



# The Story of the No Student Hungry (NSH) Programme University of the Free State



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



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*“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. YOU can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.”*

- Former South African President, Nelson Mandela



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## Goal

The goal of the No Student Hungry (NSH) Programme of the University of the Free State is to ensure that poor students with strong academic records are adequately nourished and, in so doing, keep them at the university and increase their chances of academic completion and success.

## Institutional context

The Mission of the University of the Free State rests on two pillars:

The Academic Project (academic excellence)

The Human Project (human embrace)

The NSH Programme works within the framework of the Human Project of the university in order to enhance the work of the Academic Project.



Prof Jonathan Jansen and his wife Grace with a group of the first intake of NSH students.

## Background and rationale

The University of the Free State (UFS) has a proud record of transformation. Not only is it renowned for its candid acknowledgement of the human and development challenges faced by an institution in transition, but it has transformed its once exclusively white student body to one that is now 65% black and 60% female.

Located in one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, many students of the university come from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds and do not have the means to support themselves adequately while studying.

Preliminary research findings indicate that a majority of our students are not always sure where their next meal will come from, while many simply go hungry for days on end. The impact of these uncertainties on a student's motivation and concentration is devastating.

Many students eventually drop out of higher education to seek incomes for themselves and their families. As a direct result of hunger, therefore, talented young people are being forced out of further and higher education, with huge losses in human potential for the country. The personal, familial, institutional and societal costs of such losses in human potential are incalculable.

Preliminary research findings indicate that 59% of our students are severely food insecure and go through periods of hunger. We consider this to be a crisis.



‘How do you eat an elephant?’ the saying goes.  
‘One bite at a time.’

## The elephant metaphor

Our NSH logo is an elephant which represents both the size of the problem and our approach to resolving it. ‘How do you eat an elephant?’ the saying goes. ‘One bite at a time.’

- \* A recent study found that 59.5% of our students study on an empty stomach; only 16% were found to be ‘food secure.’
- \* The problem is widespread and requires recurrent funding.
- \* How do we even begin to tackle the scale of this problem in an era of university subsidy cuts and global as well as national economic crises?
- \* How do you eat an elephant, in other words?

## Philosophical context

As part of its transformation agenda under the leadership of the present Vice-Chancellor, Prof Jonathan Jansen, the Human Project at the UFS is intended to create empathetic and supportive learning environments which enable and encourage students to build bridges across the fault-lines of race, ethnicity, class, religion and national status.

When especially disadvantaged students sense that they are cared for, not only regarding their intellectual development, but also in terms of their more basic human needs, there is a greater capacity among them for participation in matters of reconciliation and restoration.

Even though the NSH satisfies an immediate physical need – hunger among students – it is important to recognise the broader context of human development and academic success within which the programme works.

## A human project – one bite at a time

The NSH Programme was started in 2011 as a project of the Vice-Chancellor. It is the first part of a broader approach to the problem of hunger on our campuses. The NSH Programme emerged as a flagship programme funded by donations from outside the university. A food bursary is allocated to hungry students on the basis of academic excellence and the commitment to public duty.

The bursary offers students a small daily allowance of R30 per day and provides for students with an average of 60% and above. It discourages entitlement thinking and builds a strong sense of responsibility on the part of those who benefit from the food bursary.

In addition, the NSH Programme offers food directly to many more students as a result of direct donations from large supermarkets and through its various partnerships, both on and off the UFS campuses.

We aim to expand the project annually in line with growing support in order to alleviate hunger among students. In so doing, it significantly enhances impoverished students’ chances of completing their degree.

The NSH team meets with students on a regular basis to offer training, motivation and opportunities for personal growth and career development. A new mentoring programme will be implemented in 2014. We will encourage volunteers from our institution and the local community to adopt an NSH student and offer them guidance and support. Our mentors will receive continuous training and support to ensure that the mentoring programme remains sustainable and effective.

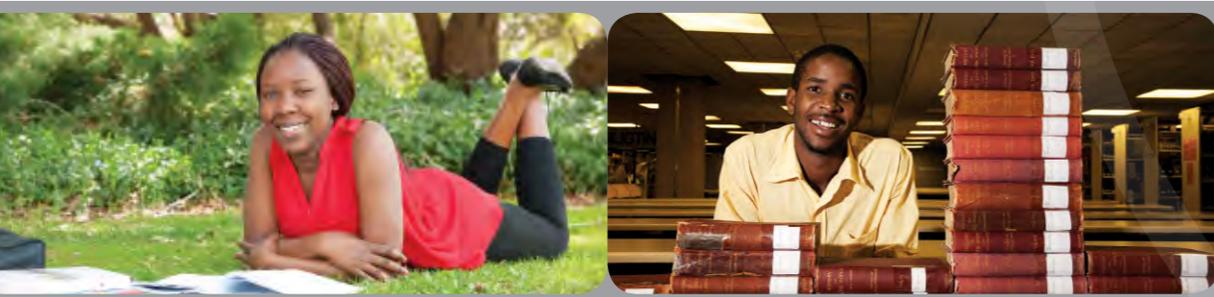
The raising of funds is a continuous process involving awareness campaigns, seeking of partnerships with companies and institutions, and championing support from the general public, staff and individuals.

A food bursary is allocated to students on the basis of academic excellence and the commitment to public duty.

The bursary offers students a small daily allowance of R30 per day and provides for students with an average achievement of 60% and above.

## Key project components

1. Identify participating students in advance. Students are invited to apply for participation in the NSH Programme by making their case in writing for a small bursary to support their food needs.
2. A strict selection process is followed.
3. Selected students access a food allowance (linked to their student cards) without their participation being known or evident to others.
4. Students are required to participate in student life programmes.
5. Students must excel academically to remain in the project.
6. Commit the students to a 'reciprocal giving' project as a means of building a sense of philanthropy and countering entitlement thinking.
7. Students are required to volunteer 40 hours per year.
8. Evaluate the initiative on an annual basis.
9. Increase the current number (150) of students as support for the NSH Programme grows.



## Leadership and administration

The Vice-Chancellor is the official champion of the project to ensure maximum visibility and support. Although it resides in the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs for administrative purposes, the NSH Programme is led on a strictly volunteer basis by the spouses of the Dean of Student Affairs and the Vice-Chancellor. All normal administrative and management costs are of course waived by the UFS.

## A link to reality

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECSx6djH\\_Qg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECSx6djH_Qg)

## Indicative budget

The costs of the NSH Programme are modest. Based on a daily budget per student of R35 for 185 on-campus days per annum, the estimated annual indicative budget (ZAR) is as follows:

1 student	10 students	100 students	1 000 students	10 000 students
6 475	64 750	647 500	6 475 000	64 750 000



## Support is needed

The NSH Programme requires annual funding and our capacity to reach the thousands of students studying on empty stomachs depends on recurrent funds on a year-to-year basis. In order to grow and prosper, the project needs leading sponsors. A leading sponsor would contribute R500 000 per year for three years. Leading sponsors will receive prime advertising space at all major university events, including open days (which are attended by more than 5 000 pupils and their parents from across South Africa) and graduation ceremonies. In addition, all donations will be tax deductible and a tax certificate will be issued in this regard.

## Strides towards sustainability

In order for the NSH Programme to be sustainable, the following actions will be pursued:

- Securing multi-year funding system (3 years) from donors;
- Involving UFS staff members by encouraging them to make long-term debit order commitments;
- Encouraging graduates of the NSH Programme to contribute to the programme once they are employed;
- Finding a larger pool of sponsors;
- Finding more varied sponsorships, beyond financial donations;
- Identifying NSH ambassadors (patrons of the project) nationally and internationally;
- Expanding support for the NSH Programme beyond the borders of South Africa.

## Contact details

Vicky Simpson | 051 401 7197 | email: simpsonvz@ufs.ac.za  
Grace Jansen | 083 745 5793 | email: grace\_jansen@yahoo.com  
Annelize Visagie | 051 401 3834 | email: nostudenthungry@ufs.ac.za

## Our current partners

Actuarial Society of South Africa	Afrikaanse Taal Raad
Bowman and Gilfillan	Budget Rent a Car
Coca-Cola	Community Chest
Corporate Talks International	Damelin Cape Town
Engen Oil	Grant Thornton
HORTGRO Science	IQ Business (Proprietary) LTD
JS Lugbespuiting	Kloppers Bloemfontein
Kovsies Private Accomodation (KPA)	Loch Logan
M C Kharbai School for the Deaf	Master Builders Port Elizabeth
Miss SA 2014 Rolene Strauss	National Health Laboratory Services
Nature and Business Alliance	Nedbank
Omnimed	Outsurance
Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC)	PURCO SA
Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA)	Public Servants Association (PSA)
Rhino Energy	SA Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns
Senwes Bloemfontein	South End Museum
Standard Bank	Stone Wealth Management
Student Village	Sun International
The Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Development Trust	The Compass Group
The Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation	The Swiss Embassy
Travel Counsellors	Varsity Colledge
Verster Berry Quantity Surveyors	World Changers Church International
Yad Mordechai Foundation	

## Banking details

ABSA	Account nr: 1570850721
Account holder: UFS	Ref: NSH and Surname   Company name
Branch code: 632005	

Please provide proof of payment so that we can keep in touch:  
E: nostudenthungry@ufs.ac.za/ simpsonvz@ufs.ac.za

## *The success of the programme speaks for itself*

Testimonies of some of the NSH Programme food bursary recipients.

### **Melatia**

Melatia is a remarkable young student who started on the NSH Programme in March 2012. Her mother lost her job as a teacher and could no longer afford to send enough money for accommodation and food. She took 16 modules in 2012 instead of the usual 12 to finish early and save on fees. “It is hard to cope with my workload without proper nutrition,” says Melatia. “Now that I have a food bursary, I can afford to have a proper meal every day. It has given me new hope.”

The results are clear; she received distinctions in 14 out of the 16 modules at the end of 2012. She continues to do well, with an average of 80% in the first semester of 2013. In just two and a half years’ time, she will have successfully completed her degree by the end of this year. She is well on her way to becoming a Chartered Accountant.

### **Moses**

“I am a second-year B.luris Financial Planning Law student and have been on the programme almost a year. My guardian is a pensioner living on very limited means, so the financial strain was great. Knowing that he isn’t as worried about me now, humbles me. The programme has meant that I can get through the day and gain the unlimited freedom that comes with education.”



## **Sam-maree**

“I have much more confidence and energy, and I’ve started doing better academically. I volunteered for the HIV/AIDS programme as peer mentor, and I’m enjoying that almost as much as the meals.”

## **Melanie**

“I am a second-year Geography and Environmental Management student, as well as a single mother – so studying and looking after my little boy is very demanding. Being on the No Student Hungry Programme has helped me a lot in terms of getting a balanced meal every day. It is one less worry for me. I dream of completing my studies so that I can be independent and provide my son with the life he deserves.”

## **Thabiso**

“Before I got the food bursary it was hard to stay in class. I could not concentrate because I had no food, so I used to go home. Thanks to NSH, I now attend all my classes and am doing well in my academics.

One day I’ll gladly pay it back and support the NSH Programme. I would not have been here if it wasn’t for the generosity of the programme.”



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