Bails and bashes must fall

SRCs splurge on frivolity despite last year’s wave of protests over fees

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STUDENT representative councils at 26 universities were at the forefront of last year’s #FeesMustFall campaign, but some are failing to honour their commitment to needy students. Indeed, SRCs have already spent hundreds of thousands on pool parties, beauty pageants, music festivals, food, entertainment and freshers’ balls.

The 14-member SRC at Mangosuthu University of Technology in Durban plans to spend R500 000 of the R2.5-million budget it requested on a freshers’ ball and welcome party.

Vaal University of Technology’s SRC has earmarked R165 000 of its R1.7-million budget for “functions and refreshments”, while the SRC at Central University of Technology in Bloemfontein spent R29 246 on its orientation week for first-year students.

At the University of Johannesburg, the SRC has set aside 32% of its almost R2.4-million budget for cultural and recreational activities.

Although the SRC at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth spent R34 470 on a bus tour, picnic and music festival for first-year students, it set aside R300 000 of its R3.5-million budget to assist financially needy students.

Meanwhile, the University of Zululand’s SRC has been heavily criticised by students and the EFF Student Command for hosting a lavish bash and a pool party last week-end. It appointed 47 students not being able to register because of unpaid fees.

In a Facebook post, the Student Command asked why the SRC had spent R160 000 on a six-hour party when there was a “shortage of computers and outdated books in the library”.

What’s in the SRC budget

University | SRC Members | Budget
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University of South Africa | 12 | R1.1-million
University of Mmuambanga | 12 | R1.1-million
University of Zululand | 12 | R1.1-million
Stellenbosch University | 12 | R800 000
North-West University | 11 | R9.9-million
University of Pretoria | 10 | R1.3-million
Soa Plaaje University | 10 | R500 000
Rhodes University | 15 | R1.2-million
University of Cape Town | 17 | R420 000
Mangosuthu University of Technology | 11 | R3.5-million requested
University of Fort Hare | 7 | No fixed budget
University of Johannesburg | 11 | R2.9-million
Vaal University of Technology | 17 | R1.7-million
Central University of Technology | 17 | R420 000
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University | 16 | Varies based on registration figures
University of the Western Cape | 6 | Budget unallocated
Cape Peninsula University of Technology | 7 | R3.5-million
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University | 16 | R1.1-million

Funding for the needy or for perks of leaders?

TWENTY-ONE members of the central student representative council at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University have agreed to forgo their monthly R2 300 stipend for three years to assist needy students.

In contrast, their 11 peers on Unisa’s national SRC can spend R30 000 on catering for the year and a further R600 000 on travel and subsistence.

At least R250 680 has been set aside for honoursariums for the 16 SRC members of the University of Mmuambanga, which includes a cellphone allowance for the president and secretary-general.

Nicholas Nyati, SRC president at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, said members had also agreed not to take a salary increase this year.

“Stipends that were not paid to us for January, February and March will be donated to the SRC budget to assist needy students,” he said.

Paul Mamane, dean of students at the University of Mmuambanga, confirmed that R13 000 had been set aside for transport accommodation and subsistence for the SRC members.

The university has only 1 344 students, but its SRC has a budget of just more than R1-million, while the SRC of the University of Cape Town’s SRC budget is R2.1-billion.

Mmuambanga SRC members also get clothes worth R600 and uniform allowance, — Prega Govender