SEFAKO MAKGATHO HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

FOCUS on SMU

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The much anticipated construction of the 2000 beds at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University has taken off in earnest

Members of Council of the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University alongside the Vice-Chancellor and other members of the Executive and Senior Management as well as Labour and SRC representatives came together to witness a historic moment in the life of the university, when a formal sod turning event for the construction of the much anticipated 2000 beds residence facility took place on 05 August 2021.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr Thabiso Lekoana; a member of Council who also serves as the Chair of the Planning and Resources Committee of Council (PRCC) said "What was always a talk is becoming a reality today". Describing the moment as a very special day for the university, he also mentioned that since conceptualization, the project has played a dynamic role psychologically in the minds of the stakeholders of the university. "Not only for the university but the country at large. Some years ago, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) launched what is called the Student Housing Infrastructure Programme (SHIP), in

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SAAHE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE,
27-30 JUNE 2022
HEALING HIGHER EDUCATION

The SAAHE CONFERENCE 2022 Communications team is calling on all students, faculty and designers to design and submit a logo for the SAAHE 2022 Conference*

Prize for winning design: R500 Takealot Voucher
Deadline date for submissions: 25 August 2021 *(midnight)*

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collaboration with the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) and at that time, the university seized the opportunity to be part of those who will be beneficiaries of that programme", said Lekoana. He attributed the delays to the commencement of the project to amongst other things; the issue of the rezoning of the university, adding that the huddles took months to deal with.

"We may not change history but we have the ability to change the current and the future. This is one step to the right direction. Yes, this institution was previously disadvantaged, but we must be a generation that change things and turn them around for the better. We are heading towards an advantaged university, not only in terms of culture but infrastructure as well. We are turning a sod for a very modernized building, that will never have dynamics of cold water. The dynamism tells you that our students will find themselves in a better position with their counterparts in other institutions. This is a legacy project for this Council", emphasized Lekoana.

Lekoana further mentioned that the 2000 beds project will assist the university to save a lot of money spent on facilities outside.

Adding her voice during the sod turning event, the Deputy Chairperson of Council Ms Mmanare Mamabolo pronounced this as a big moment for Council considering that the issue has been before them for three years.

"Our business as a university is teaching and learning, but in doing that you need to ensure that the lives of the key stakeholders – students, are the best in campus. In May we arranged a walk about with management just to find out what were the issues. We were not happy with some things especially in residences", she remarked. Mamabolo further said as former students themselves, they did not witness some of the things that they came across during the walk about such as challenges of warm water to shower, which is a basic need. She said they hope this project will help alleviate accommodation issues that the university was confronted with for a long time.

"When this building is finalized, we don't want to see defects, we don't want to see cracks or the building falling apart. We want to see a good quality building that will last for many years.

Amongst other things that Council want to see according to Ms Mamabolo are that; attention has to be paid on compliance as per the dictates of the Occupational Health and Safety ACT and that the building should be completed within the articulated time-frames. "We do not want delays; we need good quality service; we need to see something we can be proud of.

Mamabolo expressed the desire to see the project being handed over in phases so that students are not delayed from taking occupation of the residences. She thanked government for helping the university realize this dream.

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Professor Mbati in his capacity as Vice – Chancellor of SMU said It's an exciting day for everyone and that the day will be remembered for many years to come as this has been a project in planning for many years.

“It would be remiss of me as Vice - Chancellor if I don't mention that part of our growth and development as SMU is based on several pillars. If you look at the transformational trajectory that we must take as SMU to position us as a leading health sciences university; amongst other things, is the infrastructure of this institution, including addressing issues of backlog and maintenance. We say in our strategic plan that we want to be a student centric university. We have a lot of students that stay on campus, and research shows that students who stay on campus residences turn to do much better in terms of the academic project. I think this project attends to the many pillars that we must be looking at”, said Prof Mbati.

The Vice-Chancellor also said the financial sustainability of SMU is also important.

The Executive director of Institutional Support Mr Matsiababa Motebele thanked the Council, management and the DHET for support. He told the university community that the new building will consist of 400 beds facilities in 5 clusters.

SRC President Thato Masekoa said each year there is turmoil at the University due to issues of accommodation for students. He added that the buildings in the university are too old and expressed hope that the construction of the new residences facility marks the beginning of many good things to come during their time. Masekoa also emphasized the need for the turn-around time to be met.

Nehawu Chairperson Tshifhiwa Mulaudzi described the day as a very emotional one looking at how far the university had come. He described the 2019 March to the DHET as a turning-point that displayed the unity of the SMU community. He said the union wants to see a good quality building that is strong.

Mr Lekabe Moledi representing the APSA/ SAPTU union, reiterated the need for quality and said as a health sciences university, SMU needs to lead by example. He thanked Council for playing the necessary oversight.

Thanking all stakeholders that participated during the sod turning ceremony, Executive Director for Student Affairs Dr Irene Mohasoa, said all stakeholders should hold the university accountable for the commitment made on this day that the project will be completed. She also agreed that the quality of the building is crucial and issues should be regularly reported at all levels. Dr Mohasoa expressed her delight as someone who was born in the adjacent community of Mothotlung to see a building of this nature being constructed in the area. She described this as an affirmation of the university's commitment to transform the lives of the community being served.

The new state of the art residence facility is expected to be completed over a period of two years.