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30 September 1994 AdP/AM/311

Mr James McNell Department of Education and Training PRETORIA 0001

ASSESSMENT OF FLASH POINTS AND PROBLEM AREAS

With reference to the fax received from the Minister of Education concerning the above matter, I wish to comment as follows.

It is unfortunate that such an important document should be given such a limited time for response. It touches upon not only the short term crisis experienced by all tertiary institutions but also highlights the continuation of the crisis for years ahead. Each institution should seriously re-evaluate all its current mechanisms as well as its value system. This somehow requires guidelines set by the central authority. Without such guidelines the individual processes may go in the wrong direction with the resultant waste of energy and time, not to mention the traumatic effects on the institution if it finds itself misplaced because of this.

Herewith some comments on various aspects of the memorandum.

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No reference is made of the fact that the Advisory Committee noted rationalisation between institutions as a logical focal point.

The reference in the fourth paragraph under Noted refers to universities under severe financial pressure etc. No mention is made of technikons who, as fairly young institutions, do not necessarily have the problem of replacing obsolete equipment but rather are faced with an inability to get equipment at all.

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The solutions to the problems explained in the document and determining the priorities is most problematic. For tertiary institutions the dilemma arises from under-prepared students (disadvantaged) gaining access to institutions in which their success rate is unacceptably low. This leads to costly developmental programmes which are not subsidised by the State. It is a pity that the shrinking State subsidy funds for these institutions is to be further diluted in order to offer assistance to students with real problems which arise out of the secondary school system. One could logically think that the appropriate funding for such development programmes should be supplied by the State to the secondary system.

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A matter of great concern to tertiary institutions is the perception of pressure to lower "standards" in order to accommodate under-prepared students. These institutions relate to not only each other but also institutions from throughout the world. The articulation between South African institutions and those of the outside world depends on the standards maintained locally. The technikons are also vulnerable from another angle namely the industry they are intimately linked with. In the final analysis the quality of South Africa's product - which determines South Africa's global competitiveness - is dependent on the standards maintained by its work force which in turn is dependent on the standards maintained in educational institutions. This is the harsh reality of standards.

Alma Illitchley

Andre du Preez [Prof]
Rector
[Dictated by Prof du Preez
but signed in his absence]