National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin *(Chair)*, Itumeleng Mothlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhabo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

02 October 2026

Equal Education stands in solidarity with Rhodes University Students and condemns structural violence

Equal Education has always understood the constitutional imperative for equitable educational access, especially for the poor and working class. When institutions undermine or restrict access to education because of financial standing, the consequences are devastating not only for individual students, but for their families and communities.

Qualifying students who seek to better their future should not be turned away from the gates of any institution of higher learning simply because they cannot afford to meet financial demands. We have watched with great concern the developments at Rhodes University, where students are losing valuable teaching and learning time as a result of financial exclusion and outstanding student debt.

Students from working-class communities should not be sidelined and denied meaningful access to education or have their academic records and certificates withheld because they cannot afford exorbitant fees and other financial requirements imposed by institutions of higher learning, such as clearing historical student debt. Financial circumstances should never determine a student's ability to access and participate fully in their education.

Equal Education condemns the use of violence against students. We support the right to protest and the right to education. We note, with deep concern, the university administration's decision to withhold meal vouchers from vulnerable students this week, which appears to serve as a punitive measure against peaceful student gatherings around legitimate issues facing students. We stand in solidarity with students and other marginalised students of different institutions who continue to bear the brunt of financial exclusion and inequality.

We further support students' call for university management to engage with them meaningfully and to provide clear, fair and sustainable resolutions to the challenges they face, including the university's new 2027 student fees protocol and ongoing shortage of quality, affordable and safe off-campus student accommodation, and the implications thereof for students from historically marginalized and working-class backgrounds. We also call for law enforcement to prioritise dialogue, de-escalation and the safety and dignity of students.

Education is a fundamental right, and financial hardship should never become a barrier to that right.

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