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MESSAGE TO STUDENTS AND STAFF

CLOSURE OF THE CAMPUS (23 SEPTEMBER 2016)

Dear Students and Staff,

After receiving information that a certain small group of individuals intend to embark on actions that may affect the safety of students and staff negatively, I decided to close the campus for today (23 September 2016). The identified group also articulated their intention to barricade entrances to the University and to set buildings alight.

My notice to students and staff issued during the evening of 22 September 2016 therefore called upon staff not delivering essential and clinical services to stay at home in the interest of their safety. I also recommended that students should, as far as possible, remain in their residences.

I wish to state it clearly that any form of intimidation, violence or damage to property cannot be tolerated. My information is that the SMU community vehemently opposes aforementioned actions. I wish to assure you that all possible measures are being taken to ensure your safety and to protect and strengthen a fresh institutional culture, allowing our staff to passionately perform their respective mandates, and to develop and succeed, and our students to optimally benefit from the student life and academic experiences offered by the SMU.

The situation will be monitored carefully today and should violence or damage to property occur, I will not hesitate to close the University completely and cancel all activities indefinitely in the interest of the safety of students, staff and the public.

I also wish to reiterate that the SMU fully support the aspiration to achieve quality fee free higher education for the poor, combined with financial support measures aimed at providing in the additional financial needs of such students. This may not happen in 2017 and we will have to revert to an interim dispensation. I wish to call upon the SMU community to afford the Management and the Council the opportunity to consider the opportunities presented by the Ministerial announcement to qualifying students and the University. The Management

and the Council remain sensitive to the needs of our students and will explore all options fully with a view to mitigating the effect of the unfortunate fee dispensation on poor students.

Similarly, I wish to confirm again that Management is already attending to the concerns raised by the Student Body in its Memorandum of Demands as intimated in its response thereto. I wish to appeal to students and student formations to study the full text of Management's Response and to engage Management on matters requiring further elucidation and/or discussion. My approach regarding these matters is that the entire leadership of the University should work tirelessly to remove all stumbling blocks, real or perceived, to safeguard the irreplaceable learning opportunities at offer at the SMU, and to deliver on our mandate to contribute to the high level and professional human resource needs of the country.

In conclusion, it is of critical importance that the academic programme resumes on Monday 26 September 2016. I therefore appeal to students to return to their classes, while we continue with our efforts to find solutions to the concerns raised in the Memorandum. An academic recovery plan is currently being developed with a view to concluding the academic activities of 2016 before the end year recess. This may not be achievable if the resumption of the academic programme is delayed further.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. de Beer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

PROF CHRIS DE BEER
INTERIM VICE-CHANCELLOR
DATE: 23 SEPTEMBER 2016