

## **Minister Nzimande meets with University Vice-Chancellors**

8 March 2016 - In his continuing engagement with key stakeholders, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, met with all the country's 26 university vice chancellors last week.

The meeting - to take stock of, and share ideas on the challenges facing Higher Education and Training, with a view to finding solutions - was a follow up to a similar get-together that the Minister had with the VCs on January 20.

Addressing the VCs, Minister Nzimande referred to a number of key areas that were identified by the 2015 Higher Education Transformation Summit that needed to be taken forward, including the transformation of institutions, the development of a framework for university tuition fees and how the sector could look after the needs of students who are too rich to access NSFAS funding, but too poor to get bank loans.

He also updated the meeting on the Presidential Commission established to investigate the funding of higher education and training that was announced by President Jacob Zuma last year, which has already started laying the groundwork for its work.

Minister Nzimande called on all South Africans to cherish, promote and affirm the vital work of institutions of higher learning, saying these were critical national assets.

"The recent disruptions and violence at some universities clearly show that there are fringe elements seeking to destabilise our institutions as part of a perverse agenda that is hijacking and undermining legitimate student concerns.

"While the government is working with all stakeholders to craft solutions to the voices of students regarding transformation, fees and housing, I must emphasise that violent protest is not an acceptable way of articulating these challenges," Dr Nzimande said.

He also bemoaned what he called "a continually and unhelpful changing of goalposts" by some stakeholders.

In the meantime, DHET confirmed that an additional R16,2 billion had been allocated to higher education over the next three years, funded through the re-prioritisation of expenditure plans.

About R5,7 billion of this would address the shortfall caused by keeping fees for the 2016 academic year at 2015 levels, while about R2.5 billion would go to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme to clear outstanding student debt, and R8 billion would be used to enable current students to complete their studies.