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UCT students get 1.8m to ease financial strain

Over 30 students are beneficiaries of the KEPCO SA and Eskom Rotek Industries bursary.

Photo: Nasief Manie

For more than 30 University of Cape Town (UCT) students, the pressure of wondering whether they will be able to return to university next year has been eased by a R1.8 million bursary initiative involving the Department of Student Affairs' (DSA) Student Financial Aid, Eskom Rotek Industries (ERI) and KEPCO KPS.

On 16 September, the UCT leadership and stakeholders gathered with students to celebrate under the theme, "Investing in Education, Empowering Future Leaders".

For S'phesihle Ndlovu, a second-year Bachelor of Business Science student, the stress of wondering where the next pot of funding will come from has been lifted.

"Higher education brings a lot of opportunities, but with it, a lot of financial pressure. Being part of the recipients has lifted a lot of weight and financial pressure from not only our shoulders, but our families too. Before receiving the funding, I was operating on fumes because I was thinking about when I was going to apply for another bursary; how am I going to register next year; will I be able to continue with my studies; will I be able to fulfil my goals? This bursary has been a life changing opportunity and moment in my life. The relief from financial pressure has helped me refocus on my goals."

Ndlovu told the funders: "You have provided us with much more than financial freedom, but also confidence as we pursue our goals. Knowing that a generous community believed in our potential as students also gives us renewed energy and greater strength. It gives us momentum. Thank you for investing in not only our future, but that of the country because of the impact that we will have when we graduate. I hope that one day, as we progress in our careers, we will be able to pay this kindness forward."

First-year construction student Ntazi Mahlangu described the bursaries as a "belief, commitment and investment". Mahlangu said: "We thank the stakeholders for this investment in students. Thank you for believing in us, supporting our dreams and giving us the opportunity to focus on our studies and our future. Your support motivates us to work harder. We may not be able to fully express how much your support means to us, but we hope our achievements will serve as a reflection of the impact that you have made in our lives and our future. May your generosity continue to open doors, create opportunities and change lives."

ERI representative Cynthia Ndaba said the only return on investment for them is that students put their best foot forward – always.

KEPCO KPS SA chief executive officer, Jungnam Lee, said as an organisation that works with Eskom, the company's responsibility should not stop at a power station gate.

"We've always wondered what else we can do for the communities and people of South Africa – education and supporting young people is important to us. This is an investment in people. As a company, we talk a lot about energy, but the most important energy in this room is not electricity – it is the energy and potential of the students here today. To the students, please make the most of this opportunity."

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Professor Brandon Collier-Reed, offered encouragement to the students: "I can't wait to see you all on the graduation stage in the not-too-distant future."

Story by Kamva Somdyala, UCT News

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