



Friday, 2 August 2019

## **STATEMENT OF MANCO ON THE PROTEST ACTION ON CAMPUS AND THE RESUMPTION OF OPERATIONAL AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

The last few days have seen a protest action jointly led by organised labour and students, which led to the suspension of the operations and academic activities of the University since 29 July 2019. The decision was taken by Management in the interest of safety and security of staff and students as the entrances of the University were barricaded by the protesters.

On the same day (29 July 2019), the Council held an emergency meeting and deliberated on the resolutions of a joint meeting of staff and students. There were two sets of resolutions in the document presented to the Council, (i) those that were squarely within the domain of the Council to decide upon and (ii) those that were in the domain of Management. The Council issued a statement to this effect communicating its decisions to the University community and also indicated its preparedness to give detailed feedback to the representatives of the protesters at a meeting on 30 July 2019. The offer was rejected on the basis that the Council delegation, and the Chair of the Council in particular should address the entire membership of the joint meeting of protesters, and not just their representatives. A stalemate was reached and the meeting did not take place as envisaged.

Given the serious nature of the matters raised in the resolution document, Council further directed that Management should prepare a response without delay, to the issues including but not limited to the Infrastructure Plan; State of Residences on campus; and allegations of non-performance against some members of staff. Management is working on the report to submit to the Council as requested. Furthermore, a task team of the Council was established to investigate the allegations levelled against Management and the Vice-Chancellor in the resolutions document, with express indication that a report be presented to the

Council as soon as possible. Immediately after the meeting referred to above, the Council issued a directive that operations and academic activities of the University should resume without delay on 30 May 2019. Notwithstanding this directive by this body charged with the governance responsibilities of the University, the protest action continued and the operations and activities could not be resumed due to safety and security concerns.

Senate, which is a body charged with the responsibility to oversee the academic programme of the University in terms of the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997, has also warned that if the academic activities do not resume on 5 August 2019, there was a real risk that the 2019 academic year could not be salvaged and would in all probability be extended into the 2020 academic year, with devastating implications for both students, staff and the University as a whole. Therefore, a concerted effort should be made by the role players and the leadership, collectively, to mitigate this emerging risk.

It was in this spirit that a meeting was held between the delegation of students and staff and a delegation of Council yesterday (1 August 2019), and the concerns of the former were presented to the delegation of the Council led by the Deputy Chairperson of the Council. Without getting into the details of the meeting, which are within the space of the Council to discuss and resolve, it was amongst others agreed that the matters raised will be taken to the Council Chairperson and a proposed way-forward from the Council will be spelt out by close of business today to the delegation of the protesters. It is MANCO's wish that the proposed way-forward will be principled and acceptable to the broader University community, whilst the fundamental rights of the individuals and due process are complied with.

MANCO wishes to emphasise a number of implications for the University, if the operations of the University and its academic activities remain suspended. Of deep concern are the following:

- a. The University is not able to pay its creditors (including utility services such as electricity, water and waste management), and there is now a huge backlog compromising basic service delivery;
- b. The academic staff and postgraduate students are not able to attend conferences and congresses, which are an important lifeblood of any self-respecting academic institution;

- c. There is now a real risk that the employees of the University will not be paid by 15 August 2019, as the processing of the salaries through payroll is done within set timeframes at the beginning of each month;
- d. The process to fill vacant academic and support staff positions have been halted, and some of these are critical for the well-functioning of the University;
- e. The University's infrastructure funding from the Department of Higher Education and Training is at risk, as there are a number of submissions that were required by the DHET this week, which could not be submitted due to the protest action;
- f. A number of statutory reports required by the DHET have not been submitted by 31 July 2019, including HEMIS data reports; and
- g. The reputation of the University will be irreparably damaged given the protracted protests.

As engagements between the parties involved are taking place, it is MANCO's considered view that the operational and the academic activities should resume, without delay, on 5 August 2019 as the risk of losing the academic year is becoming real by the passing of each day. Against the backdrop of the aforementioned imperatives as well as the ever increasing requests from staff and students for a normalised environment, Management therefore has had no other choice but to approach the High Court to seek an urgent order to protect the constitutional rights of patients, students and workers wanting to exercise their right to return to their work stations and educational programs unimpeded.

MANCO wishes again, to extend an invitation to Organised Labour and SRC to engage in order to save the academic project and prevent the dire consequences of having the operations of the University remaining suspended beyond **Monday, 5 August 2019**.

MANCO urges all leaders across all levels and the entire University community who might have been aggrieved to raise their concerns through appropriate channels and allow the relevant University structures, including the Council where applicable, to deal with their concerns.

Apart from stating the fact that the current state of affairs on campus is deepening the enormous challenges facing the institution, the continued existence and sustainability of the institution remain at risk.

We need to return to the values of the University and promote a healthy culture restoring discipline and respect, but at the same time encourages robust debate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cr de Beer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**PROF CR DE BEER  
VICE-CHANCELLOR**

**Prepared and approved at a Special Meeting of MANCO on 2  
August 2019**