SEFAKO MAKGATHO
HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

FOCUS on SMU

NEWSLETTER / Volume 5/ 1st Edition | *January 2020*

Sharing with new students TIPS to make it at SMU

By Maditsi Matlala

Hundreds of SMU's new students sat and listened attentively to an impressive array of speakers that were lined up to reach out and welcome them during the orientation event. An orientation event is essentially a rite of passage new students must go through to enable them to transit seamlessly from erstwhile high school habits to embrace the ethos that befit an SMU Student.

Addressing this captive audience, Prof Lekan Ayo-Yusuf, the Acting Vice-Chancellor of SMU, congratulated them for having made the cut competing against 30 000 deserving applicants, for very limited space.

"Welcome to SMU where no boundaries exist on the map of knowledge to serve humanity. You made a wise choice by opting to study at SMU and making SMU your partner of choice in pursuit of your dream to become a health care and science professional, "said Prof Ayo-Yusuf.

He called upon the students to find their own passions in the course of their studies and strive to finish their studies in record time by investing their energies in positive pursuits. The education they will be exposed to will enable them to mature beyond imagination and prepare them for life, in the world of work, or as job creators, in their own right.

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Prof Ayo-Yusuf also added that SMU in its sixth year of existence, is well and truly on the way to become a benchmark institution in the health delivery sector. He pointed out that research output has doubled. More SMU PhD academic staff are being trained. New academic streams have been introduced and a new centre of entrepreneurship has been established to fire student imaginations to ensure that they become job creators and innovators in the wake of the fourth industrial revolution. He assured them that drinking from the SMU fountain of knowledge, they will be exposed to holistic health sciences education that will prepare them for life.

“We are committed to the requirements of the National Development Plan (NDP) and the National Human Resource Health Policy which require that we educate health professionals to be able to contribute to the transformation of the health services”, said Prof Eunice Seekoe, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for teaching, learning and community engagement.

Mr Lerato Mokheranyana, the Student Representative Council (SRC) President, also welcomed them. He said by opting to study at SMU, the new students are embarking on a career that is going to define and transform their lives, forever.

Dr Matsontso Mathebula, the clinic doctor and manager, said as young adults, the future is in their hands and that nobody is going police them and remind them to go class. He also appealed to them to vow to stay HIV/AIDS free in order to graduate alive.

This new cohort of students' includes amongst themselves one of the country's top achievers, Trevor Mashabela from Limpopo in Sekhukhune who became number 2 nationally on quintile 1 schools and obtained seven distinctions. Trevor is amongst the learners who were invited by the Minister of basic education during the announcement of matric results for 2019. He is pursuing Medicine at SMU and has expressed his excitement to be part of this University.

Focus on SMU reporters, Lerato Mpiwa and Floyd Mmakou
had an exclusive interview with the newly appointed

Executive Director of Student Affairs & Residences,

Dr Irene Patience Mohasoa

Dr Irene Mohasoa, Executive Director: Student Affairs and Residences

Focus on SMU (FoS): Can you briefly tell us about yourself?

Irene Patience Mohasoa (IPM): I hold a doctoral degree in Psychology. Served as an educator, Senior Education Specialist, Student Health and Wellness Practitioner, Acting Director: Student Development, Acting Dean of Students, Acting Deputy Director: Advocacy and Resources Centre for Students with Disabilities. I served as a mentor and supervisor for Masters and Doctoral students. I have presented research papers in local and international conferences and published research articles in accredited international journals.

FoS: What is your vision for SMU Student Affairs and Residences?

IPM: To promote academic excellence of students through full access and inclusion in academic and co-curricular programmes, research, community engagement and outreach initiatives with emphasis on holistic development of students. Also, contribute to lifelong learning, shaping understanding of self, community and contribution to global society.

FoS: What expertise are you bringing to SMU?

IPM: I bring experience in Student Development, student governance, health and wellness programmes, support for students with disabilities, and other diversity programmes. Knowledge in strategic planning and management skills, risk and compliance skills, quality management, monitoring, evaluation and research skills which will enable me to contribute to teaching and learning, research, community engagement and outreach agenda of the University.

FoS: What made you to have interest in working with students and within the education sector?

IPM: Making a difference in students' lives inspired me to serve in the educational sector. My passion of contributing to academic excellence and increasing the throughput rate amongst students also contributed.

FoS: When working with students, what are the common challenges do you encounter?
IPM: I have found some students to be rebellious against university policies and procedures. Faced difficulties amongst some students in understanding financial prudence and acknowledging that public funds need to be used appropriately.

FoS: How will you interact with students and maintain a good working relationship?
IPM: Allowing students to schedule meetings, where they can communicate their needs and addressing them with the guidance of the institutional policies. Lastly, by treating all registered Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University students equally.

FoS: How was your transition from working with learners from primary/secondary schools to students at University?
IPM: It was an easy transition because during my employment as an educator I served as a part time tutor and lecturer of University students. As an educator by profession and qualifications in psychology, it is easy to adjust to various student groups.

FoS: One of the requirement for this position of Executive Director: Student Affairs and Residences is "willingness for all-hours involvement," so how will you balance your professional and personal lives?
IPM: Even though Student Affairs work requires one to be available as and when required; that does not mean one is working all the time. Instead, one is required to set realistic career and personal goals that work to create a healthy work life balance.

FoS: In the memorandums of grievances that students usually submit to management during protests, it is clear that students have lost confidence in your department, how are you going to restore it?
IPM: We will follow up on all concerns raised, schedule meetings with the SRC, Student structures and general students, provide progress reports on issues raised, and use available online platforms to provide feedback to students. Meanwhile we will be developing quality standards for all directorates in our Department. We will also commission student satisfaction surveys about our services and address challenges identified.

FoS: What are the plans for infrastructure development more especially student accommodation on campus?
IPM: There is a five-year student residences plan aligned to Enrolment Plan that is currently in place. The plan includes construction of 2000 beds on campus and Project envisaged to be completed in 2023.

FoS: Sports at SMU is in shambles, what are your plans to revive sports and have competitive teams that will participate in different sporting codes of varsity cup?
IPM: We will engage in benchmarking exercise in local and international higher educational institutions and develop Sports Policy. Establish a Sports Committee consisting of chairpersons of all sporting codes available in the institution. All sporting codes to have code policies that are inclusive, catering for all students irrespective of their disability. All committees to draw their plans according to sports seasons ensure membership and participation in national and international events organised by University Sports South Africa (USSA).

FoS: On that note, the sports facilities are also in bad conditions, are there plans to improve them?
IPM: There is a plan in place to improve sports facilities. That will be done in collaboration with the Transformation Office and Department of Institutional Support.

FoS: How will your department assist students to have a conducive environment that will have a positive impact in their academic performance?
IPM: We will explore students' perceptions regarding Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University teaching and learning environment, and have impact on academic performance through self-administered anonymous questionnaires. We will also collaborate with the Department of Institutional Support to ensure that lecture halls and student residences are renovated and maintained to ensure compliance to Occupational Health and Safety. Lastly, provide access to Wi-Fi, computer labs and required software through Information Communication Technology Department.

FoS: How are you going to monitor and evaluate your department's performance?
IPM: We will develop a Departmental Operational Plan aligned to Institutional Strategic plan. In addition, Implement Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University Performance Management System in all directorates within the Department, then monitor performance monthly, quarterly and annually. Lastly implement improvement plans as and when required.

FoS: Do Student Affairs have a watertight code of conduct to discipline transgressing students?
IPM: They do have Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University Student Code of Conduct.

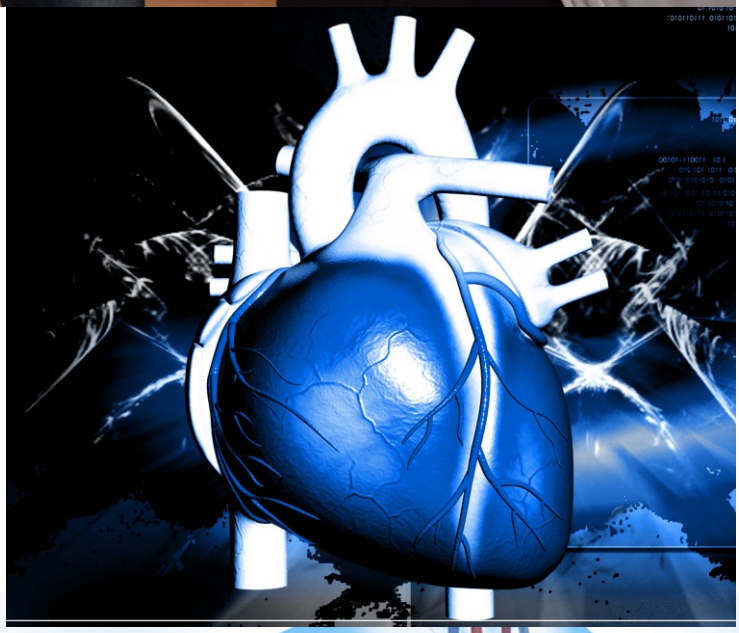
FoS: What motivates you as a person?
IPM: The opportunity of learning new things, being able to complete difficult projects and meeting the target I set for myself.

FoS: Lastly, there are student related projects that are currently administered in other departments, aren't those projects supposed to be back in your office?
IPM: Yes, they need to be brought back to Student Affairs and Residences Department

Awarding Cardiothoracic Surgery Stars

By Maditsi Matlala

In unveiling the awards ceremony, recently, Prof Risenga Chauke, the head of the department of cardiothoracic surgery said the ceremony was held to show great appreciation to staff members who went beyond the call of duty and particularly excelled in their work spaces, as clinicians or support staff.



To illustrate his point, Prof Chauke made reference to football's woman or man of the match awards that are given after the match. He highlighted that all players give their all in the match. But there is always one player that stands head and shoulder above the rest, whose performance contributes to the victory of the team. Rewarding that player with the woman or man of the match awards seeks to inspire other team members to perform better, for the good of the team and to also win the award.

The following staff members were identified as stars of the night, who received awards:

	Recipient	Award
1	Ms P N Mokgethoa	Best Ward 14 Cleaner, received voucher
2	E N Mohajane	Best Ward 14 Sister, cash voucher
3	Sister Mohlamme	Best Theatre Sister, cash voucher
4	C M Ntsomela	Best ICU Sister, cash voucher
5	Sister R Chuma	Best CTOPD Sister, cash voucher
6	Mr M Shange	Best Perfusionist, cash voucher
7	Dr D Nyamande	Best Registrar, cash voucher
8	Dr S M Mazibuko	Best Consultant, cash voucher

Physiotherapy Alumna Envisage Collaboration Opportunities for SMU

By Phemelo Komane

The SMU Physiotherapy department was privileged to host its alumnus, Prof Nomusa Mngoma, an Associate Professor (Adjunct) and Research Scientist whom is currently attached to Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada for 27 years. The purpose of her visit was to explore physiotherapy collaborative relationship between SMU and Queens University. Her speciality is in musculoskeletal physiotherapy and rehabilitation, as well as global health.

Prof Mngoma graduated from SMU (previously known as MEDUNSA) in 1985. After qualifying as a physiotherapist, she had a dream of furthering her studies abroad. Her dream was propelled by the harsh conditions under the apartheid system. Her move was beneficial as her career blossomed, she was exposed to many opportunities that would had never happened if she remained in South Africa at that time. “Although leaving my home country was a difficult decision, my great wish was to further my studies abroad. Once I had made the decision to remain in Canada, I knew that giving back was going to be an important part of my journey. “I've been able to bring back and share knowledge and skills gained abroad, and to be of explore my skills abroad, and to be of service here at home”, said Prof Mngoma.

“The training I got from SMU more than adequately prepared me for clinical practice abroad. I realized that as a clinician, I had a unique set of skills because of my training in the South African context”, she said.

The impression she got from SMU staff and students was that they were very engaged and keen to discuss current academic and professional issues. “SMU students and staff are bright. The types of questions the students asked during their meet and greet showed a great capacity to critically reflect on current issues”.

She is passionate about research, and is available for mentoring students who are eager to explore and gain experience. We have also discussed linkages with Queen's university and other physiotherapy programs in Canada. She added, “I am very keen to work with SMU faculty to explore potential areas for research collaboration”.