

Newsflash!

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SMU and Ga-Rankuwa Community signs a protocol of engagement

The Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University and the community of Ga-Rankuwa recently signed an engagement protocol. The protocol provides a framework for effective communication and engagement between the two parties. Speaking at the signing ceremony, SMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Peter Mbatlana said, a university's relevance is steeped in its commitment in uplifting the community within which it is located.

"We are a national asset and therefore belong rightfully to the entire country. Nonetheless, we have to be alive to the immediate community in which we are located, the Ga-Rankuwa community. By signing this protocol today, we agree to give effect to this aspiration. The protocol will help us to outline the modalities on how this will be done and govern our relationship moving forward", emphasized Prof Mbatlana.

Mbatlana further emphasized that SMU is a University first and foremost and operates in terms of the Higher Education Act with a specific mandate to produce a certain caliber of health professionals. *"This means that the teaching and learning must be correct, the support we give to our students and staff must be correct and the environment and training platform must also be conducive for them",* he said.

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The Vice-Chancellor also told the community representatives that SMU is at an advanced stage of finalizing the process of commercializing the University land wherein business and the community will be given an opportunity to work with the institution on a variety of projects. He cautioned that it is important to be prudent when utilizing the University funds and be accountable for every cent spent. Furthermore, Mbatlana stressed that the university will not compromise on quality and pricing and will continuously conduct market surveys to have an appreciation of costs of goods and services to ensure value for money.

He lauded the teams that worked hard for the improvement of the community engagement protocol and called for all stakeholders to have an appreciation of their different roles. Speaking for business and the community, Mr N Maselela said when the first protocol was signed in 2016, they felt that the University was not listening to the community and a decision was made that a document that will guide the relationship between the two parties be created.

“Today we have revised the old document. In order for us to achieve the benefits, there must be a continuous process of engagement and it must be a peaceful process and therefore, no one should be undermined”, said Maselela. He called upon all parties to play their role so that the material conditions of people can change for the better. Maselela further said going forward, they want to see a company from the community of Ga-Rankuwa being given a huge responsibility by the University as part of building capacity. He cautioned against any form of segregation in business.

The Chief Financial Officer of SMU Mr Eminos Manyawi explained that the process to finalize the community engagement protocol was not easy with a lot of concessions having to be made. He mentioned that Council requested that the protocol should be revised considering that a lot had changed since the 2016 version was put in place. The CFO said despite the difficulties endured along the way, the protocol was a reflection of the harmonious relationship between the University and the community of Ga-Rankuwa. Manyawi explained that through this protocol, the University will communicate to the Ga-Rankuwa community the employment, business and developmental opportunities associated with the implementation of the infrastructural and other supply projects of the University.

