



## **“Iminingo”**

*VICE-CHANCELLOR’S COMMUNIQUÉ*

**Wednesday, 6 September 2017**

### **DISRUPTIONS AT THE DURBAN CAMPUSES**

Late last night, I became aware of a social media call, purportedly by the SRC, for a shutdown of DUT. As stated in it, the reason for it is the S-Bux system of payments to NSFAS students. In short, S-Bux funds that were supposed to have been transferred to about 150 of our students a few months ago have not been transferred as yet, despite many promises by the NSFAS Office.

At an urgent departmental meeting I called this morning, Student Services confirmed they had been engaging with the SRC and the affected students on the one hand, and, on the other hand, with NSFAS officers. The latter had confirmed by yesterday already, that the outstanding funds would be transferred by today. I was advised that this had been communicated to the SRC and to some of the students who were at Student Services yesterday and that a common understanding had been reached that a solution was in the offing.

It was indeed a surprise, that there were sporadic, but quite threatening disruptions at, especially, the three Durban Campuses, namely: ML Sultan, Ritson and Steve Biko. Unlike in the past, there were no formal notices to Management that there would be a protest, to start with.

In search of a solution, Plan B was conceived in case the NSFAS S-Bux payments do not go through in the next 2-3 days. Under the following conditions, the University will be willing to give emergency advances to the affected students, provided:

- The number of students affected is not more than 175; give and take a handful.
- The total cost of such emergency advances is R250 000; give and take a small percentage thereof.
- The emergency advance will assist the affected students for no more than 1 month while the NSFAS Office finalises S-Bux payments to them.
- Each of the students affected has already been NSFAS approved for such funds.
- The quantum of emergency advance to each student affected will be refunded to the University direct by the NSFAS Office. Confirmation in this respect would have to be given by the NSFAS Office.
- The reason for non-payment through the S-Bux system is because of its technical glitches that would take about 3-5 days to resolve. Confirmation in this respect would have to be given by the NSFAS Office.
- This concession is not misconstrued as an entitlement going forward; nor that the University would always be in a position to assist in this manner in future.

It was reported to me earlier this afternoon that the NSFAS Office has confirmed that the funds have been transferred. I hope those funds are now accessible to the affected students. Thus, at this stage, Plan B may not necessarily kick in.

It has come to my attention that some students intimidated, threatened and acted violently to other students and staff members as they disrupted lectures. I, hereby, warn all students that such behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at DUT. It may lead to suspension and even, expulsion.

I wish to urge members of the DUT community – staff, students and alumni alike - to help Management to stamp out these acts of intimidation and violence. We often see social media videos and photos of all sorts of acts of violence, including school kids being sjambokked and other despicable acts. There must be staff, students or even alumni in positions to take some videos or photos of such behaviour against our own people. It takes the whole community to protect itself by being intolerant to violence against any other member. And, if you are not the subject of such violence today, it may be you tomorrow!

Management wishes to take drastic disciplinary steps against the perpetrators of acts of intimidation and violence on our campuses. To this end, I, hereby, call on all those who might have some footage, photos and other media to send it to **Mr Yugen Reddy** at **060 579 9980**.

To those who became subjects of intimidation, threats and violence, I wish to apologise that they could be subjected to all that by fellow members of our community; that our University is being steered away from being a place of reason and deliberation to being a place of coercion and violence. As noted above, this is something we have to work collaboratively to eradicate. It can be done!

The University remains open. Lectures, examinations and other academic/research work must continue as scheduled and without any disruption.

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