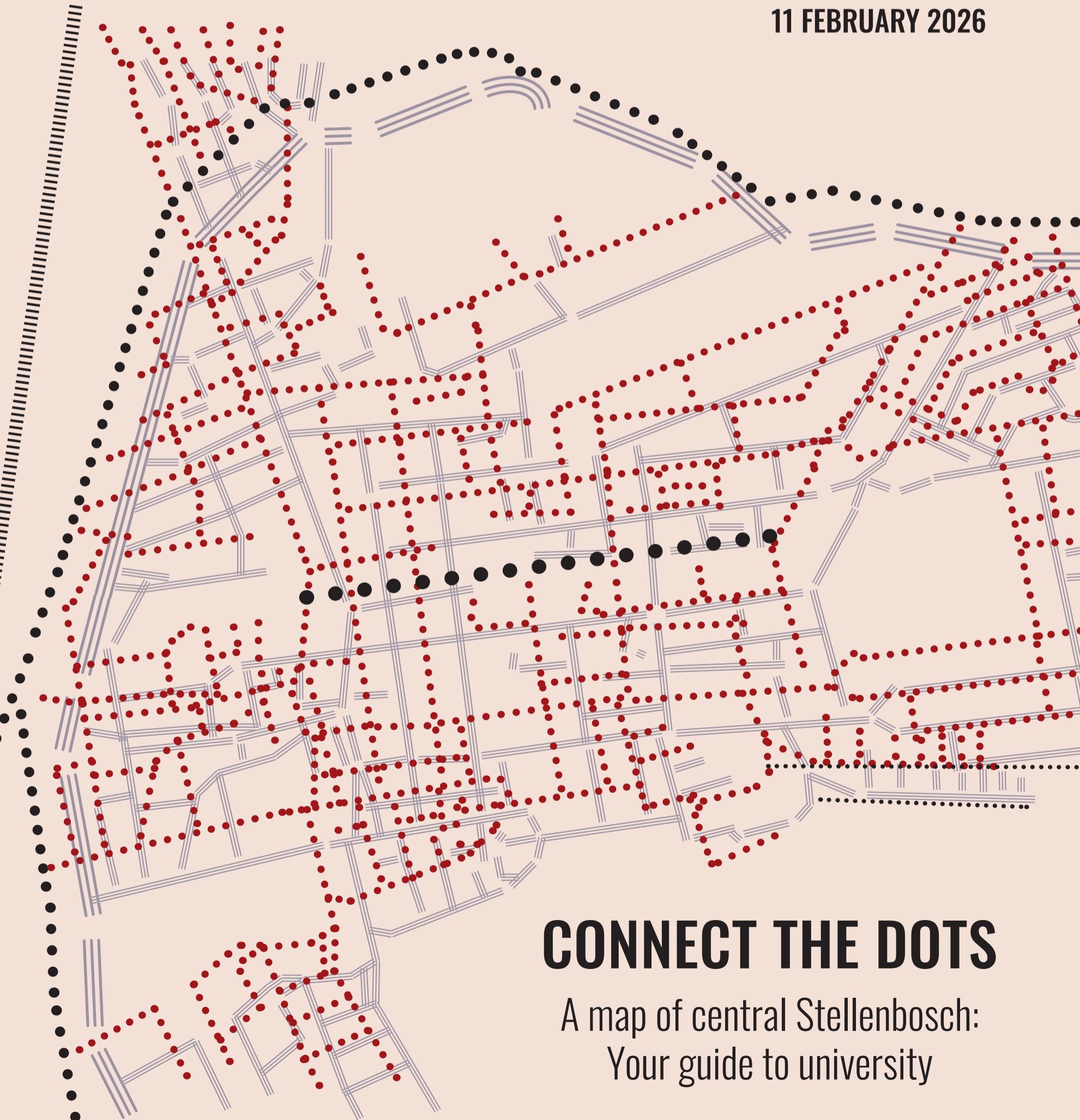


DIE MATIE

Iphephandaba elisemthethweni labafundi beYunivesithi yaseStellenbosch
Amptelike studentekoerant van die Universiteit Stellenbosch | Official student newspaper of Stellenbosch University
Gestig in 1941 | Established in 1941 | Lisekwe ngowe-1941 | 85ste jaargang

2026 WELCOMING EDITION

11 FEBRUARY 2026



CONNECT THE DOTS

A map of central Stellenbosch:
Your guide to university

NEWS

NSFAS: National Student Flaking Aid Scheme

Nationally, students are experiencing problems with student debt. SU students also face uncertainty regarding registration blocks and allowance disbursements. *Die Matie* reports that many of these problems seem to be a result of inconsistent NSFAS payments.

TENISHA TAYLOR, ZANDRI VAN GREUNEN & LEAH FALCON

R286,2 million – this is how much the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) still owes Stellenbosch University (SU) for 2025 student fees.

Prof Nicola Smit, SU's acting Chief Operating Officer (COO), said to *Die Matie* on Saturday, 7 February, that "SU has received two payments from NSFAS related to the outstanding 2025 balance. Unfortunately, the outstanding balance remains significant." Although SU received R75,5 million from NSFAS during December 2025, NSFAS still owes SU over R286 million for 2025, Smit said.

By the time of print, SU has also not yet received a response from NSFAS regarding the university's application to reclassify Stellenbosch as a metro area.

"Accommodation allowances are disbursed in line with NSFAS location classifications, with Tygerberg and Bellville classified metro, while the Stellenbosch campus classification remains non-metro, pending NSFAS confirmation."

Smit also confirmed that, by the time of print, SU still awaits official correspondence from NSFAS confirming the 2026 allowances.

In response to *Die Matie's* question whether the university has contacted NSFAS regarding outstanding payments and 2026 allowance caps, Smit said, "The SU's COO and the Chief Director Finance have contacted NSFAS on various occasions." However, no answers were received as of yet.

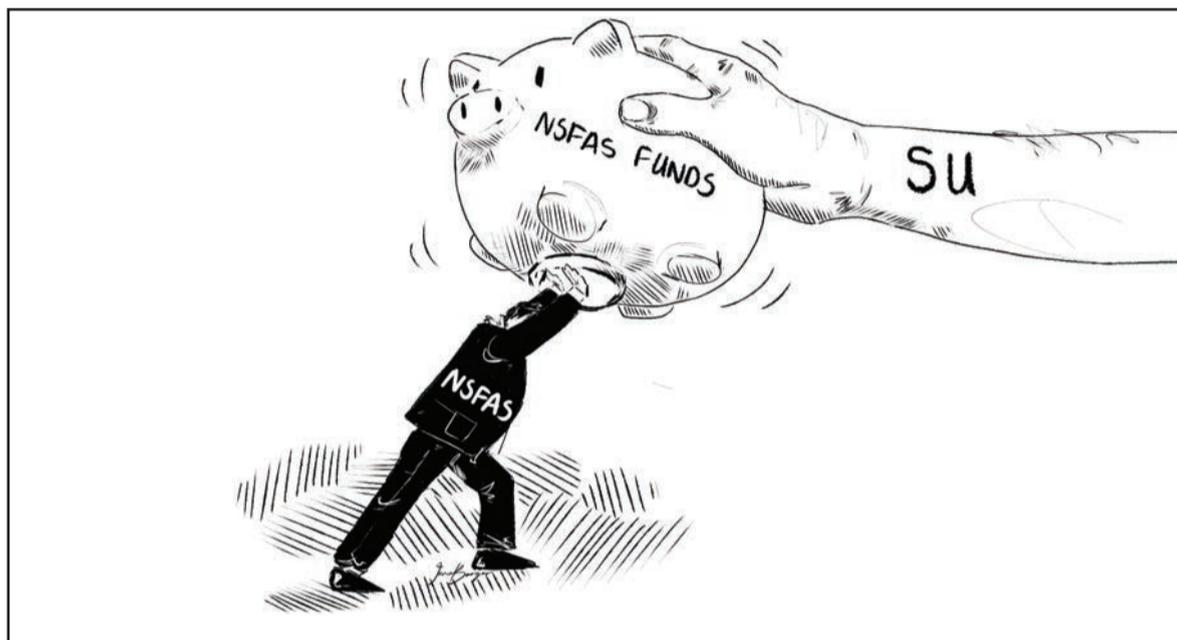
First payments for 2026

Smit confirmed to *Die Matie* that the university has "received the first payment from NSFAS for the 2026 academic year on 3 February."

SU's Centre for Undergraduate Bursaries and Loans (CUBL) is currently processing upfront NSFAS allowance payments for February for students who appear on the official NSFAS funded list, have a funding status of "Funded" or "Provisionally Funded", and completed required NSFAS compliance actions.

Smit said, "As the final 2026 NSFAS guidelines are still pending, these upfront payments will be based on the 2025 NSFAS capped amounts and cover one month's allowance for applicable categories.

"These upfront allowances form part of the annual NSFAS allowance package and are not additional funds. Changes to a student's NSFAS funding status may [possibly] affect eligibility."



WHERE IS THE MONEY? Students are eagerly awaiting communication and payments from NSFAS. Cartoon: Jana Burger

SU TOP-UP FUNDING FOR NSFAS-FUNDED STUDENTS

In 2025, NSFAS-funded students received top-up funding from SU across the following categories:

- Accommodation top-ups: 1 846 recipients
- Qualification code exception

assistance: 75 recipients

- Tuition shortfall for the 2024 academic year (paid in 2025): 2 481 recipients
- Meal quota top-ups: 1 286 recipients

These figures reflect the number of payments made per funding category. Individual students may have received support under more than one category.

Source: Stellenbosch University

'ENGAGE WITH US'

Natalie Nortje, Vice-Chair of the Prim Committee, said:

"The SRC is passionately committed to the welfare and service of students. Beyond our mandate, we lead with compassion, in an effort to understand the individual need of students and advocate for their needs. I would like to encourage students to engage with the SRC, and to be aware of the opportunities that are available to them."

Financial blocks and registration

As stipulated in Part 3 of the 2026 SU Yearbook (Student Fees), all amounts that are in arrears on the student fees account for a specific year have to be paid before the student will be allowed to register for a subsequent year of study.

However, by the time of print "a total of 6 158 financial blocks has been lifted to enable SU students to register. Of these 2 581 are NSFAS students," Smit said to *Die Matie*.

Smit explained, "In addition to the case-by-case assessment and risk categorisation (low, medium, or high risk), we have applied an additional criterion, namely whet-

her a student is funded by NSFAS or not. Students were checked against the current 2026 NSFAS provisionally funded list. Where a student did not appear on the list, an internal assessment was conducted to determine their potential eligibility for NSFAS funding for the 2026 academic year. This assessment is based on a criterion aligned with NSFAS requirements and was applied as an interim measure while awaiting final NSFAS funding outcomes for these students for 2026.

"In parallel, consideration was given to the availability of other confirmed funding sources, including external funding and/or sponsorships, with confirmation that the outstanding balance on the student account would be covered in full, in determining whether a financial block could be lifted.

"SU also lifted financial blocks for students who made a payment towards their outstanding balance and provided proof of payment, as well as for students affected by NSFAS course or qualification code discrepancies," Smit said.

Registration data for NSFAS

Smit explained to *Die Matie* that data provided to NSFAS is not limited to student registration in-

formation alone. SU provides a comprehensive dataset, which includes a student's registration status, academic results, tuition fee information, accommodation details, and other approved financial arrangements relevant to the student's funding.

"NSFAS sets formal window periods for institutions to upload registered student data. For the 2026 academic year, this period runs from 3 January to 31 March. During this time, the university uploads the information of registered students in line with NSFAS requirements to ensure that eligible students' funding can be secured and released.

"Where adjustments are required after the formal deadline (due to late registrations or changes in students' circumstances), the university engages directly with NSFAS to request extensions to manage these updates. These engagements continue throughout the academic year, in line with NSFAS processes," Smit said.

Processes and systems

NSFAS funding is not paid to the university as a once-off amount. Instead, NSFAS releases funding to institutions in tranches, based on the official NSFAS funded list and

'WE ARE WORKING FOR STUDENTS'

Simiso Langa, the interim SRC Chair, said to *Die Matie*:

"The SRC can find out what is happening on the ground. The university has a matrix for the registration numbers, which is very helpful to contextualise what we are working with. But, regarding dignity for our students, we also try to make sure that management isn't just looking at numbers, but [also] consider that they are working with students. Students are people and everyone deserves to have human dignity.

"Our primary role is to put pressure on upper management to consider those things and to constantly remind them that we are working for the students.

"I try to find solutions to help as many students as possible. We have been working behind the scenes for the past few weeks to help students. But we ask for some time. We are doing our best to reach as many students as possible."

the approved payment amounts for the relevant academic year.

According to Smit, NSFAS is responsible for confirming student funding on the NSFAS system, providing the university with the official NSFAS funded list for each academic year, and setting allowance categories and capped amounts for each academic year.

On the other hand, CUBL is responsible for processing and disbursing student allowances once funding is confirmed, calculating allowances based on students' living arrangements recorded on SUNStudent.

Students must check that their personal details, banking details, and accommodation information on SUNStudent are accurate and remain unchanged throughout the year. Incorrect or incomplete information may result in delays in allowance payments.

Assistance from NSFAS

Smit said NSFAS has appointed Ms Michaela Brink from their head office to liaise with SU students on NSFAS-related matters. "She is based at the Coetzburg Centre and started on 5 February 2026."

By the time of print, NSFAS had not yet responded to any queries from *Die Matie*.

Ben Anderson reinstated into SRC

EMMA GILES

More than four months after the election of the Student Representative Council (SRC), Ben Anderson was officially reinstated as a SRC member for the 2025/2026 term, following a ruling by the Student Court. The third respondent in the case, Lihle Baleka, appealed the decision of the Student Court to overturn Anderson's disqualification on 28 November. The appeal court dismissed the appeal and reinstated Anderson on 13 January.

Anderson received 53,26% of the votes in the 2025 SRC election which took place from 22 to 29 August. The Student Electoral Council (SEC) disqualified Anderson on 5 September 2025 from the 2025/2026 SRC. On 21 November, the Student Court unanimously overruled the SEC's decision to disqualify Anderson. The third respondent appealed this decision, which was dismissed by the appeal court on 13 January, reinstating Anderson into the SRC.

According to Chapter 7 of the Student Constitution, the appeal court "consists of two lecturers of the Law Faculty, who are appointed by the Dean of the Law Faculty".



ROADSHOW Anderson speaks in his SRC role. Photo: Supplied by Ben Anderson

Anderson said he is planning to "publish a regular newsletter about [his] activities on the SRC". His first newsletter was published as a Substack article on 22 January, which provided a summary of the events leading to his disqualification and reinstatement in the SRC. He also provided some reflection on his experience of this election process. Anderson wrote: "Naming names and satisfying personal vendettas will not solve our university's problems [...]"

In his newsletter, Anderson also said that he would be attending the SRC camp from 23 to 25 January in Paarl. He added that, on

22 January, he "was provided with an estimation of the total cost of catering, transport and accommodation at roughly R45 000 for the weekend". He said he "will push for full budget transparency on the individual budget items of the camp once the camp has concluded".

Way forward for the interim SRC

Two members of the interim 2025/2026 SRC, Johan Weideman (transformation and multilingualism portfolio) and Pulane Mtshali, (branding and visibility portfolio), confirmed to *Die Matie* on 28 January that the SRC is still operating in an interim capacity. This in-

cludes Anderson.

Weideman and Mtshali stated that the SRC's "focus for 2026 is to lead by example and build a student governance culture that students can trust and be proud of". They also aim to create "an SRC culture that is professional, accountable and respected".

Anderson said to *Die Matie* on 1 February that the interim SRC are awaiting the appointment of a new SEC before they can begin internal caucuses and finalise their inauguration date.

The SEC selection was scheduled to take place before the end of the welcoming period, 8 February. *Die Matie* was told on 8 February that this has not occurred yet. According to Chapter 14 of the Student Constitution, the 2025 SEC's term ended "no later than the end of the fourth term".

This new SEC will facilitate the election of the new SRC Chairperson and Executive Committee by the SRC members, marking an official 2025/2026 SRC.

Simiso Langa, interim SRC Chairperson and Chair of the Prim Committee in 2024/2025, confirmed to *Die Matie* that her term

will end once the new chairperson is elected. Langa was not elected in the 2025 SRC election. It was announced on 19 September that she was appointed as a temporary chairperson by Prof. Deresh Ramjugernath, Rector and Vice Chancellor of SU.

According to Chapter 3 of the Student Constitution, the "Executive Committee of the SRC must appoint Electoral Commissioners [...]". According to their role guidelines in Chapter 14, these Commissioners are then able to appoint Assistants who, "in cooperation with and under the supervision of the Electoral Commissioners, must ensure that all student leadership elections run smoothly".

On 24 November, Anderson said to *Die Matie* that at least some of the 2025 SEC members would have been appointed by the Executive Committee of the 2024/2025 SRC, which "does raise questions about independence," he added.

The SEC did not provide comment to *Die Matie* on questions regarding their role, structure and conduct in the 2025 SRC election.

• Read the full article on our website, diematie.com

Dosent ontvang Van Ewijk-prestasiëprys

ZANDRI VAN GREUNEN

Dr. Alfred Schaffer, 'n bekroonde digter en 'n senior dosent verbonde aan die Departement Afrikaans en Nederlands aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US), is in Desember 2025 as die wenner van die Van Ewijk-stigting se prestasiëprys aangewys.

Dié toekening, ter waarde van R100 000, erken individue wat presteer het ten opsigte van die stigting se doelstellings, naamlik die bevordering van kulturele betrekkinge tussen Suid-Afrika en Nederland.

Volgens Schaffer is sulke betrekkinge in 'n tyd van internasionale spanning baie belangrik. Dialoog vorm die grondslag van verstandhouding en wedersydse respek. "As die wêreld 'n dorp is, moet jy jou bure probeer leer ken," het hy gesê.

Albei lande kan uit 'n gedeelde geskiedenis leer. Schaffer het gesê Nederland kan veral baie oor Suid-Afrika leer, onder meer oor versoening, hoe om ekologiese uitdagings te benader, en wat diversiteit en multikulturaliteit beteken. Hy het gesê daar bestaan steeds groot onkunde in Nederland oor dié land se koloniale rol in Suid-Afrika.

Hoewel hy al jare lank in Suid-Afrika woon en werk, het Schaffer gesê dat om tuis te wees nie vir hom aan een plek gebonde is nie. Hy het verduidelik dat taal, aksent, humor en verskillende geskiedenis soms 'n



WENNER Dr. Alfred Schaffer. Foto: Zandri van Greunen

afstand tussen hom en Suid-Afrikaners skep, maar dat hy ook nie volkome tuis in Nederland voel nie. "Miskien kan 'n mens in meer as een land leef en steeds 'n verskil maak," het hy gesê.

Die prys erken ook Schaffer se werk waardeur hy met die breër Nederlandssprekende wêreld, soos die Karibiese Eilande en Suriname, in gesprek tree.

"Daar is 'n verskil tussen om iets vir die gemeenskap doen en om dit sáám met die gemeenskap doen. Dit is dus belangrik om praktiese geleenthede te reël waar 'n klomp stemme gehoor kan word," het hy gesê.

Schaffer het bygevoeg letterkunde speel 'n belangrike rol om mense nader aan mekaar te bring. Volgens hom leer lesers deur middel van literêre tekste hoe om hulself in ander mense se skoene te plaas, en op sy beurt bevorder dít empatie.

• Lees meer op diematie.com

SU debaters take Bulgaria

MISHA FRAY

Two students represented Maties at the World Universities Debating Championships (WUDC) in Sofia, Bulgaria. The competition took place from 27 December 2025 to 4 January 2026. The event brought together more than 1 000 participants from universities globally to debate some of the world's most pressing political, economic and social issues.

Evert Reynolds, a third-year LLB student, and Ross Froise, a third-year BCom (Economic Sciences) student, represented SU in Bulgaria as part of the University of Stellenbosch Debating Union (USDU).

The WUDC selection process was based on historical tournament performance with SU having a long-standing debating legacy; this being that the institution originally introduced formal debating to the Southern African circuit. Participation in the championships was made possible through a culture bursary provided by the university to the students after they showed commitment to the debating space, along with personal funding.

The tournament consisted of nine rounds over a three-day period. The SU team finished three rounds first place and six rounds fourth place. Overall, the SU team narrowly missed qualification for the quarterfinals by just four points.

Both debaters described the championships as exceptionally



DEBATERS Evert Reynolds (left) and Ross Froise (right) at World Universities Debating Championships in Bulgaria. Photo: Supplied by Evert Reynolds

demanding. "The World Championships expected the highest level of commitment every second of the tournament," Reynolds said. "It could often feel difficult to keep a level head when you are expected to remember things like the entire political climate of Saudi Arabia after six hours of debating with little to no sleep," he said.

For Froise, WUDC marked his first in-person international competition, having previously debated only in online tournaments hosted by universities such as Princeton and Columbia.

"Internationally, people tend to value different things," he said. "We had to adjust our performances and tailor our speeches to the international judges."

Froise also emphasised the importance of extensive preparation. This included consistent practice, studying current affairs

and history. He also stated that both debaters would attend multiple tournaments with the sole purpose of improving their debating skills before participating in the World Championships.

Beyond competition, the experience fostered a strong sense of global community.

"WUDC was also [an] incredible opportunity to meet new and interesting people, network and make a name for Maties on an international platform," Froise stated. Reynolds described debating as "more essential than ever", noting its role in promoting critical thinking and constructive engagement with divisive issues.

Froise has already confirmed that he plans to attend the 2027 WUDC in Canada. Both students expressed pride at the chance to represent the university on an international stage.

EDITORIAL

Editor's letter: Connecting the dots



speech at Stanford University where he introduced the concept of connecting the dots as a metaphor for life. What may seem like a small passion project or an unfortunate event now, could lead to something entirely unexpected.

For almost 85 years, *Die Matie* has been a thread sewn through Stellenbosch's history. Year after year, journalists, editors and photographers dedicate their time to storytelling, truth, conversation and representation. We strive to honour this legacy and use our platform to connect the dots across age groups, faculties, beliefs and perspectives when telling the stories of Stellenbosch. We aim to recognise patterns in our history and understand the context of those we speak to and not just our own.

Life is a series of turning points – forks in the road, potholes, downhills and blind corners. It is important to acknowledge your past, your heritage and the people who helped you get to where you are now. It is just as important to think ahead about your future aspirations, career and the support network you will build. Finally, it is essential to consider how this all fits together.

You might find yourself searching for that next dot or stuck, unable to decide where to go next. But hopefully, one day, you will look back and see your space in this world has taken its place... and every dot, right or wrong, is part of the final shape that is you.

This newspaper is your guide to connecting the dots.

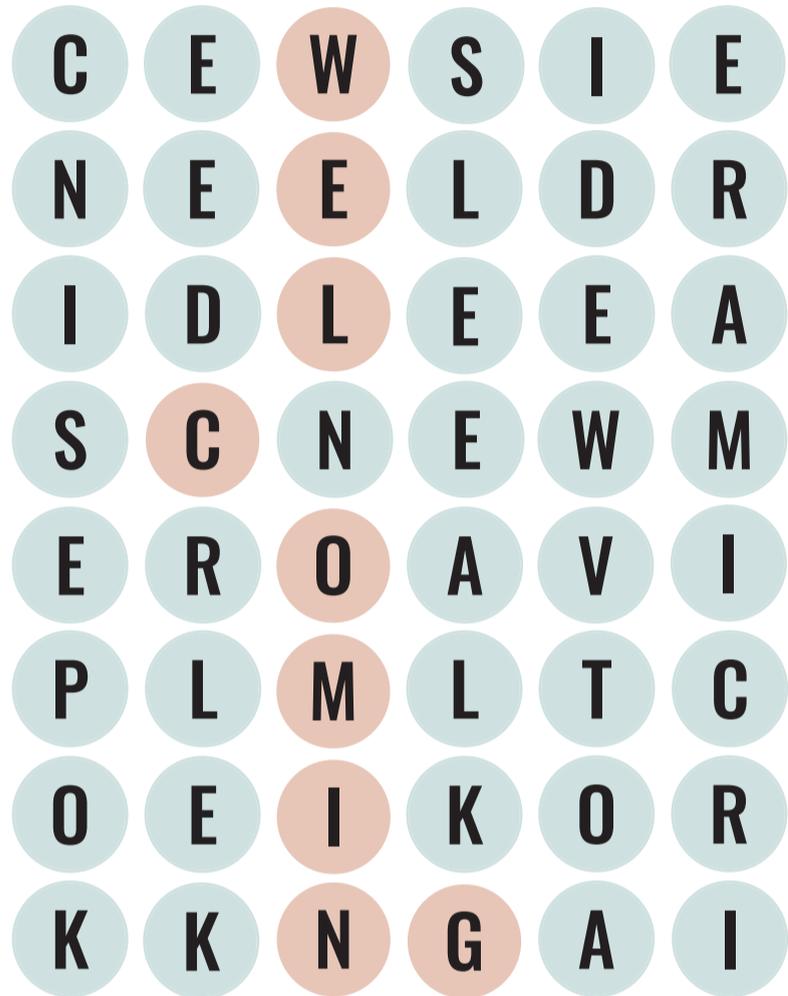
Emma Giles
Editor-in-Chief
2025/2026

TODAY'S THEME: MATIES

This is *Die Matie's* take on The New York Times' game *strands*. Connect the letters to find your favourite Welcoming words.

These include iconic places, mascots and events. 'Welcoming' has been provided as you have already completed it. There are five words that have not yet been found. Every letter is used once. Good luck finding them.

Game: Created by Lené Vorster



When playing the game of Connect the Dots you simply follow consecutive numbers until a shape appears. In real life, there are no numbers to guide your next step. You pick the path yourself, weaving your way through decisions, sometimes taking blind leaps of faith.

Well, here you are at Stellenbosch University (SU). This is the next dot in your story. In 2005, Steve Jobs gave a commencement

Archives from 'Die Matie': 85 years

ANICA HATTINGH

For the last 85 years, *Die Matie* has played a central role in chronicling the history of Stellenbosch University (SU). While individual articles change, these pillars have endured across decades, transcending era, politics and student cohort.

Student life and campus culture

The most enduring pillar of *Die Matie* remains the insight it provides into the life of a Matie. From first-years' experiences to residence traditions and rivalries, and even advice on "how to balance the life of a university student", these topics have been prevalent throughout the newspaper's history.

A notable piece of student-life history appeared in an opinion piece on 3 March 1950, explaining Juniordag (Junior Day). At a time when a strong hierarchical system among students prevailed, Juniordag was a day dedicated to junior students. First- and second-years enjoyed events such as a junior picnic and a parade through Coetzenburg. Yet the duality of the day was clear: While some



ARCHIVES A collection of past editions of 'Die Matie'. Photo: Anica Hattingh

students embraced the festivities, others questioned them. Monica (surname was not included), the article's author, observed that Juniordag, which celebrated the arrival of spring, only made the looming exams feel closer: "Spring

brings only one thing to students, and that is exams. Is that really something one should celebrate?"

This snapshot, one of many traditions recorded at SU, illustrates how *Die Matie* has long served as both a chronicle of campus culture

and a platform for student reflection. It captures not only what students celebrated but also how they questioned the traditions shaping their university experience.

News that never fades

Some news stories at SU have a way of repeating themselves. From the governance and transparency of SU's councils to housing or financial crises and student-led activism, the university has repeatedly faced similar challenges.

In 2001, journalist Yvonne Beyers wrote an in-depth article about rising tuition and residence fees. Beyers reported that tuition had increased by 10% from 2000 to 2001 – a decision, explained by then SU spokesperson Shireen Adams, prompted by "decreasing income from alternative sources". The university sought to maintain a certain standard and quality of teaching, which necessitated the tuition increase.

Residence fees rose by 11,9% alongside tuition. Recognising the potential impact on accessibility,

SU pledged to do "everything in its power to ensure the continued availability of bursaries".

The 2001 article demonstrates that SU students have long faced financial challenges – a reality that continues today. The university's commitment to bursaries remains as relevant now as it was then, highlighting the enduring issues of student life that *Die Matie* captures so faithfully.

These examples of *Die Matie's* content only scratch the surface. The newspaper has consistently reported not only on the hardships of student life, but also on lighter, more carefree topics. From enjoying the cultural offerings of Stellenbosch to sporting events such as Varsity Cup and the annual Derby clashes, *Die Matie* continues to be the voice of the students, reflecting their celebrations and concerns across generations.

Students can visit the university's website or library to read more about *Die Matie's* archives and start their own deep dive into *Die Matie's* influential history.

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STUDENT LIFE

Beginner's guide to being a Matie

ABIGAIL POWELL

Beginning university is a tumultuous experience and a huge step in life. Beginning it in a strange town, away from family and friends, makes it even more intimidating. But you are not alone. Here is a guide with everything you need to know when it comes to Stellenbosch University (SU).

SU welcomes students from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures, but there is one language all Stellenbosch students speak: The Maties lingo. (By the way, "Maties" refers to all SU students.)

The place(s) to be:

- The library, also known as the Bib, is where many late-night study sessions will take place until you are eventually chased out to the tune of "Closing Time" by Semisonic.
- The Rooiplein is easily identifiable by the bright red bricks that connect the Neelsie Student Centre and the library.
- The Neelsie is often referred to as a food court, but one could also call it a void for money, where you will spend far too much of your allowance on cheap yet delicious doughnuts. Those nine rands spent on doughnuts add up. (Do you know where the Neelsie got its name? The student centre celebrated its 50th birthday in 2025, and was named after the acclaimed Afrikaans writer CJ Langenhoven. His nickname was Neelsie. Langenhoven wrote "Die Stem", which is part of the South African national anthem.)
- The Jan Mouton Building, commonly referred to as the JM, is at the back of the Neelsie and is a great study spot, especially since it stays open past midnight.
- Admin A – the one building you hope you never need, but absolutely must know. It's where you go to change modules, sort out funding or try to get into res. Basically, anything admin-related can be handled at the Administration A Building. However, the building is currently closed due to renovations. All services moved to the Inorganic Chemistry Building in Bosman Street in the meantime. Please take note: During the registration period – until 20 February 2026 – all registration-related services for students – the Centre for Academic Administration, the Accommodation Office, Client Service Centre, Student Finance (Centre for Undergraduate Bursaries and Loans) and student cards – will be clustered at the Coetzburg Centre. When in doubt, ask an older student or staff member where to go.



IT'S GOING TO BE A-OK Pokkel outside the Administration A Building in Ryneveld Street, Stellenbosch, getting a student card. Cartoon: Jana Burger

Essential information

- Every Matie gets a student card. (Please see the emergency numbers at the back of the card.) Your student card gives you access to the Bib, computer centres, all the academic buildings and lecture halls. You can even load money onto it to buy food (see COB below), print, and use the laundry facilities at residences, making it the only thing you really need when walking around campus. Until 20 February, student cards are available at the Coetzburg Centre. Thereafter, you may visit the Student IT Hub in the Inorganic Chemistry Building. If you lose it (which is a rite of passage and happens to most of us at least once), head back to the Student IT Hub and they will print and activate a new one for you to use.
- The Call Order Bar (COB) is a system where you can load money onto your student card to use in the Neelsie or at various deli's around campus to buy food or take-aways.

Traditionally speaking:

- The Dream Walk is an iconic aspect of the institutional welcoming programme, where new first-year students walk along Victoria Street and place their dreams for university life into the trees. It's a magical night filled with hope and a sense of excitement for what's to come.
- Pokkel is the mascot of Maties. He is fun, full of spirit, and quite possibly the best squirrel you will ever meet.



STEPPING ONTO CAMPUS The iconic Rooiplein steps leading to the Stellenbosch University Library. Photo: Anica Hattingh

Services that SU offers:

- Campus Security will quickly become your best friend when you have to walk alone on campus after dark. Their walk-with service, available on WhatsApp at 082 808 2333, will safely escort you home, no matter the hour. Save this number; it's an amazing service to have in your back pocket. Alternatively, there is a night shuttle that leaves every hour from the Neelsie parking area from 18:00 to 06:00. It operates within a radius of 6 km from the Neelsie. Book through the SUNStudent portal.
- The Writing Lab connects students with academic advisors

and writing assistants. If you have any questions on how to tackle assignments or if you need help with academic writing and formulation, this is the place for you. Book an online or in-person session through MySUN.

- Printing on campus is easy thanks to your printing quota. Simply load money onto your student card via SUNStudent, log into a university computer and select an online printer. Scan your card, choose "pull print", and select the documents you would like printed.
- University can be a taxing experience and alongside the highs, there will be lows. The

Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) is committed to supporting students in an academic and personal capacity. A free counselling service is available at 021 808 4707. In case of emergencies on weekends or after hours, you can call 021 808 4994. Students on Tygerberg campus can contact 021 927 7020.

Spend time in the SUN:

- For first-year students, class timetables are assigned and can be accessed on MySUN. From second year onwards, you will need to create your own timetable, also on MySUN. Just select "Undergraduate", then "Studies", and click on "Class Timetable". If you're unsure, the help link is surprisingly useful.
- What is the difference between all these "SUN" platforms? MySUN is a centralised platform where you load COB, book Writing Lab consultations, and access NSFAS information. SUNLearn is where you will find your learning portals like SOCSCLearn, EMSLearn, STEMLearn, and FMHSLearn – this is where your modules live. SUNStudent is used to check your marks and access your academic records.

Starting university can feel overwhelming, but Stellenbosch has a way of becoming home. Between the late nights at the Bib, doughnuts in the Neelsie, and learning where to go when things feel confusing, you will find your rhythm. Just remember, everyone else is figuring it out too.

Surviving Stellenbosch culture shock

ZANDRI VAN GREUNEN

Most new Maties arrive in Stellenbosch ready to experience what “*Dis altyd lente in die oë van die Stellenbosch-studente*” (It’s always spring in the eyes of the Stellenbosch students) is all about. This ideal can seem tone deaf when the realities of back-to-back lectures, res activities, and being away from home start to sink in. For most first years, it takes a while to settle in and for the initial university culture shock to wear off.

Teneil le Roux, a PGDip (Marketing) student from a farm outside Mbombela, said she was surprised by how cliquy campus life can be. She elaborated on this saying, “People tend to group themselves based on shared beliefs and lifestyles. It often feels very left or right, which can leave those in the middle feeling out of place.”

Cliques aren’t necessarily a bad thing. Janco Botes, a BAHons

(Journalism) student from Pretoria, stated that Stellies is a town where anyone can find their crowd.

“There is the frat boy crowd, the Aandklas and Boho’s crowd, the Platō Versus run club, and the Kruiskerk crowd,” he said. Botes expanded on how this can create a “bubble effect” and “make the town seem disconnected from the real world”.

Having come from more culturally conservative environments, Choolwe Mulaisho, a PGDip (Marketing) student from Johannesburg who attended high school in Kwa-Zulu-Natal, offered a different perspective on Stellenbosch’s “bubble”. She said the environment allows students to express themselves freely and make their own choices about how they dress and live.

“You can’t stereotype people here,” Mulaisho said. “Stellies culture is really a mix of where every-



DRINKING CULTURE De Lapa’s Robot drinks special board. Photo: Ella Bosman

one is from, it’s a melting pot of different people and personalities.”

Students from smaller towns

are sometimes taken aback by the drinking culture that comes along with living in Stellenbosch.

“It was a shock at first,” Le Roux said, “coming from an Afrikaans-medium Christian school.”

Ayabonga Hlumkeza, a third-year BAcc student from Mossel Bay, was also stunned by the “big groove life” that exists in Stellenbosch – where he is from, nightlife is mostly reserved for weekends.

Le Roux dealt with culture shock by getting involved on campus. “Joining communities that shared my interests and values reminded me of who I am, and that I wasn’t alone.” She also explained that being exposed to people from different backgrounds challenged her, but helped her grow.

Slowly but surely the culture shock fades. Mulaisho said, “Your experience here is really what you make of it,” while Hlumkeza summed it up simply: “Once you find your people, Stellies starts to feel like home.”

Starting from scratch at your university

ELLA BOSMAN

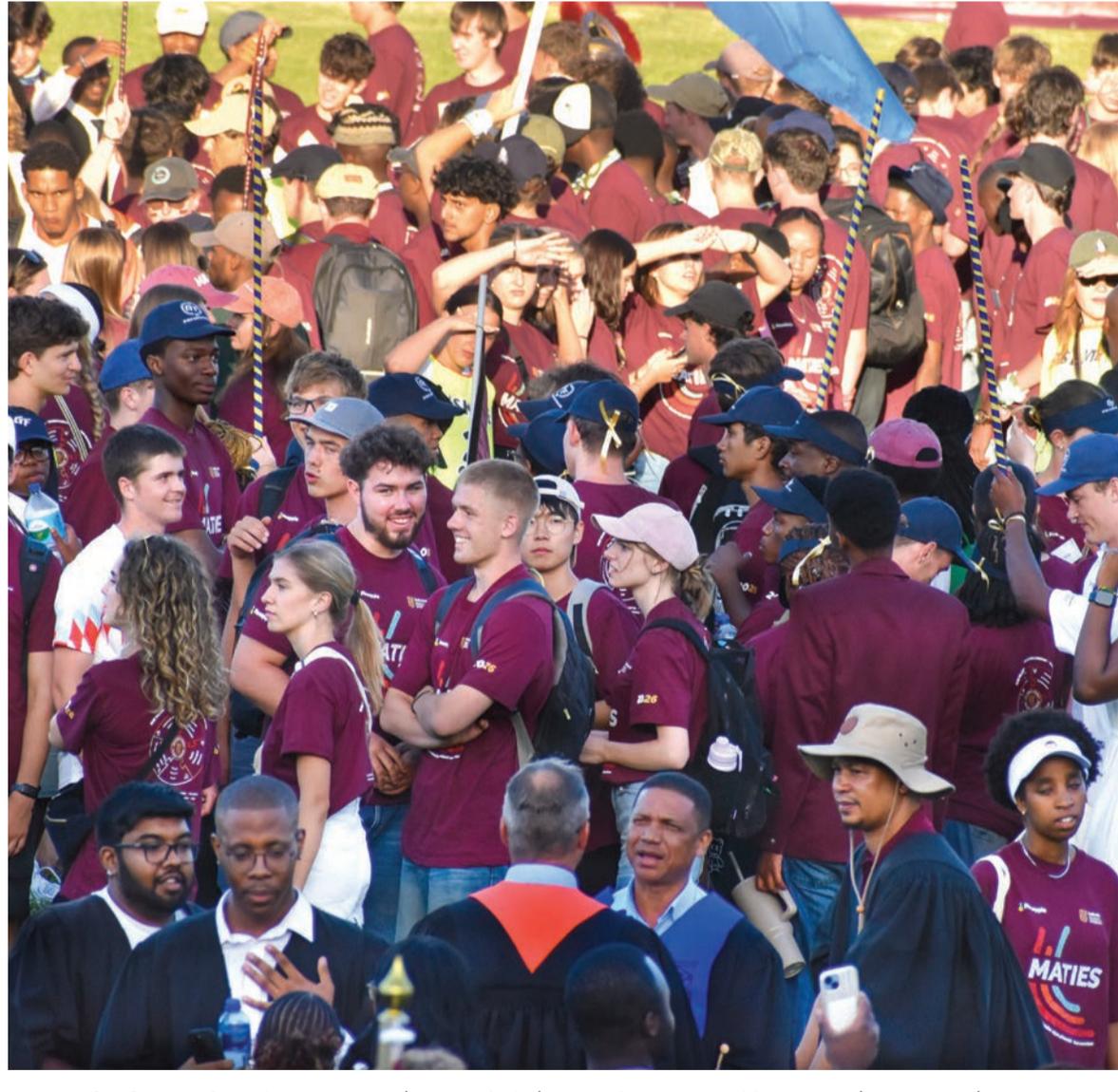
For many, arriving in Stellenbosch for the first time feels a bit like walking into High School Musical. Oak-lined streets buzzing with life, students everywhere, the Neelsie, and of course its infamous night life. While this environment is associated with an idealised “university experience”, some students report feeling out of place despite the setting.

Giuliana Millard, a BA (Humanities) graduate and current postgraduate student at SACAP, described Stellenbosch as “a picturesque little student town with cute cafes and bars everywhere,” while other students interviewed reported feeling at home immediately. However experiences vary greatly, particularly for students navigating university for the first time without family precedent.

The term “first-generation student” refers to any student that is the first in their immediate family to attend university. According to an Instagram post by @soar_stellenboschuniversity (posted in January 2025), being a first-generation student means that “neither of your parents/guardians have attained a degree, diploma, or certificate at a tertiary education institution after Grade 12 (matric)”.

Students who move to Stellenbosch often face additional adjustments, including adapting to a new lifestyle and social environment. Ammara Mahomed, a BSc (Molecular Biology) third-year, described the lifestyle as “extremely different from anything [she] knew”. She noted that the pace and density of student life initially felt overwhelming.

Academic expectations were also highlighted as a key adjustment. As Erin Painting, a fourth-year BSc (Computer Science) student, put it, “Being naturally smart



FINDING YOUR PEOPLE Newcomers at the Rector’s Welcoming Ceremony on 28 January. Photo: Emma Theron

in high school doesn’t get you very far in university. You have to study.” According to a survey conducted by *Die Matie* among senior students, several described the transition from school to university academics as demanding. These students further reported having to develop new study habits.

Beyond academics, students

pointed to other pressures associated with first year, including large lecture halls, residence culture and increased independence. These factors were frequently mentioned by respondents as contributing to a challenging adjustment period.

Administrative processes were another recurring theme. Students cited difficulties navigating plat-

forms such as SUNStudent, MySUN and SUNLearn, particularly during registration, welcoming and assessment periods.

Respondents indicated that support often came from personal networks rather than formal university networks. According to Painting, friends, siblings and older students became lifelines in

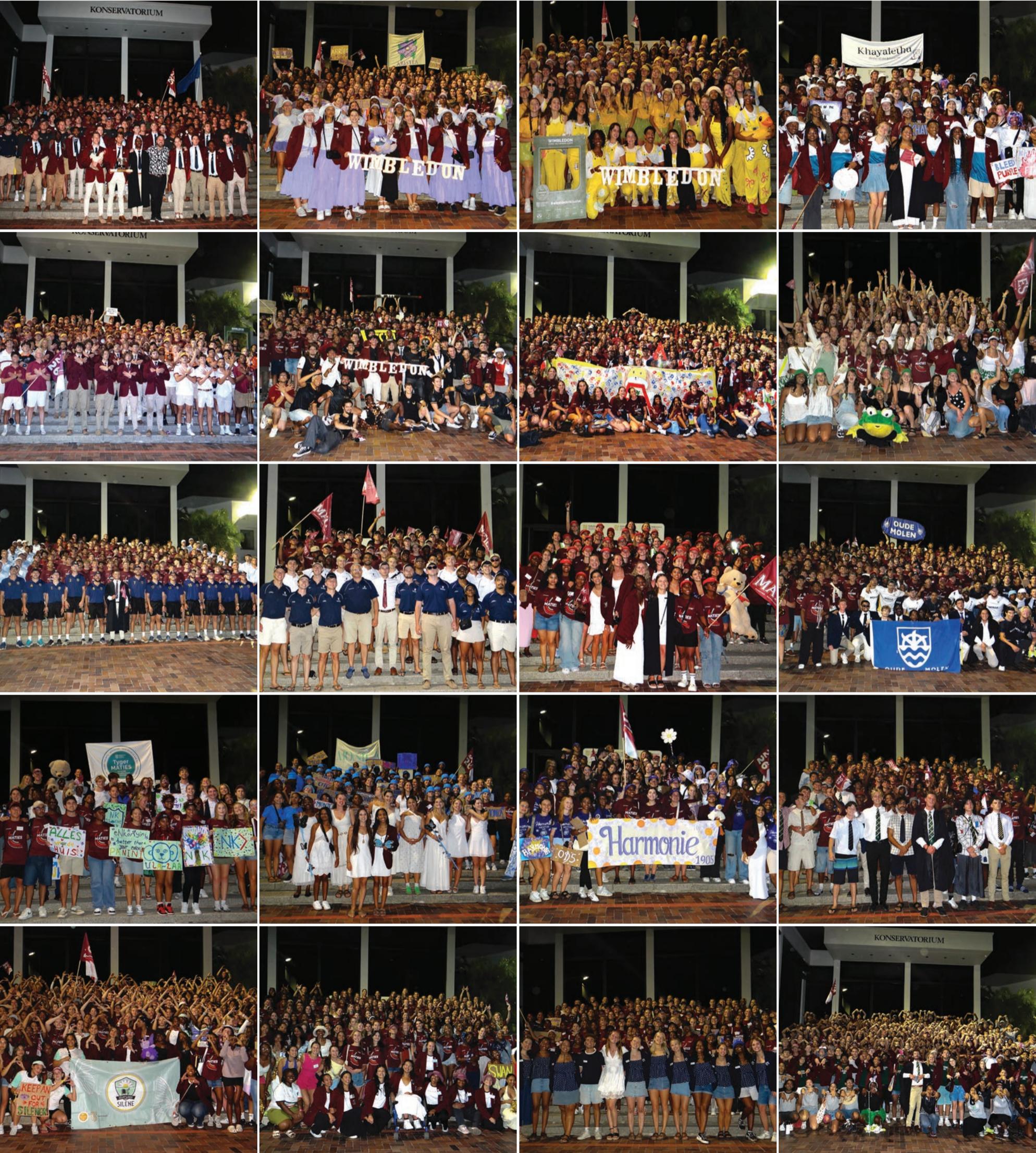
struggles. Mahomed further described feeling like he was “thrown into the deep end.”

Stellenbosch University (SU) prides itself on its meaningful student support systems. For first-generation Maties, the Strengths, Opportunity, Agency, and Resilience (SOAR) programme is a “pre-Welcoming programme for students” that is “designed to boost [their] confidence while helping them familiarise themselves with their new living and learning environment”. This programme’s major aim is “changing first generation student lives and creating leaders”. In an interview with SU, Dr Joy Petersen explained that “the main goal of the programme is to enhance their confidence, help them make early friendships and create a sense of familiarity with their new environment.”

Despite these challenges, several students reflected on how their experiences shaped them over time. Senior students advised first-years to be open to opportunities and campus life. Millard even warned against underestimating the iconic De Lapa fishbowl, noting that some lessons have to be learnt through tough experience.

The most important advice was simple: Do not be too hard on yourself. As Painting put it, “University is a big jump.” Feeling lost and confused, especially in the beginning, is part of the process. Slowly, through mistakes such as walking into the wrong lectures, choosing DCM coffee over a meal, pulling an all-nighter before a test, or enjoying *Klein Saterdag* a bit too much, students ultimately learn to find their own way in the world. In the wise words of Carla Botha, a third-year BSc (Human Life Sciences) student, “None of it was really that deep.”

DREAMWALK 2026



IT STARTS WITH A DREAM(WALK) SU residences and Commuter Student Communities came together in front of the Conservatorium in Victoria Street. Photos: Anica Hattingh, Emma Theron and Jana Burger
 From left to right: Row 1 & 2; Helshoogte, Aristeia, Sonop, Kayaletu, Eendrag, Vesta, Aurora, Lydia
 From left to right: Row 3 & 4; Dagbreek, Majuba, Huis Ten Bosch, Oude Molen, Enkanyini, Monica, Harmonie, Wilgenhof
 From left to right: Row 5; Silene, Venustia, Nerina, Metanoia



IT STARTS WITH A DREAM(WALK) SU residences and Commuter Student Communities came together in front of the Conservatorium in Victoria Street. Photos: Anica Hattingh, Emma Theron and Jana Burger
 From left to right: Row 1 & 2; Heemstede, Pieke, Goldfields, Isa, Simonsberg, Minerva, Huis Visser
 From left to right: Row 3 & 4; Serruria, Capri, Erica, Huis Marais
 From left to right: Row 5; Meerhoff, Nemesia, Helderberg, SLS





THE JOYS OF CAMPUS IN FEBRUARY Cartoon: Jana Burger

Living in Stellenbosch on a (tight) budget

JANA GOUS

Stellenbosch may be known for its oak-lined streets and vibrant student culture, but when it's the end of the month and your bank account is scraping zero, even the town's charm can feel expensive. Still, living on a student budget is far from impossible.

Smart grocery shopping can stretch your budget significantly. Buying in bulk at larger supermarkets is usually cheaper, thus it is best to avoid overpriced convenience stores near residences and student accommodation. Die Boord Super-spar remains a popular choice for specials and discounts, while OK Foods often runs good deals on fresh vegetables. Although Checkers Sixty60 is convenient, shopping in-store allows you to select better-quality produce and catch physical specials that the delivery platforms may miss. The Neelsie Spar must not be underestimated, as they cater especially to students and offer filling lunches.

Eating out in Stellenbosch central doesn't have to break the bank. Apps such as Djol highlight daily restaurant specials around Stellenbosch, while Refreshi connects consumers with surplus food from bakeries, coffee shops and restaurants at discounted prices through "surprise bags". Users simply order via the app and collect their food at a set time. Java Bistro in Church Street is a long-standing staple, with quality food and specials each day of the week.

You don't have to feel guilty



EXPRESSING JOY Xpresso and their amazing R14 array. Photo: Jana Gous

when getting a sweet treat either. Kristen's Kick-Ass Ice Cream offers a half-and-half option that provides good value for money, while De Vrije Burger sells swirl ice cream for just R10. Xpresso Café at Eikestad Mall keeps all items at R14, from pastries to coffee and slushies. Sushi lovers can also look out for specials at Suki Thai on Andringa street.

Second-hand is your best friend when it comes to clothing and household essentials. Apps like Yaga allow you to buy and sell pre-loved clothing at a fraction of retail prices. In town, the Hospice Charity Shop and Ons Winkel stock affordable clothing, textbooks and homeware. Cash Crusaders is another solid option, as they offer good-quality furniture and unique pieces at student-friendly prices.

For affordable experiences, the Rooiplein Market, held on Wednesdays during the term, offers many budget-friendly clothing and food stalls, varying in prices. Stellenbosch has also joined the trend of Cape Town's First Thursdays, which allows free entry to art galleries for an enjoyable night out at no cost. Even your morning coffee can be cheaper, with Curbside Coffee on Bosman and Soeteweide Street offering R25 coffee specials from 07:00 to 08:00.

As a student, you don't have to simply survive on Neelsie meals and Maggi two-minute noodles. Stretching your budget in Stellenbosch may take effort, but with the right tips, and some practice, you can experience the town as a European tourist on a never-ending holiday at home.

Important SU contacts

AMBER STEYN

Administration A

This is the building where students can go to enquire about, amongst others, academic records, bursaries, loans, module changes and student fees.

Contact details: 021 808 9111
Street address: 52 Ryneveld Street, Stellenbosch. However, the building is currently closed due to renovations. Please visit the Coetzenburg Centre.

IT Hub

In the first few days of the year, SU's most visited location is the IT Hub. IT-related student services are dealt with here – such as Wi-Fi connectivity, network problems and your student card.

Contact details: 021 808 9289 or ithub@sun.ac.za
Street address: Currently housed in the Inorganic Chemistry Building in Bosman Street, Stellenbosch.

Campus Security

Campus Security assists students by providing services such as escorting them to and from buildings on campus. Students can contact Campus Security for safe walks between campus buildings and their accommodation when needed – whether it is to SU residences or private accommodation on campus. Most students tend to make use

of this service during the A2/A3 assessment season.

Campus Security is a 24-hour service. This can be extremely helpful when it comes to the rise of crime in Stellenbosch.

Contact details: 021 808 2333 (Stellenbosch campus) / 021 938 9057 (Tygerberg campus).
Street address: 62 Merriman Avenue, Stellenbosch.

24-Hour Rape Crisis Helpline

Contact details: 082 977 8581

HIV/AIDS Helpline

Contact details: 0800 012 322

Campus Health Services

Feeling ill? Do you need a doctor or nurse? Please visit the Campus Health Services.

Contact details: 021 808 3496 (weekdays from 08:00 to 17:00).
Street address: 7 Claassen Street, Stellenbosch.

CSCD

The Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) is a 24-hour crisis service. Consultations are confidential.
Contact details: 021 808 4994

(during office hours from 08:00 to 16:00); and 010 205 3032 (after hours).

Street address: 49 Victoria Street, Stellenbosch.

SU Client Services Centre

In-person services are temporarily based at the Inorganic Chemistry Building in Bosman

Street.

Contact details: 021 808 9111 or info@sun.ac.za or send a Whatsapp to 061 729 8858.

Academic structures

SU has 10 faculties, each with its own dean.

Each academic department within a faculty has its own programme co-ordinator. A programme coordinator is responsible for managing the day-to-day academic programmes, which includes synchronising course schedules, tracking student progress and they also act

as the first point of contact for prospective students.

In each department, you will meet course convenors and module co-ordinators. They are responsible for maintaining academic quality, managing student assessments, and ensuring alignments with university policies. All the contact details are available in the academic SU yearbooks on the SU website.

Academic Affairs Council

This body reports into the Student Representative Council, and consists of the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the student academic committees

of each faculty. The Academic Affairs Council (AAC) supports students with academic matters, such as timetables, queries related to lecturers and tutors, course frameworks and concessions.



SAFETY FIRST Stellenbosch traffic police on patrol. Photo: Anica Hattingh

Iconic Welcoming traditions across different Stellenbosch residences

JANA BURGER

Residences and their residents at Stellenbosch University (SU) annually pride themselves on their unique events and traditions during Welcoming.

Die Matie interviewed a few senior residents from different residences regarding iconic events aimed at making newcomers feel seen and welcomed into their new home away from home.

Monica

Monica has an evening called Sorro Sanctus. Lené Janse van Rensburg explains that “throughout Welcoming your mentors and House Committee (HC) keep an eye out for who has that special bond and

aren’t roommates”. A note gets slipped under their doors to be at the sitkamers (“sitting rooms”) at a certain time. Newcomers sit back to back to each other and receive a card, revealing the name of their Sorro Sanctus (or res sister). This event celebrates “the bonds newcomers have made and embracing these new friendships!”

Harmonie

During Claim to Fame, Harmonie’s quad is decorated with fairy lights and origami hanging from the trees. Delané Potgieter, an HC member, shares that the first-years get the opportunity to walk through the quad, where the rest

of the house members are there to cheer them on. The newcomers would also share their Claim to Fame Fact with the rest of the house. Potgieter says, “It provides the opportunity for the seniors and newcomers to officially meet and hopefully make lasting friendships. It creates bonds between us all and creates a unity, or should we say harmony, within our residence.”

Huis Visser

Welcoming leader, Brynard Potgieter, shares more about the newcomers’ annual hike up Coetzenburg. “It’s a good bonding experience between the HC and the first-years.” Upon reaching the top of the mountain, the HC’s achievements during their time in the residence get shared and the newcomers receive their Huis Visser golf t-shirts. This marks their integration into the residence.

Helshoogte

Caps and Collars is a special trust-building exercise where newcomers are split into teams. According to Eben Olivier, all except one per team are blindfolded. The HC plans a “maze” through the residence. The newcomers form a train, holding on to one another’s shoulders, depending on their teammates to navigate through the maze. They finally reach the deck area looking out over Helshoogte’s breathtaking view of Stellenbosch, where they



ANCHORED Huis Visser hiking Coetzenburg. Photo: Supplied by Huis Visser.

receive their Helshoogte jerseys and hats. After this, they celebrate with a braai.

Heemstede

“The Moment of Awe is a very special and vulnerable tradition that fills our first-years with a sense of pride and belonging in our home,” as described by Heemstede’s HC. Newcomers bring a photo of themselves and open heartfelt letters from their parents. Their photos get hung up on the Ditse wall, where they are able to write their names in a book that has been passed down from generations since 1966. This moment completes “their integration into our home.” Another iconic event is the HC’s cricket hats. If a HC member

is spotted without their hat, they must do the chicken dance in front of another residence, while the rest of Heemstede cheers them on. To mark the end of Welcoming, they take their hats off in union.

Lydia

During Lydia’s Starry Night evening, newcomers have their sleepover on their residence balcony. HC Member, Lara Bornmann, explains how newcomers would take their mattresses outside, play games and make s’mores by the braai. They also have a pajama party, where the Seniors Committee and newcomers would dance together in their coffee hall. Both traditions allow newcomers to have fun and bond with other Lydianers.



AWE(SOMENESS) Heemstede’s Moment of Awe. Photo: Supplied by Heemstede

So... you’ve got a roommate. What to do next?

ANICA HATTINGH, JULIAN RAEI GORDON & EMMA OLIVIER

As the new year kicks off, residences are once more filled with moving boxes and unfamiliar faces. During this liminal time, many students experience uncertainty. How do you live with a roommate? *Die Matie* reached out to some students to discover how they cohabited.

Set expectations early

“As a first year I set expectations and boundaries with my roommates very soon,” says BScHons (Computer Science) student, Cejay Spinelli who stayed in Huis Visser from 2023 to 2025. Having conversations about how to keep the room in order is also important.

“I think having an open conversation about things like cleanliness, noise, guests and shared spaces is very helpful and avoids conflict later,” says fourth-year BAccLLB student and former Nemesia resident, Erin Carter.

When it comes to living with someone else for the first time since meeting them, Cassidy



REACHING RES-OLUTIONS Living in close quarters can be challenging. Photo: Hannerie Rossouw

Krzychylkiewicz, BAcc graduate in 2025 and former Nemesia resident, reminds that “there are two lives in this room and you need to let them also breathe in the space”.

Handle conflict with care

A healthy discussion can solve most problems. Krzychylkiewicz

says, “Always have an open line of communication where you both feel like you can approach the other with problems without getting angry or becoming distant (both are unfair).” Krzychylkiewicz further mentions, “Your roommate’s boundaries are not attacks on you. Remember that most boundaries

go both ways. You need to come to a balance.”

Spinelli emphasises the importance of boundaries too. “It’s important to keep your boundaries and not let the person take advantage of you.” In his experience, unresolved issues can lead to a “fear that it will mess up the whole year.

When resolution feels out of reach, it becomes really hard.”

When resolution feels too far

“When you are forced to live with someone you don’t like or respect, it becomes a bad, stressful situation,” Spinelli says.

In a university residence, Krzychylkiewicz recommended to “approach the Head of House or primaria for a conflict resolution session”.

Whilst discussing issues with your roommate and potentially a residence head, it is essential to remain respectful and compassionate, even when you may feel it’s hard. Jana Fourie, PGDE student and Minerva Prim in 2025, says, “Make sure to not bad-mouth your roommate. No one deserves to be treated with disrespect.” Krzychylkiewicz says, “If everyone is receptive and willing to communicate maturely, a positive relationship can be built.”

So, roommates provide communication and cohabitation skills. Fourie says that it is “a difficult but fruitful experience”.

DAG & NAG

Who brings the vibes to the Bosch?

JANA BURGER

Stellenbosch is known for its iconic nightlife, but where should you rock up when you haven't been around the block yet? *Die Matie* interviewed a few local bars and clubs to make picking where your next jol will happen slightly easier.

AANDKLAS

Known for hosting Battle of the Bands, Aandklas on Bird Street is the rock and roll bar of Stellenbosch. It is a great place for your next karaoke or quiz night or to rock out to live music.

Popular drink orders:

- The Skinny Bitch (vodka, lime and soda)
- Brandy and Coke

Aandklas describes their vibe as “raw, gritty, and authentically rock and roll with a Stellenbosch soul. No-frills, high-energy live music hub. The focus is the band, the sound, and the crowd, not polished decor or bottle service.”

BOHEMIA

On the corner of Andringa and Victoria Street, ‘Boho’s’ is arguably the most aesthetic bar in town – frequented by the poets, artists and “madmen”. They are known for their live music on Tuesdays, Sunday Bingo and well-priced drinks.

Popular drink orders:

- Black Label
- Klippiess and Coke

Bohemia describes themselves as “vibrant and easy going with a rock and roll atmosphere. [It is a] place where friends meet up and new friends are made.”

DORP

Known for great parties and food specials, Dorp on Bird Street is the perfect pitstop on your next pub crawl. Their live music on Thursdays and the DJs from Wednesday to Saturday are always a hit.

Dorp contributes to the Stellenbosch party by bringing “a special feel-good singalong vibe. We have an upcoming Pitbull party that is gonna be massive. In general, we cater to a wide audience of customers and the party never stops.”

NU'BAR

The vibe continues at Nu'Bar on Plein Street, a popular choice for nights filled with dancing and lively singalongs.

Popular drink orders:

- Brandy and Coke
- Jägerbomb

Ryan Perkins, a second-year BAcc student, says, “The best place to get absolutely faded and have a good time with mates and dance



DORP A bartender making a cocktail. Photo: Jana Burger

the night away is at none other than Nu'Bar. Not only don't you have to wait in an hour-long line, but you also get a taste of actual good music.”

In one word, Nu'Bar likes to describe themselves as “unforgettable. You have to have one Nu'Bar night in your university experience and memory.”

PUNK

Punk, situated on Victoria Street, is the ultimate place to be on a Tuesday evening, with a great quiz night and cocktail specials. It is one of the places in town where you will find that alternative vibe.

Popular drink orders:

- Olof Berg
- The Skinny Bitch

Punk describes themselves as being “the new kid on the block. Punk is known for its event space and hosts many events and parties during the year. Music style varies, but we like to dance, so high energy music is generally the theme of the night.”

Whether you are looking for a night filled with dancing, singalongs, games or just catching up with old friends, Stellenbosch has a place that is bound to match your preferred vibes for the evening.

Golden Week: Is it social tradition or party culture?

NINA GUY

Golden Week marks the first week of the semester, celebrated with nights out running from Monday through to Sunday. For many students, it is an opportunity for social interaction. It includes dressing up and embracing student life. However, for others, excessive alcohol consumption and a lack of awareness around safety and regulation have resulted in serious injuries and offences. The question remains: is Golden Week truly a social tradition, or simply an excuse to party?

With increased alcohol consumption and late nights, students are more vulnerable to accidents and unsafe situations. Reports of drink spiking and hospitalisations highlight the need for greater awareness and responsibility. While Stellenbosch offers a vibrant nightlife, the absence of caution can quickly overshadow what is meant to be a celebration.

At the same time, Golden



GOLDEN WEEK Students partying during the first week of the semester. Photo: Nina Guy

Week holds genuine value for many students as a social tradition. The shared experience of themed outfits and collective excitement fosters a sense of belonging and community. After the pressure and stress of the first se-

mester, Golden Week can feel like a release or a chance to reconnect and celebrate youth in a town built around student life.

Die Matie spoke to several students to gather their perspectives on Golden Week. Famke Treu,

a second-year LLB student, described the atmosphere on campus as “infectious,” noting that even students without plans often feel a strong urge to get involved and join in the excitement. She added that Golden Week is a valuable

tradition for the students of Stellenbosch.

According to second-year BA (Law) student Kristen Mouton, the social atmosphere motivates her to attend certain events, yet she believes that the overconsumption of alcohol should be better controlled to ensure everyone's safety. She also said that her most memorable moments are spent with friends on the dance floor, where they reconnect with familiar faces and meet new people. Mouton feels that there are healthier alternatives for students to socialise, particularly given the negative influence the week can have at the start of the academic semester.

Ultimately, Golden Week exists in the balance between enjoyment and responsibility. While it holds social significance, it is also a time marked by widespread alcohol overconsumption. The challenge lies not in ending the tradition, but in reshaping it so that celebration does not come at the cost of student well-being.



WINELANDS PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Performing *Echoes of the New World* at the Toyota Stellenbosch Woodfees in October 2025. Photo: Mark Cloete

Students embrace cultural passions

AGNES HOMWE

For many students, university is a place where academic paths and personal passions often diverge. Studying something completely different from what you love can feel like a loss of structure, identity, or creative outlet. For Stellenbosch University (SU) students Jack Enslin, Kyra de Maudave Bestel, and Justin de Villiers, cultural societies and independent organisations have become vital spaces for keeping their passions alive.

Enslin, a second-year BSc (Food Science) student, admits that his degree is “quite far removed from his passion for music”. Despite this, he continues playing the French horn with the Winelands Philharmonic Orchestra. “Being part of the orchestra gives me a creative outlet. It’s a welcome mental break from the academic stress I face throughout the week.”

Weekly Thursday rehearsals act as a “forced break” which allow him to step away from academic pressure and reconnect with music-minded people.

For De Maudave Bestel, a second-year BDataSci student specialising in applied mathematics, music and performance have always been part of her life.

“These cultural activities aren’t just hobbies for me, they’re part of my identity,” she says. While her degree is analytical and structured, music stimulates different interests in different parts of her brain. “I love having very different interests, because the experiences you get to have are just so varying.” Being involved in residence acapella, singing lessons, and independent performances gives her both creative expression and consistency.

“Having rehearsals at a set time gives me structure to base my life



BALLROOM DANCING Suné Joubert and Justin de Villiers dancing at the 2025 South African National Student Ballroom and Latin-American Social Dance Competition. Photo: Sebastian Whitward

around,” she added.

De Villiers, a third-year BSc (Geoinformatics) student, echoes this sentiment through dance. He highlights how his degree differs from his cultural passions. The one involves sitting behind a screen, while the other involves movement, and that contrast is exactly what he loves. Through the Maties Ballroom and Latin Dance Society, de Villiers found a way to combine music, movement and community. “These activities allow me to express myself and work towards something beautiful and fulfilling in a way that academics can’t.”

All three students highlight the importance of balance. Enslin

notes that orchestra commitments force him to plan his academic work better, while De Maudave Bestel believes that “when you’re busy, you actually manage your time more efficiently”. Justin adds that completely cutting out cultural activities during stressful periods negatively affects his mental health and ultimately his academics, too.

Their shared message is clear. Cultural passion doesn’t disappear when it’s not part of your degree. Through societies, independent groups and personal initiative, students can continue to create, perform and belong, proving that university life is richer when passion and academics coexist.

Stellies music scene (a)live and well

EMMA OLIVIER

There is something special about a live performance. To keep a finger on the Stellenbosch music scene’s pulse, look out for these bands on *Die Matie*’s radar.

GSTRiNG

The fourth string on a guitar (nothing else) – GSTRiNG is a genre-defying band pushing boundaries in Afrikaans music. Drawing from diverse influences for their bittersweet summer sound, GSTRiNG proves that “Afrikaans is not a genre”, according to guitarist and lead singer Neelsie van Dyk.

Guitarist Wilhelm Warmenhoven says that fans can look forward to “a few *lekker* collabs” and “hopefully a short album with something a little different”.

Van Dyk adds, “We want to be a bit experimental this year.”

Blitz

For good vibes and loud music, Blitz is the fresh punk-rock band to keep an eye on. Their first single, “Fluit Fluit”, buzzes with an electric stick-it-to-the-man energy. It’s “loud and *befok* and very beautiful too”, as frontman Johan Verdoes described at Battle of the Bands (BOTB) 2025 – which Blitz won. You can show Blitz some love at Aandklas on 14 February.

Ultra-Mal

Ultra-Mal is making waves as a niche, multi-genre phenomenon. “Everything has a method and structure,” says rapper Sive Mdabuli, describing how Ultra-Mal joins creativity and musical knowledge. “We strategise how we would put it all together. That’s the dope part.”

Ultra-Mal reached second place at the 2025 Taalgenoot Ruk en Rym competition, winning a music video to be released this year.

“What inspires us to make music?” Mdabuli contemplates. “Honestly, just life. In life, everyone needs encouragement and motivation. You can take that from our songs, like ‘Dala Rot’ – *dala* what you must.”

Dierbaar

This rock trio is challenging the Afrikaans music status quo with brutally honest lyrics, raw sound and dreamy vocals. Frontwoman Janke Mostert’s guitar riffs are reminiscent of an angsty coming-of-age cult classic’s soundtrack. Dierbaar’s latest single, “Parasosiaal”, is out, but this is just the start of a new wave of alternative Afrikaans.

ThreeOhFive

After winning Aandklas’ annual BOTB in 2024, ThreeOhFive underwent a brief hiatus and transformation. Albert Kotze, ThreeOhFive’s new frontman, says, “We got a whole new set of original music. It’s heavy, emotional, very gripping, and explosive, but still catchy – something you can sing along to.” Prepping their first EP and a tour, they are now back and ready to make “music built on the sound of perseverance”.

Undercard

At last year’s BOTB, Undercard made the semi-finals with music created just six weeks prior! Now, with the new year ahead, the pop-punk emo group doesn’t plan on stopping any time soon.

“Our philosophy is very DIY; very scrappy,” says vocalist Daniël Goosen. Lovers of energetic but emotional songs can look forward to more gigs and a first EP from Undercard and Rambo (their trusty tambourine). Goosen shared Undercard’s plans for “a DIY show – whether it’s in a parking lot, skate park or warehouse!”

The Govt.

It is possibly the best Govt. in the country. Matt Carstens, frontman, is currently making music in the United Arab Emirates, but The Govt. plans on making a comeback in February. “We are hoping to get some cool shows in,” says Carstens. Since they won BOTB in 2023, the band has become cemented in Stellenbosch music legendry with their anti-establishment rocktronica sound.



BLITZ ATTACKZ Performing at the 2024 BOTB. Photo: Emma Olivier



SPORT



SLAM DUNK Two university campus basketball players battling it out on court.
Photo: Ryan van Heerden

This is your campus, this is your sport

AMBER STEYN

To be a part of any sport at Stellenbosch University (SU) means to be a part of a community – a team. At SU, our newcomers have a variety of options in regard to the sport in which they would like to participate.

The sports offered by SU are rugby, football, cricket, hockey, netball, swimming, water polo, basketball and athletics. Within the Recreational and Active Lifestyle Unit (RALU) there are cheerleading, equestrian, ultimate frisbee, wall climbing and underwater sport. Lastly, within the Competitive Unit, there is badminton, chess, cycling, e-sport, fencing, gymnastics, parasport, squash, table tennis, volleyball, tennis, sailing, rowing, golf and canoeing.

Anche Nortjie, the senior sport

manager for hockey and RALU, gave insight into the trialing process for Maties Sports. He said that, for hockey specifically, they have to sign up via the Maties Hockey Instagram page and the club will communicate directly with the students to inform them about the dates and times of trials taking place. Other sports follow a similar process for trials to compete in.

Another option is the residence/CSC sport clubs if you are looking for something requiring less commitment but just as much fun. There is a fee for residence/CSC sports, but cluster sports are free. For students who are interested in participating in sport for their own enjoyment, their assigned residence/CSC have what they are looking for. RALU also hosts

events open to all through community sign ups. There is a very vibrant and competitive residence league for most sports.

“We [had] a Colour Run scheduled for the first time ever for the newcomers on [31 January],” said Nortjie. For this Colour Run, newcomers [were] able to sign up via their communities. She added that on 18 September they will be hosting a Women in Sports tournament for females only.

Staying active is possibly one of the best ways to stay healthy and keep a clear mind. Join a sport, or even just go for a hike with your community or residence. Whether you join sports to stay active or make friends, live out the memorable moments. Your mind and body will thank you.

The balancing act: Being a student athlete

JANA GOUS

Student athletes are among the most disciplined people on campus. While many students juggle academic deadlines and a social life, student athletes must do so while training, travelling and competing at a high level. *Die Matie* spoke to several Maties athletes to understand how they not only survive, but thrive under pressure.

For Maties hockey player Sego Motswasele, a fourth-year BCom (International Business) student, careful planning is non-negotiable.

“It’s not always possible to have academics, sport and a social life at the same time,” he explains. During peak moments in the semester, something has to give, and studies often take the strain when matches and assessments overlap. Still, Motswasele has no regrets. “Being a student athlete is a different kind of student life,” he says.

Third-year BCom (Econometrics) student and Maties football midfielder Alicia Aebes shares a similar reality. She relies heavily on routine and time management to stay on track. “My life is not always balanced,” she admits, “But each week is a learning curve.” One of her biggest challenges is maintaining



ON THE FIELD Maties hockey player Sego Motswasele.
Photo: Supplied by Motswasele.

proper nutrition: essential for recovery, but can be costly in Stellenbosch. Despite the pressures, Aebes believes the experience is worth it, noting that football has introduced her to opportunities she would not have encountered otherwise.

For Josh Reyneke, a second-year Theology student and Division 1 water polo player, discipline starts with rest. “Sleep gives me the capacity to function,” he says. Early mornings and intense training sessions leave little room for spontaneity, but Reyneke is comfortable with the sacrifices. Guided by a Jim Elliot quote that Tim Keller used in one of his sermons, “Wherever you are, be all there,” he remains present in both sport and academics. He remains grounded through his faith, saying, “I play water polo for the glory of God, and I believe that

only by His grace have I been given the talent to compete at this level.”

Rugby scrumhalf Ezekiel Ngobeni, a BCom (Agricultural Economics) graduate, emphasises perspective by separating his sport from his identity. “Time management is key,” he says, adding that planning ahead allows him to give each commitment the attention it deserves.

All four athletes agree that Stellenbosch University (SU) provides strong support when sport and academics clash, through flexible assessments, workshops and understanding coaches. Their advice to first-year student athletes is unanimous: be patient, ask for help, manage your time wisely and enjoy the journey.

My running club and me

ANICA HATTINGH

From sunrise starts to post-run coffee stops, Stellenbosch is packed with running crews that cater to different paces, personalities and playlists. Not sure where you fit in? Consider this your unofficial quiz to finding your people!

Burnt: The Social Sprinters

You’re a Burnt runner if:

1. You run for fun, fitness and the after-run hang.
2. Your running outfit matters almost as much as your splits.
3. If others motivate you.

Versus: The Competitive Crew

You’re a Versus runner if:

1. You secretly love hill repeats.
2. You track every run on Strava.
3. “Just an easy run” still ends up being fast.

Outlaws: The Rebels

You’re an Outlaw if:

1. You run to clear your head and get some fresh air.
2. You don’t care about pace, just showing up.
3. You believe running should feel freeing, not forced.

Quick Quiz: Find Your Fit

Your ideal run ends with...

- A. Coffee and chats
- B. A sense of achievement
- C. Good music and good people

Your running goal right now...

- A. Staying active and social
- B. Getting faster and stronger
- C. Running for mental health

Your running club vibe is...

- A. Warm and welcoming
- B. Driven and disciplined
- C. Creative and carefree

Your ideal running club is:

- Mostly A – Burnt
Mostly B – Versus
Mostly C – Outlaws



STAYING ACTIVE Two friends enjoying a run.
Photo: Supplied by Luzandi Landman

Know the ins and outs of Varsity Cup

ANICA HATTINGH

Maroon Mondays. Cape Derby. Pokkel and Rugby that Rocks – all of these are iconic to the FNB Varsity Cup (VC), which kicks off on 16 February.

Every year, Maties flock to the Danie Craven Stadium to witness the men in maroon in their full glory. But more than the rugby itself, it is the gees that truly draws students together. Whether you're a seasoned VC supporter or new to the madness that ensues, here are some insider tips to make this rugby season one to remember.

Dress the part

Maroon is non-negotiable. Whether it's your year group's iconic maroon shirt, hoodie, a scarf, face paint or a thrifted jersey, showing up in colour is part of the culture. Bonus points for creative outfits – the stands are as much a spectacle as the game.

Arrive early

The atmosphere starts long before kick-off. Getting to Danie Craven early means better seats, time to soak up the build-up and a chance to join the chants before the stadium fills up.

Embrace the traditions

Lean into traditions such as Maroon Mondays – when Stellenbosch University students start showing their support long before the evening's match. From lecture halls to walkways, students arrive on campus dressed in maroon supporter gear, flooding the university with the home team's colours.

Bring friends (& make new ones)

VC is best experienced in a group. Come with friends, but don't be surprised if you leave having made a few more. The gees has way of bringing people together.

Know the fixtures

Matches between the FNB UCT Ikeys and FNB Maties have famously been coined the Cape Derby. These clashes bring a different level of intensity altogether – the highlight of last year's VC being the nail-biting final between these two teams. Knowing when the big games are scheduled helps you to plan ahead and ensures that you don't miss the most electric nights of the season.

So, as Varsity Cup and maroon season draw near, it's time to dust off the Maties merch, crank up the gees and get ready for a rugby season that promises big hits, bigger crowds and unforgettable nights at the Danie Craven. Under the floodlights with all your favourite people, university feels like the adventure it is. Get ready and bring the gees for the season's kick-off on 23 February!



POKKEL PUNCHES Pokkel is in full gees. Photo: Emma Theron



TACKLE AND SCRUM
The 2025 Varsity cup in action.
Photo: Ryan van Heerden

Rest and recover: How to exercise safely

LILJA FLOHR

Whether at the gym or on the sports field, exercise is part of campus life for many students. But this also puts new strain on the body and it is important to remember that more exercise at university does not automatically mean better health. Here are a few tips on how to stay healthy and safe when exercising.

Nikita Gerber, a biokineticist at the practice Mandie Le Roux Biokineticist in Melkbosstrand, gave *Die Matie* insight into different tips and services for recovery and regeneration.

The most common recovery mistake Gerber sees students make “is not recovering at all. People have too few rest days and only rest when they are already in pain”. She says, “The importance of recovery cannot be measured.” As it is “where your muscles recover and build”, recovery is extremely important in maintaining long-term physi-

cal and mental health, especially for active students. She highlights how “your body is part of your degree. Take care of it and it will take care of you.”

For students dealing with overtraining or physical exhaustion, Gerber mentions a few different options, including “a physiotherapist, a biokineticist and especially a sports psychologist, which is helpful when a student has emotional and physical burnout”. She clearly advises students to make use of biokinetic services “with regard to preventing injury [...] because with biokinetics [they] assess the whole body and assess muscle imbalances which could cause injury”.

Stellenbosch University (SU) also offers a larger support system to help you prevent and take care of injuries. Samantha Brits is the Fitness Manager at Maties Gymnasium and explains how it “works closely with SU's health and sports teams to keep students fit and inju-

ry-free”. The facility “is co-located with physiotherapists right next door”, which makes it possible for more “students to get medical screenings and injury rehab”.

She agrees with Gerber, explaining how smart and efficient recovery “preserves a human's long-term fitness and well-being, whereas skipping it can leave even the most active individual sidelined or exhausted”. The biggest mistakes she sees in students' recoveries are “not taking enough rest days, lack of sufficient sleep, poor nutrition or overtraining”. While Maties gym “itself does not offer specific resources for burnout”, a good prevention measure is “that all new members have the opportunity to get a tailored program specifically to their individual needs”.

Brits advises students to always “schedule their recovery days, prioritise rest, hydrate and fuel their body, and, lastly, manage their stress levels”.



FLYING HIGH Exerting yourself can end in injury. Photo: Ryan van Heerden



MATIES, YOU HAVE ARRIVED! The official welcoming ceremony of Stellenbosch University took place on Wednesday 28 January 2026 at the Danie Craven Stadium on the Stellenbosch Campus. Shortly after the official ceremony, all newcomers gathered on the main rugby field for the famous and iconic group photo of all new Maties. Photo: Skypixels