

VUVUZELA



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Clubs' R1 million debt

ERICA DREIJER AND KIM HAWKEY

AN alarming number of Wits' student clubs and societies are in debt to the tune of R1 million.

Vuvuzela found the debt had been accumulated by 23 active clubs and societies since 1999 by being overdrawn on their bank accounts. Top of the list was Receive and Give (RAG), a charity organisation that had a debt of R183 419.66.

A possible solution, proposed by the SRC and Dean of Students Prem Coopoo, to help offset part of the debt, was to use a credit created by inactive clubs and societies that were closed down at the end of 2006. According to Zakhele Maya, the SRC treasurer, an amount of R511 695 is available for this purpose.

The Vice-Chancellor ruled that the current accounts of inactive clubs and societies can be shut down and the funds transferred into a new account, said Maya.

However, according to Maya, two active societies, the Educational Student Council and RAG and one inactive society, Student Education Programme (STEP), will be exempt from having their debt written off.

The Educational Student Council is under investigation due to a contravention of a university by-law, as a personal bank account was used for the Council instead of an institutional account, said Maya.

Maya said that STEP has a debt of R600 000 and is exempt from the write-off as it is currently under investigation for mismanagement of funds.



WHO'S COUNTING? The collective debt of several student clubs and societies is well over R1 000 000. Figures like that don't come out of petty-cash. *Photo: T Kenichi Serino*

STEP's R600 000 debt is not included in the R1 million deficit.

On further probing, *Vuvuzela* established that STEP doesn't appear to have a R600 000 debit, but that it

has a credit of around R50 000. It is being investigated as a result of a missing R500 000. The money was received by STEP management but was never deposited into STEP's bank

account. *Vuvuzela* was told that STEP had fulfilled their duties with the money that was deposited into its bank account and that no debt was incurred in the process.

Vuvuzela tried to consult with Prem Coopoo and Lamese Abrahams, Head of SRC Administration, to understand how the debt was accumulated, the reasons for not including RAG, Educational Student Council and STEP in the write-off and what the plans are to write off the additional R488 305 that will not be covered by the monies provided by inactive societies.

The dean refused to respond to email queries from *Vuvuzela* and declined an interview. Abrahams referred the email sent by *Vuvuzela* back to the dean, who is responsible for all student affairs.

It is not clear where the money will be found to finance the debt that won't be covered by the inactive societies. Since the SRC does not have sufficient funds to cover the debt, the university has been approached by the SRC to look at finding ways to help fund this amount.

Annually, the SRC provides clubs and societies with a grant, but due to the large numbers of clubs and societies in existence, it is allocated on merit and each receives a limited amount. It is customary for clubs and societies to turn to the SRC to help them write off debt.

According to the SRC and RAG, the new Oracle system will prevent the accumulation of such debts in future, as the money will need to be available before it can be withdrawn from the system. Previously, societies operated on an "I owe you" system whereby money could be withdrawn before the money had been paid into their accounts.

STEP's missing money, missing students

T KENICHI SERINO

ONE of the suspended Wits clubs had nearly 600 "ghost" students, according to documents given to *Vuvuzela*.

The documents are from the Student Teaching and Education Programme. STEP served over a thousand matric students with low-cost tutoring by Wits students. Its wide-spread access is revealed in the documents, which mentioned that 20 of the matric students were homeless and were receiving tutoring free-of-charge. The programme was suspended by Wits this year in what the university called "accordance with world-wide accounting practices".

The documents are the formal request to the university for financial

assistance, minutes of a meeting of STEP executive members, and the official report made to the legal office.

Together the documents form an informal diary of the discovery of STEP's financial problems and the struggles of the executive committee to deal with them while keeping the programme afloat.

The report, compiled by STEP financial officer Thabile Ngubeni, said that the registrations of the matric students had not been adequately organised from the previous administration and showed that 1 353 matric students have been fully paid.

However, according to the report, Icam records showed that 1 943

cards had been issued. This meant that there were an additional 590 'ghost' matric students for whom no payment was officially received. The report also noted 230 matric students were registered but "no indication of payment was found". This resulted in a loss of R115 000.

The report was given to the legal office last April and describes the discovery of financial discrepancies in the programme and attempts to engage the chairperson, Siphosibo Sibeko, and SRC administrator, Joseph 'Dadi' Mothlaoleng in resolving the discrepancies. It said that for the fiscal year of 2005/06, there was a budget shortfall of R300 000.

Last year *Vuvuzela* reported that

an additional R400 000 was missing from the fiscal year 2004/05.

The report said that Mothlaoleng advised that Ngubeni find receipts and begin identifying students who had already paid and those who had not paid.

The report also said that progress in STEP's investigation was delayed by certain members of the executive committee. This included missed meetings, missing documents and reports which failed to be materialise.

The budget shortfall resulted in a request last August to the Dean of Students, Prem Coopoo, for financial assistance. According to the minutes of a subsequent meeting of the STEP

committee members, the request was denied due to "the fact that the Dean is currently not in a position to assist with funds or the acquiring of funds as would be needed to carry out the remaining projects and tasks".

The minutes also said that the members were able to scrape together R68 520 from excess budget funds. This was spent on things such as a revision camp, extra study guides and a prize ceremony for the learners totaling R46 520. Another R12 000 was budgeted for administration and the all residences picnic.

The minutes end: "meeting adjourned for an indefinite date on account that many issues kept on arising".

NEWS



Life is no yo-yo for this TV star

CAMPUS CELEB: TSHOLO WECHOEMANG

Tsholo Wechoemang, Yo TV presenter and actress was born and bred in Johannesburg. She is doing her first year BA, in international relations, media and law at Wits. Photo and text by Vuvuzela journalist, Judy Lelliot

How and when did you start working in TV?

My mom got me an agent when I was five. I appeared in a Rama ad when I was six and the rest as they say is history.

What was your last appearance on TV?

It was a show for Yo TV in February or March.

How do you handle university and work?

I don't. I stopped working. Varsity is hectic but at the same time, if something substantial came along I'd consider it.

What is the craziest thing a fan has ever done to you?

Slapped me! It was a reflex reaction and she was exited.

What is your most memorable moment at work?

I was seven years old and I was working on *Soul City* I. It was my birthday and it was on a Friday. I brought a cake to school, but I had to leave for work. We were shooting a hospital scene and it was right at the end of the day. I was sitting in a hospital bed with a drip and they had one of those curtains drawn across and everybody came in and surprised me- they had the biggest chocolate cake I had ever seen. And people gave me money- I went home with R17.

What is your favorite music track?

Little star by Kelis

Do you have a boyfriend?

Yes.

Have you ever had difficulties getting paid?

Ag, that's one of those questions. It's like have you ever been caught in the rain? Ja. It's just a long process; tax agents take their fee. Sometimes we got paid in two weeks, sometimes we got paid on the same day.

How do you relax?

I take a long bath or listen to music or do both.

Favorite music?

I like anything, but no kwaito or reggae.

What don't you leave home without?

A handbag.

Who is your favorite TV personality?

Pamela Nomvete. She is not arrogant, she takes her work seriously and she has a good work ethic. She is one of the greatest actresses. We did a film together called *Zulu Love* letter. To begin with I was nervous around her and I used to hide behind my dad!

Civil engineers hit the road

ERICA DREIJER

WITS has increased its intake of first-year civil-engineering students from an average of 40 students in previous years to 133 in 2007, according to Prof Mitchell Gohnert, head of Wits' School of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Civil engineering has increased in popularity because of the economic growth in South Africa and the resultant growth in the construction industry, he said.

In order to cope with market growth requirements, the Wits School

received a boost from the engineering industry.

Murray & Roberts, Grinaker-LTA, WBHO and Group5 provided the school with assistance by upgrading the civil and environmental engineering undergraduate computer facility.

They also replaced the 12 ageing computers with 56 state-of-the-art computers.

Prof Gohnert said this would give students an opportunity to be exposed to the latest engineering software which would allow them to compete

and participate at an international level.

The upgrade also has direct relevance to Minister of Finance Trevor Manuel's 2007 budget speech and the university's vision for 2010.

Both government and industry have recognised the shortage of engineers in South Africa and unless the problem is rectified, it may seriously hamper South Africa's development going forward, said Prof Gohnert.

The upgrade of the computer facility is also part of the school's plan to align itself to Wits' vision of becoming

part of the top 100 universities in the world. This goal requires radical improvements in every aspect of the university's business.

In terms of future improvements that will help the university achieve its vision, the school is also planning to start upgrading the laboratories later on this year.

Currently, some of the testing equipment used was outdated and not in line with international standards, said Prof Gohnert. The industry had also committed to invest in these upgrades, he said.



CIVIL MINDED: Prof Mitchell Gohnert. Photo: Erika Dreijer

Chuck a can at Roots & Shoots

FRANNY RABKIN

Roots & Shoots is planning a recyclable monument to "attain a better world for living" for all of Jozi to see.

As part of its initiative to raise awareness about recycling, it is planning a massive tower of fully recyclable tins and cans during the course of this year.

The tower, which they hope will be 80m high and 10m wide, will be built on West Campus close to the M1 and Empire Road,

Aside from the environmental aspect, the tower will be a formidable engineering feat. Roots & Shoots has involved Dr Peter Roberts of the Wits Engineering Faculty as a consultant on safety during the construction.

The project is in the planning stage, but Roots & Shoots has already involved the EcoDrive Group at Wits, Collect-a-Can Project, and the Vieolia Environmental Services. They are looking for Engineering and Architecture students to help design the structure, so it is safe, and Arts students to design the logos. If you are interested in being part of the project, contact Sood Andimuligo at dkatutu@yahoo.com



CANNED: An artist's impression of the tower.

VUVUZELA

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On the road to transformation

AS THE nation celebrates 13 years of democratic rule this week, we continue to interrogate its achievements this far.

Typically, this interrogation concerns the road it has come in healing the divisions of the past and establishing a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights, as stated in the preamble of the constitution.

At Wits, as has been in the case in the past couple of years, this interrogation has centred on the transformation of the institution - the speed, the process, the nature and the obstacles in achieving this, so as to reflect the South African society.

While on one hand, student leadership and other bodies call for a speedy transformation, levelling accusations at top administrators for dragging their feet and slowing the process, the university administration responds that it has made significant progress in the past five years in various areas related to transformation in its quest to become a truly academically excellent, transformed institution.

However, they acknowledge that there are still challenges that need to be overcome.

Overcoming these challenges will require leadership that is able to deal with the paradoxes of our times as described by the venerated Prof Ali Mazrui, who spoke this week on campus as a guest of the Wits Intellectual Public Life Project.

Wits University is at a crossroad.

It has to maintain its standing as the leading institution of learning, research and development at the global scale, while at the same time juggle the ball of transformation with the baggage of past legacies.

When post-colonial African leaders were faced with a similar predicament, said Prof Mazrui, most of them failed. Sacrifices were made, pursuing one goal to the detriment of the others and history attests, the consequences were not pleasant.

CLASSIFIEDS

COAL STOVE PRODUCTIONS: Come to Primi Rosebank for the screening of the hottest student films in Johannesburg. Free entry for first 60 people. Sunday, April 29 at 6pm.

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The politics of religious debate

FRANNY RABKIN

RELIGIOUS "fanaticism" was often given a negative connotation in the global media - but being fanatical "should mean being very tolerant", according to a speaker at an inter-faith meeting on campus on Tuesday.

Rishaad Moosa made this point at the event, organised by the SRC on Tuesday. Moosa is a member of the Muslim Students' Society and the South African Union of Jewish Students.

The devotional aimed to "learn about different religions and philosophies ... and to look at a religious theme in a non-political [way]", according to Shamim Afshani, of the Baha'i Society. It looked at what different religions had in common rather than differences. The theme was religious tolerance.

Students from most of the faiths on campus were there: Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Baha'is read from different scriptures and discussed them.

Moosa and Irshaad Vawda, of the Muslim Students

Society, took issue with the word "fanaticism", contained in some Baha'i scripture. Vawda said there was a difference between fanaticism and intolerance.

"Being fanatical can mean that you are really serious about your religion, without making you intolerant."

Moosa added: "Tolerance is the very crux of my religion."

Is tolerance enough? And is conversion - at the root of most religions - compatible with tolerance? These and other issues were explored. Baha'i scripture dominated, but quotes from the Qu'ran and the Bible were also discussed.

But can religion really be separated from politics? For Moosa a separation is "very hard. For me, they go hand in hand. But what I like is the idea of tolerance."

Afshani said there were two aspects to religion - spiritual, which dealt with how the individual related to God, and social, about how people related to each other.

But "these are questions that generations of people have looked at, and have not been able to answer".

TALKBACK

African independence still a debatable question



ERNEKA EGBEONU
PRESIDENT
WEST AFRICAN STUDENTS UNION

FOR centuries the African continent has been under brutal foreign occupation by the Arabs that invaded North Africa and the Europeans who invaded all parts of Africa.

After centuries of slavery and colonisation, the Europeans began to grant independence to the African countries. The first to gain this so-called independence were Sudan in 1956, Ghana in 1957 and Nigeria in 1960. Other African countries followed and South Africa became the last in 1994.

But the nagging question remains: Are the African countries actually independent?

Indications exist that Europe and the US still, through manipulation and military coups, determine who rules African countries.

For close to 20 years, the Structural Adjustment Programme, with its devastating effects, was forced on the African countries by Europe and the US. Realizing that it was unworkable, they later withdrew it. But they refused to render any apology or compensation to the African countries it had devastated for decades.

Many African leaders do not read their annual budgets until they receive pledges for financial hand-outs from Europe and the US. Independent countries in Europe, America and Asia have set up

scientific, technological and industrial manufacturing systems with which they developed essential products, built their economies, military and security systems, and social-welfare systems.

But in Africa, Nigerian rulers use the Nigerian independence to waste the abundant natural and human resources of that country; they steal billions of dollars and hide them away in European and American banks. While they ravage the country, Nigeria's productive population continues to scatter all over the world

looking for survival. This week a radio advert had somebody crying that he has a dream that the high rate of killing, rape, diseases, racial hate and xenophobia in South African might soon lead to the demise of the country. The advert ended by questioning whether that was what South Africans had done with their freedom.

The waste of abundant human and natural resources in Nigeria, dependency on foreign hand-outs by most African countries, and violent crime and xenophobia in South Africa, all seem to be rooted in the consumer tendencies of the Africans. And no country will actually be independent if it consumes rather than produces.

Recently Ghana celebrated its 50 years of independence. The discussion hosted by the West African Students Union (WASU) at Wits University suggested that Ghana had not made any meaningful achievement in the 50 years. On April 27 three African countries - Sierra Leone, Togo and South Africa - celebrate their independence. Within this period, Nigeria held elections for a new president, governors and legislators.

WASU held a seminar on April 26 with the theme: *Interrogating the Independence of African Countries*. Five speakers from Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Togo and South Africa took part.

PIGGING OUT

Grannyfeelgoods, The Matrix, East Campus
Hours: 7am to 5pm weekdays, closed weekends.
Vuvu verdict: 7.5/10

KIM HAWKEY

INTRIGUED by its name, *Vuvuzela* decided to target Grannyfeelgoods for its next food crit.

The eatery resembles your average modern health-food joint such as Kauai, but is a bit funkier and the menu is not limited to health food. The venue is open and airy with a good view, creating an upbeat, refreshing atmosphere.

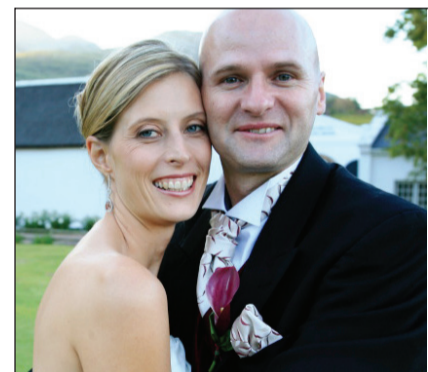
The menu generally consists of healthy food, including wraps (R24-R27) and salads (R29-R31 for savoury and R14 for fruit).

Healthy sandwiches, such as the Vegetarian (R24), are on offer, as are a number of the sinful variety, like the Pastrami Bagel (R24). The muffins, for R8.50, are also a good breakfast buy.

Best buy for R20: At R19, the BLT sandwich on ciabatta, is recommended.

Picking wedding music no song and dance

SLICE OF LIFE



ERICA DREIJER WITH JAMES HIER

MUSIC sparks all kinds of emotions in people... it makes you happy, sad and can even be traced back to the root of a fight or two.

So on the day that I was swapping my identity as a single woman to become Mrs Hier (pronounced hire... or is that higher?) it was fitting for music to form a crucial part of the material that our dreams would be made of.

The first step in laying the foundation was to ensure that we selected music that personified two individuals and a merger for our new life together as Mrs and Mr Hier. We piled hours into this occasion... trying to find a balance between what we love, what people can stomach and what makes for a memorable party. It's not every day you get married!

We ended up with a list that we were told "is good stuff to play after 10pm, once the older and more respectable crew have settled down for the evening". Enough said. Finally the big day arrived. After keeping my now nervous groom waiting for 20 minutes, I strode down the aisle to the Wedding March. Although it is traditional, it provided familiarity in a moment of uncertainty as I crossed over from singledom into married life.

It also reminded me that this attractive man would be my husband within the hour. Afterwards, lively piano mingled with the sound of chatter on the patio of the Laborie estate in the Cape winelands as we shared a drink with our guests

and watched the sun go down on the beautiful Paarl Valley. We entered the dining hall on U2's *It's a Beautiful Day*. Our first dance was to the tune of *Chasing Cars*, though we kept on thinking that we should have rather chosen *I Want to Grow Old with You* by Adam Sandler from the movie *The Wedding Singer*.

We partied to songs like *Bitter Sweet Symphony*, *Bliester in the Sun*, *Scar Tissue* and *Rock me Amadeus*. As everyone danced to the last song for the evening; *Wonder Wall* by *Oasis*, everyone was in high spirits.

But I convinced James (that's Mr Hier) to allow one of our guests, who had come a long way, to play his choice as the last song, as a favour. So the *Blue Bull* song by Steve Hofmeyr filled the room and all dancing came to an abrupt halt. It was the wrong song with which to end the night on a high note. An inebriated guest stepped in and tried to save the day by fast-forwarding through the play list in search of a more inspirational last song. Our unhappy Blue Bulls supporter (who was not even dancing to his own song) moved in with his fists and started throwing insults about. The evening nearly ended on a low note... But once again, music came to the rescue. We were allowed to select another "new" last song.

U2 we salute you! Emotions were soothed as *Pride (In the name of Love)* played out.