



**Q+A WITH LUYANDA BHEYILE,**  
Manager of Alumni Relations at Rhodes University.



**How is Rhodes handling and prioritizing the growing number of financial aid requests from students?**

- Sound academic performance
- Proven financial need
- Willingness to make a minimal financial commitment to the University to pay fees
- Mostly South African citizens
- Signing of the acknowledgement of debt in instances where the family is unable to settle fees in full by the end of the academic year. This is done to ensure that academically sound students are permitted to progress to the next academic level so that the University is able to collect the funds once they have graduated and secured permanent employment.

In addition to the above the University's **Isivivane Fund** makes it possible for the University to tap into new money predominantly from the government SETAs which was not the case in the past. In the previous academic year R7.3 million was raised via Isivivane from the various SETAs to assist 64 students with funding ranging from R80,000 to full funding.

The Vice-Chancellor also provides a guarantee for students with strong academic performance for them to be able to register. The guarantee is not in monetary terms but rather a waiver for them to be able to register on the strength of their academic performance. During the course of the academic year some of those students are able to secure full funding through our fundraising efforts.

**To what degree has the pandemic compounded student funding and support needs?**

The full impact of the pandemic on the level of need is not very clear at this stage. What we know for a fact, is that the student debt was slightly higher in 2020 than the previous academic year and the number of students who have been able to pay their registration fee for the current year has dropped compared to the same period last year.

**What are the challenges facing disadvantaged students seeking acceptance or scholarships to Rhodes?**

The biggest challenge for the country is that there is not enough funding from the National Student Financial Scheme to meet the growing demand for financial assistance. Another challenge is that most scholarships and bursaries have relatively high academic requirements and the top performers are snatched away quickly by donors leaving our average but good students out in the cold. There seems to be more funding for commerce than any other faculty at undergraduate level and this leaves students from other faculties particularly humanities with fewer options.



**What does it take to fund one student for one year at Rhodes and how can alumni pledge to support this?**

Full fees cost around R130,000 including books/handouts. Alumni can pledge through the US Trust or can contact me directly to make direct payments to the university via once off donations or monthly debit orders. Online giving can also be made via this link <https://www.ru.ac.za/givingtorhodes/>

**How do you evaluate candidates and award scholarships through your office?**

The overriding requirement for our internal bursaries is that the students must have passed all their courses in the previous academic year to be eligible for scholarships or bursaries. Most of our scholarships are based purely on academic merit and students would be selected automatically once the final results have been released if they meet the set requirements. Additionally, various donors that provide funding to the University provide set their own requirements particularly around academic performance. What we do find is that there are fewer scholarships/bursaries for humanities and science at undergraduate level as explained above.

**What compelling success stories do you have that evidence the benefits of student support and funding?**

See story from the attached link and Absa bank was a founding partner of Isivivane. <https://www.ru.ac.za/isivivane/latestnews/isivivanecampaignvisiblychangeslives.html>