



STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL
IBHUNGA ELIMELE ABAFUNDI
STUDENTERAAD



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100
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SRC 2021/22 TERMREPORT I STUDENT FINANCIAL ACCESS

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Students' Representative Council
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Constitutional Responsibilities

The core functions of the Students' Representative Council include –

- (1) To act in the best interest of students and to actively promote students' rights under CHAPTER 2.
- (2) To represent students at – (a) The University Council. (b) The Senate. (c) The Institutional Forum. (d) Other committees, structures, and functionaries of the University. (e) National and international student structures.
- (3) To evaluate the University policy and give input in the formulation thereof.
- (4) To formulate and maintain policy to ensure that the SRC performs its functions and duties effectively.
- (5) To facilitate projects and initiatives to the benefit of students.
- (6) To inform students continuously, and obtain feedback, about its activities



Portfolio Overview

The duties and responsibilities as Student Financial Access head include:

- Liaising with Funding offices and social workers
- Providing financial literacy programmes/workshops for students (especially vulnerable students)
- Ensuring accessibility of work opportunities on campuses
- Educating SRC members on funding matters and processes
- Being a port of call for students with financial exclusion and difficulty concerns
- Generally working on improving financial accessibility in the institution



Committees/Task Teams

Student Fees Committee:

This committee aims to deliberate and discuss matters pertaining to student fees (whether it be tuition, residence fees, etc.). A meeting of the Student Fees Committee took place on the 29th September 2021, where amongst other confidential matters, the possibility of a fee increment was discussed.

Bursaries and Loans Committee:

The institutional Bursaries as Loans Committee aims to deliberate and discuss matters pertaining to Bursaries and Loans of both Undergraduate and Postgraduate students. A meeting for this committee was not held this term.

Funding Operations Workstream: Registration

The Funding Operations Workstream was set up by the SRC to assist students with any funding issues during the Registration period. This Workstream included the RegisterAll initiative, Student Debt Working Group and assistance from the SASCO Right to Learn Campaign.



Term Overview

Weekly CUBL meetings:

This term I had weekly meetings with the Centre for Undergraduate Bursaries and Loans, mainly Mr Kallie Sauls and Ms Bianca Davids. The aim of these meetings was to ensure that I remained up to date with any developments in the centre (and with regards to certain bursaries such as NSFAS). Furthermore, these meetings also served as an opportunity for me to raise any pressing student issues/concerns to them and discuss ways in which we can combat these issues.

CSCD Meeting:

At the beginning of my term, I met with Lizzie Witbooi a social worker at the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD). The aim of this meeting was to not only set the basis for a good working relationship with Ms Lizzie Witbooi but to also gain more insight on the assistance that the CSCD offers to financially needy students (specifically with regards to food security and basic needs such as toiletries). We then discussed ways in which the SRC could be of assistance in these initiatives.

SAUS NSFAS Meetings:

On 2 occasions, the 14th of November 2021 and the 27th of January 2022, The South African Union of Students organized meetings to engage with NSFAS. The main topics of discussion at these meetings were NSFAS presenting their new funding criteria for recommendations and informing student leaders of any changes/developments within NSFAS. Furthermore, this served as a platform for student leaders to engage with NSFAS on pressing issues prevalent at their campuses.

Registration: Funding Operations Workstream:

With the Registration period, in my capacity as head of Student Financial Access, I was tasked with chairing the funding operations workstream which included the RegisterAll initiative aimed at assisting students in paying the first instalment of their initial registration fee as well as the Student Debt Working Group which serves to liaise with the Institutional Student Debt Working Group to ensure that students who have historic debt and are unable to register due to this have a chance at clearing their debt. This workstream also worked in collaboration with the SASCO (South African Students Congress) Right to Learn Campaign in dealing with any general student funding queries.



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Action4inclusion:

During the 1st term, I met with the Law and Social Justice Trust and Action4inclusion Committee to discuss initiatives and projects to raise money and assist in combatting student debt. We also discussed proceedings for the Registration period when it comes to assisting students with historic debt.

General Activity:

Most of the activity throughout my term included dealing with student queries as they arose. Students would email me, and I would assist them through either providing them with an answer or referring them to the relevant staff member who would be able to assist.

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Plans for next term

In the next term I aim to have various projects and initiatives including a stationary drive to prior to the test/ exam period. A financial literacy workshop specifically aimed at students who are on bursaries (however open for all to attend) and summits in partnership with the Action4inclusion campaign to raise funds for student debt. Furthermore, I aim to evaluate the in-house food security programmes in residences/ pso's and offer any assistance for improvement thereof. I am also looking at appoint a “project manager” to assist with the initiatives throughout the year.

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Recommendations

I would advise that the next student financial access portfolio appoints a project manager (or sub-committee) earlier in their term so that they are able to obtain the necessary assistance when it comes to planning and executing any projects/initiatives.

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