Clubs’ R1 million debt

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 debt, but that it has a credit of around R50 000. It is being investigated as a result of a missing R300 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.
Civil engineers hit the road

ERICA DREIJER

WITS has increased its intake of first-year civil engineering students from an average of 80 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. 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Currently, some of the testing equipment used was outdated and not in line with international standards, said Prof Gohnert.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.

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
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 centered on the transformation of the institution - the speed, the process, the nature and the obstacles in achieving this.

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 research 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 paradoxes - sometimes as described by the venerated Prof Ali Mazrui, who spoke this week on campus as a guest of the Wits Intellectual Public Life Project.

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 where faced with a similar dilemma, 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 the same framework: an independent 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 Enugu's funds. Finally the big day arrived 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 Europe, America and Asia have been able to identify scientific, technological and industrial manufacturing systems, which they developed essential products.

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