

MEDIA ADVISORY

DATE: 19 April 2021

TO: All media

ATTENTION: News Editors/ Reports

For Immediate use:

MINISTER NZIMANDE STATEMENT ON THE FIRE THAT DAMAGED SOME OF THE BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN AND SURROUNDING AREAS ON SUNDAY 18 APRIL 2021

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, welcomes the swift response of the emergency services, the South African National Parks (SANParks) to contain the fire that started above the Philip Kgosana Drive in the game camp area between the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the busy Hospital Bend junction near Groote Schuur Hospital.

Minister Nzimande commends the timely response by the UCT Council and Management to find alternative accommodation for four thousand affected students and their decision to suspend all the academic activities today and tomorrow (19-20 April 2021), whilst the university assesses the situation and damage to the institution's property. "This decision is important because the safety of students and staff remains our utmost priority," said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande also wishes those in hospital a speedy recovery.

Minister Nzimande is saddened by the fact that the fire destroyed amongst others the iconic African Studies Library, the memorial restaurant, and the UCT's upper campus where boarding students reside.

"The African Studies Library, houses, the African National Congress archives and record of the underground publications. This library is also repository of the Bleek Lloyd collection of recorded stories and notebooks of their engagement with the /Xam and !Kun Cape San people of the mid 19th century, as well as original copies of pioneering isiXhosa newspapers like Imvo ZabaNtsundu, amongst others," said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande has also directed Higher Health to work with other emergency relief agencies to offer students debriefing support and that Higher Health's mobile clinic and psychologists support the UCT in-house team for psycho-social services in order to further support students.

Higher Health is an agency of the Department of Higher Education and Training that is responsible for promoting the health and wellbeing of student across South Africa's public universities and technical and vocational training colleges.

Minister Nzimande also thanked the private sector and government departments and agencies who instantly assisted the university in managing the after-effects of this furnace.

The Minister has further called on the more participation of the private sector to support the #UCTFire emergency relief fund.

The public can donate essential items and food to students at Old Mutual West Campus, 91 Jan Smuts Road, Pinelands, Cape Town. Items must be sealed, in accordance with Covid-19 protocols. Financial donations can be made to (donor names can be included as references):

Account name: UCT Donations Account
Bank: Standard Bank of South Africa
Branch code: Rondebosch Branch, 025009
Account number: 07 152 2387
Swift code: SBZAZAJJ

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