Feeding minds

LAST month, on the Cape Argus Opinion pages, we featured one young man's moving account of how he stared down adversity and triumphed in his quest to obtain his Bachelor of Education.

In his story, Dustin Coraizen, who is now enrolled to do his B Ed Honours at Stellenbosch University after passing his Cape cum laude last year, remembered: "My mother used to call me and ask me if I had anything to eat for the night, and I would reply, 'Yes mom', knowing there was not anything to eat (seeing that everything is triple expensive in Stellenbosch)".

Dustin is just one of many students who attend universities in South Africa who not only have the usual challenge of keeping up with classes, but also the challenge of survival.

He made it, but how many students have to drop out simply because of circumstances.

The University of the Western Cape recently launched an initiative to provide "holistic" assistance, including money for registration, food and academic materials, to students in need.

UWC's management has pledged R2 million towards the Ikamva Letu (our future) campaign launched yesterday, while the university's SRC has contributed R350 000 from its own budget.

THEY want to raise about R15m to support the so-called "missing middle", students who do not qualify for financial assistance but are still battling to pay their fees and the associated costs of going to university.

The SRC's president, Akhona Landu, said the council was mindful that students' needs went beyond their actual studies and included other elements, such as the availability of study resources and access to regular meals, which also contribute towards creating a healthy and progressive environment for students.

And the university is to be heartily congratulated for trying to come up with a solution and not waiting on the Department of Higher Education to respond.