

Drop first-year fee demands, SRC tells Wits

The Wits Student Representative Council has demanded that Wits University revoke its decision to charge first-year students awaiting financial aid half of the R9,340 registration fee.



WE WANT THE MONEY! Wits University Vice-Chancellor Adam Habib, middle, watches as the Student Representative Council protests the university's demand that poor students pay a registration fee of R4,670.

Photographer: Alon Skuy

Yesterday the SRC handed a memorandum to vice-chancellor Adam Habib asking how the institution could expect poor people to raise R4,670 in a week.

Wits wants students who have applied for financial aid but not yet received it to pay the fee so they can be registered.

Habib said he understood that poor students were angry but said the institution had to cover its costs in order to give students a "quality" education.

He said most financial aid students did not have a problem paying for registration because the National Student Financial Aid Scheme paid for them.

But hundreds of students who had not yet qualified for financial aid would have to find a way to raise R4,670 this week.

The government made R9.5 billion available for tertiary education bursaries. Of this Wits had been allocated R179 million.

"The big question is will we have students that qualify for financial aid after the cash is finished. This may happen."

So far, Wits has offered approximately R152 million to 2,090 returning students and 330 first-year students.

More than 22,500 students applied for financial aid and only 3,000 qualified for the scheme.

The university is still processing 5,000 applications because documents were outstanding.

Habib said the SRC's anger was "misdirected" because the government made only limited funding available.

He warned applicants against violent protests.

"We will act in the full course of the law and that will mean immediate expulsion [for perpetrators] without consideration of ever coming back to the university."

Source: The Times

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