

University education is key to preventing future outbreaks

A spotlight has been placed on the role of scientific research and the study of viruses and diseases, due to the outbreak of Covid-19.



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Moving forward, the training and education of scientists, researchers and health specialists is critical to the country's ability to develop vaccines and care for the population. Universities are best placed to provide the environment and resources necessary to overcome future pandemics, but only if students are supported enough to succeed academically and follow these career paths.

"The benefits of a tertiary education do not only accrue to the individual, but to wider society – this is where our future scientists, doctors and researchers are trained. It's vital that we look at every aspect of the university experience to ensure that students can succeed and, most importantly, innovate," says John Schooling, director of STAG African.

While universities are accustomed to funding the purchase of research equipment, running clinical trials and facilitating international studies, investing in students' living arrangements has historically been given less attention. However, research conducted by The Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I) shows that students living in well-resourced university residences are 80% less likely chance of drop out or fail their first year.

"Students living in affordable, on-campus accommodation don't have to spend time and energy travelling to campus or worrying about their safety. This gives them the mental space necessary to be creative and direct their energy towards

work. Living on campus also provides students with a sense of belonging to a community of like-minded people where they can share ideas,” says Schooling.



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John Schooling 22 Jul 2020



“Most of the successful research aimed at understanding Covid-19 and developing a vaccine has occurred at universities. This is one of the only places where people have the freedom and resources necessary to think up new and innovative ways to combat health risks like pandemics and epidemics,” says Schooling. “University education is more than the next level in the learning process; it’s a critical component of human development worldwide.”

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