

The Student Affairs Committee of Council visits Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital to see conditions under which SMU students conduct their clinical training



The Student Affairs Committee of Council led by its Chairperson Ms. Mmanare Mamabolo recently led a delegation on a tour of the Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital to get first-hand information about the experiences SMU students face when doing their clinical training at the facility.

The delegation comprised of other committee members, the Student Representative Council and staff from both the hospital and the University.

The first segment of the session started at the Vice-Chancellor's boardroom where the Chairperson Ms. Mamabolo addressed staff members from both SMU and the DGMAH and outlined the purpose of the visit. The Chair explained that it is often easy to go through reports that are presented to the Council, however a need arose that a physical inspection of the facilities was necessary so that the committee can fully brief Council on the conditions students work under and come up with ways of helping them.



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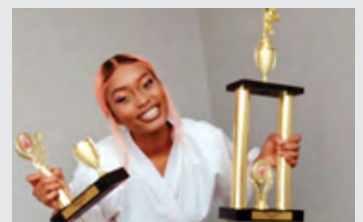
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“We can not only be receiving reports from our students about where they work but we have not seen what they are crying about” emphasized Ms Mamabolo.

The delegation was divided into three groups for the hospital walk-about. The first group which was hosted by Dr Matea visited Psychiatry, Emergency, OPD's Neurology, Pulmonology, Family Practice, Gynecology, MOPD and other related units. The second group which was led by Dr Adonis visited theatres, ICU, Spinal Unit, Cath Lab, all OPDs, Renal Unit and surgical ward. The third group which was led by Dr Sithole went to Medical, Pediatric and O&G wards; Nuclear Medicine; Clinical Pharmacology and Radiology.

Speaking following the tour of the facility, Ms Mamabolo said the teams observed that overcrowding was a challenge, the space where students operate and where they have to consult with patients was congested. She further said some doctors raised challenges of not having enough time to take students through everything as well as having the shortage of equipment.

The groups further observed and noted that the distance that students undertake in between their sessions is exhaustive and proposed that they need comfortable spaces such as tea rooms and where they need to relax, rest and reenergize as part of their wellness.

“The comments that we took from there is that as a university we need to assist with lecturers who can help doctors to teach the students as they may not have sufficient time”, said Mamabolo. The envisaged move will see lecturers partnering with the doctors for the benefit of the students.

The student representative council supported the proposal to have extra lecturers to assist the students at the hospital. They felt that this move will ensure that all students have the necessary clinical competencies upon completion of their training.

On a positive note, Dr Gutta from DGMAH reported that the hospital has made some strides and improvements in other areas such as having a state of the art PET scan at the Nuclear medicine unit that is used when something cannot be seen through the CT scans.

Mamabolo has since directed that all issues be consolidated and a full report be compiled to be tabled before the next meeting of Council with proposed and mitigating measures that the University can undertake to alleviate some of the challenges the students face while doing their clinicals. She concluded by saying that theirs is a Council that has a track record of delivery and will address the issues that were witnessed during the visit.



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Professor Peter Mbatlali conferred qualifications to graduates at a face to face ceremony held over a period of three days

SMU Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Mbatlali in his capacity as the Acting Chancellor conferred doctoral, masters, honours, undergraduate degrees, diplomas and higher certificates to 1440 graduates from 25 to 27 May 2022 at the University sports complex. Graduation day marks the culmination of years of hard work that institutions of higher learning and their students put in to ultimately attain their qualifications. This can be argued to be the defining moment in the lives of students as they prepare to put to practice what they have learnt and the knowledge acquired to contribute to communities.

Welcoming the parents, sponsors and well-wishers to the ceremonies Professor Patrick Demana, the Acting Vice-Chancellor during the formalities said the relaxation of the Covid-19 regulations made it possible for the university to organise face to face graduations ceremonies and enabled parents of graduates, spouses and sponsors to attend and witness the awarding of the qualifications. He called upon the graduates to take on the role of ambassadors of SMU with pride as the image of SMU rests on their shoulders.



Prof Demana said SMU, as a relatively young university, continues to make a significant contribution through its graduates to the country and beyond. He also lauded the university, under the inspiring leadership of Prof Mbatlali for steering it away from the ugly past practices and moving it towards a stage where the academic enterprise is central.

“You burnt the midnight oil and you made it. You made choices that will have an impact on your futures. Your experiences have altered your world views as many changes have occurred in your lives. As health professionals prepare yourself to make a difference in the lives of those you chose to serve”, said the Acting Vice-Chancellor.

He thanked the academic staff for their sterling work of guiding and teaching the students which culminated in their graduation. Through their resilience, in the midst of challenges of COVID-19, the graduates never gave up and they stayed focused and completed their study programmes.

Mr Linda Rojic, the President of Convocation delivered a congratulatory message to the graduates. He congratulated them for their achievements. Rojic said as alumni, the graduates constitute a critical mass of well trained professionals who were privileged to be admitted to study at SMU. He added that SMU is a university that continues to

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admit and offer young talents from rural areas of the country opportunities to study and graduate in health and science qualifications to go back serve the communities they come from.

Mr Philani Mdakane, the Student Representative Council (SRC) President, speaking on behalf of the SRC said the plan to bring about an image turnaround at SMU is well and truly underway and nothing will to stop it. He pinpointed the current calm and stability at SMU as enough proof that the student body is coming on board and are fully committed to contribute towards building SMU as a university where excellence reigns supreme.

The Deans of Schools were afforded an opportunity to congratulate those who were conferred with their qualifications. 16 Doctoral Degrees were awarded during the festivities.

SMU has five Schools:

- School of Health Care Sciences
- School of Medicine
- School of Oral Health Sciences
- School of Pharmacy
- School of Science and Technology





SMU Dietetics Lecturer Dr Suzan Mokone Develops Childhood Obesity Prevention Programme

Doctor of Philosophy in Dietetics **Suzan Mokone** is a lecturer at the Department of Human Nutrition & Dietetics. Dr Mokone is passionate about the community nutrition, and food system entailing production such as farming, food processing, packaging, transporting as well as consumption of food. She enjoys empowering others, transferring skills as well as making a nutritional difference in other people's lives. **Focus on SMU** reporter had a chat with the 2022 winter graduate to get insight on her research findings.

What is your PhD research all about and also share its findings?

The research title was 'The Development of a South African Based Childhood Obesity Prevention Programme for Children aged 2 to 5 years. The study was conducted in phases (baseline, intervention, and post-intervention) in three South African provinces: Gauteng, North West, and Limpopo. Baseline findings showed the prevalence of obesity among children aged 2-5 years. In addition, mothers and early childhood development (ECD) caregivers lacked knowledge about healthy eating, which influences the provision of nutritious meals for the children. The sixteen-week intervention included nutrition education and physical activity sessions. The post-intervention findings showed changes in the children's Body Mass Index (BMI) as well as improved nutritional knowledge of caregivers.

What are the main causes of obesity?

The main causes of obesity are the consumption of high-energy and sugary foods and a sedentary lifestyle.

What impact has your research made in the Dietetics field?

The research has developed an obesity prevention programme in a South African context based on the outcome of the baseline, intervention, and post-intervention data. The programme development is in line with evidence-based and theory-based strategies to prevent and manage childhood obesity in ECD centres. The developed programme is hoped to underpin strategies to encourage the promotion of healthy eating in the homes and ECD centres and prevent obesity at an earlier age. The study findings are fundamental to informing policy and developing effective obesity prevention programmes, especially for young children. The research has been presented at national scientific meetings among

peers, and a publication in an accredited journal resulted from the study.

What challenges did you encounter during your research journey? How would you go about motivating a researcher who is going through challenges?

I had challenges in my PhD journey, I have experienced both highs and lows, some days were smooth and some days I felt overwhelmed and felt like I would not make it, the task was too big for me. What assisted me was the support system I had, people who believed in me including my family, colleagues, supervisors, and friends who kept me going. I also applied my strengths (e.g. being focused, hardworking, motivated, determined etc) and also looking forward to my ultimate price-PhD graduation day assisted me to remain focused and resist the destruction. Breaking down tasks, having a studying schedule and committing to the study are also critical in completing the study.

Are the ECD centres implementing your recommendations?

Yes, some of the ECD centres are implementing the recommendations and were grateful for the programme.

Which nutritional guidelines can you share with our readers?

- Practising healthy food preparation methods such as grilling, boiling & steaming.
- Providing a variety of nutritiously balanced meals.
- Different food groups and the benefits of balanced meals.
- Frequency of meals and appropriate portion sizes for children.
- Offer mostly fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Serve only lean meats and legumes for protein sources.
- Reduce intake of saturated fats, salt and added sugar.
- Low-calorie snacks such as fruits and nuts.
- Drinking water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Hygiene and sanitation practices during and after food preparation.
- An increasing amount of time for children's physical activities (minimum of 60 minutes).
- Benefits of food gardening.

Dr Peta obtains Doctor of Philosophy in Medical Virology

With her research thesis titled “Downstream processing of antigens for the preparation of foot and mouth disease vaccines in the Republic of South Africa”, Dr Faith Masekgala Peta investigated the vaccine candidacy of five FMD virus strains responsible for the foot and mouth disease in the SADC region.

She developed scalable methods for commercial production and formulation of FMD vaccines based on contemporary FMD virus strains.

The vaccines were proved to be safe and efficacious in several species of cloven-hoofed animals. The results of her study will not only enable the preparation of more efficacious vaccines relevant to the local region but will also enable licensing of the vaccine for use as a livestock remedy in South Africa, and ultimately enable vaccine export to relevant African markets.

Dr Peta's research has been presented on numerous national and international conferences and was published in journals.

An interview with Dr Peta will follow in the next edition. She was supervised by Prof Mapaseka Seheri with Prof J Olowoyo as Co-Supervisor.



**The School
of Oral Health
would like
to celebrate
Dr Minnigio for
achieving
her PhD**

Dr HD. Minnigio completed the requirements for the Doctor in Philosophy Degree in Bioethics and Health Law at the University of the Witwatersrand, under the supervision of Prof CS. Wareham, at the Steve Biko Centre for Bioethics. The central aim of the PhD thesis was the development of an empirically informed, nuanced and practicable virtue ethics framework for modern anatomical pathology. This PhD thesis addresses the gaps in current literature by advancing a virtue ethics framework for a neglected practice and offers a tangible way of implementing virtues in the practice. This framework also serves as the initial basis for the development of virtuous anatomical pathologists, through virtue-based moral education.

Audiology Lecturer Obtains PhD in Audiology from UP



SMU Lecturer in Audiology and Audiology Line Manager, Dr Katerina Ehlert completed her PhD in Audiology from the University of Pretoria, titled '*Cochleotoxicity and vestibulotoxicity monitoring in patients receiving chemotherapy in South Africa*' for which she enrolled in 2018. In her study, she aimed to provide research-based recommendations for ototoxicity monitoring of platinum-based chemotherapy at the patient's treatment venue to improve access to services in low-and middle-income countries, like South Africa.

Results demonstrated that systematic monitoring for ototoxicity is not performed in either the private or the public oncology units. A novel approach to monitoring using mHealth audiometry was demonstrated to overcome some of the challenges in implementing an ototoxicity monitoring protocol, by testing at the patient's treatment venue. Using Health audiometry in ototoxicity surveillance could track

changes in hearing ability over time by employing baseline and exit testing. Video head impulse test can easily be performed at the patient's treatment venue; however, vestibular evoked myogenic potentials at the patient's treatment venue has proved to be logistically challenging and time-consuming when performed as part of a cochleotoxicity and vestibulo-toxicity monitoring programme. The study provides baseline information on the current practices and perceptions of ototoxicity monitoring in cancer patients to ensure the acceptance and success of ototoxicity surveillance and to ensure that early identification and intervention are possible.

Research findings were also presented at the Annual South African Speech-Language-Hearing Association virtual conference in October 2021 and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University Research Days in August 2021. The research led to two publications, and one submission in ISI accredited journals.

Dr Ehlert has clinical experience working for the Department of Health as well as in the private sector. She lectures and provides undergraduate clinical training in paediatric audiology and vestibular audiology. She supervises undergraduate and master's research projects. Katerina has published ten articles in peer-reviewed journals. Seven published articles in the field of ototoxicity, one in infection control, one publication regarding noise-induced hearing loss and an article regarding maternal views and knowledge regarding hearing loss.

After matriculating from the Lyttelton Manor High school in 1997, she studied BSc: in Biological and Agricultural Sciences from 1998-1999, obtained a B. in Communication Pathology in 2003 and M. Communication Pathology in Audiology in 2006. She completed her community service at Pretoria Academic Hospital and was subsequently employed as a junior Speech Therapist and Audiologist. From the end of 2005 till the beginning of 2007, she was employed as a senior Speech Therapist and Audiologist at Tshwane District Hospital and started that department. For the remainder of 2007, she was employed as a chief Speech Therapist and Audiologist at Doctor George Mukhari Academic Hospital. From 2007 to 2009 she was employed in the private sector by Impact Hearing Systems and Kind Hearing where she worked as a support audiologist and in private practice. She has been employed at SMU since September 2009.

Meet

Tshepo Mokoena –

a recipient of the Dean's Award from the School of Science and Technology



My name is Tshepo Mokoena, I was born and raised in the East Rand, Gauteng. I am the only child raised by a single mother and matriculated at Springs Boys' High School in 2016. I then took a gap year in 2017 after matric and started a Bachelor of Science in Life Sciences degree in 2018 at SMU. In 2020, I decided to switch streams from Life Sciences to Physical Sciences. This meant one had to redo the second year to cover a few Physical Sciences modules, hence it took me four years to complete this degree. Eventually, I graduated with a degree in Physical Sciences in 2021. In 2022, I was fortunate enough to be admitted to the Graduate Entry to Medical Programme (GEMP) at Wits University, which allows me to start my medical training at the third-year level.

My degree was conferred cum laude during the recent graduation ceremonies and I also received the Dean's Award from the School of Science and Technology.

On how he managed to win the 2021 Dean's Award in the SMU School of Science and Technology, Tshepo believes that the main thing that worked for him was asking for help. "Asking for help from my peers, seniors and even people outside SMU. Adding to that, I think I may have attended every extra class offered to BSc students from 2018-to 2021", he said. Tshepo cited surrounding himself with people who are focused and like-minded and who kept him accountable to his goals. He received a certificate and a plaque for winning the Dean's award.

When asked why he chose to pursue a qualification in Medicine, he said It has always been his dream to be a medical doctor. "All of my early childhood role models were doctors. How doctors carried themselves, the respect they commanded and their intellect, was what drew me to love this profession very early on in my childhood. My goal is to help people in low and middle-income communities live healthier and longer lives".

Receiving awards is not a new thing to him. "I won the academic consistency award in grade 7 and later received the

academic merit award/scholarship in my first year at SMU based on my matric results. I received the academic merit award/scholarship again in my final year (2021), based on my 2020 final results", said Tshepo.

He congratulated all the graduates of SMU Class of 2021, particularly those from the School of Science and Technology, as this was not an easy journey. "To current scholars, I would like to say, believe in yourself, take pride in how far you've come, never stop dreaming about how far you can go, and don't forget to enjoy the journey.

To echo what the famous late boxer Muhammad Ali said, "Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life a champion", he concluded.

Dr Simon Nkoane fulfils his childhood dream



Dr Simon Nkoane is a humble, down-to-earth, hardworking and principled person who always believes to get things deservedly. He never believes in depending on favours. The saying that goes 'Do not despise the small beginnings' motivated him to believe that he can do it regardless of where he comes from. He was born from an unprivileged family in Mohlaletse village, Ga-Sekhukhune in Limpopo province. However, that did not prevent him to make his dreams come true. When he was growing up he was inspired by the lives of teachers and hoped that one day he will become one, and thank God he became a lecturer. Currently, he is a senior lecturer in Statistics at the University of Limpopo (UL) teaching undergraduate students and supervising postgraduate students. This year, 2022 he graduated with his PhD degree from Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. *Focus on SMU reporter* spoke to Dr Nkoane to get insight into his PhD research.

Tell us about the research and its findings

My research PhD research is about developing robust statistical methods in Time Series Analysis. Robust methods come in (are introduced) when the data are contaminated with outliers. The presence of outliers in the data affects the parameter estimation and can lead to unreliable modelling and poor forecast. Forecasting is an important part of planning because it gives the ability to make an informed decision. It is therefore very important that the outliers are well managed in the analysis.

The standard methods such as Least Square, and Maximum Likelihood estimates, of estimating parameters in time series are coping in the presence of outliers. One method of dealing with outliers is to remove them before the analysis. In my research, we adopted the robust approach, whereby the robust methods (M-, MM- and GM-estimators) which were successfully applied in the Regression Analysis setting were applied in the Univariate Time Series setting. It was found that the performance of M-estimators seems to be not good, for this reason, we introduce GM- and MM-estimators to cope with the presence of AOs. Due to M-estimators' low breakdown points (BPs), it is advisable to consider the GM-estimators for nonstationary time series parameters contaminated with AOs. The consistency and asymptotic normality of GM estimators have been introduced.

The study showed that GM-estimators of ARIMA models under infinitesimal outlier contamination are consistent and asymptotically normal.

What impact has the research made on the Statistics field?

Robust methods in the time series setting have not widely been used in the literature. Most often, the removal of the outliers approach is adopted to deal with outliers. The approach is adopted because the standard methods do not cope with the outliers. There is a need to keep the outliers and study them as they may contain important information. My research showed that the issue of outliers in time series can be better captured by robust estimators.

How did you balance your time for research, supervision and lecturing?

To be precise, it was about these three points: prioritising, sacrificing and time management. One would recall that "Teaching and Learning", Research, and Community Engagement are the three pillars of any academic institution and we are always expected to align ourselves with them. The research itself demands a lot of your time especially when you are working at the same time as being a student, and you will need to put other stuff on hold and make sure the time you spend studying is well spent. During the working hours, you are busy with the supervision of students and teaching staff (that includes marking scripts, preparing lecture notes and all these administration duties). There was never any free time, but I would have to find time for juggling my studies and work. On the sacrificing part, at some stages, I would sleep in the office. Time management was always a key factor during my studies; I was able to divide my work accordingly.

Which challenges did you encounter during your PhD journey?

Generally studying while you are working is one of the challenges that one would encounter during the PhD journey. You will need to know how to balance your time. The journey can sometimes be stressful, as you are expected to find new ideas or solutions that have not been discovered and that it may take time to achieve that goal. Sometimes you might even feel frustrated, discouraged, and stuck. At this point, it is where I would motivate myself, and work on my self-confidence. A recent challenge was a Covid-19 pandemic since we were unable to move around and do things online. At some stages, you need to have a face-to-face consultation with your supervisor and during this time it was not possible. To overcome all these I told myself that I have finished what I started against all odds, and indeed it was not easy. I thank God by his grace I made it at the end.

Gauteng government commemorates International Day against Drug abuse and illicit trafficking at SMU



SMU played host to the Gauteng Department of Social Development during the commemoration of the International Day against Drug Abuse and illicit trafficking on 26 June 2022. This day has been declared by the United Nations with a purpose to mobilise the world communities to fight the scourge of drug abuse.

An impressive array of speakers and entertainers headlined the event. Mr Khulekani Cilli, a gospel singer and a former alcohol addict who has since kicked the addiction, sang inspirational gospel songs while also encouraging those who attended to emulate his example of being sober. He revealed during the occasion that he lost two houses and three cars as a result of substance abuse. The KeMoja group also performed a play and recited poetry during the event.

Speaking in his capacity as the Councillor of Ward 31, where SMU is located, Councillor Tshepo Kgatle appealed to the community to change their attitude towards drug addicts and view them as people suffering from substance abuse disorder and not criminals.

Giving a welcoming address on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, SMU Chief Operating Officer Mr Mfanfikile Sibanyoni told attendees that the University as an institution that primarily, specialises in health sciences education is confronted by the challenge of illicit drugs both, in its research activities and in practice. "We find ourselves having to deal with the trauma and many after effects of drugs- from people across the spectrum", said Sibanyoni.

"Drug abuse is a major social problem with significant impacts on both the social and economic aspects of any country and the world. The flip side of the technological advancements that we witness today is that they also enable trading in illicit drugs. As an institution of higher learning, we have a responsibility to use our expertise and the technology, at our disposal, in the fight against this scourge. Given the magnitude of the problem, we acknowledge that we cannot do this alone. Equally, we acknowledge that government on its own cannot successfully deal with this problem. Collaborations such as demonstrated by this occasion provide a platform



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and the sharing of resources which will enable us to do more with less”, emphasised the COO.

Ms Desary Carlinsky, the Acting Director, Abuse Prevention Treatment and Rehabilitation said “the change we want to see, in the war against substance abuse, starts with ourselves, as a community”. She said she came to SMU to commemorate the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and to form lasting partnerships and networks with all service delivery partners in addressing drug challenges.

Dr Moliehi Matlala, the Acting Dean, School of Pharmacy, said participating in the commemoration event is part of the School of Pharmacy's community engagement programme. She added that illicit drugs are not the only problem, even medication such as Codeine and Tramadol in the hands of school kids, end up being used as drugs and in time become gateway drugs towards illicit drugs.

Ms Dereleen James, a Central Drug Authority member, shared with the audience her experiences of her son who overcame drug addiction and has been clean for six years. She called upon the community to close ranks and work together because substance abuse disorders do not discriminate as they happen to the best among the community.

Prof Kebogile Mokwena, the NRF Research Chair: Substance Abuse and Population Health, said “as a society, we

are responsible to look after those among us who are vulnerable. Nyaope addiction cannot be treated in the same old way as alcohol addiction has been treated, in the past. There is a need to embark on evidence based ways of treating this disorder”. She challenged Gauteng Social Development to open their doors for partnership to enable her and other researchers to access funding to conduct research which will benefit the society and address the scourge of drug abuse disorder.

Delivering a keynote address on behalf of the provincial government, Deputy Director General at the department of Social Development Mr Onkemetse Kabasia said there must never be a time to retreat and everyday should be declared to fight substance abuse. “When we are sleeping, drug lords and peddlers are hard at work”, he said. Kabasia also mentioned that a trend has emerged where criminals are targeting students from the primary school level up to tertiary institutions to avail drugs to them and in the process destroying the hopes and aspirations of the future of the country.

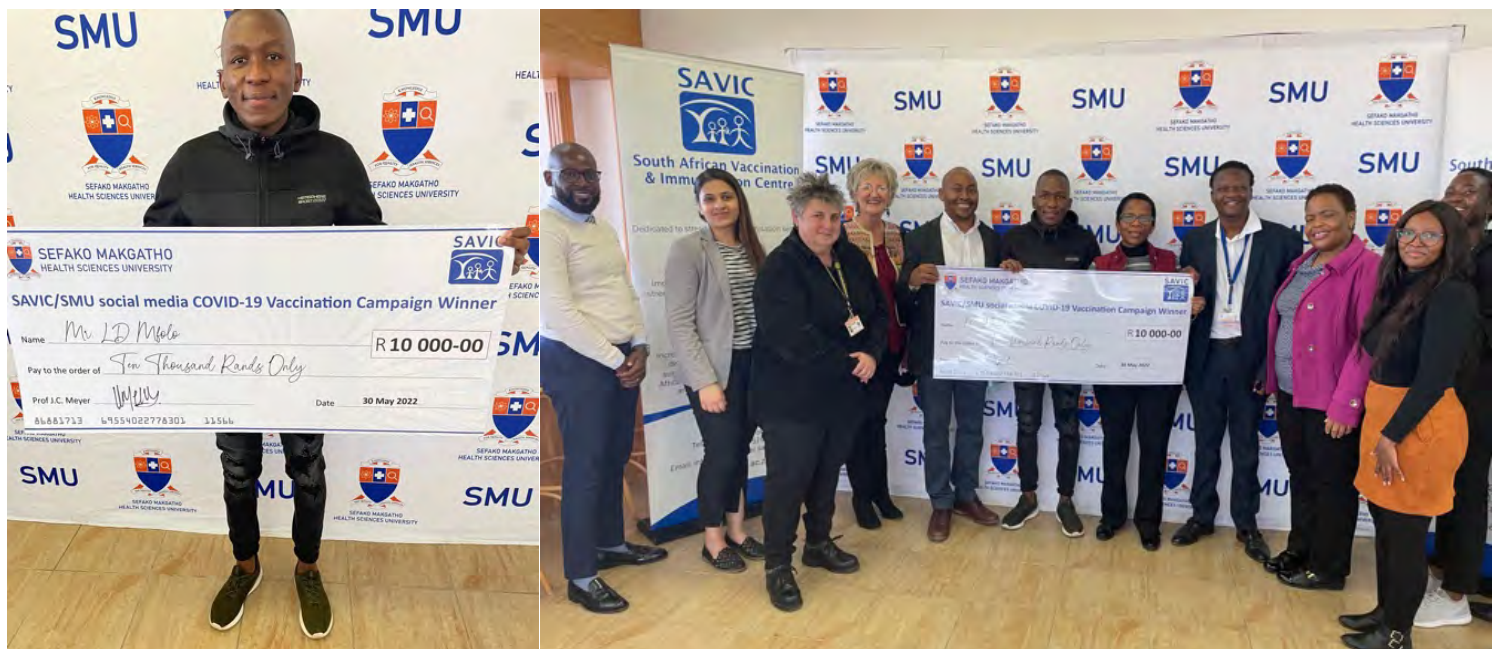
“We continue to make significant strides in fighting drug and substance abuse through programmes such as 'Ke Moja', I am fine with drugs. He encouraged those who are facing substance abuse challenges to check themselves in their nearest facility as government has availed resources to help those in need. He further said that on average, 40 000 people are treated yearly and the department is committed to reaching its target of treating 8 million people by 2024.

This day is supported by governments, organisations, communities and individuals all over the world, to promote the awareness of dangers associated with illicit drugs. This day enables different communities to create awareness's of illicit drug trade, drug smuggling and illicit tobacco consumption, because the communities at local level, are in the battle against alcohol tobacco and other drugs.

The Gauteng City Region Anti-Substance Abuse Strategy 2020 – 2025 prioritises services to young people and especially Institutions of Higher Learning. The implementation plan is geared to the:

Development and implementation of Prevention and awareness programme;

- Capacity building initiatives
- Development of extra-curricular programmes that cultivate and promote social cohesion.



Donovan Mfolo wins the SAVIC COVID-19 Vaccination competition

The South African Vaccination and Immunisation Centre (SAVIC) at SMU announced Mr Donovan Mfolo as the winner of its coveted R10 000 social media campaign competition. Concerned about the low uptake of COVID-19 vaccine on the part of young adults, SAVIC took proactive steps to promote the virtues of taking up COVID-19 vaccination by those who were not inoculated and to expedite the country's recovery from the pandemic.

The competition which targeted youth below the age of 34 became very popular and reached a total of 1464 entries from a number of universities across South Africa. The winner was selected randomly through an automated system.

Only registered and fully vaccinated students were eligible to participate in the competition. The winner's vaccination status and university registration were confirmed respectively through the National Department of Health's Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS) and the relevant university.

Acting DVC: Academic and Research Prof Patrick Demana mentioned during the handover ceremony that when the COVID-19 pandemic started in 2020, the vast majority of the global population was clamouring for a vaccine. "Scientists and public health professionals were hopeful that when a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine became available, vaccine hesitancy would disappear, global vaccination uptake would sky-rocket,

and the pandemic would soon become a thing of the past. Unfortunately, we could not have been further from the truth", said Demana.

Prof Demana said that SAVIC and SMU heartily congratulated Donovan for believing in science, and playing his part in increasing the COVID-19 vaccination uptake amongst the South African youth. Demana expressed his hope that Mfolo's winning of the prize will inspire him to continue advocating for vaccination and in building the health and prosperity of the country.

Speaking at the ceremony to award the prize to Mfolo, Prof Hannelie Meyer, Head of SAVIC thanked him for playing his part in helping to end the COVID-19 pandemic, as a young person living in South Africa. "Mr Mfolo, congratulations on being a COVID-19 vaccine hero, and a role model for your peers. It is young people such as yourself, who are helping to win back the future, by contributing towards a healthy, safe environment for all South Africans", said Prof Meyer.

Mfolo had this to say about winning the competition, "I made multiple entries so that I could win this prize, as I needed the money desperately for my studies. I will put the money to good use", said a delighted Mr Mfolo. The winner is a BSc graduate from SMU and currently studying Radiography at the University of Johannesburg (UJ).



SMU held a Research Retreat to equip postgraduate students with writing skills

The Research and Innovation Directorate recently organised the thesis and dissertation writing retreat for SMU staff and postgraduate students (Masters and Doctoral students) to facilitate completion of their studies. Twenty students, from all five schools were assembled in the conference facility at the Hotel@Hafield, away from the distractions of campus life and focus on 'writing' their dissertations, as master's or theses as PhD students for four days. The retreat was facilitated by Prof Mapaseka Seheri, the Director of Research and Innovation along with Dr Edwin Seleka, the Head of the Department of English Language and Prof Carina Eksteen, a Research fellow and a physiotherapist.

“The writing retreat was convened to equip the participants with dissertation and thesis writing skills. The postgraduate students were guided and supported to understand how they should write the different sections of the dissertation or thesis, their own role in terms of reading the appropriate existing literature, the style of writing, how to write coherently and formulate their arguments. The main reason behind the research retreat was to increase postgraduate throughput.

As the University has been struggling with relatively low postgraduate throughput; therefore, we have set aside time to be at the retreat to enable the students to focus solely on dissertation and thesis writing” said Prof Seheri.

Hosting the writing retreat and empowering the students with finer tricks of dissertation and thesis writing, the Research and Innovation Directorate contributes towards building research capacity to improve SMU's postgraduate value chain and key performance indicators of postgraduate success, including, but not limited to enhancing research outputs (student throughputs, publications & innovation) and equity profiles of postgraduates.

Dr Edwin Seleka's contribution at the retreat was to empower the students with language proficiency that is relevant for academic writing. Scientific writing in research dissertations/thesis, requires specific skills and differs from everyday

usage of language in that one is writing for an audience that does not have the privilege to ask clarity-seeking questions.

“The workshop sought to raise students' awareness with regard to making sense to an absent audience” said Dr Seleka.

Prof Carina Eksteen, also played a facilitating role in the retreat. She was at hand to guide the students with generic ideas on how to structure their dissertation and thesis, as well as being the sounding board for the students who wanted to discuss aspects of their work individually, such as developing a research model based on their research, or to discuss writing up a discussion. She shared her experience on how to publish articles and assisted some in planning to conduct their literature search.

“I learnt quite a lot at the retreat. I wish the Directorate can conduct such workshops frequently. Because at the workshop I was not only exposed to the expertise of the facilitators, on thesis writing, but I was also able to exchange notes with peers, from other disciplines and from other schools”, said Ms Tsakane Rasokanya, a PhD student, who is also a lecturer in the Department of Pharmacology, in the School of Medicine.

Mr Abongile Bele, a physics lecturer and a PhD candidate is grateful the retreat was organised off campus as it afforded him an opportunity to focus on his draft thesis, away from the distractions on campus. Mr Bele believes the guidance from the research experts on the format of the manuscript was helpful and will go a long way to enable him to deliver his thesis by end of the year.

“In compiling their dissertations and theses the students are working within strict time frames. From July 2022, the facilitators will begin to monitor the participants' progress so that they can submit their dissertations and theses by September 2022, in time for the successful ones to graduate in 2023”, said Mrs Fulufhelo Malamatshe, Research Capacity Development Coordinator.

New and modern traffic barriers installed at Campus access gates

Security services has modernized the traffic barriers on campus as part of improving security measures and access control. The new improvements have been made at the Main Gate, Gate 1 (Dorothea Gate) and Gate 6 (Ga-Rankuwa Gate), bringing to an end the use of the old models which have been in place for close to 10 years.

The new version not only has a more modern look, but further enhances the visibility of access from far as the green and red lights are not on the box only, but on the poles as well. The modern devices are also backed up by battery to mitigate the effects of load shedding and will keep them operational even during normal power failure occurrences. The installations will in future be made at the vehicle parking bays.

The next phase of the project will involve facial and number plate recognition cameras to be deployed at strategic places on campus. The cameras are able to recognize certain images and can also be used in a proactive manner to distinguish between authorized and unauthorized persons and alert the security personnel in the Control Room.

The university will in future also introduce facial recognition measures for access control. Such measures will help eliminate the current situation where access control cards are exchanged and passed around for people to gain access to certain points.

According to security services, all these efforts are also introduced to integrate multiple security modules into a single management system where the different modules will 'talk' to each other thus making tracking, tracing and preventative security a reality.



Focus on SMU Sports



The SMU Woman football club has won the 2022 Matthews Mpete Champions defeating Masakeng Highlanders, Flying Hawks and GA-Rankuwa Shining Stars recently with one of their players Tshegofatso “China” Lefutswe winning the player of the tournament award. The team's newly appointed coach, Thabo Moselane has been hard at work to prepare them by ensuring that they put additional time on training.

The Men football club won the Ga-Rankuwa Local Football Association League (GALFA) Championships giving them an opportunity to play with other Tshwane LFA league winners to qualify them for the SAFA's fourth tier, the 3rd Division League.

Meanwhile the SMU Karate Club will be taking part in the Upcoming SHINKYOKUSHINKAI National Tournament that will take place on 2 July 2022 at TUT-Soshanguve Campus after competing in their first provincial tournament on Saturday, 21 May 2022.

The following SMU Karate Club members have been selected to represent Gauteng Province:

Paballo Kobe: Women under 55kg division



Amogelang Buny: Women under 60kg division



Tebogo Nare: Men under 70kg division



Innocent Zikhali: Men under 80kg division



Amogelang and Innocent have been named the team captains of Team Gauteng for the upcoming Shinkyokshin Karate National Championships.