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EDUCATION

Skills revolution campaign kicks off today with big funding boost

DAILY NEWS REPORTER

KWAZULU-NATAL universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training are expected to receive millions of rand from the government today to clear student debt in Durban.

As part of a "Skills Revolution Campaign," the Moses Kotane Institute (MKI) has secured R74 million from Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (merSETA) to clear student debt in institutions of higher learning. The merSETA falls under the Department of Higher Education and Training.

MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and Leader of Government Business Siboniso Duma said that in addition, MKI has secured a further R126 million to accelerate the acquisition of knowledge that will enable the people of KwaZulu-Natal to be creators of wealth and jobs over the next 30 years.

Duma said that following the devastating Covid-19 crisis and floods that destroyed the economy and condemned millions of people into conditions of squalor, his department was determined to rebuild the economy by sharpening the skills of people.

"The focus is also to ensure their re-absorption into key sectors of our economy. Thousands of beneficiaries will be part of the soft launch of this skills revolution campaign, which will include the official opening of a Digital Centre at the Mangosuthu Institute of Technology," Duma said.

The department was relying on the



MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs | Leader of Government Business Siboniso Duma

enduring partnership involving the Mangosuthu Institute of Technology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban University of Technology, University of Zululand, eThekweni Academy, eThekweni Maritime Cluster and Enterprise Ilembe.

"Rebuilding efficient public service through a highly skilled workforce is also our main focus. In this regard, an integrated approach has been adopted – involving the departments of Education, Health and Public Works," Duma said.

The acting CEO of the Moses Kotane Institute, advocate Lihle Mapipa, said they have lobbied MerSETA "to make an invaluable contribution in improving the skills development of younger people in the province".

Mapipa said it was for this reason that the fund seeks to close the skills gap, upskill, and reskill its citizens as part of the economic reconstruction and recovery plan. Mapipa said that skills

development was critical not only in driving South Africa's economic reconstruction and recovery but also in sustaining it.

"We approached MerSETA as this was in line with the key focus of the MerSETA Skills Development Fund, which is to improve the employability and productivity of the workforce, contribute to economic growth, and promote a more inclusive and equitable society," Mapipa said.

MUT acting vice-chancellor Professor Marcus Ramogale said this debt relief will make a meaningful contribution and will go a long way towards improving their balance sheet.

"The financial challenges faced by our students create a lot of difficulties during registration and for now there will be some slight support. We welcome this support, and we are grateful to our valuable stakeholder, MKI, for the initiative," Ramogale said.

Mapipa knows the challenges that children from historically disadvantaged families go through; be it in kick-starting their career with a huge debt hanging over their heads or with no skills to put at the table before one gets employed, said Ramogale.

The fund will be launched in MUT by the Department of Higher Education and Training where all universities, TVETs and some private colleges will be recipients of this fund.

The launch event is expected to be attended by dignitaries from all levels of government, skills development stakeholders, MKI, vice-chancellors, rectors and CFOs, and students.