



**Siyaphumelela**  
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**For immediate release  
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**NO FOOD TO STUDY – STUDENTS HUNGRY AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING, ACCESS NOT ENOUGH**

**JOHANNESBURG**

Students attending the 2018 Siyaphumelela Conference have expressed deep concern over the high rate of food insecurity at institutions of higher learning.

Testimonials and presentations from students across the country have revealed that large segments of the student population are struggling because they have no food to eat.

Food insecurity describes the uncertainty one feels when they are unsure of when they will next buy groceries or a meal because of limited financial means. While there are no statistics on exactly how many students are food insecure, the problem is especially prevalent among those at universities.

Through a study conducted by the Food Intervention Programme at Durban University of Technology (DUT), final year Food and Nutrition student, Sboniso Ngcobo found that students in his class were either overweight or underweight.

“This clearly demonstrated to me that students have unhealthy eating habits. When I further enquired the reasons for this, most students said they eat what is readily and cheaply available such as Amagwinya (Vetkoeks) while some said they had no money to buy food at all so went hungry most of the time,” he said.

However while some students were normal weight, his research further found that their health and behavioural profile were influenced by the availability of food in terms of quality, prices and availability of money to purchase it.

The overwhelming consensus emanating from academics attending the 2018 Siyaphumelela Conference is that the majority of students going hungry are those from poor backgrounds, from low quintile schools and are often first generation students in their families.

The conference was opened by Minister Naledi Pandor (Minister of Higher Education and Training) and in her address, highlighted the adverse effect student funding has on South African students.

“Students who are inadequately funded experience great challenges with regards to food security, suitable accommodation, and the ability to obtain textbooks and other resources. These tend to be poor black working class students which means we need to develop models of funding and support that address their needs. To this end, government has chosen to introduce a full-cost bursary scheme for students whose family income is under R350, 000 a year.” said Pandor.



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To tackle this pervasive issue, lecturers, SRCs, civil society organisations, students and initiatives like Siyaphumelela have had to step in with food security interventions at institutions of higher learning.

Saide, the coordinating body of Siyaphumelela said it would further investigate the call for a food security/sovereignty forum made at the conference as more universities such as Wits and DUT are now harvesting fruits and vegetables on campuses as a food security measure.

The annual conference (now hosted for the fourth time) is a central aspect of the Siyaphumelela programme that is aimed at improving capacity at South African universities to use data analytics to improve student success. As such the annual conference aims to promote a national discourse on student success initiatives in the five partner institutions: The University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Pretoria, Nelson Mandela University, the University of the Free State and the Durban University of Technology.

As the only conference focusing on the use of analytics to promote student success in sub Saharan Africa, the conference provides a platform for international and local experts and practitioners to discuss evidence-based practices and national systemic interventions aimed at student success.

International guests include Professor Sara Goldrick-Rab (Temple University, Philadelphia), Chancellor Kim A. Wilcox (University of California, Riverside) and Vice Provos Sukhwant Jhaj (Portland State University, Portland).

Today is the final day of the 2018 Siyaphumelela Conference which has been held at The Wanderers Club in Johannesburg. The three-day event has included a number of workshops followed by two and a half days of presentations and discussions centering on finding solutions to why students do not succeed at institutions of higher learning.

Central themes that have been covered over the three days have been: basic needs and student success, leadership for student success and design for student success. To view or download the full programme, please go to <http://www.siyaphumelela.org.za/conf/2018/#!>

You can also follow developments at the conference on Twitter via #SIYA2018.

## **ENDS**

For media accreditation or to arrange media interviews, please contact Silindile Nyathikazi on +27 71 291 9959 or e-mail [silindilen@saide.org.za](mailto:silindilen@saide.org.za).

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## **About Saide**



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Saide offers a number of services across all educational sectors - higher education, teacher education, early childhood development, schooling, technical and vocational education and community education. We do not deliver education programmes, but work with educators, programmes and institutions as well as government to enable successful open learning for all.

Visit <http://www.saide.org.za> for more information.