



**COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION**  
HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITTEE

**AUDIT REPORT OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE**

**REPORT OF THE  
HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITTEE TO  
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE**

**March 2008**

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59. The Panel observed that although the General Regulations provide guidelines on postgraduate assessment, departments generally have their own arrangements, which are communicated to students on enrolment and seem to be working well. Faculties were generally not able to provide documented assessment criteria during the site visit, even though it is a requirement that these be provided to examiners. The documentation of the role and responsibility of supervisors also varies across departments, with some departments providing excellent guidelines and others very poor ones. The University does not have a general policy on the examination of postgraduate work.

#### **Recommendation 18**

**The HEQC recommends that the University of the Free State review its current policy for the examination of postgraduate degrees to ensure that the same quality standards are applied across faculties and departments in order to protect the quality of the postgraduate degrees conferred by the institution.**

60. In the Panel's view, the lack of an overarching policy framework for postgraduate studies presents some risk to the University. For instance, the Panel found no evidence of institutional policies or regulations for postgraduate publications, which means that the ethical dimension of publications may not be appropriately monitored. The Panel is also concerned that the lack of consistency across departments and faculties in the approval of postgraduate proposals at the master's and doctoral levels will ultimately compromise the quality of postgraduate studies.

#### **Recommendation 19**

**The HEQC recommends that the University of the Free State urgently review the way it balances institutional monitoring and faculty autonomy in the interest of greater consistency across faculties in implementing key policies relevant to the research core function. This should include reviewing policies regulating the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students, and regulations and guidelines for the assessment and examination of postgraduate work.**

61. In relation to graduation rates, postgraduate graduation rates at the UFS are below the national benchmarks in all categories. The Panel is of the view that UFS should explore the factors that affect postgraduate success, with the aim of improving its postgraduate graduation rates, particularly at master's and doctoral levels.
62. The implementation and impact of the language policy on postgraduate education varies across faculties. The Panel was concerned that as the Medical School was operating on a dual-medium basis the quality of the student learning experience may be compromised. The Panel found significant differences in the way departments reported on student progress and concluded that overall consistency in the way research policies are implemented was a major need at UFS. The Panel would also like to encourage the institution to assess the extent to which the language policy supports UFS's dual objective of expansion of the postgraduate student enrolment and internationalisation.

#### **Management of the Quality of Community Engagement**

63. The Panel noted that there are different conceptualisations of community engagement (CE) at the institution and that their ability to give expression to a variety of curricular and

non-curricular activities is unevenly distributed across faculties and departments. The Panel also noted that not all senior academic staff members are convinced of the value of community engagement.

64. The Panel noted that there is no dedicated department at institutional level which takes responsibility for the coordination and administrative support of CE. There is no portfolio committee for CE at institutional level, but there is a Community Services Management Committee, which operates outside the formal portfolio committee structure. While this arrangement may have been sufficient in the initial stages of CS, the Panel is of the view that the envisaged transformation from CS to community service-learning (CSL) across programmes will require more dedicated monitoring of policy implementation and staff and student performance as part of the quality management of CE, with appropriate monitoring at institutional level. This is particularly important in view of the UFS view of CE as a form of scholarship.
65. The Panel observed that CS engagement and the implementation of CSL is highly varied across faculties and programmes. The Panel urges UFS to develop a quality management system for community engagement which could help the institution give more effective expression to its conceptualisation of CSL as integrated into the core functions of teaching and learning and research.
66. 'Partnerships' is the framework within which CE is conceived and the Panel noted that the institution has been very successful in developing external partnerships. The long-standing Mangaung–University of the Free State Community Partnership Programme (MUCPP) has been a key CS site where the University, community and government departments interact.

#### **Commendation 8**

**The HEQC commends the University of the Free State on its continued commitment and initiatives to establish community engagement as a credible core function and the significant contribution that it makes to social development through viable partnerships, such as the Mangaung–University of the Free State Community Partnership Programme (MUCPP) and the Free State Rural Development Partnership Programme (FSRDPP).**

## **6 Management of the Quality of Community Engagement**

This section focuses first on the way UFS conceptualises community engagement, the location of this function in UFS's academic governance and management structure, and how this conceptualisation is put into practice across the University and second on the arrangements for managing the quality of community engagement, and in particular for integrating and aligning it with the quality management of teaching and learning and research.

### **6.1 Conceptualisation, Location and Operationalisation of Community Engagement at UFS**

#### **6.1.1 Conceptualisation of community engagement (CE)**

The University defines community engagement as 'continuously negotiated collaborations and partnerships aimed at building and exchanging knowledge, skills expertise and resources'; community service (CS) as the application of 'scholarly expertise and resources to render mutually beneficial services to communities in a collaborative partnership context'; and community service-learning (CSL) as curriculum based, credit-bearing learning experiences in well-structured and organised contexts, to address identified service needs in a community, and reflection on those experiences to gain insight into the link between curriculum and community, in order to develop social responsibility and personal growth (AP: 169).

UFS has thus focused on reconceptualising its activities in this area from a CS perspective, as a typical add-on activity, to a CSL perspective in which the work with the community is seen as integral component of learning and research (AP: 165). The latter approach is an attempt to link the core functions in a cycle where the individual core functions or combinations of core functions inform each other.

CSL is linked to the institution's transformation agenda, and the Portfolio indicates that it endorses the 'pillars' of increased participation, greater responsiveness, and increased cooperation that underpin the government's transformation agenda for HE (AP: 166). Despite this, the Panel noted that there are different conceptualisations of community engagement at the institution and that their ability to give expression to a variety of curricular and non-curricular activities is unevenly distributed across faculties and departments. The Panel also noted that not all senior academic staff members are convinced of the value of community engagement (CE), and that the distinction between CE, CS and Developmental Engagement was not clear to all. The Panel learned through interviews that the extent to which CSL is systematically included in teaching and learning and research depends to some extent on the good will of faculties and departments.

In terms of the actual activities undertaken by the institution, the Panel recognises the significant contribution that UFS makes in the area of community engagement and congratulates the institution on implementing projects such as the Mangaung-University of the Free State Community Partnership Programme (MUCPP). In its interaction with UFS staff at various levels and the external stakeholders, the Panel was struck by the staff's general commitment and the way representatives of various organisations recognised that UFS is trying to interact productively with communities in the region.

### **6.1.2 Location of CE in UFS Governance and Management Structures**

As the transition from CS to CSL has been progressing, UFS has come to recognise challenges and risks that require revision of the CS policy. The institution also recognises that quality management of CS has been limited, and that it now has to firm up its policy, procedures, mechanisms and structures for managing the quality of CE. The Portfolio indicates that UFS will use the Good Practice Guide<sup>15</sup> as a basis for developing its quality management system (AP: 168).

The Panel noted that, according to the institution's organogram, the Chief Director is at the level of Vice-Rector and is a member of EM, but there is no dedicated department at institutional level which takes responsibility for the coordination and administrative support of CE. Unlike education and research, there is no portfolio committee for CE at institutional level, but there is a Community Services Management Committee, which operates outside the formal portfolio committee structure and includes representatives of faculty portfolio committees for CE, faculty CS coordinators and coordinators of key CS delivery sites (AP: 99, 171). While this arrangement may have been sufficient in the initial stages of CS, the Panel is of the view that the envisaged transformation from CS to CSL across programmes will require more dedicated monitoring of policy implementation and staff and student performance as part of the quality management of CE, with appropriate monitoring at institutional level. This is particularly important in view of the UFS view of CE as a form of scholarship.

The Panel also observed that CS engagement and the implementation of CSL is highly varied across faculties and programmes. While it is accepted that many of the ideas were in a phase of experimentation, a more directed approach to achieving the CE scholarship goal will require more consistent application of the policy and progress with CSL across programmes. In this regard, the Panel urges UFS to develop a quality management system for community engagement which could help the institution give more effective expression to its conceptualisation of CSL as integrated into the core functions of teaching and learning and research.

## **6.2 Current CE Projects and Activities**

The Panel noted that an aim of UFS is to include a CSL module in every programme, which implies significant resource requirements for the placement, monitoring and assessment of students enrolled in these credit-bearing modules. Current funding amounted to R20,000 per CSL module may not be adequate where large groups have to be placed, monitored and assessed. These initiatives are still at an early stage of development and the institution has still to develop appropriate indicators and instruments for monitoring and assessing progress in this core function. This, however, is a fundamental element in the development of appropriate and effective arrangements for assessing the quality of CE activities.

The Panel noted that all academic staff who are involved in the design and roll-out of CSL have to complete a compulsory in-house training and development course. The Panel further noted that the UFS has no comprehensive database on its community engagement activities, but that faculties are required to publish their CE projects on their websites.

<sup>15</sup> CHESP: *Good Practices Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for the Development and Management of the Quality of Service-Learning.*

Faculty reports included in the Portfolio provide some indication of CE activities. The Faculty of Humanities finalised four CSL modules in 2005, five will be developed in 2006, and at least four are envisaged for 2007. In this Faculty a service-learning coordinator has been appointed on a contract basis, a web page with information on service-learning modules has been developed (AP: 26), and a partnership has been established, the National Khoisan Consultative Conference. The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences indicates that selected academic departments in the Faculty will be offering at least one module in service-learning from 2006 onwards. This Faculty is also collaborating with the Central University of Technology (CUT) on CSL projects (AP: 30). The Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences has the Boyden Observatory and the Lengau Agri Centre as key CS sites (AP: 34). In the Faculty of Health Sciences all undergraduate programmes have a CSL component (AP: 37). This Faculty has a partnership with the Department of Health. The Law Faculty has the Law Clinic. During the site visit to the Qwaqwa campus the Panel was pleased to note the CS activities that social science students undertake in that community and the way external stakeholders and the community appreciate these services.

'Partnerships' is the framework within which CE is conceived and the Panel noted that the institution has been very successful in developing external partnerships. The long-standing Mangaung–University of the Free State Community Partnership Programme (MUCPP) has been a key CS site where the University, community and government departments interact.

#### **Commendation 9**

**The HEQC commends the University of the Free State on its continued commitment and initiatives to establish community engagement as a credible core function and the significant contribution that it makes to social development through viable partnerships, such as the Mangaung–University of the Free State Community Partnership Programme (MUCPP) and the Free State Rural Development Partnership Programme (FSRDPP).**

be negotiated (or re-negotiated since such an agreement actually already exists) at executive management level. Several staff members involved in CSL and other CS projects have expressed an urgent need for some official agreement regarding cooperation and collaboration in the region."

One of the promising developments in this regard is the Tri-campus Project (see Section 5, paragraph 5.4.4) which is under discussion by various stakeholders in the region. It is obvious that CS initiatives of the UFS should be linked and integrated with the objectives of this project in future. The role that the Free State Higher Education Consortium (FSHEC) plays in this regard bodes well for similar regional development-focused partnerships, and should increasingly be linked to CS and CSL initiatives in future.

One of the remedial initiatives regarding the fragmented nature of CS that the CDCS has embarked on is to focus increasingly on partnership formation, specifically with regard to forming alliances with local and district municipalities, provincial government, the business sector and community structures. The recently formed Khula Xhariep Partnership (see paragraph 7.2.5) serves as an example of this strategy. Discussions with Mangaung Local Municipality that could lead to the formation of a strategic partnership have commenced in the first semester of 2006; the CDCS will embark on discussions in preparation of a similar framework for collaboration with Motheo District Municipality during the second half of this year.

The main intended outcome of partnership formation with these and other local and district municipalities is ensuring that the UFS is represented on the Integrated Development Plan Representative Forum of these structures, in order to be in a position to engage with these municipalities in a robust way for more coherent and better coordinated collaboration. The effective functioning of the CSMC (see paragraph 7.3.4) will form an integral part of effective communication and coordination of the various collaborative initiatives.

#### **7.4 QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF PROCESS-RELATED ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Process-related arrangements for the implementation of CS include the key indicators of inclusion in management strategies such as effective communication and management information systems; capacity building and support for staff, students and partners; and support for relevance and responsiveness to societal challenges in teaching, learning and research.

##### **7.4.1 Integration of CS with teaching and learning**

Institutional support for excellence, innovation and relevance in teaching and learning by means of CSL pedagogy is apparent when taken into consideration that the number of CSL modules officially designated as "Community Service Learning" has increased from around ten (not all the modules were registered in 2004) to 26 over the past two years, with several more to be introduced during 2007. The second CS policy implementation strategy requires that a compulsory CSL module be included in all academic programmes; thus far the Faculty of the Humanities and the Faculty of Health Sciences have complied. Some of the modules originated from community-based education (CBE) courses, clinical practice or fieldwork activities, but several have also been developed

from scratch.<sup>15</sup> By setting minimum requirements for CSL modules to be funded by the UFS, the CDCS has been providing some guidelines for the development and implementation of such modules<sup>16</sup>. It should be noted, however, that the allocation of start-up funding for CSL modules is not a mere "numbers game", but is approached as a collaborative exercise, involving partners, with a view to achieving quality, cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

#### 7.4.2 Participatory community-orientated research

Institutional support and capacity building for participatory, collaborative, community-oriented research are undertaken in close collaboration with the DRD and CHESD. Special attention has been given to capacity building in appropriate research designs such as Participatory Action Research (PAR), *inter alia* through workshops by international specialists in this field.

The 2003 CS Conference of the UFS was dedicated to the Integration of Research and CSL<sup>17</sup>. From this conference, a special volume of the academic journal *Acta Academica Supplementum*<sup>18</sup> appeared as a joint initiative of the CDCS and Prof. Robert Bringle of Indiana University-Purdue University (Indianapolis). The title of the volume is *Research and (Community) Service Learning in South African Higher Education Institutions*. After a protracted process in which some of the articles that were submitted met with rather harsh criticism, the volume was published in May 2006. In view of the fact that many South African scholars might not be quite ready to accept applied research outputs as academic work, this volume could be regarded as a significant achievement in the field, adding considerably to the rather limited South African body of peer-reviewed, accredited research articles on CSL.

#### 7.4.3 Communication and information management

It has been acknowledged by the UFS that effective communication, both internally and externally, is a cornerstone of accountability and transparency with regard to all its CS endeavours. The Community Service webpage, which forms part of the UFS website, is where much of the information regarding CS is currently available. A database<sup>19</sup> with details of 67 CS projects and CSL modules represents a first effort at providing an inventory. The usefulness of this database for tracking the progress and growth of CSL in particular has proven to be limited, due to the fact that it has not been designed as a properly coded and tagged resource for purposes of executing specific queries. Thus, it has become obvious that a comprehensive web-based management information system (MIS) is required, especially for the effective management of CSL, and tracking its

<sup>15</sup> See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.2 for a complete list of *CSL modules registered for 2006*.

<sup>16</sup> See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.3 for *The application form for funding of a CSL module and the letter explaining the procedure*.

<sup>17</sup> See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for the Programme of the CS Conference in the Integration of CSL and Research; and Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for *CommTalk 4: Conference of Research and CSL*. This newsletter has largely been dedicated to reporting on this Conference.

<sup>18</sup> The table of contents is available at Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for *Acta Academica Supplementum 2005 3*.

<sup>19</sup> Available at <http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/content.php?id=3790&FCODE=Z1>



development. Such a database structure has already been designed by an expert<sup>20</sup> in the field and the application was built by UFS Computer Services in the first semester of 2006. The following are some of the intended functions and benefits of this MIS for CSL:

- It will be linked to the existing HEMIS Analyser and PeopleSoft System.
- Quality management of CSL will be built into it from the outset.
- Queries and cross-tabulation of entries will allow for more effective coordination of CSL efforts.
- Longitudinal comparisons for programme evaluation (annual surveys etc.) will be possible since data will be archived per year.
- The database will be managed jointly by the CDCS and the various faculties, allowing for increasing decentralisation of the management of CSL initiatives where relevant.
- Impact studies could be undertaken on an ongoing basis by means of the effective use of this MIS for CS.

The newsletter *CommTalk*, as well as the FSRDPP's *Triangle* and others, forms the backbone of communication with staff, external stakeholders and other interested parties. Regular media coverage is received with the assistance of the Division: Strategic Communication by way of the provincial and national printed and electronic media. UFS publications such as *BULT*, *Dumela* and the UFS website are also utilised for the dissemination of information regarding CS activities. One area where improvement is required is representation of the student voice, which could be achieved through closer collaboration with the student newspaper *IRAWA*.

Highlights of regional and local engagement activities of 2005 form part of the annual report, *Transformation for excellence. Die verhaal van die UV in 2005/The story of the UFS in 2005*, under the apt heading "Bridging the gap with the community". Those CS initiatives that have received attention in the printed media during 2006 may be viewed on the UFS website under *Media releases: 2006*. Examples include the following:

- 09 March: *From disregard to acknowledgement – the role of the Griekwa in South Africa* (Department of Anthropology)
- 17 March: *A play to inform on how to build houses using earth bricks* (Department of Architecture – Unit for Earth Construction)
- 09 May: *UFS first to mechanise antique agricultural technique* (Department of Soil, Crop and Climate Sciences)
- 05 June: *Training workshop for Heidedal parents* (Research Institute for Education Planning)
- 06 June: *UFS involved in project to light up townships* (Department of Physics)
- 20 June: *UFS takes lead in improving quality of training in economics in schools* (Department of Agricultural Economics)
- 11 July: *Nguni cattle project* (Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences)

Several of the above-mentioned projects and programmes have also been highlighted in *CommTalk 7* (01-2006) (see [http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/documents/Z1/Newsletter/11154-2006\\_01\\_CommTalk.pdf](http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/documents/Z1/Newsletter/11154-2006_01_CommTalk.pdf))

<sup>20</sup> See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.3 for *The Entity-Relationship Diagram for Quality Service Learning*. The full Database Dictionary is a comprehensive document which will be made available on request.

These are but a few of the many community engagement initiatives that are undertaken by academic staff members in the faculties, and in many instances also by support service staff and students.

#### 7.4.4 Support and capacity building for staff

Support for staff (inter alia by means of capacity-building programmes, equitable performance management, recognition and incentives) is another area on which the CDCS has been focusing over the past three years.

The dedicated Community Service Learning module (HOS717<sup>21</sup>), offered at the UFS, forms part of the Master's Programme in Higher Education Studies offered by CHESD. This forms the backbone of the capacity-building programme for staff which the Senior Lecturer: Community Service Learning has been designated to develop since 2004. Eight UFS staff members successfully completed the module in 2005 and ten more have enrolled for 2006. The CHESD Resource Centre provides access to a growing collection of books, journals and other documents focusing on CSL.

The UFS participates in the Service-Learning Capacity-Building Programme (SLCBP) of JET-CHESP. By means of this programme, funding is allocated by JET Education Services to support eight academic members of staff of the UFS to participate in its capacity-building programme and to develop or refine a CSL module in the process. The publication, *Service Learning in the Curriculum: a resource for HE institutions*, (June 2006) that was developed by the HEQC (CHE), JET Education Services and a small group of mostly South African CSL practitioners (which included a UFS staff member from the Department of Psychology), will be the most important resource for the SLCBP<sup>22</sup>.

#### 7.4.5 Performance appraisal and conditions of service

A very important area in which some tentative provision has been made for CS and CSL by way of interventions by the CDCS, is the performance management system. The current Performance Management System (PMS) document does specify the role of "Community Service" and refers to "service learning" under the Teaching and Learning Role. However, CSL is explicitly excluded under the role referred to as "Scholarly Service to the Community", and it is becoming increasingly evident that the need is felt by staff working in the field that CSL should also be included, and that this particular role should be weighted appropriately. This issue is still under consideration and will be taken further in the course of 2006.

#### 7.4.6 Areas for improvement

A matter that has come to the attention of the CDCS is the fact that the Conditions of Service for Lecturing Staff (1 August 2004) refers to CS under the section devoted to "Duties of Staff Members" in such a way that it could not be regarded as being in alignment with the pronounced community and regional engagement thrust that the UFS

<sup>21</sup> See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.1.2 for *The Study Guide of HOS717*.

<sup>22</sup> See [http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/documents/Z1/Service-Learning Resources/11799-Service-Learning%20in%20the%20Curriculum%20-%20A%20Resource%20for%20HEIs.pdf](http://www.uovs.ac.za/faculties/documents/Z1/Service-Learning%20Resources/11799-Service-Learning%20in%20the%20Curriculum%20-%20A%20Resource%20for%20HEIs.pdf)

has developed since 2002 when the first CS Policy was adopted. The only reference to CS in the Conditions of Service document is the following (see section in bold letters):

"By virtue of the mission of the University, the work assignment of the staff member, comprises of the following:

- Teaching
- Research
- **Supplementary community service within his/her field of study if and as agreed upon.**
- Rendering service within University context..."

Discussions and negotiations aimed at addressing this obvious discrepancy will begin in June 2006. The following reference to this matter, as well as the issue of a fair weighting system for CS, has been included in the draft CS policy document:

"Tangible acknowledgement of and credit for involvement of staff in community service will be integrated into the performance management system of the UFS, ensuring growth in the status of community service in line with that of teaching and research and equalising the recognition given to staff members in this regard. A sub-minimum weighting for community service will be determined for all academic staff members of the UFS and will be reflected in their conditions of service."

Currently, support, development and recognition of CS undertaken by students are mainly co-ordinated by initiatives not managed by the CDCS, such as KOVSCOM (the volunteer CS programme of the UFS), the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) initiative and others. Support and development of students involved in CSL rest with the individual staff members offering such modules. Recognition of excellent contributions to CSL is an area where the CDCS and the various faculties should focus on more in future.

Support, development and recognition for partners involved in CS and CSL are currently mostly indirect and have not been monitored or evaluated adequately yet. This aspect of its CS endeavour should certainly receive more focused attention in future.

## **7.5 QUALITY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS IN RESPECT OF THE OUTPUT AND IMPACT OF COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Continuous monitoring and evaluation to gauge the output and impact of CS are regarded as critical by the CDCS. After the first three-year cycle of policy implementation, practitioners at the UFS are ready and willing to refine existing mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of CS in general, but with particular emphasis on CSL. A comprehensive quality management system is now provided in the *Good Practice Guide* of the HEQC and JET-CHESP, which has already been referred to (paragraph 7.1)<sup>23</sup>. This Institutional QM Report for the UFS is the result of a first run undertaken by two staff members of the CDCS for purposes of pilot-testing the instrument during the development phase of the Guide towards the end of 2005.

<sup>23</sup> See Additional Documentation (Institutional) file 2.3.1.2.3 for an example of how the self-evaluation instrument for quality management (QM) at the institutional level may be utilised.

### 7.5.1 Monitoring and evaluation of CSL

The integration of CS QM arrangements with those of teaching and learning is mainly facilitated by arrangements developed for CSL. The HEQC/JET-CHESP self-evaluation instruments for the faculty, programme and module levels provide comprehensive guidelines for such integration at each of these levels (see the *Good Practice Guide* mentioned earlier). During the pilot-testing phase of these instruments, self-evaluation reports were compiled by the Faculty of the Humanities<sup>24</sup>, the B.A. Studies Programme<sup>25</sup> and CSL in the Humanities module<sup>26</sup>. Two lecturers who offer CSL modules at the Central University of Technology (CUT) also participated in the pilot-testing.

At micro-level, a comprehensive set of instruments for monitoring and evaluation (M & E) were introduced at CSL module level via the Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (MERP), conducted for CHESP by the-then Evaluation Research Agency (ERA) of Prof. Johann Mouton of Stellenbosch University. The findings of the MERP have been captured in an article by Wildschut and Mouton which will be published in a volume of *Acta Academica Supplementum* 2005(3) mentioned above. The ERA-run CHESP M & E regime set the tone for and raised awareness of the need to focus on quality management of CSL activities for and by all participants. UFS module convenors participated in the MERP for three years. Updated and refined versions of these instruments have since been developed for institutional purposes. The original MERP pre- and post-implementation questionnaires for students which were further developed at the UFS to incorporate most indicators of the *Good Practice Guide*, have recently been included in the SLCBP of CHESP.

Four academic staff members of the UFS who offer CSL modules have been requested to submit their CSL case studies for a publication of JET-CHESP which is due to appear in 2006<sup>27</sup>.

### 7.5.2 Areas for improvement

Despite large strides already taken by the UFS, quality arrangements are still lacking with regard to gauging the impact of CSL on student recruitment, retention and throughput. Arrangements (e.g. collaborative studies) to gauge the impact on external partners are also still rather fragmented and need to be developed further by experts in programme evaluation and development studies. Such future studies will also have to include the development of procedures to evaluate the contribution of CS in response to national, regional and local priorities. More public forums have to be created by the UFS to allow broader society to take part in discussions around the contribution that the UFS is or should be making, in the form of CS conferences, symposiums, workshops and public hearings.

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<sup>24</sup> See Additional Documentation, (Institutional Guide), file 2.3.1.2.2 for *UFS pilot-testing of Faculty Level Self-evaluation Instrument of the Good Practice*.

<sup>25</sup> See Additional Documentation, (Institutional Guide), file 2.3.1.2.2 for *UFS pilot-testing of Faculty Level Self-evaluation Instrument of the Good Practice*.

<sup>26</sup> See Additional Documentation, (Institutional Guide), file 2.3.1.2.2 for *UFS pilot-testing of Module Level Self-evaluation Instrument of the Good Practice Guide*.

<sup>27</sup> Two of the case studies are available at Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.2.

## 7.6 REVIEW AND BENCHMARKING OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

This evaluative stage provides indicators for the review of CS which is aimed at continuous improvement and innovation. In the case of the UFS, a formalised cycle of review of the CS policy and implementation plan was drawn up and approved in the first CS Policy.

### 7.6.1 First policy review

The first three-year cycle after the adoption of the CS policy ended in 2005 and the CDCS resolved to embark on an inclusive, participatory process to review the policy. The following is an excerpt from the invitation by the Chief Director: CS to the first CS policy review work seminar:

On 2 February 2005, the UFS Exco granted approval for a work seminar on community service to be held on 25 and 26 May 2005. The title of the seminar was: *Community Service – the way forward*.

The following serves as background information for this work seminar (we quote from the Exco agenda):

- *As part of the Exco, Senate and Council's approval process of the UFS's Community Service Policy on 12, 13 and 14 August 2002, the Chief Directorate: Community Service undertook to review the policy after three years.*
- *The proposed work seminar creates an opportunity to take stock of the progress made since August 2002, to determine what critical input is needed to facilitate further expansion, development and implementation and how Community Service Learning and Research can take shape within the UFS's strategic plans and priorities for 2005 – 2007.*

A comprehensive programme<sup>28</sup> was drawn up and followed for the Work Seminar in order to include the full range of high profile to "grass-roots" participants. In the first report<sup>29</sup> that was submitted to Executive Management of the UFS after the event, the Chief Director: CS stated the following:

"The work seminar was a great success. Eighty files containing documentation were prepared and handed to participants, although there were even more persons who attended the seminar on an informal basis. The outline of people who attended the seminar is as follows:

Exco (7); EM (3) [in addition to the Exco members and deans]; deans (3); Qwaqwa (4); academic personnel (43); support services (5); SRC presidents (2) [Qwaqwa and Vista]; MUCPP (7); FSRDPP (4); students (6); and other visitors (10).

<sup>28</sup> See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for *The programme of the CS Work Seminar*.

<sup>29</sup> See Additional Documentation, (Institutional), file 2.3.1.2.3 for *The Report to Exco on the CS Work Seminar*.

The CDCS is convinced that the revised CS Policy will become an important steering mechanism for CS at the UFS for the 2006-2008 period<sup>30</sup>.

### 7.6.2 Strategies for improvement

Strategies for improvement were identified in the course of 2006 in discussions that were held on the policy and negotiations regarding objectives for future implementation of policy stipulations and goals. The responsibility for taking recommendations forward will largely rest with the CDCS, in close collaboration with CS Portfolio Committees in the faculties, as well as partnership structures such as the FSRDPP, MUCPP and others. A more inclusive management structure was proposed during the annual CS Work Summit during February 2006, namely a CS Management Committee which will also include chairpersons of Faculty Portfolio Committees. These CS Work Summits represent an effort to encourage broader participation and are aimed at providing a forum for in-depth discussions of strategic planning and implementation issues.

### 7.6.3 Benchmarking

As far as the broader CE and CS profile of the UFS is concerned, projects and community engagement initiatives of the Centre for Development Support, SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise), MUCPP, Boyden Observatory, and many more that resort under the various faculties and support services, have earned national and international recognition. Regarding CSL in particular, the following may be mentioned:

- In 2004, an Honorary Doctorate was awarded to Prof. Robert G. Bringle (IUPUI) by the UFS for his exceptional contribution to the development of CSL in South Africa, mainly through his participation in the CHESP initiative.
- Regular fact-finding visits by colleagues from other HE institutions indicate that the UFS is regarded as one of the leaders in the field of CS (and CSL in particular) by peers.
- Visits by lecturers and students from the USA also bear testimony to the significant CS profile of the institution.
- Through consistent participation in CHESP and its national initiatives since 1999 the UFS has been able to compare and benchmark its CSL work on an ongoing basis.

Benchmarking of CS at the UFS has taken various forms in the past. One example is its participation in the benchmarking programme of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), which specifically focused on "Engagement with Community and Region" in 2004. The results of this benchmarking initiative of the ACU have been less than favourable with regard to CE at the UFS. This could probably at least partly be attributed to the fact that the indicators used in the community engagement benchmarking checklist did not reflect the specific, contextualised CS mission, goals and objectives of the UFS.

A more recent development in the area of benchmarking pertains to the participation (since April 2006) of the Vice-Rector: Academic Planning and the Senior Lecturer: CSL in developing a *South African Survey Instrument for Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions*, a project undertaken by JET-CHESP. In future such close

<sup>30</sup> Available at Additional documentation (Institutional) file 2.3.1.1.4 for the *Progress Report: CS Policy Review (February 2006)*.

collaboration with other South African HE institutions working in this field will hopefully lead to even more useful and development-driven CS/CE benchmarking exercises.

## 7.7 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

It could be stated, without fear of contradiction, that the UFS has responded well to the need to expand the management structures (see 7.3.4 above) and procedural arrangements (e.g. partnership development, see 7.3.5) for the delivery of quality CS and CSL. The inclusive, participatory approach to the development of an academically integrated CS agenda which has been followed over the past three years (e.g. the policy review process, see paragraph 7.5.1) is currently bearing fruit. Considerable progress has been made towards increasing the levels of "buy-in" and ownership among staff members, although it is acknowledged that some academics will never accept that CS can be fully integrated with the (other) scholarly activities of a university.

The CDCS is intent on linking and synchronising CS activities with current and future broad initiatives of the UFS, including the Strategic Priorities, the Transformation Plan, the Focus Group strategy and the Tri-campus Project.

Recruiting adequate support for, and securing the participation of the relevant external stakeholders represent, and always will, a tremendous challenge in an environment where so many demands are made on the time and resources of the public sector in particular. Without their full co-operation and support, CS remains a demanding, even risky endeavour. However, the participatory, reciprocal ethos of CS at the UFS requires that it should be based firmly in broad, cooperative partnerships where all parties pull their resources together to build a better province and region.

In conclusion, we cite the following statement<sup>31</sup> which defines the UFS commitment to quality delivery of academically integrated community service:

In South Africa we currently need courageous scholars with a firm commitment to the "public good", as defined democratically by all those who are involved. These scholars should not be afraid either to leave the comfort zones of their laboratory or lecture room, or to give up the hegemonic position of scientific knowledge. They should be brave enough to take outcomes-based education one (inevitable) step further; that is, to include the responsive, collaborative and interdisciplinary approach of community service which is fully integrated with teaching, learning and research. In this regard the UFS intends to take incremental steps from policy to practice so that an enabling environment is available to its staff, students and partners.

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<sup>31</sup> For example, a paper presented at the international conference: EMSU 2002 in Africa, Environmental Management for Sustainable Universities: The Role of Higher Education in Sustainable Development, 11-13 September 2002, Rhodes University, Grahamstown. A reworked and updated version of the paper is available at [http://www.uovs.ac.za/documents/community\\_service/2005-5/2005\\_09\\_Community\\_service\\_sustainable\\_development\\_policy\\_web.pdf](http://www.uovs.ac.za/documents/community_service/2005-5/2005_09_Community_service_sustainable_development_policy_web.pdf)