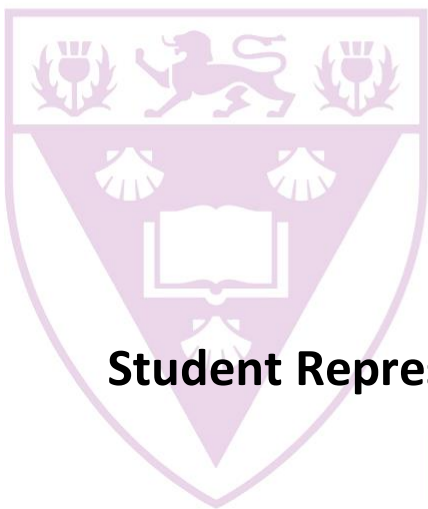




RHODES UNIVERSITY



SARC

Second Semester Report

Student Representative Council | Rhodes University

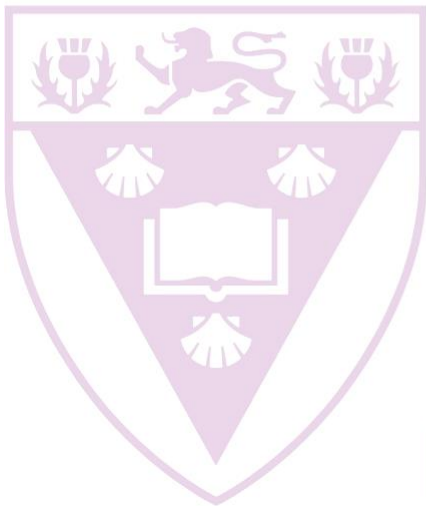
Released: 27 November 2020

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>There were 53 community engagement representatives that enrolled for the “Community Engagement in my Context” course.</p> <p>The SRC Community Engagement and Environmental Councillor had a three-day webinar titled “Community engagement and environmental sustainability” which includes speakers that were students and in collaboration with RUC. Covering a range topics such as: getting involved, transition to virtual engagement and time management.</p> <p>The SRC Shadow the Leader Mentorship program</p>

		<p>launched in the first semester has been ongoing on social media through a group chat with all the RCL from Ntsika Secondary whereby the community Engagements volunteers continuously engage with the learners through; Monday Motivations, Mental Wellness Wednesday, COVID 19 infograph Fridays and Grade 12 learning content.</p> <p>The SRC also made a “Good luck video” to all the Matriculants together with the VC, CE reps, SRC and student societies.</p>
<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>The SRC has assisted students that needed laptops and data bundles by liaising with the Fees Office, faculties as well as the Registrar’s and IT Division so that all students could be assisted.</p> <p>Overall, some students were fearful that they will be left behind and it formed part of the SRC’s job to</p>

		<p>ensure that they were not a number on a piece of paper, but also a person who needed help during this difficult time.</p> <p>The SRC wrote to the Registrar requesting SWOT week for students before exams to allow them adequate preparation time for exams and the request was granted.</p> <p>The SRC also wrote to the DSA and IT & S divisions requesting extensions of the lab operating hours to allow students adequate time towards their studies.</p> <p>During this Covid-19 pandemic the SRC has been having continuous engagements with the DSA on notifying them about residence students who were not in conducive environments for learning to be allowed back to residence. The SRC Residence Councillor worked closely with the</p>
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		<p>DSA to ensure that those students' issues are attended too by the university, as well as to ensure a smooth transition to online learning for all students and that those who were not in conducive environments to learn are not left behind.</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.</p> <p>(DSA Goal 1)</p>	<p>Percentage of students seeking academic advice assisted.</p>	<p>Anxiety over the final year exams were high and a lot of students reached out to the SRC for affirmation and general relief from their anxiety. There has been a significant amount of emails which have been attended to by the Academic Councillor to act as a go between with students and lecturers.</p> <p>The SRC Media Councillor commissioned a poster from the SRC design team with the approval of the</p>

		<p>Counselling Centre. The poster was shared on social media encouraging students to seek counselling if they needed it. The poster was shared with detailed information alongside an existing poster from the Psychology Clinic.</p> <p>The SRC Media Councillor encouraged members of the media team to attend CV workshops hosted by the Career Centre. The SRC Media Councillor also organised a workshop with an experienced media practitioner for the benefit of members of the SRC media team. The workshop was aimed at teaching media team members how to compile their best content into a portfolio to show to prospective employers and potential clients. The session was part of the first Student Media Colloquium planned and executed by the SRC Media Councillor in partnership with the Project Manager.</p>
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		<p>The SRC Media Councillor organised in-studio training for a second SRC radio presenter who stood in for the main presenter this semester.</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>The SRC Activism & Transformation Councillor launched the #IAmWomXn Anti gender-based violence social media campaign. The campaign directed attention to the rights that people in a relationship have. Additionally, it was clear and concise and well received as it expressed the student body's stance and highlighted the importance of the situation that should not be taken lightly.</p> <p>A statement that outlined the SRC's stance against Gender-Based Violence was released with attention towards the harassment and reporting sections of the Sexual Offences Policy for</p>

		<p>Students. This allowed students to access information to empower themselves of the procedures available to them to report sexual harassment cases.</p> <p>There has been a significant rise in Covid-19 infections with the students being careless and failing to adhere to campus rules and regulations. The SRC issued communication to students after discussions with the DSA to bring awareness against the spread and the potential increase in infection rates which could pose a significant issue with the exams and students writing sit down exams.</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 SRC organized a 3 day-series of webinars to celebrate women's months. The webinars took place from 27 – 29 August. The topics for the 3 days webinars were women in entrepreneurship, women in leadership and Girl talk: Health and wellness for young women, respectively.</p>

		<p>These webinars mainly had students as panellists, and they were broadcasted live on the SRC Facebook group.</p> <p>Using similar strategies from the Student Body meetings held earlier in the year, the SRC International Affairs Councillor convened a virtual sitting of International Forum. Students who could not attend the forum were able to read through a set of frequently asked questions prepared by the SRC Media Office.</p> <p>The SRC Media Councillor relaunched the SRC Facebook page. The goal is to allow for seamless communication from the SRC on Facebook as is possible through the other social media pages of the institution. The page will work in tandem with existing Facebook group</p>
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		<p>which is designed for direct interaction between the SRC and the student body.</p> <p>Through the page the SRC will be able to communicate as a single unit. The SRC will also have access to more features such as conducting live sessions which have become increasingly important for engagement during the pandemic.</p> <p>The SRC videography team, through the office of the SRC Media Councillor shot and edited videos of the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Student Affairs delivering speeches for the 2021 SRC inauguration ceremony. The SRC President's speech was uploaded on the SRC YouTube channel and the rest of the content from the inauguration will follow.</p> <p>The SRC Projects Office in collaboration with</p>
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		<p>Nkoli-Fassie society hosted a week of virtual events to celebrate the 30 year anniversary of the first ever Gay Pride celebrations ever held in South Africa.</p> <p>The SRC Media Councillor successfully planned and executed a virtual Student Media Colloquium. The colloquium was a platform for Student Media organisations as well as university stakeholders and community organisations to come together and pave a way forward with uplifting student media at Rhodes University. The editors of Activate, The Oppidan Press, and the station manager of Rhodes Music Radio were invited to speak on behalf of student media. Representatives from the Communications and Advancement Division, The Circle of Unity, the School of Journalism and the editor of Grocott's Mail were also invited to</p>
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		<p>be panellists. The sessions were pre-recorded and will be made available on YouTube after editing has been completed. A workshop on compiling a media portfolio was hosted by a PhD student from the Journalism department for the benefit of Student Media members and members of the SRC Media Team. Members of the media team were also provided with helpful resources. The workshop and the resources will allow them to be ready for world of work in the media industry.</p> <p>The SRC continued with the broadcasting of the SRC Lalelani show on Rhodes Music Radio. The SRC Media Councillor launched the process of collecting podcasts of the radio show from RMR. The podcasts feature interviews with members of the SRC as well as members of the student body. The podcasts will be shared with the student body</p>
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		<p>and will act as a way to inspire them and keep them motivated during the exam period.</p> <p>The SRC Media Councillor launched the “Ask The SRC” initiative through which members of the student body were invited to ask the SRC any question they would like answered. Frequently asked questions would also be answered live-on-air on the SRC radio show.</p> <p>To ensure that only relevant information was being circulated and that a healthier debating environment was created, the SRC Media Councillor created a set of rules for members to abide by when joining the Rhodes SRC Facebook group.</p> <p>The SRC Media Councillor is also initiating the process of getting an SRC WhatsApp channel and cell phone. This will be handed over</p>
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		to the incoming councillor if not finalised by the end of the year.
2.6 Improve the level of student funding to academically qualifying students.	Percentage increase in available student bursaries/funding.	<p>The SRC Student Benefits and Sponsorship Councillor (SBS) has assisted students that have suddenly had their applications rejected by liaising with the Financial Aid office on ways forward. Further, the SBS councillor has liaised with the Financial Aid office to assist students that have had funding problems - particularly those that have not received their funding.</p> <p>On the 11th of September 2020, the SRC President attended a workshop with other stakeholders (NSFAS Executive, SAUS leadership, and other SRC Presidents to discuss and address NSFAS related issues that fellow students are faced with in our campuses.</p> <p>On the 21st of October, SAUS hosted a webinar on</p>

		<p>‘Student funding opportunities for 2021 academic year’, The panellists were DR Randall Carolissen (NSFAS administrator), Mr Maliviwe Lumka (DHET Chief Director for SETAs) and Dr Molapo Qhobela (NRF CEO). We advertised and encouraged students to attend this event to ask any questions that they might have regarding funding.</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
<p>3.1 Maintain the reputation of Rhodes University as a research-intensive University by production of knowledge of high impact.</p>	<p>Total Research output units (Weighted).</p>	<p>There was a significant issue to deal with in the Information Systems department with plagiarism issue with a group of students who felt that punishments they received from the department had been too harsh. There was communication between all parties, and everyone was</p>

		<p>made aware of their standing within the situation and that their punishment had not in fact been too harsh in the circumstances. The Academic Councillor helped with appeals to the disciplinary hearings, gave commentary and general guidance.</p> <p>Post-graduate students have undoubtedly been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The SRC has been in contact with the Rhodes management to ensure that post-graduate students also receive support during this period. We are still awaiting a way forward and a plan of action in this regard, particularly with the issue of scholarships and research that require field work but could not be fulfilled due to the lockdown regulations.</p>
<p>3.2 Purposeful provision of programmes and initiatives that supplement and enrich students' experience holistically.</p>	<p>Student leadership development Effective and ethical running of student governance.</p>	<p>The Oppidan mentorship programme is a year-long commitment which is spearheaded by the Oppidan committee (academic representative). Given the</p>

		<p>circumstances of Covid-19 the mentors have formed WhatsApp groups with their mentees whereby they offer academic assistance in addition to that of tutors.</p>
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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
<p>4.5 Enhance implementation of environmental sustainability policy and practices.</p>	<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>July 2020 2as Plastic free July. Makhanda battles with pollution, especially sewage waste and plastic waste. The SRC therefore, collaborated with Makana Plastic Action Group to do clean ups at the spring, which is a source of drinking water for a large population of the town including Rhodes university students. This was done to promote Plastic Free July to curb plastic pollution and keep our town clean and safe.</p> <p><u>18 July 2020: RU Growing</u></p>

		<p>In everything that we set ourselves to, they should be an opportunity for us to enhance life and bring about social change. In efforts to have a sustainable project that would endorse the children, the SRC collaborated with Hayley Skerrit to start the #RUGrowing project. The project is to raise awareness on the pressing environmental issues, and how we can tackle them and to promote a culture of planting trees, flowers and vegetables. On Mandela day, we planted 67 seeds of vegetables on plastic bottles at Gladys Williams preschool. Planting in plastic bottles is an eco-friendly alternative of gardening that save up space while combatting plastic pollution.</p> <p><u>Action Against Poverty</u> The SRC collected food parcels with a student, Sweetness Mgobhozi, that we donated</p>
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		<p>to Makana Outreach for their soup kitchen.</p> <p><u>05 September 2020: River Rescue</u></p> <p>River pollution and sewage waste are some of the issues causing environmental decay in Mkahanda, threatening the integrity of the river systems in town and affecting human health. In collaboration with the River Rescue team, SRC went to a river health assessment excursion which happen on Saturdays. The purpose of the River Rescue is to clean the stream in Makhanda by engaging the communities and teaching community members on how to dispose their waste in an environmentally friendly way. We also do mini SAAS treatments to test for the quality of the water.</p> <p><u>7 September 2020: Arbor Week Tree Planting</u></p> <p>The Rhodes SRC donated 10 trees to plant in celebration</p>
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		<p>of Arbor week. The SRC planted trees at an ECD centre, Gladys William Pre-school. We taught the kids of the importance of having trees for our environment.</p> <p><u>16-18 September 2020: Community Engagement /Environmental webinars</u></p> <p>The webinars focused on discussions around environmental sustainability during and after Covid-19. It dwelled more on how individuals can play a role in making our environment healthy. We had invited Nazia Wadee (Miss South Africa 2019), Sikhumbuzo Rhadebe (HPW Planeteers Chairman), and Yenziwe Mbuyisa and Azola Finca who are student leaders here at Rhodes University.</p> <p><u>26 September 2020: Clean-Up</u></p> <p>In collaboration with the Rotary Club and Makana Plastic Action Group, the SRC and the environmental representatives went for</p>
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		<p>another clean up at the Spring. This follow up cleaning is because we have noticed that people still litter in the areas and this means that there should be frequent monitoring of the area and educate Makhanda residents about the unhygienic conditions the littering causes.</p> <p><u>Student Engagements</u></p> <p>-Eco-bricks challenge- this project was set out to be an engaging challenge between the residences and dining halls, however due the lockdown, individuals continued with this at their homes. Residences that had started it are Winchester House under the leadership of Nkosinamandla Machastella and Corry House, with Mcebisi Gumede.</p> <p>-Jan Smuts Hall hosted the SRC in a mini workshop with the Environmental Councillor during lockdown.</p> <p>-Students from the Environmental Sciences</p>
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		<p>talked about composting on campus.</p> <p><u>Work in progress</u>- rainwater harvesting by fixing of gutters and filters and getting more of the big tanks to be fitted into gutters and connected to buildings.</p> <p>Investigation of the feasibility of boreholes as a secondary water sources for Rhodes University.</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 associate professor/professor levels.</p> <p>Demographic diversity index of all staff of Rhodes University</p>	<p>The Dean elections, where SRC has representation, were conducted in the second semester, however the selection process was rejected by Senate as they did not reflect both gender and demographic diversity in the elections outcome. A submission towards the transformation of the Deanery at Rhodes</p>

		University was made to Council.
5.5 Drive transformation by identification of socially unjust systematic patterns and recommend/implement remediation through the transformation plan.	<p>Institutional transformation plan adopted, and annual reports produced. (0=NO, 1= YES).</p> <p>Number of events/projects targeted at promoting transformation.</p>	<p>On the. 14th of August, the SRC President participated as a panellist in a webinar that was focusing on Centering Transformation in the Moment of Crisis. Organised by the Rhodes Equity and Institutional Culture Division.</p> <p><u>Breast cancer awareness</u> A social media campaign on breast cancer awareness with self-testing guidelines was launched and a date was set for students to wear pink to show their support.</p> <p><u>Suicide prevention</u> Suicide awareness and prevention social media campaign was launched in collaboration with counselling centre to inform students about suicide, what to do when a friend is suicidal as well as encouragement to reach out and the resources available to them.</p>

		<p>Mental World Health Day</p> <p>Collaborated with the wellness centre to promote mental health.</p>
5.6 Promote internationalisation at home & cultural diversity.	Number of events/projects promoting an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity across all the University stakeholders	On the 24 th and 25 th of September 2020, the SRC President participated as a facilitator in a webinar that was organised by the office of equity and institutional culture here at Rhodes University. The focus of the webinar was in celebration of Heritage Day with the theme “Connecting the past and the present”.

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

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	REPORT
6.1. Ensure sufficient levels of financial resources for the institution.	Overall student satisfaction.	The SRC engaged senior management to request that NSFAS residence students receive a living allowance of R1 500 while they are home, so that they can cater for

		their essential needs which enables them to fully focus on their academics. This request was granted.
6.6 Provide advisory Oppidan/off-campus accommodation information to our students.	Oppidan/off-campus accommodation advisory list provided (YES =1/NO = 0).	Council approved the accreditation of private accommodation policy which will ensure that the dignity of Oppidan students will be upheld by the specifications outlined in the policy.

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

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE 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.	Two members of the SRC (The president and Secretary-General), were invited a SAUS event which happened on the 10 th of October 2020. The event's focus was on "Placing Digital Transformation as a Way of Repositioning our Universities for Post Covid-19 Economy" and the speaker of the event was the Minister of Communications

		<p>and Digital Technologies, Hon Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams. Unfortunately we could not honour the invite due to transport unavailability issues.</p> <p>On the 30th of September 2020 and 1st October 2020, the members of the SRC attended a two days virtual Nelson Mandela University Annual Youth Convention, which was focusing on “young people as agents of their own and collective development”.</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 2nd of September 2020, the SRC President participated as a panellist in a webinar that was organised by SAUS titled Re-imagining Higher Education post Covid-19.</p> <p>On the 1st of October 2020, members of the SRC and student body of Rhodes were invited by the UCT Department of Student Affairs to attend a virtual panel discussion focusing on “Student voices and actions:</p>

		<p>What does the future world look like?”. This event was advertised to our students and some of our SRC members were able to attend it.</p> <p>On the 13th of October 2020, the SRC President participated as a panellist in webinar that was titled: “Leading authentically - Insights on the impact of a global pandemic on my leadership journey”. This webinar was organised by the Wits University Dean of Student Affairs as part of their series of Leadership Conversations.</p> <p>The leadership of SAUS invited 3 members of the SRC (President, Secretary-General and the Activism & Transformation Councillor to an event that happened on the 30th and 31st of October. The event was focusing on “The student mental health awareness and welfare of students living with disabilities”. The speakers</p>
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		<p>for the event were: Professor Ramneck Ahluwalia (CEO of Higher Health), Hon Buti Manamela (Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology), Deputy Director General of the Department of Health and MUT Vice-Chancellor. Unfortunately, we could not honour this event, as the office of the DSA did not support and approve the invitation.</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.
Students requesting the relaxation of residence rules and requesting to be allowed to have visitors. This was a challenge because SRC members understand that while we are still facing a pandemic and the safety as well of students is of paramount importance, we are also faced with increasing numbers of students with mental health challenges, which these restrictions might be aggravating.	Responding to emails and notified students about the Covid-19 safety rules and regulation that we as students and the university should always be mindful of. Moreover, we reminded students that their safety and health is more important and that we should all do our part to ensure everyone is safe.

Due to covid-19 pandemic, the SRC had to attend to student issues using strictly online platforms. This became challenging when attending to student matters while also adjusting to the online learning ourselves and trying to keep a constant balance between leadership and academics.

There was a lot of learning, adjusting and developing time management skills and never being too shy to ask fellow council members for assistance and advice on how to attend to student matters and keep a steady balance with academics.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The women's month series of webinars was one our highlights for this semester. This event was the first of its kind to ever be hosted by the SRC and we wish for it to be continued by other SRCs to come. The aim of these series of webinars was to enlighten and empower women in all the fields, we are speaking leadership, entrepreneurship, sports arts & culture, wellness amongst other things. In an attempt to achieve this, we have invited a diversified panel of prominent women at Rhodes University, who have been excelling in different fields to share their knowledge with us and their fellow students.

GRATITUDE

A special thank you to the following:

- The Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Development, and the Deputy Chancellor: Academic & Student Affairs 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.
- The Registrar's Division and the Financial Aid Office staff for the swift assistance provided to date.
- The Division of Student Affairs, the IT & S Division, and the Oppidan Committee for the good working relations and all the assistance provided to date and for the great working relationship with the SRC.

