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## **UCT statement on current NSFAS challenges and student hunger on campus**

The University of Cape Town welcomes last week's announcement by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Naledi Pandor, on the appointment of Dr Randall Carolissen as the administrator for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

NSFAS plays an important role in funding students in universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges. Dr Carolissen has been appointed to NSFAS for a period of one year to take over the governance, management and administration of the entity. The university will continue to work closely with NSFAS and acknowledges the important role it plays in funding of poor and working-class university students.

It is therefore important that priority is given to ensure that NSFAS delivers on its mandate. UCT has always been committed to supporting NSFAS and will continue to be available to assist the Administrator.

We wish to emphasise that no UCT students have been affected as a result of the current challenges facing NSFAS in respect of making payments for students awarded funding for 2017 and 2018. UCT has avoided this by itself providing the funding to the students concerned on the understanding that NSFAS will make all the necessary payments in due course. All UCT students awarded funding thus received their books allowances on time and will continue to get monthly living allowances. In addition to receiving their allowances, the university provides a laptop at no charge to all first-time entering NSFAS students. The cost for the laptops is carried by the university.

The latest preliminary data shows that a total of 3 856 students are currently being assisted with funding from the NSFAS, while an additional 1 011 receives UCT GAP funding with the loan administered through NSFAS. GAP funding is considered for applicants who did not meet the NSFAS eligibility criteria but still need some financial assistance towards their study costs. UCT will receive from NSFAS the relevant financial aid application information to enable us to determine whether a student meets the UCT criteria for GAP Funding. The financial assistance provided to GAP funded students is a course fee bursary and a UCT loan offer.

We have taken note of the issue of student hunger on university campuses and while this is a deeper social issue not only limited to UCT, we have recently established a Task Team made up of different representatives, including the SRC, to better understand the extent and scope of food insecurity at UCT and to develop appropriate interventions. The university already provides financial support to a number of students on campus, but we are aware that the need is always far greater than the resources we have.

There are also other interventions provided by UCT students and external parties, which provide relief on a daily basis to students who are vulnerable.

***ENDS***

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

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