



## COMMUNIQUÉ TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS

### UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY AND STUDENTS' DEMANDS

**MONDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2016**

#### Dear Students and Parents/Guardians

I would like to commend all students who are committedly taking part in alternative teaching and learning via, *inter alia*, our digital learning platforms, e-Thutho; electronic and social media to ensure that the syllabus of each module is completed by 4 November 2016. Management and all staff remain determined to complete the academic year successfully, and to ensure that no student is deprived as a result of these alternative arrangements.

Let me also commend our student leaders, and our students at large, for accepting these arrangements and ensuring peaceful University campuses that are conducive to effective learning. We have continued our engagements with student leaders and parents at several forums and meetings during the past two weeks, and will continue to do so during this week.

The purpose of this communiqué is to provide you with an update on some of the recent developments at CUT and feedback on the demands from students:

**South African Police Services (SAPS):** Following students' allegations of victimisation by police officers, Management met with Brigadier Lekoelea on 20 October 2016. He invited students to press charges against those police officers, as the police are not above the law. One such a charge has already been filed in court. It was further requested that, as from Monday, 24 October 2016, the SAPS operate from outside the perimeters of the University, and only intervene when the situation deems necessary. CUT Management takes full responsibility for this decision, which was conveyed to the student leadership, so that they could also exercise leadership by ensuring that the academic programme will not be disrupted any further.

**Student access to Library and Information Services (LIS), Student Academic Support Centres and 24-hour learning spaces:** These facilities, which recorded a high usage by our students during the past few weeks, will remain open to all students throughout the main and re-assessment periods. The closing time of the Bloemfontein campus' LIS was extended from 22:00 to 24:00, whilst the closing time of the Welkom campus' LIS was extended from 19:00 to 22:00. Furthermore, Management is currently exploring the possibility of also extending the closing time of the Welkom campus' LIS to 24:00. In addition, we have embarked on a pilot study to open 24-hour computer rooms at each campus, which will be implemented from Monday, 31 October 2016.

**National campaign related to student fees:** Management supports free, quality education for academically deserving poor and "missing-middle" students, as well as the conversion of NSFAS loans to grants/bursaries for academically deserving students. Furthermore, Management agreed in principle on the decolonisation of higher education, which will form part of the University's

transformation project. In addition, students will be allowed to continue with their national course for free education for all, provided that it be done in a peaceful manner.

**Students' Representative Council (SRC) bursary for financially excluded students:** The Management Committee (Mancom), at its meeting of 18 October 2016, approved the establishment of a Student Financial Support Fund (SFSF) in co-operation with the SRCs. The Fund will be launched during this week to support financial needy students.

**Waiving of the application fee as from 2018:** The University Council approved the reduction of the application fee for late applications for 2017 from R430 to R230. Furthermore, Management appointed a Task Team to embark on a research process regarding the application fee for 2018. A report in this regard will be submitted to Council in March 2017.

**The registration fee should be 10% of students' respective total tuition fees:** In 2016, registration guidelines, with concessions, and Financial appeals guidelines, aimed at making the registration process less stressful, were developed and shared with students. A similar set of registration guidelines will be made available to students for the 2017 registration process. Management remains committed to ensure that all academically deserving students from a poor background will have access to higher education, and will not be rejected to any form of financial exclusion. Furthermore, Management has a responsibility to ensure and enhance the financial sustainability of the University, in order to deliver quality academic and research programmes and services to our students, through a well-qualified and committed staff complement.

**Employment of more staff in the Financial Aid Department at the Welkom campus:** This matter enjoys high priority by the Campus Director and the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Feedback will be provided to students at the Welkom campus by 11 November 2016.

**Concerns relating to book, food and accommodation allowances:** As these matters are related to NSFAS, the CFO is currently engaging with NSFAS on the concerns raised by our students, in an attempt to resolve these concerns before 2017.

**Alternative book shops:** The Board of Trustees of CUT Innovation Services (CUTis), at its meeting of 26 October 2016, approved the establishment of a "CUT Shop" in 2017. The shop will initially stock CUT clothing, and will gradually increase their stationery and textbook stock. A start-up budget of approximately R1 million has been committed towards this purpose.

**CUT must expand its accommodation facilities:** The university has recently completed two new residences, resulting in 252 beds at the Welkom campus, which will be occupied in January 2017, and 96 additional beds at the Bloemfontein campus. Furthermore, the CUT Council recently approved a policy that provides guidelines on the accreditation of private accommodation providers, who, in terms of the policy, are bound by strict standards set by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). CUT, with the full participation of the SRC, started to accredit interested service providers in preparation for the 2017 student intake. Finally, Mancom, at its meeting of 18 October 2016, approved a proposal to Council for the acquisition of land close to the Bloemfontein campus, which, if successful, will result in more space to construct student residences.

**Tightened and strengthened security system:** Safety and security are major priorities for both CUT Council and Management. Council approved a budget of R5 million towards the improvement of both campuses' security systems. The first phase of this project, namely to repair cameras and install additional cameras in critical areas, will be completed by the end of this year.

**Offering of new academic programmes at the Welkom campus:** This matter was discussed at the Mancom meeting of 18 October 2016. Senate approved a number of new academic programmes, which will be introduced at the Welkom campus over a five-year period, effective as from 2018. The Director: Welkom campus submitted a detailed report in this regard to students at the Welkom campus on 22 October 2016.

**New cafeteria, or expansion of the existing cafeteria, at the Welkom campus:** Mancom, at its meeting of 25 October 2016, agreed that this is a high priority that must be completed by the end of January 2017. Substantive financial resources were committed for this project. The Director of Information Technology (IT) and Logistics is visiting the Welkom campus on Monday, 31 October 2016, to engage all role players on the matter, for purposes of determining the best way forward in this regard.

**Free data to help students with their studies:** The four major mobile operators in South Africa, namely Telkom, Vodacom, MTN and Cell C, have agreed to provide mobile data services to students until the end of the year, to enable them to access online academic material. Our IT Department made the necessary adjustments to the University's systems, and this service has been active from the past weekend.

**Mobile police station at the traffic circle in Mothusi Road, Welkom:** Management fully supports this request. The Director: Welkom campus is currently engaging the Matjhabeng Local Municipality and the SAPS in this regard.

**Assessment of students in 2016:** In an attempt to ensure that all students are afforded every possible opportunity to complete their studies successfully, the University Senate approved a number of recommendations pertaining to the 2016 assessments, in order to allow all students to write the final assessments. Please refer to the communiqué by Prof. DP Ngidi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Teaching and Learning, which was sent to all students on Friday, 28 October 2016, in this regard. Furthermore, as communicated, main assessments will commence on Monday, 7 November 2016.

Management would like to thank the student leadership, all our students, parents, unions and staff for their constructive and level-headed engagements on these matters. Be assured of our commitment to continue engaging, in a transparent and open manner, on matters that affect our students and staff.

Let us continue to work together in promoting positive dialogue to resolve these concerns, and to complete the 2016 academic year successfully!

Thank you for your understanding and support!

Kind regards



**Prof. Henk de Jager**  
**Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal**