At their Wits’ end

Students block registration despite a new deal

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LECTURES are yet to begin at universities but already student protests have brought campus activities to a halt.

On-campus registration was due to begin at Wits University yesterday but demonstrations led to a shutdown.

The students were demanding, among other things, the scrapping of registration fees.

Management has allowed students to register without paying the R9,000 fee immediately — giving them until March to do so.

Those unable to pay by March will have to present an affidavit indicating their difficulties.

The university has undertaken to find ways to assist struggling students, including cancelling students’ debt.

But the concessions did little to quell the protests by a group calling itself FeesMustFall, which vowed it would not stop its demonstrations until education was free and all “historic debt” was cancelled.

Registration at Unisa’s Pretoria campus was also disrupted when members of the #OutsourcingMustFall campaign protested.

The campaign had in November and December held mass meetings that resolved to support “outsourced workers”.

The group’s spokesman, Austin Mofyo, said the workers would disrupt the registration process and lectures should their demands not be met.

As students and workers protested on the two campuses yesterday, Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande announced further financial support for students in need.

The minister said R10-billion had been set aside for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

He added that the government had committed a further R6.9-billion to support university education. This includes the R2.33-billion allocated to assist universities to keep fees at last year’s rates.

Wits Vice-Chancellor Adam Habib warned that if financial burdens and demands on universities continued, the quality of South Africa’s universities would be at stake and could collapse.

What they are doing is destroying the futures of their own children

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