



# ANNUAL REPORT

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE  
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

20  
24

T: +27 51 401 2819 | E: [wahlwp@ufs.ac.za](mailto:wahlwp@ufs.ac.za) | [www.ufs.ac.za](http://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

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	2
Executive Summary	4
Organisational Culture and Structure	7
Circle of Experts	8
Circle of Educators	9
Circle of Facilitators	10
Circle of Analysts	11
Operationalising the Integrated Organisational Structure	12
Key Strategic Areas	14
 Student Success	16
Goal 1: An Environment Conducive to Student Learning and Success	17
 Student Well-being	24
Goal 2: An Environment Conducive to the Biopsychosocial Well-being of Students	25
 Student Development	36
Goal 3: An Environment Conducive to the Development of Graduate Attributes	37
 Student Experience	42
Goal 4: An Environment that Fosters a Sense of Belonging and Care for Students	43
Special Projects	50
Digitalisation Plan	54
Change Management Process	56
Conclusion	60

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Circle of Experts (blue).	8
Figure 2: Circle of Educators (orange).	9
Figure 3: Circle of Facilitators (purple).	10
Figure 4: Circle of Analysts (red).	11
Figure 5: Four key strategic areas related to the vision of a student-centred university.	15
Figure 6: Cascade of strategic goals and objectives.	15
Figure 7: The ADKAR model of change.	56
Figure 8: Group coaching sessions.	58

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: KSA – Student Success: Strategic goals, objectives, and indicators.	17
Table 2: KPIs per the Digitally Enhanced Student Success and Employability Programme, phase 1.	19
Table 3: Accreditation of off-campus accommodation in Bloemfontein.	20
Table 4: Accreditation of off-campus accommodation in Qwaqwa.	20
Table 5: Bloemfontein Campus occupancy, July to December 2024.	20
Table 6: Qwaqwa Campus occupancy, July to December 2024.	20
Table 7: Off-campus accommodation inspected during second semester of 2024.	21
Table 8: KSA – Student Well-being: Strategic goals, objectives, and indicators.	25
Table 9: First Things First activation and HIV testing.	26
Table 10: Food from donors, January to June 2024.	26
Table 11: Food from donors, July to November 2024.	27
Table 12: Distribution of parcels, January to June 2024.	27
Table 13: Distribution of parcels, July to November 2024.	27
Table 14: Top 10 reasons why students visited Student Counselling and Development in 2024.	32
Table 15: Number of sessions offered during 2024 (psychological services).	33
Table 16: KSA – Student Development: Strategic goals, objectives, and indicators.	37
Table 17: Health screening statistics.	40
Table 18: Peer Mentor Programme, 10 theme discussions.	40
Table 19: Career fairs in 2024.	41
Table 20: Career weeks in 2024.	41
Table 21: Key performance indicators for MSDF.	41
Table 22: KSA – Student Experience: Strategic goals, objectives, and indicators.	43
Table 23: Students reached during health and wellness dialogues within college format.	44
Table 24: Integrated change management activities and deliverables, 2023 to 2024.	59



# FOREWORD

Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal  
**Prof Anthea Rhoda**

As acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the Free State, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Executive Director and his entire team in the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) for their outstanding achievements in 2024.

“The student journey at the UFS, from entry to exit, is paved with opportunities for growth and development on all levels, both personally and academically.”

The different departments of the DSA contributed to the key strategic foci of the division, namely student success, student well-being, student development, and the student experience. With a student-centred approach, the DSA aligns its goals and activities with those of Vision 130. These activities are based on the values outlined in the university’s vision, with a specific focus on care, social justice, and excellence.

The departments that make up DSA – Student Life, Social Support, Housing and Residence Affairs, Counselling and Development, KopsieSport, CUADS, and Health and Wellness – provide opportunities for students to have a holistic student experience, allowing students to engage in activities beyond the classroom. These activities include cultural activities, athletics, leadership development, engaging with communities through engaged scholarship activities, as well as activities contributing to employability. The student journey at the UFS, from entry to exit, is therefore paved with opportunities for growth and development on all levels, both personally and academically. Through the commitment and dedication of the DSA staff, opportunities exist for students to not only expand their knowledge and skills, but also to display their talents and explore their dreams and aspirations. Through engagement in the activities provided by the DSA, students often develop relationships with other students that could last beyond their time at university.

The organisational structure applied in the DSA is central to its successes. By applying a community of practice approach, the DSA creates opportunities for the realisation of dialogue, inclusion, collaboration, diversity, inclusivity, identity, and accountability. This facilitates partnerships with other entities across the institution. It also contributes to the effective functioning of the division and building a body of knowledge related to student affairs. This knowledge enables the

institution to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of students.

Flying the Kopsie flag high, we are extremely proud of all our students’ achievements and accomplishments in various athletics codes and all other co-curricular activities in 2024. Special mention must be made of the Shimlas who were crowned the 2024 Varsity Cup champions, and KopsieNetball who secured its fifth Varsity Netball title. Through the dedication of coaches, managers, and others, our students continue to excel and thrive – well done to all involved.

The DSA contributes significantly to the Kopsie student experience, ensuring that our graduates exit the university having had a meaningful student experience. May you, in true Kopsie spirit, continue to enhance the lives of our students as we look forward to continued accomplishments achieved through your hard work and dedication. 🍷





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Director:  
**Student Affairs, Temba Hlasho**

The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) at the University of the Free State (UFS) is more than just a support structure; it is the heart of student engagement, transformation, and success. Every initiative, every programme, and every decision are driven by a deep commitment to creating an inclusive, student-centred environment where every student has the opportunity to thrive. In line with the UFS Vision 130 and the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028, the DSA has made tremendous strides in ensuring that students not only succeed academically but also grow into well-rounded individuals ready to make meaningful contributions to society.

At the core of our work are four key strategic areas: Student Success, Student Well-being, Student Development, and Student Experience. These areas guide everything we do, ensuring that our efforts remain focused, relevant, and impactful. Over the past year, we have worked tirelessly to refine our organisational culture and structure, fostering a more agile and collaborative framework that enhances efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness. By implementing the four operational circles – Circle of Experts, Circle of Educators, Circle of Facilitators, and Circle of Analysts – we have created a more connected and student-responsive division. This shift has enabled us to be more proactive, adaptive, and intentional in how we serve our students.

The passion and dedication of our staff have been the driving force behind our achievements. Through their efforts, we have made significant progress in strengthening student leadership, expanding wellness initiatives, enhancing student support structures, and improving engagement platforms. The DSA Change Management Process has been instrumental in aligning staff competencies with the evolving needs of our students and the university. Through leadership development, competency assessments, and targeted training, we have empowered our team to innovate, collaborate, and continuously improve service delivery.

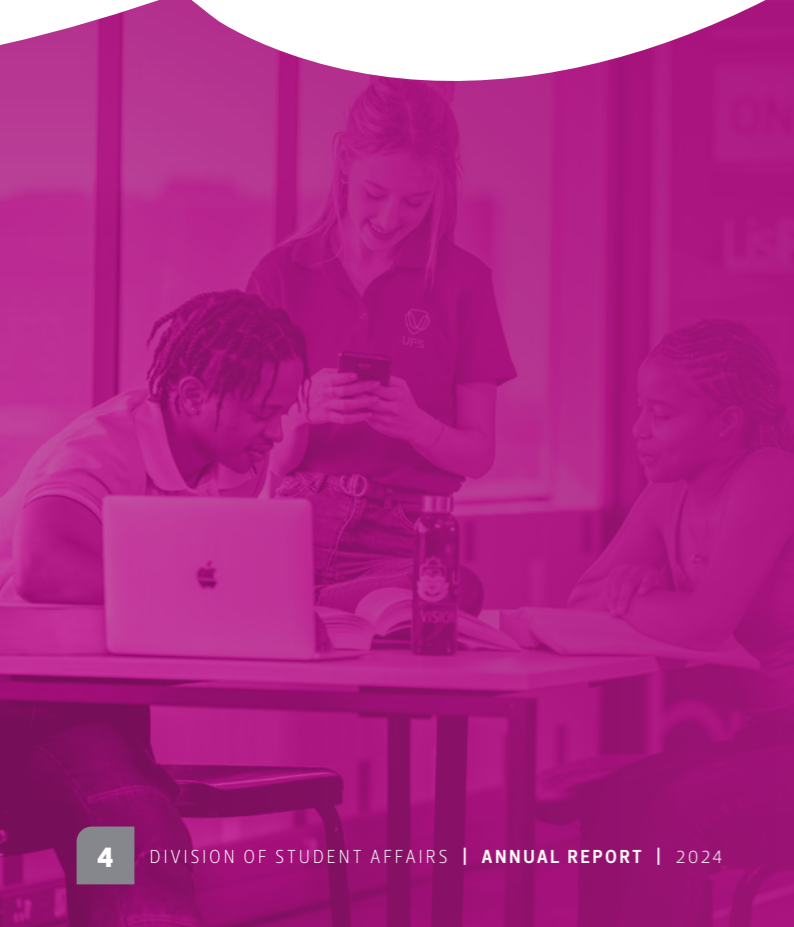
The past year has also seen notable advancements in digital transformation. While digitalisation is just one aspect of our strategy, it has played a crucial role in enhancing student engagement, streamlining support services, and improving accessibility. In partnership with ICT Services, we have implemented data-driven solutions that make student services more efficient, transparent, and student-friendly.

Our commitment to holistic student development is evident in the initiatives we have championed. The Critical Dialogue Series has provided a thought-provoking space for students to engage on issues such as governance, cultural diversity, and the intersection of politics, religion, and academia. The Lekgotla Men's Well-being Programme has

created a safe and empowering environment for students to reflect, share, and grow, addressing critical topics such as mental health, addiction, financial literacy, and leadership. The Executive Director of Student Affairs (EDSA) Prestige Awards have continued to celebrate student excellence, leadership, and innovation – a testament to the incredible talent and drive within our student community. Additionally, the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Programme has empowered students to pursue entrepreneurship and business development, supporting the university's broader goal of economic sustainability and innovation.

Looking ahead, we remain deeply committed to refining and strengthening our initiatives, ensuring that student success remains at the heart of everything we do. We will continue to expand support structures, advance engagement initiatives, and promote inclusivity. As we navigate the ever-changing landscape of higher education, our focus will remain unwavering: to create an environment where every student feels seen, heard, and supported.

It is with great pride that I reflect on the work we have accomplished and the remarkable dedication of our staff. Their passion and commitment have shaped the DSA into a dynamic, responsive, and student-focused division. I am equally inspired by the resilience, creativity, and leadership demonstrated by our students. They are the reason we do what we do, and their success is our greatest achievement. Together, we will continue to build a university experience that is not only enriching, but also transformational. 🌟





# ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND STRUCTURE

The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) is committed to fostering an organisational culture that empowers individuals and teams to thrive while reaching their full potential. Central to this vision is the establishment of an agile, dynamic culture that promotes collaboration, accountability, inclusivity, and a strong collective identity.

To achieve these aspirations, the DSA has adopted an organisational structure designed to enhance synergy and interconnectedness across functional areas. This structure is built on a framework of interrelated operational circles, each dedicated to a specific focus area.

“The DSA is committed to fostering an organisational culture that empowers individuals and teams to thrive while reaching their full potential.”

## A Shift Towards an Integrated Organisational Framework

In redefining its organisational model, the DSA seeks to move away from rigid hierarchies and isolated operational silos. Instead, it is implementing an integrated, agile system that fosters collegiality, shared learning, and cross-functional collaboration. As part of this transformation, all functional areas within the DSA have been structured into four distinct yet interconnected communities of practice:

- **Circle of Experts** – Specialising in subject matter expertise and knowledge development.
- **Circle of Educators** – Focused on student learning, development, and engagement.
- **Circle of Facilitators** – Dedicated to enabling dialogue, inclusion, and support services.
- **Circle of Analysts** – Providing data-driven insights and strategic analysis.

This progressive organisational framework is designed to enhance operational efficiency, encourage knowledge-sharing, and ensure that the DSA remains adaptive to evolving student and institutional needs. 📊

## CIRCLE OF EXPERTS

The Circle of Experts encompasses functional areas that require specialised knowledge and expertise to deliver tailored services to students. This community of practice is dedicated to addressing complex challenges that necessitate professional insight, strategic analysis, and precise responses to student needs. By evaluating multiple possibilities and leveraging expert judgment, this circle ensures the provision of high-quality, informed support that enhances the student experience.

The following DSA functional areas are considered to be 'experts':

- Student Counselling and Development (SCD)
- Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS)
- Social Support Office (SSO)
- Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA) – (structures and operations)
- Health and Wellness Centre
- Koviesport (high-performance sport; commercialisation, events, and marketing).

Figure 1 illustrates the grouping of these functional areas in a Circle of Experts (blue circle) and how this specific functional sphere fits into the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.

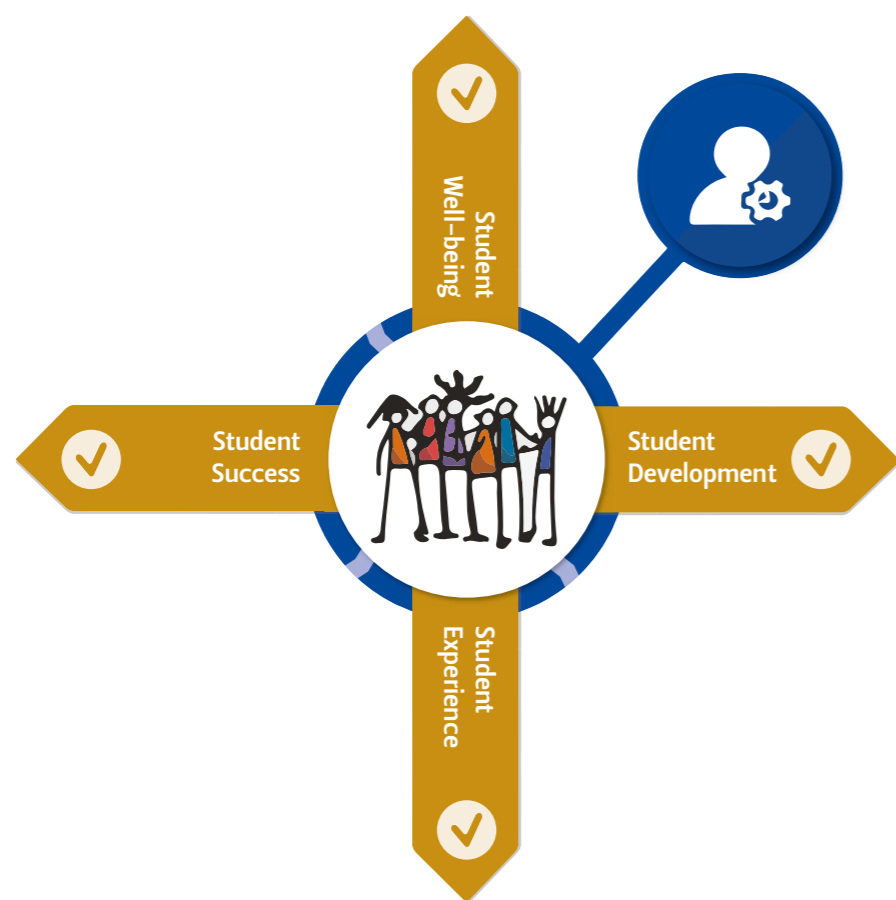


Figure 1: Circle of Experts (blue).

## CIRCLE OF EDUCATORS

The Circle of Educators encompasses functional areas dedicated to student education, holistic development, and future preparedness. This circle positions the DSA as an integral partner in the broader campus curriculum, reinforcing the idea that student learning and personal growth are interconnected and extend beyond the classroom. By leveraging co-curricular and extracurricular programmes, this circle plays a pivotal role in cultivating graduate attributes, ensuring a well-rounded and enriching student experience.

The following DSA functional areas are considered to be 'educators':

- Student Leadership Development
- First-Year Orientation and Peer Mentoring Programme
- Student Media
- Arts and Culture
- Dialogues
- Career Services
- Active Civic Teaching (Kovies ACT)
- Student Wellness
- Food Environment
- Koviesport (recreational and mainstream sport).

Figure 2 illustrates the grouping of these functional areas in a Circle of Educators (orange circle) and how this specific functional sphere fits into the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.

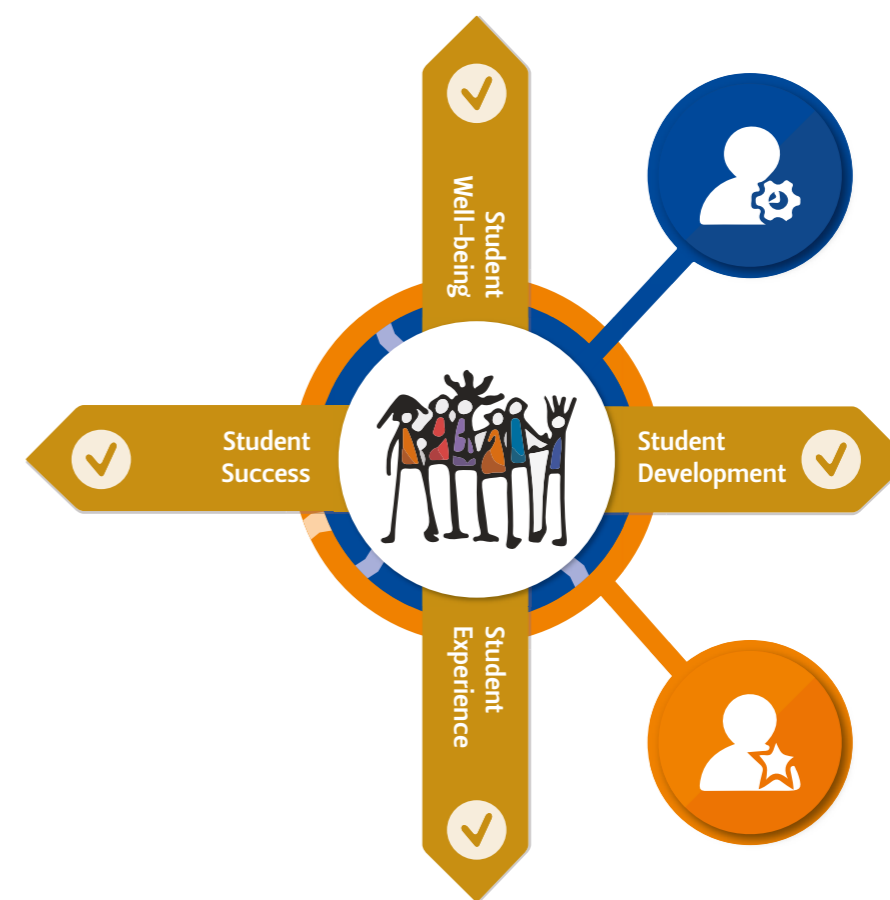


Figure 2: Circle of Educators (orange).

## CIRCLE OF FACILITATORS

The Circle of Facilitators encompasses functional areas responsible for guiding and managing the complex dynamics of student communities, associations, organisations, and their leadership structures. This circle plays a crucial role in fostering open dialogue, establishing clear yet flexible boundaries, and enabling social systems to self-regulate within a safe and supportive framework. By promoting meaningful discussions, encouraging debate, and nurturing interconnectedness amid diversity, the Circle of Facilitators strengthens student engagement and leadership development.

The following DSA functional areas are considered to be 'facilitators':

- Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA) – (college communities). *Although college communities are part of the Circle of Facilitators – due to the nature of this functional area – the head of college communities reports to the Senior Director: HRA to establish an integrated accommodation system at the UFS.*
- Student Governance (governance structures, student associations, and organisations).

Figure 3 illustrates the grouping of these functional areas in a Circle of Facilitators (purple circle) and how this specific functional sphere fits into the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.

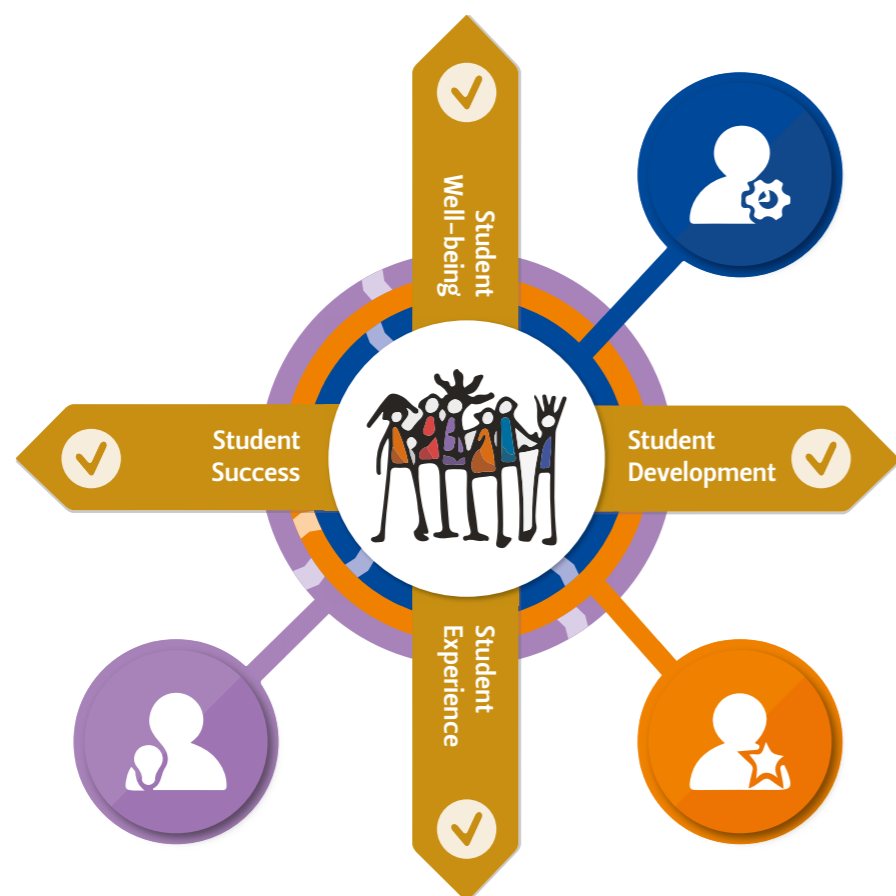


Figure 3: Circle of Facilitators (purple).

## CIRCLE OF ANALYSTS

The Circle of Analysts is dedicated to enhancing the impact and visibility of the DSA and the UFS through data-driven insights and analytics. At the core of this circle's mission is the establishment of an evidence-based culture, ensuring that decision-making, programme development, and service delivery are informed by robust data analysis. By leveraging data to assess and optimise the effectiveness of initiatives across the Circle of Experts, Circle of Educators, and Circle of Facilitators, this group plays a critical role in driving continuous improvement and strategic innovation within the DSA.

Figure 4 illustrates the incorporation of the Circle of Analysts (red circle) and how this specific functional sphere fits into the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.

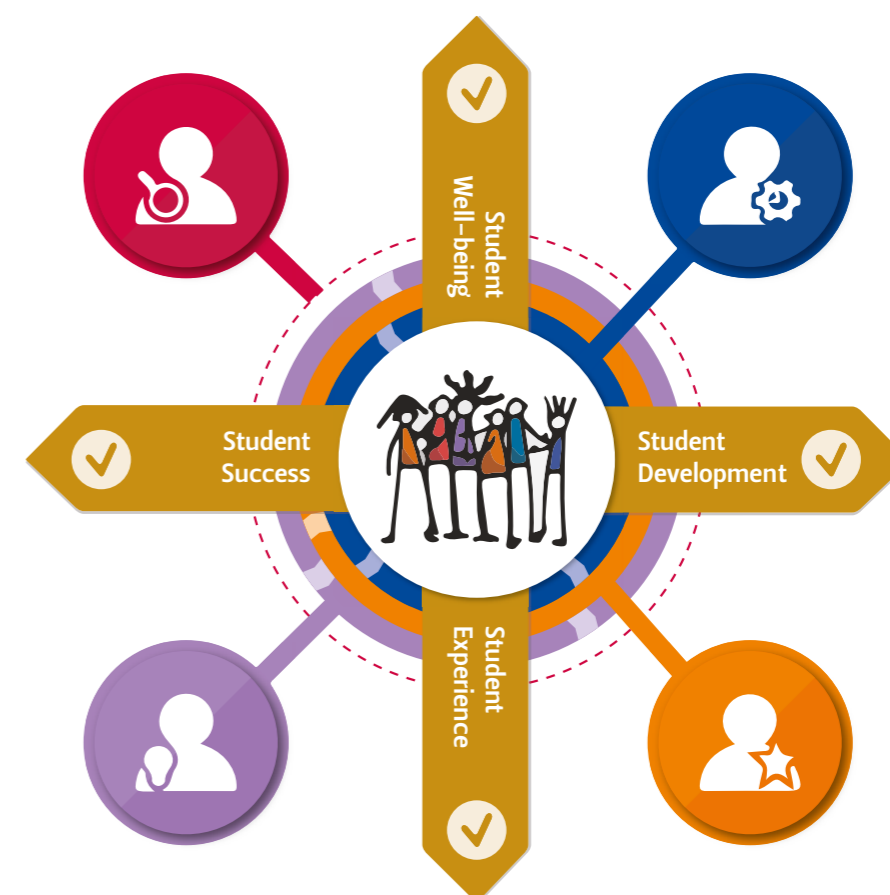


Figure 4: Circle of Analysts (red).

## A Holistic and Integrated Student-Centred Structure

The DSA is committed to a holistic, integrated, and student-centred organisational framework. This structure is designed to foster dynamic interaction between the four key strategic areas – Student Success, Student Well-being, Student Development, and Student Experience – and the four communities of practice – Circle of Experts, Circle of Educators, Circle of Facilitators, and Circle of Analysts. By aligning strategic objectives with these interconnected communities, the DSA ensures a cohesive, agile, and impactful approach to student engagement, support, and development. 📌

# OPERATIONALISING THE INTEGRATED ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

## Communities of Practice as Interconnected Circles

The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) is committed to establishing a flat, agile, and innovative organisational structure that enables self-organising teams to collaborate effectively. The successful implementation of this integrated framework relies on the operationalisation of functional circles into communities of practice (CoPs) – specifically the Circle of Experts, Circle of Educators, Circle of Facilitators, and Circle of Analysts.

Recognising the value of deeper collaboration, the DSA seeks to foster stronger connections between professionals within shared areas of expertise. These communities of practice extend beyond departmental boundaries, creating a dynamic and supportive network that enhances both professional development and the effectiveness of student services.

The establishment of communities of practice aims to achieve three key objectives:

*Note: The integrated organisational structure of the DSA promotes self-organisation. Thus, the individual leadership function of each head of department/centre/unit is encouraged and upheld – especially within the context of the communities of practice.*

- 1 Continuous Professional Development** – CoPs serve as platforms for continuous learning and skill enhancement. The DSA prioritises staff competency to ensure the highest quality and impact of its programmes, projects, and services.
- 2 Integrated Collaboration Across Campuses** – CoPs enable cross-functional engagement across all three UFS campuses, reinforcing a unified approach to implementing the institution's multi-campus model.
- 3 A Culture of Mutual Support and Well-being** – The DSA is deeply invested in staff wellness, recognising that a thriving organisational culture must prioritise care and support. Through CoPs, the DSA fosters a collegial environment where staff can share best practices, address challenges, and support one another professionally and personally.

Importantly, the goal of communities of practice is not to introduce a new hierarchical structure, but to create dynamic professional networks. These networks empower staff to collaborate, exchange insights, and develop innovative solutions in an inclusive and supportive environment. 🌟



# KEY STRATEGIC AREAS

The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) is guided by four key strategic areas (KSAs) that serve as the foundation of its student-centred approach.

These KSAs are:

-  **Student Success**
-  **Student Well-being**
-  **Student Development**
-  **Student Experience.**

Figure 5 illustrates the four key strategic areas that focus on student-centredness.

Each of the four key strategic areas (KSAs) is operationalised through a strategic goal, achieved via the implementation of a set of targeted objectives. These strategic goals and objectives are directly aligned with the broader institutional priorities outlined in the UFS Vision 130 and the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028. To ensure coherence and impact, the DSA has adopted a cascade-of-importance approach, wherein specific UFS objectives have been carefully identified and mapped to DSA strategic goals. This structured alignment reinforces the university's overarching mission while ensuring that the DSA's initiatives contribute meaningfully to institutional success.

Figure 6 illustrates the cascading of strategic goals and objectives.

The following section provides a detailed overview of the four strategic goals, along with their associated objectives, for each of the key strategic areas (KSAs).

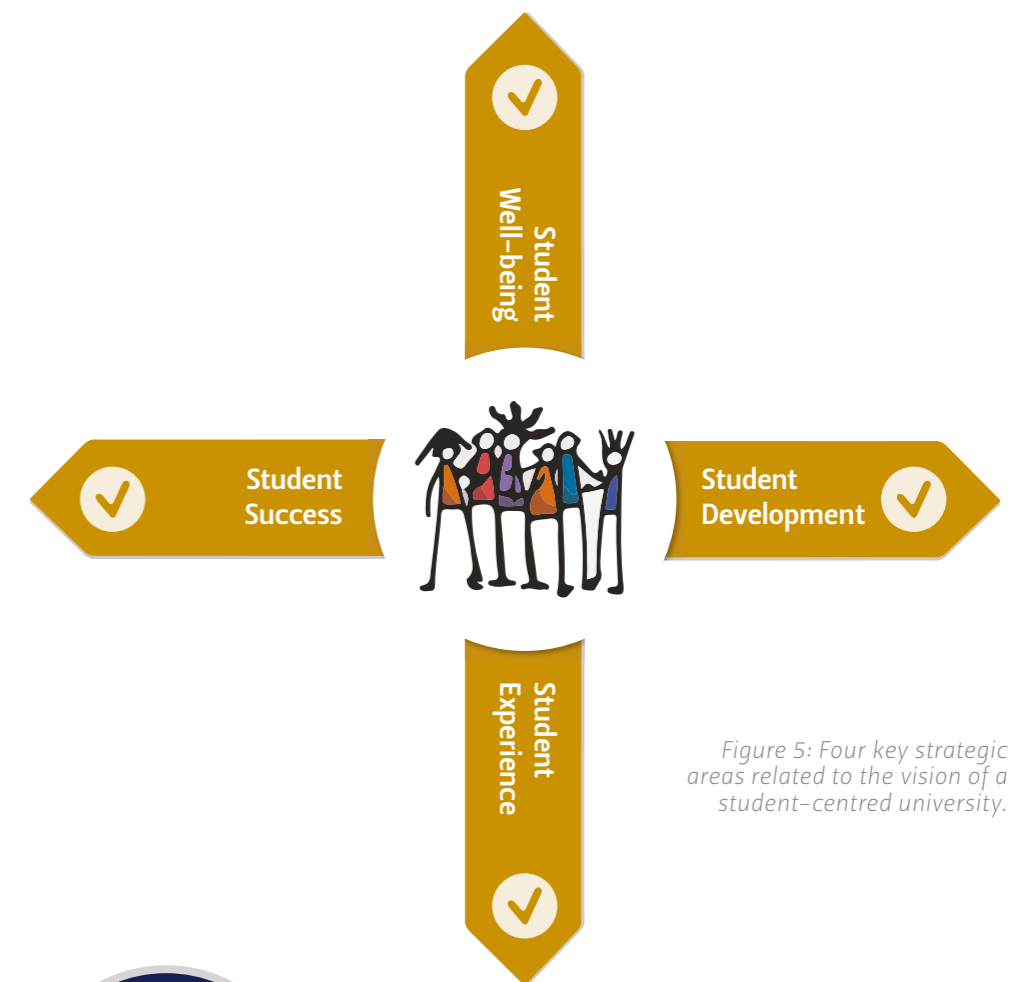


Figure 5: Four key strategic areas related to the vision of a student-centred university.

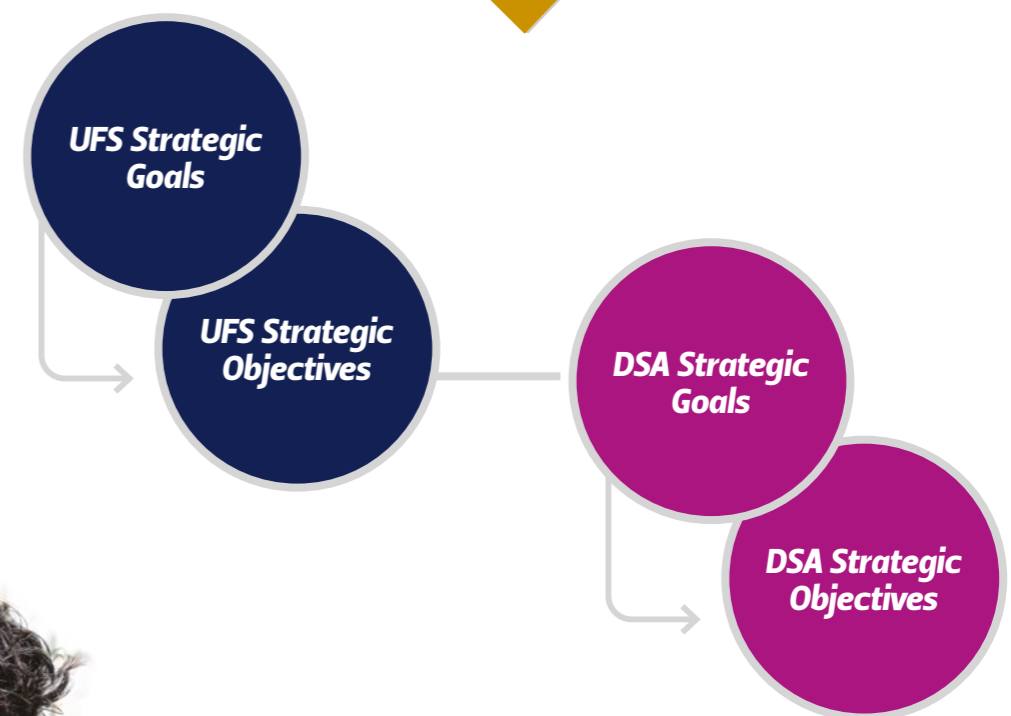


Figure 6: Cascade of strategic goals and objectives.



## KEY STRATEGIC AREA: STUDENT SUCCESS



The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) works in close collaboration with academic centres and faculties to establish a student-success infrastructure at the UFS. Additionally, the DSA recognises the importance of increasing and improving student representation in academic affairs to support the co-creation of an environment that fosters academic success. Upholding scientific rigour, the DSA is progressively integrating data and data analytics in a collaborative manner to enhance student success.

### Goal 1: An Environment Conducive to Student Learning and Success

This strategic goal aligns with Objective 4.4 of the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028, namely:  
**Ensuring the efficiency of academic programmes, offerings, and academic support systems.**

The DSA aims to achieve the following objectives by 2025 to advance Goal 1:

- **Objective 1.1**  
Establishing a holistic and integrated infrastructure.
- **Objective 1.2**  
Establishing more and better student representation in academic affairs.
- **Objective 1.3**  
Increasing the use of data and data analytics to enhance student success.

Table 1 below illustrates the goals and objectives associated with the key strategic area of student success.

GOAL 1: AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS		
Alignment with the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028 Objective 4.4: Ensuring the efficiency of academic programmes, offerings, and academic support systems.		
Objective 1.1	Objective 1.2	Objective 1.3
Establishing a holistic and integrated success infrastructure	Establishing more and better student representation in academic affairs	Increasing the use of data and data analytics to enhance student success
Key performance indicators	Key performance indicators	Key performance indicators
1.1.1 First-time entry student (FTEN) indicators 1.1.2 Career Services indicators 1.1.3 Living-learning indicators	1.2.1 Student representation indicators	1.3.1 Student tracking indicators (integrated DSA support) 1.3.2 Data-informed decision indicators

Table 1: KSA – Student Success: Strategic goals, objectives, and indicators.

## 2024 Progress Towards Strategic Goal 1

The DSA achieved notable advancements in student success during 2024, with the following highlights exemplifying excellence in relation to each objective.

### Objective 1.1: A Holistic and Integrated Success Infrastructure

#### KPI 1.1.1: First-time Entering Student (FTEN) indicators

The **First-Year First-Year Welcoming and Orientation (FYO) Office** successfully implemented several priority projects during 2024. These initiatives aimed to integrate new students into the UFS community in a holistic manner, easing their transition into higher education. At the start of the year, the FYO webpage went live, providing crucial information to first-year students. The office also hosted a training camp for 50 Gateway crew members from all three campuses.

Kovsie Week helped First-Time Entering Students (FTEN) students familiarise themselves with their new environment by means of library and campus tours, as well as the College Hub programme. During Faculty Welcoming, students could meet faculty members, staff, and peers. The Dream Walk event enabled students to anchor their dreams of the future. The Blackboard FYO Organisation offered 7 168 registered students a course in navigating the platform, with a chance to win prizes for participation.

Focus group interviews provided deeper insights into FTEN's experiences and expectations, and a FTEN theatre production raised awareness about social issues and challenges typically experienced by first-year students. The FYO office hosted a series of financial literacy seminars during the year, as well as an exam preparation series to capacitate students. They also successfully advanced plans for the 2025 FTEN student T-shirts to procure 8 000 branded T-shirts. In collaboration with the Information and Communication Technology (ICT)



Click to watch  
the video

department, software was also designed to capture FTEN data and streamline T-shirt distribution in future.

The **Peer Mentorship Office** provided blended (face-to-face and Blackboard) induction and annual training to almost 1 000 peer mentors across all three campuses. A total of 605 peer mentors successfully completed the Mediated Learning Experience course. Five themed discussions – the data of which was collected via evaluation questionnaires – were hosted online and attended by a total of 981 mentors and 2 768 mentees.

The **Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS)** registered eleven first-time entering students on the Bloemfontein Campus, five on the South Campus, and three on the Qwaqwa Campus.

**Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA)** provided Residence Mentorship Programme funding assistance to maintain the engagements between mentors and mentees. HRA also collaborated with the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), with Residence Committee (RC): Academics, and mentors referring FTENs to CTL.

**KovsieSport:** The early introduction to campus sport for first-years has yielded great results, promoting an active campus and competitive sports environment. The tournament, consisting of several sporting codes, also contributed to the sports culture and sportsmanship of UFS student-athletes.

The **Arts and Culture Office** successfully delivered the Gateway First-Year Production on all three campuses.

**Engaged Scholarship** launched the First-Year Community Engagement Festival. The purpose of this event was to engage first-year students



Click to watch  
the video

early in their academic careers and expose them to community engagement principles and programmes.

#### KPI 1.1.2: Career Services indicators

**Career Services** successfully launched the new Career Development and Employability Pathway (CDEP) as part of the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF) project. The MSDF is a charitable, non-profit private foundation. This pathway is a five-step process that students will complete from first to final year to increase their employability. The five steps entail collaboration between two CTL departments and Career Services.

From January to December 2024, Career Services hosted five career fairs (Economic and Management Sciences (EMS), Law, Natural and Agricultural Sciences (NAS), Qwaqwa Campus and General BFN) and seven career weeks (one per faculty), providing more employment opportunities to students and preparing them for the world of work. It also successfully hosted the Placement Preparation Days on both the Qwaqwa and Bloemfontein campuses with 304 students in attendance (over both semesters).

The MSDF-funded project, called the Digitally Enhanced Student Success and Employability Programme (DESSEP), included four key performance indicators (KPIs) for Career Services, as shown in the table below. Career Services subsequently embedded more work readiness into the curriculum. This has assisted with a greater number of submissions, with 4 856 students completing two work readiness tutorials. As the rest of the table shows, Career Services also far exceeded the rest of the deliverables. (See KPI 3.3.1 for more information.)



KPI as per DESSEP phase 1	Actual achievement	Status
4 000 students to complete two work readiness tutorials	4 856	119% (exceeded)
500 to complete the Career Development Programme	2 527	505% (exceeded)
400 placements	489 (July 2023 – June 2024) + 212 (July–Dec 2024)	111% (exceeded)
2 000 job portal users (Career Hub)	16 130 logins 5 729 active users (logged in 3 times or more)	197% (exceeded)

Table 2: KPIs per the Digitally Enhanced Student Success and Employability Programme, phase 1.

**CUADS** and **Career Services** identified a gap in addressing work-readiness for students with disabilities. To this end, the idea for a CUADS Career Week was conceptualised.

#### KPI 1.1.3: Living-learning indicators

**HRA:** In terms of off-campus accommodation administration, 250 new applications were received in Bloemfontein at the start of 2024, totalling almost 1 500 beds, as shown in the next table:

*The DSA achieved notable advancements in student success during 2024, with highlights exemplifying excellence in relation to each objective.*



Provisional accreditation	
Total capacity	17 836
Total student addresses	1 621
Total service providers	768
Full accreditation	
Total capacity	4 184
Total student addresses	50
Total service providers	27
New applications	
Total capacity	1 500
Total student addresses	250
Total service providers	150

Table 3: Accreditation of off-campus accommodation in Bloemfontein.

The statistics pertaining to off-campus accommodation in Qwaqwa are reflected in the next table:

Qwaqwa: Off-campus verification 2024	
Completed and processed applications	527
Renewals	378
New applications	149
Total capacity bed space	5 642

Table 4: Accreditation of off-campus accommodation in Qwaqwa.

Statistics relating to occupancy in the residences on the Bloemfontein Campus during the second semester of 2024 are as follows:

Second semester occupancy statistics	
Accommodation type	Percentage occupancy
Junior accommodation	93,57%
Flats	78,13%
Postgraduate, including Kopsie-Inn	48,12%
Rooms	68,29%
Senior accommodation	90,48%

Table 5: Bloemfontein Campus occupancy, July to December 2024.

On the Qwaqwa Campus, **HRA** maintained an occupancy rate of 98%. The following table provides an overview of the relevant capacity and occupancy:

	Capacity		Occupancy		Vacancies
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Senior Undergrad	322	445	308	438	21
FTENs	203	471	194	468	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>916</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>33</b>

Table 6: Qwaqwa Campus occupancy, July to December 2024.

Occupancy on the South Campus was maintained at 90% for all three residences.

In the second semester, a total of 165 off-campus accommodation establishments in Bloemfontein were inspected to assess compliance with Department of Higher Education and Training DHET's norms and standards, as well as the Mangaung Metro Municipality by-laws.

Compliant accommodation	159
Non-compliant accommodation	6

Table 7: Off-campus accommodation inspected during second semester of 2024.

## Objective 1.2: More and Better Student Representation in Academic Affairs

### KPI 1.2.1: Student representation indicators

The **Institutional Student Governance Office** (ISGO) ensured the successful election of class representatives to Faculty Student Councils to ensure representation within the academic aspect. The ISGO also hosted informative and engaging dialogues facilitated by the Student Representative Council (SRC) to ensure representation.

**ISGO:** The constitutional review process saw the participation of all ISRC sub-structures at the Constitutional Review Summit. This included robust engagement on the future of the constitution and inputs that led to various changes to the document. This sitting, although rare, had full participation of Student Governance structures across all three campuses, providing for reflection on the progress made over the past years and applying changes where applicable.

## Objective 1.3: Use of Data and Data Analytics to Enhance Student Success

### KPI 1.3.1: Student tracking indicators

Student sign-up sheets as well as attendance registers are kept for events. These attendance registers are used at the end of each year for the presentation of a certificate of completion of theo-

retical and practical **Community Engagement**. These certificates list all the skills development in which the student participated. It is important to note that this process is open to any student at the UFS who forms part of the Active Community Citizens through Engaged Scholarship for Sustainability (ACCESS) student volunteerism programme (this is an open group not to be confused with the ACCESS Action Learning Group).

The **ACCESS Action Learning Group** has a registered Blackboard (Bb) Association for community-based research for students. These students do weekly assessments and reflections following the Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR) approach. These weekly assessments and reflections are combined at the end of the year to form a portfolio of evidence for these students.

The **Food Environment Office** operated on an application system developed specifically for the food parcel process. The **First-Year Experience and Curriculum** (FYEC) used a monitoring and evaluation framework to gather data on all priority projects relating to the welcoming and orientation of first-year students. The **Peer Mentor Office** used Bb, Evasys, student emails, attendance register, and debriefing sessions to gather data during the first semester and focus groups during the second semester.

**KopsieX/Student Media** showed high engagement across metrics on content related to university and welcoming events. Engagement spikes aligned with content including community events, achievements, and highly anticipated announcements. Videos involving celebrations or significant announcements resulted in higher shares and interactions.

Statistical data from the **FutureLEAD Challenge** (FLC) programme is provided by drawing on the Bb

Organisation's evaluation reports per completed module. This indicated student success and development throughout the programme and enabled the **Student Leadership Development (SLD) Office** to issue certificates of participation to all who achieved the required 70% for any of the modules.

**CUADS** has registered a total of 168 students on the Bloemfontein Campus:

- 35 students with visual impairment
- 74 students with learning difficulties
- 9 students with mental health conditions
- 16 students with hearing impairments
- 34 students with mobility impairments.

On the South Campus, **CUADS** has registered a total of 7 students:

- 1 student with visual impairment
- 4 students with learning difficulties
- 2 students with hearing impairments.

A total of 11 students were registered by **CUADS** on the Qwaqwa Campus:

- 6 students with visual impairments
- 1 student with a mental health condition
- 1 student with hearing impairment
- 3 students with mobility impairments.

In total, **CUADS** had 44 students with disabilities (visual impairments, hearing impairments, mobility impairments, and learning difficulties) graduate during the April 2024 graduation ceremonies.

#### *KPI 1.3.2: Data-informed decision indicators*

**Career Services:** As part of the MSDF project, the employment rate after graduation is monitored and used to inform the impact of the entire Career Development and Employability Pathway (CDEP) and the placement officer's work. This is retrieved from survey data.

**Engaged Scholarship:** Verbal reflection sessions were conducted after each event to ensure that student voices were captured and that improvements could be implemented. With regard to data collection through the **ACCESS programme**, pre-and post-surveys were conducted with the 2024 cohort, as well as a focus group discussion with both the 2023 and 2024 cohorts.

Due to the application system that students use to apply for food support, the **Food Environment Office**

can trace vulnerable students. Thorough data is also kept of food support to make informed decisions to address hunger and malnutrition among students.

The **FYEC** used a monitoring and evaluation framework to gather data on all priority projects relating to the welcoming and orientation of first-year students. The FYEC used this report to make adjustments to the welcoming and orientation programme for first-year students.

**KovsieX** strategically utilised data from **KovsieFM** streaming listenership and social media engagement figures from X, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. By closely examining the patterns of audience interaction, content preferences, and trends in consumption across these platforms, Student Media gained valuable insights into the changing dynamics of media consumption among the student body. The integration of this data played a pivotal role in shaping the decision to transition towards **KovsieX**, a multiplatform approach designed to leverage the strengths of diverse media channels.

The evaluation data of awareness and training programmes presented by the **SLD Office** were drawn from questionnaires administered after completion. This provided valuable information regarding student satisfaction with learning content and experience, personal development, and programme logistics. This is important to ensure that programmes are constantly reviewed, adapted, and improved to stay student-centred and relevant.

**CUADS** has developed surveys for students to complete after each semester regarding the support received from the centre. This included an Advocacy and Awareness survey regarding student participation, events and topics, a Disability Support Survey regarding the individualised support to students per disability category, an Accessible Study Material Production Survey regarding the quality of converted material, and an Alternative Assessment Survey regarding facilities and coordination of tests and exams.

**Kovsie Health**, Qwaqwa Campus: The Department of Health (DoH) has launched a new programme called Impilo – a project designed to replace the patient file system to improve the efficiency of record keeping. The Qwaqwa Campus Clinic has been chosen by the DoH to be a pilot site for the project in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District because of its stable network. 📶





## KEY STRATEGIC AREA: STUDENT WELL-BEING



The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) is committed to fostering the holistic well-being of students. By leveraging data and analytics, the DSA aims to gain a deeper understanding of students' biopsychosocial needs and respond with precision and effectiveness. Ensuring broader access to services and opportunities that support both physical and mental well-being remains a priority. Additionally, the DSA seeks to collaborate with various stakeholders to strengthen the safety and security of students.

### Goal 2: An Environment Conducive to the Biopsychosocial Well-being of Students

This strategic goal aligns with Objective 4.1 of the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028, namely:  
**Ensuring the efficiency of the non-academic support structures and systems.**

The DSA aims to achieve the following objectives by 2025 to advance Goal 2:

- **Objective 2.1**  
Increasing students' physical well-being.
- **Objective 2.2**  
Increasing students' mental well-being.
- **Objective 2.3**  
Increasing students' safety and security.

Table 8 below illustrates the goals and objectives associated with the key strategic area of Student Well-being.

GOAL 2: AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCTIVE TO THE BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS		
Alignment with the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028 Objective 4.1: Ensuring the efficiency of the non-academic support structures and systems.		
Objective 2.1	Objective 2.2	Objective 2.3
Increasing students' physical well-being	Increasing students' mental well-being	Increasing students' safety and security
Key performance indicators	Key performance indicators	Key performance indicators
2.1.1 Health indicators 2.1.2 Food and nutrition indicators 2.1.3 Sport indicators 2.1.4 Social support indicators	2.2.1 Preventative programme indicators 2.2.2 Counselling and psychotherapeutic indicators	2.3.1 Crime prevention indicators 2.3.2 Gender-based violence indicators 2.3.3 Student housing indicators

Table 8: KSA – Student Well-being: Strategic goals, objectives, and indicators.

## 2024 Progress Towards Strategic Goal 2

The DSA's dedication to student health and well-being was demonstrated across multiple departments and portfolios.

### Objective 2.1: Students' Physical Well-being

#### KPI 2.1.1: Health indicators

**HIV Office:** The First Things First (FTF) campaign offered activations where students were encouraged to know their health status by testing for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), screening for tuberculosis (TB) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), non-communicable diseases, and other necessary screenings.

The objectives of the campaign were to

- provide free and confidential HIV testing;
- promote dental health awareness and provide basic dental screenings;
- educate students on safe sex practices;
- offer Pap smear screenings for eligible students; and
- create a supportive environment for discussing sexual and reproductive health.

The table below offers an oversight of the campaign during 2024:

	Bloemfontein Campus	South Campus	Total
FTF activations	4	4	8
HIV tested	2 590	591	3 181
HIV positive	12	5	17

Table 9: First Things First activation and HIV testing.

The **HIV Office** also facilitated the Best Club – an HIV support group. Currently, there are about 400 students receiving ARVs from the clinic, of which 200 students form part of the support group.



**Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA):** Residence heads have created platforms to talk about student well-being and responses to student health. A working group was established to develop protocols regarding the responses to student medical emergencies i.e., referrals and ambulances.

On the Qwaqwa Campus, the **Social Support Office (SSO)** hosted an indigenous games event aimed at promoting cultural heritage, fostering community engagement, and encouraging physical activity and teamwork.

#### KPI 2.1.2: Food and nutrition indicators

The **Food Environment Office** received the following stock from donors during the first half of the year:

Month	Bloemfontein/ South Campus		Qwaqwa Campus
	Tiger Brands	Gift of the Givers	Gift of the Givers
January	R67 714	R150 000	R125 000
February	R82 240	R150 000	R125 000
March	R68 940	R150 000	R125 000
April	R68 940	R150 000	R125 000
May	R68 125	R150 000	R125 000
June	R58 042	R150 000	R125 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>R414 001</b>	<b>R900 000</b>	<b>R750 000</b>
Hygiene Packs	R180 000		R150 000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>R2 394 001</b>		

Table 10: Food from donors, January to June 2024.



The **Food Environment Office** received the following stock from donors during the second half of the year:

Month	Bloemfontein / South Campus		Qwaqwa Campus
	Tiger Brands	Gift of the Givers	Gift of the Givers
July	R68 096,11	R150 000	R125 000
August	R91 707,44	R150 000	R125 000
September	R80 795,00	R150 000	R125 000
October	R135 336,66	R150 000	R125 000
November	R143 768,00	R300 000	R250 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>R519 703,00</b>	<b>R900 000</b>	<b>R750 000</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>R2 169 703,00</b>		

Table 11: Food from donors, July to November 2024.

The **Food Environment Office** distributed the following parcels per campus during the first semester of 2024:

Month	Bloemfontein Campus	South Campus	Qwaqwa Campus
January	0	0	0
February	1 458	302	479
March	559	82	322
April	212	87	216
May	312	64	182
June	0	10	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 541</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>1 206</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4 292</b>		

Table 12: Distribution of parcels, January to June 2024.



During the second semester, the **Food Environment Office** distributed the following number of parcels per campus:

Month	Bloemfontein Campus	South Campus	Qwaqwa Campus
July	561	90	161
August	459	61	133
September	390	55	129
October	438	123	51
November	19	13	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 867</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>474</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2 683</b>		

Table 13: Distribution of parcels, July to November 2024.

The No Student Hungry (NSH) Programme at the UFS addresses food insecurity among students by providing a daily meal allowance to those in need. Qualifying students therefore have access to at least one nutritious meal a day. By means of donor funds, the programme is able to provide a meal a day to around 100 students across the three UFS campuses. Through supporting students' physical wellbeing, the NSH Programme enhances students' ability to focus on their studies and ultimately achieve academic success.

The **Food Environment Office** launched a marketing campaign in collaboration with the **Department of Nutrition and Dietetics** to improve students' eating habits and focus on the food environment on campus.

The **Food Environment Office** and **Kovsie Active Civic Teaching (ACT)** were invited to a colloquium



organised by Tiger Brands. Tiger Brands expressed that its team “is quite impressed with the food gardening programme that the UFS provides. It is a positive benefit to the beneficiaries, in efforts of augmenting the food hamper offering and positive in how it encourages and gets students involved with the process of growing their own vegetables. It is a healthy and sustainable approach to contributing to the alleviation of food insecurity”.

**Kovsie ACT:** Over the course of the year, students benefited from 2 532,7 kg of freshly harvested vegetables, enhancing their access to nutritious food. The office also launched the New Garden Initiative. Planting activities began at the Paradys Experimental Farm to extend gardening opportunities to students on the South Campus. This initiative increased student participation in sustainable agricultural practices and expanded the garden’s reach to a new community.

**Kovsie ACT’s** Ubuntu Street Store distributed 956 loaves of bread and 80 litres of soup. More than 200 individuals benefited from this initiative, strengthening the culture of social responsibility among volunteers. Food gardens were also established on the Qwaqwa Campus to assist students with fresh produce to augment the food parcels distributed.

### KPI 2.1.3: Sport indicators

The **SSO**, in collaboration with **KovsieSport**, hosted the Lekgotla Sports Day festival on the South Campus. A variety of sporting codes ranging from basketball, netball, chess, and soccer were available. There was a turnout of 150 students across all three campuses. This project was essential to provide greater access to services and opportunities that will promote the physical and mental well-being of students.

Three **KovsieAthletics** members were part of the history-making USSA Cross Country team that took part in the International University Sports Federation (FISU) World Cross Country Championships in Muscat, Oman. Kirsti Bell and Casey Bosman formed part of the women’s team while Kesa Molotsane (KovsieAthletics Administrator) was selected as the team coach. The women’s team came third overall while the South African team also came third. The SA team made history by bringing home three gold, one silver, and three bronze medals from the championship. Yolandi Stander represented the UFS at the All-Africa Games in discus and threw a distance of 54,44 m to secure fifth place. Three Kovsie athletes competed at the Confederation of African Athletics (CAA) African Championships that took place in Douala, Cameroon. Mthi Mthimkulu finished first in the mixed 4x400 m relay, Yolandi Stander achieved seventh place in discus, and Miné de Klerk second in shot put. Peter Makgato competed in the men’s long jump at the Invitational Jerusalem Gram Slam and obtained fourth place.

**KovsieParaSport:** Three UFS athletes took part in the Toyota National Championships for Physically Disabled at the Mangaung Stadium in Bloemfontein. Louzanne Coetzee took a silver medal in the T11 400 m and a gold medal in the 1 500 m. Arina Nicolaisen took a bronze medal in the T38 400 m, setting a national record, and the gold medal in the 800 m race. Nielbert Mostert competed in the T13 1 500 m race, where he won the gold medal. He also won the 5 000 m race to make it a double gold. Coetzee and her guide, Estean Badenhorst, also participated in the World Para Championships in Kobe, Japan. Coetzee ran a season’s best in the women’s 1 500 m T11, where she claimed a bronze medal.

**Rugby:** Campus rugby leagues started to include women’s rugby as well. The UFS Young Guns qualified for a home semi-final in the FNB Varsity Cup Young

Guns competition after a successful season, but they unfortunately lost in the final. Three Varsity Cup games were hosted at Shimla Park, with Shimlas beating Ikeys in the final to claim a second Varsity Cup title. **Hockey:** Antoinette Louw, a KovsieHockey alumna, was selected to represent South Africa at the Olympic Games. At interprovincial tournament level, the Kovsie ladies produced 11 players who were selected for the Free State U21 women’s team. The Kovsie men produced nine players who represented the Free State in the U21 men’s team.

**Cricket:** The UFS first team won the Mangaung Cricket Association League and represented the Free State and the Knights franchise at the National Club Championships in Pretoria. The women’s team finished as runners-up in the Mangaung League for women. The UFS cricket team performed well at the Club Championship, finishing in fourth position. **Football:** The men’s team participated in the 2023/24 season in the ABC Motsepe provincial league. The Kovsie men’s team also qualified for Varsity Football 2024. The KovsieFootball Club ended in third position in Free State Stream B. The women’s team participated in the Provincial SASOL League. They qualified for the national play-offs but fell short in the semi-finals.

**Netball:** Rolene Streutker – a master’s student at the UFS – has signed with the Melbourne Mavericks to play in the Australian league. Karla Victor formed part of the SA U21 team that participated in the African qualifiers. Team SA won all their matches in the round robin and beat Malawi in the final. A big highlight for KovsieNetball was when the team triumphed in an exhilarating final, defeating the University of Johannesburg 58–55 in extra time to claim their fifth Varsity Netball title. **Tennis:** Two men’s and two ladies’ teams participated in the Mangaung Night League. The ladies A team won the league and the men’s A team was runners-up. Three

players from the club played in the Free State Super 8 tournament. Talita Swart won the bronze medal in the women’s singles and gold in the women’s doubles. Kovsie men’s champion, Friederich Brisley, and runner-up, Charl van Heerden, won the gold medal in the men’s doubles gold division.

**Table Tennis:** The UFS table tennis team won the Free State league for the second year. **Badminton:** Robert Summers and Caden Kakora participated in the All-Africa Games in Egypt. They also won gold medals at the USSA 2024 tournaments.

**KovsieSport** Qwaqwa Campus held a successful Gateway tournament attended by 800 first-year students – a record number. League games for football, netball, and volleyball were underway, as well as rugby, basketball, table tennis, and tennis. Men’s football occupied the top five spot as the best-placed among all sporting codes participating in the league. Furthermore, seven players – four women and three men – from the Qwaqwa Campus were selected to be part of the University Volleyball USSA team, achieving the 11<sup>th</sup> position out of 20 universities that were represented. KovsieSport also marked a historic milestone by participating in the provincial Indigenous Games for the first time. Their involvement highlights the university’s commitment to embracing and celebrating cultural heritage through sports. By engaging in traditional games such as morabaraba, diketo, and jukskei, the university fostered a deeper appreciation for indigenous knowledge and practices. This initiative aligns with KovsieSport’s mission to promote inclusivity and diversity.

### KPI 2.1.4: Social support indicators

**Engaged Scholarship:** Students were engaged in programmes to develop an entrepreneurial mindset. This included making and packaging soap,



making furniture from eco-bricks, and producing and potentially selling vermicompost. One of the major focus areas for the second semester was entrepreneurship. A programme with Dr Ekaete Benedict in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences was implemented to assist students with social entrepreneurship and to learn the basic principles of being a social enterprise.

**Kovsie ACT's** Santa's Shoebox project provided 246 boxes filled with stationery, self-care items, clothes, and non-perishable food items. This support helped alleviate financial stress and ensured that students had the necessities to thrive, contributing to their overall well-being.

**SSO:** A partnership between the UFS and the University of Zambia (UNZA) aimed to foster a mutually beneficial collaboration that enhances student well-being, promotes academic excellence, and drives global engagement. This initiative sought to build on the shared values of both institutions, focusing on knowledge-sharing, student development, and strengthening ties between South Africa and Zambia. A delegation from the UFS – including eight UFS students – went to Zambia.

Key objectives of the partnership included the following:

- Establishing innovative student support systems
- Enhancing cultural exchange and leadership development
- Promoting social justice and sustainable practices through collaborative programmes.

**SSO:** Following a Conceptual Framework Task Team meeting between the University of the Free State, Stellenbosch University, and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, it was decided to host a collaborative inter-institutional Student Well-being Summit. The three-day summit was intentionally inclusive of all genders, while creating a safe space for important discussions. Twelve UFS students attended the summit, which offered opportunities for arts, culture, and entrepreneurship.

The Student Well-being Summit aimed to

- engage in courageous conversations about well-being;
- create awareness of the importance of holistic well-being;
- address risky behaviour;
- engage with intersectional issues in relation to culture and gender diversity;
- highlight aspects that promote a sense of belonging and safety;
- promote robust and impactful solution-driven discussions; and
- create an entrepreneurial and innovation-driven culture among students.

The **SSO** hosted an anti-bullying campaign aimed at raising awareness and promoting student well-being at the UFS. The event highlighted the psychological effects of bullying and included activities such as self-defence lessons to empower students. With approximately 140 participants, the campaign successfully fostered a culture of em-

pathy and inclusivity, aligning with the university's Vision 130, which emphasises social justice and diversity.

## Objective 2.2: Students' Mental Well-being

### KPI 2.2.1: Preventative programme indicators

Project Empower is a collaboration between **Student Counselling and Development (SCD)**, **KovsieSport**, and the **Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)**, which focuses on student-athletes. A Netball and Football Identity and Team Dynamics workshop was held to help players and coaches explore their individual and collective identities. The workshop focused on understanding athletic and team dynamics, which play a crucial role in performance, both individually and as a group. This event attracted approximately 60 student-athletes and members of the management team. Additionally, there was an online presentation introducing football and netball players to the GROW and Self-Esteem programmes offered throughout the year. This presentation provided valuable information on the objectives and structure of the programmes, with around 80 student-athletes participating.

The **SSO** presented a symposium, Safety in Sisterhood: Creating Safe and Brave Spaces for Female Students. It was institutionally hosted on the South Campus and attended by students from all three campuses. The event aimed to foster a sense of community and address critical issues related to women's safety, health, financial literacy, and careers. The programme emphasised the need for safe spaces where female students could openly discuss their challenges, share experiences, and find practical solutions through

engagement with experts.

**SCD** and the **SSO** on the Qwaqwa Campus presented the following preventative programmes and training during the second part of the year:

- Peer Educators and Influencers Training on Mental Health
- Gender and Sexuality Training
- Health Awareness Dialogue
- Mindful Men's Circle
- Masculinity Men's Conference
- Men-to-Men Mental Health
- Health Awareness Dialogue
- Substance Abuse Dialogue
- Influencers' Ungafi Sikhona Competition.

The **SSO**, in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, held the annual Imbizo launch on all three campuses, institutionally hosting it on the Qwaqwa Campus. The platform was created for male students to engage on topics affecting them while receiving guidance and advice on how to handle challenging situations.

To encourage students to play an active part in their mental health, **SCD** launched the DoDay social media campaign. Each day, for a month, SCD proposed one small action to complete in order to improve one's mental health. Students were encouraged across various social media platforms to take up the 30-day challenge and share the skills.

### KPI 2.2.2: Counselling and psychotherapeutic indicators

**SCD** has identified the top 10 reasons why students seek their services per month, as set out in the following tables:

*By leveraging data and analytics, the DSA aims to gain a deeper understanding of students' biopsychosocial needs and respond with precision and effectiveness.*

”

	January		February	
1	Anxiety	31	Overthinking	205
2	Overthinking	27	Anxiety	201
3	Family	19	Depression	127
4	Stress	18	Family	123
5	Depression	16	Panic attacks	100
6	Eat/sleep	13	Stress	99
7	Panic attacks	12	Eat/sleep	93
8	Poor self-esteem	12	Academic performance	88
9	Suicidal	11	Poor self-esteem	86
10	Academic performance	10	Financial	85

	March		April	
1	Overthinking	205	Overthinking	201
2	Anxiety	201	Anxiety	185
3	Depression	131	Academic performance	148
4	Family	129	Depression	121
5	Stress	128	Stress	121
6	Academic performance	102	Eat/sleep	110
7	Eat/sleep	100	Family	108
8	Panic attacks	98	Financial	97
9	Poor self-esteem	89	Panic attacks	90
10	Financial	89	Poor self-esteem	84

	May		June	
1	Overthinking	188	Overthinking	35
2	Anxiety	156	Anxiety	32
3	Academic performance	140	Depression	22
4	Depression	114	Academic performance	19
5	Family	112	Panic attacks	15
6	Stress	91	Stress	15
7	Eat/sleep	89	Poor self-esteem	14
8	Panic attacks	82	Romantic problems	12
9	Poor self-esteem	80	Financial	12
10	Suicidal	75	Trauma	10

	July		August	
1	Overthinking	170	Overthinking	116
2	Anxiety	166	Anxiety	114
3	Academic performance	113	Family	69
4	Family	101	Academic performance	64
5	Stress	97	Stress	60
6	Panic attacks	89	Depression	59
7	Depression	86	Eat/sleep	51
8	Eat/sleep	78	Poor self-esteem	50
9	Poor self-esteem	77	Panic attacks	47
10	Regret	68	Family	44

	September		October	
1	Overthinking	146	Overthinking	97
2	Anxiety	140	Anxiety	91
3	Academic performance	93	Academic performance	71
4	Depression	88	Stress-related issues	58
5	Family-related matters	83	Eating/sleeping	54
6	Stress-related	71	Panic attacks	54
7	Eating/sleeping	71	Depression	53
8	Poor self-esteem	62	Suicide attempt/plan	42
9	Panic attack	60	Poor self-esteem	36
10	Anger issues	60	Death of a loved one	36

	November	
1	Overthinking	51
2	Depression	49
3	Anxiety	47
4	Family	37
5	Academic performance	36
6	Anger	28
7	Stress	24
8	Suicide	23
9	Eat/sleep	23
10	Self-esteem	19

Table 14: Top 10 reasons why students visited Student Counselling and Development in 2024.



Although **SCD** has moved to mainly face-to-face sessions after lockdown, students may still choose which platform of counselling they prefer:

- Telephonic counselling
- Online video counselling
- Face-to-face counselling.

One of the phenomena on the UFS campuses that is increasing vastly is students struggling to deal with ancestral callings. **SCD** has rolled out a multi-faceted approach to assist these students. Support sessions are being conducted, as well as the development of protocol guidelines. A certified spiritual healer registered with the Traditional

Individual counselling							
Totals for all campuses	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
Total sessions booked	53	425	728	848	988	607	3 649
Total sessions attended	42	315	516	545	624	349	2 391
Difference	11	110	212	303	364	258	1 258
Cancelled by student	5	38	78	103	117	99	440
Cancelled (other)	4	16	9	35	78	26	158
Missed by students	2	55	112	159	174	167	669
Total	11	109	199	297	369	292	1 277
New students booked	31	223	275	290	278	166	1 263
New students attended	29	168	229	214	200	117	957
Totals for all campuses		Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Total
Total sessions booked		820	879	958	1 115	717	4 489
Total sessions attended		553	543	586	749	461	2 892
Difference		267	336	372	366	256	1 597
Cancelled by student		108	90	88	103	70	459
Cancelled (other)		30	72	53	31	14	200
Missed by students		126	172	223	207	165	893
Total		264	334	364	341	249	1 552
New students booked		200	198	204	215	79	895
New students attended		162	152	148	171	58	691

Table 15: Number of sessions offered during 2024 (psychological services).



Healers Organisation has been conducting support groups for students struggling with these matters since April. This will, for the pilot project, only be available on the Bloemfontein Campus. Sixteen students have been assisted with this new initiative. A plan to extend the service to the South Campus is underway.

In the second semester, **Kovsie Health** and the **HIV Office** integrated with **SCD** from 1 October 2024 to become the **Health and Wellness Centre** under the leadership of Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee.

**SCD** staff attended training on Addiction, specifically looking at the manifestation of behaviour and treatment modalities. This training provided staff with practical ways of dealing with clients addicted to a variety of substances and behaviours. During the training, staff learned to identify common patterns of addiction, understand underlying psychological and emotional triggers, and apply evidence-based treatment approaches, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectic behavioural therapy (DBT), and motivational interviewing. Additionally, the training emphasised the importance of a multidisciplinary approach and the role of family and community support in the recovery process.

In 2023, **SCD** initiated its social work internship programme in collaboration with the academic Department of Social Work, which continued in 2024 with two fourth-year Social Work students being placed. The programme complemented the social work services with individual casework, group work, and community work. As part of community work, interns held awareness campaigns on grief and substance abuse at residences, highlighting how individuals are likely to deal with grief in unhealthy ways. This campaign increased the

number of students joining the grief support groups, where they could learn more healthy ways to deal with grief.

### Objective 2.3: Students' Safety and Security

#### *KPI 2.3.1: Crime prevention indicators*

**Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA)** collaborated with **UFS Protection Services** to host several workshops across residences and day residences in response to different crimes affecting students. Five awareness campaigns were hosted by **UFS Protection Services** in collaboration with residence heads. This was followed by campaigns offered to commuter students in collaboration with the SAPS, Falcons, and community protection forums. Students were provided with whistles, safety tips, and pamphlets.

**HRA** also oversaw the installation of cameras in all dining halls on the Bloemfontein Campus, as well as at Awela staff restaurant.

**DSA** on the Qwaqwa Campus collaborated with **UFS Protection Services** to offer monthly activations prior to NSFAS allowances being paid to students.

#### *KPI 2.3.2: Gender-based violence indicators*

**Engaged Scholarship:** A gender-based violence (GBV) advocacy group for students was established in 2023, namely the #KovsiesCare initiative. This group of students continued with programmes in 2024, and marketing was developed to get new student sign-ups for the committee. Stakeholders involved again in 2024 included **UFS Protection Services**, the **Directorate Community Engagement**,

**Communication and Marketing**, the **Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Office (GEADO)**, and the **Arts and Culture Office**.

The **KovsiesCare** GBV campaign facilitated collaboration between multiple stakeholders, culminating in impactful events such as the Womxn's Memorial Wall where students painted a mural and participated in performances to promote discussions around GBV. The Doek Chronicles and Wear a Doek Day initiatives celebrated heritage and empowerment while addressing social justice and health themes. The Wear a Doek Day event included poetry, music, GBV education, and participation from multiple university offices.

**Student Experience and Student Media** developed the GBV Bystander module in partnership with the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). This module focuses on the bystander effect so that first-year students can better understand the psychological dynamics that inhibit intervention in distress or emergencies. The goal is for students to foster a culture of active bystandership and collective responsibility.

**SCD:** Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee and Elizabeth Msadu served as members of the Sexual Offences Response Team (SORT) committee. **SCD** collaborated with **UFS Protection Services** and the **Unit for Institutional**

**Change and Social Justice** to enhance preventative measures, as well as reflect on reactive measures regarding gender-based violence.

#### *KPI 2.3.3: Student housing indicators*

**HRA** on the Qwaqwa Campus had a meeting with landlords, SAPS, and **UFS Protection Services** to address matters such as safety and security, hygiene and ablution facilities, and developments and upgrades.

The appointment of a security company by **HRA** has also greatly assisted with inspections.

**HRA** collaborated with the **Occupational Health and Safety Office** to facilitate fire drills for most of the on-campus residences. A report was shared, highlighting all the technicalities during the drills, including the time students took to evacuate the building, alarms (working and faulty), etc.

**HRA Housekeeping** maintained a clean, hygienic environment for students, where they could advance and thrive in all aspects of their studies. Through a cleaning colour-coded system, cleaning schedules, inspections, and various tests, they ensured that they sustained an environment conducive to student development on all three campuses. 🧼

*The DSA's dedication to student health and well-being was demonstrated across multiple departments and portfolios.*



# KEY STRATEGIC AREA: STUDENT DEVELOPMENT



The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) is committed to cultivating graduates who embody ethical leadership and drive transformative change in society. To achieve this, it seeks to develop an out-of-class curriculum through co-curricular and extracurricular programmes that enhance graduate attributes, employability, and entrepreneurship. The DSA aims to implement high-impact educational practices that are strategically aligned with the UFS Graduate Attributes Framework and assessment criteria.

## Goal 3: An Environment Conducive to the Development of Graduate Attributes

This strategic goal aligns with Objective 1.3 of the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028, namely:  
**Ensuring that our academic offerings and practices produce desirable and successful graduates.**

The DSA aims to achieve the following objectives by 2025 to advance Goal 3:

- **Objective 3.1**  
Establishing an out-of-class curriculum.
- **Objective 3.2**  
Increasing student participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- **Objective 3.3**  
Establishing an integrated system of career development.

Table 14 below illustrates the goals and objectives associated with the key strategic area of Student Development.

GOAL 3: AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES		
Alignment with the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028 Objective 1.3: Ensuring that our academic offerings and practices produce desirable and successful graduates		
Objective 3.1	Objective 3.2	Objective 3.3
Establishing an out-of-class curriculum	Increasing student participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes	Establishing an integrated system of career development
Key performance indicators	Key performance indicators	Key performance indicators
3.1.1 Co-curricular programme indicators 3.1.2 Extra-curricular	3.2.1 Awareness indicators 3.2.2 Participation indicators	3.3.1 Michael and Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF) indicators (as per project schedule)

Table 16: KSA – Student Development: Strategic goals, objectives, and indicators.

## 2024 Progress Towards Strategic Goal 3

This year saw the implementation of a range of dynamic co-curricular programmes and initiatives across multiple departments and campuses. The following section highlights these programmes and their impact on student development.

### Objective 3.1: An Out-of-Class Curriculum

#### KPI 3.1.1: Co-curricular programme indicators

The DSA **Co-Curricular Hub** fully emerged in 2024 as a multidisciplinary offering to students that provides learning experiences beyond the classroom. The hub has made notable progress in creating an integrated and mutually enriching support system between student affairs and academic affairs. The close collaboration has resulted in faculties encouraging students to participate in relevant co-curricular programmes that complement academic learning and further UFS graduate attributes. Working cross-disciplinary, the hub capacitated lecturers to provide online information about all co-curricular programmes, made information accessible to students through various online channels, and developed staff professional competencies within DSA through a workshop on Project Outcomes Development and Graduate Attribute Mapping.

The **Kovsie ACT** Eco-vehicle project has completed five learning cycles with all colleges on the Bloemfontein, Qwaqwa, and South campuses. The Eco-Vehicle Skills Programme made significant progress in fostering technical innovation and expanding its reach: the Eco-Vehicle 2.0 prototype was advanced, featuring off-road capabilities, a top speed of 45 km/h, and a runtime of 30 minutes per charge. Engineering mediators were also recruited, and industry mentors were trained using mediated learning experiences to better support student teams. The project has attracted interest from prominent institutions such as the University of South Africa (UNISA), the Central University of Technology, Nelson Mandela University, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, with UNISA expressing intent to integrate the project into their engineering and sustainability programmes.

The **Peer Mentorship Office** provided blended (face-

to-face and Blackboard) induction and annual training to almost 1 000 peer mentors across all three campuses. A total of 605 peer mentors successfully completed the Mediated Learning Experience course. The Peer Mentorship Office also successfully collaborated with Student Counselling and Development as well as the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Academic Advising to provide peer mentors with holistic training.

The **Student Leadership Development (SLD) Office** has developed the following attributes through two programmes – mapped accordingly by CTL:

- What Students Should Know (WSSK): Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving, Ethical Reasoning, Digital Skills and Competencies.
- FLC Programme: Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving, Ethical Reasoning, and Entrepreneurial Mindset.

The **CUADS** short learning programme: Basic Introduction to Universal Design in Learning was advertised on the university's Facebook page, LinkedIn, and the Higher Education Disability Services Association's (HEDSA) website. The co-ordinator attended Phahamisa Short Learning Programme (SLP) management system training and billing system training.

#### KPI 3.1.2: Extra-curricular programme indicators

The **Arts and Culture Office** launched the Kovsie Step Up and Dance event in collaboration with the SRC Arts and Culture. The office also hosted the national Choral Celebration Network Foundation (CCNF) Choral Celebrations. The Bloemfontein Campus Choir held more than 223 first-round auditions in February 2024. After a rigorous three-round audition process, 35 new members joined the choir, bringing its total strength to 100 members.

**Engaged Scholarship:** Mapping of the different graduate attributes pertaining to the Active Community Citizens through Engaged Scholarship (ACCESS) programme is underway. This includes all graduate attributes, SDGs, and Vision 130, as well as the different development levels of students based on the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) guidelines.

The Living Lab projects are projects that form part of the Environmental Affairs programmes and projects as outlined in the ACCESS programme model. These projects seek to create awareness about sustainability, as well as provide students



Click to watch the video

the opportunity to gain practical and theoretical knowledge with regard to several programmes on sustainability.

**KovsieSport**, in collaboration with **Student Counselling and Development (SCD)** and the **CTL**, introduced the Empower programme in 2021 as a football student-athlete academic and support programme, which would ensure the holistic development and success of football student-athletes at the university. The Empower programme has three pillars for holistic development:

- Academic Support (CTL) – student-athletes' academic vision and ambition.
- Student Counselling and Support – student-athletes' well-being and mental health.
- Student Career Development – the creation and development of student-athletes' future career.

**Social Support Office (SSO):** As part of the current Lekgotla Project, the Men's Forum was introduced to facilitate continuing discussions among male students at the UFS. The Men's Forum consists of 50 male student leaders on all three campuses who have been trained on several topics. These included leadership skills (self-leadership), mental health, substance abuse, and health concerns for men.

**Kovsie Health** embarked on Wellness Wednesday programmes. This was a collaborative venture with the Makerspace in the UFS Sasol Library. Students participated in crochet, knitting, sewing, and crafting initiatives as part of the mindfulness programme.

### Objective 3.2: Student Participation in Co-curricular and Extra-curricular Programmes

#### KPI 3.2.1: Awareness indicators

**Kovsie Health** and the **HIV Office:** First Things First (FTF) is a programme that aims to increase

knowledge on several health topics through activation events to eliminate misinformation around communicable and non-communicable diseases. The primary goal of FTF is to encourage health-seeking behaviour and enhance quality of life in young people through regular testing and/or screening for major ailments, for example, testing for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Tuberculosis (TB), Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), and non-communicable diseases.

Activations are varied and ranged within the following key programmatic areas:

- First Things First (HIV, STIs, and TB) Programme
- Men's Health Empowerment Programme
- Women's Health Empowerment Programme
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme
- MSM LGBTI Programme.

Activations are three- to five-day events, where UFS stakeholders (Department of Health and non-governmental organisations) who support UFS initiatives for the delivery of health and wellness services come together to render the following services:

- HIV testing
- TB/STI screening
- Screening for non-communicable diseases
- Condom demonstration and distribution
- Mental health and gender-based violence (GBV) screening
- Substance abuse service.

**SSO:** The Men Unveiled podcast – as part of the Lekgotla Project – was launched to offer a secure and open platform for male students to share their experiences, challenges, and successes. This initiative aims to dismantle stereotypes, promote well-being, and highlight the programmes and services available to support male students.

The **Arts and Culture Office** hosted a dialogue



Click to watch the video

on African Spirituality within the university and residence spaces. This initiative provided a platform for students to engage in meaningful discussions on indigenous spiritual practices and traditions, promoting cultural diversity and awareness. The office also hosted the first-ever Choral Celebration Network Foundation (CCNF) festival, and in addition, collaborated with Jane Mpholo Productions and the Lesotho College of Education to deliver impactful cultural events to students.

To further cultivate an environment of care and a sense of belonging, **Career Services** hosted its first Awards ceremony. The event acknowledged and celebrated students who were actively enhancing their work readiness, as well as Career Ambassadors who excelled in their tasks and duties. A total of 11 students were awarded.

The national GradStar Awards challenge students to showcase their best qualities, refine their skills, and gain valuable insights into what top employers seek in ideal candidates. By participating, students can assess their strengths, identify areas for growth, and position themselves for career success. One UFS student came in second place, and 10 students were among the top 100.

### KPI 3.2.2: Participation indicators

**Kovsie Health** and the **HIV Office** offered several health screening campaigns during the year. The outcomes have been captured in the next table:

Health screening	Bloemfontein Campus	South Campus	Total
HIV tested	1 069	348	1 417
HIV positive	5	1	6
TB screened	2 017	201	2 218
STI screened	791	116	907

Table 17: Health screening statistics.

The **Health and Wellness Centre** also reached students through facilitated dialogues, workshops, and exhibitions. The following modules were emphasised during dialogues and workshops:

- HIV/TB/STIs
- Sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
- Gender-based violence
- Mental health
- Alcohol and drug abuse prevention
- COVID-19
- Human rights promotion (disability and LGBTQI+).

The **Peer Mentor Programme** successfully presented 10 theme discussions to mentors and mentees. For each theme discussion cycle, both mentors and mentees were encouraged to complete theme evaluation questionnaires. The data for each theme evaluation questionnaire was as follows:

Theme evaluations	Mentors	Mentees
Theme 1: The bigger picture	381	972
Theme 2: Turning your dreams and aspirations into reality	210	593
Theme 3: Personal growth and development, a unique journey	167	494
Theme 4: I am unique, autonomous, and worthy	142	410
Theme 5: Fostering a positive attitude that fuels perseverance and success	81	299
Theme 6: Yes, I can!	202	432
Theme 7: Challenge accepted!	191	309
Theme 8: Stop, think, go	150	300
Theme 9: I have something to offer	148	251
Theme 10: I belong. I am an important piece of the puzzle	125	162

Table 18: Peer Mentor Programme, 10 theme discussions.

**Career Services** has successfully implemented several initiatives aimed at equipping students with essential career skills and knowledge:

- Five career fairs (EMS, Law, NAS, Qwaqwa Campus, and General BFN) and seven career weeks or masterclasses (one per faculty).

Faculty/entity	Attendance
EMS	728
Law	503
NAS	492
General Fair Bloemfontein Campus	369
Career Day Qwaqwa Campus	220

Table 19: Career fairs in 2024.

Faculty/entity	Attendance
Health	46
Law	317
EMS	421 (Bloemfontein); 81 (Qwaqwa)
Education	195 (Bloemfontein); 41 (Qwaqwa)
Theology and Religion	36
The Humanities	171 (Bloemfontein); 19 (Qwaqwa)
CUADS career week	13 (Bloemfontein); 4 (Qwaqwa)

Table 20: Career weeks in 2024.

**Career Services** also hosted Placement Preparation Days, providing 89 students with career readiness training, supported by UFS staff and company representatives. The initiative emphasised interview techniques, CV writing, and professional communication.

**Engaged Scholarship:** The ACCESS UFS Volunteer Programme has grown to approximately 590 active participants, engaging in weekly outreach initiatives and supporting key events such as Open Day, Research Colloquium, and Community Engagement indabas. The programme is being formalised as a co-curricular initiative for 2025, focusing on skills aligned with UFS graduate attributes.

**Gateway First-year Orientation and Welcoming** hosted a series of financial literacy seminars across the Bloemfontein and South campuses. The seminars exceeded expectations, with 1 050 students participating across the sessions, well above the targeted attendance of 350 students per session. These seminars equipped first-year students with essential financial management skills.

### Objective 3.3: An Integrated System of Career Development

*KPI 3.3.1: Michael and Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF) indicators (as per project schedule)*

The table below shows the KPIs that **Career Services** had to meet by June 2024, when the initial two-year MSDF grant ended; and December 2024 as an extension of MSDF funds to complete work and reach targets. Central to these KPIs was the scaling of the Pathway to reach as many students as possible.

Key performance indicators to be met by June/July 2024	Progress from July 2023 to June 2024	Progress from July to December 2024
Employment of two new staff members on the Qwaqwa Campus	Completed	n/a
8 000+ students enrol for UFSS	9 327 students (exceeded target)	n/a
1 500 students enrol for EDED	1 588 students (exceeded target)	n/a
Career Development: 500 students complete the programme	1 205 completions (exceeded target)	2 527 completions (exceeded target)
Work readiness: 4 000 students complete at least two courses	2 485 completions (62% of target KPI)	4 856 completions (exceeded target)
Support the placement of 400 graduates	489 placements (exceeded target)	701 placements (exceeded target)
2 000 job portal users	13 340 logins; 3 934 active users (exceeded target)	16 130 logins; 5 729 active users (exceeded target)

Table 21: Key performance indicators for MSDF.

**Career Services** exceeded the MSDF deliverables, as demonstrated in Table 21. The initiative to embed work readiness and career development content in curriculum and modules has propelled the number of submissions, far exceeding the initial KPI of 4 000 (two work readiness tutorials) and 500 (career development) submissions. (See 1.1.2 for more information on Career Services indicators). 📖



# KEY STRATEGIC AREA: STUDENT EXPERIENCE



The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) is committed to fostering a culture of care and a strong sense of belonging for all students across the three UFS campuses. To support this, it aims to strengthen the social systems within the multi-tiered college communities on each campus. Additionally, the DSA prioritises the development of effective and representative student governance structures to enhance the overall student experience. Meaningful engagement with students – through dialogues, conversations, and awareness campaigns – remains a key focus. Equally important is ensuring that students with disabilities feel valued and included through the application of universal access principles.

## Goal 4: An Environment that Fosters a Sense of Belonging and Care for Students

This strategic goal aligns with Objective 3.3 of the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028, namely:  
**Becoming a home for staff and students from diverse backgrounds.**

- **Objective 4.1**  
Establishing a multi-layered system of student communities in colleges and student formations.
- **Objective 4.2**  
Providing an effective and representative student governance structure.
- **Objective 4.3**  
Increasing the application of universal access principles.

Table 18 below illustrates the goals and objectives associated with the key strategic area of Student Development.

GOAL 4: AN ENVIRONMENT THAT FOSTERS A SENSE OF BELONGING AND CARE FOR STUDENTS		
Alignment with the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028 Objective 3.3: Becoming a home for staff and students from diverse backgrounds.		
Objective 4.1	Objective 4.2	Objective 4.3
Establishing a multi-layered system of student communities in colleges and student formations	Providing an effective and representative student governance structure	Increasing the application of universal access principles
Key performance indicators	Key performance indicators	Key performance indicators
4.1.1 Student college indicators 4.1.2 Student association indicators 4.1.3 Faculty organisation indicators	4.2.1 Election indicators 4.2.2 Student leadership training indicators	4.3.1 Advocacy and awareness indicators 4.3.2 Training indicators 4.3.3 Implementation indicators

Table 22: KSA – Student Experience: Strategic goals, objectives, and indicators.

## 2024 Progress Towards Strategic Goal 4

In 2024, the DSA made substantial strides in improving the student experience, with the following highlights showcasing excellence in achieving each objective.

### Objective 4.1: A Multi-layered System of Student Communities Established in Colleges and Student Formations

#### KPI 4.1.1: Student college indicators

In a series of dialogue sessions across different colleges on the campuses, **Kovsie Health** reached the following number of students:

Colleges	Students reached
Central	52
North	76
East	64
West	63
South	47
General awareness campaigns on Bloemfontein Campus	1 577
General awareness campaigns on South Campus	693

Table 23: Students reached during health and wellness dialogues within college format.

To foster an environment of belonging and care for students, **Housing and Residence Affairs** (HRA) hosted the College Prestige Awards at the end of 2024. Academic and leadership certificates were awarded, including academic recognition. Residence Life and College Communities also completed a successful strategic reflection to prepare for 2025.

**HRA:** Different learning communities across colleges worked and supported one another by using their residence and college spaces to prepare for exams.

The annual Director's Tournament to promote



social cohesion between residence and commuter students was held on the Qwaqwa Campus towards the end of the year. Colleges competed against each other, with trophies won.

**Student Counselling and Development** (SCD) offered workshops to students in college format. This ensured that day residences and residential students could join the workshops in a space where they felt comfortable. Using the colleges as an organisational principle was a huge advantage.

#### KPI 4.1.2 – Student association indicators

**Institutional Student Governance Office** (ISGO): During the first semester, the following associations and organisations were successfully registered:

- Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command (EFFSC)
- I Am Black and I Am on Track Association
- United Nations Association of South Africa (UNASA).

To ensure that the newly elected Campus Student Representative Councils (CSRCs), Institutional Student Representative Council (ISRC), Faculty Student Councils (FSCs), associations, and organisations were operationally equipped, the office facilitated in-house training and team building, with each developing a strategy for their respective terms.

Student associations consist of, among others,

- 16 arts and culture groups;
- 16 universal access and social justice associations;
- 9 religious associations; and
- 7 political structures.

The following six councils were also structured to be



inclusive of the broader student community:

- Associations Council, based on development and common interests
- Organisations Council, political and advocacy-based
- Arts and Culture Council, related to the arts
- Civic and Social Responsibility Council, which strives to serve the community and the environment
- Universal Access and Social Justice Council, based on access and representation
- International Council, serving the interests of international students.

Another milestone for the **ISGO** was the approval of the Associations and Organisations Funding Model and Guiding Document.

#### KPI 4.1.3 – Faculty organisation indicators

**ISGO:** Class representatives were elected from class modules and representatives were then elected from this group to the FSCs. The FSCs consist of various portfolios that are inclusive of interests and capacity-building, consisting of the following:

- The Humanities Faculty Council
- Economic and Management Sciences Council
- Natural and Agricultural Sciences Council
- Education Faculty Council.

The Qwaqwa Campus hosted the Campus Excellence awards for both faculties and the support units. DSA awarded 12 students who excelled in different activities hosted by Career Services, Arts and Culture, Student Life, Housing and Residence Affairs, Student Counselling and Development, CUADS, and KovsieSport.



**Career Services** has strategically strengthened partnerships with faculties to integrate career development and work readiness content into academic programmes. Continuous discussions are focused on achieving vertical alignment, ensuring that career readiness is embedded in the 2025 curricula. To date, it has been embedded in modules across five faculties (EMS, Education, Health Sciences, NAS, and The Humanities). Additionally, Career Services has prioritised building strong relationships with the UFS Department of Finance, facilitating connections between employers and students for bursary opportunities. Collaboration with faculties remains central to the planning and execution of key initiatives, including career fairs, placement preparation days (PPDs), and company presentations, ensuring a cohesive and impactful approach to student employability.

The **Gateway Orientation and Welcoming** successfully completed individual meetings with faculty marketers and teaching and learning managers (TLMs). Towards the end of the year, a joint meeting was held to enhance coordination and planning for first-year student support in 2025.

### Objective 4.2: An Effective and Representative Student Governance Structure

#### KPI 4.2.1: Election indicators

The ISGO demonstrated its commitment to innovation and digitalisation by successfully conducting the 2024/25 CSRC elections online. The use of online systems enabled real-time projection of election results, promoting transparency and engagement. Voter turnout reached 49,58%, and a quorum was achieved on the first day. In terms of ISRC elections and student representation in



institutional committees, elections were held promptly, ensuring the timely formation of the ISRC.

The Qwawqa Campus held successful CSRC elections, producing a female president for the second time in the history of the campus. Furthermore, the elections were conducted under a revised constitution, enabling the introduction of a Universal Access Portfolio to promote diversity. This portfolio has been successfully filled on the Bloemfontein and South campuses.

Faculty representation at the UFS is facilitated through faculty student councils (FSCs), with each faculty having five faculty student councils on the Qwawqa and South campuses and seven on the Bloemfontein Campus. Additionally, student associations and organisations contribute to student governance, with 118 associations and organisations on the Bloemfontein Campus, three on the South Campus, and 52 in Qwawqa. These structures ensure that students are actively involved in decision-making processes, governance, and advocacy efforts at the UFS.

**HRA:** All residence and college elections were successful. The process was entirely in-house and managed and facilitated by residence heads and college coordinators.

#### KPI 4.2.2: Student leadership training indicators

The **Office for Student Leadership Development** (SLD) made significant strides during 2024, focusing on leadership development, governance training, and strategic collaboration.

The FutureLEAD Challenge (FLC) programme engaged a substantial number of students across all three campuses. Key statistics for the year included the following:

- **FLC 2024 Programme**
  - ♦ An average of 494 students participated in Modules 1 and 2, with 711 tests taken.
  - ♦ An average of 505 participants actively engaged in Modules 3 and 4, with 507 students participating in the FLC Journal.
- **FLC 2023 Extended Programme**
  - ♦ An average of 34 participants actively engaged in Modules 1–4, with 34 students participating in the FLC Journal.

Seven top FLC test achievers across the campuses received awards for scoring 100% on all four tests. The Executive Director Student Affairs (EDSA) Prestige Awards recognised four best overall achievers for outstanding performance in both the tests and journal components.

#### Certificates awarded:

FLC 2024: 414 certificates of participation and 177 certificates of completion.

FLC 2023 Extended: 28 certificates of participation and 15 certificates of completion.

**SLD** and the **ISGO:** The Campus Student Representative Council (CSRC)/Residence Committee (RC)/Residence Assistant (RA) induction training for newly elected student governance leaders focused on institutional and DSA alignment, leadership skills development, and team-building activities. Key events included the following:

- Bloemfontein/South Campus induction: Attended by 316 students and 42 staff members.
- Qwawqa Campus induction: Attended by 82 students and 15 staff members.

Through the training of governance structures, the **ISGO** was able to equip student leaders with training around the policies and procedures of the

university, as it relates to students in particular.

**SCD** collaborated with **HRA** to deliver a comprehensive two-day leadership training programme aimed at enhancing the skills and competencies of all residence committee (RC) members. The training curriculum encompassed various themes, including self-discovery, communication skills, assertiveness, boundary setting, time management, self-care, and resilience.

### Objective 4.3: The Application of Universal Access Principles

#### KPI 4.3.1: Advocacy and awareness indicators

**Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support** (CUADS) forms part of different structures within the DSA to ensure accessibility and awareness regarding disability accommodation:

- Co-project lead: Circle of Experts DSA Project Teams
- Coordinating committee, Mx and Mxss Pageant
- Committee, ISRC Constitutional Review (as CUADS, we are elated with the split in the portfolio Universal Access and Social Justice to ensure the continuous representation of students with disabilities)
- Coordinating committee, EDSA Prestige Awards
- Committee member, Student Health and Wellness Coordinating committee
- Task team member, Safety in Sisterhood.

**CUADS** embarked on Get-to-know DSA sessions to guide students with disabilities to services already available within the DSA. Sessions were held with the Student Counselling and Development, KowsieSport, Peer Mentorship, Food Environment,

and Social Support offices.

**CUADS** was also a partner at the first annual International Conference on Disability Rights hosted at the UFS in collaboration with the **UFS Faculty of Law, Free State Human Rights Centre**, and **Counterpart International**. A Disability Rights Unit was launched as part of the conference programme, and **CUADS** looks forward to the collaboration with the Faculty of Law in this regard.

Advocacy and awareness sessions, training, and workshops held by **CUADS**:

- Soetdoring Residence CUADS awareness event
- Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Studies guest lecture
- Social Support Office Anti-Bullying campaign
- #KowsiesCare Doek Chronicles bridge activation
- House Harmony Deaf Awareness session
- House Beyers Naudé Deaf Awareness and Sign Language session
- CUADS awareness session at House Madelief with House Bram Fischer
- Monthly Human Resources onboarding programme for newly appointed staff on disability and universal access and design
- Qwawqa CTL tutor training session
- Students with visual impairments also judged at the House Legatum pageant.

**Engaged Scholarship:** **CUADS** actively participated in the Wear a Doek Day event. This engagement was rooted in the understanding that people with disabilities are often underrepresented in conversations about health, well-being, and gender-based violence (GBV). The event provided a valuable platform for CUADS to interact with students, many of whom showed significant interest in the services offered by the office.

#### KPI 4.3.2: Training indicators

**CUADS** conducted the following training at the UFS:

- First-Year Success Facilitators training on disability with 50 attendants
- CTL Tutor training on the services of CUADS, disability, and universal access
- Health and Wellness Peer Educator training
- Human Resources onboarding programme for newly appointed staff on disability and universal access and design.

Students from all the disability categories elected their representatives to constitute the Universal Access Council. The Universal Access Council subsequently underwent capacity-building training to best equip them for their responsibilities. The purpose of the training was to provide disability equity training, identify roles within the council, for council members to get to know one another across the different categories and campuses, and to gain an understanding regarding the council's position with the university's student governance structures.

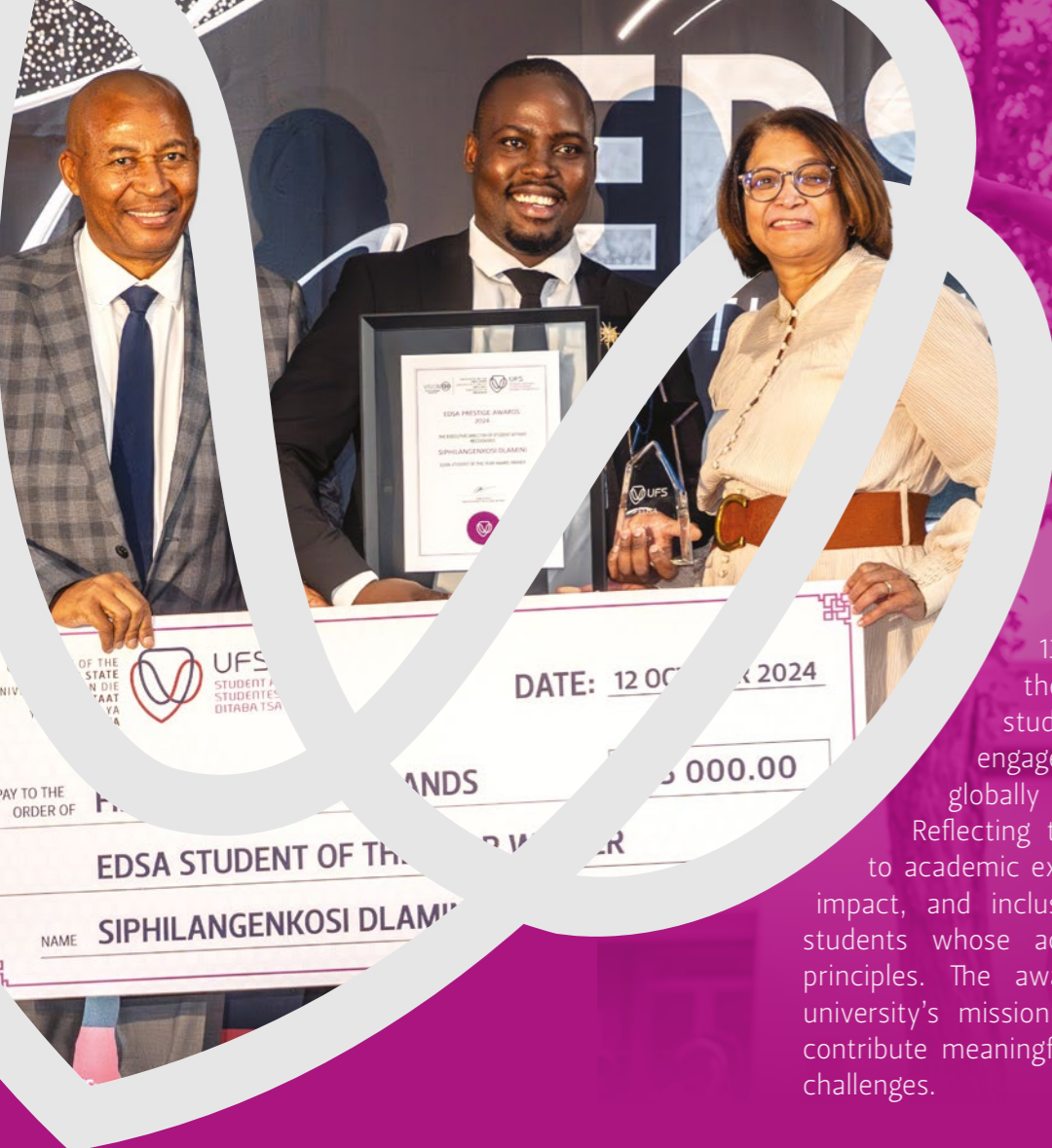
#### KPI 4.3.3: Implementation indicators

**Engaged scholarship:** Part of the advocacy and awareness indicators regarding universal access in the programmes of the Engaged Scholarship Office is the deliberate inclusion of **CUADS** in programmes. Conversations have been initiated with CUADS on the inclusion of staff members and students in all programmes. One of the key workshops for 2024 was training for students on the topic of Universal Access and Reasonable Accommodation, specifically through the lens of how to enter communities of members with disabilities or different disability communities.

**CUADS** collaborated with **HRA** to address some of the challenges affecting students with disabilities living in junior residences, and for the purpose of better understanding the procedures of Housing and Residence Affairs in terms of appeals, etc.

**CUADS** also attended a national NSFAS Disability Workshop organised by the **Higher Education Disability Services Association** to discuss challenges in the sector and the relationship with the particular office dealing with students with disabilities applications. 🏠





### Alignment with UFS Vision 130

The Prestige Awards align closely with the UFS Vision 130, which aspires to position the university as a research-led, student-centred, and regionally engaged institution that produces globally competitive graduates. Reflecting the university's commitment to academic excellence, innovation, societal impact, and inclusivity, the awards celebrate students whose achievements embody these principles. The awards therefore amplify the university's mission to develop graduates who contribute meaningfully to regional and national challenges.

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

### EDSA Prestige Awards

The Executive Director: Student Affairs (EDSA) Prestige Awards is a flagship initiative dedicated to celebrating excellence, diversity, and achievement within the UFS student community. Established in 2022, these awards recognise students who exemplify the institution's values through academic excellence, leadership, community engagement, and innovation. By acknowledging outstanding contributions within and beyond the academic sphere, the Prestige Awards provide a platform for recognising and rewarding student success. As an institutional initiative, the Prestige Awards encompass all three UFS campuses – the Bloemfontein, Qwaqwa, and South campuses – ensuring broad recognition of student excellence across the university.

### Student Impact

By encouraging leadership, academic achievement, and community engagement, the awards inspire students to strive for excellence. Past recipients have made significant contributions in areas such as academics, authorship, mentorship, and activism, serving as role models for their peers and fostering a culture of continuous growth and achievement.

Through the Prestige Awards, Student Affairs continues to uphold its commitment to student excellence, leadership, and societal impact, ensuring that outstanding students receive the recognition they deserve.

The award categories included: CUADS Awards, Residence Awards, Sport, Student Life, Student Counselling and Development, Social Support Office, as well as the EDSA Student of the Year Award.

### EDSA Critical Dialogue Series

The DSA at the UFS plays a crucial role in fostering a transformative, inclusive, and humanising

environment that enhances the overall student experience. Recognising the need for open dialogue and meaningful engagement, the EDSA has prioritised building collaborative relationships with student bodies to better understand their challenges and collectively develop inclusive solutions to address pressing issues within the higher education sector.

In line with this commitment, the EDSA launched the inaugural Critical Dialogue Series in 2024 – a platform designed to facilitate structured discussions on societal concerns that impact both the university and the broader community. This initiative aligns with the university's Integrated Transformation Plan (ITP) workstream on Engaged Scholarship and the third tenet of Vision 130, which aspires to position the UFS as a diverse, inclusive, and equitable institution. Through these dialogues, students were encouraged to reflect, connect, and innovate in their roles as university leaders and members of society, ultimately contributing to the development of ethical and socially responsible global citizens.

The first segment of the series, held on the Bloemfontein Campus, explored the topic, 'The Coexistence and Confluence of Politics, Religion, and Academia: Upholding Constitutional Values and Principles.' The discussion aimed to assess whether politics, religion, and academia can coexist harmoniously in society and to examine the extent to which their intersection can contribute to long-term universal solutions to societal challenges.

The second segment, hosted on the Qwaqwa Campus, focused on the theme, 'The Embrace of Cultural Diversity in Higher Education Institutions: Promoting Expression While Upholding Constitutional Values and Principles.' This discussion explored how culture and customs shape student behaviour within university environments and sought to determine how cultural diversity can be leveraged to foster coherent and unified student communities, rather than fragmented and divergent groups.

The final dialogue on the South Campus examined the 'Concept of Good Governance in Contemporary Society.' This discussion addressed the efficacy of co-governance models in universities and explored the balance between institutional autonomy and decision-making within multi-campus

higher education institutions. The conversation encouraged students to critically assess governance structures, leadership roles, and the impact of policy implementation on institutional effectiveness and student representation.

### Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Programme

The Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Programme was established as a national response to rising graduate and youth unemployment, the need to leverage university resources, and the development of third-stream income. The programme seeks to

- mobilise national student and graduate resources to create successful businesses;
- instil an entrepreneurial mindset in academics; and
- support the transformation of universities into entrepreneurial institutions.

The EDHE Programme takes a people-focused approach, ensuring that entrepreneurship education is accessible to students from all disciplines. Operating across institutional and regional boundaries, the programme brings together resources from various universities to enhance entrepreneurship development at both the institutional and national levels.

### EDHE Entrepreneurship Intersarsity Competition

A key initiative within the EDHE Programme is the annual EDHE Entrepreneurship Intersarsity Competition. This competition aims to

- identify and showcase top student entrepreneurs from South African public universities;
- attract investment and support for student-led businesses; and
- encourage entrepreneurial excellence through competition and mentorship.

The competition features four categories: Existing Business Tech, Social Impact, General, and Research-Based Business. Students from all 26 public universities in South Africa were invited to participate by submitting entries in one of these

categories. The competition provides a platform for student entrepreneurs to gain visibility, secure funding, and develop their business ventures with the support of industry experts and potential investors.

Following a formal internal submission and judging process, four UFS students were selected to represent the university at the EDHE Entrepreneurship Intervarsity Competition.

### EDHE Studentpreneurs Indaba

The EDHE Studentpreneurs Indaba 2024 marked a significant milestone, as it was the first time the indaba was hosted as an independent event. Through collaboration with communities of practice and various partner organisations, the indaba provided an essential platform for knowledge exchange, networking, and practical insights, equipping student entrepreneurs across institutions with the tools and connections necessary to successfully navigate the entrepreneurial landscape.

A delegation of the above-mentioned four students and their respective coordinators from the UFS participated in the indaba. Various entrepreneurship masterclasses were presented, as well as industry visits where students could engage with successful entrepreneurs across various sectors. The initiative allowed students to explore the workplaces of these entrepreneurs – offering students a unique opportunity to experience their business operations first-hand.

### Lekgotla Men's Well-being Programme

The Lekgotla Men's Well-being Programme, headed by the Social Support Office, is a transformative initiative designed to support, educate, and empower young men across all three UFS campuses. Through dialogues, experiential learning, and mentorship, the programme creates a safe and reflective space for young men to explore issues impacting their well-being, development, and role in society.

### Imbizo Launch: Establishing a Platform for Change

The Imbizo launch marked the inaugural event of

the Lekgotla Programme, laying the foundation for an initiative that addresses the challenges faced by young men in society, their communities, and within the university. The imbizo serves as a safe space for personal growth, encouraging young men to become conscious, knowledgeable, responsible, and accountable citizens capable of making meaningful contributions in their families, communities, university environment, and broader society. A total of 304 students from all three campuses participated.

The launch focused on three key themes:

- The evolution of a man from a cultural and religious perspective
- Consent
- Financial literacy for young men.

By fostering open dialogue and mentorship, the imbizo contributed to nation-building and transformation, reinforcing the UFS' commitment to the holistic development of its students.

### Hiking Pledge: Building Emotional Resilience

In a collaboration with the National University of Lesotho, the Limkokwing University of Technology, and Lerotholi Polytechnic, the UFS entered into a hiking pledge as part of the Lekgotla Programme, with a total of 61 UFS student delegates. The initiative aimed to use physical endurance as a metaphor for personal growth, with students committing to breaking the silence around men's struggles and speaking openly about their experiences.

Participants navigated a challenging trail that required teamwork, vulnerability, support, and resilience to reach the summit. Upon completion, students engaged in reflective discussions to unpack the symbolic lessons learned from the hike. The experience was widely praised for fostering a supportive, stigma-free space, enhancing emotional well-being, and building meaningful connections across institutions.

### Lekgotla Addiction Dialogue: Addressing the Reality of Addictions

The Addiction Dialogue provided a critical platform to discuss various forms of addiction with young

male students, including

- social media addiction;
- substance abuse; and
- pornography addiction.

The event, which drew 252 students from all three UFS campuses, facilitated engagement with expert speakers who explored the causes, consequences, and coping strategies related to addiction.

Through interactive discussions, students explored the psychological and social impact of addiction, the importance of early intervention, and the role of community support in fostering recovery. Personal testimonials reinforced the need for increased awareness and access to resources.

### Parole/Offenders Dialogue: Lessons on Crime and Reintegration

The Parole/Offenders Dialogue, hosted on all three campuses, was a collaboration between the Social Support Office, Health and Wellness, Protection Services, and the Qwaqwa Department of Correctional Services. The event aimed to educate young men on crime prevention, rehabilitation, and the consequences of criminal activity.

Discussions were structured around three key themes:

- Life in prison, highlighting violence, overcrowding, and the realities of incarceration
- The stigma of a criminal record, addressing societal prejudices and reintegration challenges
- Rebuilding life after prison, exploring the struggles of ex-offenders in re-entering society.

One of the most powerful moments of the event was the testimonies of reformed parolees, who shared their personal stories of transformation, offering practical advice and motivation to students. Their accounts provided first-hand perspectives on the harsh realities of prison life, the difficulties of reintegration, and the value of making informed life choices.

### Mx and Mxss UFS 2024 Pageant

The Mx and Mxss UFS 2024 – the pageant with a difference – was launched with resounding success by the Social Support Office. The primary purpose

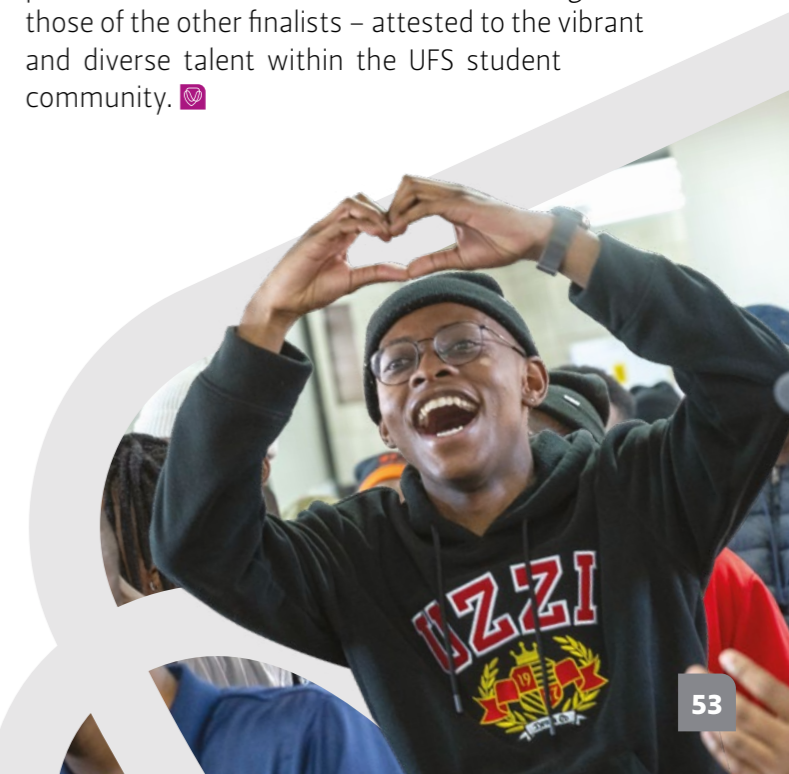
of the pageant was to create a platform that goes beyond superficial beauty, focusing on holistic qualities, capabilities, and talents. It seeks to promote inclusivity by embracing various gender identities and abilities, ensuring an all-encompassing representation of the university community.

The pageant featured a four-series structure, with each campus hosting its own preliminary pageant. Each campus showcased 18 contestants, and only the top six winners from these events earned a place in the grand finale.

Each of the campus leg pageants demonstrated strong community engagement and stood as a transformative initiative that celebrated the diverse identities, talents, and experiences of the UFS student community. Finalists on the South Campus showcased recycling-themed performances and smart-casual outfits. Prizes included financial awards either covering outstanding university fees or cash if fees were up to date. By focusing on holistic qualities and providing tangible financial support, this event paved the way for meaningful student engagement and empowerment.



The Mx and Mxss 2024 UFS Institutional Finale took place at the Madiba Arena on the South Campus, drawing a crowd of more than 2 400 students from across all three campuses. The pageant fostered unity and a sense of community, making it a truly memorable occasion. The institutional winners were Dolly-Lee Kolisang, Ofentse Kekana, Ntobeko Mngomezulu, Nkosingiphile Ndlovu, Liso Mtiso, and Lehlohonolo Bloem, receiving recognition for their outstanding performances. Their achievements – along with those of the other finalists – attested to the vibrant and diverse talent within the UFS student community. 📸



# DIGITALISATION PLAN

The DSA has made significant strides in implementing its Digitalisation Plan, aligning with the UFS' broader Digitalisation Implementation Plan and Vision 130. This plan is designed to enhance student engagement, streamline administrative processes, and integrate emerging technologies into student services. The following section summarises key developments.

## Strategic Alignment and Initial Developments

The UFS digital transformation journey began in 2021 with the development of a comprehensive road map detailing seven intermediate outcomes, each with defined success metrics and annual targets. In line with this, the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) Digitalisation Implementation Response Strategy was formulated to transition the DSA from a consumer of information and communication technology (ICT) services to an active participant in shaping the university's digital infrastructure.

A critical focus throughout this process has been the protection of student data and privacy. The DSA's Business Capabilities Statement and integration into the Enterprise Architecture Framework ensure compliance with the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act and university policies.

Two major digitalisation projects were prioritised:

- Digitalisation of support services
- Digitalisation of co-curricular programmes

Following approval, business cases were submitted to ICT Services, leading to the appointment of a software development company to support implementation. By January 2024, the basic electronic platform for these projects had been developed, with work on the first functional area – the Food Environment Office – scheduled to commence in March 2024.

## Key Areas of Digitalisation Progress in 2024

### Student Media Digitalisation – The KovsieX Project

One of the most transformative initiatives has been the Student Media Digitalisation Project, known as KovsieX. Approved by the UFS Rectorate on 29 November 2023, KovsieX represents a new era for student media, integrating previous brands (KovsieFM, KовsieTV, and KовsieCAST) into a unified digital platform with three specialised divisions:

- Audio (radio and podcasts)
- Video (long-form and short-form content)
- Social media (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube)

### Progress and milestones

Rebranding and realignment – All previous student media platforms were consolidated under the KovsieX brand, with KовsieFM becoming KовsieX Radio and KовsieCAST evolving into KовsieX Podcasts.

- Platform growth and engagement
  - ♦ KовsieX has gained significant reach, with more than 1,2 million views recorded since its launch.
- Social media expansion
  - ♦ Instagram (August 2024–December 2024): 2 823 total accounts reached, with 2 338 non-followers engaging with content.
  - ♦ TikTok: 295 435 total views, with a peak of 11 820 views on a single day (3 August 2024).
- Infrastructure development
  - ♦ KовsieX Pod (Bloemfontein) is nearing completion, with full operations set for 1 February 2025.
  - ♦ Qwaqwa Student Media is now fully integrated into KовsieX, with plans to upgrade existing facilities to support podcasting, video production, and multimedia content creation.
- Future plans (2025)
  - ♦ Re-equipping Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa radio studios with state-of-the-art broadcasting technology.
  - ♦ Acquisition of Hootsuite for social media management and analytics.
  - ♦ Pilot launch of the Teamup Student Events App to enhance digital marketing for student programmes.


## Digitalisation of Student Support Services and Co-Curricular Programmes

The second major digitalisation focus was the development of a customised software system to modernise support services and co-curricular programme administration.

### Phase 1: Digitalisation of the Food Environment Office

- The first phase involved the transformation of the Food Environment function, replacing the manual paper voucher system with a QR code-based system for distributing food parcels and meal vouchers.
- Proposed voucher process
  - ♦ Administrators generate unique QR codes for eligible students, setting expiry dates and usage limits.
  - ♦ Students present their QR codes at collection points, where administrators scan them for verification.
  - ♦ The system automatically updates available meal counts and prevents fraud.
- Current progress
  - ♦ Final software testing is scheduled for February 2025, with an anticipated rollout soon thereafter.
  - ♦ The system is undergoing bug fixes with ICT Services and the software developer to ensure full functionality before launch.

The DSA Digitalisation Plan continues to make significant progress, positioning the university as a leader in student-focused digital transformation. With major developments in student media modernisation, student support services automation, and co-curricular programme digitalisation, the DSA is well on track to achieving its strategic digitalisation goals.

By integrating cutting-edge digital solutions and enhancing student experiences through technology, the DSA is reinforcing its commitment to innovation, accessibility, and excellence in student affairs at the University of the Free State. 

# CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The DSA has undergone a significant transformation – transitioning from a traditional, hierarchical structure to a flexible and agile model. This shift has enhanced innovation, responsiveness, and collaboration, creating a more student-centred environment that aligns with the university’s Vision 130 and its commitment to being a research-led, student-centred, and regionally engaged institution.

At the core of this transformation is the adoption of agile principles, including flexibility, decentralised decision-making, rapid iteration, and adaptive planning. Moving away from rigid, top-down processes, the new structure enables teams to make real-time decisions, ensuring a proactive and adaptable approach to student needs. This student-centred

vision underpins the DSA’s new strategic direction and organisational structure, reaffirming its commitment to collaboration, ownership, and holistic development.

While guided by the six enablers of business agility (leadership, culture, structure, people, governance, and ways of working), the ADKAR model of change played a crucial role in managing the human aspects of this transition.

“ At the core of this transformation is the adoption of agile principles, including flexibility, decentralised decision-making, rapid iteration, and adaptive planning.



Figure 7: The ADKAR model of change.

By addressing the key stages of Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement, the model ensured that staff members were aligned with the new structure and equipped with the necessary skills and mindset to thrive in an agile environment. This approach fostered strong staff engagement, making the transformation both operationally effective and culturally sustainable.

To maintain and strengthen this agile culture, the following key elements proved essential:

- Continuous Leadership Development – Leaders must further develop agile competencies, including technical literacy, digital fluency, data analytics, and critical thinking, to model and drive agile behaviours.
- Embedding Agile Practices in Daily Operations – Agile methodologies should be fully integrated into daily processes, including regular sprint cycles, retrospectives, and feedback loops, ensuring continuous iteration, improvement, and value delivery.
- Continuous Staff Training and Skills Development – Regular training in agile methodologies, problem solving, and collaboration tools is critical to maintaining momentum and effectiveness.
- Promoting Psychological Safety – A thriving agile culture requires an environment where experimentation, innovation, and failure are met with support rather than blame. Encouraging open idea-sharing and critical discussions is essential for a high-performance culture.
- Recognising and Celebrating Achievements – Acknowledging successes, both big and small, reinforces the value of agility and motivates staff. Public recognition and reflection on both successes and lessons learned will strengthen a culture of continuous improvement.

During March 2023 to November 2024, the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) first- and second-layered leadership underwent leadership coaching sessions. The sessions were structured around the communities of practice, and the outcomes are demonstrated in Figure 8.

The summarised integrated change management timeline followed for 2023 to 2024 is demonstrated in Table 22.





Figure 8: Group coaching sessions.

Integrated change management activities and deliverables 2023–2024

Agility enabler 1: Leadership	Agility enabler 2: Culture	Agility enabler 3: Structure	Agility enabler 4: People and engagement	Agility enabler 5 and 6: Governance and new ways of working
2023				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Leadership awareness raised on 16 March 2023.</li><li>Leadership development through group coaching sessions 1–4 held.</li><li>Individual executive coaching Session 1 held with SLG members.</li><li>Competency analysis and Integrated Development Plan (IDP) completed for Phase 1 and started for Phase 2.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Change management forum representing communities of practice established in November 2023.</li><li>Change awareness sessions held with all staff on 12 May 2023, 19 May 2023, and on 28 July 2023.</li><li>Student Leadership Governance (SLG) continued signing off on all processes during quarterly SLG meetings.</li><li>Short-term wins identified and celebrated with all staff members in November 2023.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Phase 1 job analysis process completed.</li><li>Phase 1 job grading completed.</li><li>Phase 2 job analysis processes launched.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DSA award and celebration session held.</li><li>Phase 1 competency assessment and IDP completed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DSA strategy signed off and shared with all staff.</li><li>DSA service delivery and aligned with digitalisation plan.</li><li>New ways of working document reviewed by community of practice and signed off by leadership.</li></ul>
2024				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Leadership development through group coaching continues with Sessions 5–10.</li><li>Individual executive coaching Session 2 held with SLG members.</li><li>Competency analysis and IDP for Phase 2 and Phase 3 completed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Culture audit completed during DSA social events held for all staff on 11 April 2024 and 26 July 2024 through storytelling and small group discussions.</li><li>Reports signed and answers to critical issues provided to staff by SLG members.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Phase 2 and Phase 3 job analysis process completed.</li><li>Phase 2 and Phase 3 job grading process was stopped due to the Financial Sustainability plan of the UFS.</li><li>Phase 2 and Phase 3 competency assessment and IDP completed.</li><li>Phase 1 to Phase 3 future fit job profiles uploaded on PeopleSoft for performance management purposes.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DSA award and celebration session held.</li><li>Phase 2 and Phase 3 competency assessment and IDP completed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>New ways of working embedded.</li><li>Community of Practice Strategic Think Tank sessions launched.</li><li>Financial sustainability plans presented to SLG.</li></ul>
Future Recommendations				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Recommended new behaviours and values measured through 360-degree feedback tool.</li><li>Training completed as per needs identified in IDP.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Values embedded through 360-degree feedback.</li><li>Engagement survey completed.</li><li>Change institutionalised through the alignment of values in performance management way and progress continually assessed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>New organogram shared with all staff members.</li><li>Continuing to update newly developed job profiles to ensure future-fitness.</li><li>Continuous streamlining of roles and structure to ensure embedding of agile culture.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Training of staff aligned with IDPs.</li><li>Wellness needs identified and prioritised per department.</li><li>Continuous award and celebration sessions held with staff.</li><li>Alignment of departmental goals with DSA strategy.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mindset of continuous improvement embedded through celebration of innovative ideas.</li><li>Updating processes and procedures aligned with digitalisation plan.</li></ul>

Table 24: Integrated change management activities and deliverables, 2023 to 2024.

Throughout the year, the division made significant progress in advancing its strategic objectives, ensuring that students receive the necessary support, resources, and opportunities to excel within and beyond the university setting.

”

## CONCLUSION

The DSA remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering a holistic, student-centred environment that supports academic achievement, personal growth, and leadership development. Throughout the year, the division made significant progress in advancing its strategic objectives, ensuring that students receive the necessary support, resources, and opportunities to excel within and beyond the university setting.

Guided by the UFS Vision 130 and the UFS Strategic Plan 2023–2028, the DSA has successfully implemented initiatives that enhance student success, well-being, development, and experience. By refining its organisational structure, expanding student engagement initiatives, integrating digital solutions, and promoting leadership and mentorship programmes, the division continues to strengthen its role in shaping a dynamic and inclusive student affairs ecosystem.

These achievements reflect the dedication of the DSA staff, students, and institutional partners to working collaboratively to create an environment that is both supportive and transformative. The division's focus on strategic alignment, continuous improvement, and innovation has positioned it as a key contributor to the university's broader mission of producing globally competitive graduates who are engaged, responsible, and adaptable.

As the division looks ahead, it remains committed to building on these successes, refining its strategic approach, and proactively responding to the evolving needs of students and the higher education landscape. By upholding its core values of excellence, inclusivity, and student empowerment, the DSA will continue to enhance the university experience, ensuring that every student is equipped with the skills, knowledge, and support needed to achieve their full potential. 🍷





# ANNUAL REPORT

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE  
**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

