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Abstract

The funding of higher education in South Africa has in the recent past been a subject of animated debate. This debate has ranged from the adequacy of government funding of higher education, the suitability of the funding framework, to protestations against frequent tuition fee increases. At present, the debate is mainly about 'free' higher education. Unlike most African countries, South Africa has an established history of cost sharing. But, for a while now, students, especially Black students, have been demanding tuition free higher education even though the country has a student financial aid scheme to support talented but poor students. The demands for tuition free higher education suggest, among others, the possible existence of financial barriers to higher educational opportunities. This paper is a sequel to the debate on free higher education in South Africa. It seeks, in the main, to understand and examine the rationale and drivers for the students' demand for 'free' higher education. What are the financial barriers to higher educational opportunities that the current funding architecture has failed to address? Secondly, why are students demanding free higher

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education when there is a scheme to support talented but poor students? Is cost sharing inconsistent with the country's post-apartheid transformation policy in higher education? Finally, is 'free' higher education the panacea to the access and participation challenges facing Black students? (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Wangene-Ouma, Gerald, E-Mail: gouma@uwc.ac.za