

ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR'S COMMUNIQUÉ

OUTCOME OF THE APPEAL AGAINST THE SANCTION OF THE EXPULSION OF STUDENTS

Dear staff and students

In an attempt to foster a culture of open communication at our university, CUT Management regularly shares information with its staff and students that impacts on the institution - amongst others by means of communiqués such as this. CUT Management would therefore like to share the final outcome of the students' appeal against their expulsion with you.

Background

In May this year, CUT's Disciplinary Committee imposed a sanction of expulsion on twelve of its students after they were found guilty of misconduct and violent behaviour, including direct involvement and participation in the disruption of CUT academic and administrative processes and intimidation of staff and students.

This sanction was a result of violent protest by these students on 31 January and on 3 February 2014. There was a violent attempt of hijacking the university and its processes by twelve students, who were thereafter charged and sanctioned. The incident took place while university management and officials were helping other students to register for 2014. The safety and security of students, parents and officials were at risk, as they were threatened and intimidated by the students, who stormed into the registration centre at the time.

At the time of their expulsion in May 2014, Prof. Thandwa Mthembu, Vice-Chancellor and Principal at CUT, made the following statement: *"So many of our students and staff, their parents and the public at large who may have been at our premises, were traumatised. Their lives and careers could not be any less important than those of the twelve students"*.

Outcome of appeal

It was decided that the students would be suspended for a period of twelve months (as from 21 July 2014). On their return to campus on 21 July 2015, a suspended sentence of expulsion will remain for a period of three years. The twelve students will not be allowed to hold Students' Representative Council (SRC) office for the suspended period. It was further decided that the six SRC members could not remain in office, as their conduct was unacceptable for someone in a leadership position. For this reason, they have been removed from office with immediate effect.

Way forward

You will recall that this unfortunate incident initially started due to pressure on the university to allow foreign students to register without valid study permits, as is required by law. I am currently attending the HESA AGM and Board meetings, on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, where the new Immigration Regulations 2014, which came into effect on 26 May 2014, were discussed. These regulations will have a significant impact on universities and will put even more pressure on CUT to comply with national policy related to foreign students. Section 49 (16) of the Act states that “*any person who contravenes or fails to comply with any provision of the Act shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine or to imprisonment not exceeding two (2) years.*” This means that registrars and vice-chancellors would run the risk of a criminal sanction for not complying with their undertaking/obligations. I would like to call upon the whole university community to support us in ensuring that we comply with important regulations, like this one, at all times.

As Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, I am aware that this is a difficult time for the university community. However, I am also confident that the twelve students will learn through this process, and that they will on their return to the campus in 2015, complete their studies successfully in order to take up their careers and play a positive role in society. I want to thank all students and staff for their support during this process and I wish to encourage you to continue with your studies and the activities of the new academic semester with the same diligence, commitment and enthusiasm as you usually would.

Thank you, in advance, that I can have the confidence and assurance that we will all continue to work and learn together in a spirit of ‘Ubuntu’, and by doing so, we will ensure a conducive environment towards the progression of teaching and learning and research at CUT, so that we may remain a “CUT” above the rest!.

Kind regards



Henk de Jager
Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal

24 July 2014