

**Transformation Summit
28 July 2017**

Institutional Culture

- including visual culture and institutional rituals
- deeply embedded patterns of organisational behaviour, shared assumptions, beliefs or ideologies.
- Require recommendations and feedback
- Dialogue rather than debate...
- Emphasis on equal opportunity to speak, reiterating the rules of engagement; important not to interrupt those speaking.
- most of the participants are graduates of the university, staff, emeritus, and/or have children at the uni.

“My role in the university is... And this is important because...” and position themselves in terms of how they feel approximate to the university

- Participants expressed affinity to, attachment, and commitment to the university, while others expressed no love for or patriotism towards Rhodes - looking for the first way out.
- Staff who joined the uni from other institutions are shocked by the culture of the institution (“culture”) – “black academics don’t want to stay in this uni” & uni not always accepting of who they are. Veneer of English liberality, civility masking exclusionary.
- Former local student felt very alienated while at Rhodes apart from academics, would like to see more local students being “part of” the university
- Communication gaps between staff and students need to shift.
- Awareness of privilege and proximity to the culture of the institution, which is characterised as cis, white, and male.
- Historical versions of the university inconsistent with current ones.
- What do we mean by Rhodes university culture? Is it the dominance of white people or the way things are done in the uni? Is it about the material stuff like flowers, buildings, and aesthetics? And Grahamstown?
- All agreed that we need to be uncomfortable...being too comfortable means that one is not able to be critical.

Themes

Identity

Academic Curriculum

Diversity, Respect

Hierarchy, Transformation, Policy, Accountability

*Recommendations, Directions and Implementation: What needs to be addressed and how?? What is implementable? What is the process?

Results

- Why are aspects of institutional culture so alienating? Language, codes of behaviours, visual culture...norms which are "normal" for some but not for others. Class has a lot to do with this.
- Sense that Rhodes is an ivory tower cut off from the rest of Grahamstown.
- Artworks on the wall ... the very concept on the wall was alienating.
- Need for individual on campus to oversee the uni's visual culture, reflect upon it.
- Spaces need to be created around the uni in order to reflect upon the institutional culture and digital spaces.
- More canvassing of student opinion to see what is it about the visual culture
- Hierarchical structures which are "normal" but exclusionary to others.
- Importance of the gap between what the institutional culture and how it is experienced by those in the university
- Uni is too corporatized, too top-heavy, too top down.
- Communication and transparency is paramount.
- Strategies that respond to the diversity on campus.
- Extended leadership forum which includes all stakeholders
- Policies should be reviewed more regularly and implemented mindfully.

Q&A Session

- students out of this conversation because they are disillusioned, charges against activists must be dropped. Forum is not representing the revolutionary voices of students.
- Why is there such a loyalty to the past?
- Make those people who are here feel welcome, that the uni is theirs.
- Guard against "inclusivity" being "assimilation" - but rather respect for diversity.
- Recommendation for fine arts department to take on the task of looking at the visual culture.
- Rhodes is not a happy family
- Name change: how can the institution take the responsibility for informing people regarding name change.
- Name change: need for more consultation processes including members of the greater Grahamstown community, no "papering over cracks".
- Policy review: important.

- Invest in intersectional research on policy (NB)
- RU Equity employment plan is not the best plan.
- Issue is reimagining what this university could be - name is just a cosmetic change.
- Address whether