



**MINISTRY
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Minister Nzimande deepens ongoing engagement with Vice-Chancellors, Student Leaders

10 June 2016 - Minister of Higher Education and Training Dr Blade Nzimande has again met student and university leaders as part of his ongoing engagement with all stakeholders within the higher education sector.

In separate meetings with Vice Chancellors, representatives of the student umbrella body South African Union of Students (SAUS), and of university Student Representative Councils (SRCs) from across the country yesterday, the Minister sought a range of views on the most pressing issues facing the sector. These include approaches to the current budgeting cycle, campus security, language policy, student housing, and contributions to the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into future funding models for higher education, among others.

Although they reflected a range of suggestions on possible approaches to the future shape and funding of the universities, student representatives expressed the view that the violent and destructive activities seen on some campuses recently were not and could not be a legitimate part of any dialogue going forward. Minister Nzimande and his senior officials pointed out that those who suffered most from the burning of laboratories, auditoriums, and other essential university infrastructure were students. Without the infrastructure essential for learning and teaching, they would be denied the benefit of the knowledge and skills available to empower them, their families, and their communities.

On the fee question, it was made clear that a model offering free tertiary education across the board was not sustainable for a developing country like South Africa. Nor could such a blanket “one size fits all” system ever be fair, because it would in fact end up subsidising many families who could afford to pay for their children’s university studies, while resulting in the exclusion of many others who could not.

A number of vice chancellors expressed their concerns at the fact that a small criminal minority was imperilling critical university infrastructure. Students and South Africa's ability to sustain research, teaching, and learning at the highest levels would be very negatively affected should these wanton and criminal acts not be stopped immediately, they underlined.

Minister Nzimande said the meetings had been "enormously useful in further developing the ongoing dialogue between university administrations, democratically elected student representatives, and the Department of Higher Education and Training. We look forward to deepening these engagements further as we together seek and implement sustainable solutions to the challenges facing a higher education system which we have expanded massively in the past 20 years, giving many tens of thousands of young people opportunities that were previously out of their grasp."

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