

Placing teaching and learning and research and innovation at the centre of the life of a University

Context

The National Development Plan (NDP) positions education, training and innovation as central to its overall goals. Whilst not a solution to all problems, teaching and learning and research and innovation are needed to solve societal challenges, eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. Higher education (HE) in this context is a major driver of the knowledge system which, then, provides a link to economic and social development. Therefore, universities are key to national development. They set norms and standards that underpin a nation's knowledge capital, and provide high-level skills. This reality, therefore, places the Academic Project at the centre of a university's business. This is important taking into consideration the provisions of the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE, 2001), which presents the following five key policy goals and strategic objectives which underpin the importance of Higher Education:

- To provide access to higher education to all irrespective of race, gender, age, creed, class or disability and to produce graduates with the skills and competencies necessary to meet the human resource needs of the country.
- To promote equity of access and to redress past inequalities through ensuring that the staff and student profiles in higher education progressively reflect the demographic realities of South African society.
- To ensure diversity in the organisational form and institutional landscape of the higher education system through mission and programme differentiation, thus enabling the addressing of regional and national needs in social and economic development.
- To build high-level research capacity to address the research and knowledge need of South Africa.
- To build new institutional and organisational forms and new institutional identities through regional collaboration between institutions.

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These goals drive the realisation of a national vision of a single, national and coordinated system. This envisaged coordinated system differentiates institutions in terms of their respective institutional identities and purposes, their missions and their programme offerings. It further aligns the respective institutional visions and missions with identified national and regional needs, sociocultural and economic development.

The envisaged system is supported by three mechanisms which are key to achieving policy goals and objectives. These mechanisms are *institutional planning processes*, the *funding framework* and the national *quality assurance* system. Through these mechanisms, the State is able to “steer” HE institutions and, in so doing, influence their compliance with national HE policy goals. What is evidently clear in this regard is that key national goals and the plan for higher education place the Academic Project at the centre of the life of any HE institution. Evidently, the above-mentioned goals further underline the role that Higher Education plays in society.

What does all these mean for Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)?

Indeed, the critical question that we should be asking each other relates to the relevance of all these to our University. If we are to be put on trial in relation to how we treat the Academic Project in line with the above-mentioned objectives, and its key drivers (academics and researchers), how would we fare? Have we placed this Project at the centre of our work? If asked about our role in supporting this Project, are we able to unequivocally answer in the affirmative? These are some of the hard questions which will require us to robustly and honestly engage with them. Are we ready to engage at that level?

It is a well-documented fact that we are the only University in the country which primarily specialises in health sciences education. At a national and possibly continental level, this places a huge responsibility on SMU to play a significant role in health sciences education. This responsibility must be understood taking into consideration the increased competition in the HE sector, with traditionally “non-medical” institutions venturing into the space of health sciences education, resulting in increasing competition to attract top students, academics and funding. Furthermore, the HE sector has been affected by the economic constraints, which present challenges with regard to institutional sustainability. In simple terms, if we do not step up, and place the Academic Project at the centre of SMU life, we run the risk of being overtaken by

competing institutions and becoming irrelevant. We dare not drop the ball!

What then can or should we do in this case?

A cursory broad look at how the university functions, immediately, points to the fact that support functions have assumed the central role. What does this mean? Universities tend to employ more support staff than academics. Support functions tend to project themselves as being more important and more strategic. Whilst they are important, their importance must be seen in the extent to which they support teaching and learning, and research and innovation. Furthermore, support functions in higher education institutions (HEIs) is regularly questioned by scholars in terms of costs and a perceived growing number of employees with support staff roles.

It therefore goes without saying that placing the Academic Project at the centre requires a change of culture within the institution. This could include, amongst other things, answering simple questions such as, the following:

- If I am in the support function, how much of the Academic Project do I understand?
- How does my role support the Academic Project?
- Do support staff have the consciousness to fashion their role in shaping of the support to gain legitimacy in relation to academics?

Placing the Academic project at the centre of the University's activities will require a deliberate effort and a culture change, Are we ready for such a change?

Finally

As the popular legend goes, during a tour of NASA headquarters in 1961, John F. Kennedy encountered a janitor mopping the floors. “Why are you working so late?” Kennedy asked. “Mr President,” the janitor responded, “I'm helping put a man on the moon.”

Whether I am in administration, infrastructure, cleaning, gardening, communication, sport, or whatever function I am hired to perform, am I able to take a leaf from the NASA janitor, and say “I am helping SMU to produce graduates who are able to contribute to national development”?

Let the conversation begin!

To see the list of publications from the Schools, please visit the SMU Intranet.

Intranet link: [Intranet - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)



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Towards a connected SMU: progress on the ICT network and infrastructure refresher projects

The Department of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is currently working on network and infrastructure estate refresher project for the entire University. The project consists of four distinct but interconnected sub projects, namely cabling, switching and routing, data centre establishment and server infrastructure.

Data Centre infrastructure: The project involves the transformation of a pre-determined space to datacentre qualifying level. This includes environmental control, upgrading the floors, ceilings, and doors of the building, installing a Huawei data centre pod with 8 racks, and the provision air conditioning, UPS, and connection of a generator. The project was successfully completed in the first quarter of 2021.



External and indoor cabling: Civil work for the project started on the 16th of August 2021, while building cabling started on the 9th of August 2021. The project includes the laying of 24km of new backbone fibre optic cable and installation of 10 000 new network points. The current progress on the project is 68% towards completion.

Servers, backups and storage: Significant progress has been made for the provision of servers, back-up and storage. Further progress is around the development of the logical architecture and planning of the Microsoft suite of server and client management software. Currently, training schedules for SMU engineers have been finalised and a project management committee has been established.

Switching and network equipment: With regard to switching and routing, SMU has signed off on Meraki design solution documentation and training schedules have been rolled out for SMU engineers, with the first set of training being set for May.

For both servers and switching, SMU are currently awaiting delivery of product shipped from abroad. The server project is scheduled for completion in 2022, while switching and routing will complete in the first half of 2023.

Keeping SMU connected!

Numolux/Sinovac delegates visited SMU to assess progress on the ongoing vaccine trial for children

The Numolux Sinovac delegates visited SMU recently to check progress at the Mecru site where a pilot study on vaccination of children is taking place. The primary objective of the study is to evaluate the efficacy of two doses of CoronaVac® against confirmed symptomatic COVID-19 cases in children and adolescents aged 6 months to 17 years. Efficacy will also be evaluated against hospitalization and severe COVID-19 cases.

The study has enrolled 14 000 children and adolescents across the world in various paediatric age group cohorts across 5 countries namely South Africa, Chile, Philippines, Malaysia and Kenya.

At the time of the visit MeCRU reported that 370 participants were enrolled at SMU as per the target given to the site. The

first cohort was recruited and enrolled from 10 September to 10 November 2021 with the second cohort completed between 09 February to 18 March 2022.

The site is currently busy with scheduled follow up visits for both cohorts that will end in November 2022 and March 2023 respectively.

Numolux Group (Pty) Ltd of Pretoria is the authorized representative in South Africa of SINOVAC Life Sciences Co., Ltd., a subsidiary of the SINOVAC Biotech Ltd. (“SINOVAC”) of Beijing, China.

SINOVAC and Numolux launched a Phase III paediatric COVID-19 vaccine study on the 10th September 2021, with the first child vaccinated here at SMU, Mecru Clinical Research Unit.





HPCSA Evaluate and Accredite the Bachelor of Occupational Therapy

The approval and recognition of the occupational therapy programme are accredited by Professional Board for Occupational Therapy, Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics, Art Therapy of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). The accreditation of the programme demonstrates the recognition of the academic and clinical quality of the Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (B.Occ.Ther) degree at SMU by the Professional Board. The implication of the accreditation of the academic programme indicates that graduates are eligible for registration with HPCSA. This is a legal requirement to practice the profession as an Occupational Therapist in South Africa. The accreditation of the SMU B.Occ.Ther programme by HPCSA leads to the approval of the programme by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists. We Focus on the Department of Occupational Therapy to get more understanding on the accreditation process of the B.Occ.Ther Degree. Professor Alfred Ramukumba HOD department of Occupational Therapy gave a detailed explanation of what transpired during the process.

What are the processes of evaluation for the Bachelor of Occupational Therapy degree?

The evaluation takes place every five years to determine whether the SMU B.Occ. Ther programme continues to meet the minimum standards of training for occupational therapists in South Africa. The steps of the process include the following:

- A. Self-evaluation by SMU Occupational Therapy Department to assess whether the programme meets the minimum standards of training for occupational therapists as stipulated by Criteria for Programme Accreditation of the HPCSA Board. The Self-evaluation report is submitted to the Board before the site visit by the evaluators appointed by HPCSA.
- B. The SMU Occupational Therapy Department put together curriculum and policy documents including:

- Curriculum documents: detailing the programme qualification mix (PQM), curriculum content and schedules.
 - Academic management: current governance system, student recruitment, selection and admission
 - Teaching and learning, clinical facilities information, assessment, quality assurance, human resources,
 - Consultation with relevant offices including Quality Assurance.
- C. Site visit planning includes:
The SMU Occupational Therapy Department prepared a schedule of activities that the evaluation panel undertook during the site visit. The activities include:
- Interviews with the Dean, HoD, academic staff and students.
 - Observation of the students' academic and clinical learning opportunities/activities.
 - Visits to clinical training facilities.
 - Visits to University teaching resources and facilities such as Library, Skills Labs and CUTL
 - Review of programme resources such as activities labs and assessment tools and equipment.
 - Review curriculum documentation.
 - The final meeting between the Occupational Therapy Department and evaluators.

What does professional accreditation of the Bachelor of Occupational Therapy degree mean to the department?

It is an honour for the Department to be granted professional

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accreditation in the Bachelor of Occupational Therapy programme. The Department is delighted to continue offering the Occupational Therapy programme aimed at educating SMU occupational therapy graduates to be professionally competent generalists who can address the needs of persons with occupational dysfunctions and needs at all levels of healthcare. We are convinced that our graduates are capable of translating theoretical knowledge into practice to serve individuals, groups and communities in a different practice settings.

How does it feel to consistently acquire the accreditation of the Bachelor of Occupational Therapy degree after every five years?

We feel excited and motivated to continue offering B. Occ. Ther programme. We undertake to continue reviewing the

curriculum to ensure that the programme remains relevant in addressing the health needs of the country. We regard producing graduates who uphold the highest standards of ethics as our call of duty. Notwithstanding challenges at SMU, the staff are dedicated and prepared to work tirelessly to ensure that learning and teaching outcomes remain remarkable.

What are the implications of failing the evaluation process?

Failure to meet the accreditation requirement could lead to a follow-up evaluation by the HPCSA Board with financial implications. It could lead to graduates not being permitted to register with the HPCSA. It could also lead to an extension of the duration of the programme.

Pharmacy lecturer shares her views on nGAP Lectureship



The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) is a prestigious programme under the Department of Higher Education and Training which involves the recruitment of highly capable scholars as new academics. nGAP seeks to accelerate the academic careers of individuals from designated groups by providing opportunities to acquire a postgraduate qualification (ideally at the doctoral level), within an overall programme that provides mentoring and support as appointees are inducted into all areas of academic life. The nGAP lecturer Dr Thokozile Mosiane who works under the School of Pharmacy shares her views on the nGAP lectureship and her research goals.

What do you want to gain from the nGAP lectureship?

I want the position to help me explore my teaching philosophy and help students think critically. I want to grow in the new areas of learning such as grant application writing and developing my teaching and presentation skills.

You are a natural achiever, how do you maintain your hunger for more success?

I am always looking for a challenge, the challenge might come in a book with 500 pages that I need to complete in 2 days or a task that seems impossible to complete.

How do you plan to continue learning in your field?

Reading, attending symposiums and being an active researcher.

What are your postdoctoral research goals?

To add and contribute to the universal body of knowledge by exploring and researching new ideas in Pharmacy Practice. To publish novel studies on Tuberculosis treatment in internationally acclaimed journals.

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

Anti-tuberculosis FDC products have been reported to be unstable in formulation due to chemical interactions between the drugs. It has been previously published that ethambutol catalyses the degradation of rifampicin and isoniazid in the formulation due to its reported hygroscopic nature. This is said to result in the loss of rifampicin potency upon storage. During a step-wise elimination experiment, we deduced that no interaction exists between isoniazid, pyrazinamide or ethambutol. Meaning that rifampicin is the drug interacting with any of the other three anti-TB drugs. This was further tested through microcalorimetry studies and it was identified that the incompatibility exists between isoniazid and rifampicin.

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

Not yet.



Front row (from left to right):

HOD, Dr Alex Dandadzi; Lecturer, Ms Ntsoka Mathiba; Lecturer, Mrs Mosima Masethe; and Lecturer, Dr Taurai Hungwe.

Back row (from left to right):

Computer Lab Technician, Mr Innocent Nkosi; Junior Lecturer and MSc student, Ms Vhulenda Sumbana; MSc student, Mr Ofentse Pholosi; MSc student, Ms Ronewa Mavhunga; MSc student, Mr Adivhaho Mufhe, MSc student, Ms Khathu Budeli; and Junior Lecturer and MSc student, Mr Siyabonga Masuku.

The other five MSc students could not make it for the photoshoot because of work commitments.

Computer Science Introduces New Postgraduate Programme

Programme Objective

The objective of the Master of Science (MSc) in Computer Science & Information Technology (CSIT) postgraduate programme is to train individuals and impart the research knowledge and skills necessary for solving real-world information technology problems by taking advantage of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

Structure of the programme

The Master of Science (MSc) qualification in CSIT is a research-based programme. The programme runs for a maximum of two (2) years. Candidates enrolled in the programme are expected to carry out independent research under supervision. At the end of the programme, the candidate is expected to:

- Publish one (1) Research article in the Department of Higher Education & Training (DHET) accredited journal, and
- Have completed and submitted a thesis that will be externally moderated.

Requirements for applications and enrolment

Applications for admission for both our postgraduate programmes (BSc Hons CSIT and MSc CSIT) are open to South African and international students. However, international students as well as South Africans with foreign qualifications must submit proof of evaluation of their qualifications by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). The Research and Internationalization Office handles all international students who are interested in studying at SMU. To be enrolled, the admitted applicant must hold a BSc Honours degree in CSIT or a related field with an average of at least 60%. In addition,

the candidate is required to have at least 65% in each of the following modules:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Database Systems
- Research

Career Opportunities

There are many career opportunities in Computer Science and Information Technology that permeate across all sectors including but not limited to banking, healthcare, education, insurance, ICT & telecommunication, government, commercial, and construction.

Job positions available to CSIT graduates include the following but are not limited to software developer, software designer, software tester, solution architecture, network engineer, network administrator, network engineer, database developer, database administrator, business analyst, systems analyst, data analyst, software configuration manager, project manager, educator, and researcher.

Comments from the Head of Department (HoD) and some of the students registered for MSc-CSIT

“The department is so excited to now reap from what it sowed. It took us years of hard work to get to where we are. As the department, this programme will certainly give birth to research culture, collaboration with relevant industries and other institutions of higher learning to grow our research output. Additionally, it will attract international students as well as professors with a proven research track record to join our department. The department would like to wish the

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programme's first cohort the best in their research journey." - Dr Alex Dandadzi, HoD of Computer Science.

"This is a great opportunity for me to further my studies in Computer Science and Information Technology at an institution that was previously known as Health/Medicine University. I'm quite honoured to be part of the 1st group of the MSc programme in CSIT at SMU." - Ms Ronewa Mavhunga

"The MSc Programme in CSIT would offer a great opportunity to individuals who wish to get more into Research in their future, and it's also great for those who wish to get into leadership roles without depending only on experience.

The programme would also assist individuals to explore more on how they can use Technology to better day-to-day activities and also find better ways of overcoming challenges that can be performed better when using Technology. It's also a good growth to the University itself since there's going to be more postgraduate students coming out of it." - Solly Mogashane.

"I feel very much honoured to be part of the selected students to undergo this huge milestone in their academic career. It is an opportunity that I see as a platform to showcase my skills and confidence in carrying out worthwhile Research and as a learning curve towards being a better Researcher under the wings of my Department." - Ofentse Pholosi.

Biology Lecturer Awarded Multiple Research Funding



SMU Biology Lecturer Dr Nqobile Mkolo was awarded multiple research funding as follows the SAMRC's Research Capacity Development initiative funding of R600 000 for three years (August 2021 – August 2024). The period of funding is five years comprising the first three-year period with a further extension of two years (R 400 000) contingent on satisfactory performance. FirstRand Foundation (FRF) partnership with NRF Black Academics Advancement Programme (BAAP) funding of R600 000 for two years (2022-2023). The award includes funds for the Faculty/Department to appoint a replacement lecturer for the period that the beneficiary is on sabbatical as well as running expenses for the actual research costs of the project. Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Research Development Grant

(RDG) funding- R500 000 for three years (2018-2020). Focus on SMU spoke to Dr Mkolo to get insight on her research projects.

Can you briefly describe your research and laboratory experience?

My current research focus areas and interest include Metabolomics, Proteomics, Molecular docking, Acarology and Anti-diabetic activities of drugs. I collaborated and worked in diverse related fields in multiple settings at the University of Pretoria (Para-clinical Sciences), Taconic Bioscience USA and Denmark (Jan 2018-Dec 2020), Biomedical Research Centre (UPBRC) (Jan 2018-Nov 2021), Bayworld (Feb 2019-Present), Centre for Proteomic and

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Genomic Research (CPGR) (June 2021-Present), University of South Africa (Jan 2016-Dec 2021), Agricultural Research Council (Jan 2020-Present), North-West University (Jan 2019-Present), Biofuels Business incubator (Jul 2021-Present), South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) (Jan 2019-Present), Wageningen University & Research, Netherlands and Tadulako University (UNTAD), Indonesia (March 2021-Present).

How do you manage to source funds for your research?

Grant funding is an essential part of any researcher's career, but effective grant management is a skill that is needed. Currently, I am managing different fundings with the help of the Sefako Makgatho Health Science University Research office, Human resource department and finance department. For me to manage the funding, firstly I make sure I understand the funding requirements, all research grants come with obligations for reporting and record-keeping. Before I spend a single rand, I make sure that I have a clear understanding of what types of expenses my grant funding is designed to cover.

Secondly, I do recordings of every penny spent, as some of us know grant management is not just about keeping your project on track. It is also about managing money. The simplest way to track my expenditures is to keep detailed records of every transaction. I normally, organize my expenses by budget category and check periodically to see how my spending compares with my expected expenses. Most importantly, I make sure I do not forget to keep multiple backups in case of electronic systems failure. Above all, I make sure that grant funds are managed separately from other money. Co-mingling finances with other projects is a sure path to failure. Lastly, I stay on track, funding organizations usually require periodic reports, thus I usually make sure they are submitted on time. I regularly review the status of my project and the budget, to ensure that I stay on track. Detailed tracking and record-keeping also help me to ensure compliance with complex grant requirements.

You are a serial achiever, how do you keep on winning?

Thank you for considering me as a serial achiever, one day I wish I can borrow you my life for one day maybe you will say thank you I am enough. Serial achievement does not lie principally in the achievement itself. It lies in the relentless mental push of the achiever to continue to race on thinning tires, to push through to the next obstacle, and the emotional unwillingness to take the risk.

I always thrive on climbing a new mountain every few months. My life is divided into two parts. I always focus on learning about myself and look at the "five fundamentals" of understanding my talent, achiever style and life patterns and making them work for me. Secondly, I work through the "seven behaviours" - taking responsibility, building relationships, embracing change, inviting opportunity, being passionate, being conscious and getting focused.

Can you tell us about a time when you learned something new at work in terms of research?

Funny enough you learn every day something new when you are doing research from my postgraduate students and colleagues. Recently, I just learned how to use DADA2 software from my MSc. postgraduate student (Mr Mphephu M.)

How would you assess your career so far?

I wish my team members and the students that I supervise can assess my career so that I can provide a better answer. Although it looks promising, what I can say is that 24 hours isn't enough for me.

What was the biggest challenge in your career so far and how did you overcome it?

When I was conducting the study on verification of the folkloric and anecdotal antidiabetic effects of Hypoxis hemerocallidea (Fisch, C.A. Mey. & Avé-Lall) and isolated, β -sitosterol using early-stage Type II spontaneous diabetic mutant BKS-Leprdb mice. The Type II spontaneous diabetic mutant BKS-Leprdb mice were bred at Taconic Bioscience USA and Denmark. The import of vet permits to South Africa was the biggest challenge since it took longer to get it and the Type II spontaneous diabetic mutant BKS-Leprdb mice were ageing. However, I knocked on every door of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in South Africa. I acknowledged Dr Alicia Cloete and Dr Gretna de Wit from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries South Africa for their assistance with the application of Import Vet. Permits. I also thank you to Mr Ruan from World Courier for making sure that the animals arrived safely in South Africa. Many thanks to Dr Emily Alimonti, Dr Ashely Hallenbeek and Dr Len Djurhuus from Taconic Biosciences Inc, USA and Denmark, for assisting me with the breeding and importation of the animals.

How did you improve as a pre-clinical scientist over the past years?

I am working with a great team locally and internationally. They assist me a lot in terms of my growth as scientist Prof Obi C.L., Prof. King P., Prof. Seheri M., Dr. Olaukun O.O., Dr. Iweriedor B.C., Dr. Zubair M.S., Prof. Vervoort J., Dr Bell L., Prof Naidoo V., Prof. Katarere D., Prof. Magano SR., Prof. Eloff J., Prof. Prinsloo E. and Dr. Alimonti E., Dr. Hallenbeek A. and Dr. Djurhuus L.

All of them say I have grown a lot and I am brave as a scientist. Even my first honours supervisor Prof. Coetzee M. may agree, I guess by judging my scientific writing skills.

Why are you interested in the research projects?

I just want to change the world and make it a better place.

What particular skills do you bring to the research projects?

The most fundamental skills I bring are: Project Management, Handling Budgets, Team Leading/Managing, Handling Data



Nurses celebrate International Nurses Day

The Department of Nursing Science joined the rest of the world in celebrating the International Nurses Day (IND). This day is celebrated on Florence Nightingale's birthday, which is on 12 May, each year. Nightingale is renowned for having founded the modern nursing profession. The theme for the 2022 IND celebration was "Nurses a Voice to lead - invest in Nursing and respect rights to secure global health."

Speaking at this event, attended by nursing staff and students, Prof Deliwe Phetlhu, the Head of the Department of Nursing Science, outlined the purpose of the event. She said the occasion was to celebrate and commemorate the birthday of Florence Nightingale. "The event was also held to acknowledge, appreciate nurses as pillars and the nervous system of the South Africa's health delivery system", she proclaimed.

Prof Phetlhu acknowledged Sister Diane Seale, a nurse who risked her life by approaching an armed patient who had shot three other patients at the Somerset Hospital in Cape Town and calmed him down to stop shooting. "By hugging him, she showed him compassion and that made him to stop shooting and submitted for sedation. She prevented any further loss of lives from the gun man's hand", said Prof Phetlhu.

She said Sister Seale exemplified nurses' resilience, calm and strength of character in the midst of life threatening situations. This strength of character was also put to the test in the worst of the COVID 19 pandemic, when nurses were at the frontlines in the war against COVID 19 and healed the sick.

The guest speaker Mr TM Magadze said, "the voice of nursing is never too small to matter and counts a lot in the health care

delivery system". He also mentioned that the treatment nurses receive at times drives them away from the profession or even makes nursing less appealing to many students.

Magadze also said that nurses are making progress as leaders including being at the helm of various institutions such as hospitals. He lamented the poor involvement of nurses in policy making within the public health space and urged them to speak for the benefit and welfare of patients.

"Nurses are often not acknowledged for role they play in ground breaking operations such as separation of Siamese twins. The surgeon is often celebrated and nurses who played a pivotal role in the operation are not appreciated", said Magadze.

He encouraged the nursing students play a role in research for the purpose of developing a critical repository of institutional memory of best practice for the benefit of patients. He further called upon the nurses to refrain from engaging in practice that brings the profession into disrepute.

Magadze's speech encouraged robust debates amongst attendees on the importance of nurses' voice being heard in the public health discourse. The audience agreed during debates that there is a need for nurses to raise their voices, contribute and also influence the formulation and practice of public health policy in the country.

The nurses also resolved to become the change that they needed to see in the profession and vowed to speak out against Gender Based Violence. They declared that the days of not asking questions are over and it is time to change the status quo.





Brightening the Faces of Children with the Gift of Smiles

The Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and Burns (DPRSB), brightened the lives of children who were born with Cleft Lip. This is a condition that results in failure of the mouth/lips to fuse during the early developmental stages in the womb, rendering the little faces of these children, unable to smile.

Cleft palate is also as a result of a failure of fusion of the roof of the mouth during developmental stages in the womb resulting in the nasal and oral cavity not being separated which will give rise to problems of feeding and growth, speech, and infections of the ear which may affect hearing, to mention a few.

“Cleft lip and cleft palate macroscopically/globally is more prevalent in the Asian population followed by Caucasians and lastly African population of which It is estimated that of 0.5 in 1000 live births, an African child will be born with either a cleft lip or palate deformity, said Dr Kenneth Segwapa, the Head of the DPRSB.

“With cleft lip deformities there is abnormal attachment of the lip muscles to the surrounding tissues and an obvious discontinuity of the upper lip, to correct this we use the child's native tissues to surgically realign and reconstruct the layers of the lips such that to ensure the child has a water-tight seal of the lips and a more aesthetically appealing upper lip and smile” continued Dr Segwapa.

He also said, “Cleft palate repair similarly follows the same principles as cleft lip repair as we also use native tissues in the

roof of the mouth to close the cleft palate and repair muscles of the palate which assist with speech formation, through various surgical techniques. This separates the oral cavity from the nasal cavity and allows for function of the muscles of the roof of the mouth which are important in speech formation”.

Fortunately, through surgical intervention this defect can be corrected. Dr Kenneth Segwapa and his team performed operations on fourteen children living with Cleft Lip. The operations successfully corrected their deformities and thereby changed their lives forever, during the Smile Week, in April 2022.

The 14 children were operated at the Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMHAH) and came from the various provinces of the country. The DPRSB has been supported, in this campaign to bring smiles to little faces of children by the Smile Foundation.

A Non-Profit Organisation (NPO), the Smile Foundation has been supporting the DPRSB for over 10 years. The support is in the form of availability of anaesthetic staff, if needed, purchase of books, journal subscription, registration for congresses, offering psychological and social work services to patients. SM also purchases equipment and consumables, donating to the burns unit as well as sponsoring operations for children with cleft lip/cleft palate and post burn deformities.



Meet Velencia Maupye – Manager of the Gender-Based Violence Unit

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a widespread problem in South Africa, with negative impacts particularly on women. Thus said SMU is not immune to GBV issues.

Ms Velencia Maupye was recently appointed to strategically account, lead and manage the GBV unit. She is the custodian, advocate and executor of relevant University policies and procedures relating to combatting GBV. Focus on SMU reporter spoke to Ms Maupye to know more about the GBV unit and its plans for the SMU community.

Briefly, who is Velencia Maupye?

I originated in the Limpopo Province in a place called Senwabarwana (also known as Bochum). I am a dedicated, passionate, and well-organised individual. I have more than 13 years of experience in Public Service. I started my career in the Limpopo Provincial Government where I worked as a Probation Officer, carrying out the work in the field of crime prevention, treatment of offenders, care and treatment of victims of crime, and working with families and communities. I then joined the National Government where I was appointed as an Assistant Director: Employee Wellness and Gender Mainstreaming, and later I was promoted to Gauteng Provincial Government where I worked as a Deputy Director: Gender Mainstreaming. My main responsibilities there included amongst others; coordinating and facilitating advocacy programmes in promoting gender sensitisation and responsiveness, stakeholder engagement, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) advocacy and policy formulation for gender responsiveness. I have participated in both the Provincial and National forums that oversee and implement the Gender Programmes in Government.

Explain to our readers, what does your job entail as the Manager of the Gender-Based Violence Unit?

My job includes but is not limited to providing strategic leadership on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) related issues on Campus; Representing the University at various University Meetings and providing regular reports about the GBV work to all relevant University Structures, including Senior Management and Sexual Harassment Committee; Engaging stakeholders regarding optimizing proactive and current GBV-related interventions; Managing a contemporary and accurate complaints database; Work collaboratively with the relevant Executive Management members to track GBV-related outcomes in their related areas. Managing GBV-related complaints and cases on behalf of the complainant; Contributing to functional policy development and review.

Does SMU have the Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) in place? How can the VEP assist the victims?

The University has counselling services available to support complainants and victims of GBV. To refer victims and complainants for psychosocial support, the GBV unit works in collaboration with the Universities' Employee Wellness Practitioner, Social Worker and Psychologist who provide emotional containment and trauma debriefing when needed. The VEP is designed to assist victims and survivors of crime and violence, including gender-based violence, in managing the aftermath of the incidents they have experienced.

Which issues can the Victims report?

The victim may report cases of sexual and gender-based violence to the GBV Unit.

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Do we have a Perpetrators' Rehabilitation Programme? How does it work?

No, we do not have.

How can SMU effectively address GBV, if there is no available data?

To address issues of GBV, the University has established a GBV Unit within SMU. This unit is the first port of call for cases of Gender-Based Violence, it further provides a safe and confidential space for complainants and victims of GBV to report cases and engages in advocacy programmes around GBV issues. Over and above this great initiative, we must ensure the safety of all students and staff by strengthening our awareness of GBV to prevent incidents from occurring within our institution. Furthermore, raising awareness about the University's policies concerning gender-based violence is of great importance. Awareness plays a central role in efforts to eradicate and remove the root causes of gender-based violence.

How can the impact of GBV programming be measured?

The engagement of stakeholders can be used to measure the impact of GBV programmes. This process will assist in ensuring that we are responding to the issues of GBV in our institution.

When are you embarking on roadshows to create awareness of the University's Sexual Harassment Policy?

We are in the process of embarking on roadshows to create awareness of the university's Sexual Harassment Policy. The awareness sessions will be continuous throughout.

Which communication platforms are you using to reach out to different university stakeholders?

The communication platform used to reach out to different stakeholders includes Emails, SMSes, newsletters, Campus Radio and other electronic forms of communication.

Educate our readers in terms of different types/forms of GBV that exist?

Forms of GBV may include but are not limited to:

- **Physical violence** - which involves hitting, biting, punching, shoving or any physical act of a person which results in physical harm to the other. This could even be done in such a way that marks are not left, or left on the body parts which are noted regularly.
- **Emotional, verbal and psychological violence** - these are any patterns of degrading or humiliating conduct towards another, including repeated insults, ridicule or name-calling; repeated threats to cause emotional pain; or the repeated exhibition of obsessive possessiveness or jealousy, such that it constitutes a serious invasion of privacy, liberty, integrity or security.
- **Sexual violence** - refers to the act of forcing someone because of their gender to participate in sexual activities. This can include rape, unwanted touching or groping, assault, harassment, forced marriage, forced prostitution or coercing someone to have sex with from the position of power.

- **Economic violence** - It is an action that causes economic harm to someone because of their gender. This can include withholding family finances, spending joint earned income without consent, or preventing someone from getting an education or earning their income.
- **Femicides** - It is the intentional murder of women and girls. It has become common that we hear on the news that women are been killed by the people they knew and trusted. The perpetrators gather information such as victims' daily routines, personal details and relationships to isolate them, cause harm or murder them.

How can one identify different types/forms of GBV?

Some of the GBV behavioural and psychological symptoms to look out for may include but are not limited to suicide attempts, overly sensitive, confusion, feeling depressed, hopelessness, anger, self-blame, fear and anxiety, being restless etc. It should be noted, however, that some forms of GBV are subtle and do not necessarily exhibit visible symptoms.

Is there any information that you feel our readers need to know?

Few safety tips from my side, I can say they must stay alert and be aware all the time. Always tell your friends about your whereabouts and have emergency contacts on speed dial in case you might need them. Restrict access to your personal information and be aware of your social media footprint – this information can be used by perpetrators to track your movements and your patterns.

Which key message would you like to share with our readers?

Gender-based violence (GBV) does not discriminate. Any person of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender can be a victim or perpetrator of GBV. If you know people who are trapped in the cycle of abuse, it is important to encourage them to get help before it is too late. GBV is a serious matter and cannot be used to settle scores. Let's embrace the SMU values by standing against GBV. Together, we will eliminate GBV.





SMU Plays host to the Annual General Meeting of SAUSSA

SMU Staff Sports (SMUSSA) recently hosted the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the 2022 Southern African Universities Staff Sports Association (SAUSSA). SAUSSA is an umbrella body to which university staff sports associations from Southern African Universities, affiliate. The AGM was attended by eight universities from Southern Africa.

Prof Peter Mbatlana, the Vice-Chancellor of SMU extended a word of welcome to delegates who had attended the AGM. Prof Mbatlana expressed his pleasure for the privilege to host the 2022 SAUSSA AGM, at SMU and wished them success in their deliberations.

He urged SMUSSA to expose the delegates from different universities to the hospitality of SMU and enable them to take to their various home countries good memories about the hospitality of SMU. He added that SMU premises is turning into a huge construction site as the construction on the 2000 student residences is underway. He also urged SMUSSA to take the delegates on tour of the campus to see the fabulous facilities of SMU.

The following were elected to the executive committee of Southern African Universities Staff Sports Association (SAUSSA) 2022.



Q&A

with nGap lecturer

Mohora Malebatja



Briefly, tell us why did you apply for the nGAP lectureship all about?

As a Master in Public Health Graduate, it has always been my desire to become an academic. I applied for the nGAP Lectureship because I love teaching, reading and learning new things. I aspire to become one of the best researchers in the occupational and environmental health sciences field. I am passionate about environmental and occupational health aspects that affect the health of our communities on daily basis. It has always been my dream to contribute positively to other people's lives and make a difference. I strongly believe that the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired through my studies, should be able to benefit other people in society. Through this lectureship, I will be able to fulfil my dream. I am truly honoured to be considered for this job, because teaching, sharing and transfer of skills to others, has always been my calling. I am doing what I love and most importantly, I value education hence I applied for this post, which will give me a perpetual opportunity to enhance my knowledge, and understanding of various scientific aspects through research and innovative technology.

What are the benefits of the nGAP lectureship?

The benefits of nGAP lectureship include participation in research studies at the doctoral level, being allowed to be mentored by well experienced and highly skilled leaders,

and well-recognized researchers who have contributed immensely to the body of scientific knowledge. It is quite a pleasure to draw a wealth of knowledge, skills, and wisdom from those who have long been in the field. nGAP lectureship gives young people the opportunity to be trained for academia. It is a great initiative aimed at empowering young people who are interested in academia, providing them with skills in teaching and learning, research and community engagement. It also offers one the privilege to participate in the Staffing South Africa's University's framework Programme.

How do you maintain your hunger for your personal career growth?

I set my own goals and benchmark myself with different academics that inspire me to want to grow in my career. I maintain my hunger for growth through enrolment in various short courses for public health and research, and attendance in occupational and environmental health science webinars, workshops and conferences. I read a minimum of 3 articles daily to enhance my knowledge. I aspire to be a great researcher and Lecturer shortly, who will make a positive contribution to the academia and as a result, make me more disciplined and hardworking towards my career growth. My mentors are also playing a huge role in encouraging me to grow in my career, through their guidance and support.

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What are your Public Health research goals?

I aim to be one of the best researchers focusing on occupational and environmental health aspects such as water and sanitation, water quality, climate change, waterborne diseases, medical waste disposal, occupational diseases, health risk assessments and food safety with more emphasis on Public health in the next 10 years. I aim to be able to supervise students in public health research in years to come. One of my biggest goals is to be able to participate in national and international public health studies that contribute to the improvement of the health of communities.

Surely you are passionate about public health, occupational hygiene, disease control and environmental health, what triggered the passion for that?

From a very young age, I always wanted to be a healthcare worker when I grow up. I love serving and helping people, which resulted in me studying public health. The rise in communicable and non-communicable diseases in recent years which led to various epidemics, endemics and pandemics resulting from environmental and occupational exposures has triggered my passion for disease control and prevention, occupational hygiene, and environmental health in Public Health. I have always been interested in knowing various disease patterns, trends, distribution, and causes through research, which triggered my passion for epidemiology and public health as a whole.

The main objectives of Public Health are to prevent disease, prolong life, and promote health through organized community efforts, what are our plans for the Public Health sector to prevent pandemics such as COVID-19?

Some of the plans to prevent pandemics such as COVID-

19 include a multi-sectoral approach to policy formation and development. Getting political buy-in from leaders in government and support from traditional leaders, on the implementation of public health strategies and programmes aimed at mitigating the spread of diseases such as COVID-19. Implementation of the six WHO building blocks indicators which include access to essential medicines, service delivery, access to health information, healthcare workforce, financing and governance. Other plans may include facilitation of health education and health promotion following Ottawa Charter actions plans, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of vaccination programmes for viruses such as COVID-19, Strengthening and enhancement of Public Health Surveillance, dissemination of preventative measures information through various platforms such as media, and Development of health and safety protocols. Another plan is for scientists, epidemiologists, clinicians, environmental health practitioners, and researchers to collaborate and work together as a team.

What message would you like to share with our readers as a Public Health Practitioner?

I would like to share with our readers that prevention is better than cure, to adhere to health and safety measures, visit healthcare facilities for regular medical check-ups and screenings. I would like to say to our readers; that eating healthy diets, physical activities and taking care of our mental wellness and well-being is of paramount importance to curb non-communicable and communicable diseases. In conclusion, your health is your wealth.





Upcoming

EVENTS




SMU Graduation Ceremonies

25 – 27 May 2022
 09h30 for 10h00 | University Sports Complex

You are cordially invited to attend one of the **SMU Graduation Ceremonies** on the following dates:

on **Wednesday, 25 May 2022**
 School of Science and Technology

Thursday, 26 May 2022
 School of Health Care Sciences and School of Pharmacy

Friday, 27 May 2022
 School of Medicine and School of Oral Health Sciences

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



SEFAKO MAKGATHO HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY



WWIS
WORKING INFORMATION SERVICES

LIVE WEBINAR

SMU RESEARCH SMARTER:

Using the Web of Science to kick start your next research project



The Library and Information Services in collaboration with Research Innovation Directorate invites you to a **Web of Science orientation** that will prepare you with the tips and tricks necessary to kick start your research journey.

In this session we will share how to successfully filter through an influx information and discover highly quality and reputable research content accredited by DHET.

19 MAY 2022  **10:00am (SAST)**

REGISTER NOW!

WHY SHOULD I ATTEND?

In this Webinar you will:

- Learn what citations are and their importance
- Learn how to set up alerts and export references
- Learn how to conduct effective searches for relevant results
- Learn how to unlock the power of citation indexing with a cited reference search

Further enquiries, please contact: Nomgcobo.ntsham@smu.ac.za
 Senior Librarian: Research and Scholarly Communication

AFRICA MONTH CELEBRATION

STAFF AND STUDENTS ARE INVITED TO JOIN ANY AFRICAN COUNTRY REPRESENTED BY STUDENTS FROM THE RESIDENCES.

 **Date: 19 - 20 May 2022**  **African Attire**

Day 1: 19 May 2022 - Dialogue | Time: 15h00 - 18h00 | Venue: Amphitheater | Dress Code: African Attire

Day 2: 20 May 2022 - Festival | Time: 10h00 - 19h00 | Venue: Student Cafeteria Square

We will be celebrating Music Festival in style featuring **Kabza de Small, Young Stunna, Daliwunga, Visca and Bontle Smith**

Walala Wazala Walala Wazala !!!!!

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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