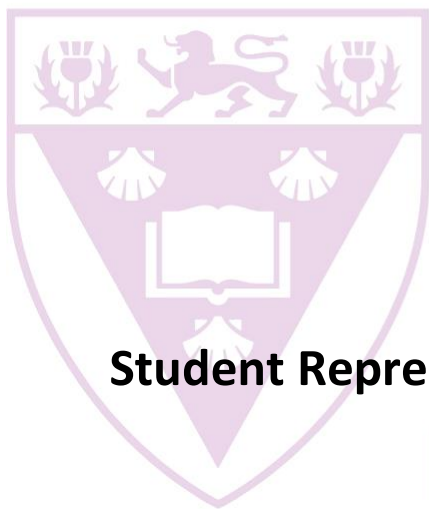




RHODES UNIVERSITY



SARC

First Semester Report

Student Representative Council | Rhodes University

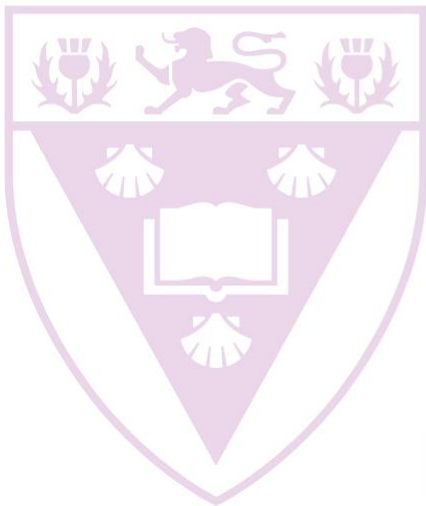
Released: 28 July 2020

Representing Leaders

Mission

“We are an SRC for the students by the students and we aim to serve the Rhodes University student body, and to represent all students from all walks of life regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic background and all other factors that make us unique. It is our aim to ensure transparency, inclusivity and execution of duties in the SRC to better serve and represent students building; trust, relationships and communication.”

RHODES UNIVERSITY



SRC
2020

Representing Leaders

Rhodes University Strategic Objectives

GOAL 1: Maintain and strengthen our general formative degree offering and the research-teaching- community engagement nexus which enable our students to access powerful knowledge

GOAL 2: Enable access to Rhodes University by all academically qualifying students and provide them with conditions which enable all students to flourish and which promote their holistic development as critical citizens

GOAL 3: Maintain and strengthen our unique institutional niche as a research-intensive university outside a major urban area

GOAL 4: Ensure financial and environmental sustainability practices at Rhodes University through good governance, leadership, and management

GOAL 5: Attract, nurture, and retain staff of high calibre and maintain an inclusive, welcoming, affirming and positive institutional environment

GOAL 6: To provide the relevant/appropriate academic infrastructure, equipment, and facilities to support our academic project

GOAL 7: To Promote Rhodes University as an institution for public good in the local, provincial, national, and international contexts

Reference: INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018 – 2022

GOAL 1: Maintain and strengthen our general formative degree offering and the research-teaching- community engagement nexus which enable our students to access powerful knowledge.

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	REPORT
1.3. Provide opportunities for students to participate in theorized initiatives falling along the spectrum of Community Engagement.	Number of service-learning options/ programmes available to students for engaged learning.	<p>The Community Engagement Councillor worked closely with the Rhodes University Community Engagement office to increase community engagement visibility during O-week. This resulted in the increase in the number of students who signed up for different volunteering programmes with RUCE.</p> <p>RUCE had a table at the SRC Sports and Societies Extravaganza which further allowed for students to sign up for programmes. This was a success as many first-year students participated and signed.</p>

		<p>The SRC Community Engagement Councillor also gave a presentation to Societies CE reps during the SRC Societies Chairs training.</p> <p>The SRC Community Engagement Councillor launched the SRC Shadow the Leader Programme where SRC members mentored the Learners' Representative Council from Ntsika Secondary School.</p> <p>The SRC Shadow the leader Mentorship program has been ongoing on social media throughout the national lockdown. A group chat with all the RCL from Ntsika Secondary whereby the community engagements continuously engage with the learner through Monday Motivations, Mental Wellness Wednesday, COVID 19 infograph Fridays and Grade 12 learning content.</p>
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		<p>The Community Engagement Councillor and Media Councillor worked together to release a YouTube video in celebration of Nelson Mandela Day and leadership. The video included SRC members having to specify what leadership has taught them in these unprecedented times. The video was also an official announcement of the Community Engagement Councillor's "Shadow The Leader" mentorship programme.</p> <p>Community Engagement reps enrolled in a course named Community Engagement In my Context on the 20th of July 2020. The aim of this is to still allow CE reps to have an enriched knowledge filled year in their capacity as agents of social change. So far 33 CE reps have enrolled in the course together with other student volunteers.</p>
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<p>1.5 Provide wider reach of our general formative degrees/ programmes through e-learning and blended modes of delivery.</p>	<p>On-going progress reports on development of e-learning at faculties (one annual report per faculty).</p>	<p>During this Coronavirus pandemic the SRC has been having continuous engagements with university management on how we can make a smooth transition to online learning for all students. The SRC also contributed R30 000 from portfolio funds to the Covid-19 Relief Fund.</p>
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GOAL 2: Enable access to Rhodes University by all academically qualifying students and provide them with conditions which enable all students to flourish and which promote their holistic development as critical citizens

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	REPORT
<p>2.2 Strengthen ability to provide quality counselling and academic advice to students. (DSA Goal 1)</p>	<p>Percentage of students seeking academic advice assisted.</p>	<p>The SRC President, Vice-President, Secretary General and Academic Councillor assisted more than 150 students with academic appeals. The International Affairs Councillor also dealt with academic queries affecting international students.</p> <p>During O-week, the Academic Councillor</p>

		<p>delivered a 4-minute speech to the first years about the importance of academic excellence and to encourage a good work ethic from the early days in their university careers, speaking to the importance of mental health and being able to seek help for whoever they feel they need to. In essence: never feeling like they are alone when dealing with tough situations, that either the SRC or staff members would be there to support them.</p>
<p>2.3. Promote a sexually responsible citizenry and safe community within Rhodes University. (DSA Goal 2)</p>	<p>Number of programmes/ intervention/events promoting sexually responsible citizenship.</p>	<p>In conjunction with the HIV Office and the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, the SRC held a SAFER IS SEXY campaign around campus which was aimed at promoting safe sex and prevention of sexually transmitted infections, with the SRC Activism and Transformation Councillor and SRC Projects Manager spearheading the campaign. The link to the video is <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFtj8aWGkRo>></p>

<p>2.5 Provide enriched student experiences for all students of Rhodes University. (DSA Goal 3)</p>	<p>Students' perception of overall student experiences (1 -10)</p> <p>Number of recreational and sporting events organized by the University.</p>	<p>The International Affairs Councillor, in the absence of the Sports and Societies Councillor, organised the SRC Sports and Societies Extravaganza to showcase the different sporting codes and cultural societies the university has to offer and subsequently the sign ups to the above mentioned.</p> <p>The SRC Media Councillor improved the overall structure of the SRC <i>Lalelani</i> radio show on Rhodes Music Radio. The show was restructured to include more informative content including interviews and important announcements.</p> <p>The SRC has been made more accessible to the student body this year. The SRC Media Councillor created a WhatsApp broadcast list with Head students and the Oppidan Marketing Rep to create a new channel of communication for the SRC and students in addition to</p>
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		<p>our social media. This has allowed for better communication with students who do not have social media.</p> <p>The SRC through the Media Councillor ensured that all the SRC statements (downloadable copies) were uploaded on the SRC website and made available to the student body.</p> <p>The SRC Media Councillor has collected submissions from SRC members in order to compile a first semester newsletter for the SRC.</p> <p>The Media Councillor has also formalised the management of the SRC's social media pages. As she continues to highlight the work of the SRC on social media, the Media Councillor has appointed the Head Writers of the Media Team as the social media managers of the SRC Twitter and Instagram pages. Having social media managers will</p>
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		<p>ensure that there is a constant stream of engaging content on our page that does not solely rely on one person to do.</p> <p>The Media Councillor has also created an editorial calendar to ensure that we continue to have content for social media every week. The calendar also includes content for the photography, writing, radio, design and videography sections of the Media Team. The content that we have managed to put out included awareness campaigns and important announcements.</p> <p>The SRC Media Councillor made the second online Student Body Meeting even more engaging than the first. Alongside the use of Facebook comments as in the first student body meeting, engagement was also open on Twitter and Instagram stories. The engagement on Instagram</p>
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		<p>was very successful as Instagram users were by far more active than Twitter users. Users were encouraged to ask questions about the agenda items and the responses were publicised in the stories. Additional information such as important contact details were made available to students in the stories and are still available now on the SRC Instagram page.</p> <p>The SRC Oppidan Councillor is part of the ongoing mentorship program which is spearheaded by the Oppidan committee. It provides academic support, as well as general mentorship. Each mentor has a WhatsApp group (platform accessible to almost all students) with their mentees to facilitate discussion whereby mentees seek assistance, therefore mentors can direct their mentees in the right channels if it is out of their reach.</p>
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<p>2.6 Improve the level of student funding to academically qualifying students.</p>	<p>Percentage increase in available student bursaries/funding.</p>	<p>The SRC President, Vice-President, Treasurer-General and Secretary-General dealt with the NSFAS financial appeals at the beginning of the year in the absence of the Student Benefits and Sponsorship Councillor. To ensure that the academically deserving students were cleared for registration.</p> <p>The SRC President, Vice-President and Media Councillor formed part of the NSFAS appeals reviewing committee.</p> <p>Negotiations to assist international students that had issues with funding were successful in about 50% of the cases brought forward.</p> <p>Students classified as international students but have a permanent South African address, or whose fee payers were employed or residing in the country were allowed a leeway in the payment of their fees by being allowed the same</p>
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		<p>options awarded to local students.</p> <p>Asylum seekers were also allowed to be considered for the VC's guarantee provided they produce their asylum documents and show academic commitment.</p> <p>In the second term, the SRC Student Benefits and Sponsorship Councillor has assisted students have been affected by the N+2 rule as well as students who had their applications rejected by liaising with the Financial Aid office on ways forward.</p>
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GOAL 3: Maintain and strengthen our unique institutional niche as a research-intensive university outside a major urban area.

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	REPORT
3.1 Maintain the reputation of Rhodes University as a research-intensive University by production of knowledge of high impact.	Total Research output units (Weighted).	The SRC Academic Councillor is part of the Teaching and Learning Committee where meetings earlier in the year revolved a lot around how the university was going to deal

		with the impacts of Covid-19 and how lecturers were going to test the students' progress while trying to avoid plagiarism.
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GOAL 4: Ensure financial and environmental sustainability practices at Rhodes University through good governance, leadership, and management

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	REPORT
4.5 Enhance implementation of environmental sustainability policy and practices.	<p>Electricity usage per enrolled student (kWh/student).</p> <p>Water usage per enrolled student (Kl/student).</p> <p>Percentage reduction in volume of hard-paper printing particularly at secretariat (% reduction w.r.t 2017).</p>	<p>On the 31st of January 2020, the SRC Environmental Affairs Councillor wrote an article for Makana Environmental News on Grocott's Mail to call for a pro-environmental town.</p> <p>On the 5th of February 2020 the SRC Environmental Councillor and Environmental reps attended RU Sustainability workshop to understand the most pressing environmental issues related to campus and Makhanda and how these inform the IDP.</p> <p>On the 8th of February 2020, the SRC held a Community</p>

		<p>Engagement and Environmental extravaganza</p> <p>In February, Hilltop Hall Environmental reps made a poster for Green Peace to raise awareness on water scarcity.</p> <p>The SRC, through the Environmental Councillor, has been making students aware of and celebrating environmental holidays such as Water Day (22/03), Earth hour (28/03), Earth day/ week (22/04), Biodiversity day (22/05) and May as the energy month.</p> <p>For National Science festival (SciFest) (15-21 April). The SRC Environmental Councillor, environmental reps together with Common ground, a student society and MPAG were going to be part of the festival doing eco-bricks and Eco planters for the duration of the festival.</p> <p>In collaboration with fellow</p>
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		<p>students, the SRC Environmental Councillor started a #RUGrowing initiative on the 11th of July 2020. The initiative is inclusive of different projects that aim at educating and finding solution on the pressing environmental issues and community development.</p> <p>On the 18th of July 2020 #RuGrowing had its first project for Mandela day. The Environmental Councillor together with Hayley Skerrit planted vegetable seeds in 67 plastic bottles at a pre-school in Makhanda.</p> <p>The SRC Environmental Councillor in collaboration Sweetness Mgobozi (Pharmacy student), continue collecting food parcels and donate them to the needy in the streets and to the Makanda Outreach soup kitchen.</p> <p>To reduce pollution and to</p>
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		<p>celebrate #PlasticFreeJuly, the SRC Environmental Councillor does hotspot cleaning (picking up litter in rivers, parks etc.) and she collaborates with Makana Plastic Action Group (MPAG).</p> <p>The SRC, through the Environmental Councillor, continues to make students aware of and celebrating environmental holidays such as World Environmental day (05/06), desertification and drought day (17/06) World Oceans day (08/06), Giraffe day (21/06), and July as #PlasticFreeJuly</p>
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GOAL 5: Attract, nurture, and retain staff of high calibre and maintain an inclusive, welcoming, affirming and positive institutional environment

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	REPORT
5.2 Continue to strive for diversity within staff establishment of Rhodes University especially at senior academic levels.	<p>Percentage of black permanent I/R staff.</p> <p>Percentage of black women permanent I/R staff at</p>	The SRC Academic Councillor attended the Science Dean election with the Science faculty representatives who each had

	<p>associate professor/professor levels.</p> <p>Demographic diversity index of all staff of Rhodes University</p>	<p>a valid vote in the proceedings. During the Dean election for Science it was made sure that the students concerns for diversity and a change into the ‘more than English’ language debacle was mentioned.</p>
<p>5.5 Drive transformation by identification of socially unjust systematic patterns and recommend/implement remediation through the transformation plan.</p>	<p>Institutional transformation plan adopted, and annual reports produced. (0=N0, 1= YES).</p> <p>Number of events/projects targeted at promoting transformation.</p>	<p>The SRC Transformation & Activism Councillor worked to ensure that the Union building elevator is functional.</p> <p>The SRC Transformation & Activism Councillor and the Oppidan Councillor organized a transformation dialogue for Oppidan students which was well attended.</p> <p>The SRC Transformation & Activism Councillor, in collaboration with the counselling centre increased awareness of the accessibility of the counselling centre through the Transformation representatives as well as social media platforms.</p>

<p>5.6 Promote internationalisation at home & cultural diversity.</p>	<p>Number of events/projects promoting an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity across all the University stakeholders</p>	<p>The international week and international food fair that had been scheduled in promotion of this objective, unfortunately, could not be completed due to the unexpected pandemic and will be revisited once pandemic regulations are relaxed.</p> <p>A project for African Diversity, has reached its final stages of planning and is set to be implemented once a sponsor has been found. The project will start off as facts about African countries and alliances and history being posted all over the SRC social media pages. This will run for a month, at the end of that month, there will be a competition about the best representation of African unity or African diversity. The project is spearheaded by the SRC International Affairs Councillor, working with the SRC Media Councillor for the design of the fact bubble or how to post the facts and</p>
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		<p>the SRC Student Benefit and Sponsorship Councillor is helping with finding a sponsor for the competition prize.</p> <p>The SRC held a #Acknowlegemyexistence social media campaign in celebration of Pride Month. The campaigned was aimed at promoting an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity across all the University stakeholders. The campaign occurred during Pride Month. With education posts through social media. The SRC Transformation Councillor collaborated with the SRC Projects Manager to create the Pride Month video. Overall, it was a success as it educated and drew attention to the #AcknowledgeMyExistence campaign. It was, however, faced with some difficulty as transformation is not clear cut and variations were made to be inclusive of the LGBTQIA+ community.</p>
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GOAL 6: To provide the relevant/appropriate academic infrastructure, equipment and facilities to support our academic project

OBJECTIVE	PERFOMANCE INDICATOR	REPORT
<p>6.1. Ensure sufficient levels of financial resources for the institution.</p>	<p>Overall student satisfaction.</p>	<p>The SRC, through the SRC Secretary-General, Treasurer-General and the Student Benefits and Sponsorship Councillor assisted students who had issues with data for online learning by reporting the cases to the Information and Technology Services Division. These are students who received the data late, the Telkom users and those who had different data numbers on ROSS. Students were advised on how they can make sure they get the data and the procedure of changing data numbers on ROSS.</p> <p>The SRC Secretary-General, the Treasurer-General and the Student Benefits and Sponsorships Councillor assisted students in tracking progresses of their laptop</p>

		requests. Contacting the different deans and checking how the progress is and give students advice on who to contact next, or give advice on alternative ways to keep students up to date with their coursework.
6.3. Provide world-class library services to staff, students and community	Total annual user log data on library use. General user satisfaction (score) on library services	The SRC, through the SRC Projects Manager, worked closely with the Rhodes University Library during Orientation Week to get as many first years as possible to sign up for the library tour. SRC members were also visible around the library to encourage first year students to go for their library tours.
6.5 Provide and maintain decent residential accommodation.	Residential bed-spaces available to students as % of UG headcount. Overall student satisfaction (score) on residential accommodation.	The SRC Residence Councillor worked very closely with the Registrar's Division to assist students with residential accommodation throughout the registration weekend and orientation week.
6.6 Provide advisory Oppidan/off-campus accommodation information to our students.	Oppidan/off-campus accommodation advisory list provided (YES =1/NO = 0).	The SRC Oppidan Councillor, together with the Oppidan Committee, communicated with various rental agencies in town to

		<p>form relationships based on empathy and understanding during orientation week.</p> <p>Following intense engagements with the SRC, Oppidan Committee and Financial Aid office, rental agencies allowed students on financial aid to sign lease agreements without the expectation of full rental deposit, provided the students hand them a letter from the NSFAS office clearly stating the approval of funding for the 2020 academic year. Therefore, students paid out rental agencies once NSFAS made payment, into their personal accounts.</p> <p>The SRC Oppidan Councillor, together with the Oppidan Committee, held a meeting with the existing bus contractor to add one more bus, making it possible to accommodate the growing number of Oppidan students.</p>
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		The third bus resolved the problem of Oppidan students having to leave campus early (worked in students' disadvantage), or being left behind by the bus due to a high demand of the bus, which could only take a limited number of students per trip.
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GOAL 7: To Promote Rhodes University as an institution for public good in the local, provincial, national and international contexts

OBJECTIVE	PERFOMANCE INDICATOR	REPORT
7.3. Identify new and strengthen existing academic collaborations and partnerships with the regional Universities for the development and advancement of the Eastern Cape.	Number of partnerships with other universities in the province.	On the 10 th March 2020, the SRC President and the Secretary-General attended a meeting at Nelson Mandela University with the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature's Deputy Chairperson of Committees, Hon Duba and his colleagues to discuss the Raymond Mhlaba memorial lecture which was supposed to be hosted on Human Rights Day.

		<p>The existing partnerships with the universities of the Eastern Cape concerning the annual intervarsity were maintained from the previous year with the council in collaboration with the Sports Administration of the university holding meetings for the planning of this event. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Rhodes University was scheduled to host intervarsity this year and preparations for this had already commenced.</p>
<p>7.4 Identify new and strengthen existing national and international research, teaching and learning partnerships.</p>	<p>Number of teaching and learning partnerships at national and international levels</p>	<p>On the 21st of January 2020, the SRC President, together with SRC Presidents from other institutions and the SAUS executive, attended a meeting at CSIR international convention centre to engage with the stakeholders of DHET regarding the issues faced by students on our campuses.</p> <p>The Council on Higher Education hosted a conference from the 26th – 28th February 2020, it was a quality promotion</p>

		<p>conference themed “Enhancing academic success through the involvement of students in quality assurance and promotion in Higher Education”, of which the SRC President was one of the panellists for this conference.</p>
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Challenges

CHALLENGES	INTERVENTIONS
Maintenance of the SRC offices has gotten worse.	We continue to report incidences to Infrastructure and Development.
Some students were doing office walk-ins without scheduling appointments with SRC members. This was a challenge because SRC members attend classes and therefore the said students would not be attended to fully.	We notified students on our social media platforms to make appointments with the SRC members before they come to the offices. Only urgent cases without appointment were attended to.
Due to covid-19 pandemic, the university had to go for recess a week earlier, and therefore we could not call the student body meeting.	<p>On the 20th April 2020, we held an online student body meeting on our SRC Facebook page. The meeting was very successful and productive.</p> <p>Another student body meeting was held online, on the SRC social media platforms on the 10th of July. It appeared most of the problems students had during the beginning of the university shutdown and the national lockdown were being solved as there were</p>

	not as many issues raised as compared to the previous student body meeting.
On the 4 th of May, online classes commenced with about 2000 students were left behind.	We had multiple engagements with the university senior management, and they reassured us that no student will be left behind. There will be a catch plan developed to ensure that those students who missed the 2+ weeks of learning are accommodated. The university has started with the distribution of laptops and study materials.
<p>The DVC: Academic and Student Affairs sent out a circular on the 18th June stating that “Assessments for semester one will not be timetabled on set days or at set times. Students will work on the different assessment tasks as part of continuous assessment and will submit them by 24 July 2020. You are encouraged to plan your work accordingly and submit your assessments as soon as you have completed them, rather than wait until the final week ending 24 July 2020. NOTE: Arrangements are being made for identified Law courses and the Faculty of Law will advise students accordingly.”</p> <p>During the term, the SRC kept receiving queries from students who complained about lecturers having fixed submission times and not being allowed to make submissions after the specified time, which was before the 24th of July.</p>	<p>Complaints were dealt with via emails of students with express concerns towards the amount of work being given and the time frames in which they were expected to be done.</p> <p>Emails were sent to faculty deans to address concerns received from students and some of the issues were clarified and/ or rectified.</p>

<p>Post-graduate students also felt that nothing much had been done to accommodate them as their submission dates remained the same.</p>	
<p>The SRC received numerous calls for assistance from the off-campus missing middle-students who tried negotiating with their rental agents/ landlords in their capacity as the Covid-19 pandemic affected their households financially. Therefore, resulting in this group of students unable to meet their contractual obligation.</p>	<p>The SRC worked with the Division of Student Affairs to try to resolve the dilemma. The assistance of the Division of Student Affairs in terms of drafting a letter directed to rental agencies gave it more weighing as rental agencies were now willing to negotiate in good faith with their tenants which are Rhodes university Oppidan students and queries directed to the Oppidan Councillor in this regard were lessened.</p>
<p>Earlier this year, when the university shutdown and a national lockdown was subsequently announced, students were instructed to vacate their residences by the university. Some international students requested permission to be permitted to stay as they had no other choice due to either finances or the fear of travelling abroad or the difference in lockdown regulations for the different countries. This led them to seek temporary accommodation off campus, mostly in the residences of those Oppidans that had left Grahamstown. These students became stranded when the university started to invite students back to campus as some Oppidan students started to return to the digs the international students were renting.</p>	

HIGHLIGHTS

- Five members of the current SRC are 2020 graduates.
- The Community Engagement and Environmental Extravaganza continues to be a big highlight of O-Week.
- The SRC President formed part of the panel discuss for the CHE quality promotion conference. Out of all the SRC presidents of universities in the country, only two SRC Presidents were invited (Rhodes University and University of Free State SRC presidents) and they were the only student representatives on the panel. The topic that was engaged on was titled: Student engagement for academic success in higher education: moving beyond student involvement in institutional governance and decision making.
- The RUGrowing project has been a big milestone.

GRATITUDE

A special thank you to the following:

- The Division of Student Affairs for all the assistance provided to date and for the great working relationship with the SRC.
- The Registrar's Division and the Financial Aid Office staff for the swift assistance provided to date.
- Dr Mabizela and Dr Mapesela for all the support and for attending to students' academic queries throughout the term, and for all positive engagements during this transition to remote learning.
- RUCE for sponsoring all 52 Community Engagement representatives with t-shirts and for the great working relationship with the SRC.
- The Communications Division for sponsoring the Media Team with t-shirts.
- Mr Aldy Meyer for partnering in the RUGrowing project.
- MPAG for providing transport and recycling bag for Hotspot cleaning.

