

Unam students appeal for public help to settle debts

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THE University of Namibia's students representative council has appealed to the private sector and foreign companies operating in Namibia to assist in paying off students debts of more than N\$500 million.

The council also wants the private and public sectors to help needy students to pay registration and tuition fees that were due at the beginning of this year.

Unam's students representative for finance, Ginola Nauseb, told a media briefing yesterday that about 450 students failed to pay their registration fees this year.

About 300 of the 450 students were from Unam's main campus, and the number includes international students. Another 127 students were from the Rundu campus, 27 from the Katima Mulilo campus and five from the Khomasdal campus in Windhoek.

According to Nauseb, students' inability to pay registration and tuition fees can be attributed to the 6% increase in fees announced by the university last year.

Unam increased the registration fee from N\$4 500 to N\$5 225 last year. Tuition and hostel accommodation fees also went up.

The estimated student debt emanating from this year's registration fees for the 450 students was about N\$2,5 million. Although the university assisted some of the students, Nauseb said not all students were registered.

"Out of the 459 students who applied to Unam and could not manage to pay for their registration fees, 212 were allowed to register with a contract from Unam," he noted. Unam requires students to pay the full registration fees of N\$5 250 on or before 30 March.

"That means we have lost more than half of the students who qualified (for registration) just because they were unable to pay at that time," Nauseb said.

The bulk of those who could not pay registration fees were postgraduate and diploma students.

He added that the National Students Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF)'s criteria (of recognising some courses as a priority and others being non-priority) were disadvantaging students.

"Some students cannot qualify for funding under the NSFAF criteria, but they need that kind of funding. Some students can't even afford taxi fare and food," he stressed.

SRC president Kudzai Sibanda then appealed to local and foreign companies to "help to loosen the noose that awaits us".

He said the students' council would be holding different fundraising events "in the form gala dinners, art auctions, food drives and entertainment events".

"As students, we need your help. Records have shown that students owe over N\$500 mil-

lion, and despite all attempts, this amount keeps increasing. My only request is that you open your doors to us. Allow me the ability to engage your offices," Sibanda continued.

During an interview on the sidelines, Unam's dean of students Magreth Mainga said during this year's registration, her office had received close to 1 000 qualifying, needy students who wanted to be assisted with registration and tuition fees. She said the students were not only approaching her office for registration, but were also looking for assistance to get accommodation in the hostels.

Mainga added that the initiative by the students' representative council to raise money on behalf of the needy students "might get N\$1 000 out of someone's pocket to contribute to the students education". Her office was also already running a students' emergency fund to buy food for "commuting students who don't get breakfast in the morning".

Mainga thus urged parents and businesses to start helping students pay their accounts "bit by bit", and not to wait until it is examination time.

TOP 10

Longest Roller Coasters

1. Steel Dragon 2000	Japan	2 479m
2. The Ultimate	UK	2 268m
3. The Beast	USA	2 243m
4. Fujiyama	Japan	2 045m
5. Fury 325	USA	2 012m
6. Millennium Force	USA	2 010m
7. Formula Rossa	UAE	2 000m
8. The Voyage	USA	1 964m
9. California Screamin'	USA	1 851m
10. Desperado	USA	1 781m

Top 10 of Everything 2019