



Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor

UNISA MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO STUDENT DEMANDS

As informed role-players in the higher education sector, we are all aware that the current national student unrest is predicated on two distinct but related pillars: (i) the demand for free education; and (ii) the demand for "no fee increase" for 2017 whilst government awaits the outcome of the Heher Commission on fee-free education. We are also equally mindful of the announcement by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, that (i) universities must individually consider their fee adjustments for 2017 within a capped increase of 8%; as well as (ii) universities must commit to increase support to needy students and the so-called "missing middle".

The Unisa Management is singularly appreciative of and acknowledges the peaceful and constructive manner in which our students have conducted themselves in the exercise of their democratic right to voice their grievances on the aforementioned issues. We hope that this trend will be sustained and, as a Management, we commit to bringing our side to ensure that peaceful engagement is the hallmark of how these complex and sensitive policy and resource issues are handled. In this spirit, the Unisa Management reaffirms its respect for students' rights to protest and voice their grievances and dissatisfaction, whilst equally recognizing its responsibility to protect institutional property, staff, students and visitors on Unisa premises.

In response to the student demands of 26 September 2016:

1. Shutting down the university until the Minister announces free education: Given the complex and indefinite nature of this national concern, it will be neither responsible nor in the best interests of our most important stakeholder - the students - for a total shutdown of the university, particularly at a time when students are preparing for examinations and graduation ceremonies are in progress. These are critical academic milestones and the Management would like to see them realized.
2. On 20 September 2016, just after the Minister's announcement, I requested that an urgent meeting be convened with the student structures to enable us to collectively apply our minds on the best way of responding to the Minister's announcement and preparing for Council submission, since it is our Council's decision that can affect any changes to our fee structure. In that engagement it was agreed that Management will be provided with the names of the representatives of the student structures so

that further engagement may be scheduled. It is very unfortunate that we have not received these names and I want to urge student structures not to renege on the agreement reached. The names of the representatives should be furnished, as agreed, to the acting Dean of Students enabling us to immediately convene the envisaged meeting/s to chart the way forward.

3. I want to emphasise that some of the legal steps, including the attainment of an interdict, are precautionary measures to ensure that as a Management, we deliver on our duty to maintain the essential academic activities of the university aimed at allowing students to progress with and complete their study programs.

As indicated above, Management is not unsympathetic to the student plight and we encourage further constructive engagement. I want to affirm our commitment to engage with all key stakeholders in resolving these complex issues of our time because we understand that it is only *together* that we will be able to bring about responsible and sustainable change.

Prof MS Makhanya

Principal and Vice-Chancellor

29 September 2016