SEFAKO MAKGATHO
HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

FOCUS on SMU

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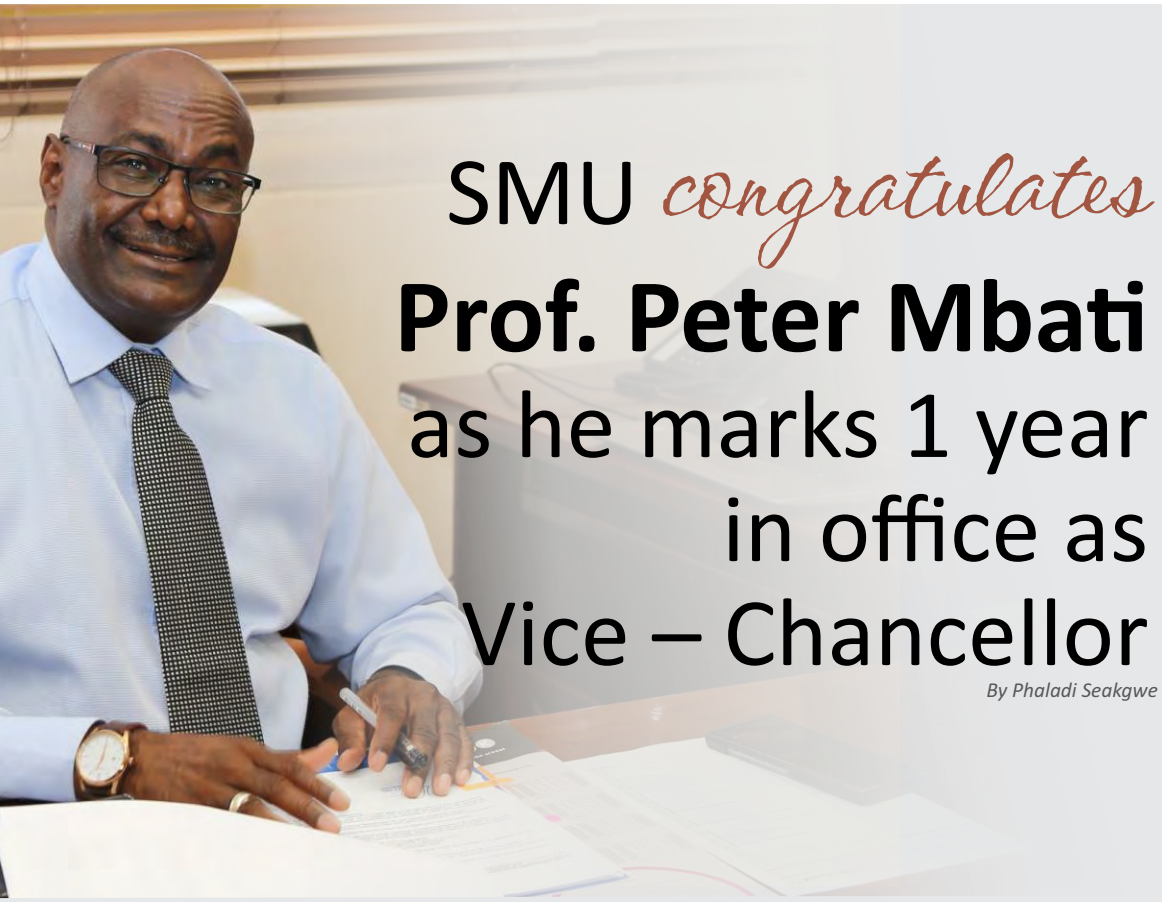

SMU *congratulates* **Prof. Peter Mbati** as he marks 1 year in office as Vice – Chancellor

By Phaladi Seakgwe

SMU Vice - Chancellor Professor Peter Mbati has been in office for a full year following his appointment on 01 June 2020 by the Council of the university. He is a well-established academic and university leader with remarkable international experience.

When Prof Mbati joined SMU in 2020 he amongst other things committed to improve the operating model of the University to be financially sustainable in the long term; and changing the institutional culture to be more inclusive for both staff, students and alumni. Furthermore, he also emphasized on the need to work together to improve the performance of the university in both online and contact teaching in order to improve student success rate, whilst also improving the University's excellence in research and social responsiveness.

So far, a number of notable achievements and developments have taken place within SMU. Shortly upon taking office, the university held its strategic session under his leadership where a new vision was outlined and a new strategy developed. The strategic plan 2021-2025 has since been approved by council and is currently being implemented. According to Prof Mbati, this is a roadmap that will guide everyone towards achieving the goal of being a leading regional University as measured by teaching and learning excellence, vibrant impactful research and innovation, post graduate training and excellence in core support activities including ICT, infrastructure and maintenance.

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The university also held its inaugural dialogue with its key stakeholders to talk about a number of issues amongst them the university culture and values; what the future holds; and how should the university community work together for a successful SMU. All participating stakeholders including management, labour, students and staff got an opportunity to express themselves on how a successful SMU should look like.

The university is also implementing a performance management system for all employees and this will ensure that there is a clear link between the University strategic objectives, teamwork within departments and individual performance thus leading to high performance of the institution and a new culture in the workplace.

Significant progress has similarly been made on key infrastructure projects such as the construction of a new boundary wall on campus, improving conditions at residences, cafeteria and pavilion, the opening of the Cardio and Strength Gymnasium and the maintenance of the grounds and roads within the university. Work is underway to ensure that all the major infrastructure projects both physical and ICT are achieved as planned.

The Vice – Chancellor successfully led discussions with labour to resolve and end a prolonged protest relating to salary increments and improvement of conditions of service. The protracted protest had potential to seriously affect the academic year. Through his efforts together with his collective management of the university, key issues being raised by students, which also led to a strike are being attended to and resolved working with student structures. Prof Mbati believes that dialogue and constant engagements are key to resolving contentious issues and fostering unity amongst members of the SMU community including students and staff.

The above are just some of the milestones recorded, the state of campus report that was released recently outlines issues in detail.

SMU successfully conferred qualifications during virtual ceremonies

By Phaladi Seakgwe

Due to the unusual challenges of Covid-19 Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University hosted the winter virtual graduation ceremonies over a three-day period to confer qualifications to those who met all the requirements of their respective fields.

A total number of 1340 graduates received their undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications from all the five schools of the university.

In conferring the qualifications SMU Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Mbati in his capacity as acting Chancellor lauded health care workers and members of the

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scientific and business communities, global and continental multinational organizations including the World Health Organization, the African Union, governments and ordinary citizens for their contribution in the fight against Covid-19.

Professor Mbati said the graduations Ceremonies took place at a time and space when everyone is required to roll up their sleeves and double their efforts as we have to coexist with the pandemic.

He thanked the senate of the University for taking the decision to proceed with the graduations.

“It gives me great pleasure nevertheless to confer the degrees of the University and award the diplomas and higher certificates to all those who have satisfied the requirements for their respective qualifications”, he said. Professor Mbati further used the opportunity to encourage those who graduated to also pursue post graduate studies in any university including SMU.

The DVC: Teaching, Learning and Community Engagement Professor Eunice Seekoe acted as the Vice Chancellor during the virtual ceremonies. She said the exigencies of the moment occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic made it impossible for face to face meeting in one room. “Thanks to the technological age we live in, we are able to celebrate with you on your achievements virtually, and for this humanity should be grateful for the role of technology in advancing human civilization”, said Prof Seekoe. During the three day events, 12 doctoral degrees, 121 masters' degrees, 188 honours degrees were awarded and the balance qualifications conferred where undergraduate degrees, diplomas and higher certificates.

Prof Seekoe further proudly asserted that the numbers on their own demonstrates that a fairly new university, SMU is gradually and confidently finding its space in our higher education system. “It is carving a territory for itself as a premier institution in the health sciences and science and technology fields. The university is better positioned to play its role in the broader national development project by producing graduates who are well equipped with knowledge, skills and attributes to succeed in their chosen careers and professions”, she concluded.

All the Deans from the five schools got an opportunity to congratulate those who received their qualifications.

Since its establishment in 2014 and having opened its doors to the first cohort of students in January 2015, SMU has so far conferred qualifications to over 5000 people. These ranged from Higher certificates, Diplomas, Advanced diplomas, Undergraduate Degrees, Honours, Masters and Doctoral Degrees.

The graduations ceremonies served as a highlight in the lives of both the university, its students, families and other key partners.

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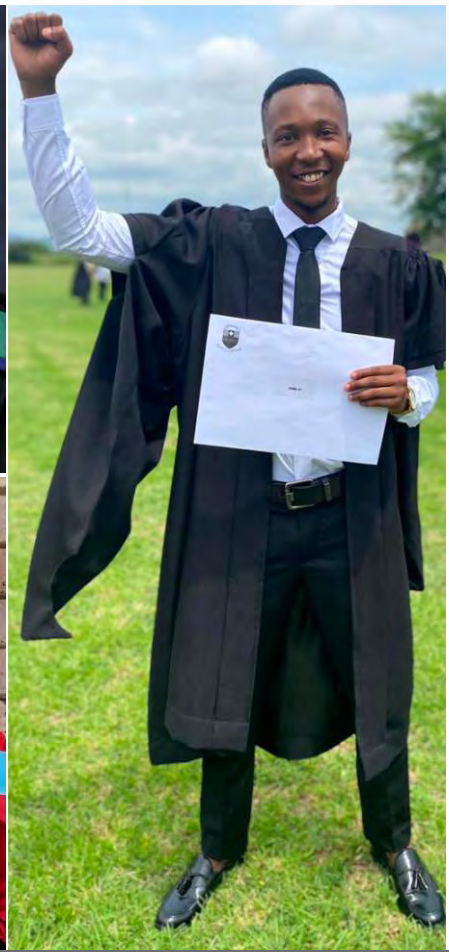
CONGRATS



The Pharmacist's Oath

SMU establishes the Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator

By Tumelo Moila

The Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) has recently established its Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator (CfERI), under the School of Science and Technology. The objectives of CfERI encompasses activating, protecting and nurturing the pragmatic entrepreneurial ideas to invigorate the socio-economic standing of the SMU and its surrounding communities. The Centre plays a significant role as a business education centre and an entrepreneurial clinic that treats potential entrepreneurs who have great ideas that can be nurtured into innovative businesses.

> "The CfERI at SMU envisions being a leading centre and platform for health sciences students and associated communities to embrace outstandingly entrepreneurs' innovative initiatives. Its mission statement includes the provision of transformative and innovative business support and development services to foster entrepreneurship and competitive enterprises growth in health and sciences," said Mr Taurai Hungwe, Acting Centre Manager.

The CfERI serves all five SMU Schools under the leadership of a Steering Committee that comprises staff members from the schools, non-academic departments, and a student representative. ***The committee comprises the following individuals:***

Acting Centre Manager	Mr Taurai Hungwe	School of Science & Technology
Acting Business Development OfficerActing	Mr. Kesentseng Mahlaba	School of Pharmacy
Centre AdministratorCentre	Mr Adolf Managa	Finance Department
Committee Member	Dr Maggie Aphane	School of Science & Technology
Centre Committee Member	Prof Joshua Olowoyo	School of Science & Technology
Centre Committee Member	Prof Solly Seeletse	School of Science & Technology
Lead Student Mentor	Ms Lerato Mphahlele	School of Science & Technology

In April 2021, the CfERI introduced the entrepreneurship programme in collaboration with the United Kingdom-based Mashauri organisation to support SMU staff and students with entrepreneurial education, a virtual incubator and an online entrepreneurial boot camp. The activities and modules under the programme are a mixture of bespoke developed tools, templates, lectures and processes.

"The programme is critical in fulfilling the objective of SMU CfERI of being an innovative university whose students can create new business ventures with the potential of spinning off value-generating businesses for the benefit of the SMU and South Africa's economy," said Mr Hungwe.

Hungwe further said the programme is delivered virtually, allowing for the implementation during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that affects negatively face-to-face classes and initiatives. The first stage of the programme that entails entrepreneurship basics and idea pitching has been completed with participants coming up with their entrepreneurial value propositions. The next stages will have participants pitching their ideas and attending an immersion online boot camp," concludes Hungwe.

Thirty-seven participants from all five schools are currently enrolled and benefitting from the programme. One of the participants, Azeemah Mahomed, Lecturer at SMU Department of Speech and Hearing who completed the final portion of her Master of Business Administration (MBA) with Wits Business School said she had learnt a practical and systematic method of putting her ideas and thoughts to paper during the first stage of the programme. "It allowed structured learning, for example, the programme had several videos that we had to watch and answer questions, and each video had a specific end target. There is a ton of information out there, the programme zoned in, defined what was relevant and practical to get us to our end goal".

"I felt that this would allow me to take the theory that I learnt and put it into action, allow me the opportunity to network with the right type of people and come out of this with a great business, and a method to success that I can use over and over again. So far, I see that the skills I have learnt so far can be used in many industries and areas that will automatically open more doors for change and growth, not just for myself, but God willingly, for other people I cross paths with on this journey and beyond," concludes Mahomed.

From left to right:
Marvel Hlungwani
and Luyanda Khumalo

Two SMU students selected to serve on the organizing committee of SAAHE

By Phaladi Seakgwe

Two SMU students Marvel Hlungwani and Luyanda Khumalo have been selected to serve on the committee of the South African Association of Health Educa-tionalists (SAAHE). This is an association of health sciences educators from South African universities, NGOs and government as well as the private sectors. The focus of SAAHE is on improving the quality of teaching and learning in health sciences education so as to enhance the delivery of high quality, affordable and sustainable health care to South Africans in both the public and private sector.

The pair told Focus news that they are elated to be part of the committee and to attend the conference. “Mrs Hanlie Pitout, shared the link with us to apply and be part of the committee having been the Marketing Rep for 2021 IPECP I took the opportunity and applied for the committee. One of the requirements was previous experience in other areas related to student and leadership in general, so I guess one met those requirements”, said Marvel Hlungwani.

Hlungwani further said participating in the conference aligns perfectly with the SMU brand and therefore makes him excited to be part as they will also interact with students from many universities across the country. Marvel further believes that there is a lot to gain when interacting with students from other institutions as this would afford them an opportunity to have a better worldview of their different professions and provide more clarity in terms of roles. “It is also a perfect way of developing oneself professionally”, he concluded.

Luyanda Khumalo explained that he felt privileged and to an extent proud, that his dedication to leadership and personal development was met with recognition by such an association. “The SAAHE called to all students in institutions of higher learning to apply for the SAAHE Student Task Force 2021 and like many others, I applied with a brief motivation as to why I believed I qualify to be part of the team, a few weeks later I was informed of my selection for the final 16 STF members”, he said.

“There is always a lot to gain from participating in such activities and projects, that's why as students we should never shy away from contributing, not only will the knowledge gained help me as an individual but it will be extended to others as I will share my experiences and what I learned. It will equally help us as a collective to have an appreciation of other healthcare professions and their role in ensuring optimum health services provision to the people”, concluded Luyanda.

The virtual conference will take place from 21 to 25th June 2021 and is expected to provide a fresh perspectives and inspiration to enable a deeper understanding of the agile higher education landscape that institutions are grappling with today.

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ATIM
AFRICA CENTRE FOR TOBACCO
INDUSTRY MONITORING AND POLICY RESEARCH

ATIM encourages smokers to quit

The African Centre for Tobacco Industry Monitoring and Policy Research released a number of key messages to mark World No Tobacco Day which was observed on 31 May 2021. The annual event is used to educate the public on the risks associated with tobacco use. This celebration is also an opportunity for all South Africans to claim their constitutional right to a healthy environment.

In line with this year's theme, "commit to quit", SMU's Africa Centre for Tobacco Industry Monitoring and Policy Research (ATIM) has highlighted some key messages from their research findings aimed at helping smokers quit:

A message to current smokers: There is no better time to quit than now. Commit to quit

"Smoking cessation has major health benefits for women and men of all ages, regardless of their health status. Some benefits are immediate, as soon as mere minutes after the last cigarette, and these benefits only grow years after quitting. You will no longer smell of cigarette smoke, your food will taste better, and your risk for several diseases will reduce, including conditions such as lung cancer, heart attack, stroke, chronic lung disease and severe illness from COVID-19", says Professor Lekan Ayo-Yusuf who serves as ATIM Director and DVC responsible for Research, Postgraduate studies and Innovation at SMU.

You will also have more money in your pockets for yourself and your family to spend on food and other essential needs instead of on cigarettes, with cost savings of close to R7,000 per year as we showed in our recent published study. Those of low socio-economic status and possibly on government welfare grants unfortunately spend significantly more on cigarettes and hence deepening poverty.

A message to Health professionals: Offer help to quit

In 2010, Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), including South Africa, adopted the guidelines of Article 14. This article of this international agreement requires that the member countries work hard to promote smoking cessation by ensuring that primary healthcare facilities routinely deliver cessation advice as part of the standard of care, and that smokers have barrier-free access to quit lines and free or low-cost cessation medications. The Article 14 guidelines emphasise the role for healthcare professionals (HCPs) in cessation programmes, including screening for tobacco use, providing brief cessation advice to all smokers, and offering cessation treatments during clinical encounters.

A study from researchers at SMU however showed there is much room for improvement in this regard: only 1 in 4 South African smokers reported that their HCP offered them advice to quit smoking between 2010 and 2017. This is despite the fact that consistently over this same period those advised to quit were at least twice more likely to make quit attempts, which has been associated with successfully quitting.

Another study by SMU researchers emphasised the need for clinical interventions that address the smoker, not just the smoking. This is because smokers often have multiple lifestyle risk factors present at the same time, including excessive alcohol intake and an unhealthy diet. A holistic intervention should therefore include promotion of physical activity, frequent intake of fruit and/or vegetables, and avoidance of alcohol misuse, as these together play a significant role in prompting quit attempts and eventual staying quit for good.

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A message to the South African government and the public: Support the new tobacco control bill

Between 2010 and 2017, e-cigarette use increased, but cigarette quit attempts did not change. Our previously published study also confirmed that the use of e-cigarette was not associated with long-term quit success. In fact, against what the industry wishes to make the public believe, e-cigarette use increases the chances of relapse after quit attempts and is associated with concurrent cigarette smoking in South Africa.

The government and the public can prevent the next generation from taking up nicotine addiction and assist current smokers who attempt to succeed in remaining quit by supporting the urgent enactment of the new tobacco control bill, The Control of Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Bill. The bill, among other aspects, seeks to regulate e-cigarette use, point-of-sale counter displays, introduce graphic warning labels on tobacco products and promote 100% smoke-free public places. This will provide an enabling environment for smoking cessation, as smokers trying to quit will not be exposed to others' smoking, which may serve as cues to resuming smoking and hence relapse.

A recent study from the University of Cape Town also suggest eliminating smoking could save government R42 billion per year, of which R14.48 billion would be from avoidable healthcare costs. Such savings can be used to support the implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) that would allow for the improvement in the quality of healthcare available to all South Africans, irrespective of their socio-economic status.

- **National Youth Day Celebration** : 16 June 2021
- **BMF Student Chapter - SMU Branch** *(Debate on Transformation of Higher Education, in particular SMU)* : 16 June 2021 | Time 18h00 - till late | Venue: Virtual (Link will follow soon)
- **Department of Biology final PhD presentation** : 18 June 2021 | Time 10h00 - 12h00 | Venue: Virtual and Contact - NSB Room 009 (Link will follow soon for virtual)

TOPIC: *Per and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in Human Biological Fluids (Maternal Serum and Breast Milk), Dairy Milk and Infant Formula: Implica*