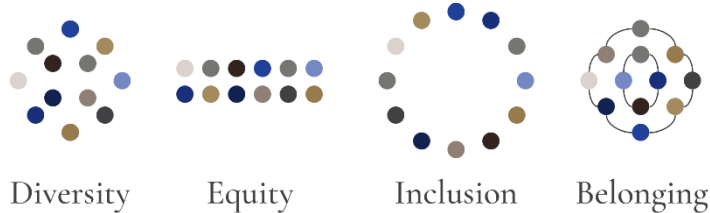


# FACULTY OF SCIENCE TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE



Diversity

Equity

Inclusion

Belonging

**Transformation Report - December 2025**

**Compiled by Dr Rupal Jivan, Chairperson**

---

## 1. Executive Summary

- **Committee/Community Name:** Faculty of Science Transformation Committee (FSTC)
- **Overall Mandate/Purpose:** The purpose of this committee is detailed in the Terms of Reference Document. Broadly, it is to ensure that line managers achieve transformation targets set out by WITS University's policies and imperatives which are framed by national legislation.
- **Key Achievements (Summary):** This year, the FSTC hosted its inaugural workshop titled "*The Transformation Lab: Reflecting on Who We Are, Shaping Who We Become*", which brought together individuals from the Faculty of Science and other faculties into a single space. The workshop was designed using open-space technology and facilitated by Dr. Bernadette Johnson (TEEO), Mr. Ciaran Heywood (TEEO), and Dr. Ekaterina Zibrova (TEEO). Participants engaged in meaningful discussions on institutional culture, beliefs, values, and belonging. In the second part, they reflected on their individual responsibilities as well as the role of university leadership in achieving a better institutional culture.
- **Major Challenges Encountered (Summary):** Two major challenges were encountered during the planning of this event. The first was securing adequate funding. The committee initially relied on the Faculty of Science Dean's allocation of R10 000, which was insufficient to host a workshop of this scale. Although the team successfully obtained additional funds, having a larger budget from the outset would have allowed for more effective planning and preparation, as the team would have had a clear understanding of its financial parameters and goals. The second challenge involved finding a suitable venue at WITS. There are few open and accessible spaces available for events of this nature, and the university should consider identifying and making such spaces available to staff for team-building activities at reasonable rates.

- **Future Focus Areas (Summary):** Given the success of the event, the FSTC aims to continue hosting faculty-wide workshops as part of its ongoing trajectory. In addition, the committee should strengthen its marketing efforts through platforms such as newsletters or a dedicated website. It will also be important for the committee to prioritise the evaluation of school-level committees, adopting a supportive rather than directive approach to their development and functioning.

## 2. Mandate and Alignment

- **Alignment with University Transformation Priorities:** Describe how the committee's/community's work aligns with the eight key transformation pillars articulated by the University:
  - Diversify the Wits Academy
 

Transformation chairs are required to be present at all recruitment and selection panels for new academic staff members. However, WITS's policies do not require a transformation chair for the recruitment of PAS staff which is something that may need to be queried in terms of HR policies.
  - Expansion of Knowledge Archives
 

The FSTC itself does not contribute to this at present but intends to do so with the creation of a unique website.
  - Institutional Culture
 

The FSTC has made significant progress in advancing the university's institutional culture imperatives through its inaugural "*Transformation Lab*" workshop. This initiative created a reflective space for staff from across the Faculty of Science and other faculties to critically examine the behaviours, values, and cultural dynamics that shape the university community. Using open-space dialogue, participants explored themes of belonging, shared responsibility, and leadership's role in fostering a more inclusive environment. Insights and recommendations emerging from these discussions will be consolidated into a formal report to guide future initiatives. The workshop marked a strong beginning, setting a clear trajectory for continued efforts to strengthen institutional culture and promote meaningful transformation within the university.
  - Institutional Naming, Visual and Spatial Redress
 

While the committee does not directly engage in institutional naming processes, smaller initiatives—such as teas, informal gatherings, or braais organised by school-level transformation committees—contribute meaningfully to spatial redress. Though modest in scale, these events bring together individuals across different levels within the schools, helping to dissolve social and hierarchical boundaries. By fostering comfort, inclusivity, and a sense of belonging in shared

spaces, such initiatives advance the broader institutional goal of creating an environment where all members of the WITS community feel welcome and valued.

- Language diversification, Multilingualism and Translanguaging

In 2024, the FSTC hosted a summit that brought together speakers from various institutions to engage in dialogue on multilingualism and intercultural intelligence. Through these discussions, staff within the Faculty of Science were introduced to innovative pedagogical approaches and new perspectives on integrating multilingualism into teaching and learning practices.

- Public Engagement

At present, the FSTC is not directly involved in public engagement.

- **Specific Objectives for 2025:** The objectives outlined below were set at the beginning of 2025. Next to each objectives, achievements have been stated.
  - I. Confirm adoption of the FSTC logo and pillars displayed above. (Achieved)
  - II. Improve FSTC visibility and share ideologies with the Faculty of Science Community by improving monthly themes emails and converting this to a “Did You Know?” series. (Not achieved)
  - III. Ensure that all FSTC members receive and read key documents such as the Terms of Reference, Employment Equity Act, Recruitment Policies and other supporting information. (Achieved)
  - IV. Run a Transformation Community of Practice Workshop specifically for members of the FSTC in coordination with Ciaran Heywood of the TEEO. (Restructured, to be held at FSTC meeting on 16 October 2025)
  - V. Improve structures by ensuring that that all schools create a transformation forum. (Partially achieved)
  - VI. Devise a plan and template for the creation of website on the WITS page where the FSTC can highlight its achievements. (Not achieved)
  - VII. Plan and host the 4th Annual Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEI&B) summit. (Achieved with restructuring, renamed “The Transformation Lab”)

### 3. Activities and Initiatives

For each major initiative or activity undertaken, provide the following details:

- **Initiative Title:** The Transformation Lab: Reflecting on Who We Are, Shaping Who We Become.
- **Description:** The Transformation Lab was a workshop designed to provide staff within the Faculty of Science at WITS University an opportunity to engage meaningfully with institutional culture, diversity, and inclusion. The workshop created a safe and constructive space for dialogue, reflection, and actionable planning toward building an inclusive and collaborative academic environment.
- **Alignment to Strategic Objectives:** Institutional Culture
- **Implementation Steps/Methodology:** This was an open-space technology workshop which aimed to, 1) increase awareness and understanding of institutional culture and its impact on staff experiences; 2) provide a safe space for open dialogue and shared experiences and; 3) develop actionable strategies to strengthen inclusivity and collaboration within the Faculty of Science.
- **Stakeholders Involved:** All members of the Faculty of Science and wider university were invited to participate. The audience consisted of stakeholders at all levels of the institution.
- **Key Dates/Timeline:** The workshop was held on 2 October 2025.

### 4. Successes and Outcomes

- **Achieved Outcomes:** This year, the workshop attracted 35 participants. Given its interactive, workshop-style format, participant inputs were captured in various forms. These contributions are currently being consolidated, and the committee will explore improved mechanisms for documentation and reporting to enhance the quality of feedback for future events of this nature.

**Evidence of Success: See photos below.**



Do We Have The Will to Change? And Stepping Into What Is Next.... \*transforming Mindsets\*

- Understand what the change is - cultural diversity and change
- Self awareness to change and conscious of "biases"
- Is the structure/system conducive to internal (self) and external factors affecting change
- External factors: socio-economic, political, technology, Culture, funding
- Technology: access, affordability, usability, adoption.

- Transfer of Knowledge, Skills
- Nurturing young talents
- Leadership opportunities
- Breaking the cycles of negativity..
- "Be Kind"
- What will influence the change?
- Creating a shared understanding
- Prioritise people strategy

- Create a ~~One~~ People centred Strategy
- Ensure co-creation
- Leaders should listen
- Bring people along the process of change transformation...
- Create spaces where agency can be activated; recognising and using sphere of influence for good

How do you identify bullying Has bullying becoming normal in the work place.

Accessibility to Academic Staff with parents

Students at risk of dropping out especially postgrads

For the independent ones

Change accommodation of parents post-grads, as an approach to supporting students



- **Contribution to Transformation:** The event allowed members of the WITS community to delve into institutional culture at WITS. Members were allowed to share ideas and perspectives, but more importantly sharing a space and communicating openly allowed participants to play a direct role in shaping culture within this community.
- **Lessons Learned from Successes:** The success of the workshop was indicated by participants directly requesting more events of this nature. They commended the organising team and were happy to have a space and opportunity to meet new people, build connections with other members of the community, share ideas and learn from each other. It was apparent from the nature of conversations that members of the science community do not share sufficient social interactions. This event provides the basis to support more team building events amongst our staff in the future.

## 5. Challenges and Opportunities

- **Challenges Encountered:** The primary challenges were limited funding and time constraints faced by the organising team. Increased funding would allow for workshops to be hosted by externally trained personnel and provide for improved venues, enhancing engagement and participation. The FSTC, as the organising team, consists of a small number of academic staff members. Greater involvement from school-level committees would expand capacity and enable more impactful events.
- **Impact of Challenges:** These limitations affected the number of participants the event could attract. Meaningful change requires broader engagement. While this year's workshop benefited from an excellent team of facilitators from the WITS community, involving external teams could provide fresh perspectives and new insights for participants.
- **Mitigation Strategies:** To address these challenges, the team will request a larger budget from the outset. Improved planning and preparation will allow for earlier advertising, adequate resources, and the opportunity to reach a larger audience. The Faculty of Science Transformation Committee is committed to support the organisation of an event such as this one from earlier in the new year.
- **Opportunities Identified:** The event highlighted a clear interest among WITS staff for spaces that foster community-building. Organising more events of this nature has the potential to contribute significantly to creating inclusive and collaborative environments across the university.

## 6. Future Plans and Recommendations (2026)

- **Proposed Initiatives for 2026:**
  - The FSTC intends to revisit its Terms of Reference so that the roles and responsibilities of School Transformation Chairs are more carefully delineated. This will be done in co-ordination with and under the advisement of the transformation steering committee.
  - The FSTC will work towards strengthening relationships between School Transformation Committees and students within their schools. Relationships between academics, support and technical staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students must be strengthened to promote collegiality and develop a better institutional culture. This must begin with creating adequate structures.
  - The FSTC will host its second Transformation Lab workshop, to create a space for conversation, collegiality and team building.
- **Adjustments to Strategy:** In 2025, the committee intended to host a community of practice meeting, which was unsuccessful. However, the intention for this meeting was strategic planning. Instead of a TCoP, this will be incorporated into the scheduled transformation committee meetings as ongoing strategic planning. The committee will perform more effectively if there is participation from all members.
- **Recommendations for the University/TEEO:** The TEEO has provided strong support to the FSTC throughout 2025. Moving forward, the committee requests continued collaboration through the sharing of information, knowledge, and ongoing guidance to ensure the success of future initiatives.