Parents dig deep to pay varsity fees

Student debt continues to mount

By MBALI TANANA

Despite the successful FeesMustFall campaign, parents still have to dig deep to pay for a year of university study.

The Saturday Dispatch spoke to five universities about what it cost annually to read for the most popular degrees.

Walter Sisulu University spokeswoman Yomela Tukwayo said these were: education R27 200, engineering R32 250, medicine R51 340 and accounting R26 460.

“Students [who] don’t qualify for NSFAS are expected to pay a minimum initial payment of R3 900 (non-residence), and R5 540 (residence). A single room costs from R15 540 to R28 000 depending on various factors.”

Rhodes University media liaison officer Catherine Delner said their most popular degree, a Bachelor of Arts, cost R37 200 (although this varied according to modules).

“The cost of residence for the year is R50 500.”

Delner said registration fees were 10% of the annual fees and had to be paid by January 18.

“Textbooks vary vastly in price and courses differ in the number of textbooks required but all textbooks are available in the library and can be used on short loan.

“Approximately 1 000 students rely on NSFAS funding and R43.7 million is still owed by approximately 2 600 students from 2015. R19 million is still outstanding from 2013 and 2014.

Deiner said debt of more than R9 million had been handed over to attorneys of which R8.9 million was foreign debt.

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) spokeswoman Debbie Derry said their registration down payment for a degree was R6 200 and R4 300 for a diploma.

Popular degrees and their costs are: civil engineering (R24 830), radiography (R21 550), pharmacy (R32 860) and social work (R32 000).

Residence fees were about R20 000.

She said: “NMMU has a number of interventions to assist its students.

“Our intervention also benefits those students who are not poor enough to receive NSFAS funding, but also not wealthy enough to pay for their own tuition.

“We also have a merit system that rewards students who do well academically.

“We have distributed R1.44-billion in bursaries over the last five years.”

Stellenbosch University spokesman liaison Martin Viljoen listed their popular courses and prices as: arts R33 234, science R40 680, commerce R33 106, and engineering R45 073 and medicine R51 120.

“Accommodation amounts to R29 880 (double room, men); R36 360 (single room, men) and R29 260 (double room, women) and R35 520 (single room, women).

Residence meals cost about R15 000.

Viljoen said residence for women was cheaper because men “are a bit harder on the residences – more breakages”.

Books can cost up to R5 000 and internet usage about R1 200.

Kemantsha Govender, spokeswoman for Wits said there were no registration fees and a waiver period was available for less fortunate families.

“The university has waived the first payment for students who cannot afford it. Poor students are required to make the first instalment of their tuition fees by March 31.

“If students still cannot afford to pay by March, they must enter into a payment plan with the university.”

Popular subjects and their costs: medicine and surgery R38 140, social work R39 960, education at R29 620, accounting R41 400 and arts degrees cost between R33 640 and R43 330.

Residence costs between R40 000 and R70 000. — mbalit@dispatch.co.za

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