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Makerere Agrees to Keep Feeding Students - for Now

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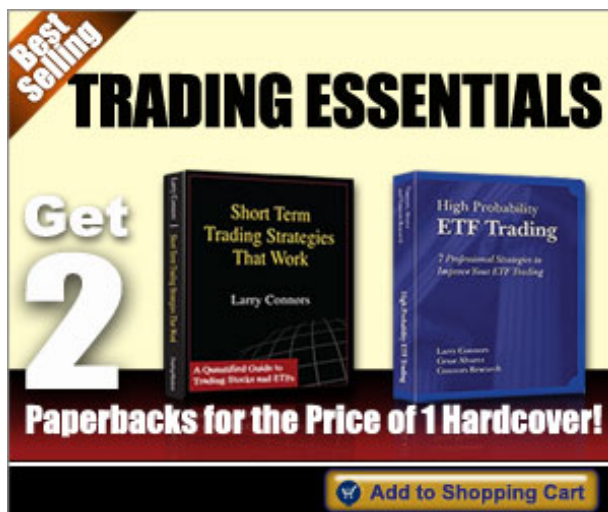


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Makerere, Feb 03, 2010 (The Monitor/Africa Global Media via COMTEX) --

Makerere University has once again suspended the proposal to outsource meals for the students, Daily Monitor has learnt. The University's Vice Chancellor, Prof Venansius Baryamureeba, told Daily Monitor in an interview that the 87-year-old institution will start the new policy in the new academic year. "We shall implement the new policy in the next academic year because we don't want to do things in a hurried manner" Prof Baryamureeba said on Monday. The new policy was supposed to take effect this semester, which started on Saturday.



The Dean of Students, Mr John Ekudu-Adoku, said the university will provide meals to students because the university has not raised enough funds intended to compensate the catering staff. "We shall still provide meals to the students because the government has not yet released the money to the university to pay off the affected people (catering staff)," Mr Ekudu said.

This is the third time the university has failed to implement the policy after its first and second attempts on August 15, 2009 and October 1, 2009 flopped. "I am even just putting letters on the notice boards today (Friday) informing them (students) of the decision," Mr Ekudu said.

The university has 300 catering staff whose gross pay amounts to Shs4.3billion as compensation.

The university had earlier proposed to give students Shs2,000 per day as food allowance, a decision which was rejected by the students' guild. The university currently spends about Shs3,000 to feed each student per day.

Since last academic year, students have been allowed to choose between having their meals in the halls of residence or buying from vendors within and outside of the campus.

The government sponsored students are currently given Shs460,000 living out allowance each, where Shs240,000 is allocated as food allowance for the four- month semester.

Fees increased

The university also increased accommodation fees for private students residing on campus from Shs340,000 to Shs460,000 per semester and some food types like fish dropped on the weekly menu because of the high prices and the high cost of utilities like water and electricity.

Over years, Makerere University students have been fed on meat and beans thrice a week, and on fish, once a week. Each semester, Makerere feeds over 6,000 students, three-quarters of whom are government-sponsored.