First SRC Political Report
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1. Introduction

Honourable members of Student Parliament and observers

I would like to take this moment to welcome you all to the first sitting of Student Parliament in 2016. I extend my humblest apologies for my absence as I represent the University in a different capacity prohibiting me from presenting this report in person.

Over the course of 2015, it became clear that the University of Cape Town was a bastion of white, liberal, male and capitalist education and culture. This hegemony has resulted in the creation of an elite structure that prevents the masses of this nation from unlocking the doors of higher education. Exorbitant fees, misplaced curricula, colonial spaces and architecture and the slow transformation of staff are a few examples of why the Decolonial Project has taken centre stage in 2016. The mandate of our SRC is clear: we must create greater access to our institution for the black, working class who form the masses of South Africa. Our programs, projects and policies must be governed by the central question: is the black child better placed to graduate from this institution as a result of such a decision?

Our work as student leaders in varying governance structures must serve as an enabler of change rather than a gatekeeper of the status quo. It is a difficult task as it is often easier for us to execute an already defined mandate rather than reimagining the mandate itself. I call upon each and every one of you to participate in a cooperative and collaborative effort to facilitate change over the next year. Our work will not only answer to the calls presented to us today, but will go a long way in proactively improving student life at our institution.

2. #FeesMustFall and #EndOutsourcing: mass student action resurrection

The Fees Must Fall movement as we know it started at the University of the Witswatersrand when the SRC led by Shaeera Kalla and Nompendulo Mkatshwa erected barricades thereby shutting down their university. This act served as a clarion call to all institutions who were subject to the commodification of higher education to rally behind the demand for no increase in fees for the 2016 academic year and the active move to securing free, socialist education for all in South Africa. At the University of Cape Town, the movement started as an allied movement that cut across
Where students lead, institutions are reimagined;

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ideological lines. In the end, students across the country achieved a 0\% nominal increase and a real decrease in fees for the 2016 academic year. This is in no way the end of our fight but it serves as a signal for what collective, focused student action can bring about in our social context.

An instrumental part of the collective action of students throughout the 2015 year was alliance we developed with workers across every sector in all universities. It was then only a natural progression that the movement included the call for the ending of outsourcing at all institutions of higher learning in South Africa. At the University of Cape Town, the call was received and we saw an end to the outsourcing of workers on the 27th of October, 2015. The finalisation of the process and drawing up of contracts is in process and the current goal is to have insourcing by mid 2016.

2.1 Meetings with the Department of Higher Education & Parliamentary Committee

I represented the University at two meetings with government: the first being a sitting with the Parliamentary Committee on Higher Education and Training in December 2015 and another with the Department of Higher of Education and Training in January 2016.

The first meeting with the Parliamentary committee served as an engagement session around issues raised by students though the protests. The SRC representatives from across the country had an opportunity to engage the Minister, executives of NSFAS as well the Parliamentary Committee on issues such as unsustainable fee increases, implementation challenges with NSFAS and possible solutions, residence constrains across the country and issues of overall transformation and Decolonisation. It was clear that the SRCs needed to engage with the DHET in a one on one session which led to the sitting in January, 2016.

The original intention behind the sitting was to receive feedback on the questions and concerns raised by student representatives at the meeting in December. However, it became clear that the DHET had not taken note of the issues set out by SRCs with many university campuses coming under political pressure as registration was underway. This growing frustration with the inaction of government led to a walk out staged by SRC Presidents from across the country when our demands were not receiving direct attention which were:

1. No financial exclusion across the country
2. Clearance of historic debt: an update as per the demands of December 2015
3. Free registration: no student from any institution should be prevented from accessing their education because of an upfront payment.

4. NSFAS: we call for the issues raised in December 2015 to be addressed and for the adequate implementation of these the scheme. We further make a call for a transparent, accountable and efficient process that better enables students. We urge NSFAS officials to be present on campuses during registration.

5. Free Education: we (the SRCs) note the Presidential Commission put in place to look into the calls of students in 2015. We are aware that the findings of the commission are due in June but call for quarterly reports as of the 31st of March 2016. These reports need to signal the beginning of a roadmap and model towards free higher education.

6. International students: we call for the decrease in the financial barrier to entry non-SADC African students. We make a further call to the DHET to work with regional bodies and the AU in creating continental agreements that could see the transcontinental education of our people.

7. Accommodation: we reiterate the call to government to make reasonable intervention in the creation and provision of safe, affordable campus accommodation across the country.

8. Language: Language can never be a barrier to entry and success for a student in an institution of higher learning thus we call for English as a the standard medium of instruction. We make a further call that African languages be further incorporated into institutions so as to allow them to become languages of instruction.

A number of these demands have seen progress both from a government and university management point of view. However, these incremental achievements are still insufficient in addressing the often broader scope of the issue. These demands still hold firm and we call for all relevant stakeholders in higher education and training to support this move in tertiary education.

### 2.2 SAPS Working Group
Following the presence of the SAPS on campus during the #FeesMustFall campaign and the events at the South African Parliament, the SRC raised concern at the lack of regulation and absolute autonomy the police had once on campus. A call was then made to create some mechanism for accountability. The members of convocation made the same call which led to the creation of the SAPS Working group which is tasked by Council to draw-up a set of protocols for the SAPS when our University campus.

The final draft protocols are due for approval by Council and will be made public in due course.

3. Residence Crisis and Financial Bailouts

3.1 Residence Crisis

The University was faced with a crisis the annual over allocation challenge was further compounded by students writing deferred exams, those who were awaiting outcomes from RACs, second tier students who received and accepted their offers no longer had a place following the aforementioned challenges and the arrival of students on the waiting list or with no residence at all.

The SRC met with the management of the University in late January 2016 to outline these issues in a quest to proactively find a solution. Due to management’s lack luster approach to addressing imminent issues, upon registration a crisis soon ensued. This lack of supply of residence beds and mass demands rendered the University to a state of emergency. The SRC received hundreds of students who faced varying degrees of homelessness and worked as best we could with the resources at our disposal to ensure as many students acquired residence. The crisis residence pool was expanded with the addition of Riverview Lodge being added as a provisional housing facility.

At the writing of the document, all students with offer have been housed, students who stayed at Riverview Lodge were prioritised for housing with most of them being placed.

3.2 Shackville
The issue of homelessness and the desperate conditions Black students faced was further highlighted by the #RhodesMustFall movement when a shack was erected in the center of Residence road on Upper Campus. This visual representation resulted in increased focus on an issue often ignored by those of whom where displacement has never been a risk or reality. The subsequent removal of the shack and the events around it has called into question what can and cannot be defended and justified acts of protest and the accountability mechanisms for private security on the University campus who were seen to physically assault and target students.

3.3 Private Security

After the brute force applied by private security and the SAPS on students participating in the protests around Shackville, the SRC held a meeting with the Special Executive Task Team where it was resolved that:

1. Private security personnel would wear clear identification labels.
2. There would be an establishment of a line of command that would enable to immediate resolution of an issue raised by a student or staff member.
3. The SRC called upon management to begin a de-escalation plan that saw the withdrawal of private security which costs the University exorbitant amounts of money in the wake of growing financial austerity.
4. The ED for Properties and Services would create more clearly defined rules and protocols for private security and the SRC would be able to facilitate student consultation in ensuring these protocols are sufficient.

The SRC are committed to address the issue of private security and plan to host public discussion forums around this issue which would enable the University community to engage in critical discussion paving a way towards a mandate for the University management.

3.4 Financial Bailouts

Following from the calls for the clearance of historic debt that prevented students from registering for 2016. Government provided funding to these students through the extension of a NSFAS loan. The idea of this assistance funding was that it would eradicate or substantially decrease the
number of financial exclusions are institutions of higher learning. Up on the provision of funding, it was not made clear to Universities that it would be distributed subject to current NSFAS rules (which are a barrier in of themselves) which massively detracted from the financial assistance reaching those who needed it most further driving tensions across campuses. After realizing the bottle necks in the system, the SRC held several meetings with the Executive of the University in a bid to finding solutions to the funding problems students faced. These resolutions included:

1. Extension of the Financial Aid appeal date, Debt-to-Loan applications and registration for students affected in these areas.
2. Allowance for students who owe the University up to R10 000 to be given the opportunity to provisionally register and those who fall outside of this bracket had access to the Grace Period application process through their faculties.
3. Students who were potential graduates in 2016 but failed to meet the n+3 rule were reconsidered for assistance.

The SRC has furthered the call for increased funding and access through the #FundingFutures campaign which has raised over R2.3 million in funding for needy students. The allocation of the funding will be determined in a similar fashion as the SRC Assistance Fund application and distribution process. We have decided to take this issue hands on through this initiative as it is a project with the potential of having a great societal impact through the creation of greater access the University of Cape Town.

4. Sexual Assault, Rape, Abuse and Safety on Campus

An extract from the “There is No Excuse” Statement:

“In light of the recent reported sexual assaults on and around the University of Cape Town, which we recognize are by no means a new problem on this campus, students at the university sat down with the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Transformation – Professor Anwar Mall – to address the issues of security measures on campus and the punishment of perpetrators. Meetings with Andre Thyse and other members of Property and Services regarding security measures on campus were also attended.
As students we have come together to launch the “There is No Excuse” awareness campaign with the hopes of informing students and ensuring everyone is conscious of the dangers on campus, the support structures that are available and what tangible measures are being put in place to guarantee the safety of every student. “

(SRC Statement: 15th February, 2016)

The SRC have been particularly distressed by the repeated incidents of violence throughout the first part our term. The launch of the “There Is No Excuse” campaign with other stakeholders aimed to raise awareness and give voice to those often silenced by the failings of the institution. As part of this drive for a safer campus, the SRC have called for:

1. The allowance for public engagement with the DISCHO review
2. The use of private security to patrol areas like the Rhodes Memorial and pedestrian bridge where several violent attacks have taken place.
3. Increased visibility of CPS guards on satellite campuses with the Health Science campus in particular as well as at Riverview Lodge (this was achieved).
4. Review of the functioning and funding of Student Wellness as the system currently does not have the capacity to service the number of students that require their help. It is often the working class, Black students that have to bear the burden of poor service delivery which results in even greater challenges to an often challenging set of circumstances.

At the writing of this report, the University reported that the SAPS had apprehended the suspected perpetrator of the violent rape and sexual assault cases in the Rhodes Memorial area. We hope that this indeed is the perpetrator so as to allow for justice to take its course. It must be stated that this in no way solves the often silent, marginalized rape culture that plagues our campus. The SRC strongly urge University management to make strides in radically changing the reporting systems and support given to victims of rape and sexual assault. We cannot continue to live in a community where the crimes of many continue to go unpunished while leaving the victims permanently traumatized.
Conclusion

The 2016 SRC finds itself in unprecedented times as student governance across the country is brought into question. Despite these challenges, we will remain resolute in the fight for students at every level. We firmly are of the view that our current systems need to incur some kind of reform to better enable student governance to more effectively represent students. We will continue to rethink and reshape the structures and systems around us and contribute to the shaping and creation of a truly decolonized University of Cape Town.

Amandla!

Rorisang Moseli
President
UCT Students’ Representative Council 2015/2016