



ALLAN WEBB HALL



RHODES UNIVERSITY
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Allan Webb Hall

2019 Hall Report

Prof EM Mgqwashu & Ms L Maholo



Susan Kunju, BMus (Hons), PGCE
Canterbury House



Lucky Xaba, BSS, PGDIS, MIS
Canterbury Annexe



Lisa Maholo, BCom, BCom (Hons)
Truro House



Salisbury House
Samkelo Malgas, BSc (Hons), MSc, PhD



Winchester House
Yusuf Motara, BScS (Hons), MSc, PhD

Allan Webb Hall continues to offer students and staff excellent opportunities for healthy interactions, collaboration, growth and an unparalleled university experience. We have had a number of staffing changes this year. Mrs Judy Seymour retired as warden of Canterbury House after 10 years. In January this year Mrs Kunju moved from Canterbury Annexe to Canterbury House, and Ms Thobeka Msengana was appointed as Warden of Canterbury Annexe. After only one month in this role Ms Msengana was offered a life-changing opportunity at the University of Fort Hare, and regretfully tendered her resignation. Ms Lucky Xaba was appointed in her place. Prof Ferdi Botha of Winchester House also resigned effective end of Term One as he was offered a position at the University of Melbourne in Australia. Dr Yusuf Motara was appointed at Winchester House. Then, just as we thought the dust had settled, Prof Emmanuel Mgqwashu was appointed Director of Faculty Teaching and Learning Support at North West University. Ms Lisa Maholo was appointed Hall Warden and her first duty as Hall Warden was to appoint Dr Samkelo Malgas as warden of Salisbury House.

Our team strives to inculcate a nurturing family-like atmosphere with an academic focus, in line with the Division of Student Affairs Values:

- **Encourage potential and cultivate academic success and excellence**



Allan Webb Hall has an established record of academic success. This year we built on that by initiating an Academic Awards ceremony as part of our Welcome Dinner. In previous years, awards ceremonies were only held at the end of the year, as end of year results are only available after students return home. In 2019 we started the year by celebrating the academic success our students achieved at the end of 2018. We felt that this have the twin aims of celebrating past achievement and inspiring our first years. Our Top Performing First Year Student in 2018 was BCom student Hannah Zulu, who achieved a first year average of 69%. Our Top Performing Undergraduate was BPharm student Ahmed Setar who achieved distinctions for four of his five subjects (just missing a fifth at 73%). Ahmed was placed on the Dean's List for Academic Merit and awarded Academic Half Colours. Our Top Performing Fourth Year Student in 2018 was BPharm student Zainab Wintola, who achieved a fourth year average of over 70% and was placed on the Dean's List for Academic Merit. Further, the Top Performing House at Allan Webb in 2018 was awarded to Truro House. We congratulate these students.

In Canterbury House, Mrs Kunju reports, “Our Academic Rep ran a Buddie system whereby senior students in the residence were paired up with mainly First Year or Undergrad students to support them in their academics. We decided to use this term to focus on this programme and allow for these students to spend as much time together as possible.”

Ms Xaba noted that Mr Chrispen Mutanho was invited to present a House academic talk to Canterbury Annexe. Mr Mutanho is a PhD candidate in the Education Department at Rhodes and is also lecturing in Science in Education.

Winchester House this year benefitted from a new warden with fresh eyes and new ideas. Dr Motara has cultivated academic success and excellence in his house with the presentation of House certificates for students who had graduated, and those who had obtained first-class results in one or more subjects. Furthermore, these students were invited to an academic tea at the Warden’s Flat to celebrate their success together.



Dr Motara was dismayed to note that many Winchester students obtained G7 Warnings after the June exams, with Winchester being the worst performing House in the worst-performing Hall in the University residence system. Dr Motara notes, “I hypothesise that this is because the environment within the House has not been conducive to studying: noise is all-too-common, students remain convinced that school-style approaches such as regurgitating information (without understanding it) will work, and the academically successful within the residence are unlikely to also be the popular or influential. A great deal of work is necessary to turn this around. All students who received G7

Warnings were approached individually to understand how, and whether, they could be helped. The November exam results may provide some indication of how successful this approach was.”

The new Salisbury Warden, Dr Malgas, reports a similar concern regarding June academic results. He notes that in Salisbury, second year students were the worst performing group during the June exams:

“Some of the interventions placed included the Salisbury House having an academic meeting specifically to discuss the June exam results and see what could be done, and also students encouraging each other in practical ways that they could adopt in order to do much better and well for the end of year exams, this involved each member of the house having access to the statistics for the June results of the house and hall. As a hall, an academic workshop which aimed to complement the mentorship program was conducted, its aim was to get students in the hall into their respective courses and to have more senior students in a higher level to provide assistance and function as tutors to those in the group as the mentorship program which was not intended to function as a tutorial group, this meant the academic workshop and their groups could carry on throughout the term. Finally, the House decided to have awards for students who attain a 60% average, and this should be done at the beginning of every semester. To quote a house member ‘we celebrate individual success not only because it contributes to the overall success of the house, but because it helps in the attainment of every house member’s primary academic goal, that is to attain their degrees’.”

Of course, academic success is not only measured in distinctions. We feel it is important to celebrate the student who, despite adverse circumstances, continues to strive to fulfil their academic potential. To this end we award the Mother Cecile Trophy for Academic Endeavour. In 2019 this trophy was presented to Donica Walton, for her exceptional academic achievement. Ms Walton’s grandmother passed away during her exams, but Donica did not allow this to deter her from her goal. She achieved 70% for Sociology 3, 76% for Psychology 3 and 93% for Theory of Financial Management, and was placed on the Dean’s List for Academic Merit.

- **Develop ethical leaders and responsible citizens**



Our Hall Leadership Training, which is crucial in developing ethical leaders and responsible citizens within our Hall, took a different approach in 2019. Mindful of budgetary constraints, rather than the previous combination of both Hall Committee and House Committees from each House, this year only the wardens, the Hall Senior Student, the Hall SRC Reprehensive, House Senior Students and Sub-wardens took part in the Two

Day Leadership Camp at Hobbiton on Hogsback. Only the Hall Committee members are subsidised by the Division of Student Affairs for this training, and mindful of budgetary constraints, the decision was taken to limit the attendance at the overnight camp to Hall Committee members only, and then request that House Committee members join the Hall Committee in a teambuilding activity subsequent to the return of both Hall and House Committee members to Grahamstown.



After the camp, Prof Mgqwashu reflected that for the first time in all the years he has been the Hall Warden, he felt this was the most productive engagement, “We were closer, understood each other, and made huge progress as the Hall Committee and achieved things we couldn’t achieve in the past. For example, together we managed to revise the Hall Constitution, jointly set up and revived warden leadership of each House Comm portfolio to support and develop student leadership, and resolved gender (and sometimes racial) conflicts much more speedily and cohesively as a team than we ever did before. On reflection, Student Leadership felt the decisions we have taken this year and the

progress we have made can be ascribed largely to the decision we took regarding beginning of the year Leadership Camp.”

During leadership week, Thobeka Msengana, then-warden of Canterbury Annexe, presented a talk to our House and Hall Comm students on being mindful of creating a culture at Allan Webb Hall that we can all feel welcome in.



This was followed by our inviting Dr Zethu Mkhize from the Equity & Institutional Culture Office to present a talk on “Consent in Sexual Relationships” to our student body. This was well received by our students.

In September the DSA invited Dr Mkhize to present the “Sexual Offences Policy for Students” and the Equity & Institutional Culture Office issued each student and warden a copy of the booklet. It was strongly felt that this was the best talk on consent we have had at Allan Webb, as this was not about interpretation – the document is neutral and unbiased, lays out the facts as they are, and Dr Mkhize spoke to it without equivocation. We hope this will be repeated in 2020, but in the first term, so that first years can benefit from this immediately.

On a residence level, Dr Motara notes, “After some time without enforced discipline, it has been very difficult for students to adapt to and adopt the University rules, especially if they are seen to go against ‘House culture’. Some notable ‘wins’ in this area, for 2019, have been:

- Shutting down in-house sale of alcohol from the ‘Vat’, and replacing it with a ticketing system to bring it into compliance with University policy and practice. Work on the replacement is still ongoing. This removes a significant legal risk to the University; the penalty for non-compliance with South African liquor law can be up to half a million rands.
- Making students aware of the governance structures within the University, and the actual restrictions applicable to University residences.
- Running successful and well-received House elections.”

Further, our students continue to value community engagement. The five Community Engagement Reps in our Hall work together under the aegis of Mrs Kunju as it is felt that combining our efforts lead to a more successful outcome. This year we continued our partnership with Luzuko Pre-Primary School. Canterbury House hosted two successful thrift shop events during the year, and funds raised

were used to purchase cots for the children at Luzuko Pre-Primary School, as well as party packs for a second semester party event.

- **Value and celebrate diversity**



Allan Webb Hall benefits from a diverse and socially disparate Hall Committee leadership who work together to find common ground in order to best serve their constituents.

The events of 2019 provided ample opportunity to hold formal and informal discussions on gender-based violence

and xenophobia. Dr Motara says, “Individual and group discussions were held with many students, usually at the dining hall or in the common room, and the level of understanding of ‘diversity’ and its many meanings appreciated noticeably during the course of the year.”

In Salisbury House, Dr Malgas notes that the Transformation Rep, “held House Talks/Discussions on issues about Consent, and the sanctioning of Sexism, Homophobia, Transphobia and many other unfair discriminatory forms of harassment and social injustices.” We are especially encouraged to note that the men in the house accepted ownership of their roles addressed these important matters from the perspective of asking the questions, “What is the direct and indirect effect of it on us as males? What is expected of us as males? How do we reaction when we are labelled as perpetrators? What is our role as males? What are drivers of GBV?”

However, Dr Malgas also notes, “a number of Reps reported that their efforts of engaging students on transformation issues were met with resistance. It was stated that in some cases the resistance emanated from some students feeling attacked when certain behaviour and language is questioned. It was also observed that the term transformation has acquired a narrow meaning in which change in ‘gender(ing)’ behaviour is foregrounded. Thus the meaning of social transformation is understood mainly to mean change in gender based forms of discrimination and violence. It was resolved that other forms of discrimination, exclusion and violence should also be brought to the foreground in awareness raising activities. Transformation themes such as poverty, disability, race, etc. should also be foregrounded.”

The Orientation Week drama production during continues to be a hit as well as a talking point for our new students. We hope this will continue.

- **Promote personal growth and resilience**



In order to promote personal growth and foster resilience within our Hall, the Allan Webb Hall Mentorship Programme was initiated by Ms Lisa Maholo. The programme is designed for student

engagement and development within the university space between students coming from diverse communities with varying backgrounds and values. The aim is to assist first year students to successfully transition into and operate in the Rhodes University space. The hope is that the mentorship programme will give students involved the opportunity to be more accountable for their own academic and personal success and foster a brother/sisterhood.

A group of 22 returning students were identified and trained as mentors at the end of term one. A high standard of confidentiality, commitment, honesty, openness, integrity and respect were required from all mentors and mentees alike. This was due to the level of openness and trust mentees would eventually have towards their mentors. Mentors were partnered and assigned a group of first years (4-5 mentee's). Mentors met with Ms Maholo every second or third week for debriefing sessions and groups were required to meet weekly for an hour. Contracts were signed between the mentor and mentee groups; this ensured a mutual understanding of expectations from the beginning of their meetings.

Although the programme was intended to run only for one semester, the programme was extended into the third term upon the request of students. Various topics were covered during the debriefing sessions by Ms Maholo in preparation for mentorship group meetings. Topics ranged from the following:

- Roles and Responsibilities for mentors and mentees (contracts), How I am finding varsity life? Personal goals for term one.

- Time management; how do I manage my time? How do I account for my 24 hours in a day? All mentees and mentors will be required to draw up timetables of how they spend their week.
- Academic Life vs Personal Life? Which one gets more of my attention? How do I balance my life?
- Managing my finance (Taking into considerations my background, how do I manage my finances?) and career management (CV writing workshop)
- How am I doing? How have I changed from the person I was when I first got here? Am I coping with this new stage of my life?
- How was home? Exam prep – academic, physical and mental wellness?
- What do I want more as person, what do I want from the Hall/residence and the University?

During fourth term, the End of Year Function for the mentorship programme was held. The function was aimed saying to the student involvement and to reflect on the ways to improve the programme for 2020. The programme has been handed over to two senior students (previous mentors under the programme) within the Hall.

- **Cultivating sporting participation and excellence**

In a smaller Hall, such as ours, it is often difficult to form teams to participate in inter-res sports. However, thanks to the determined efforts of our Hall Senior Student, Lusindiso “Bhoza” Mabhoza, Allan Webb Hall restarted the Allan Webb soccer team, and renamed it, The Allan Webb Foxes. Challenges arose in the lack of appropriate soccer kit, but funds will be made from our 2020 budget for this, on the understanding that soccer is not only a men’s sport, and that women would be encouraged to join the team, and would be enthusiastically welcomed if successful at try-outs. In their first year of playing together, the Allan Webb Foxes finished 6th out of 14 in the league. Mr Mabhoza and his team are to be congratulated on this initiative.



An unfortunate shoulder injury sustained in the first semester saw Sinolwazingekamvalakhe “Sino” Ralo benched from his position on the Rhodes University first rugby team for the rest of the year but we are confident that he will recover and return in 2020. Fortunately, Ukhanyo “Tank” Charles this year lived up to his nickname and again played Rhodes University first team rugby. Tank was also awarded our 2019 “Farrell Trophy for Sporting Excellence”. Further, Azola Mkhwambi, stalwart of the

Allan Webb Foxes, was promoted to Rhodes first team soccer. These three students are all resident in Winchester House.

However, it should be noted that confusion arose between the Conference Office and Sports Administration regarding these students remaining in residence to participate in USSA tournaments. It is hoped that this will be resolved in 2020.

- **Promote a wellness approach to life**

2019 saw us interrogate our Hall Calendar and how it can better serve us. A Hall Committee meeting was held during Leadership Week, and a number of the suggestions raised during this meeting were implemented. Importantly, our Welcome Dinner was moved to take place earlier in the year, so as not to compromise any student's academic schedule. Our theme was "Sofiatown" and we had nearly full attendance. It has been hailed as the best formal dinner we've ever had at Allan Webb.



Encouraged by this success, our then-Hall Warden and our Hall Administrator accompanied our Hall Senior Student and Hall SRC Rep to a meeting with the Manager of Food Services to discuss hosting our Hall Leavers Dinner on a Friday night, rather than the customary Tuesday or Wednesday night. The students expressed that these dinners, when held on a week night, distract from the academic project. They value these dinners and would like them to continue, but in a way that allows maximum attendance and enjoyment without concerns about sacrificing academic performance. Permission was sought and obtained from the Deputy Director of Residential Operations and our first Friday night Leavers Dinner was held.

We have held a number of Hall Braais and other functions. Our Allan Webb Hall Heritage Day Carnival, a student-led initiative introduced in 2013 to thank the support staff for their hard work and dedication to our students during the year, was unfortunately not as well organised as at the start of this initiative. Nonetheless, the children of our staff enjoyed their outing and expressed their appreciation for this event.

We are also pleased to note that the students seek out opportunities to socialise with friends in other Halls, and a number of “joint braai” functions were held. Canterbury Annexe in particular delighted in the gentlemanly conduct of the Graham House students who hosted them in March this year.



Further, our Canterbury Annexe Wellness Rep promoted the “First thing First” campaign. Ms Xaba reports that this drive “includes a free test for HIV, screening for Tb and Pap smear because it is important to know one’s status and health.” Two bootcamps were held in 2019, one in each semester.



Finally, we were pleased to note that the DSA continued to provide opportunities such as workshops and talks for our students, and look forward to this continuing in 2020.

In closing, it should unfortunately be noted that a number of challenges arose in 2019. Like students in residential institutions all over the world, our students continue to complain about the food. However, it should be noted that our students' complaints about the food are legitimate concerns. For instance, during load shedding, confusion arose when students were unable to fingerprint for their meals. Incorrect meals were requested and allocated. This was resolved when new technology was implemented allowing students to fingerprint even during power outages. A constantly raised concern is around quantities, particularly for our vegetarian students. It is felt that the catering team consistently underestimates, and therefore underprepares, meals for vegetarian students. It has been suggested that this is due to the kitchen underestimating the Hindu/Halaal option, and then offering those students the Vegetarian meal. This is disappointing, and continues to be a contentious issue in our Hall.

Water is another contentious issue. The University-issued SmartValves work well – when they work. After a period of adjustment, they now appear to work more frequently than not, so this is an achievement to be celebrated. However, it has been raised on social media and by our students that the University's "Restricted Water Supply Campus Plan" is inconsistently implemented across the University, particularly with regard to the harvesting and use of grey water. The obvious confusion of newly arrived students when issued their bucket and water mat bears testament to this. It is suggested that in 2020 the "Restricted Water Supply Campus Plan" is explained again to each warden, and the wardens are tasked with explaining the "Restricted Water Supply Campus Plan", and how it applies in their individual residence, to the entire House. Our students are, quite rightly, upset by the unfairness of implementing a University-wide system that only a few actually adhere to. This is especially frustrating when as a Hall we take a hard line with water usage and issue disciplinary sanctions to students who contravene the rules around water usage.

Security and maintenance continue to be issues at Allan Webb Hall. We have noticed an improvement in minor and/or routine issues, but two serious ongoing maintenance issues have the potential to develop into serious disasters: the sewage system at Truro House and the inattention to the devastation wrought by the fallen tree at Canterbury House.

Truro House has been facing a serious problem of blocked sewerage behind the residence. Since July 2017, the residence sewerage pipes have been getting blocked every two to three months. The matter has been reported to the Division of Infrastructure and Operations with time matter no permanent solution put in place.

Due to blockage of sewer, the back of residence is flooded with dirty water, toilet paper and faeces every two months. The smell inside the residences becomes unbearable; the residence turns to an unhygienic state of living which hinders the role the residence system seeks to achieve, which is ensuring an environment conducive to students performing at their best academically.

Our major concern is the health risk we will be putting students in once students return in 2020. We might find ourselves having parents and students, rightfully so, refusing to move into the residence because of the health risk attached to living there.

Of even greater concern, and a matter that requires urgent attention, is the fact that the University has not repaired the damage to the wall at Canterbury House caused by the windstorm of 31 October 2018. The initial clean-up did nothing but sweep away the worst of the debris on the ground. Not only do we still have a block of wall lying on the ground, we are also forced to walk under a wall upon which bricks are so precariously balanced that a strong gust of wind could bring them tumbling down. This is not an exaggeration, as evinced by the fact that the damage was, in the first place, caused by a windstorm. We have sent numerous emails and made countless phone calls regarding this matter. We have sought assistance from the Deputy Director of Residential Operations. We have contacted the Deputy Director of Infrastructure and Operations. But until now communication has been forthcoming regarding when we can expect these repairs to be effected.

In October this year, an intruder gained access to Canterbury House. As the matter is still under investigation by Dr Mkhize at the Equity & Institutional Culture Office we are unable give further details, but the damage to the laundry door suggests that the intruder gained access to the residence at this location. This would not have been possible had the boundary wall at Canterbury House been repaired within a reasonable timeframe. It is very difficult as a Hall to convince students that the University cares about their wellbeing when simple, elementary measures such as repairing a wall, are not taken to protect them.