

NUST council rakes in thousands in unsanctioned meetings

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News

October 22, 2020



By **Confidente Reporter**

NAMIBIA University of Science and Technology (NUST) Council has allegedly been holding a number of unsanctioned meetings beyond the four per year prescribed in the State Enterprise Governance Act reportedly raking in hundreds of thousands of dollars from the already financially challenged institution.

Investigations show that the NUST council members have so far met way more than they should and have been demanding their payment despite the institution facing challenges.

Confidente can also report that the council received sitting allowances totalling N\$500 000 in May alone with one member allegedly pocketing N\$120 000.

“In comparison to 2015 the University spent N\$169 000 for all members allowances,” a source at the University told *Confidente*.

The source added that, “Council has to date quadrupled the allowed amount of council meetings.

“On top of this there have been dozens of subcommittee meetings. The Honorary Awards Committee which has not met since 2016 provides a number of civil servants a retainer of almost N\$180 000 for a committee which never meets,” said the source.

Minister of Public Enterprises Leon Jooste said they are currently investigating the issue and will formally announce their position.

“The Ministry of Public Enterprises is looking into this matter and will be in a better position to respond and intervene once we have all the verified details,” said Jooste.

NUST acting vice chancellor Andrew Niikondo however, told *Confidente* that: “This in itself is evidence that the person that provided this information has incorrect information at his/her disposal. It is not always a necessity to inform Honourable Minister Jooste about the council meetings, as some of the engagements are only for information sharing purposes.

“Four meetings are allowed annually, but if the need arises, this number can be increased.”

Niikondo also said that the council members only receive allowances.

“None of the council meetings take place at 01:00am as is alluded to. However, some meetings start late in the afternoons and go until late. Our council members have full-time employment outside the university, so it is not easy to plan council meetings considering their other engagements at their respective workplaces.

“This causes collision courses and thus the only opportunity is to have a quorum of the meeting late in the afternoons or evenings. This is common in all organisations in Namibia and even further afield and thus it is not exclusive to NUST.”

In order to get insight on how the council orders takeaways and catering companies at the university’s expense to feed them in the evening, Niikondo added, “When the council meets, there are some snacks and soft drinks. This is a normal practice everywhere and these snacks will not even cost tens of thousands of dollars as said by the source hence this is not correct,” he said

Touching on salary delays, Niikondo explained that the chairperson of the council is not responsible for managing finances hence it is not a true reflection to say she delayed payments of NUST employees.

“When there was no money to pay the council we also delayed their salaries. The council does not run the university and none of them have an office at NUST, it

depends on what they get from management”.

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