

Desmond Tutu Hall Report December 2019

2019 has been quite a year in Desmond Tutu Hall with a number of highlights and challenges.

Highlights

- Academic performance improved from 2018
- Two of our students got elected to the Student Representative Council for 2020.
- Six of our students were awarded the Investec Top 100 awards.

Challenges

- The Hall warden resigned at the end of the first term. This left one of the residences without a warden for the remainder of the year.
- The water crisis affected the hall in many way, not least of which was hygiene in the residences.
- Student apathy and decreased participation in hall activities
- Mental health issues also affected the morale of the hall

The rest of the report follows below under the Values of the DSA

Encourage potential and cultivate academic success and excellence

The hall committee decided at the beginning of the year that Desmond Tutu Hall's examination results had to improve from last year, 2018. The initiative by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dr C Boughey, for first year students to have weekly sessions in which they would go through the RU Learning booklet was very useful. All academic representatives across the hall made these sessions compulsory for all first year students. Academic commitments such as tests and ADP sessions were the only accepted reasons for absence from these sessions.

For the rest of the hall, students were encouraged to volunteer as tutors for any academic subjects they were willing to assist their fellow hall mates. One of the wardens worked with the academic reps to come up with rules for the Hall tutoring programme. This was to ensure that no one abused the system. The list of students volunteering as tutors in the entire hall, as well as the Rules of engagement, were put up in every residence in the hall as well as in the dining hall (screenshots below).

In terms of celebrating academic success, wardens were encouraged to publicly acknowledge students that had performed well such as obtaining distinctions or being in the top ten of each residence. At the Leavers' Dinner, the top student in each academic year, across the hall, received certificates. Their names have also been added to the Honour's Board in the dining hall.

The hall also worked together on a Newsletter which was also an opportunity for the students in the hall to showcase and debut their talents. This was the second issue of this Hall Newsletter which was initiated in 2018. A screenshot of the cover page is included below.

DESMOND TUTU HALL TUTORING PROGRAMME

RULES AND REGULATIONS.

1. **Tutoring is free. No form of payment should be expected. Tutoring is fully voluntary.**
2. Venue should be convenient for both parties.
3. Both parties should be on time for a session, should a tutee/tutor be late beyond reasonable time, the tutor/tutee has a right to call off a session.
4. No student should in any way take advantage of another student. If you experience any challenges, please approach your residence academic representative.
5. Tutee should prepare in advance for a session, a clear lack of preparation grants a tutor a permission to dismiss a session.
6. Should a tutor face difficulties, he or she may refer a tutee to another tutor.
7. A tutor may take on one or more tutees at once depending on what they feel comfortable with.
8. Tutors can provide study material for their tutees at their own discretion.
9. Tutors are also expected to be well prepared for the tutoring sessions.
10. **Tutoring sessions during Swot week and the examination period are strongly discouraged.**

DESMOND TUTU HALL TUTORING PROGRAMME

Tutor sign-up Sheet

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Develop ethical leaders and responsible citizens

Rhodes University being a place where leaders learn, the residence system is an excellent environment for students to develop and nurture strong leadership. A house committee of about 10 students in each residence, is responsible for entertaining, motivating and leading more than 70 students. This requires dedication, maturity, hard work, team spirit and patience. Students have the opportunity through heading sub-committees, organising events and giving feedback to demonstrate their leadership qualities.

The Disciplinary process though not always pleasant is also an opportunity for subwardens to develop as leaders. It is also an opportunity for all students to grow and learn within the residence system as accountability, learning from mistake and redress all make for good citizenry. Within each residence, house committee members to ensure smooth running of the residence and a step up from that; the hall committee works together towards a wholesome experience for every student in the hall.

Each of the residences had a form of toiletry donation initiative to assist their less fortunate res mates. This promoted the spirit of “Ubuntu”.

Extensive training provided at the beginning of the year equips these student leaders. However, up to 2019, our hall committee training has been more theoretical and did not fully prepare students for what lay ahead. Going forward, we have decided to focus more on everyday tasks that the leaders have to complete and less on, for example, leadership styles and or types of leaders.



Value and celebrate diversity

The hall committee recognised that students have different talents, abilities and interests. Whilst Rhodes University is an academic institution; it would not be fair to only celebrate academic excellence. The committee therefore came up with other categories of excellence to be acknowledged and celebrated at the Leavers' Dinner. The categories were as follows, for each residence:

Leadership – for a house or hall committee that went beyond the call of duty in their tenure as a leader

Overall/All-rounder – for a student who was actively involved in diverse spheres around campus

Sports – students that participated the most in inter-res sporting fixtures, performance ability was not a factor

Community Engagement – students that volunteered and participated the most in the Hall community engagement project

Deportment – the recipients of this award were named by the catering staff in the dining hall. They selected one student from each residence that was very courteous to the staff.

Initiative – this was awarded to a house committee member that demonstrated great initiative in their respective portfolio and brought new ideas to the team.

Furthermore, in terms of diversity, the hall committee hosted a Fun day which consisted of some competitive games. The choice of games was diverse in order to appeal to the different cultures, and childhood memories, across the hall. The games included Umgosha, Shoot your shot, Heads Up (Rhodes edition) and Donkey.

Promote personal growth and resilience

With the growing concern about mental health across the world, resilience is a very important aspect. Students in leadership were throughout the year encouraged to openly speak, and encourage conversations around mental health. The aim was to destigmatise mental diseases and conditions. There were a number of cases in the hall of severe depression, anxiety and some suicide attempts. The counselling centre was very helpful in addressing the different cases.

Debrief sessions were hosted in the reses and also for student leaders in the hall when traumatic events occurred in the hall or around campus.

Cultivating sporting participation and excellence

Physical activity is an important part of a healthy mind. Students in the hall engage in various activities. These range from team sports in the University sports clubs to simple walks around campus. Because Desmond Tutu hall is up the hill, almost all the students get at least 20 minutes of physical activity by simply just going to and returning from lectures.

Participation in inter-res sports is highly encouraged but, can be challenging to the timing. A lot of students prefer to sleep in on a Saturday morning. The only male residence in the hall, Cullen Bowles, has a soccer team but, it wasn't as active this year.

The hall committee in conjunction with the Environmental reps in the hall, hosted a Fun Day on the 28th of September 2019. The teams competing each comprised students from each of the reses so this event also encouraged unity within the hall.



Promote a wellness approach to life

Having Wellness leaders Transformation reps as part of the house committees worked well though not all reses have adopted this system. These student leaders have the support of the rest of the house committee in planning, promoting and running events. Officially incorporating these

portfolios into the house committees also helps in promoting unity within the house committee. It means all the members of the committee arrive at the same time at the beginning of the year and bonds are formed during training and O Week preparation.

Events organised by the university namely, Consent talks, Pillowcase design and Sexual Harassment policy workshops were very instrumental in raising awareness around pertinent issues.

At residence level, the different house committees had initiatives to promote wellness such as weekly “chats” which focused on emotional and spiritual wellness, period party, and hosting a seasoned psychologist to address students in a residence.

The year in pictures

At the beginning of the year, the hall committee hosted a Welcome “garden” party and at the end of the year, a Leavers’ dinner. The garden party was hosted inside the dining hall due to the fact that the university crockery cannot be taken out of the dining hall and, the hall committee opted for the environmentally friendly route of not using disposable crockery.





