On campus

Global representatives flock to Stellenbosch for 3rd student affairs global summit*

Invited representatives from 19 countries working in the rapidly developing area of student affairs and services gathered in Stellenbosch to attend the bi-annual Global Summit on Student Affairs and Services. The Summit brought together key leaders in Student Affairs from around the globe to engage in dialogue around critical issues in Student Affairs.

Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and the International Association for Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) were the joint initiators and drivers of the event, and after a rigorous application process Stellenbosch University (SU) was granted the honour to host the event held from Wednesday to Friday (26-28 October 2016) at the Wallenberg Research Centre at STIAS in Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Prof. Adam Habib, chair of Universities South Africa (USAf), an organisation representing South Africa's universities, and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, delivered the keynote address on Thursday themed "Contextualising Higher Education within Emerging Democracies".

"The event is a very exciting platform for a global conversation to advance the role of higher education in general and student affairs and services in particular," said Dr Kevin Kruger, president of NASPA. It was the third event of its kind with the first event held in Washington in 2012 and the second in Rome in 2014.

According to Dr Birgit Schreiber, Senior Director: Student Affairs at SU, one of the main organisers of the Summit and representative of the host institution,

> Not only in South Africa, but the world over an emphasis is increasingly placed on what can be termed a global transformation project. Sharply coming into focus are issues such as how a global perspective meets local realities; activism and democratisation; access and gender and human rights. Although these issues are globally relevant, they are extremely relevant and topical in South Africa and other emerging democracies. It is thus very fitting that South Africa was chosen as host nation to these important discussions.

More than 50 selected thought-leaders of higher education from countries across regions and continents participated in the event. "Discussing Student Affairs initiatives with colleagues from around the world helps to enhance overall student learning and success," noted Achim Meyer auf der Heyde, president of IASAS.

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"The programme is usually focused on a particular theme," added Schreiber. "This year we used the UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth (Medium Strategy 2014–2021 with focus on Access and Gender) as the basis for discussions. The focus is on translating the high-level objectives into local realities, addressing issues of global-local tensions, rising opportunities in youth access and the role of universities and Student Affairs in democratisation and transformation around race and gender inequalities."

According to Schreiber, the two-day conversations generated concrete outcomes:

> They focussed on regional collaboration and partnerships among the professional organisations and universities to further the work in Higher Education with special focus on accelerating the ideals of Social Justice. A position paper based on participants' contributions will be submitted to UNESCO.

Apart from dignitaries from NASPA and IASAS, Mr Yousaf Gabru, Chairperson of the South African National Commission for UNESCO, and those representing among others the European Council on Student Affairs, the Southern African Federation for Student Affairs and the Academic Association of Student Affairs (USA) were in attendance.

Also included in the programme was a student panel consisting of six students who shared how their experienced the impact of Student Affairs on their lives and studies, and how Student Affairs enabled them to promote values of human rights, equity and justice.