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**Memorandum from the Parliamentary Office**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1365**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 11/05/2018**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 15 OF 2018)**

**Ms N Nolutshungu (EFF) to ask the Minister of Higher Education and Training:**

(1) (a) What is the total number of instances of corruption at the University of Zululand that have been reported to her department or which her department has been made aware of, (b) what are the reported allegations in each instance, (c) was each allegation investigated, (d) what was the outcome of each investigation and (e) what are the names of the people who were implicated;

(2) were any punitive measure put in place in respect of each case; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

**NW1467E**

**REPLY:**

(1)(a) The Department of Higher Education has received information about seven alleged instances of corruption at the University of Zululand.

(b) These allegations relate to the following:

(i) procurement processes for infrastructure projects;

(ii) qualification fraud, changing of marks and tampering with admission requirements;

(iii) irregularities relating to the purchase of housing for executive managers;

(iv) the procurement process for the appointment of a computer-training service provider using funds from the Teaching Development Grant;

(v) fraud relating to the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor;

(vi) the un-procedural appointment of University of Zululand attorneys; and

(vii) an alleged R11.5 million transfer.

(c) – (d) (i) **Procurement processes for infrastructure projects**. The tender process for infrastructure development was challenged in court and it was halted whilst the matter was heard in court. The university investigated the matter and found that certain staff members flawed the procurement process due to the non-disclosure of material facts. The officials implicated in the irregular procurement process were subjected to the university’s disciplinary process and have since left the institution.

(ii) **Qualification fraud, changing of marks and tampering with admission requirements to allow students who did not meet the requirements to be admitted.** It was alleged that fake academic transcripts were being generated outside the university. The university reported that it acted decisively and suspended two employees identified in the alleged degrees for sale scam. The matter was also dealt with in the court and both accused were found guilty on 62 counts of fraud. The marks of individuals identified were removed and students were allowed to re-register.

(iii) **Irregularities relating to the purchase of executive housing.** The Department received a number of complaints from the Secretary of Save Unizulu amongst others, alleging financial irregularities, including the spending of R19 million on houses and plots at an up-market eco-state to house university executives. The Minister wrote to the University Council requesting clarity on the alleged irregularities. The Council responded that the purchase was approved in 2015 as part of the university’s retention strategy. The houses remain the property of the university, and the use is governed by the university housing policy.

(iv) **Illegal sourcing of a computer-training programme.** The allegation is linked to the appointment of a service provider to provide computer training as part of the university’s Teaching Development Grant (TDG) funded activities. The Department requested information from the university and was satisfied with the explanation. The external audit report of the TDG funded activities indicated that the funds were used to support the university’s approved TDG plan, and were in accordance with the university’s own policies. No further action was requested at that time.

(v) **Alleged fraudulent appointment of the Vice-Chancellor.** The appointment of a Vice-Chancellor is the remit of Council and not the Department. The Department was initially invited to sit on the selection committee due to a misinterpretation of the university rule. The Department engaged with the university explaining that the rule referred to Ministerial appointees on Council and not Departmental officials, and recused itself from the process. The Minister of Higher Education and Training also raised the matter with the Chairperson of Council and was reassured that the university had undertaken an extensive search in accordance with the recruitment policy applied to appointment of a Vice-Chancellor and been unsuccessful in attracting an appropriate candidate before the Chairperson of Council requesting Professor Mtose to consider applying for the Vice-Chancellor position.

(vi) **Fraudulent/Unprocedural appointment of the University of Zululand attorneys**. The university appoints its service providers in line with its own supply chain management policies. The Council approved the appointment of the attorneys. The university has submitted satisfactory reports on time and in line with reporting requirements. In 2016, it received an unqualified audit opinion. The analysis of the reports does not show any material irregularities in respect to its supply chain management.

(vii) **Illegal transfer of R11.5 million.** An illegal transfer of R11.5 million to a private account occurred in 2013 just before the Administrator left the university. A forensic audit was undertaken by the university to investigate the case. The university has indicated that it had dealt with the matter. The Department has not seen the forensic report.

(2) Although the university has investigated all the cases detailed above, and put in place various punitive measures, the Minister has recently directed the Council to conduct an independent forensic investigation into a whole range of matters, including the above, so that these allegations can be comprehensively addressed as a matter of urgency.