

Social Cohesion Workshop kickstarts seamless SRC elections

Social Cohesion Workshops are a precursor to the annual SRC elections at MUT. The Dean of Students, Thembi Kweyama, hosted a Social Cohesion Workshop on 1-2 September 2018 at MUT's Natural Sciences Campus. This workshop was intended to educate and sensitise student leaders from various political formations about embracing political diversity in order to intensify social cohesion. The event contributed to Goal 2 of the MUT Strategic Plan - "to promote a high-performing student population".

Various student formations attended the two-day workshop. These included ANCYL, DASO, EFFSC, NASMO, SADESMO, SASCO and YCL. The workshop included topics such as Maximising Your Gains (Negotiations and Diplomacy), Influencing the Nation (Beyond Student Politics), Power Dynamics (Balancing the Scale), Academic Demands and Leadership, among others. Student leaders from various formations also participated in group activities that required them to work together to address certain problems and participate in group presentations.

The facilitator of the Social Cohesion Workshop was Lindokuhle Khoza from Lindong Development. According to Thembi, "The workshop was a huge success. Such forums enable student leaders to realise that they all have a common goal and shared interests in serving and fighting for the rights of students."

The road to SRC Elections 2018

The SRC elections took place on 20 September 2018 at Seme Hall. The purpose of the activity was to enable students to exercise their right to elect leaders of their choice to represent their interests at the University.

The national IEC was the first organisation to be approached to facilitate the MUT SRC elections. This was based on the stipulation by the SRC Constitution that the Chief Electoral Officer should preferably be derived from the IEC of South Africa. Unfortunately, the provincial office of the IEC has taken a resolution not to facilitate SRC elections. In view of this, private consultants with experience in facilitating elections were approached. Lindong Development was appointed to facilitate the MUT SRC elections 2018.

Voting process

The voting process started at about 07h30 on 21 September 2018 at Seme Hall. When the gates closed at 23h30, there were no voters left in the queue, which meant that each and every voter was afforded the opportunity to cast a vote.

The voters' roll was accurate in view of the fact that students had been given a chance to correct any error two weeks prior to voting day. The alphabetical sequencing of voters also assisted in expediting the process. Minor hiccups over operational issues were identified and attended to by the Student Affairs Department. For example, extended opening hours allowed students to collect their student cards in order to vote.

While voting was underway, hundreds of students were entertained by various artists at the MUT sports ground, including DJ Masiya and other local artists. The entertainment event began at 13h00 on 20 September 2018 and was concluded at 23h00. This was to ensure that all students danced and sang together regardless of their political affiliations. This enhanced social cohesion amongst student leaders from the various political formations and students in general.

Counting process

The counting process took place at the voting venue, Seme Hall. This began at around 00h30 on 21 September and continued until 12h45 when it was finally concluded. All parties cooperated well during the process and there were few hitches. The spirit of cooperation that existed outside the counting venue was reflected in the manner in which observers related to one another.

At the final count, 6912 voters had cast their votes. The votes gave a clear indication of democracy at play. After the counting was concluded, the ballot boxes and all relevant material were moved to Protection Services for safekeeping.

SRC election results

Various student organisations participated in the elections. The winner was EFFSC, which received 3787 votes, followed by SASCO with 2163 votes, then SADESMO with 906 votes and DASO with 56 votes. Altogether 6912 students cast their votes, which represents about 57% of the 12204-strong MUT student population. The results for independent candidates were as follows:

Name	Vote Count
Cossa Gift	3374
Goniwe Simphiwe	2173
Khubisa Mxolisi	111
Ngunane Mfanafuthi	828
Nhleko Mthokozisi	1964
Simelane Mlungisi	2123
Sithole Sandile	3468

Mthokozisi Ntuli, Student Development Officer, said, "A lesson learnt is that we should continue with social cohesion activities, as they contribute to the good conduct of students during elections."

No de'javu for the EFFSC Inauguration



SRC President, Codesa Gwala

The EFF Student Command (EFFSC) surprised everyone with a request to hold its inauguration on campus, on Friday 5 October 2018 instead of going to a 'fancy' venue for this event. This was a complete departure from the way SRC inaugurations have been conducted at MUT over the past two decades. The inauguration of the 2018/2019 SRC team was done in the presence of more than 300 students (electorate) from all student organisations. "We want the over 50% students that voted to come and see and hear us committing to serving them on the promises we made during the election campaign," said, Codesa Gwala, the incoming SRC President.

There were no sleek designer suits for the new team. The eight team members from EFFSC were dressed in their day-to-day clothes and academic gowns so as "to set the tone that we are an organisation that puts education first," said Codesa.

Dr Enoch Duma Malaza, Vice-Chancellor & Principal, thanked the outgoing SRC for being magnanimous and being a part of the event. By the same vein, he also thanked the incoming SRC and reminded them of the importance of governance in giving students a voice. "However, do remember to be inclusive and embrace diversity. You are charged with the duty of bringing student perspectives to the issues facing the University. Be patient and articulate your needs through a governance process." Dr Malaza also expressed his appreciation that some of the SRC members had left an indelible mark on him during the strategic plan development and review consultations. "You were critical in informing the strategy and reminded us about a decolonized curriculum as part of the strategic approach we should adopt. It is also interesting that you insisted that by 2025, MUT should be a transformed University instead of a transforming University", Dr Malaza reminded the incoming SRC.

In his inaugural address, Codesa's first protocol was to address not just executive management but also acknowledged the presence of cleaners and security. There are wide-ranging deliverables they are expecting from the University such as "Seeing to it that students participate in physical activities, have easy access to WiFi, 24/7 access to the library and clinic", amongst many. At the heart of his presentation was the need for executive management to see to the welfare of students and that no student must be financially excluded. "We will be a neutral SRC and will work as a united team. We are committed to assisting each other physically, emotionally and otherwise. The walls of education must come down because we want free and decolonized education for everyone", he said to the applause of students.

Gender-based violence given the boot at Brotherhood and Sisterhood events

The unfair treatment meted out to women has galvanised MUT to take steps towards protecting female students by empowering them with the necessary knowledge. Over a two-day period on 29 and 30 August 2018, powerful speakers descended on MUT to contribute to this noble cause. Some of these were TV soapie stars Themba Ndaba, who plays Brutus in The Queen, and Nomzamo Mbatha, an actress in Sibaya.



Nomzamo, second from left, was a big hit with the female students



Male students gained a lot from Themba, in red.

Themba told the audience at the Brotherhood event that he had never taken part in social occasions that have the potential to end badly. "For the first time in my life, I decided to accept this MUT invitation because I understand the seriousness of the issue," said Themba. He added that he wanted MUT students to be real men. This is how seriously he views the situation where women are abused by their male counterparts. Themba told over 400 MUT male students how he was scolded by his father when he was young for kicking a girl. "The headmaster of my high school called my father and told him that I had become a horse that kicked women. My dad did not whip me. He sat me down and told me how important women were. He emphasised their role in bringing life to the world and taking care of it," Themba said.

Themba learnt that no matter what a woman has done, there is nothing that can justify beating her up. "Walk away from the situation, and come back when you have cooled off," he advised. Themba said it was important for men to show women love.

Ndlenhle Jiyane, a warden at MUT, told the students that he had learnt a life lesson when he impregnated a girl in his hometown (KwaNongoma), a situation that led to a clash between the girl's family and his. He wished he had had a male role model who could have guided him. He appealed to the students to listen carefully to the various speakers and take their advice. Jiyane also emphasised the importance of love and forgiveness in a relationship. He told the students that whatever they did would have consequences, so they needed to be careful.

At the Sisterhood event, Nomzamo Mbatha, who grew up in KwaMashu northwest of Durban, told the female students about the importance of being independent. "Dependency usually opens a door to abuse," she said. Nomzamo advised the students to stand united and stop posting negative messages about each other on social media. For her, sisterhood meant that the female students should care for and be truthful to each other, not vilify each other. In its message to the female students, the Department of Student Affairs, which organised the two events, warned the female students to be aware of the signs of a toxic relationship and take the necessary steps.

The students said they benefited a great deal from both events. Buyisile Gumede (21), a second-year civil engineering student, said she learnt that it was important to inform the right people if someone was in trouble.