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Community Engagement Orientation Course Report

Introduction

The Community Engagement Orientation (CEO) course is a partnership between RUCE and the DSA launched in 2022. It is a program designed to equip first-year students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for community engagement. The course is part of the Rhodes University Community Engagement Division's efforts to promote social justice, active citizenship, and community involvement among students. This report provides an overview of the Community Engagement Orientation Course, including its purpose, implementation, and outcomes.

Purpose of the Community Engagement Orientation Course

Rhodes University prides itself on the quality of students it produces. The overall aim is to produce students who are not only prepared for the workplace but also prepared to cope with the pressures of life. The primary goal of the Community Engagement Orientation Course is to introduce first-year students to the concept of community engagement and to encourage them to become active citizens who contribute to the betterment of their communities. The course aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to engage with communities in a meaningful and sustainable manner. The course also seeks to break down the perceived separation between the university and the community and to promote a sense of belonging and connection to Makhanda.

Implementation of the Community Engagement Orientation Course

The Community Engagement Orientation Course is implemented through a combination of training sessions, workshops, and community-based activities. The course is delivered by facilitators (CE Residence Reps) in residence, who are trained by the Rhodes University Community Engagement Division. The training covers topics such as social justice, privilege, community engagement, and active citizenship. The course also includes two CEO sessions, held monthly as part of the extended orientation programme (a total of 5 sessions).

Community Engagement Extended Orientation Programme

As part of the extended orientation programme, the Community Engagement Orientation Course also includes the "Exploring Makhanda Tours." The tours aim to expose first-year students to the rich history of Makhanda and to promote a sense of belonging and connection

to the community. The tours are run by tour guides who are trained by the Rhodes University Community Engagement Division (18 student CE Reps from RU Residences). The tour guides receive a background of all the tour stops, and a handbook is created that compiles information that the tour guides can speak about during the tour. The tour stops include the Rhodes University Community Engagement Office, 1820 Settlers Monument, Egazini Memorial, Joza Youth Hub, St. Mary's DCC, Kingswood College, and the Cathedral of St. George and St. Michael.



Outcomes of the Community Engagement Orientation Course

The Community Engagement Orientation Course has been successful in engaging first-year students in community-based activities and promoting a sense of belonging and connection to the community. In 2023, the CEO course has had a turnout of close to 700 first years, with some residences having full attendance for both sessions. The "Exploring Makhanda Tours" have been attended by **1036 first-year students for the year 2023**. The enthusiasm and dedication displayed by some of the Community Engagement Representatives has been commendable, with some being among the most active and the first to submit feedback and registers.

Conclusion

The course has been successful in engaging students in community-based activities and promoting a sense of belonging and connection to the community. The "Exploring Makhanda Tours" have been particularly successful in exposing first-year students to the rich history of Makhanda.

We acknowledge and thank the Division of Student Affairs for their contribution to this important initiative from funding the transport for the “Exploring Makhanda Tours” and the general encouragement and support they give RUCE and those driving the CEO course in the Residence system. Together we can do much!

Report compiled by: N, Nkwinti, H, Mlambo & M, Chauke (March 2023)