

Report of survey on how best to facilitate research within the University of Swaziland

Ms H Z Nkambule^{*}, Prof. K J B Keregero and Prof. O T Edje

ABSTRACT

Research is recognized and highly cherished mandate of any University. According to the University of Swaziland Act, 1983, the mandate for research is enshrined in the function of assisting in ‘the preservation, transmission and increase of knowledge and in the stimulation of the intellectual life and the cultural development of Swaziland’

However, staff members at the UNISWA do not seem to conducting as much research as would be expected in a University setting. As a result, the UNISWA Research Centre was requested to conduct a survey to determine the possible causes of the low rate of writing and soliciting research funds from the UNISWA Research Board.

Data were collected from primary sources and through a questionnaire developed by UNISWA Research Centre and the questionnaire was sent to all UNISWA academic.

Findings of the study showed that majority [82%] of the staff were aware of the existence of the UNISWA Research Board but lacked the finer details about its operations and activities. However, about half of the respondents [57%] were not quite sure of the procedures to follow in order to solicit funding from the Research Board. Majority of the researchers and research proposal that were funded by the UNISWA Research Board were from the Faculties of Agriculture and Science. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents [65.8%] received funding entirely from sources other than the UNISWA Research Board. Only 18.0% relied on the Board for funding, while 17.0% relied on both the Board and external sources. Staff was asked to indicate factors that inhibit them from conducting research. Using a six-point Likert-type scale, the findings showed that out of 19 factors listed in the questionnaire, only two were inhibiting staff from conducting research. These were: lack of required research skills and the difficulty in finding collaborators. Factors such as insufficient funding, heavy teaching load, lack of research culture, lack of incentives for research, lack of equipment, absence of research programmes reflecting national problems, less weight attached to research and too much bureaucracy and others did not constitute inhibiting factors for conducting research.

* UNISWA Research Centre, University of Swaziland

The study recommended that the UNISWA Research Board should address the following issues:

1. Establish orientation programmes for new staff;
2. Include issues like the roles and responsibilities of the UNISWA Research Board and how to apply for funding as an important aspect of UNISWA News
3. Shorten bureaucratic channels that proposals have to go through
4. Ensure that research proposals are evaluated by specialists in that area of expertise
5. Prepare pamphlets for periodic distribution to staff about procedures and guidelines for the writing of research proposals every semester
6. Organize workshops more frequently on the writing of research proposals.