SEFAKO MAKGATHO HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

FOCUS on SMU

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# Assisting first time entering students navigate SMU

*By Maditsi Matlala*

Hundreds of first time entering students attended the 2019 orientation ceremony that was held at the Sport Centre, recently. The orientation event serves as a necessary rite of passage that the new students must undergo to be able to part ways with their erstwhile high school habits and begin to embrace the ethos that befit an SMU Student. An impressive array of speakers were lined up to share their wisdom and experiences with the captive audience of starry eyed students and their parents who had accompanied them.

Prof Chris de Beer, the Vice-Chancellor of SMU thanked the first time entering students for choosing SMU as the university that will nurture their dreams to become health and natural science professionals. He called upon them to optimally use the opportunity afforded to them as it may be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

In his words, the VC stated, "Thousands have applied to study at SMU, but they could not make the grade. Being admitted at SMU

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places a great responsibility on their shoulders to work hard to succeed in your studies. SMU is doing all in its power to foster an enabling institutional culture that would inspire them to succeed in their studies. Use the support systems that are in place to address your emotional, academic and social challenges. Free education gives talented yet lesser fortunate students access to higher education. But it also obliges them to give a satisfactory academic performance.

Boast about SMU and show pride in it because you have this privilege to be admitted to study at the only university in South Africa focusing on the health sciences, "said Prof de Beer.

In the same spirit, Prof. Lekan Ayo-Yusuf, the deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for the research, postgraduate studies and innovation also gave his remarks to calm anxieties of these students. The DVC encouraged them, not only, to focus on their studies, but also urged them to identify extracurricular activities in which they will invest their positive energies. He called upon them to familiarise themselves with the rules and regulations of the university in the general calendar.

Mr. Innocent Chauke, the President of the Student Representative Council (SRC) also welcomed and advised them to work hard so that they will be able to complete their academic programmes within the prescribed period.

# Prof SJH Hendricks:

## New Dean of the School of Oral Health Sciences & CEO of SMU Oral Health Hospital

***By Ncumisa Malahlana***

*Prof Stephen Hendricks-*
*New Dean of the School of Oral Health Sciences.*

Prof Stephen Hendricks, who recently assumed the huge responsibility as the Dean: School of Oral Health Sciences & CEO of SMU Oral Health Hospital plans to take the school to greater heights by becoming the top go-to school in the continent. "We need to reposition and locate the school among the top institutions of higher learning of global oral health and dentistry. We must have a student exchange programme between SMU and the Harvard University Dental School, for both undergraduates and postgraduate students, because we do not want our students to be locally relevant, but globally competent. I also wish to tour other schools globally and market our School for the exchange programme so that when our students graduate, they then understand and can link up with their global scholars' counterparts", explained Prof Hendricks.

While lecturing, Prof Hendricks came across an inquisitive student, who questioned the commitment of high profile academics teaching at previously disadvantaged institutions. "Why do black academics like to go to historically white universities? Why don't they come and teach where we are?" asked the student. The question changed Prof's journey and before he knew it, he had joined SMU. "I came to a point where I reflected on the contributions I can make to historically young universities, and thought it was time to respond to the student's question by joining SMU. As much as there were no funds or vacant posts at SMU, I took a non-salaried position until the Dean's opportunity came through," said Prof Hendricks.

He also emphasized the importance of the SMU community knowing the iconic struggle hero whom the University is named after. "If you don't know who Sefako Makgatho is, then there is a problem", said the newly appointed Dean. "You cannot be at this University and not have studied the history of Sefako Makgatho, his contribution to the trade union movements, education and in religion as a community activist," emphasised Hendricks. His message to the students is to encourage them to utilise the opportunities given to them wisely. "You only have one chance, do your best, first time; work hard, and always ask for help when the need arises," said Prof Hendricks.

**Prof Hendricks qualifications comprises:**

- Doctorate in Medical Sciences (Public Health), Harvard University (USA).
- Post-Doctoral Fellowship (Community Dental Health), Harvard (USA).
- Masters in Public Health, Harvard (USA).
- Masters in Science, University of London in United Kingdom (UK).
- Masters in Public Administration, Harvard (USA).
- Diplomat in Dentistry, American Board of Dental Public Health.
- Diploma Dental Public Health, Royal College of Surgeons in UK.
- Registered as Specialist in Public Community Health with the Health Professions Council of South Africa.
- Bachelor in Theology, Theological Education Extension College in SA.
- Bachelor of Dental Surgery, the University of Western Cape (SA).

# Mr David Sedumedi – & Director of Advancement Internationalisation

*By Lesego Popela*

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University recently introduced the office of Institutional Advancement and Internationalisation to its institution. At the helm of developing this directorate is Mr David Sedumedi who holds MEd in Higher Education (Course work specialising in Student Development) and currently busy with his PhD in Leadership and Complexity, methodology: Systems thinking. He has extensive experience in higher education, which has equipped him with the right skills and knowledge to lead this office.

He explains that institutional advancement is a new concept in South African higher education context with only a few institutions having a formal structure of advancement. The Institutional Advancement and Internationalisation office will be dealing with policy development and implementation, which includes, but not limited to fund raising and development, internationalisation, campaign designs, stakeholder relations and project communication strategy.

Setting up this office from scratch is what excited Mr. Sedumedi most to apply for this position, he hopes to incorporate his experience in his previous similar role and his current PhD studies. "In my role the plan should be informed by the institutional priorities; what is it that SMU wants to achieve and how do we then mobilise resources to support the whole enterprise by the university", said Mr. Sedumedi. He went further on to explain that Systems thinking teaches you to be constantly monitoring your external environment, such that you are able to be responsive and adapt to the changes that the external environment imposes upon you.

"We hope to move away from the dependency of sponsorships, but rather create partnerships where people realize that by collaborating with SMU they are actually investing in the public health care system of the country", said Mr Sedumedi. He plans to rope in current students and staff members to start pledging towards helping SMU projects such as 'Hands of Compassion' (a feeding scheme mainly for students without financial assistance, which relies solely on donations), in a coordinated manner such as using the Payroll donations system where a certain amount will be given back by SARS.

Mr Sedumedi is excited about the challenge that lies ahead. He hopes to be able to help SMU assert itself as a Health Sciences institution, while working towards being the number one institution of choice for investors on the University's doorstep such as the Rosslyn industrial hub.

# Dr Ncube Receives International Award

The Malaspina International Scholars Travel awards are held annually at the ILSI Annual Meeting & Science Symposium, which is a premiere gathering of scientists from around the world. This year Dr. L. J. Ncube, senior lecturer in the Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics was one of the six recipients of the award for 2019. Focus on SMU reporter, Lesego Popela had an interview with her to find out more about her experience at the symposium.

**1. What is the MALASPINA international scholars travel award?**

The Malaspina International Scholars Travel Award is an award granted to exceptional early career scientists to help foster professional growth and development.

**2. How does one qualify to be a candidate for the award?**

To qualify for the Malaspina award, one has to be involved in cutting edge research that yields science results that positively impact on the quality of life of individuals and improves health of communities.

**3. What inspired you to get involved with the International Life Sciences Institute?**

The HOD (Prof. Veldman) circulated an invite and an application form from the International Life Science Institute (ILSI) South Africa for interested staff members to apply for the ILSI travel Grant to attend the symposium. At first, I ignored the email from the HOD. Due to the confidence he had in me based on the research that I am involved in and the Food Safety Program that I am busy developing for the Department, he sent an email specifically directed to me and encouraged me to apply for the grant. I therefore, applied. The application was assessed by ILSI and I won the award which enabled me to travel, for free, to Florida, Washington DC, where I attended a symposium and show-cased my research work.

**4. Kindly explain what the research paper you sub-mitted was about.**

The paper that I submitted was about "Self- Reported Food Handling Practices among Households in Ga-Rankuwa Area, Gauteng Province, South Africa" and the paper was co-authored by Dr. M. Manafe and Mr. R. Gordon. This paper was drafted from the umbrella topic "Food and Nutrition Security Status in Households in Ga-Rankuwa Area, Gauteng Province" and I am the chief investigator of this independent research project. The short term plan for this research project is to identify the food and nutrition security problems of households in Ga-Rankuwa, with a long term plan of developing community food and nutrition programs and involve our students in training the community to ensure that unnecessary food borne and nutrition related illnesses are prevented.

**5. What was your highlight of the event?**

The session that I enjoyed mostly was the poster presentation whereby we were also served finger food and we also got the opportunity to network with experts from all sectors (government, academics and industry) who were interested in our research and universities. The other session that I enjoyed was my oral research paper presentation which grabbed a lot of attention and interest.

**6. How did you feel after receiving the award?**

I was very excited and felt honoured when my research work was considered "exceptional", and viewed as having the capacity of a scientific work that could promote health and well-being of individuals in different communities. Considering that I was one of the six award winners worldwide and the only one from South Africa and representing Sefako Makgatho Health care Sciences University, I felt recognised and very useful not only at SMU, but Globally. In terms of research, this was an encouragement for me to start recognising and valuing my research work activities and involvement. This award was an eye opener to stop overlooking and undermining my research capabilities and impact, and since then, I have started looking at research from a different angle.

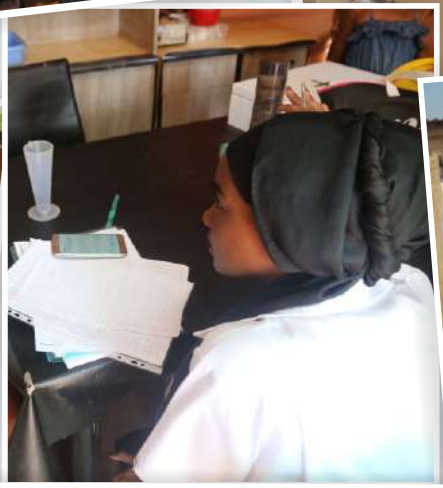
**7. What do you wish other people knew about ILSI?**

I wish other researchers who are involved in cutting edge research that aims at promoting the health and well-being can understand ILSI and its purpose, the opportunities they have to help foster professional growth and development of exceptional early career scientists and the global networking opportunities and platform they create between government, academics and industry to share global knowledge on new technologies available to solve public health problems. The ILSI is there to encourage exceptional researchers to acknowledge their research and the impact it has on the quality of life.

**8. Do you have any advice for people who would like to be part of ILSI and perhaps walk in your footsteps of winning the Malaspina International Scholars Travel award?**

It all comes with hard work, dedication, focus, passion and willingness to find solutions to problems arising in the communities. My passion for research was inspired and developed when I was working in public hospitals. It was aroused by my concern for the quality, safety and status of food provided to patients as there were no tools available to assess food service quality. For instance, my Bachelors research project was "The microbial food safety status of a food service unit in a certain public hospital in Mpumalanga"; my Master's topic was "The Quality of Healthcare Services rendered to Patients in a certain Hospital in the Mpumalanga Province" and my D-Tech research project was about "The development of a Conceptual Framework for assessing the quality of Food services in Public hospitals in South Africa" which covered the inputs, transformation, and the food service outputs. To this point, I am passionate to extend my services to make a difference in improving the quality of life and health status of the different communities. I am currently a chief research for an umbrella research project "Food and Nutrition Security Status of Households in Ga-Rankuwa Area, Gauteng Province 2017 to 2020". Its main objectives were to identify food and nutrition security problems, develop and implement the strategies to address those problems.

I believe God has a purpose for everyone in this world. Nelson Mandela once said "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Education is always linked to research and it is the key to creating a sustainable planet and to preventing needless deaths and illnesses. Education is the new currency by which the nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity. I therefore, advise researchers to initiate ground-breaking research projects that lead to innovation of tailor-made products/services to address/prevent the specific problems identified. I believe a beneficial research must be collaboration between academics, industry and government for easy implementation of the solutions that will benefit everyone. Don't overlook the worth of your research; it might be the solution that the world has been waiting for.

# MBChB Service Learning

Dean of School of Medicine, Prof. Lionel-Green together with staff members from Practice of Medicine visited Tshwane North communities, where the second year Medicine students were doing the screening and door-to-door visits during their service-learning block. The communities visited include: Marryme & Boikhutsong (Soshanguve), Sisters of Mercy (Winterveldt), and Ramohodu (Ga-Rankuwa).
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