect of change involved incorporating the following three functional areas into the DSA portfolio: Housing and Residence Affairs, KovsieSport, and the Health and Wellness Centre. Thirdly, the DSA went through an external review process. Although the external review panel made many commendations, specific recommendations were also made. By their very nature, these changes suggested a new strategic direction and organisational structure for the DSA.

The DSA has identified five key strategic areas to implement its student-centred vision, namely (DSA, 2021):

1) Student Success
2) Student Well-being
3) Student Development
4) Student Experience
5) Integrated Organisational Culture

1) Student Success

The DSA is passionate about enhancing the academic success of students 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 jointly create a student-success infrastructure at the UFS.

2) Student Well-being

The DSA is passionate about the holistic well-being of students. The DSA aspires to use data and data analytics to understand students' biopsychosocial needs and respond accurately and appropriately. In this regard, it is essential to provide greater access to services and opportunities that will promote student well-being on all three UFS campuses. The DSA identified the use of digitalisation and technology (aligned with the 4IR) as well as infrastructure development as important strategies to scale relevant services.

3) Student Development

The DSA is passionate about developing graduates who are ethical transformational leaders in society. To this end, the DSA aims to create experiences through co-curricular and co-curricular programmes that will develop graduate attributes, employability and entrepeneurship. The DSA aspires to implement high-impact educational practices that are constructively aligned with the UFS Graduate Attributes Framework and assessment criteria. The use of technology is crucial to scale developmental opportunities for students, and the DSA aims to use this to create greater access to co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes.

4) Student Experience

The DSA is passionate about enhancing the academic success of students 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 jointly create a student-success infrastructure at the UFS.

5) Integrated Organisational Culture

The DSA is passionate about the holistic well-being of students. The DSA aspires to use data and data analytics to understand students' biopsychosocial needs and respond accurately and appropriately. In this regard, it is essential to provide greater access to services and opportunities that will promote student well-being on all three UFS campuses. The DSA identified the use of digitalisation and technology (aligned with the 4IR) as well as infrastructure development as important strategies to scale relevant services (DSA, 2021).

The Department of Student Counselling and Development is one of the entities within the Division of Student Affairs and will be elaborated upon accordingly.

5. Student Counselling & Development (SCD)

5.1 The History of SCD

Knowledge and skills to cope with the demands of higher education are a great necessity for students globally as well as for South African students. The student counselling service at the UFS remains at the helm of imparting this required knowledge and skills to our students to ensure that they are fully prepared to meet the academic challenges of Higher education and those of the broader society.

The original counselling service of the University of the Free State, known as 'Kovsie Counselling (KC)', was established by Professor Koos Venter in 1986. The service had very humble beginnings in the Psychology Department building, with only two psychologists in service. The services of KC were limited to basic career counselling and psychotherapy with only a few students. Ultimately, the service was moved to its new (and current) location in the Health & Counselling Building.

Following Prof Venter's retirement in 2005, Dr Refiloe Seane was appointed as the new Director of the service, fulfilling a period of two terms until her retirement in 2016. On Dr Seane's appointment as Director, the following units existed under Kovsie Counselling: Unit for Students with Disabilities; and the Reading Development Programme.

In 2005, Dr Seane established a Careers Office on the Bloemfontein Campus, as well as the counselling services at the Qwaqwa Campus. The Reading Development Programme was established at the Qwaqwa Campus in 2006.

Initially the counselling service at Qwaqwa Campus was conducted by a part-time psychologist, until 2011 when a psychometrist was appointed to assist with assessments for career counselling and the presentation of developmental workshops (both newly introduced services). In 2010, Qwaqwa Campus saw the launch of a Careers Office and in 2013, the psychologist post being upgraded to that of a full-time position.

In 2014, Mr Tobias van den Bergh was appointed as the new psychologist at the Qwaqwa Campus to assist us in growing and branding the service for our Qwaqwa students. Mr van den Bergh constructed the Strategic Development and Transformation Plan (SDTP: 2015-2020) following an internal audit that was conducted from July to October 2014.

During Dr Seane's directorship, Kovsie Counselling underwent a name change in 2012 and became known as 'Student Counselling & Development (SCD)'.

Further structural changes to take note of, are:
2010: Reading Development Programme repositioned under the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)
2010: Unit for Students with Disabilities repositioned under the Dean: Student Affairs
2013: Careers Office (Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa Campuses) repositioned under the Dean: Student Affairs
2016: Dr Melissa Barnaschone was appointed as the new Director of SCD

Further departmental improvements to take note of, are:

2005
Became members of the Society of Student Counselling in South Africa (now known as Southern African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education – SAACDHE) and revived the Free State Region.
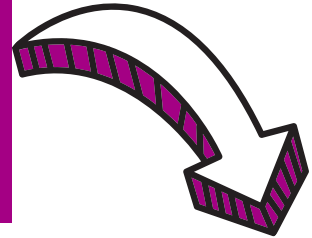
2010
Joined the social network by starting Facebook and Twitter accounts – a portal committee was elected to manage these accounts and the continuous updating of relevant information.

2011
- Psychometric testing facility underwent a revamp in order to meet international standards and accommodate more students for psychometric evaluations.
- 2011: Marketing strategy and department image improved, by introducing the "Red Couch" emblem.
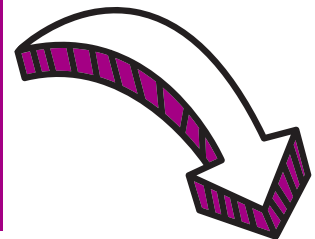
2012
- Careers Office Resource Centre underwent a face-lift in order to make it more inviting for our students and insure utilization of the resources.
- Accessibility improved through the installation of an elevator and toilet for disabled persons.
- Hosted the national SAACDHE conference.

2014

- A comprehensive informed consent form was developed, to meet the ethical guidelines as set-out by the HPCSA.
- Increased collaboration and programme alignment with the SCD Office: Qwaqwa Campus.

2015

- The revision, formalization, and alignment of client documentation, to increase uniformity and professional practice.
- A crisis management service (daily scheduled emergency sessions) and an after-hour crisis line were established.

2017

DSA Excellence Awards:
Best New Project category –
1st, 2nd, and 3rd places.

2018

Second best presentation at the annual SAACDHE conference, Magaliesberg.

2019

- Appointment of two Counselling Psychologists for Moshal scholars and UFS students in general with external funding
- The development of the UFS Student Mental Health Policy
- A link to the SCD web homepage is added to the new KovsieApp (to be launched at a later stage)
- The UFS Student Toolkit is launched and made available to all UFS students on Blackboard
- SAACDHE Best region
- DSA Excellence Awards: Best New Project – 1st and 3rd place, Innovation Award, as well as Keeping up with the Times project - 2nd place.
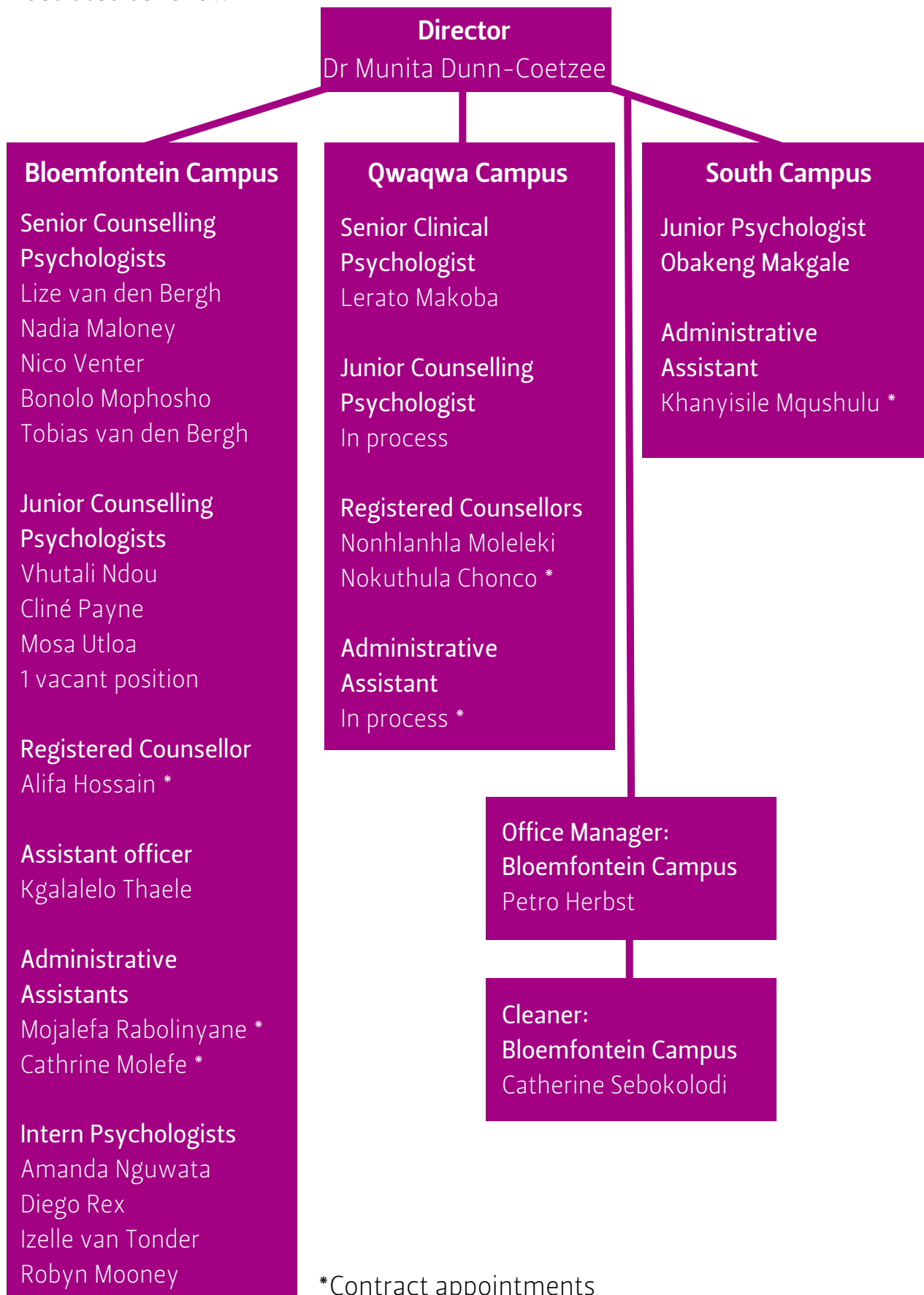- The appointment of a permanent psychologist on the South campus.

2020

- Achieved the largest staff capacity at the Qwaqwa campus since its establishment – Two permanent psychologists and two registered counsellors.
- Establishing #WellbeingWarriors initiative (Mental Health Resources)
- Created and disseminated the first UFS student electronic mental health magazine named MindMatters.
- May 2020: As this was the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, telepsychology and virtual counselling sessions were initiated to assist students.
- 1 September 2020: Establishment of UFS Student Mental Health Careline in collaboration with SADAG.
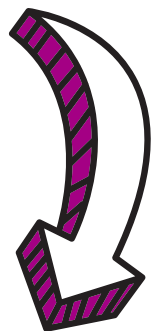
2021

- 1 September 2021: SADAG co-ordinates the screening process of students at SCD
- Hosting of the first Virtual SAACDHE Conference
- SAACDHE Conference: Best presentation award.

During May 2021 Dr Melissa Barnaschone resigned as Director: SCD after which Ms Lize Wolmarans acted as Director. Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee started as Director: SCD on 1 December 2021. The current SCD organogram can be illustrated as follow:

Director
Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee

Bloemfontein Campus

Senior Counselling Psychologists
Lize van den Bergh
Nadia Maloney
Nico Venter
Bonolo Mophosho
Tobias van den Bergh

Junior Counselling Psychologists
Vhutali Ndou
Cliné Payne
Mosa Utloa
1 vacant position

Registered Counsellor
Alifa Hossain *

Assistant officer
Kgalalelo Thaele

Administrative Assistants
Mojalefa Rabolinyane *
Cathrine Molefe *

Intern Psychologists
Amanda Nguwata
Diego Rex
Izelle van Tonder
Robyn Mooney

Qwaqwa Campus

Senior Clinical Psychologist
Lerato Makoba

Junior Counselling Psychologist
In process

Registered Counsellors
Nonhlanhla Moleleki
Nokuthula Chonco *

Administrative Assistant
In process *

South Campus

Junior Psychologist
Obakeng Makgale

Administrative Assistant
Khanyisile Mqushulu *

Office Manager: Bloemfontein Campus
Petro Herbst

Cleaner: Bloemfontein Campus
Catherine Sebokolodi

*Contract appointments

16

5.2 The SCD Strategic Plan

5.2.1 Strategic Foundations: Core Values

The core values of SCD form the foundation on which the strategic plan is built. Values guide the direction of movement and establishes the platform for the three pillars. The core values are preserved and maintained even amidst environmental, strategic, or goal-specific changes. These foundations are the core of what we do, how we do it, and why we do it.

The core values of SCD are:

1. Compassion
2. Connection
3. Empowerment
4. Professionalism

The four core values of SCD encompass the following:

Compassion ········→ openness, acceptance, care, empathy and motivation

Professionalism ········→ integrity, accountability, good service, transparency and excellence

Empowerment ········→ growth, personal development, holistic wellbeing

Connection ········→ teamwork, community, ubuntu

5.2.2 The Three Pillars

The strategic direction of SCD can be divided into three focus areas, or pillars, namely:

a) Psychological Interventions,
b) Training and Development, and
c) Research and Innovation.

The three strategic pillars embody the primary avenues through which SCD hope to achieve incremental and significant change initiatives.

These pillars are designed to support the institution, division, and department's integrated mission and vision and, ultimately, aim to promote and support:

- The development and implementation of systemic and impactful health promotion and primary preventative interventions for students.
- Outcome-driven activities aiming to improve student well-being and mental health.
- The continuous and deliberate growth of professional and departmental capacities via professional development activities, the strategic repurposing of resources, garnering funding support and establishing meaningful partnerships with relevant stakeholders and role-players.
- The participation in and production of research about higher education students and mental health.
- The design, development, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based mental health programmes, projects, and interventions.
- The continuous professionalisation of student mental health services.
- Innovative and scholarly-practitioner approaches to mental health services.
- Robust internal and external collaborations.

The three pillars are underpinned by specific and essential foundational elements and focus points. The strategic foundations are meant to enable the strategic imperatives and will be described in detail later. Please take note that SCD prioritizes aligning our services to all students via a multi-campus model and that the SCD Strategic Plan implicitly drives the process to establish an aligned offering on all three campuses. This will therefore not be repeated in very pillar.

The next section conceptualises each pillar and indicates the objectives associated with each.

## 5.2.2.1 Pillar 1: Psychological Interventions

The well-being of students is paramount to not only their academic success but also their life success in general. Consequently, we care about developing core human attributes that enable students to effectively manage higher education and mental health challenges, to grow and develop, and flourish.

We aim to achieve this by gradually shifting our primary focus from tertiary and secondary interventions to pro-active and preventative interventions. We hope to facilitate a systemic commitment to contributing to the well-being of an otherwise healthy student populace whilst providing mental health services and resources to mitigate the adverse effects of distress and mental health issues among students.

Psychological Interventions encapsulate all the activities and mental health services at various intervention levels. The overarching purpose of this pillar is to increasingly facilitate the development of research and evidence-based interventions, to encourage interventions that are group-based or scaled, to expand and streamline available mental health services to students, and to create a systemic culture, environment, and spaces that implicitly and explicitly enable and support student mental health.

Consequently, the broad objectives are to:
a) promote and maintain student well-being and health.
b) provide care and professional services to mitigate emotional distress and mental health issues.
c) prevent the development of debilitating mental health issues through early detection and identification.
d) explore interventions that are Africanised (decolonised), generation-specific, technology-driven, and student-focused.
e) implement preventative interventions that are group-based and scalable.
f) positively influence the broader UFS context and community to enable an environment that is systemically supportive, caring, knowledgeable about mental health, and responsive to the social-emotional needs of students.
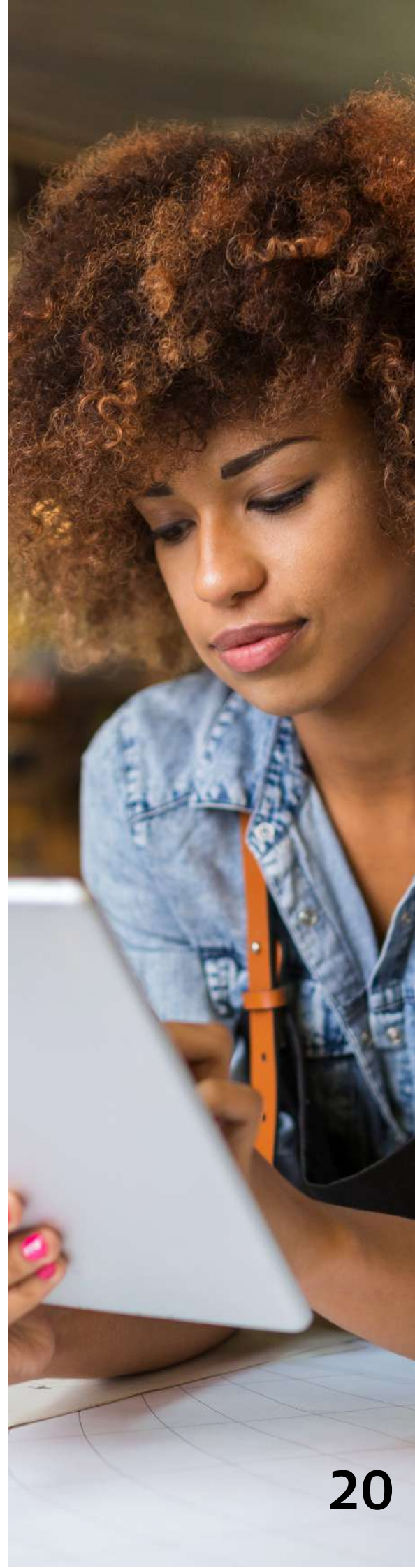
5.2.2.2 Pillar 2: Training and Development

The Training and Development pillar is concerned with the professional development of employees, the training of graduates, early career professionals, and interns, and the development of new skills, knowledge, and practices that support the relevant strategic imperatives. Additionally, the pillar focuses on developing human, infrastructure and technological capacities to enable several change initiatives.

The objectives associated with the Training and Development pillar are to:

a) Invest in deliberate internal and external employee training and development opportunities related to mental health services and critical professional skills and knowledge.

b) Contribute to the professional training and development of early-career mental health professionals, graduates, and students.

c) Develop physical, technological, and human capacities in support of mental health service delivery.

d) Train and develop UFS employees and structures in ways that enhance their knowledge, understanding, and practices related to student mental health.

5.2.2.3 Pillar 3:
Research and Innovation

At SCD we recognise the importance of developing and implementing interventions and services that are theoretically supported by notable research and knowledge. In addition, we recognise the significance of applying scholarly-practitioner approaches to what we do with and for students. Furthermore, we are intended to contribute to the production and output of research knowledge and practices relevant to student mental health and wellbeing.

Similarly, SCD is focused on advancing innovative practices and solutions to address the mental health needs, difficulties, and challenges of higher education students and counselling centres. Here, the application of novel approaches and technology-driven practices to address the high demand for mental health services is essential.

In terms of the Research and Innovation pillar, the objectives are to:

a) Produce research outputs and contributions related to students, counselling centres, and mental health.

b) Expand our research and innovation capacities.

c) Form research and innovation partnerships and collaborations.

d) Use technology and digital resources to expand, improve, and transform mental health services.

5.2.2 Mission and Vision

SCD's mission is to:

a) Improve the understanding and awareness among the UFS community regarding holistic mental health and mental health challenges.
b) Provide systemic education and knowledge regarding mental health and issues and implement programs, activities, and initiatives that support healing, and the development of resilience among students.
c) Significantly contribute to knowledge production, evidence-based interventions, and mental health innovations to address the substantial mental health needs of students.
d) Collaboratively create a socially just environment by expanding mental health services to enhance compassionate and caring environments for students.

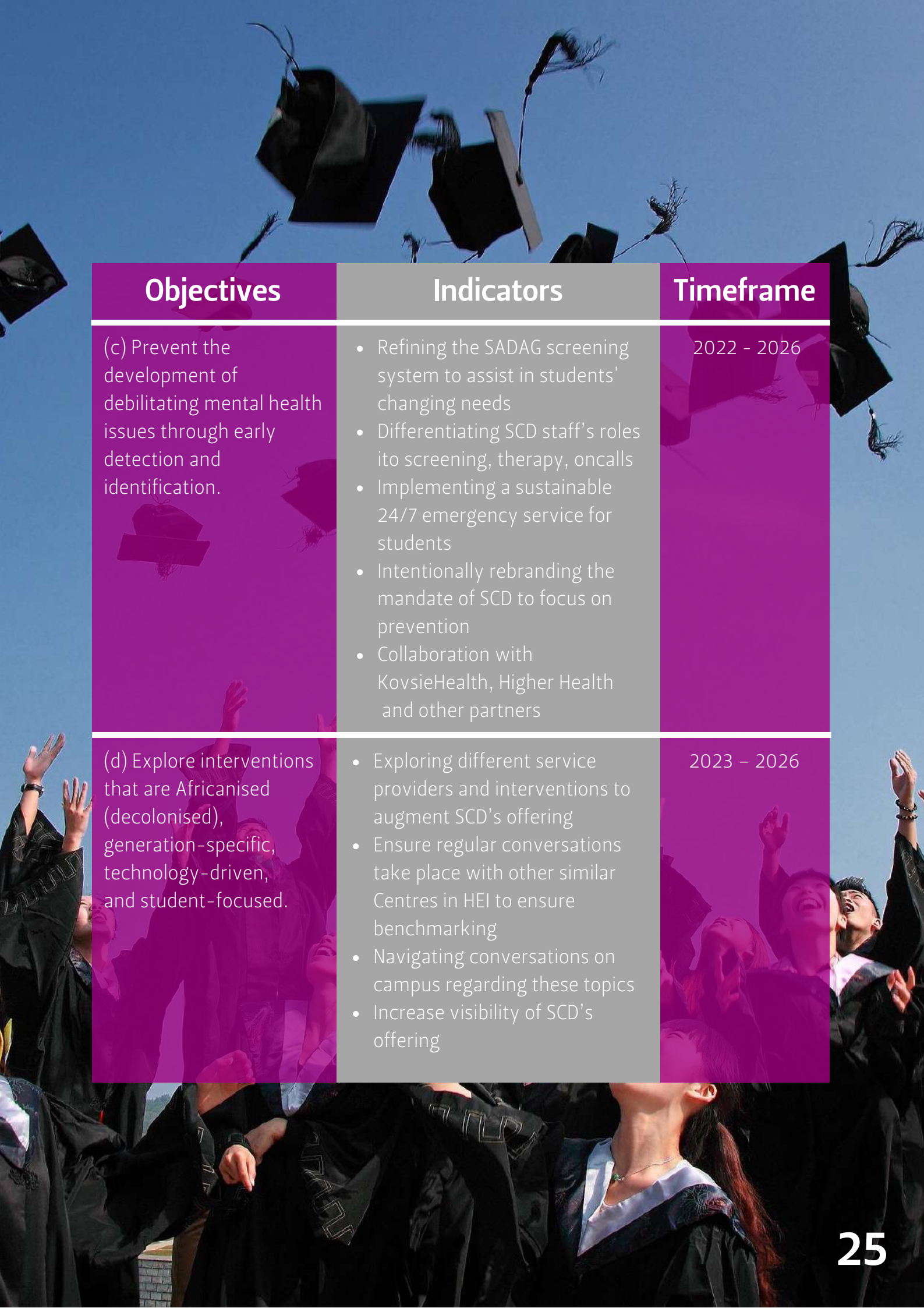The mission culminates in SCD's vision:

Our vision is to develop and implement systemic and holistic mental health services that promote student well-being and flourishing, mitigate, reduce and prevent mental health challenges, address existing mental health issues.

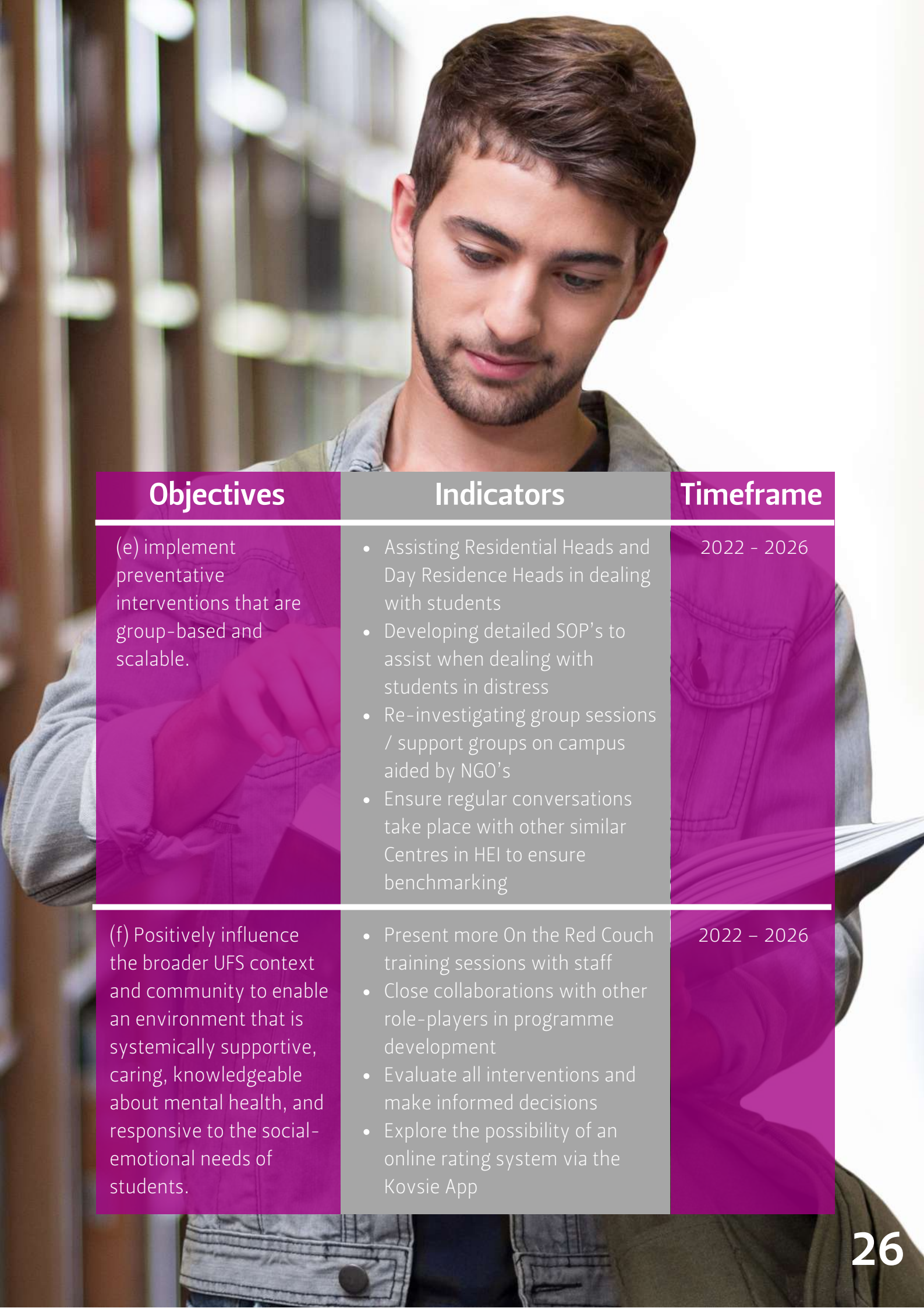# 6. Strategic Five-Year Plan

The SCD strategic five-year plan is visualized in the tables below – providing more detailed information with each pillar's objectives, adding indicators and timeframes.

Pillar One: Psychological Interventions

Objectives	Indicators	Timeframe
(a) Promote and maintain student well-being and health.	• Expand hybrid skills-based workshops and Mental Health Programmes • Be intentional about annual awareness campaigns • Collaboration with student leadership structures • Utilizing various communication and media platforms	2022 - 2026
(b) Provide care and professional services to mitigate emotional distress and mental health issues.	• Adjusting all SCD staff's job profiles to ensure it aligns with the mission and vision of SCD • Expanding the offering of services provided to include more online self-help material • Ensure accessibility for differently abled students to all material • Maximize student reach through the use of technology • Develop the SCD App	2022 - 2026

Objectives	Indicators	Timeframe
(c) Prevent the development of debilitating mental health issues through early detection and identification.	• Refining the SADAG screening system to assist in students' changing needs • Differentiating SCD staff's roles ito screening, therapy, oncalls • Implementing a sustainable 24/7 emergency service for students • Intentionally rebranding the mandate of SCD to focus on prevention • Collaboration with KovsieHealth, Higher Health and other partners	2022 - 2026
(d) Explore interventions that are Africanised (decolonised), generation-specific, technology-driven, and student-focused.	• Exploring different service providers and interventions to augment SCD's offering • Ensure regular conversations take place with other similar Centres in HEI to ensure benchmarking • Navigating conversations on campus regarding these topics • Increase visibility of SCD's offering	2023 – 2026

Objectives	Indicators	Timeframe
(e) implement preventative interventions that are group-based and scalable.	• Assisting Residential Heads and Day Residence Heads in dealing with students • Developing detailed SOP's to assist when dealing with students in distress • Re-investigating group sessions / support groups on campus aided by NGO's • Ensure regular conversations take place with other similar Centres in HEI to ensure benchmarking	2022 - 2026
(f) Positively influence the broader UFS context and community to enable an environment that is systemically supportive, caring, knowledgeable about mental health, and responsive to the social-emotional needs of students.	• Present more On the Red Couch training sessions with staff • Close collaborations with other role-players in programme development • Evaluate all interventions and make informed decisions • Explore the possibility of an online rating system via the Kovsie App	2022 – 2026

Pillar Two:
Training and Development

Objectives	Indicators	Timeframe
(a) Invest in deliberate internal and external employee training and development opportunities related to mental health services and critical professional skills and knowledge.	• Ensure relevant training for SCD staff on a regular basis throughout the year • Ensure budget allocations make provision for sufficient CPD-accredited activities per staff member per year • Initiate monthly case discussions between SCD staff members to enhance collaboration and knowledge	2022 - 2026
(b) Contribute to the professional training and development of early-career mental health professionals, graduates, and students.	• Implement an HPCSA-accredited internship programme for Intern Counselling Psychologists from 2023 • Refine collaboration with UNIBS regarding internship rotations and placements • Enhance collaborations with the Faculty of Medicine regarding possible intern rotations • Expand the intern placement programme from 3 interns (2023) to 5 interns (2026)	2022 - 2026

Objectives	Indicators	Timeframe
(c) Develop physical, technological, and human capacities in support of mental health service delivery.	- Develop a communication plan to ensure transparent communication, aligned marketing approaches and targeted messaging - Moving from a paper-based system of data and client management to a paperless system of data and client management. - Building and expanding partnerships with NGO's and role-players in the private sector to enable collaboration.	2022 - 2026
(d) Train and develop UFS employees and structures in ways that enhance their knowledge, understanding, and practices related to student mental health.	- Present more On the Red Couch training sessions with staff - Close collaborations with other role-players in programme development - Evaluate all interventions and make informed decisions - Explore the possibility of an online rating system via the Kovsie App	2022 – 2026

Pillar Three: Research and Innovation

Objectives	Indicators	Timeframe
(a) Produce research outputs and contributions related to students, counselling centres, and mental health.	• Establish a process to start utilizing all the captured data that SCD has access to • Develop a research focus area where staff can contribute • Explore evidence-based practices at other Centres in South Africa	2022 - 2026
(b) Expand our research and innovation capacities.	• Move from a paper-based Centre to a paperless Centre • Provide funding for an upgraded technological client management system • Differentiate SCD's staff model and invest in research internships, studentships	2022 - 2026

Objectives	Indicators	Timeframe
(c) Form research and innovation partnerships and collaborations.	• Explore evidence-based practices at other Centres in South Africa and Globally • Form partnerships with other Universities on research projects • Establish a focus area for research within the Centre • Reach out to Department of Psychology to obtain Master-students to research SCD's data	2022 - 2026
(d) Use technology and digital resources to expand, improve, and transform mental health services.	• Move from a paper-based Centre to a paperless Centre • Provide funding for an upgraded technological client management system • Initiate conversations with UNIBS for a stronger partnership to conduct research and the possibility of a combined training unit	2022 – 2026

7. Conclusion

SCD's five-year strategy will be subject to ongoing review and annual adjustments and will be responsive to recommendations from any forthcoming institutional or departmental reviews. Building on previous plans and achievements, it aims to ensure that the SCD remains relevant and excels in psychological interventions, training, and development as well as research and innovation.

8. References

Auerbach, R. P., Alonso, J., Axinn, W., Cuijpers, P., Ebert, D., Green, J., Mortier, P. (2016). Mental disorders among college students in the World Health Organization world mental health surveys. Psychological Medicine, 46(14): 2955–2970.

Auerbach, R. P., Moertier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Cuipers, P., et al. (2018). WHO - World Mental Health Surveys International College Student Project prevalence and distribution of mental disorders. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 127(7): 623 – 638.

Brown, J. S. L. (2018). Student mental health: Some answers and more questions. Journal of Mental Health, 27(3): 193–196. doi:10.1080/09638237.2018.1470319.

Division of Student Affairs (DSA). (2021). Division of Student Affairs: Strategic Direction and Organizational Structure. Version 1. https://www.ufs.ac.za/supportservices/departments/student-affairs-home (Accessed 4 July 2022).

Evans, T. M., Bira, L., Gastelum, L. B., Weiss, L. T. and Vanderford, N. L. (2018). Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education. Nature Biotechnology, 36(3): 282–284.

Fandie, K., & Naudé, L. (2019). Being Flawed or Being Courageous: South African students' attitudes towards counselling. Current Psychology, 38:647-658. doi: 10.1007/s12144-017-9645-1.

Gallagher, R. (2014). National survey of counseling center directors. Alexandria, VA: National Association of Counseling Services. http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/28178/1/survey_2014.pdf (Accessed 3 May 2019).

Kaminer, D., and Shabalala, N. (2019). Developing a student mental health policy for a South African university: consultation, contestation and compromise. South African Journal of Higher Education 33(5), 196 – 212. http://dx.doi.org/10.20853/33-5-3597

Kuh, G. (2020). Through a glass darkly: Apprehending an uncertain future. In R. Ludeman (Ed.), Student Affairs and Services in Higher Education: Global Foundations, Issues, and Best Practices (3rd. ed., pp. 226-230). International Association of Student Affairs and Services.

Padmanabhununni, A., Jackson, K., Noordien, Z., Pretorius, T.B., and Bouchard, J.P. (2022). Characterizing the nature of professional training and practice of psychologists in South Africa. Annales Medico-Psychologiques, 180: 360 – 365. doi:10.1016/j.amp.2022.02.012.

University of the Free State (UFS). (2022). University of the Free State: Institutional Profile. https://www.ufs.ac.za/about-the-ufs (Accessed 4 July 2022).

Xiao, H., Carney, D. M., Joun, S. J., Janis, R. A, Castonguay, L. G., Hayes, J. A., and B. D. Locke, B. D. (2017). Are we in crisis? National mental health and treatment trends in College Counseling Centers. Psychological Services,14(4): 407–415. doi: 10.1037/ser0000130.