

# Statement by the Council of the UFS

We, the members of the Council of the University of Free State,

- Recognizing the incident at Reitz House as an incident that was racially motivated,
- recognizing that it was in protest against the integration policy adopted during 2007,
- recognizing that it further showed disrespect towards fellow human beings who were not only Black, but were older, women, and socially and economically disadvantaged,
- recognizing that the students' behaviour in this incident does not represent the way every other student, regardless of race, feels towards Black people,
- recognizing that the unruly acts of vandalism can under no circumstances be condoned, and does not reflect the way that all those who are aggrieved by the racial abuse would respond.

We express, unequivocally our disgust at the action of the four students. We condemn it without any qualification. We express our complete antipathy with any person, however motivated, who condones in any way the action of these students. We reject any notion that these actions were simply examples of boyish pranks.

Whilst we disassociate completely from the perpetrators of this shameful action, we, being associated with the university in a governance accountability, cannot disassociate ourselves from their action. We therefore apologize unreservedly and sincerely to those who have been violated. We apologize to those who identify themselves with the violated group."

*(adopted at a meeting of the UFS Council on Friday 7 March 2008)*

## Programme of action for the UFS

As part of the above resolution adopted by the Council, the following interventions were approved as part of a programme of action to address the specific incident at Reitz and the more fundamental issues:

- Council mandated the management, in addition to the other disciplinary steps under way, to consider the possibility of closure and of conversion of Reitz into a beacon of transformation, hope and liberation (either as a residence or in some other form). This should take place in terms of due process to give residents and other stakeholders reasonable opportunity to make submissions so that all relevant considerations can be taken into account.
- It was approved that the group of workers be assisted by the university with emotional, psychological, legal and other support they may require.
- First-year students in Reitz who were not present when the video was made last year should also be assisted with counselling.
- Council approved the appointment of an external expert agency to assist the university in managing the challenges and to provide capacity to accelerate the transformation and integration processes.
- Council proposed that social cohesion and racial tolerance be highlighted as a strong theme in the academic initiatives of the UFS and that management should find additional ways to strengthen existing programmes regarding diversity on the campus among all staff and students.
- Council called on management to create more systematic opportunities for a dynamic conversation at the university to openly and frankly discuss issues and examples of racial intolerance and how the university can address this as a community, more proactively and comprehensively than in the past.
- Council reaffirmed the decision it took in June 2007 to increase diversity in student residences from 2008 and recommitted the UFS to the current implementation of the policy of integration in residences.
- Council supported a management initiative to investigate the fundamental issues underlying many of the current problems in residences, including:
  - o residence culture, including initiation, as well as race, racialism and racism
  - o alcohol and drug abuse
  - o the place, organization and management of residences
  - o constitution of student structures and the role of political parties in student politics and student structures
  - o the physical structure of residences as part of a campus accommodation strategy.

Other steps are also being implemented. These include:

- the setting up of an ombudsman for diversity matters, which is in addition to the Office for Diversity that already exists
- investigating the setting up of an independent disciplinary unit
- establishing whistle-blowing procedures to enable staff and students to report incidents of racism
- announcement of the process to decide the future of Reitz residence, made on 17 March 2008.

Management is also intending to introduce a compulsory module on diversity for all first-years as part of the academic curriculum.



An interdenominational group of students from the University of the Free State spontaneously formed a circle in front of the Main Building of the UFS in Bloemfontein to pray for the university, two days after the Reitz video surfaced. The students were joined by the Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Frederick Fourie, and other members of the top management. [PHOTO: Hannes Pieterse]

## Transformation will continue, says rector

The University of the Free State (UFS) is going through arguably the most difficult time in its 104-year-old existence.

The now infamous Reitz video has shocked, outraged and traumatized the entire university community - students, staff, alumni, donors, parents of students and many other stakeholders.

Our country has been polarized, with the old racial fault lines again coming to the fore. Questions are being asked about how thorough-going our collective efforts at nation-building and social cohesion really are, about how we relate to each other as individuals, our attitudes and prejudices.

As an institution, the UFS is dealing with the Reitz matter as quickly and fairly as possible. Already, the Council and the Executive Management of the UFS have adopted a programme of action to address this specific matter and the deeper, fundamental issues raised by this incident.

But we must also not forget that much effort has already gone into transformation at the UFS since the early 1990s.

In 1993, the UFS introduced English as a medium of instruction, alongside Afrikaans. This parallel-medium tuition policy opened the doors of learning to all, leading to the current situation where black students make up approximately 60% of total enrolment at the UFS.

Later this language policy was extended to the administration, so that official meetings are conducted in English and Afrikaans, with the necessary professional interpreting services and documentation in both languages.



Prof. Frederick Fourie

In the late 1990s we also integrated our residences for the first time, though this effort did not bring the results we had hoped for. That is why we have once again made an effort to integrate student residences as from 2008.

But we see transformation in a much broader sense as well. The academic core of the UFS has also been transforming, in the sense of what we teach and how we teach.

The UFS is one of the leading universities when it comes to community engagement. This means our students must not only learn in a classroom situation but in a community context as well, through assignments,

practicals, research, etc.

We also provide diversity workshops for staff and students, including all first-years in residences, though this is clearly something that we need to revisit.

The UFS is also finalising a draft Institutional Charter as part of the effort to change the institutional culture of the university and create a sense of belonging for all - whether white or black, English, Afrikaans or Sesotho speakers and any one else.

But of course it is sad that the behaviour and resistance to our renewed integration efforts by little more than a 1 000 students (out of a total enrolment of more than 25 000 students) can so obscure this sincere and ongoing transformation effort.

Now we are being looked at through lenses that are clouded by the video. Old stereotypes of this institution and its people are being revived.

At the same time though, it strengthens our resolve to carry on with the project to transform the UFS into a beacon of quality, equity, non-racialism, non-sexism, diversity and multilingualism. That is our commitment to South Africa and the world.

*Prof. Frederick Fourie  
Rector and Vice-Chancellor  
University of the Free State*



# Verklaring deur die Raad van die UV

"Ons, die lede van die Raad van die Universiteit van die Vrystaat,

- erken die insident by Reitz-koshuis as 'n insident wat rasgemotiveerd was;
- erken dat dit in protes teen die integrasiebeleid was wat gedurende 2007 aanvaar is;
- erken verder dat dit minagting getoon het teenoor medemense wat nie net swart was nie, maar ook ouer, vroue, en sosiaal en ekonomies agtergeblewe;
- erken dat die studente se gedrag tydens hierdie insident nie verteenwoordigend is van hoe elke ander student, ongeag ras, teenoor swart mense voel nie;
- erken dat die ongedisiplineerde dade van vandalisme onder geen omstandighede verskoon kan word nie en nie die wyse weerspieël waarop al diegene wat deur die rasseverguising gegrief is, sou reageer nie, en

spreek onomwonde ons afkeer van die optrede van die vier studente uit. Ons veroordeel dit sonder enige voorbehoud. Ons spreek ons totale afkeer uit van enige persoon, ongeag waardeur gemotiveer, wat op enige wyse die optrede van hierdie studente goedpraat. Ons verwerp enige opvatting dat hierdie optrede slegs voorbeelde van kwajongstreke is.

Terwyl ons ons geheel en al van diegene distansieer wat vir hierdie skandelige optrede verantwoordelik is, kan ons, aangesien ons ten opsigte van bestuursaanspreeklikheid met die Universiteit geassosieer is, ons nie van hulle optrede losmaak nie. Ons vra dus diegene wat oneer aangedoen is sonder voorbehoud en opreg om verskoning. Ons vra diegene wat met die groep wat oneer aangedoen is, identifiseer, om verskoning."

(aanvaar op 'n vergadering van die UV-raad op Vrydag 7 Maart 2008)

## 'n Program van aksie vir die UV

As deel van bogenoemde besluit wat deur die Raad aanvaar is, is die volgende stappe gedoen as deel van 'n program van aksie om die spesifieke insident by Reitz en die meer grondliggende kwessies aan te spreek:

- Die Raad het 'n mandaat aan die bestuur gegee om, naas die ander dissiplinêre stappe wat aan die gang is, ook die moontlikheid te oorweeg om Reitz te sluit en om te skakel in 'n baken van transformasie, hoop en bevryding (hetsy as 'n koshuis of in 'n ander vorm). Dit moet ooreenkomstig regsvoorskrifte gedoen word sodat inwoners en ander belanghebbendes 'n redelike kans gegee word om voorleggings te doen. Op hierdie wyse sal alle relevante moontlikhede in ag geneem kan word.
- Daar is goedgekeur dat die groep werkers deur die Universiteit bygestaan sal word met emosionele, sielkundige, regs- en ander ondersteuning.
- Eerstejaarsstudente in Reitz wat nie teenwoordig was toe die video verlede jaar gemaak is nie, behoort ook met berading ondersteun te word.
- Die Raad het goedkeuring verleen dat eksterne kundige bemiddeling verkry word om die Universiteit met die bestuur van die uitdaging te ondersteun en om die nodige bykomende kapasiteit te gee sodat die transformasie- en integrasieproses versnel kan word.
- Die Raad het voorgestel dat sosiale samehörigheid en rasse-verdraagsaamheid as 'n sterk tema in die akademiese inisiatiewe van die UV uitgelig moet word. Die bestuur moet ook wyses vind om bestaande diversiteitsprogramme onder alle personeel en studente te versterk.
- Die Raad het 'n beroep op die bestuur gedoen om meer sistematiese geleenthede vir 'n dinamiese gesprek by die Universiteit te skep om die kwessies en voorbeelde van rasse-onverdraagsaamheid openlik en openhartig te bespreek. Die Raad het ook gevra dat die Universiteit as gemeenskap dit meer proaktief en omvattend as in die verlede moet aanspreek.
- Die Raad het die besluit wat in Junie 2007 geneem is om diversiteit in studentekoshuise vanaf 2008 te verhoog herbevestig en het die UV weer verbind tot die huidige implementering van die koshuisintegrasiebeleid.
- Die Raad het 'n bestuursinisiatief ondersteun wat sal help om die wesenlike kwessies te ondersoek wat onderliggend is aan baie van die huidige probleme in koshuise. Dit sluit in:
  - o koshuiskultuur, insluitend ontgroening, asook ras, rassigheid en rassisme
  - o alkohol- en dwelmmisbruik
  - o die plek, organisasie en bestuur van koshuise
  - o die konstituering van studentstrukture en die rol van politieke partye in studentepolitiek en studentstrukture
  - o die fisiese struktuur van koshuise as deel van 'n kampus-akkommodasiestrategie

Ander stappe word ook geïmplementeer. Dit sluit in:

- die aanstelling van 'n ombudsman vir diversiteitsaangeleenthede wat bykomend is tot die Kantoor vir Diversiteit wat reeds bestaan;
- 'n ondersoek vir die daarstelling van 'n onafhanklike dissiplinêre eenheid;
- die daarstelling van 'n blitslyn sodat personeel en studente insidente van rassisme kan rapporteer
- die aankondiging op 17 Maart 2008 van die proses om oor die toekoms van Reitz-kamerwoning te besluit.

Die bestuur oorweeg ook die bekendstelling van 'n verpligte module oor diversiteit as deel van die akademiese kurrikulum vir alle eerstejaars.



'n Groep studente van die Universiteit van die Vrystaat wat aan verskillende kerkgroepe behoort, het spontaan 'n sirkel voor die Hoofgebou van die UV in Bloemfontein gevorm om vir die universiteit te bid twee dae nadat die Reitz-video aan die lig gekom het. Die Rektor en Visekanselier, prof. Frederick Fourie, en ander lede van die topbestuur het deel van die groep gevorm. [FOTO: Hannes Pieterse]

## Transformasie aan die UV sal voortgaan, sê rektor

Die Universiteit van die Vrystaat (UV) gaan waarskynlik deur die moeilikste tyd van sy 104 jaar oue bestaan.

Die nou berugte Reitz-video het die hele universiteitsgemeenskap – studente, personeel, alumni, donateurs, ouers van studente en baie ander belanghebbendes – gekok, gekrenk en getraumatiseer.

Ons land is gepolariseer met ou rasse-breuklyne wat weer na vore gekom het. Vrae word gevra oor hoe deurtastend ons kollektiewe pogings ten opsigte van nasiebou en sosiale samehörigheid regtig was en is, oor hoe ons as individue aansluiting by mekaar vind, oor ons houdings en vooroordele.

As 'n instelling hanteer die UV die Reitz-kwessie so gou en regverdig as moontlik. Die Raad en die Uitvoerende Bestuur van die UV het 'n program van aksie aanvaar om die spesifieke aangeleentheid van Reitz en die dieper, grondliggende kwessies wat deur hierdie insident na vore gebring is, aan te spreek.

Maar, ons moet ook nie vergeet dat baie moeite reeds sedert die vroeë 1990's ten opsigte van transformasie by die UV gedoen is nie.

In 1993 het die UV Engels as 'n medium van onderrig naas Afrikaans ingevoer. Hierdie parallelmedium-onderrigbeleid het vir almal die deure van die universiteit oopgemaak. Dit het gelei tot die huidige situasie waar swart studente ongeveer 60% van die totale studentetal aan die UV uitmaak.

Later is hierdie taalbeleid na die administrasie uitgebrei sodat amptelike vergaderings in Engels en Afrikaans gevoer word, met die nodige professionele tolkdienste en dokumentasie in beide tale.

In die laat 1990's het ons ook ons koshuise vir die



Prof. Frederick Fourie

eerste keer geïntegreer. Hierdie poging het egter nie die resultate gelewer waarop ons gehoop het nie. Daarom het ons weer 'n poging aangewend het om studentekoshuise vanaf 2008 te integreer.

Maar ons sien transformasie ook in 'n baie breër sin. Die akademiese kern van die UV in terme van dit wat ons onderrig en hoe ons onderrig is ook besig om te transformeer.

Die UV is een van die leidende universiteite insake gemeenskaps-betrokkenheid. Ons studente moet dus nie net in 'n klaskamersituasie leer nie, maar ook in 'n gemeenskapskonteks deur middel van werkstukke, praktiese sessies, navorsing, ensovoorts.

Ons bied ook diversiteitswerkswinkels aan vir personeel en studente, insluitende alle eerstejaars in koshuise (iets wat ons sekerlik sal moet hersien).

Die UV is ook besig met die finalisering van 'n konsep Institusionele Manifest. Dit is deel van ons poging om die institusionele kultuur van die Universiteit te verander en om 'n gevoel van samehörigheid by almal te kweek – of dit wit, swart, Engels, Afrikaans of Sesotho sprekendes of enige iemand anders is.

Natuurlik is dit hartseer dat gedrag en weerstand tot ons hernude integrasiepogings hierdie opregte en deurlopende transformasiepoging so kan versluiër – en dit deur 'n bietjie meer as 'n 1 000 studente (uit 'n totale inskrywingsgetal van meer as 25 000 studente). Nou word daar na ons gekyk deur brilglase vertroebel deur die video en herleef ou stereotipes van hierdie instelling en sy mense weer.

Terselfdertyd versterk dit egter ons vasberadenheid om voort te gaan om die UV te transformeer in 'n baken van gehalte, billikheid, nie-rassigheid, nie-seksisme, diversiteit en veeltaligheid. Dit is ons onderneming aan Suid-Afrika en die wêreld.

Prof. Frederick Fourie  
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