



Media Statement

Date: 05 October 2022

For Immediate Release

DHET Director General Dr Nkosinathi Sishi impressed by outstanding progress made at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University during his visit.

Director General of the Department of Higher Education and Training Dr Nkosinathi Sishi paid a courtesy visit to the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University on 04 October 2022 at the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor Prof Peter Mbatlali. The Vice-Chancellor used the occasion to provide a general update on SMU and this gave the DG a sense of the current status of the University, existing challenges and its future plans as espoused in the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan which is being implemented. Accompanying the DG was the DDG University Education Dr. Marcia Socikwa.

The Vice-Chancellor took the DG on a tour of the Campus visiting the SMU MECRU unit, the proposed African Bioimaging Centre, the premium 2,000 beds student accommodation facility and the upgraded Pharmacy Building.

SMU through the MECRU unit is currently conducting a Vaccination trial study sponsored by Sinovac/Numolux Group. The primary objective of the study is to evaluate the efficacy of two doses of CoronaVac® against confirmed symptomatic COVID-19 cases in children and adolescents aged 6 months to 17 years. The pilot study was launched in September 2021 and has successfully enrolled a total number of 370 participants as per the given target to the site. Other studies currently underway at MECRU include the following:

- CoVPN 3008 COVID 19 Vaccine (Mordena)
- VPM 1002 (Tuberculosis vaccine)
- SHERPA – SISONKE (J&J Vaccine), for booster shot of HCW with Mordena vaccine.

Moreover, the proposed African Centre for Bioimaging will house the state-of-the-art High Resolution Transmission Electron Microscope (HRTEM) that has been purchased through joint funding from the Department of Science & Innovation, National Research Foundation,

Department of Higher Education and Training and SMU. The HRTEM has capabilities for elemental microanalysis, tomography and cryo-imaging which will allow the university to obtain high resolution images to amongst others, support research in the health sciences such as in nanomedicine and nanotoxicology.

Dr. Sishi expressed his appreciation on the work done so far by SMU and said the path the University has taken will lead to the realization of the vision driven by Prof Mbatlana. He was particularly impressed with efforts to improve research and development as well as progress made around the academic project in general. "We now have a broader picture of where you want to go as a University. My advice is that if you wish to move faster, find the right partners to work with, including international partners. I also want to give you our sincere affirmation that the department will support you", said the DG.

Prof Mbatlana explained that SMU is on a new trajectory in line with its 2021-2025 strategic plan and that the academic project and the financial sustainability of the University are key priorities. He further elucidated that plans are underway to implement the approved new Business Model which will among other things allow for the commercialization of the SMU land which will in turn enable SMU to bring the much needed third stream income. The VC assured the DG that the University will account fully for every cent received.

Issued by Communication and Marketing

For more details, please contact Phaladi Seakgwe, Acting Director: Communication and Marketing at phaladi.seakgwe@smu.ac.za

Cell: 0790751673