

Terms of Reference

External evaluation of the four-year Siyaphumelela initiative

Saide is seeking the services of an evaluator experienced in evaluations of higher education interventions to conduct an evaluation of particular aspects of the four-year Siyaphumelela initiative, funded by the Kresge Foundation.

Background

The Siyaphumelela initiative involves improving institutional capacity to increase student success by collecting and analysing student data and integrate it with institutional research, information technology systems, academic development, planning and academic divisions. The Kresge Foundation is providing four years of institutional support, plus potential bonus grants, to the participating universities. Five South African universities, Durban University of Technology (a university of technology), Nelson Mandela University (comprehensive university), University of the Free State, University of Pretoria and University of Witwatersrand (research universities) joined the Siyaphumelela initiative. Notwithstanding their diverse contexts and foci, these universities agreed to shared goals to help improve the nation's ability to use data to drive student success.

Saide, as the organising body, coordinates and maximises the learning from the project activities through inter-institutional, national and international engagements as well as through the management of a knowledge portal. For more information, please see <http://www.siyaphumelela.org.za/>.

Programme objectives

The objectives that partner institutions agreed to were:

- Develop annual goals for improving student success,
- Establish a broadly representative student success committee or task force (if not already in-place) comprising representatives of Institutional Research, Information and Communications Technology, Academic Development, Student Services, Planning, Academic divisions, students, and a senior member of the university's executive team,
- Develop sustained capacity to implement and manage a data chain (collect, collate, analyse and use both historical and real-time data),
- Use data analytics to review the top 10 courses/modules in which students fail, withdraw, or receive otherwise unsatisfactory grades to improve student success with an increased mark of C or better,
- Strengthen and integrate data analytics across multiple departments (Institutional Research, Information and Communications Technology, Academic Development,

Planning, and Academic Divisions / Faculties) to improve decision-making for greater student success, and

- Scale-up across the Institution evidence-based student success efforts selected and developed in response to problems identified through data analytics, and share good practice more widely in the national system.

To assist partners in achieving these objectives, *Saide*, in its coordination and knowledge management role, undertook to do the following:

- Setup up their programmes and initiate institutional development,
- Investigate and address issues related to high impact practices supported through institutional development underpinned by coaching support,
- Build and support initiatives to drive national discourse including development of systems and practices that could be shared among all South African HEIs,
- Contribute to the international discourse through participation in conferences and seminars, and
- Make a contribution to understanding the use of student analytics to support student success.

Overall, realising these objectives is intended to result in South African universities employing evidence-based practices—informed by robust analysis of student data at each institution and by sharing approaches across the participating institutions — to yield more graduates from all racial, gender, and socio-economic groups and reduce any differences in university completion rates among those groups.

To achieve better graduation rates for all students, the Siyaphumelela initiative thus aims to achieve the following outcomes three outcomes:

- (1) Learnings about models to optimise student success are shared as **high impact practices** (knowing);
- (2) Sustained **capacity** is developed to **implement** and **manage** a data chain (collect, collate, analyse and use both historical and real-time data) (doing);
- (3) A positive culture of **evidence-based enquiry** and analysis geared towards student success is created and sustained (being).

Evaluation purpose, audiences, foci and questions

The overall **purpose** of the evaluation is to elaborate on the extent to which the Siyaphumelela initiative has achieved the three outcomes identified above. (In Appendix A these outcomes are related to the programme objectives and activities.)

The **audiences** for the external evaluation are:

- The five Siyaphumelela participating universities,
- *Saide*, as the organising body, and

- The Kresge Foundation.

Proposed evaluation foci and questions related to the identified audiences include:

- **Providing the Universities external, objective feedback on their progress and success:** To what extent and in what ways do the universities exhibit the three desired institutional outcomes of the Siyaphumelela initiative? In what ways did the Siyaphumelela activities contributed to the achievement of those outcomes?
- **Improving Saide's capacity to undertake coordination:** To what extent and in what ways did the universities / Kresge benefit from Saide's role? To what extent has Saide's capacity as an intermediary developed over the course of this initiative?
- **Helping the Kresge Education team understand the success of the Siyaphumelela initiative:** To what extent did Siyaphumelela achieve its goals in terms of improving institutional capacity and student outcomes? To what extent do the universities exhibit the desired outcomes? To what extent has Siyaphumelela contributed to a national dialogue around student success? In what ways, did Kresge's approach to the initiative support or hinder the success of the universities?

Scope

In the first phase, the evaluator will deepen their understanding of Siyaphumelela and revise their evaluation scope for approval of Saide. In the second phase, the evaluator will execute the revised evaluation scope of work.

In the proposed scope of work, the evaluator should at minimum describe how they would approach:

- Review of key Siyaphumelela documents,
- Engagement with partner institutions,
- Engagement with the Kresge Education Team and
- Engagement with members of the *Saide*/Siyaphumelela team.

The core participants (*Saide*, partner institutions and Kresge) have agreed to contribute to the evaluation's data collection efforts.

Governance/accountability

The external evaluator will be contracted by *Saide*, and the consultancy fee paid from the Siyaphumelela grant.

The external evaluation will be managed by *Saide's* Siyaphumelela Project Leader.

Professional qualifications and experience

The successful applicant will:

- Be an evaluation practitioner with at least a relevant Master's degree,
- Have a background in education (preferably also evaluations in education),
- Have experience in evaluation and expertise in data collection.

Deliverables and schedule

- Finalisation of the Evaluation Plan – 31 January 2018.
- Guidance to partner institutions (presentation and report) – Mid-march 2018.
- Reflections on progress with partner institutions (presentation and report) – Mid-September 2018.
- Final report – 31 January 2019.

Documents provided with these Terms of Reference:

- Kresge Foundation's Request for Proposal
- Participating Universities' 2016 reports
- *Saide's* 2016 report

Budget amount

Maximum for all components R250 000.00. This amount excludes travel costs, which *Saide* will pay directly.

Deadline for submission of applications

Midnight, Central African Time, 1 November 2017.

Format

By email PDF document (5-6 pages) containing the following:

- Elaboration of scope with approach and methodology
- Elaboration of proposed budget
- CV of applicant
- Timeline for evaluation activities from start to 31 January 2019 finish.
- Contact details of three referees.

In addition, please send one exemplar (evaluation report or brief) from a prior evaluation conducted by the applicant.

Review criteria

- Proposal quality – addressing ToR and understanding the nature of the evaluation.
- Proposal feasibility.
- Lead consultant experience:
 - Relevant *Master's*, and experience of evaluations in higher education.
 - Some understanding of the use of data to support student success higher education.
 - Experience in evaluation and expertise in data collection.

- The close attention to and interpretation of the outcomes, indicators and purpose of the evaluation.
- The extent to which the evaluation design was not only sound and theoretically informed, but also responsive to the particular requirements of the ToR.
- Cost (budget within limit specified in ToR).

Adjudication process

- 6 to 20 November 2017
- Notification by 30 November 2017

Work to begin

- Ideally during January, 2018

Available Documents

- Initial Requests for Proposals for participating in the Siyaphumelela initiative
- 2016 Saide and University Reports

[Download Documents.](#)

Appendix A: Table 1. Siyaphumelela framework

| Initiative Objectives <i>From RFP</i> | Outcomes <i>From Theory of Change</i> | Programme Objectives <i>From the RFP, the Contracts and in the latest Reporting Template</i> |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1. Improve capacity to collect student data and integrate it with Institutional Research (IR), ICT, academic development, student services, planning and academic divisions</p> <p>2. Create South African models of universities using successful data analytics to improve student outcomes</p> <p>3. Create a greater awareness and support for evidence to improve student success in South Africa</p> <p>4. Create and highlight a shared vocabulary and consensus on especially effective practices to improve student success</p> <p>5. Enlarge the cadre of experienced institutional</p> | <p>A. Learnings about models to optimise student success are shared as high impact practices (knowing) (Objectives 2 and 4)</p> <p>B. Sustained capacity is developed to implement and manage a data chain (collect, collate, analyse and use both historical and real-time data) (doing) (Objectives 1 and 5)</p> <p>C. A positive culture of evidence-based enquiry and analysis geared towards student success is created and sustained (being) (Objective 3).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop annual goals for improving student success, such as 1st year retention to 2nd year based on entering cohort. • Commit to reducing student outcomes differences based on race, gender, class and first generation status, while maintaining quality. • Establish a broadly representative student success committee or task force (if not already in-place) comprising representatives of Institutional Research, Information and Communications Technology, Academic Development, Student Services, Planning, Academic divisions, students, and a senior member of the university’s executive team. • Develop sustained capacity to implement and manage a data chain (collect, collate, analyse and use both historical and real time data). • Use data analytics to review the top 10 classes in which students fail, withdraw, or receive otherwise unsatisfactory grades to see if there are opportunities to improve student success • Strengthen and integrate data analytics among Institutional Research, Information and Communications Technology, Academic Development, Planning and Academic divisions. • Scale-up student success efforts across the university. <p><i>Activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree that the institution’s Vice-Chancellor will attend the annual student success conference. • Commit to fully participating in activities of the network, including sharing data and experiences with other grantees on student success, attending twice annual meetings, attending the annual conference, and participating in training, trips to international conferences and the study tour on student success. |

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| <p>researchers versed in data analytics to support student success.</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree that any bonus grant earned will be applied to support carefully focused • professional development for faculty. • Agree to participate in a Siyaphumelela-sponsored national discussion of High Impact Practices such as the First-Year Experience and share evidence on how the creation of these practices contributed to student success. • Agree to administer the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) on a regular basis (as recommended by the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State). • Provide required reports and participate in evaluation and dissemination activities within the Network. |
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