# HESFF

## Higher Education Student Finance Forum

**Letter of Welcome**

Dear HESFF Conference Delegate and Exhibitor

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the annual conference and AGM of HESFF (the current trading name) and the very first AGM of the SA Student Finance Forum NPC here at the Roodevalley Lodge north of the city of Tshwane next to the Roodeplaat Dam.

It has been a long time indeed since the previous Conference and 15th AGM, still under the name of Student Accounts Administrators Forum (SAAF) that was held in September 2019 at the King George Hotel in George. The reason for two years without an event was of course the Covid-19 pandemic that struck the world in early 2020. This pandemic and subsequent lockdown levels of limitations affected each one of us in some or other way. Many of us have sadly lost family members and relatives, and we saw how many of our friends and family lost their jobs and were struggling to make ends meet. Our hearts go out to everyone that suffered during the last two years. However, we believe that our work life is returning to the way it was before Covid-19.

The fact that the pandemic had such an immense effect on the way we used to work before the lock down, and how institutions had to adjust with staff working from home, have on-line meetings, still rendering the level of service to staff and students as before, and many other aspects, the theme of this conference was related to these challenges. However, since the Board of Directors decided on the theme earlier this year when most of us were still working from home and wearing masks, there has been some most encouraging changes to a way back to normal, and now at the time of this conference, we found that most of us are back at the office without masks, but maybe still sanitising and keeping a safe distance from colleagues.

Therefore, the initial theme has shift to a much more relevant challenge that our members in the student financing function and institutional funding are experiencing, namely the pressures of sufficient funding for institutions' financial viability, and very importantly, the contributions from student fees as a major second source of income, and how this source can be supplemented by third stream income in innovative ways.

However, this conference is again about gaining knowledge, networking, and application of best practices at your institution. The interactive format will again focus on active participation by the delegates, and therefore there are three sessions in the program – one in the format of a panel discussion, one in the format of a "think tank", and then on Friday morning there are various break-away discussion groups where delegates are encouraged to participate and share.

There have also been some major structural changes since the 2019 AGM, of which most of you would have been informed through a couple of update newsletters. Briefly, the Forum has registered as a Non-profit Company in 2021 with the CIPC as was decided at the 2019 AGM, and which lead to the withdrawal of its 20-year sponsorship by the founder of the Forum, Adapt IT Education at the end of 2020. The 2019 elected Board members were registered as Directors with the CIPC, and the Board negotiated a contract with Mr Peet du Plessis to take over all the responsibilities of organisation, administration and financial administration that was previously performed by Adapt IT. This structure relates to some of the decisions that are tabled at the AGM.

A special word of thanks must again go to our Associate members and Exhibitors who have such an important role to play in the function of student fees and the financing of study fees and provision of financial services to our higher education institutions and the students. This is indeed a fruitful partnership between higher education and the private financial sector. University and College delegates are encouraged to engage with them and to find out more about the services they render to the higher education sector.

The sponsors/ exhibitors who participate this year are:

- Gold Sponsor package: Fundi Capital
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Every delegate is encouraged to participate during the two-day program, and wherever it is possible, and time allows, the facilitator will give opportunities for questions and comments. However, please also remember that we have a pre-determined schedule that should be kept to, as most delegates have planned their attendance according to this schedule, and the venue staff also needs to be considered in terms of their services.

If you have a problem with your accommodation, please take it up directly with the Hotel's staff or your other place of stay. We are unfortunately not responsible for that part of the conference.

The catering by this 3-star hotel is of a high standard, but if you have a problem with the food, please discuss it with the catering staff – the conference facilitator is not responsible for the catering and what is presented on the buffet menus.

There are several opportunities in the program for social networking to be enjoyed and utilised to meet colleagues from other institutions. Please try to make a point of meeting other delegates that you have not engaged with before.

We trust that you will leave from here on Friday afternoon, feeling rejuvenated and encouraged to return to your institutions with fresh ideas on how to face the challenges you are confronted with every day.

Once again, a warm and hearty welcome and we wish you a most enjoyable conference.

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