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SEFAKO MAKGATHO HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

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Master of ceremonies, Chairperson and Members of the South African Press Club, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the University Council, the CEO of the Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital, Members of the Interim Management Team, Directors of the Schools and of Support Services, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is indeed a privilege to address you this evening.

Allow me, first of all, to thank the Management and Members of the National Press Club for affording the Sehako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) the opportunity to play, albeit for a short while, in the space created by the Club for organisations and institutions to present themselves, indeed under the observing and professional eyes of members, but with the preferred contexts and packaging of the organisation or institution itself.

The SMU this evening wishes to optimise the opportunity to developing important media networks and strengthening the SMU Brand. It has become exceedingly important to forcefully articulate the contexts defining the SMU as a newly established institution, and to influence opinions and perspectives about it.

Let it be known to all that the SMU refuses to be defined in terms of the status of other institutions, be they former or current. The SMU also vehemently opposes the notion to apply historical contexts, limitations and perceptions to describe its role, the quality of its enterprise, and the boundaries of its dreams and aspirations.

Let me explain.

The SMU is not the former MEDUNSA, or the former MEDUNSA Campus of the University of Limpopo (UL). It is indeed true that the SMU currently occupies the facilities used by the former MEDUNSA and the MEDUNSA Campus of the UL, and will soon be richly endowed with ownership of said and related facilities. It is also true that the SMU is privileged to benefitting from the incorporation of the MEDUNSA Campus of the UL into the SMU, which incorporation provides the SMU with a firm programme and infrastructure platform to execute its mandate, and to take its place among peers much earlier.

Similarly, the SMU is benefitting from the partnerships concluded with Departments of Health and the extensive clinical training platforms established during previous dispensations. For now, any effort to contemplate a comprehensive understanding of the contexts co-informing the deep institutional emotions of the SMU, must account for the aforementioned historical information.

But, ladies and gentlemen, it must be clearly understood that the SMU, which was established on 16 May 2014, is one of three newly established universities in South

Africa. It was established as a comprehensive health sciences university, and is the only university in South Africa with an exclusive focus on health sciences education. The focus of the SMU implies that it carries a special responsibility towards the country, to produce highly qualified health personnel with competencies similar to those who have highly effective health care systems in the world. The special focus of the SMU also poses real challenges for the medium and long term sustainability of the institution, which compels the institution to optimise organisational effectiveness and efficiency, access to resources and the development of support and funding networks.

The aforementioned responsibility and challenge define the vision of the SMU to be the benchmark institution providing holistic health sciences education that meets the health needs of the individual, the family, the community and the population. The SMU's mission is to deliver quality interdisciplinary health sciences research and education, an innovative and technology enriched educational approach resulting in evidence based methods for curriculum development and transformation, and the empowerment of students and staff to provide effective transformational leadership.

Establishing the SMU, ladies and gentlemen, was therefore clearly not the endorsement of any previous dispensation and/or a commitment to the continuation thereof. The SMU was established by the government as a new and post-apartheid university with a particular scope and mandate, embodying all the ideals of an inclusive, non-racial, non-sexist, transformed and democratic society. The SMU Community and its support networks are therefore called upon to join forces with a view to articulating and embracing SMU's own vision, mission, strategic objectives and priorities, and to respond with vigour, passion and loyalty to the mandate of the institution.

The public manifestation of the SMU's distinctive positioning is, inter alia, highly dependent upon the understanding role of the media, and we thank you in anticipation for assisting.

While assuming its role, the SMU is faced with multiple constraining realities impacting on its efforts. Allow me to name a few.

Envisaged growth targets of the SMU were informed by assumptions which proved to be invalid. In this regard, mention should be made of the fact that the initially envisaged infrastructure developments, and the timely approval of new academic programmes and schools, did not manifest as originally planned.

The University is seriously hampered in achieving its performance outcomes, as the institutional support functions and the configurations inherited through the incorporation of the

MEDUNSA Campus of the UL were almost, without exception, not designed, focussed and capacitated to support a self-standing institution.

The institutional challenge to perform is significantly intensified by the neglected state of the existing facilities and infrastructure. The consolidated operating budget of the institution shows a substantial deficit. To make ends meet the University is currently dependent upon special grants from the DHET to provide in its operational needs, growth aspirations and the achievement of its strategic goals in general.

Unavoidable operational costs, the staff intensive orientation of the academic enterprise and organisational inefficiencies, leaves little room within the current financial parameters for routine maintenance and capital expenditure, let alone the investment in new academic initiatives and infrastructure developments. There is in fact a total reliance on special DHET grants to finance critical projects and routine actions.

The institution is saddled with substantive recurring, unavoidable and mainly irrecoverable operational costs associated with the lack of on-campus residence facilities.

The current Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) and the costs associated with the institutional manifestation thereof, significantly exceed the conventional sources of income, with key components externally subsidised not accounted for.

But, ladies and gentlemen, the SMU aspires to lead, even beyond the borders of our country, as the benchmark health sciences institution, and is furthermore committed to redressing the shortage of health care professionals in the academic and health care sectors in the country.

The SMU therefore shoulders its responsibility with pride and commitment, albeit sometimes against all odds. Despite the odds, we shall be inspired in this call, as we are entering uncharted territory, by the legacy of Sefako Makgatho, a courageous leader, well ahead of his time, who against all odds made a significant contribution towards achieving the freedom and human rights we are enjoying today.

Preparing for the journey ahead, the SMU positioned itself strategically with due cognisance of the national imperatives as embedded in the 2014 to 2019 Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), important policy documents (such as the National Development Plan, the Department of Health Strategic Plan, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training and the Minimum Norms and Standards for Student Accommodation), its own vantage points, and a number of identified critical success outcomes.

Allow me to mention a few vantage points.

The SMU was established both as a new university, as well as by incorporating the MEDUNSA Campus of the UL. This incorporation must be embraced by the fledgling institution as it serves, in terms of programme offering, operational capacity, infrastructure and experience, as a firm and tested foundation on which the SMU can build its enterprises.

The geographical location of SMU and its ability to attracting rural based students already establishes a strong basis for its orientation towards rural development and its associated research imperatives. In addition, the SMU has also succeeded in establishing relationships with its constituent communities through a number of successful community engagement initiatives, which also provide an opportunity for clinical training and service-learning.

The training of black health professionals for purposes of improving health services in the country represents an important platform for leveraging greater levels of national and international support in terms of resources and skills development.

In terms of health and related science programmes offered at South African universities in general, the current SMU range of programmes is one of the most extensive in the country. For the most part, too, the SMU offers very similar kinds of programmes to what is available at stand-alone health sciences universities internationally. This provides a firm platform from where the SMU could, over time, extend its programme offering.

The SMU benefits substantively from the research infrastructure and networks transferred to it during the incorporation of the MEDUNSA Campus of the UL. The challenge for the SMU is to develop Research Niche Areas with a view to entrenching research excellence and consolidating the positive growth in research at the institution. Enhancing and strengthening the research culture, the depth, relevance and quality of the research, remains a high priority and must be supported by research funding strategies and programmes aimed at building institutional research capacity, infrastructure and networks.

With a view to paving the way forward it is also important to define critical success outcomes. The following, among other, must be achieved:

An institutional culture of good governance, management and administration must be institutionalised at all levels within the organisation.

A focus on renewal, transformation (including the elimination of racial discrimination) and institutional value frameworks based on the values enshrined in the Constitution, the Higher Education Act, other legislative prescripts and codes of conduct and behaviour.

Long term sustainability through a combination of optimal institutional effectiveness and efficiency, comprehensive cost cutting and containment programmes, a growth and expansion of the institution's resource base, a resource mobilisation programme and a revised funding model.

The generation of additional recurring mainstream income by way of a fundamentally revised and carefully extended PQM, the growth of student numbers, a sustainable growth in the research output and diverse national and international partnerships.

A quality and focused academic enterprise, aligned with the comprehensive nature of the University, responsive to national imperatives and appreciative of the unique challenges associated with health science education and the related resource provision, characterised by cutting-edge and customised delivery models.

Constructive engagement of and service delivery to the community by means of the clinical, practical and in service training components of the programme offering of the institution, the community service programmes of staff and students, and the empowerment (economic and otherwise) opportunities associated with the functioning and development of the University.

A human resource development and provision plan and strategy, with specific emphasis on attracting (from other countries if necessary) and retaining quality academic staff, revising the conditions of service and improving the work environment of staff, revising and developing staff support and development programmes, and maintaining sound and professional labour relations.

Partnerships with institutions, government, state agencies, business and alumni to, inter alia, strengthen the core functions of the University and to broaden its support and resource base. Adequate institutional capacity and enhanced skill levels in accordance with the approved and uniquely developed institutional functions and structures, in particular, within the support functions with a view to upgrading and repositioning these functions from the level of being a constituent part of an institution, to the level of support functions required within an autonomous institution.

The ability to maintain constructive relations with the student body and its constituent parts by means of open, transparent and diverse communication channels, and to provide adequate, quality and cutting-edge student academic administrative systems, student support programmes and campus services, student governance models, student life and development programmes, and student centred training and recreational facilities.

The provision and maintenance of appropriate facilities and infrastructure, with specific emphasis on the urgent need to address the maintenance backlog with regard to existing facilities, to provide adequate on-campus student accommodation meeting the prescribed norms and standards as published in the Government

Gazette of 29 September 2015, to provide adequate and cutting-edge ICT and telephony infrastructure, to optimise the use of existing facilities and infrastructure in accordance with institutional strategic imperatives and priorities, to perform visionary planning of future campus developments, and to ensure adequate institutional capacity, skills and protocol to execute major infrastructure development projects in accordance with the approved supply chain management policies and procedures and approved timeframes.

An institutionalised strategic management approach, with constant reference to, focus on, and assessment of the achievement of its strategic imperatives and annual performance goals and objectives at all levels in the organisation, guided by an institutional strategic calendar and performance indicators and agreements, and informed and directed by reliable and relevant management information and quality assurance criteria and improvement plans.

Ladies and gentlemen, despite the major constraints and special circumstances experienced by the SMU since its establishment in 2014, I wish to state that the institution progressed well in achieving most of the abovementioned critical success outcomes.

In the interest of time I shall only provide you with a few examples, especially those constituting the critical platform required to successfully launch and develop a new institution. The SMU managed to institutionalise good governance and management protocol, practices and delegation frameworks at almost all levels in the organisation, and the Minister of Higher Education and Training is about to approve and publish the SMU Statute in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997, as amended. The process of drafting and revising policies and procedures is almost complete, and a policy guide will soon be submitted to the Council for approval.

A new and customised senior management model has been developed and approved, and the process of filling senior management positions with suitably qualified individuals is progressing well. The development of SMU specific organisational structures and concomitant competency frameworks and staff establishments at all levels, are in an advanced stage and will be finalised and submitted for approval during the second semester.

The Senate and the Council approved a newly developed academic configuration, replacing the obsolete faculty and school arrangement with a school model. Further in this regard, the criteria for the establishment of schools have been developed, and the establishment of a number of new schools aligned with the SMU's strategic aspirations and based on comprehensive business plans are in the offing.

The SMU made noticeable progress with regard to the need of the institution to generate additional recurring income. The Senate and the Council approved a significant number of new academic programmes and critical amendments to existing programmes. These have been submitted to the relevant registration and accreditation authorities and it is expected that the SMU will receive permission to activate said programmes by January 2017.

The SMU increased the 2016 first year intake with 156 students to 1220 and increased its total number of enrollments from 5056 to 5315. The SMU experienced presented its first season of graduation ceremonies during which 997 degrees in four Schools were conferred, of which 125 were honours degrees, 118 master's degrees and 8 doctoral degrees. The University also awarded 10 advanced diplomas.

The University managed to increase its overall research output (compared with the previous recorded output achieved at the MEDUNSA Campus) from 93.2 units in 2014 to 110,6 units, at first audit, in 2015. Related to the above, the University managed to increase the per capita publication output of faculty from 0.16 in 2014 to 0.2 in 2015, the number of new research projects with 296, the number of peer- reviewed journal articles form 132 in 2014 to 148 in 2015 and the number of scholarly book chapters and research related workshops. The University also managed to increase the number of active institutional Memoranda of Understanding with other institutions and the

number of structured collaborative research projects (co-authorships with 93 international collaborators).

The SMU confirmed/extended its international footprint and has concluded a number of cooperation agreements with foreign institutions. The SMU will also house the BRICKS Centre for Tobacco Control, and the SMU's MeCRU was recently acknowledged for its contribution towards improving the effect of HIV drugs by the use of the Tat Vaccine.

Despite the #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall and #OutsourcingMustFall campaigns, the SMU managed to maintain institutional stability. Due to early decisions of the Council regarding student fees and insourcing of certain campus services supplemented with the engaging leadership demonstrated by the SRC and Labour Unions, the SMU did not experience any disruptions of its academic and examination programmes, or suffer any damage to property and infrastructure during the said campaigns.

The SMU managed to mobilise former students of MEDUNSA and the UL, who benefitted from the learning opportunities offered at the former MEDUNSA or MEDUNSA Campus, with a view to strengthening its support networks and to constituting an Alumni Association as contemplated in the SMU Statute.

In preparation for the establishment of the SMU the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) commissioned the development of a Master Development Plan for the institution. Due to the economic slow-down, the constraints experienced by the Treasury and caused by the #FeesMustFall Campaign, the DHET was not successful in securing additional funds to give effect to the Master Plan as envisioned.

This effectively delayed the infrastructure development plans for the SMU, especially the developments pertaining to new academic and administrative facilities, the provision of facilities aimed at improving the quality of student life and experience, and the provision of on-campus student accommodation. It was also established through a facilities audit commissioned by the SMU that substantial amounts would be needed to address emergency and deferred maintenance and the replacement of existing facilities and infrastructure.

Despite this troubling context, I am pleased to mention that the SMU is about to occupy two new buildings (pharmacy building and a new residence), and that the institution received special grants from the DHET for deferred maintenance and the construction of another new residence. In addition, the Council of the University will be considering proposals regarding infrastructure development and delivery soon, ranging from the optimal use and upgrading of existing facilities and infrastructure, to the replacing of uninhabitable facilities, the provision of administrative and student services facilities, and a significant increase in on-campus student accommodation capacity.

This programme will also be supported by measures to ensure adequate institutional capacity and expertise to deliver envisaged outcomes timely.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is clear from the aforementioned that the SMU has made big strides in achieving many critical success outcomes.

But SMU's journey has just begun. The institution is, as it were, like a wild bird released from its cage to forcefully fly into an unknown future, exposed to the experiences and uncertainties of the world and never to return to its state of captivity again. Committed to, not only optimise every opportunity presented by its newly acquired freedom, but to also outgrow and heal from the scars of its prolonged subjection.

Those who released this bird did so with the trust that it will be strong enough, not only to survive, but also to find its rightful place among peers. I trust that you will develop a keen interest in the flight of this bird and that you may find the time and the space to report on the head-winds and the battering storms, but also the tail-winds and the symphonic tempos of effortless gliding in diverse air currents.

Thank you.

Prof Chris de Beer
Interim Vice-Chancellor,
23 June 2016