

Four SMU students jetted off to Jonkoping University in Sweden as part of an exchange programme

Four SMU students recently jetted off to Sweden to spend three months at the University of Jonkoping as part of the exchange programme which has been in existence for many years. The Quartet, expressed their excitement for being selected to represent SMU in a foreign country. The Acting Dean of the School of Oral Health Sciences Professor Tshepo Gugushe joined the students and wished them on their journey.

Speaking to Focus Onkgopotse Pimpi said, he was excited and grateful for the opportunity. "It's a lifetime opportunity and adventure. I am looking forward to being an ambassador for SMU and our School of Oral Health Sciences. It is a huge responsibility and I am prepared for it", he said.

He further mentioned that he expects to explore, make international friends and come back home to impart what he would have learnt at Jonkoping.



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Malebo Malepe said this is a chance to forge professional relations that should last long. “I want to establish relations and connections across the board and this certainly will make a huge impact and contribution in my life and I expect to come back home a different person. It still feels unreal”, she said.

“I honestly never thought I will be selected when I wrote the motivation”, said Makhuduku Kgomotso Manchidi. He recalled when their lecturers explained that there is such an opportunity during their first year of study and this motivated many of them to work hard to be part of the selection. Manchidi said he was looking forward to meet new people, learn a new language, tasting different cuisines and also participate in sporting activities as he is a footballer.

Deacon Lefawane explained that he was caught with mixed emotions when he learned in November 2021 that they will be leaving for Sweden this year. “My expectations are already on another level because we started interacting with the University since January this year and I am looking forward to learn more about their style of teaching and learning. From what we have seen so far they do things differently and we are ready to explore more of their methods”, he said.

Deacon further said he believes they will adapt quickly as they are already familiar with some of the people they will be working with since the interactions started in January.

The Acting CEO of the Dental Hospital Dr Khanyi Makwakwa who is also the students' lecturer expressed joy in seeing them embarking on this journey. “I am very proud of the students and I urge them to be open to new experiences, learning and adventure. They must embrace this opportunity and make the most of it”, she said.

Lindi Rampa from student housing said when students go for outreach or extended training, be it overseas or locally, the treatment and exposure they get in relation to issues of community development is always gratifying.

“We encourage them to behave well, look after themselves and also take care of the patients they will be working with. They must represent SMU and upon their return, we expect that they will impart what they have learnt including on residence life so that they encourage other students here at home during the house talks”, concluded Rampa.

The selected students are all in their final year doing Bachelor of Oral Hygiene. The process of selection amongst other things required that they submit motivation letters stating why they should be given the opportunity supported by their academic records.



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Biology Senior Lecturer Receives TAU Fellowship

Biology Senior Lecturer, Dr Esmey Moema was recently awarded the Teaching Advancement at University (TAU) Fellowship. Focus on SMU Reporter interviewed Dr Moema to get the gist of the Programme objectives and how it will enhance her academic career.

Briefly, tell us what is the TAU fellowship all about?

Teaching Advancement at University (TAU) fellowships programme, as a component of the Department of Higher Education (DHET)'s National Framework for advancing academics as university educators, was first introduced in 2016. The purpose was to contribute to the transformation of Teaching and Learning in the higher education sector in South Africa. The programme is funded through the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP) as a collaborative project, and the participants are the academics that are nominated from public institutions of higher learning throughout South Africa. The nominated academics are expected to work collaboratively on several responsibilities and activities, with the main objective of solidifying the teaching and learning environment for both educators and learners, by firstly challenging the legacies of inequality from the past and advancing social justice in the learning environment.

Why are you interested in the TAU fellowship?

As an academic, there are three main strategic goals that one has to be actively involved in, namely, Teaching and Learning; Research; and Community engagement. TAU fellowships programme seeks to, among other aims, enhance teaching and learning in higher education, by developing the academics into scholars of note, leaders, mentors and trailblazers in their respective academic fields across the length and breadth of South Africa. I, therefore, seek growth in my academic journey,

and by being part of this prestigious programme, I am bound to achieve my goal.

What do you want to gain from the TAU fellowship?

It is said that learning is progressive; through networks that will be established from this programme, one should be able to gain knowledge from other colleagues or even pass knowledge to other colleagues from various institutions. Since one of the purposes of TAU fellowships is to develop academics into trailblazers in their respective fields, I believe that through collaborative brainstorming with other colleagues, one should be able to develop new ideas or even think of new ideas that will assist SMU to advance in one of its strategic goals – Teaching and Learning.

Most institutions of higher learning are now fostering collaborative learning to enhance the performance and effectiveness of learning and development within institutions, so I also believe that one will learn the importance of collaborative learning in an academic environment, through the TAU fellowships programme.

How do you plan to continue learning in your field?

In academia as my field: most institutions were mostly offering face-face/physical classes and assessments, but during the Covid-19 pandemic, mostly if not all, were forced to go fully online regarding theory and practical classes, as well as assessments. However, the new notion is blended/multimodal learning (i.e. using both face-face/physical and online learning platforms, considering the lesser burden Covid-19 now has on humanity, compared to when it first started. The online platform, I must confess, was relatively new to most of us, simply because we were somehow stuck with the old ways of delivering teaching and

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learning in an academic environment. But now, I fully support the multimodal platform for teaching and learning, as it is now in line with the 4th Industrial Revolution (4-IR) that the world is aiming at.

In the process of continuous learning in an academic field, one must learn to overcome the following issues that can impact the process of learning, especially in an online platform: 1) *Adaptability Struggle* – meaning, it may be difficult for learners who have not had any computer training to adapt to a digital way of studying compared to a traditional classroom setup; 2) *Technical Issues* – meaning, most learners may not have a strong internet connection like broadband hence this may cause connectivity problems; 3) *Computer Literacy* – meaning, many learners, especially those from the rural area, may lack computer operation skills due to lack of resources; 4) *Time Management* – meaning, a daily plan is very important to anyone who wants to achieve a specific goal; it is, therefore, important for learners to plan accordingly for their study time; and 5) *Self-Motivation* – meaning, online learning can be lonely at times because of lack of physical interaction. So as an academic/educator, one must learn to continue to take their learners through the processes of difficulty to make learning easier for them, and I believe that the TAU fellowships programme will set a platform for new ideas of dealing with the evolution of education in institutions of higher learning.

In Biology as my field: one should learn to use the pedagogical approaches in Biology, to foster critical thinking in undergraduate learners, and also to make them actively engaged in the subject. The approach should also be learner-centred, which is regarded as the best indicator of a successful curriculum, due to the implementation of active-learning strategies. Active learning strategies involve the application of the scientific methods to questions posed to learners so that at the end of the curriculum, learners can have improved problem-solving skills. Learning styles, such as *integrated lecture-lab* where learners do simulations/or watch videos, rather than having normal laboratory sessions (*e.g.* dissections), in the process, engaging learners more than a traditional class; and *enquiry-based exercises*, where learners must have gone through a traditional class with an educator during a specific period, then have tutorials addressing learning activities included in their study guides, to see if learners can apply the knowledge gained from the previous lecture(s).

TAU fellowships programme will, therefore, give me, as well as my colleagues from other institutions, an opportunity to share the challenges and successes in our various fields, so that I, as an individual, can also contribute towards advancing teaching and learning in my institution.

What are your postdoctoral research goals?

My specific field of interest is 1) Parasitology and 2) Aquaculture. With Parasitology, the main focus is on the morphological and molecular characterization of digenetic trematodes of both medical and veterinary importance, especially larval stages, in freshwater bodies that are proximal

to Tshwane Metropolitan. On the other hand, one of my MSc students is working on the project entitled “*Investigating gastrointestinal parasites found in the faeces of non-human primates from two zoological gardens in South Africa.*” This project will contribute towards fostering proper management to ensure the safety and protection of non-human primates, zookeepers and visitors at all costs.

As I have mentioned that my other field of interest is aquaculture, specifically on fish growth, since fish is regarded as the cheapest source of protein, especially in developing African countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, *etc.*, where there's a need to increase food production, because of the growing human populations. Two of my MSc students are working on projects such as “*the effects of water hardness on skeletal development and the rate of growth of three cichlid fish species*”; and “*the Impact of using raw and fermented manure on fish growth and microbial quality of water and fish*”. The successful completion of these two projects will contribute to the success of aquaculture and food production in South Africa.

Can you describe some of your main discoveries that resulted from your PhD research?

My PhD research project was brought about by the fact that, in previous research studies, only adult digenetic worms have mostly been studied and documented extensively, since they are fairly easy to classify based on their well-developed reproductive system, but their larval counterparts have not been given similar attention. Based on the reason stated above, then it was decided to combine the morphology and the molecular aspects of digenetic parasites, focusing mainly on the larval stages of these parasites. The intention was, not only to classify these organisms but also to establish the evolutionary relationships within this group of parasites.

Have you collaborated with other postdoctoral researchers? If so, can you describe the partnership?

Collaborations within SMU:

- a. Prof Chantelle Baker (Electron Microscopy Unit), for viewing the external ultra-structures of digenetic trematodes;
- b. Mr Johnny Rakgole (Department of Virology), for doing phylogenetic studies on digenetic trematodes.

Collaborations outside SMU:

- a. Dr Mamohale Chaisi (SANBI-ZOO, Pretoria), co-supervising the MSc Project;
- b. Dr Maphuti Ledwaba (SANBI-ZOO, Pretoria), collection and analysis of research samples;
- c. Ms Nozipho Khumalo (SANBI-ZOO, Pretoria), co-supervising the Honours project;
- d. Ms Veronica Phetla (SANBI-ZOO, Pretoria), phylogenetic studies of gastro-intestinal parasites of NHPs;
- e. Dr Arnold Kanengoni (Johannesburg Zoo), collection of research samples.

SMU Mathematics Postgraduate Workshop

In the early hours of a Monday morning on the 21st of February 2022, a Mathematics Workshop was held at the Maths department of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. Postgraduates in the field of Bachelor of Sciences in Mathematics were invited. At this event, they heard various speakers of note addressing them, who are well equipped in experience and knowledge regarding the journey they have embarked on.

We received a warm welcome from the Mathematics Head of Department (HOD) Dr Maggie Aphane who elaborated on the purpose of the workshop and what she hopes the students will have gained by the end of the workshop. "We are gunning for the best!" exclaimed Dr Aphane, "We want to produce the best and we will not settle for second best, and that is the reason for this workshop".

She went on to speak about the Math talks and conferences that the department has held over the years that have passed. She highlighted how the department has been working to give its learners the best possible tools to launch into the professional world. They have invited speakers from Unisa, UP, Benin, Greece, and Alabama University over the past years. Dr Aphane also spoke about the job opportunities available for BSc in Mathematics graduates; some of which include openings in the telecommunications industry, becoming a

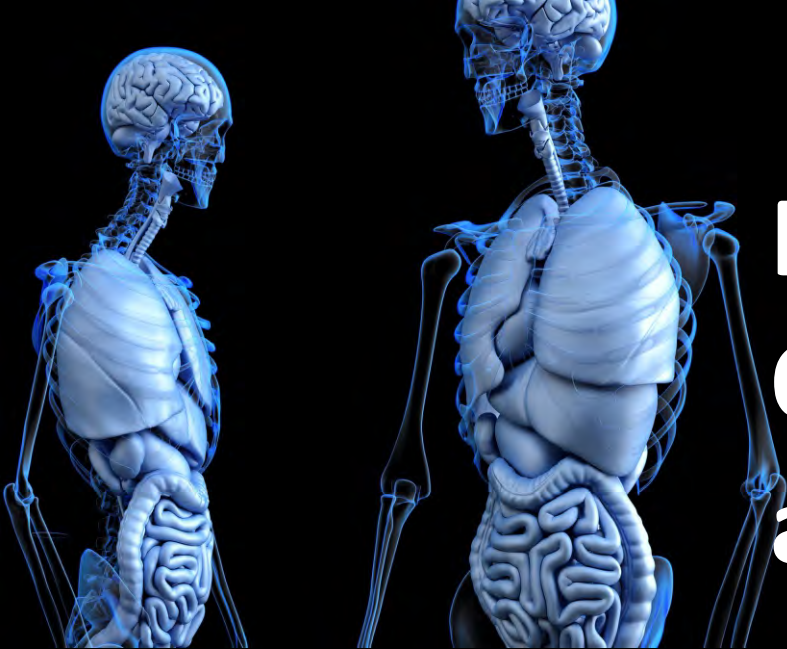
data analyst, working as a statistician, or even pouring back into the well that gave you water by joining the education sector and teaching others this great phenomenon.

In the quest to become the best, the Mathematical department of SMU has also been able to increase the number of publications of articles from 1 in 2019 upping them to 22 in 2020 and reaching a whopping 219 articles in 2021. The department is doing whatever it takes to produce the best Mathematicians in the country.

We had a chance to speak to a PhD (Mathematics) candidate Mr Howard Bokodisa, a lecturer of the subject who was also a speaker at this event. He expressed how he had been looking forward to the event and how he believes it will "empower students and individually cater for them". He also expanded on his journey as a BSc Maths student. He says he has had his "fair share of failure and success, but with persistence, the rewarding moments are worth it".

In her concluding remarks, Dr Aphane stated how most of the BSc Students are unaware of the countless opportunities that lie before them. She hopes the workshop provided sufficient information and knowledge for the students to make good career choices. The world is your oyster, it's up to you to find the pearls.





Picture: <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/anatomical-anatomy-body-gut-health-2261006/>

Focus on Organ Donation and Transplants

SMU together with the Transplant Education for Living Legacies (TELL) held an online session recently to create awareness about the importance of organ and tissue donation.

According to the information provided by TELL, South Africa is the only country in Africa that does transplant surgeries from deceased donors, however the country remains behind on a global level. This is attributed to amongst other things the lack of public education and a shortage of transplant coordinators and referrals by medical professionals.

Some of the challenges about organ donation in the country are that there is an inherent shortage of donors, the identification and referral of potential donors and that donor families have the final say.

The mission of TELL is to increase the number of organ and tissue transplants that occur in South Africa by providing transplant education to both the general public and medical sectors. The University and TELL are expected to hold further sessions to find ways of expanding awareness on organ donation and transplant.

More to follow on Focus on Schools.



VC Addresses the 2022 Salary Negotiating Parties

The salary negotiations of 2022 started with two unprecedented events: organized labour came together as a collective to negotiate on the salary negotiations, and the Vice-Chancellor Prof Peter Mbatia came to wish the parties well in the course of the challenging engagements ahead.

On 14 March 2022, the Vice Chancellor of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) joined the salary

negotiations meeting to wish the parties well in their deliberations. He acknowledged that the mere fact that he is at this gathering is because something is definitely happening at SMU; there is a sense of renewal and hope, and the 'winds of change' are ushering a new era. Whether from Council or Management or Organised Labour or SRC leadership, there is a new understanding of what needs to be done to "reclaim the soul" of our University, and a recognition that it is not business as usual, and the full realization that all the pivotal

stakeholders have a role to play to secure the future of the institution. This new interaction must be premised on, and guided by truth and even where *parties agree to disagree*, it must be on the basis of honesty and truth.

The VC is committed, together with his Management team, to the welfare of all SMU stakeholders, especially employees and students. To provide an environment where there is dignity and pride, and even as we get into these difficult negotiations, which are emotional by their very nature, there must be mutual respect based on a common goal to ensure the sustainability of SMU. While he cannot be involved in the actual talks, since if deadlock is reached, he needs to be the arbiter on issues before they go to Council, his role therefore was to wish all the parties well. At the same time, he reminded the parties that they cannot forget who we are? He responded by saying: *We are a University, producing the highest quality training, which is our primary focus, guided by the core function of teaching, learning, research & innovation, and supported by an administrative team. If we say we are a University, we need to have serious discussions in respect of the academic/admin ratio and the current skewing towards admin staff; understand the problems around structuring and aligning our vision to the need for more academics. Our South African university financing model is self-sustaining; your income must balance your expenditure, and the reality is that SMU is in a unique position as we cannot sustain our expenses; have a huge shortfall and we are close to a "fiscal cliff" since our fixed costs (salaries, and other support services" gobble close to 87% of our revenue, leaving Management with no room to prioritise other equally important activities such as much needed maintenance and gardening services.*

At this juncture, the Vice Chancellor further wished to reiterate serious concerns raised by the Finance and Investment

Committee of Council (FICC) in its meeting of the 10th of March 2022. The FICC were emphatic in their view that the current salary bill at 63% of total revenue as presented to the meeting was unsustainable and may need serious and "out of the box" interventions by Management in consultation with organised Labour. Costs such as overtime and part-time employees have become unsustainable and difficult to justify under the current funding regime.

He went on further to say that, *the question then arises: If we are not self-sustaining, whose problem is it to correct this anomaly? Is it the VC's, CFO's; ED: HR; Organised Labour or students? The truth of the matter is that it is all OUR problem (management, employees, labour, staff) and we need to form effective strategic partnerships to ensure that ten (10) to (20) years from now the University will still be able to open its doors for the next generation. We have a responsibility to uphold the SMU dream and not break it. We have to be more efficient in the uses of our human resources, and to do this we must have robust and honest conversations.*

In conclusion, he wished the parties well as they navigate the difficult salary negotiation space; recognizing that labour represents a constituency which wants a high increase; Management will present counter arguments, and somewhere in the middle, the parties need to meet each other. The University must continue to be a going concern, and must be sustainable and for this to happen, it will be because the parties took responsible decisions today. On this note, he thanked the Chairperson, Manager: ER for the invitation, and wished everybody good luck.

All parties thanked the VC for coming to wish them well.





BUSINESS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Gala Dinner

the SMU Vice-Chancellor,
Prof Peter Mbat

to a Business and Stakeholder Engagement Gala Dinner.

24 March 2022

🕒 18h00 - 20h00

📍 **Batter Boys Village, The Rose hall**
(32 Jeugd Road | Montana)

RSVP to Babalwa Luphondo
babalwa.luphondo@smu.ac.za

CENTRE FOR UNIVERSITY TEACHING & LEARNING
Teaching Development Unit

Presents the following Workshop:

TOPIC : PRIMARY HEALTH CARE (PHC) IN HEALTH SCIENCE EDUCATION

PRESENTER:

Prof Steve Reid

PHC Directorate, University of Cape Town



Prof Reid is a Family Physician from KwaZulu-Natal, who is the chair of Primary Health Care at the University of Cape Town. He has a background in rural health and holds a doctorate in education from UKZN. He has published extensively on health sciences education, human resources for health, systems for primary care and medical humanities. This seminar will address the question: "How can Primary Health Care best be integrated into health science curricula?" Using Community-Oriented Primary Care (COPC) as a framework, the seminar will cover the selection of students, pre-clinical training, clinical placements, community-based education as well as internship as leverage points for the implementation of PHC.

📅 **25 MARCH 2022**
Friday

🕒 **11:00 - 12:30**

🌐 [Click here to join the meeting](#)

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Department of Physiology Presents the following Workshop entitled:

Presentations from departments offering honours programmes for BSc Life Sciences & Occupational and Environmental health

📅 **Wednesday | 30 MARCH 2022**
🕒 **16:00**

🌐 **Blackboard**
<https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/7773de784ab3457fa11fe24a36b5ac39>

ITEM	PRESENTER	TIME
Introduction & business of the day	Prof Harold Majane	16:00 – 16:05 pm
Presentations by departments:		
Physiology	Prof Leon Hay	16:10 – 16:25 pm
Psychology	Dr Sorethe Beets	16:25 – 16:40 pm
Pharmacy	Prof Madan Poka	16:40 – 16:55 pm
Biology	Prof Piet King	16:55 – 17:10 pm
Biochemistry	Dr Stanley Gololo	17:10 – 17:25 pm
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS BY PRESENTING DEPARTMENTS		
Microbiology	Dr Marcelle Leroux	17:45 – 18:00 pm
Chemistry	Dr Bethusile Maseko	18:15 – 18:30 pm
Haematology	Prof Vanessa Moodley	18:30 – 18:45 pm
Virology	Prof Gloria Selabe	18:45 – 19:00 pm
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS BY PRESENTING DEPARTMENTS		
CLOSURE		19:20 pm