

Newsflash!

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Gauteng Health and Wellness MEC Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko visits SMU

Gauteng MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko paid a courtesy visit to Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) on 10 March 2023. She was accompanied by senior officials from her department including the Acting Head of Department Lesiba Malotana and veteran medical practitioner Dr Victor Ramathesele.

In his welcome address, the SMU Vice Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbatlali lauded the MEC for choosing to visit SMU despite the difficulties she was currently dealing with in the health sector. The Vice-Chancellor made a high-level presentation, focusing on the University's strategic direction, highlighting the key university projects undertaken in support of its core business and the challenges that the university faces.

The VC appealed to the MEC and department to intervene on amongst other things; the conclusion of multilateral and bilateral agreements with the department; creation of government funded additional posts, especially specialists in both the Schools of Medicine and Oral Health Sciences; slow recruitment processes to vacant posts; slow submission of performance contracts from joint appointees. Mbatlali further requested that the MEC looks at the delays in finalizing outstanding administrative matters in the School of Oral Health Sciences.



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Subsequent to the VCs presentation, the Dean of the School of Medicine Prof. Nathaniel Mofolo painted a picture of the challenges encountered in rendering services in particular at Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital – a key SMU clinical training platform. He appealed to the MEC for assistance in terms of alleviating some of the challenges encountered including infrastructure and staffing issues. Mofolo mentioned that following a meeting with the Joint Health Sciences Committee there was commitment towards a revamped new state of the art Dr. George Mukhari academic tertiary teaching hospital. He emphasized that many postgraduate students come to SMU when they want to specialize because of the rich skills found in the University.

Prof. Dini Mawela, the Acting Dean of the School of Oral Health Sciences spoke about the challenges confronting the School and appealed for assistance from the department. She further provided an update on the positive visit by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) to SMU.

In her response, the MEC stressed that the status quo in terms of the Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital has to change especially considering the number of patients it serves and its role as an important clinical training platform

for SMU students. Regarding the dental clinic located at SMU, the MEC promised to assist in the best way possible such as in the procurement of instruments required at the dental hospital. She also spoke about the idea of having a mobile unit that will render dental services in communities emphasizing that the department is localizing health care including in informal settlements. She also encouraged the university to provide a list of students who are supported financially by the department to be forwarded so that payments could be expedited to address any challenges. She highlighted that students produced at SMU should complete their studies and start doing their internships in Gauteng hospitals to strengthen capacity.

The MEC committed to come back by the end of March with concrete responses on the issues raised and to take a tour of the Campus. The MEC, is known for her commitment in ensuring that the health systems and processes are managed in such a way that they are fit-for-purpose and take into consideration the size of the Gauteng healthcare system and the kind of skills that are needed to provide adequate and effective care to the over 16 million people of the province, majority of whom rely on the public healthcare system. SMU, being a health sciences institution, clearly, has a role to play, in partnership with the Gauteng government.



