



UNIVERSITY OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE ON THE OUTCOME OF A MEETING OF COUNCIL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI STUDENTS UNION ON STUDENTS FEES

Council of the University of Malawi wishes to inform members of the general public and students that the University of Malawi Students Union (UMSU) has been alleging lately that the University of Malawi Management and Council have not been willing to engage it on the subject of fee adjustment. Consequently, UMSU wrote a petition addressed to the Ministry of Education advising Government that it was planning to hold vigils at the University Office against Council because of its allegedly unrealistic high fees.

This petition was delivered at the Civic Offices in Lilongwe on Wednesday, 27th June, 2016 despite UMSU leaders meeting management of the University of Malawi on 25th June, 2016 where the basis for raising the fees was shared with them. It is important to point out that the vigil was planned before meeting Council.

Having noted that UMSU did not follow proper procedures, as indicated above, Council arranged to meet members of the students Union at the College of Medicine on Saturday 9th July, 2016 from 2pm where among other things, it was established that it was not correct that both University Management and Council were reluctant to meet them. It was also noted that the Ministry of Education, in its response to the UMSU petition, had advised them that the authority to determine fees in the University of Malawi is the preserve of the Council under the Act. At the same meeting, Council shared with UMSU a letter from the district council authorities in Zomba barring UMSU from holding a vigil because they had flouted procedures according to the Police Act.

Council further observed that UMSU did not furnish it with the petition to give Council an opportunity to prepare a response. Council and UMSU then agreed to meet 48 hours later on 11th July, 2016 in Zomba to

discuss the matter. Over and above the initial petition given to Council on 9th July, 2016 Council accepted an additional submission from UMSU providing new information in respect of UMSU's proposed fees.

At the meeting on 11th July, 2016, UMSU was given an opportunity to present both submissions. Against the background of the two submissions referred to above, Council requested UMSU to provide a rationale for the proposals it was advancing.

Once this was done, Council observed that UMSU's proposed fees had no empirical basis. The Council, in turn, offered its own rationale for raising the fees which was primarily based on considerations of maintaining academic quality. This rationale arose from the unit cost analysis which demonstrated that for generic and mature entry students, their fees contribution constituted 12% and 25% respectively of the full cost for training a student in the University of Malawi as shown in the table streamlined by colleges below:

College	Average Unit Cost per year	Generic Students (12%)	Mature Entry Students (25%)
Chancellor College	K3, 506, 944	K400, 000	K900, 000
College of Medicine	K5, 054, 352	K600, 000	K1, 400, 000
Kamuzu College of Nursing	K4, 075, 427	K450, 000	K1, 000, 000
The Polytechnic	K3, 789, 451	K450, 000	K950, 000
Average for Colleges Continuing Students	K4, 106, 543	K400, 000	

In the final analysis, Council resolved that it could not accept to adopt the UMSU proposals because they were not based on an empirically justified position. Additionally, UMSU did not demonstrate how their low proposed fees could guarantee academic quality for the University whose standards has been the subject of public debate over the years.

Furthermore, Council saw no merit in claims by UMSU that its fees would lead to massive withdrawals of its students. Council took this view because Government created the Higher Education Students Loans and Grants Board specifically to provide loans to genuinely needy students. Additionally College Principals who were party to the meeting, demonstrated with concrete evidence that well before the new fees were announced by UNIMA, alternative funding sources for supporting needy

students in colleges were already operational to complement efforts of the Higher Education Students Loans and Grants Board. For example:

Table 1: Number of students supported by external scholarship providers and the Loans Board

College	External scholarship providers	Higher Education Students Loans Board	Total Number of students supported
CHANCO	140	759	899
COM	235	262	497
KCN	434	358	792
POLY	229	760	989

For Chancellor College, the external scholarship providers include the African Development Bank, Tertiary Education Scholarship Trust, Soko Fund, J’Africa Foundation, Nchima Trust, Tertiary Education Scholarship Trust, Higher Education Science and Technology and Muslim Association. For College of Medicine, the external providers include Dossani Trust, Rab Processors, Ali Mahomed Trust, Lions Club of Bavaria and CBM, I-TECH, Centre for Disease Control, Global Health, St Andrews University, Consortium for Advanced Research in Africa, Southern Africa Research Consortium, St John of God Hospital, Malawi Liverpool Welcome Trust, NORHED Surgery, Sight Savers International, Malawi Vaccine and Nkhoma Synod. For Kamuzu College of Nursing, the external scholarship providers include Bill & Melinda Gates, Global AIDS International Alliance, Tertiary Education Scholarship Trust, Soko Funds, Moyo Fund, NAC Global Fund, UNFPA, ICAP-NEPI, Nchima Trust, Ali Mahomed Trust, Elma Foundation, USAID World Learning, Christian Health Association of Malawi, Clinton Health Access Initiative, David Livingstone Memorial Clinic Fund. Finally for the Polytechnic, these include Higher Education Science and Technology, David Livingstone awards, Nchima Trust, Soko Fund, David Livingstone Scholarship, Tertiary Education Scholarship Trust, Total Malawi.

It is clear from the foregoing, that Council is working tirelessly to find scholarships/loans and grants for its genuinely needy students so that none of them should lose higher education opportunities.

Council was concerned that while it had figures of those who withdrew on financial grounds and measures for bringing them back with the assistance as described above, the position UMSU insisted on that the new fees would lead to massive withdrawals was not supported by commensurate statistical data, except fears.

Furthermore, Council shared with UMSU communication between the Students Loans Board and the University Office to the effect that all needy students' fees based on the current fees, have been factored into the 2016/2017 Loans Board Budget. Council, therefore, expects UMSU leadership to convey this good news to the entire university student body and advise all needy students to apply accordingly instead of resorting to vigils.

Council would like to assure the general public and all the students that Council shall support all applications by needy students to the Loans Board so that they can access the loans, scholarships and grants. Meanwhile, the Loans Board budget has been significantly increased in the 2016/2017 financial year to meet the growing needs of needy students. Council is committed to undertake aggressive search for more scholarships while at the same time maintaining quality, relevance, a stable calendar, employability and sustainability of the University of Malawi.

**University Registrar
Secretary for Council**