Student protests cost SA R300m

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AMAGE to property during student protests has cost two Eastern Cape universities more than R500 000 over six months.

In responding to questions from DA MP Dr Belinda Bozoli, Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Minister Blade Nzimande revealed that Walter Sisulu University (WSU) and Rhodes University were among 14 universities across the country that would have to pay for damage costing more than R300-million.

WSU’s damage total was R350 000 and Rhodes’ R250 000. Fort Hare University, which was also damaged when students took to the streets in support of the “#feesmustfall” campaign, was among four universities that failed to include figures.

Nzimande said some universities had not confirmed from which budgets the costs would be recovered, while others stated they would be recovered from insurance.

WSU spokesman Yonela Tukwaya confirmed the amounts last week.

“These are damages from the January/February protests. Most of the damage was at the Mthatha campus followed by the Butterworth campus.

“The least damage was at the Buffalo City campus. Some of the costs will be covered by insurance but some must be covered by the university,” Tukwaya said.

She was not able to provide a breakdown of the damages as staff were attending the institution’s graduation ceremony.

Rhodes University spokesman Cather ine Deiner said the damage was inflicted during protests last year, which caused delays in the construction of a life sciences building, which incurred costs of R130 000.

A further R120 000 had to be spent removing graffiti, fixing broken windows and replacing burnt furniture.

“During the protests (one week in October), contractors and staff building the life sciences building were not able to come onto campus,” said Deiner.

“This delayed the project, resulting in at least one more week worth of costs (salaries, wages etc.).”

The report stated that while the University of Fort Hare had submitted a document on the damages, it did not provide a breakdown of costs, while the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University did not report damages on its campuses due to protests. Damages at other universities included:

- University of Stellenbosch, R352 000;
- North West University, R153 million;
- University of Limpopo, R1.8 million;
- University of Johannesburg, R345 000;
- University of the Western Cape, R45.5 million;
- Tshwane University of Technology, R5 million;
- University of KwaZulu-Natal, R82 million;
- Cape Peninsula University of Technology, R689 850;
- University of Cape Town, R3.2 million;
- University of Zululand, R4.5 million;
- University of the Witwatersrand, R1.4 million; and
- University of the Free State, R28.8 million.

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