

From: VCO News VCO.news@wits.ac.za
Subject: WITS COVID-19 UPDATE (12) - COURT DISMISSES STUDENTS' CASE, URGES ALL STUDENTS TO COMPLY WITH WITS' DIRECTIVES
Date: 19 March 2020 at 11:31
To: VCO News VCO.news@wits.ac.za



MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE TEAM

Dear Colleagues and Students

The High Court (Gauteng Local Division, Johannesburg) dismissed the urgent application brought by two students to extend the period for the evacuation of residences. The judge implored the applicants and all other students to comply with the directives of the President, the World Health Organization and the NICD. The judge recognised that the University is following the directives of these bodies.

We are pleased with the outcome of the Court proceedings and we believe that the judgment is a vindication of decision-making informed by scientific evidence. It also allows institutions to act decisively and to work with government to manage and mitigate against this pandemic.

We are very disappointed with the applicants and others that have tried to undermine the effective management of this pandemic. Their behaviour is self-indulgent and reckless, and contrary to the advice of leading scientists in the country. Moreover, we are aware that this action was in part inspired by political machinations and we remain concerned that such conduct could undermine our country's fight against the pandemic. It especially undermines the message of solidarity by our President to act as a collective in addressing COVID-19.

Individuals must be held accountable and we are disappointed that the Court did not award costs against the applicants in a context where their conduct has not only been frivolous and reckless, but resulted in the University having to expend unnecessary resources in legal proceedings when it could have been deployed elsewhere at this critical time. This is simply unacceptable and these individuals should be held accountable for their actions.

We will continue to facilitate the evacuation of the residences by our students and to follow the social distancing policy. We emphasise that while our recess has been brought forward and residences are closed, the Senior Executive Team is putting plans in place to ensure that the academic programme resumes in a manner which is conducive to our collective needs as soon as is possible.

Wits' experts and scientists are also working directly with government to address this pandemic and contribute to the global search for a cure.

We encourage all stakeholders to look out for the collective good of the country. At this time, we must not only claim our rights but also exercise our individual responsibilities as citizens in the best interests of our community. We can only overcome this crisis if we act coherently and collectively as a country.

SENIOR EXECUTIVE TEAM
19 MARCH 2020 (11:25)