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UCT executive engages student reps over ISFAP

The University of Cape Town executive has engaged student representatives on the institution's decision to pilot the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP) in 2017.

ISFAP aims to provide funding for students whose household income does not exceed R600 000 per annum, with a sliding scale approach being applied. Three programmes – MBChB, Engineering, and Actuarial Science – were selected for the pilot project at UCT.

The executive recognises that there should have been more broad engagements on ISFAP, with the details of the pilot shared with the wider UCT community.

The executive further reiterate that UCT is committed to providing financial support to all students in need, a position that primarily drove the decision to participate in the ISFAP pilot.

At the same time, the executive has also committed support to investigating the principle, and implementation, of fee-free higher education.

The executive believes that the decision to pilot ISFAP is not at odds with the commitment to pursuing the principle of fee-free higher education, but rather that it may aid in the initiative on free-free higher education, in that it would provide information and data against which comparisons may be made.

In May 2016, UCT was invited by Universities South Africa to a workshop at which a presentation on ISFAP was made. Student organisations were invited to this workshop but only one student organisation sent a representative.

In the last quarter of 2016, before the November Agreement, UCT was invited to be part of the 2017 pilot, together with five other universities and one TVET College.

Some of the reasons behind UCT's agreement to be part of the pilot project include:

- There is a need to have more than anecdotal evidence about how the different funding models will play out in practice. Being part of this pilot will allow UCT to be able to comment critically on the success or otherwise of this approach to funding.
- Being part of the pilot allows a further opportunity to develop an understanding of whether the provision of wrap-around support is 1) able to be successfully implemented, and 2) whether it has the supportive effect that it is believed to have. Furthermore, participation in the ISFAP provides UCT with the opportunity to contribute directly to government development of policy in the area of student funding.

ENDS

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