Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Blade Nzimande, gave his Budget Vote Speech on the 22 July 2020

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Honourable Chairperson
Honourable Members
Cabinet Colleagues present
Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Honourable Bhuti Manamela
Members of the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology, led by Honourable Chairperson, Mr Philly Mapulane
Director-General of the Department, Mr Gwebinkundla Qonde
Chairpersons and CEOs of the entities
Heads of our Post School Organisations and Institutions
Officials of the Department of Higher Education and Training
Student leaders
Ladies and Gentlemen

This marks our second budget for the Department of Higher Education and Training as we commence with this 6th Democratic Parliament.

We meet at a time when we are confronted with the scourge of the coronavirus epidemic which brought with itself unprecedented changes to the manner in which government and the society, how both public and private business is conducted and how we should prioritise and manage our heath affairs.

As a sector, we have also not been spared, we had to adopt new ways of providing learning and teaching by introducing blended education platforms, which includes integrating technological learning and physical delivery of education and teaching materials.

Together with our institutions, both universities and colleges, we began the process of providing data to our students through negotiated rates with Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)

Moderated by Treasury and managed by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, we are now finalising the process to appoint service provider/s for the provision of electronic devices, particularly laptops to NSFAS funded students.

This initiative will add on already the process of the provision of laptops by some 65% of our universities.

As a department, working with NSFAS and institutions, we are working on policy amendments that will allow for the NSFAS learning materials allowance to be utilised at all institutions to purchase devices for first-time entering NSFAS students in future. We will put in place this policy change will in place for 2021.

We are paying serious attention on issues regarding future student funding considerations, high levels of student debt, funding for missing middle and postgraduate students.

I would like to thank the majority of universities who have already put in place mechanisms to provide data and devices to their students.

Honourable Members,

Our Ministerial Task Team on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has now completed its work to provide critical policy advice on how our Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system should respond to opportunities and challenges presented by the 4IR. I intend to publicly release the report so that the sector can engage with it, before recommendations to Cabinet.

As part of the five-year Labour Market Intelligence research programme, we have commissioned research to inform the publication of the list of Occupations in High Demand, the list of Priority Occupations, on behalf of the Department of Home Affairs, the Critical Skills List.

The National Skills Fund (NSF) has allocated R 84 million for research to inform the development of these occupation and skill lists in order to direct funding interventions to 60 000 beneficiaries over the 2020/21 financial year.

We continue to prioritise artisan development as our Deputy Minister shall elaborate.

We have also identified that in order to increase access to education and training, the TVET sector remains a key partner in the realisation of increasing provision of occupational programmes.

All our 50 public TVET colleges will benefit over 20 000 learners with access to training opportunities through a R2,1 billion funding window.

The NSF has thus allocated R2,5 billion to build/refurbish TVET infrastructure for 11 Colleges in 2019/20.

Coupled with the TVET Infrastructure, is the roll out of last mile internet connectivity to all TVET Campuses through the coordinating and funding of R 350 million.

Honourable members,

The report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics has concluded its work, and it has submitted its report which I have approved for public release.

Both my departments have started to collaborate on a joint plan that responds to the recommendations of this report.

The Staffing South Africa’s Universities Framework is one of the responsive mechanisms that we will take forward with increased vigour.

All five sub-programmes of the Staffing South Africa’s Universities Framework are now being implemented, including the Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme, the New Generation of Academics Programme, the University Staff Doctoral Programme, the Future Professors Programme and the Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme.

These programmes are already contributing to staff transformation in the university sector, and as we increase their scale of implementation their impact will also increase.

I have appointed a Ministerial Task Team on the remuneration of Vice-Chancellors and Senior Executives. The team will submit the research work undertaken and the findings by 31 March 2021.

I have also appointed a Ministerial Task Team (MTT) to conduct an Independent Review of the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Given the size of UNISA, not only in South Africa, but on the entire African continent – having 407 759 students in 2020 and growing – it is clearly too big to fail. The review will also focus on the mandate of UNISA as well as outstanding, after s from the merger.

But broadly, we are working on the review the Higher Education Act, No 101 of 1997. This will assist amongst others to deal with governance collapses in some of the institutions as a result of the conduct of some of the members in governance structures. I am concerned especially about institutions that are periodically placed under administration.

Since 1998, fifteen Independent Assessors have been appointed for a number of universities in terms of the Act as a result of poor institutional governance and management.

As a component of transformation in the higher education sector, I will soon publish the revised Language Policy Framework for the Public Higher Education Institutions in the Government Gazette.

The main purpose of the policy is to ensure the development and strengthening of historically marginalized South African indigenous languages as languages of scholarship, teaching and learning and communication.

Honourable members,

Cabinet has recently approved a policy framework for the PSET sector to fight gender-based violence and now this has to be mainstreamed into the entire sector.

Our national aim still remains to increase the total headcount enrolment in higher education, public and private institution, to 1.62 million by 2030, as envisaged by the NDP and the White paper.

In January 2020, I approved the new enrolment plan for the academic years 2020 to 2025.

At the postgraduate level enrolments in Masters and Doctoral qualifications are expected to grow at a higher than the overall enrolments.

Notably, the number of Research Masters and Doctoral graduates is expected to increase at a higher rate than the overall number of graduates, which is critical because our country depends on these post-graduates for its future academics, researchers and other leaders within the public service and knowledge-intensive professions.

In April 2019, the draft central application Service Bill was published for public comments. In this financial year, we will begin with the pilot of the CAS for the 2022 Academic year and at the same time finalise the required legislation to be considered by parliament following the review based on public comments received.

Honourable members

Our revised curricula for TVET colleges are now in the evaluation phase in order to make the learning outcomes current and relevant to workplace practices.

We however are forced to shift the implementation of the revised curricula as a result of COVID-19 pandemic from 2021 to 2022 in order to ensure that there is sufficient time for preparations and training.

Lecturer development continues to receive focused attention with greater support from our partners and stakeholders in the private sector.

The early work for the establishment of a lecturer training institute in Gauteng has begun and will soon gain momentum.

Dedicated and collaborative effort between the Department, Umalusi and SITA has helped significantly reduce the certification backlogs in TVET colleges.

The establishment of new TVET lecturer qualifications and the development of associated programmes and their offering by universities is well underway.

Currently fourteen (14) universities are developing programmes, eleven (11) programmes have already been accredited by the Council on Higher Education, three (3) are already being offered, and the other eight (8) are planned to be offered from 2021.

Honourable Chairperson,

In the 2019/20 financial year, the Community Education and Training (CET) College system, adopted a national sector plan which is informed by the White Paper PSET implementation plan.

The plan provides for uniformity in the strategic thrust of the CET colleges towards the achievement of the CET vision and the pronouncements of the National Development Plan (NDP) of reaching one million students by 2030.

In order to achieve this, the Department is working on the development of a sustainable funding model for the CET college sector.

In terms of ensuring a diverse programme qualification mix in CET colleges, in particular the provision of skills programmes and occupational qualifications, colleges have begun to make inroads in forging strategic partnerships with various Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith Based organisations (FBOs) and Universities.

There is also notable collaborations with the various Skills Levy institutions like National Skills Fund (NSF) and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and other government departments to ensure the availability of all requisite resources for the provision of diversified programme offerings.

Through the support of SETAs, R40 million has been committed towards the establishment of ICT laboratories in in 54 identified CET centers.

Further, there is a collaboration between Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) an agency of Department of Science and Innovation and DHET to build ICT infrastructure in the pilot centres which will serve as hubs where communities and young people in particular can access services, connect and experience the benefits of the technology from the most rural areas of our country.

Honourable members,

As a department, we remain committed to strengthening and developing the PSET sector by investing in infrastructure to provide quality teaching, learning and research and innovation spaces.

In 2020/21 due to the challenges of COVID-19 and the need to reprioritise funds across government, a total of R750 million was cut from the infrastructure budget.

Nevertheless, over the period 2020/21 to 2022/23, we will still see a substantial investment of R11.486 billion in infrastructure projects across our 26 universities.

We will continue to prioritise infrastructure development at Historically Disadvantaged universities to ensure that maintenance backlogs are addressed and the quality of infrastructure delivery management is improved at these institutions.

I am currently in a process of restructuring and streamlining infrastructure management within my department. I will soon be appointing a Ministerial Advisory Team (MACI) on PSET infrastructure as well as establish, working together with the DBSA, an Infrastructure Project Management Office, with a particular focus on student accounting.

We will also mobilize investment from, and establish partnerships with, the private sector in order to accelerate provision of student accommodation in particular, within the framework of the Presidential Infrastructure Co-ordinating Committee.

In March 2020 we invested a further R496 million in student housing and other types of university infrastructure in historically disadvantaged institutions.

Honourable members,

Amid the world pandemic, we had to revise our appropriation to ensure that we bring about a successful completion to the academic year.

Two point one billion rands from the state subsidy and transfer has been reprioritised as a Covid-19 response mechanism for universities, for both teaching and learning as well as campus readiness.

Our budget appropriation for the 2020/21 is as follows:

University education                R 79 177 737 Billion

TVET                            R 13 074 170 Billion

Skills Development                R 300 141 Million

Community Education            R 2 513 980 Billion

Planning, Policy and Strategy         R198 069 million

Administration                     R445 503 million

National Skills Fund                 R 2258102 million

TOTAL                        R107 000 116 Billion

In conclusion, I thank the Honourable President, Deputy President, Cabinet Colleagues, Deputy Minister Manamela, the Chairperson and members of the Portfolio Committee for the support and guidance.

Gratitude also goes to my wife, my staff in the Ministry and to the Director General, Mr Gwebinkundla Qonde and the entire Executive Management Committee and Staff of the Department, the Boards and Executives of our Entities, and everybody who contributed toward the achievement of our mandate as the department.

Let’s Grow SA Together

Thank you.