

# SOCIALIST YOUTH MOVEMENT CONDEMNS THE GREED AND EXTRAVAGANCE OF CARELESS UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVES

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The Council on Higher Education has said that it is difficult to defend the [exorbitant salaries and perks](#) for executives at South Africa's universities. This comes after findings that at least half of the Vice Chancellors (VCs) at public universities earned well above R4 million in 2019. Topping the list is that of the UJ Vice Chancellor's ridiculous R7 million package in the same year.

**SYM condemns this flagrant perpetuation of inequality and injustice to the detriment of workers and students alike.**

It is unconscionable for vice chancellors to be taking home these extravagant salaries while widespread cuts to higher education leave students and workers in increasingly precarious positions. The 2024 austerity budget tabled severe cuts to infrastructure spending at universities and TVET colleges, as well as to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). National government and Senior Executive teams at universities are tone-deaf to the perennial crises of homelessness and indebtedness at higher education institutions.

Currently, student historical debt is at [R16.5 billion](#) nationally. Thousands of students across South African universities have been financially excluded from attending university due to this debt. Even if they manage to register, learners are faced with predatory pricing from private student accommodation providers such as the heatless landlord corporation, South Point. University accommodation is wrongly priced above the NSFAS cap and is limited in availability. This makes learners vulnerable in an environment where they ought to be secure enough to dedicate themselves to their books without inhibition. It is unacceptable that students suffer in this manner.

Workers at institutions of higher learning are also suffocated and abused by the greed and carelessness of university executives. In this current moment, cleaners at Wits residences have been arbitrarily retrenched while striking workers at the University of Pretoria have been brutalised by police, their demand for a 7.5% increase lazily dismissed by university management.

SYM is uncompromising in its support for workers and students alike and demands that universities slash the bloated and unreasonable salaries of executives and redirect the funds towards rehiring retrenched workers, meeting the legitimate demands of striking workers, and ensuring that the needs of students are met. Additionally, universities must refrain from unnecessary expenditure such as the R100 million spent by Wits on advertising during its centenary celebrations in 2022. Instead, our institutions must realign themselves with the interests of the broader university community and the wellbeing of those who constitute it.

**To this end, we further expect universities to meet the demands that have been put forward year after year by the student movement:**

- All learners must be allowed to register, regardless of the amount of historical debt owed to the institution and the registration period must be extended until all students have registered.
- All available beds in residences must be converted into hardship accommodation so that no student is left homeless as a result of the accommodation crisis caused by ANC austerity and university mismanagement.
- Our universities must pressure the state into bailing out all student debt across the country, and must commit to a sustainable model of funding fee-free higher education to definitively end the crisis of financial exclusion.

**We call on students and all workers across the country to join us in mass action, across all our institutions and on all campuses, against inequality, greed, mismanagement and austerity. Free, quality and decolonised education for all is an attainable goal- let the flames of the student movement be reignited in pursuit of this feat.**

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