



1 August 2019

STATEMENT OF SENATE ON THE DISRUPTION OF ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY AND RELATED MATTERS

At its extraordinary meeting held on 31 July 2019, the Senate deliberated on matters pertaining to the disruption of the academic activities on Campus and the attendant implications. Senate was briefed on the recent developments that have led to the protest action which started on Monday 29 July 2019 and set to continue for the rest of the week, and the subsequent suspension of operations and academic activities of the University, and the associated implications for the academic project of the University.

Senate ruled that if the academic programme of the University is not resumed latest by **Monday, 5 August 2019**, the University will be left with no option but to extend the 2019 academic year by few months into 2020. The observation was made against the backdrop the imperative to comply with the curriculum, particularly the clinical requirements as accredited by the relevant bodies, including the professional bodies. The ruling was also made with the understanding that approximately 20 academic days have already been lost during the first semester of 2019, most of which due to student and workers protest actions.

Whilst appreciating that it was within the rights of both aggrieved workers and students to protest as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Senate further condemned in the strongest terms the recent culture and practice by protesting students and workers to close the entrances of the University every time their demands made to the University were not met. The closure of the gates not only militates against the University being a place for promotion of diversity of views and vibrant intellectual life, but also places the lives of patients at risks, given the umbilical cord relationship between the University on the one hand and Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital and Dental Hospital and other healthcare delivery facilities, situated on campus on the other. This behavior can only damage the reputation of the University as an academic institution.

Senate further urged Management to enforce the rules and regulations of the University, even during protest actions without fear or favour amongst both students and staff. The meeting expressed a deep concern that some of the actions of the protesters in the recent past, including barricading the University entrances and burning of University property are disciplinable offences in terms of both the Student Code of Conduct and Staff Disciplinary Code. Management was urged to implement consequence management and disciplinary action against staff and students, without delay, who are visibly acting outside

the bounds of the laws of the country and the policies and regulations of the University during protest actions.

Additionally, Senate urged Management to improve its responsiveness to the issues raised by the students and workers, including maintenance and cleaning of University infrastructure, including student residences, academic and office facilities. Staff members who are not pulling their weight should be disciplined consistent with the provisions of the Staff Disciplinary Code.

Senate further noted that one of the demands of the protesters is that the Vice-Chancellor, Prof CR De Beer, should be removed from office with immediate effect as they have lost confidence in him. The meeting reaffirmed its confidence in Vice-Chancellor De Beer and his leadership. The call for his removal without a legal basis was rejected by the meeting and he should be allowed to finish his term on 31st December 2019. Similarly, the meeting noted that there was also a demand for the Dean of the School of Medicine, Prof L Green-Thompson to be “excused” for allegedly failing to publish the selection criteria of the School of Medicine for the 2020 applicants. It was indicated to the Senate that the criteria were published together with those of other Schools in May 2019. The meeting reaffirmed its confidence in Prof Green-Thompson, and rejected as baseless and without any foundation, a call for his removal from Office. As a general principle, Senate condemned this tendency of calling for the removal of staff members from their respective offices every time there was disagreement between the said members of staff and students. The tendency is not only wrong in law, but is also not taking the University forward and it must be frowned upon by all who have concern for the reputation and advancement of the University.

Senate urges the Council, Management, Organised Labour, and SRC to act with speed in findings solutions to and addressing the challenges on the table in the best interest of the University. The meeting was emphatic that the academic programme of the University is paramount and must be resumed without delay, **by latest Monday, 5 August 2019**. For its part, Senate is more than willing to be part of the engagements, as part of lending its hand to the resolution of these challenges. In this regard, the conduct of all the role players, including the protesters themselves, should be informed by the desire to promote, rather than undermine, the academic project of the University.



PROF O AYO-YUSUF
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR: RESEARCH, POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AND
INNOVATION
(Chairperson of the Senate meeting held on 31 July 2019)