

# DESIGNING FOR SUCCESS: A University of the Free State perspective

Siyaphumelela Conference

Francois Strydom  
27-29 June 2017



## SIYAPHUMELELA @ UFS

- Creating capacity to follow African wisdom
- Developing a deeper understanding of our students and our institution
  - Using deeply contextualised student engagement measures to empower staff
- Act on our understanding at scale
  - Focus on evaluating the impact
- Developing a culture of evidence
- Experiencing and sharing progress
- Reflection and lessons...to date

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## AFRICAN WISDOM

“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”

~Desmond Tutu

There can be no peace without understanding.

~Senegalese proverb

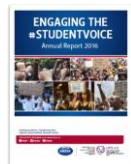
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## DEVELOPING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

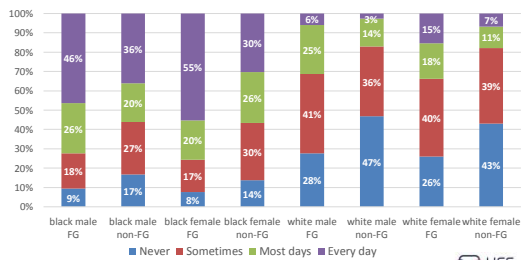
### • OF OUR STUDENTS

- Some insights from the SASSE
  - Academic challenge (with appropriate support) is critical
    - Very little difference between challenge levels of first year and senior students
  - First year students require support for transition... and so do seniors
  - Our students collaborate to learn
  - We did not understand well enough our students financial stress...



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## UNDERSTANDING OUR STUDENTS FINANCIAL STRESS



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## DEVELOPING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

### • OF OURSELVES

- We are not intentional enough about:
  - Providing and expanding transition support (first year & senior)
  - Promoting enough diversity in our subjects
  - Academic advising
  - Monitoring peer learning

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# ACTING ON OUR UNDERSTANDING... AT SCALE

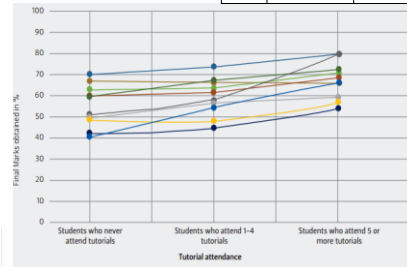
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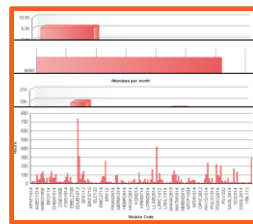
## ACADEMIC STUDENT TUTORIAL EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME (A\_STEP)

- 60% of UFS undergraduate student body in 2015

Year	Hours Tutored	Sessions Presented	Attendance
2013	8 746.35	7 304	66 641
2014	11 346.11	9 415	90 429
2015	12 993.77	10 445	111 527



## TUTORIAL DASHBOARD: INCREASED SOPHISTICATION IN DATA USE



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## ACADEMIC ADVISING

**Vision** – Providing a supportive institutional atmosphere that promotes student success through the alignment of setting and achieving educational and career aspirations

INDIVIDUAL ADVISING (2016)	
Registration contract	930
Number of students that came for first session	216
Number of students that came for second session	63
Number of students that came for third session	16
Number of students that came for fourth session	3
Number of online advising sessions	25
Wired-In-Navigating-Graduation-Success (WINGS)	147
Total number of individual sessions	470
GROUP ADVISING SESSIONS (2016)	
UFS101 module	6289
AA in residences (ResLife collaboration)	147

### Students' reasons for visiting "Wired-In-Navigating-Graduation-Success"



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## FIRST YEAR SEMINAR: UFS 101

### UFS101 STRUCTURE

#### Semester 1:

##### Get success at UFS

Focus: Help students make a successful transition to the university by helping them to develop and apply the skills required to succeed academically.

#### Semester 2:

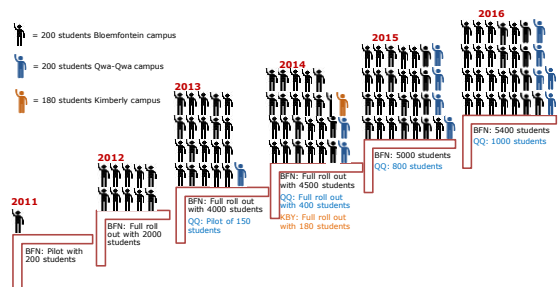
##### Shared intellectual experience

Focus: Apply critical thinking skills by engaging with complex problems from multi-disciplinary perspectives.

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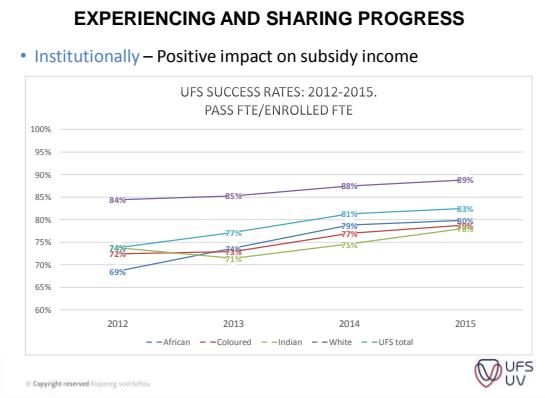
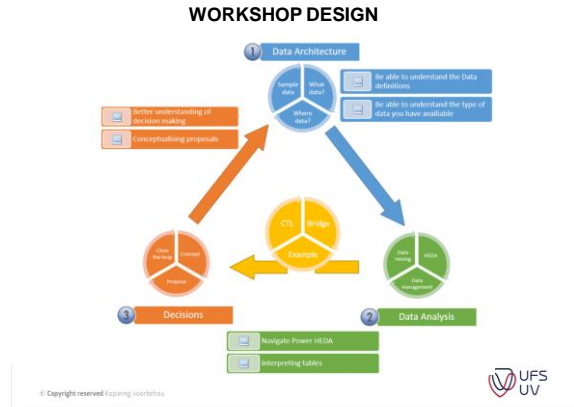
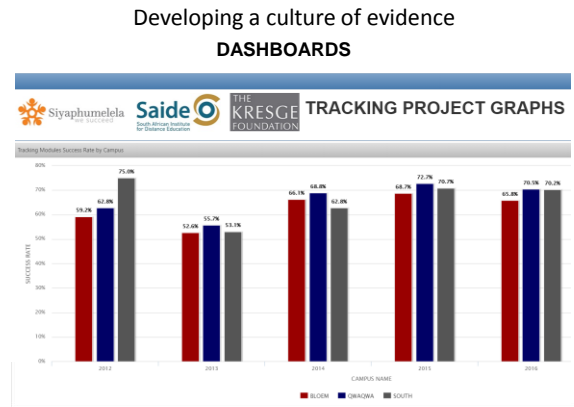
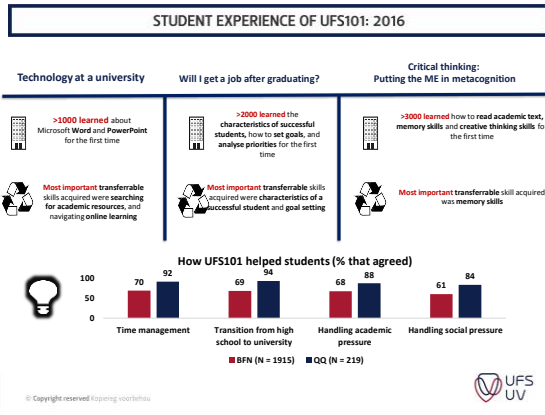


## UFS101 growth in student numbers



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- ### EXPERIENCING AND SHARING PROGRESS
- System sharing
    - Sharing ideas and practices with Siyaphumelela partners
    - SASSE instruments are used by:
      - 16 Public HEIs, 4 Private HEIs
      - 1 Southern African HEI
    - Academic Advising
      - 9 Institutions are part of the Academic Advising work stream
    - UFS101
      - 5 Institutions have visited and developed their own versions
      - OER Africa – content sharing

## REFLECTION AND LESSONS...TO DATE

**BE REALISTIC AND PERSISTENT**

- Evidence is best used to **inform** decisions as contrasted with **driving** decisions.
  1. Rational actors will be disappointed.
  2. Politics and resources can compromise and militate against convincing evidence.
  3. Evidence does not point to the contextually appropriate action; only clear-thinking well-informed people can do that.
 

(Kuh,2014)
  4. Persuading others requires collaboration, trust and time.
  5. Persist and persevere.



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