

# New structure planned for WSU

A plan has been developed to turn around the Eastern Cape's Walter Sisulu University (WSU), which has a student body of 21,800 people across four campuses. The university has been plagued by student riots, staff strikes and creditors and even salaries going unpaid.



Now administrator Professor Lourens van Staden is intent on ending over-spending and excessive travel expenses, restoring authority and stabilising operations. He is to present the plan to Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande later this month.

In an interview with the Daily Dispatch, Van Staden outlined his vision, which is based on what he calls a "South African government-like model of provinces".

The plan outlines how each of the four campuses - Buffalo City, Mthatha, Butterworth and Queenstown - will have its own budget, lecturers and administration and be run by its own campus manager.

"The major reason this university has failed is because of the central management approach. The campuses believe they've been shortchanged," he said.

Head office, which will consist of vice-chancellors and executive management, will act as an oversight structure and deal with policies and procedures.

Currently, all campuses report to the Mthatha office and in some instances campuses share lecturers.

"It's expensive for lecturers to travel between campuses and there are dangers on the roads," Van Staden said.

## Decentralised approach

He said all stakeholders had agreed to decentralise authority.

WSU spokeswoman Angela Church said on Thursday (13 June) the new model would be implemented when Nzimande approved the university statute, a guiding legal framework. This was expected by the end of this month.

"Over the past six months, a revised statute of WSU has been developed after wide consultations. The minister does not specifically have to approve the new governance and management model as this is an operational matter flowing from the new statute," she said.

She said campus managers would have overall managerial accountability for their own campus.

"Before, in the unitary model, the accountable person was at head office, which created lines of authority that were too long, too costly and ineffective. Principles of financial viability, socio-economic relevance and quality will underpin the core business and these principles aim to make each campus a viable business entity," she said.

Church said the final organogram was still being developed but it was expected that the new structure would be phased in from next year. For now, only posts of executive director of finance, student services and human resources had been advertised.

"These will be head office positions responsible for overall policy development and managerial oversight across the university," Church said.

National Education, Health and Allied Worker's Union (Nehawu), which has been vocal against Van Staden, said they supported the plan.

Nehawu provincial secretary Xolani Mamlalela said branches indicated the plan was welcomed, although there were still a few "outstanding matters".

Student Representative Council secretary-general Cwenga Sigwili said students agreed with the plan although it needed fine-tuning. "There are still vacant posts and lecturers occupying part-time positions. There's lack of investment in human resources and shortcut measures will have to be ruled out for this to work," Sigwili said.

Source: Daily Dispatch via I-Net Bridge

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