



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Rhodes University Community Engagement Residence Programme Report- May 2023

Prepared by: Hlengiwe Mlambo and Lihle Manene

Editor: Nosipho Nkwinti

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the community engagement programme in the residence space at Rhodes University, highlighting key objectives and performance indicators. The report emphasizes the achievements and impact of CE Orientation Course, identifies challenges faced, and discusses the sustainability of these initiatives. The aim is to foster a sense of social responsibility among first-year students and promote their active engagement in the community.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REPORT

1. Strengthening the Student Orientation Programme:

- The CEO Course, held from Term 1 & 2, successfully introduced students to the concept and context of community engagement.
- Students responded positively, demonstrating an understanding of their agency as caring citizens and the contributions made by Rhodes University Community Engagement to the Makhanda community.

2. Exploring Makhanda Tours

- "Exploring Makhanda Tours" aimed to create a sense of belonging among first-year students by exposing them to the history of Makhanda.
- A total of 1036 first-year students participated in the tours in 2023.
- Community Engagement Representatives played a crucial role as tour guides, exhibiting commendable dedication and active participation.

CHALLENGES

- The Community Engagement SRC Councillor was unable to attend the first day of the symposium due to a shutdown, presenting a challenge to their participation.

SUCSESSES

- In collaboration with the Residential Operations Office, a dedicated budget was established to support the projects undertaken by Community Engagement Representatives (CE reps).

This budget allocation aimed to provide necessary resources, including funds for transportation and initial project expenses, enabling CE reps to initiate and carry out their community engagement initiatives effectively.

- Siyakhana@Makana Plan of Action Presentations provided a platform for halls and their community partners to share engagement experiences and future plans.
- Except for Allen Webb, all 15 halls actively participated in the presentations, with prior apologies received from the non-attending hall.

3. Strengthening Student Orientation

- The Community Engagement Extravaganza during Orientation Week attracted 906 students, with 645 completing the registration process, demonstrating their interest and engagement.

Key Achievements

- The CEO First Year Course successfully introduced and oriented first-year students to community engagement principles and promoted an empowering environment.
- The programme emphasized the interconnectedness of individuals and advocated for the principles of ubuntu to contribute to societal development.

Program Description

- The Co-Ordinator provided session materials in advance to Community Engagement Representatives (CE reps) to ensure their preparedness.
- CE reps coordinated with first-year students to determine suitable meeting days during the designated week.
- On the chosen day, CE reps facilitated sessions while RUCE staff provided back up support, contributed to discussions, and clarified concepts as needed.
- CE reps-maintained attendance records as the course was accredited, and completion certificates were awarded to first-year students who attended all sessions and fulfilled assigned tasks.
- The duration of the program was from February to May, comprising a total of five sessions. This was part of the extended Orientation Programme.
- CE reps were allowed the flexibility to accept apologies and arrange makeup sessions for any missed sessions, ensuring that there were no clashes with the academic programme.

Achievements and Impact

- The collaborative efforts of CE reps were inspiring, particularly when tackling challenges and addressing attendance issues among first-year students.
- CE reps exhibited remarkable personal growth, assuming leadership roles and employing innovative strategies to encourage

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen Support from the Division of Student Affairs (DSA)

- The DSA, with its influence and reach to wardens and hall wardens, could play a valuable role in advocating for the importance of community engagement as a fundamental core function of Rhodes University.
- By actively promoting community engagement, the DSA can help overcome challenges faced by Community Engagement Representatives (CE reps), such as a lack of support and occasional resistance from house committees and wardens.
- Efforts should be made to raise awareness among the university staff and administrators about the significance and positive impact of community engagement initiatives.

3. Offer CE Presentations

- CE Presentations to house committees and wardens would help them understand the strategic nature and value of community engagement for the development of students and impact on our community .
- By equipping house committees and wardens with the necessary knowledge and skills, they can become advocates and facilitators of community engagement within their respective halls and residences.

4. Recognition and Incentives

- Consideration as to how CE reps and other individuals who are active might be recognised for their participation and leadership in CE.
- By highlighting success stories and publicly acknowledging the positive impact of community engagement, a culture of involvement and support can be fostered.
- Recognition and incentives can include awards, certificates, or opportunities for personal and professional development.

By implementing these recommendations, Rhodes University can further promote and strengthen community engagement as an integral part of its institutional framework, fostering active citizenship and positive societal impact.