

# SOCIAL SUPPORT OFFICE

## Student well-being Global Submit presentation



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# The Vision & Mission

The SSO vision aligns with the DSA Student Well-being Goal 2, which is consistent with the University of the Free State Strategic Plan 2028, objective 4.1, aimed at ensuring the efficiency of non-academic support structures and systems. Within DSA Goal 2, social support is identified as a key indicator that contributes to creating an environment conducive to the biopsychosocial well-being of students. Guided by this framework, the SSO seeks to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance student success and well-being through targeted social support student centred services & interventions.

# The Core Business

- A one-stop-shop for well-being.
- To create a conducive environment for students who have been exposed to crime, bereavement, attempted suicides, are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, missing students, and other emergencies.

# SSO Key Strategic Areas

## **Promoting Holistic student well-being:**

- ❖ The SSO at the UFS is committed to fostering holistic student well-being.
- ❖ Provides programmes and resources that support academic success, personal growth, and social engagement.
- ❖ Addresses the diverse needs of students to enhance their overall well-being.
- ❖ Promotes a balanced university experience that integrates academic, emotional, and social development.

## **Financial Support for Academic Success:**

- ❖ Provide targeted financial assistance to alleviate hardship and help students focus on their studies.
- ❖ Sponsor innovative co-curricular programmes that promote academic, personal, and social growth.
- ❖ Reduce financial barriers in line with best practices to enhance overall student success and well-being.

# SSO Key Strategic Areas

## **Fostering Social Integration and Inclusivity:**

- ❖ Fosters belonging and inclusivity through social activities, events, and cultural celebrations.
- ❖ Creates a vibrant campus community where all students feel valued and supported.
- ❖ Promotes student engagement by providing opportunities for interaction and meaningful connections.
- ❖ Enhances the overall university experience through a supportive and inclusive environment.

## **Supporting the Student Journey:**

- ❖ Central to student success and inclusion by addressing diverse needs.
- ❖ Provides vital resources and holistic support for both academic and personal growth.
- ❖ Fosters a vibrant campus community where all students can thrive and reach their potential.

# SSO POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS

- ❖ Social Support Protocol
- ❖ UFS Student Pregnancy Policy
- ❖ c. Protocol on Student Crises, Deaths and Funeral Support
- ❖ d. Guidelines for Cash Donation Benefit of Deceased Registered UFS Student

# Ambassador Program

- Student volunteers who serve as Social Support Ambassadors in the SSO.
- Eligibility criteria: must be second-year students, maintain a minimum 65% academic average, and demonstrate knowledge of DSA services.
- Assist with campus activities, programmes, and events, as well as additional tasks assigned by the campus coordinator.
- Serve a one-year term, with annual recruitment of new ambassadors.
- Foster student well-being and inclusivity by supporting office initiatives.
- Gain valuable experience in leadership, teamwork, and organisational skills.

# PROJECTS



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# LEKGOTLA MEN'S WELL-BEING PROJECT

- The Social Support Office (SSO) piloted the Men's Well-being Project in March 2023 to promote the overall well-being of male students at the University of the Free State (UFS), with 1,337 students from all three campuses participating in its inaugural year. The initiative addresses key factors affecting male students through targeted interventions, recognizing the alarming suicide rates among men in South Africa and the tendency for men to underutilize mental health services. By creating safe spaces for men to openly confront their realities, the project seeks to enhance well-being within the UFS student community and foster a culture that actively supports and promotes men's health and wellness.

# Projects

- Imbizo
- Lekgotla Hiking pledge
- Lekgotla sport Festival
- Lekgotla Podcast
- Lekgotla Dialogues

# SAFETY IN SISTAHOOD SYMPOSIUM

- The "Safety in Sisterhood Symposium," an initiative of the Social Support Office, is centered on promoting the well-being, safety, and security of female students at the University of the Free State (UFS). Its primary purpose is to raise awareness, empower female students, and provide access to support on critical issues related to reproductive health, safety, and crisis management. By addressing topics such as pregnancy, contraceptives, sexual health, and safety protocols, the symposium aims to equip students with the knowledge and resources needed to make informed decisions while fostering a stronger sense of community support.

# Projects

- Safety in Sisterhood Symposium
- Safety in Sisterhood : Meet & Great
- Safety in Sisterhood : Sis Fit
- Safety in Sisterhood Dialogues
- Safety in Sisterhood : High Tea

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