



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence



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FORT HARE AND WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY VICE-CHANCELLORS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SHARP INCREASE IN COVID-19 POSITIVE CASES AMONG STUDENTS IN EAST LONDON

The Vice-Chancellors of Fort Hare and Walter Sisulu universities have expressed concern over the rising numbers of infected students at their East London campuses over the past 10-14 days.

In a space of just a week, Fort Hare recorded 33 student cases, mostly among the Nursing Science Students. This morning, that number increased by 26 – to include students from Law as well as Management and Commerce faculties. The university is still liaising with Provincial Health structures to assist by increasing bulk testing on the campus.

Testing and contact tracing in East London are still underway and new infection numbers are expected to rise as results continue to trickle in.

The situation at WSU is still unfolding. The university is in the process of consolidating the numbers of all infected students, but Management is aware that some have started displaying symptoms and have been hospitalised. This is a huge concern for the university and teams are in place to put in the necessary controls.

UFH and WSU students stay in residences in and around Quigney in East London and tend to socialise together. There are confirmed reports that on the 3rd, 10th and 17th October, there were parties hosted in clubs and taverns in that neighbourhood and the students attended some or all of them. Some students have confirmed that there was non-compliance with Covid-19 health and safety protocols during the events, which were attended by as many as 300 patrons. There is a strong likelihood that such super spreader events may be the source of further cluster outbreaks.

Both VCs have embarked on consciousness-raising awareness campaigns at their institutions. They have appealed to students, parents and guardians not to drop their guard.

Tandi Mapukata, UFH Spokesperson said the coronavirus is still active and has already caused serious disruption to the 2020 academic year. The outbreak may hamper academic progress and lead to loss of life.

The sentiments were echoed by Yonela Tukwayo, WSU Spokesperson who said students have a responsibility to enjoy their lives responsibly by protecting themselves and others around them. Wearing of masks, avoiding congested spaces and regular hand sanitising is compulsory. She emphasised the non-compliance is not an option.

According to Mapukata, the University of Fort Hare has an isolation/quarantine site at the Alice Campus and is on the verge of acquiring another site in East London. The Eastern Cape Provincial government has also donated 40 beds at the Bhisho Hospital for use as an isolation site by the university. She said the university is working hand-in-hand with health authorities to curb the spread of the virus.

Tukwana said even though WSU has identified isolation areas for students across all campuses, those spaces are limited. The university's only weapon against the virus is for each person to adhere to the well-publicised COVID-19 regulations. The slightest recklessness leads to the resurgence of the deadly virus.

Ends.

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