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**28 September 2016**

## **Dr Price calls for UCT lectures to resume**

In a message to the campus community, University of Cape Town Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price has called for the reopening of the campus after classes and lectures have been suspended since last week. Please read the full communication below or [here](#).



28 September 2016

Dear colleagues and students

There can be no doubt that there are multiple valid reasons why people protest, and that we all agree on the need to make fundamental changes to both our education environment and the broader South African society. UCT has already changed in many ways over the last months and there is no doubt that much more change is necessary. We need to heed the call to transform ourselves and our institution and we should all accept this collective responsibility.

Today, however, I write with a plea that this transformation agenda, this responsibility to ensure change, are driven and insisted on in ways that do not include the shutdown of UCT operations.

There are numerous ways to bring demands to bear, to fight for specific causes, to insist on being heard, without bringing our institution to a close. Our best chance of succeeding and implementing changes is to do so with UCT in operation. The shutdown harms everyone. It will rob everyone of the opportunity to learn from this experience and to change in ways that make us better people, a stronger institution and an improved society.

A longer-term shutdown will work in no one's interest except if your interest is the destruction of the institution. The greatest impact will be felt by our poorest and most vulnerable staff and students. I do not

think I am exaggerating when I say that we are standing on the edge of a precipice. If UCT does not reopen on Monday, 3 October, the consequences will be severe for all of us and it may lead to a situation where we will be unable to recover much of what will be damaged or destroyed.

Severe consequences may include a loss of confidence from educational partners, donors and funders, and potential employers of graduates. Furthermore, the financial implications may mean a forced reduction in staff and a collapse of UCT's contribution to financial aid. The collapse of the semester study abroad programmes may become a reality and our ability to attract international scholars and research partners will be diminished. Students are the worst and very directly affected as they may not be able to complete this academic year and will have to extend their time of study with multiple financial and other consequences. Many, particularly the vulnerable, may simply fall out of the system. Our capacity to do impactful research that benefit communities directly and our ability to continue critical services in communities (some of which involve life-saving interventions) will be lost. Another direct consequence will be the potential loss of our international accreditations, which will have direct consequences for the value of our degrees. In just one more example, the hundreds of health science graduates who are scheduled to enter the South African health system in January will be unable to do so, which will put an already compromised health system at further risk. In the final analysis, the consequences of a longer-term shutdown are real and drastic.

If the higher education sector does not return to teaching, learning and research, the consequences for the future of our country will be even worse. We stand to lose a generation of students, much as we lost countless students to the protests of 1976.

No matter what changes we wish to bring to society, we can't make those changes by destroying the higher education sector in South Africa.

I urge you – no matter what your political position may be or what your social justice commitments are – to commit to reopening our university so that teaching, learning and research can continue. I urge you not to support the shutdown or to participate in, encourage or enable occupations, disruptions and other elements of the shutdown – whether physically, on social media or in any other way.

We *can* address the issues that desperately need addressing; we *can* continue to transform this institution radically; but I am appealing to you to support the reopening of UCT on Monday, 3 October.

All of us should be standing up for the protection of our teaching, learning and research environment; the right to learn; the right to complete the academic year, while ensuring fundamental change to our institution and our society.

Sincerely,

Dr Max Price  
Vice-Chancellor

***Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department***

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