

**LAST BASTION**

. . . Unlike any other South African university post-1994, Stellenbosch University has remained predominantly white and Afrikaans



## Coloureds will erode academic reputation of varsity – HSRC study

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AN increase in the number of coloured students would result in falling academic standards and would be accompanied by the financial ruin of Stellenbosch University (SU), suggests a Human Science Research Council study.

HSRC researcher Trish Gibbon argued that coloured students would require high levels of academic and financial support. SU has managed to remain predominantly white and Afrikaans. It has a solid academic reputation built on a well-off white student body.

“The majority of its undergraduate students are white, Afrikaans-speaking, fee-paying youngsters who have had reasonably good schooling and come from middle- to high-income families,” according to an HSRC study released two weeks ago.

The coloured graduation rate and that of black Africans was nationally 5% lower than that of whites and, in the context of a state subsidy funding formula that rewarded throughput and graduation, that would place an additional financial burden on the university, she said.

Coloureds were mainly first-generation students and suffered far greater financial constraints than

most white students.

However, Gibbon said it would be misleading to suggest the university was content with its racial profile. The fact that there were few black African students at undergraduate level was a result of the language barrier.

“So what are the available options?” she asked.

If the university continued to hold on to Afrikaans as the primary means of instruction and to be the university of choice for Afrikaans-speaking students, then it would have to enrol more coloured students, she said.

The study also said SU was an extreme case in the South African higher education landscape, a last bastion of white dominance, an anomaly 14 years after a move to majority rule and, to some, a provocation.

Professor Magda Fourie, vice-rector for teaching, needed time to study the report before commenting.

However, the statistics clearly indicated that despite the HSRC study focusing on the student cohort of 1999 to 2002/3, SU was still predominantly white.

Last year, there were 12 113 whites at undergraduate level and 2 543 coloureds, 981 black Africans and 232 Indians.

