



Prof. Peter Mbatl

One year in Office



Portfolio Committee on Higher Education Science and Innovation Upbeat on Developments at SMU



The Portfolio Committee on Higher Education Science and Innovation conducted an oversight visit at the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University on 19 October 2021. In attendance were members of the SMU Council led by Ms Mmanare Mamabolo (Deputy Chairperson of Council), University Management led by the Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Mbatl, representatives of organised labour and members of the Student Representative Council. Other members of Council in attendance were Mr Thabiso Lekoana and Dr Mangaliso Mahlaba. The Portfolio Committee was led by its Chairperson, Honorable Nompandolo Mkhathshwa accompanied by Honorable Tebog Letsie.

The Committee embarked on a tour of the Campus to inspect both infrastructure and research facilities, which included the construction site of the new 2,000 bed student residence, the new boundary wall, NHLS laboratories, Virology/ Microbiology laboratories and the new Entrepreneurship Incubation Centre. Following the Campus tour, the Vice-Chancellor made a presentation to

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SEFAKO MAKGATHO
HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY





the Committee on the University's five year Strategic Plan, the progress made as well as prospects and challenges.

As part of securing the future of SMU, Prof Mbatlana explained to members of the Portfolio Committee that Council had approved a New Business Model to ensure the financial sustainability of the University. Key to this model is increasing the numbers of students to 13,500, exploring new options for student funding, commercialization initiatives and a strong third stream income strategy. Such initiatives are important, according to the Vice-Chancellor, given some of the challenges related to student funding, student debt, backlog maintenance, and the dire need for additional office space.

Mbatlana added that the University had made significant strides in creating a new institutional culture preceded by the signing of a Culture Compact by all stakeholders (management, labour and SRC) committing themselves separately and collectively to work for the good of the University. It was also emphasized that the roll out of the Performance Management System has been given

sufficient attention for all employees to continuously contribute to a high performance culture. Professor Mbatlana emphasized the importance of every stakeholder playing their specified roles and not conflating them, in order for SMU to be successful.

Honorable Letsie emphasized the importance of stability on campus as an important recipe for success. He further cautioned that factionalism and lack of cohesion in the governance and management of institutions leads to dysfunctionality and ultimately universities being placed under administration. The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee said it is their responsibility to ensure that the higher education sector delivers on its promises and mandate, and visits such as this provides them with an opportunity to get first-hand experience on how institutions are delivering on their mandates. The Committee was generally upbeat on the progress and developmental trajectory of SMU and promised to embark on future visits to check progress on the many exciting initiatives currently being undertaken at the University.



