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Wits SRC: saints or sell-outs?

Bribery claims surface in wake of fees victory

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AFTER days of being praised for their bravery and hailed as heroes for spearheading the #FeesMustFall movement, Wits student leaders were this morning trashed on social media for being "sell-outs".

This after members of the Student Representative Council (SRC) and management reached an agreement that will allow Wits to reopen for classes tomorrow, putting an end to the shutdown.

Hailing last night's resolutions as "an initial victory", SRC members acknowledged that while they had won "a great battle, the war for free education continues with a renewed strategy".

The university heeded a call not to increase tuition and residence fees next year, with an undertaking that the upfront payment of R9 340 for 2016 would be discussed further.

Soon after the announcement, some students took to Twitter, accusing the SRC – specifically the current president Shaeera Kalla and president-elect Nomphelelo Mkhathshwa – of accepting money from the ANC to end the shutdown, while others tweeted in their defence.

An image surfaced on Twitter from @WitsFMF of a page allegedly ripped out of the SRC president's diary that lists the Progressive Youth Alliance's meeting agenda.

One line read: "Karabo -> 40K", which @MissMadiba interpreted as bribe money.

However, another line on the same page says: "Funding (Shaka & alumni & Gift of the Givers)".

Gift of the Givers has donated large amounts of food to the protesting students. But @King_Nkul, among others, came to Kalla's defence, saying: "I feel like Shaeera's SRC raised R5 million this year and got a clean audit from the CCDU (Counselling and Careers Development Unit) and the dean of students, R40K-R5 million."

"The audacity of some to claim that suddenly some would sell out, after defiantly leading this movement, is so ridiculous it's laughable," @TazEssop14 chimed in.

@KMalatji was not satisfied, regardless of the bribe allegations: "I can never pronounce on the

40K. I will ask tho how do you stop a movement you 'started' and carried on for 2 weeks?"

In its official statement, signed by both the current and incoming year, the SRC said it "strongly condemns the politicisation of our protests as a student body", saying the SRC's "sole intention of advancing the student agenda" remains intact.

Kalla and Mkhathshwa did not respond to requests for comment this morning, but Kalla shared her opinion on the end of the shutdown on Twitter yesterday morning.

"Strongly believe the shutdown is dependent on what unis around the country are doing. Wits cannot open when others are still closed," she tweeted.

But the end of the shutdown did not signal an end to a struggle for free education, the SRC said in its statement.

"Long-term goals require long-term and sustainable strategies in order for us to be successful. Shutting down the university was a short-term strategy used to secure the 0% fee increment," it said, listing "free education, institutional autonomy, racism and black debt" as some of the issues they still had to deal with.

In a statement released yesterday, Wits also agreed with students that "outsourcing (of workers) is an exploitative practice", committing to establish an internal commission to look into the matter.

"This commission will investigate the effects of outsourcing services on the university, the cost structures associated with insourcing and possible alternative models," it said.

Financial resources will also be found to "support the children of all workers employed in currently outsourced services, provided that these children qualify for admission to the university".

New dates for exams were still being sorted out as well as logistical issues such as international students' visas not allowing them to stay beyond the original exam dates.

Also approving the zero percent increase on student fees were the campuses of North-West University, with a notice on the university's Facebook page indicating that new exam timetables would be released from today.



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BOND IS BACK: British actor Daniel Craig attends the world premiere of the new James Bond film *Spectre* with French actress Lea Seydoux, left, and Italian actress Monica Bellucci at the Royal Albert Hall in London last night. *Spectre* is the 24th official James Bond film. PICTURE: ANDY RAIN / EPA

Spectre premiere a Royal affair

LONDON: Film stars mingled with royals at the world premiere of *Spectre* last night, marking British secret agent James Bond's glitzy return to the silver screen.

Hundreds of cheering fans greeted Bond actor Daniel Craig upon his arrival at London's Royal Albert Hall, where residents from nearby buildings watched the premiere from their windows.

Returning for the fourth time as

007, Craig said his own excitement at being allowed to continue in the series stemmed from his involvement beyond acting.

"I've just been allowed to be creatively involved with these films from the very beginning and I've continued to do it with this," he said. "Thankfully, we've got the most amazing team and we figure it out."

Craig has been quoted as saying

he wanted out of the franchise and told an interviewer in July he'd rather slit his wrists than play 007 again. Asked how much he knew of his future as Bond, Craig said: "I know enough."

He was joined on the red carpet by co-stars Lea Seydoux and Monica Bellucci, Ralph Fiennes, director Sam Mendes and movie producer Barbara Broccoli who later welcomed Britain's Prince William

and his wife Kate and Prince Harry to the premiere.

"It's incredible how James Bond represents so much, not just in England but all over the world," Bellucci said.

Trailers have shown action-packed scenes typical of Bond movies as 007 uncovers the shady *Spectre* organisation, and its dark link to villain Franz Oberhauser, played by Christoph Waltz.

Spectre has stood as an acronym for the Special Executive for Counter-Intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge and Extortion in past Bond films.

"It's a terrible pressure to be iconic and I practised it at home secretly," Waltz said.

Spectre, the 24th James Bond film, was released in UK cinemas last night and will be released worldwide next week. – Reuters



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