



## COMMUNIQUÉ TO STAFF AND STUDENTS

### UPDATE ON REGISTRATIONS & THE 2021 ACADEMIC YEAR

2021 #3

#### Dear Staff and Students

My communiqué of 15 March 2021 has reference.

Management had fruitful meetings with the Students' Representative Councils (SRCs) at both the Bloemfontein and Welkom campuses on 18 March 2021. The demands of our students and the South African Union of Students (SAUS) were discussed. I also visited the Welkom campus on 19 March 2021 to attend to their campus-specific demands. We remain grateful to both our SRCs for these constructive engagements.

As mentioned, CUT Management respects the call from SAUS for a national shutdown of the higher education sector. In order to afford our student leaders the opportunity to support this national call, it was decided to postpone the start of lectures from Tuesday, 23 March 2021 to Monday, 29 March 2021. The following are some of the outcomes from various meetings:

- Senate, at its meeting of 17 March 2021, approved an adjusted academic calendar for the 2021 academic year, which means that registrations will be extended during the week of 23 to 26 March 2021, and late registrations will be allowed until 6 April 2021. Lectures and academic activities for all students will commence on Monday, 29 March 2021. No student will be left behind should they not have completed registration by the end of the late registration cut-off date of 6 April 2021, as ad-hoc cases will be dealt with accordingly.
- There will not be a financial block on academically deserving senior (returning) students with a combined household income of less than R600 000, and they will be allowed to register, irrespective of their outstanding student debt, on condition that they sign the acknowledgement of debt form and submit the required documentation.
- There will be no financial block on any first-year students, including international first-year students.
- Minimum initial payments will be reduced, and in some cases not required, based on the household income level of students.
- The 2021 fee increase will be absorbed by NSFAS for all NSFAS-supported students (approximately 70% of our students), and CUT will assist the missing-middle students by requesting them to apply in order to qualify for a 0% fee increase (approximately 10% of our students).
- Academic exclusions based on students' 2020 academic performances will not be applied to senior students during the registrations for the 2021 academic year.
- Registrations will be managed according to the DHET-approved CUT Enrolment Plan 2021 to 2025.
- Student residences will be occupied at full capacity, on condition that all health and safety measures are strictly applied, and all students must adhere to the protocols that are in place.

Furthermore, the accreditation of student private accommodation providers is ongoing and receiving urgent attention. By February 2020, the accredited off-campus student private accommodation consisted of 477 beds at the Welkom campus, and 2 158 beds at the Bloemfontein campus. Since then, a further 649 beds at the Welkom campus and 1 865 beds at the Bloemfontein campus have been accredited. CUT residences comprise 247 beds at the Welkom campus, and 859 beds at the Bloemfontein campus. This brings the total of beds available in CUT residences and accredited off-campus student private accommodation to 1 373 beds at the Welkom campus, and 4 885 beds at the Bloemfontein campus. Furthermore, the design and construction of additional residences have resumed, with 400 beds to be added at the Welkom campus, and 200 beds at the Bloemfontein campus.

Police brutality against human beings in general, and protesting students in particular, is beyond doubt a violation of their human rights as enshrined in the Bill of Rights. It is stated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, that (10) *Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected;* and (12) *Everyone has the right to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources.* The CUT Code of Conduct of Students extends the right of protest to students, and stipulates the reasonable procedures to be followed during protests, without violating the rights of others. There should therefore be no place for victimisation of, and brutality against students on our campuses. What is critical is the observation of the rights of others at all times by all parties. All students have the right to protest, but in doing so, they should not violate other individuals' human rights, and the university has the responsibility and right to protect students, staff, and university property.

Finally, Management, in collaboration with the CUT Council, will continue to support our students to register for the 2021 academic year, including our first-year students, and to commence with their studies. The budget to support students in general, the missing-middle students' grouping, and cash-paying students with a household income of less than R600 000 who are not supported by NSFAS, is R90 million for 2021. Furthermore, the CUT Council approved in 2020 that 'old' outstanding debt of students who were registered for the last time in 2015 and before then, to the value of R125 million, be written off. All these concessions do put tremendous pressure on the financial standing of the university. As mentioned, the outstanding student debt at CUT as at 31 December 2020, was R1.33 billion, which poses a major risk to the financial sustainability of the university. We will continue to engage government and all stakeholders to address this matter urgently.

In conclusion, I would like to apologise to our new first-year students, senior students, and all our hard-working staff members, for the challenges that we are experiencing during the registration process. I am confident that we are now on track to allow students to register, which will also assist the approximately 13 000 NSFAS-funded students to qualify for their allowances.

Together, we will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure a smooth start to the 2021 academic year.

Kind regards / Ditumediso tse mofuthu / Vriendelike groete

**Prof. Henk de Jager**

Vice-Chancellor and Principal

(20 March 2021)