



Introducing Prof Tandi Matsha – Erasmus the new DVC Academic and Research

SMU has recently appointed Professor Tandi Matsha-Erasmus as Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Research. Matsha – Erasmus is a National Research Foundation (NRF) rated Researcher and a seasoned academic who is well respected by her peers. She holds a PhD in Medical Biochemistry and is the Founding Director of the South African Medical Research Council Cardiometabolic Health Research Unit at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology where she was before joining SMU.

Professor Tandi Matsha-Erasmus was born in Port Elizabeth, now Gqeberha and her early years were in Tsitsikama where her family hails from. In 1976 due to forced removals, her family then moved to King William's Town where she did her early primary and later attended boarding schools in the former Transkei until she finished her matric. "From there I went to an international school in Lesotho where I did international baccalaureate. I then went back to PE and got my first tertiary qualification as a medical technologist at what is now known as Nelson Mandela University. Then went to UCT to pursue a Master's Degree which was upgraded to a PHD in 2003", she said.

Her professional journey started at the Walter Sisulu University and this shaped her career into academia. She later joined Stellenbosch University in 2004 to 2006 and went to the then Cape Tech which is now Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) where she spent 15 years before coming to SMU.

Prof Matsha – Erasmus sees SMU as a beautiful university full of potential. When asked how she will cope since the University collapsed the two positions of DVC into one following the approval of the new structure, she emphasized that she is aware that the new position of DVC she occupies is demanding and also had a concern about this. "I asked a question at the interview why this was the case, I was however told that the size of the University determined combining the position. I was also informed that there are Directors of Research and the Centre for University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) and these functions will take the burden away. For now, if things get to the point where further assistance is required, one will indicate", she explained.

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“I am not so worried about Research because I like it. I have published over 150 papers and was a Research Chair before taking the position at SMU wherein a lot of work was undertaken on a variety of areas. Teaching and learning can be quite a lot of work. However, I have been assured of support from the University”.

Since she is fairly new at SMU, her immediate priority is to understand the environment and how things are done and will determine how to improve moving forward. The Vice-Chancellor has already asked her to also focus on issues of third stream income.

In order to boost the University's research efforts, she believes that there has to be incentives for doing research and time allocated. “We should have programmes for early, mid-career and established researchers. We must have programmes that support them. For instance, an early career researcher may find it difficult to source external grants for their research. We may need to have some seed funding. Whatever it is done to try and promote research must have an outcome. The other thing is to promote international collaborations”, emphasised Prof Matsha-Erasmus.

She also believes that SMU should have a formalized mentorship programme in place that should constantly be reviewed as this will go a long way in helping both academic and support staff.

In terms of the future sustainability of the University, she acknowledges that health sciences courses are generally expensive and the SMU fees structure is a bit low compared to others and this may have an impact. She cautioned the University to also spend resources carefully and make savings where possible and avoid duplications in certain areas.

Prof Matsha - Erasmus is married with 3 children. Her family did not join her in Gauteng, however, her eldest daughter works in the province and they get to see each other. She generally likes socializing and being with people. 🔍

Editorial Team

Dr Lusani Rabelani
Netshitomboni
Editor in Chief

Phaladi Seakgwe
Editor

Dineo Motshegare
Graphic Designer

Tumelo Moila
Writer

Maditsi Matlala
Writer

Golokile Lebelo
Intern

Thelma Mohlala
Intern

CONTACT US

E-mail: phaladi.seakgwe@smu.ac.za

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
Molotlegi Road | Ga-Rankuwa | Pretoria 0204





Prof Zach Koto

is the new President
of Association of Surgeons
of South Africa
(ASSA)

Prof Zach Koto, Head of Surgery at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, was recently elected as the President of the Association of Surgeons of South Africa (ASSA). He wants to see ASSA grow to a point where it also mentors young surgeons apart from looking at the affairs of surgeons in the country. Under his capable leadership, he hopes to see the association address many pressing challenges that include amongst others training, inadequate funding for training posts in public hospitals, equipment issues and the disease burden that threaten to overrun surgical programmes across various training platforms. Prof Koto is an ordinary individual who likes to work hard, challenge himself continuously to be a better version of himself. Focus on SMU reporter caught up with him to get insight into his role as the president of the association.

His thoughts on taking up the role of President.

“I have previously served in the executive committee as a representative from academic centres as head of the department, I served in various capacities for many years in the association and I think for colleagues to have confidence in me and elect me as president is indeed an honour and privilege. It is an association that organises surgeons across the width and breath of South Africa and does many things in terms of surgical care and training. I am looking forward to working with a very able executive committee under the chairmanship of Prof Paul Goldberg, Secretary Dr Claire Warden, and treasurer, Dr Mbulelo Khenene. I'm looking forward to working and serving as the president of the association,” said Prof Koto.

What is the criteria used to elect the President of ASSA?

One to be appointed as the president of the association you must be one of the seniors and have an established track record as a leader in the field of surgery. You must be experienced and have the potential to steer the association in the right direction. Currently, the association has many challenges because we just emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic and need to reorganise the surgical fraternity and move forward. This came at the right time because of the kind of energy I have to steer the association in the right direction.

What is your leadership style?

There are a lot of challenges in what I do, and I think it needs a lot of dedication. I derive a lot of pleasure and a lot of happiness in involving myself in the affairs of surgery because I love surgery and everything that has to do with it makes me happy. I look at surgery from where we come from as a country in terms of the democratic dispensation and there has been a lot of transformation, so I see myself as an agent of transformation. We have come a long way as surgeons and indeed the association has done a lot of good work. I believe that my little contribution will also help us leave a legacy that will help encourage up-and-coming young surgeons to be involved in matters that affect them directly. Hopefully, I will leave a legacy of “being a service to others” for those that are coming after us. Leadership is a team sport- you can't say you know it all, I'm a team player, I believe in working with others, learning from others and interacting with others, asking for advice, and working with people who are more experienced than me because I have learned a lot from them and I continue to learn. So my leadership style is “collective leadership” there are times when I have to make decisions but I try as hard as possible to involve others in decision-making.

What is your vision for ASSA?

I want to see ASSA grow and help mentor young surgeons. The society is involved in the bread and butter issues that affect surgeons ranging from the billing challenges in the private sector

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to scarcity of training post in the public sector. There are many pressing challenges which include amongst others training, inadequate funding for training posts, equipment issues and the diseases burden that threaten to overrun surgical programmes across various universities. There is a challenge for service load on the one hand and the need to train surgeons that are fit for purpose on the other hand, so those kind of balancing dynamics are very important. With the kind of experience, I have, I believe that I will be able to work with the ASSA executive committee to carry out that mandate.

How does SMU fit in holistically within ASSA?

I think SMU is one of the very important institutions in the country that trains the healthcare workforce. It is a relatively new university, and there is a lot of dynamism and enthusiasm for being a new university. I think it also assists us as we begin to reconfigure and rebrand SMU as a go-to health science University for both undergraduate and postgraduate training. Without any fear of contradiction and without sounding apologetic, we need to position this university on both a national and international platform to be competitive. It fits in well with the strategy of the association as well because I am very much involved in directing the Department of Surgery at SMU to become competitive nationally and internationally. So that there is synergism in working at SMU and being involved in the affairs of ASSA. These portfolios will complement each other and assist in moving forward with speed.

Prof, you are the president of two different associations, what is the difference between the two associations?

I am the current president of the College of Surgeons, which is one of the 29 constituent colleges of the College of Medicine of South Africa (CMSA). Others include amongst others, the college of neurology, college of medicine, college of psychiatric etc. One of the mandates of the CMSA is to organise exit examinations in collaboration with the universities, and also to help uphold quality training, right now the college of surgery is heavily involved with other colleges with the establishment of work based assessment. There is recognition that when you train surgeons you need to train them holistically, firstly they must have bio-medical knowledge which they get from theoretical content and technical skills of how to carry out a surgical operation and other competencies such as communication, be able to make clinical judgement, interpersonal skills to be able to handle complex problems in their working environment. That whole package makes what we call a surgeon. We only assess one part which is a theory which includes writing exams and a bit of oral, we don't assess the other competencies, for instance (can our students operate safely, communicate professionally) those are "entrusted professional values". The whole world is now looking at those values (work-based assessment). That is what the CMSA together with the committee of medical deans are currently busy with.

Where do you want to see SMU?

I want to see SMU grow significantly in terms of its stature as a health sciences university in the country. I want to see it climb up the rankings both nationally and internationally. Now, we have moved three places on the latest rankings, at least we should move further, maybe five more places but for that to happen we need to collectively focus and be visible. This is not a pipe dream,



it is achievable. As an academic in SMU and also being the president of ASSA, president of the College of surgeons and senior vice president of the CMSA I believe one will also contribute in making our university visible. Everyone in the university has a role to play in raising the university ranking, e.g. the students positive posting of the university on social media contributes positively to its rankings, protecting its reputation at all cost will enhance its ranking.

This year's graduations were very special to you, can you take us through that?

The graduations were indeed very special to me because my son graduated and it was something I was very proud of. What made me particularly happy is the fact that his average since he joined SMU to final years was well over 75% which in my view is passing the degree cum laude even though the University came with some bizarre ruling that because he was exempted on certain subjects, he did not qualify for cum laude – what a fuss! It was so sad to deny the young man his well-deserved cum laude. I hope that the university will rectify this travesty of justice and officially award his deserved Cum Laude.

You are well known for coming up with groundbreaking surgeries, what can we look forward to?

As you see me in my scrubs today, I am from theatre just now and we have just successfully completed a procedure called retro-rectal repair of an incisional hernias using a technology called – Fasciotens – this is technology developed in Germany by Dr Greenen and the first case in South Africa was done by Dr Greene himself in Somerset Hospital in Cape Town. We did the second case in South Africa here at Dr George Mukhari academic hospital. We were guided by the team in Germany as we did this procedure and it was hugely successful and the patient was discharged home. 🔍



A historic moment as SMU and TIA signs a Memorandum of Agreement

SMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Peter Mbat together with members of his executive and senior management hosted a delegation from the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) on 21 October 2022. The Agency was led by its Acting CEO Mr Patrick Krappie who was with his top management team. The parties discussed matters of mutual interest in a range of areas and signed a Memorandum of Agreement where a partnership was sealed. The Agreement means that SMU becomes TIA's Seed Funding implementing partner.

Prof Mbat expressed his appreciation to TIA for identifying SMU as a Seed Fund implementing partner as this augured well with the plans of the University moving forward. "One of the things we want to build as a University going forward is to create an ecosystem that brings research and innovation not just for academics but also that these future researchers participate in that space. The intention is with time to have research and innovation labs where students become part and parcel of it so that the teaching and learning itself is informed by the research and innovation that is happening at the university", explained the Vice-Chancellor.

He assured the delegation from TIA that SMU has a fairly good number of very experienced academics and researchers who will ensure that the partnership yields the kinds of outputs that TIA would be interested in funding. Prof Mbat further said the issues about intellectual property rights, patents and entrepreneurship are embedded in SMU's 2021 – 2025 strategic plan developed three years ago. "The partnership we get into gives impetus to the strategic objectives of both institutions. I am happy to know that we are signing this MOA today where we officially become a Seed Fund

implementing partner. It is also pleasing to know that there is a reason to get support and take our ideas to commercialization. This is a space that some universities did not participate in for too long and have as a result lost a lot of innovations in the process", declared the VC. Mbat further assured TIA that SMU will meet its expectations and give them the kind of products that will have an impact on society.

The TIA Acting CEO Mr Patrick Krappie said, "As an organization, there are certain expectations of us by society and a large part of that is to solve societal challenges through innovation. VC you mentioned something that resonated with me when you said when TIA started there was this notion of technology as an exclusive remit of the educated and the haves and yet we have a great majority of our people in the underprivileged segments of society who are able to bring solutions. For us as TIA, we are increasingly evolving towards that direction"

Krappie emphasized that the health challenges of the country are known, and that they impact the poor the most such as persistent challenges of infectious diseases. "We fund people who have abilities to develop solutions and we rely on institutions like SMU to help us realize our objectives. From where I sit, I think SMU has a big responsibility to lead what I call, distribution of the health innovation capability in the country and make sure health innovation happens anywhere. Looking at the work that the university has already done it is clear that there is commitment from SMU to lift up the activities in innovation", said the CEO.

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Krappie emphasized that It is the responsibility of TIA to support institutions by not just giving them money and hold them accountable but to work in partnership. He also said that they are well on course in terms of enhancing the commercialization of technologies that have been invested on over the years and have a responsibility as well to lead the implementation of the Bio economy strategy to ensure bio economy in the country becomes a major contributor to the GDP.

In terms of the Agreement signed by both parties, the University is expected to ensure that the Funding shall be used solely for the purposes of carrying out such projects as TIA shall have approved from time to time and for those activities in regard to each funded project as are envisaged. The University has also agreed to put measures in place that would ensure that the deliverables and milestones of each approved project are met and shall also comply with the set Seed Fund Investment Framework Rules.

Prof Patrick Demana in closing after the signing ceremony thanked the Vice-Chancellor for making sure that Council approves the establishment of the University's Technology Transfer Office (TTO) and expressed gratitude to the TIA CEO for choosing SMU and that the University will not disappoint as this was a sign of confidence.





Leaders in Academia Awarded Certificates in Future Leaders in Digital Business by WBS

A cohort of SMU staff from various schools, attended a *Future Leaders in Digital Business* programme offered by the Wits Business School as part of their personal and professional development. The group graduated recently and Focus caught up with some of them to share their experiences.

“SMU is embracing digital technology and it will benefit from a broader talent base of individuals who are able to understand and implement digital business technologies, and are able to practice management skills that are appropriately honed for the digital age,” said Prof Paul Chelule, Department of Public Health, School of Health Care Sciences.

“I teach management, leadership and marketing management topics in the department, through this course I am empowered to teach these topics much better,” said Dr Kebinitswe Masike, Acting Head of the Department of Integrated Clinical Dentistry (ICD), School of Oral Health Sciences.

Dr Moreoagae Randa, a lecturer from the department of Nursing Sciences said “I am able to build and sustain long-term relationships with my customers (students in this case) through Customer Relationship Management as we are moving from e-mail to Apps communication-digital communication. Through the acquired leadership skills, I am able to utilize service quality tools and models that assist me in identifying major problem areas as well as applying the appropriate approach. My knowledge of the Business Model and how it connects to customer experience management has been intensified”.

Dr Samantha Govendor from the School of Oral Health Sciences explained that the course has definitely expanded her understanding of how digital innovation can drive teaching, learning and research. “Since completing the course, I have also developed a keen interest in developing leadership skills among my students so that they can drive change, innovation and creation in their respective spheres,” she said.

“The course helped expand my leadership skills, customer experience skills and seeing things through the digital lens. Since I seek to provide a customer-centric- experience, I am in my teaching, since attending the course paying attention to the 'customer' experience to improve the experience and outcomes for my students, said Dr Mashudu Manafe, acting Head of the Department of human Nutrition and Dietetics, School of Health Care Sciences.

By participating in the training programme, the group was exposed to industry specialists who imparted them with knowledge that will enhance their skills in leadership in digital business. The course was designed to develop a contingent of leaders, who will make their contribution to make the university a leader in e-learning and innovation.

The curriculum covered the following modules:

- Fundamentals of digital technology
- Principles of leadership
- Digital marketing
- Project leadership
- Customer experience
- Introduction to business finance



SMU Institutional Advancement at a glance

Siyabonga to all those who cooperated with us in making Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University a caring place. On July 18, 2022, the Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Mbatia officially launched the Harambee Annual Fund. This fund will assist the university in four areas, namely; Student Historical Debt, E-learning Gadgets, SMU Scholarship fund, and SMU Hands of Compassion.

In 2021, only 29 staff contributed to the fund through employee donations. It is quite humbling that, as a result of our efforts thus far, we have received an additional 41 staff deduction forms, bringing the total to 70. We're keeping up our efforts to solicit donations from SMU's alumni, suppliers, and other patrons. It's been a humbling journey to receive such support from our alumni networks.

Through the efforts of the Advancement Office, to date, the University has been able to offer scrubs to over 300 students with the help of the PPS Foundation. The foundation also provided a total of R448 045,93, of which R298 045,93 will be used to help students with historical debt bursaries, and R150 000.00 will be used to refurbish the school dentistry classroom. The office has received a significant amount of support from university vendors who have offered their support in the Harambee spirit. Sunset Africa Coach Lines, our bus service provider, gave R8000.00, and Adapt IT pledged R5000.00 to the Harambee. The South Point, a provider of student housing, has contributed R25 000.00 to the campaign in support of the University's attempts to generate extra money for the SMU Hands of Compassion. This will help to supplement the R9500.00 in staff payroll contributions.

We appreciate that circumstances have been difficult for certain university suppliers, which has been exacerbated by interest rate volatility. However, the Institutional Advancement unit is collaborating with three university vendors who will be part of the on-campus strategic partners in ensuring the Hands of Compassion initiative has a comprehensive revenue stream. The Maverick Coffee Shop will donate R2 for every coffee sold and will also present 5 food packs to 5 underprivileged students. In addition, 20 students will be able to labor for a few hours on weekends or at special events. This will, however, be done on a rotational basis. This is done to lessen the university's reliance on sympathy. In addition, Van Schaik Bookstore has committed to give a portion of its sales to the Harambee campaign.

The university community should stay tuned for more information on how this arrangement will be implemented. Additionally, the staff cafeteria will provide 30 students with a meal each day. With over 100 students on the waiting list for Hands of Compassion assistance,

this support from our university vendors will go a long way in helping those in need. In addition, the institution has been able to feed an additional 50 students, thanks to the generosity of Rise Against Hunger Africa, which has contributed over 80 boxes of meal packs. It has been a very humbling few months, with staff, students, alumni, and university administration all working together to guarantee that SMU Cares.

WHAT MORE TO EXPECT

The Institutional Advancement office is committed in working with the SMU student body to ensure that all SMU students have a role to play in making their own lives pleasant. This shows their commitment to being part of the solution to the problems since the student historical debt has reached over R300 million from students who did not have the financial means to pay their outstanding fees at the university. Many students who owe the institution money remain in the university system, and this is also a challenge since many of them cannot graduate on time, and it also affects the country's ability to produce health professionals. As a result, the institution has partnered with FEENIX to launch an SMU-centered crowd fundraising campaign in which students with historical debt will be aided in seeking funds from friends, family, community, companies, and SMU alumni. The campaign will run from month end of October until late April 2023. The goal is to generate more than a million rands for the students who have registered to participate in the campaign. Students interested in learning more about the campaign may contact Ms. Zama Zwane, MBCHB final year student (SMU FEENIX Ambassador), or Ms. Golokile Lebelo, Department of Communication & Marketing.

The students' commitment in changing their 67 minutes into R67 is much welcomed. The student collective can amass R201 000.00 with a donation from each of the 3000 students. If the same strategy is used and our university suppliers are urged to turn their 67 minutes into R67 000.00, with 20 suppliers participating, a whopping R1 340 000.00 can be generated to help pay off the students' historical debts.

SOME OTHER TAX BENEFITS OF DONATING TO SMU

Your R50 or R100 gift may seem like a drop in the ocean compared to the total amount we're trying to raise, but just think what could be accomplished if the entire SMU community came together in the spirit of Harambee?

Many educational and charity organizations rely heavily on donations from the general public, corporates and other organizations to sustain themselves. Therefore, the government of South Africa allows taxpayers to deduct from their taxable income the


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amount of specified charitable donations. This action is taken to inspire charitable donations. Unfortunately, many people and businesses don't realize that charitable contributions may be tax deductible. Organizations that carry out PBAs are permitted by the IRS to give tax certificates to donors in appreciation of their support, in compliance with the requirements of Section 18A of the Code. A number of functions are carried out by the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, including patient care, medical care, teaching, and research and development.

Donors may be able to reduce their taxable income by the amount of their contributions if the activity qualifies under Section 18A of the Internal Revenue Code. Your contributions to the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University will qualify for tax deductions, thanks to a section 18A certificate issued by the university. You may only claim the SARS Tax Deduction up to 10% of your taxable income. Simply put, you can subtract up to 10% of your taxable income for personal exemptions. Average contributions from the current fiscal year can

be carried over and claimed in the next fiscal year, 2023. The rolled-over payment is regarded to have been transferred during the fiscal year 2024, even though it was actually paid out in the fiscal year 2022.

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University accepts monetary and non-monetary donations. While a Section 18A tax certification may be available, the institution will not issue one if the donor provided the service for free. Send your contribution to the university by February 28, 2023, to receive a tax deduction for the current tax year (ending in 2022). We encourage our staff, university vendors, and alumni to make the most of their tax benefits and make donations to the University. Donating to Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University is a great way to reduce your taxable income while helping those in need.

Written by Mr Sbusiso Gwala
Institutional Advancement Officer 



Names of the Harambee Donors

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South Point donated to the Harambee Annual Fund



SMU Risk Champions tackle Risk Management issues, to ensure management discipline in different Departments



The risks champion forum held a workshop recently at the SMU skills Centre premises with the aim of assisting risk champions in discharging their responsibilities in their respective departments in line with their roles of supporting, identifying and reporting risks in different departments in the workplace.

Risk management and internal audit officer Gape Manaka through his presentation outlined all the aspects of the risk management forum and explained that the forum's main purpose is to strengthen accountability and evaluate risk management performance. He further emphasized that risk management should be a key component of each employee's annual performance appraisal.

The presentation touched on several aspects including risks that affect the quality of teaching, research and community engagement, negative effects on staff members of the University, risks that may have a detrimental effect on the financial position of the University, risks relating to the impact of the University's activities on the environment and the community, and risks relating to governance and the management.

Manaka emphasized the risk management challenges and ways in which the risk champions can overcome them in their departments.

According to the risk implementation plan status, some activities still need to be executed, such as:

The rising awareness of risk management to SRC, Labour Organizations and the university community.

- Labour forum for risk champions.
- Outstanding operational risk assessment - internationalization, skills centre, electron microscopy.
- Fraud risk register and newsletters.

Attendees were also briefed on the four risk registers which should be monitored quarterly against the implementation of the action plan namely: The strategic risk register, operational risk register, emerging and incident risk register and the fraud risk register. These four risk registers focus on different objectives that form part of the risk monitoring documents.

The presentation was fruitful as it concluded with everyone having understood the responsibilities they are expected to carry as risk champions in their respective departments. It is now up to the champions and their departments to ensure that there is compliance and improvements on certain areas as discussed during the workshop.

Meet Dr. Babalwa Vuyokazi Soga- Kamdem



Dr. Babalwa Vuyokazi Soga-Kamdem, was born in Mdantsane, Eastern Cape. She is the fourth of six children. She attended primary at Shad Mashologu LP School and went to Fanti Gaqa HP School before she matriculated at Alphendale High in East London in 1997. She obtained a National Diploma in Office Management and Technology from Peninsula Technikon, a BTech in Office Management and Technology (Technikon Pretoria), a Master in Public Management (Tshwane University of Technology), a certificate in Instructional Design and E-learning (with distinction) (Enterprise University of Pretoria), a Post-graduate Diploma in Theology (University of Pretoria) and recently a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Management and Governance (University of Johannesburg). Dr Soga's research and administrative interests include academic administration, programme and policy analysis and support, professional writing and public administration continuous improvement.

How does it feel to achieve at this level?

It still feels like a dream. I am excited that it happened whilst both my parents are still alive. Having been raised by a domestic worker and a labourer, my parents always wanted to see us achieve what they could not achieve. It feels good that I did not disappoint them. I wouldn't have made it if it was not for the support I received from my parents, siblings, my dear husband and children, and my friends. My mom sacrificed her home to look after my children last year so that I can focus on my studies. A special gratitude to my dad for allowing her to leave her marital home. What can we do without our parents? Their love is unconditional.

Those who have gone through the PhD journey always warn that it is not easy to undertake. Please share with us your own experience?

Any journey has never been easy, be it raising a child, starting a new job or business, or relocating. All journeys come with their challenges; however, you need to stay focused. My own experiences - I came to SMU when I was almost one year through my PhD. I knew that I would not get a sabbatical leave. I was forced to go back to my planning and adjust my timelines and this meant a lot of sleepless nights and working throughout the weekends. I had to cut off socially. I had to balance between family and my studies. COVID-19 came and it had its negatives

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and positives. The positives for me were the ability to work from home. The time you spend preparing to come to work in the morning is converted to research time giving you a longer working day. The hard lockdown that restricted us to our homes also provided ample study time opportunities. Nonetheless, I cannot forget the sadness of dealing with the loss of colleagues and friends, and the depressing death statistics that kept coming to our screens. Psychologically this was quite draining but I had to find ways to keep my strength. My advice is to involve your family in your studies, they need to know that it is a phase that will pass, and you are not doing it for yourself only, it is for the betterment of your life as opportunities will arise after completing your qualification.

What was the focus of your research and please share briefly its findings and recommendations?

My study focused on the use of e-government services in small businesses in the cities of Tshwane and Johannesburg. One of the most powerful tools for socio-economic empowerment is entrepreneurship. I noticed how people from backgrounds like my own work hard, working up very early every morning trying to manage their small businesses as a means of survival and as a desire to have a better future in these tough, high unemployment and low-income environment. My research looked at how local governments could help small businesses mostly via their local economic development (LED) pillar – which is also constitutionally mandated.

The study found that the two local governments are failing to support the resolution of SMME challenges that included a lack of access to funding, poor market access, skills and capacity deficits amongst entrepreneurs, poor infrastructure, low access to technology, and excessive regulation. Small businesses, on the other hand, tended not to use e-government services due to technology access barriers, low digital literacy, negative perceptions and trust issues and internet access cost factors among others.

The study recommended, therefore, an e-government-SMME framework that proposes the implementation and/or enhancement of e-government services to optimise government support to SMMEs. The strategy is premised on the view that e-government may address most challenges faced by SMMEs in South Africa noting that the country has many support systems and structures that are failing to support SMMEs because of poor coordination, poor beneficiary engagement, unnecessary bureaucracy and corruption.

Which methodology did you use?

The study was qualitative in nature using primary and secondary data. Primary data for the study was collected through interviews with local government officials, as well as questionnaires with SMMEs. Purposive and convenience sampling were used to select research participants. Secondary data involved the collection, review and analysis of South Africa's regulatory, policy and strategic documents on small businesses and e-government. Data were analysed using conceptual and document analysis methods.

How long did it take you to complete the PhD and what would you say was the most challenging part, for example, which Chapter did you battle with?

I set myself a target to complete it in two years and I did it in 2 years, Fortunately, my thesis came back without corrections. The most challenging chapter was Chapter 5, in which I selected five municipi-

palities from across Africa as case studies on the e-government and small business nexus. These municipalities were selected using convenience sampling and data availability on issues relating to SMMEs and e-government services. The selected municipalities included the Windhoek municipality in Namibia (Southern Africa), the Casablanca municipal in Morocco (North Africa), the Kigali municipality in Rwanda (East Africa), the Accra municipality in Ghana (West Africa) and the Brazzaville municipality in the Republic of the Congo (Central Africa).

The challenge I faced is that some websites were not updated and most municipalities did not have publicly available policies, strategies and regulations on both e-government and small businesses. Regardless, I had to review strategic and policy documents alongside relevant World Bank and United Nations reports, as well as other global institutional reports on SMMEs and e-government to understand these e-government-small business relationships from an African continent perspective. This was quite important as experiences from peer African countries could help guide South Africa on what to do and what not to do in the administration of e-government and small business activities. This took about six weeks to come out with an 80-page chapter. The good part is that this data was eventually very helpful in crafting the study's recommendations. It helped in informing the earlier-mentioned framework that was produced by the research.

How does the study contribute to the body of knowledge in the field?

The study was one of the few to look at the e-government as a conduit for supporting small businesses in South Africa. This is despite the growing digital systems usage as well as concerning small business failures in South Africa. Its greatest contribution is the establishment of multiple links between small business support under LED, local government systems in small business support and electronic government. While e-government could link government departments for efficient small business support, it was not being utilised to do so. This discouraged its use by small businesses. A framework that firstly identifies small business challenges and connects e-government as a tool through which these could be met, as perceived, will help the crafting of better e-government-small business policies and programmes. The study also challenges a relook at how other e-services applicable to ordinary citizens affect their lives. From a medical university perspective, this could be how low-income students are affected by online registration systems that are supposedly designed to make university applications and enrolment easier.

What would you say were the highlights of your PhD journey?

Attending and presenting at my first International Conference organized by the WBS University in Poland and publishing my first research paper titled, Soga, B., & Vyas-Doorgapersad, S.. (2021). Assessing Local and National Government Interaction in LED: A Policy Evaluation of South Africa's Metros. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(6), 183.

The other highlight was being invited again this year as a speaker at the 9th International Scientific Conference "New Trends in Management and Production Engineering: Regional, Cross-border and Global Perspectives". The conference will take place on 09-10 June, in Brenna, Poland and publishing my second paper titled, Soga, B., & Vyas-Doorgapersad, S.. (2022). Significance of e-government services for small businesses in the City of

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These events were very important and uplifting to me as they pointed to the relevance of my study in helping to change the small business world not only in South Africa but in other parts of the world.

What do you intend doing in future after you attained your PhD

The world is evolving at a very fast pace. One needs to stay informed about what is happening around them. I am looking forward to publishing more papers and forming collaborations with other researchers. I am also hoping to get funding so that I can fulfil my dream of writing a research textbook. During my study, I noticed how I and many local scholars constantly refer to international researchers for guidance. With the large volume of research coming out of South Africa, I continue to wonder why we do not have many reputable and world-renowned research textbooks. Someone has to write these textbooks. Instead of pointing fingers at others, I have chosen to be that someone. I am currently working with fellow academics in preparing a proposal for this textbook. Hopefully, by early or mid-2024 we will have this textbook published.

I also wish to mentor young researchers including those in the medical field here at SMU. I believe I can contribute one or two things to someone's research-driven academic and professional career growth.

I have also applied at UKZN for a second PhD in Higher Education, which will focus on higher education access for children in rural areas especially considering what COVID-19 has changed in terms of online teaching and education access. I will finalise this decision but it is a path I am keen to take.

What is your message to those who wish to pursue the PhD journey?

To those who wish to pursue their PHD, it looks impossible until it is done. If you know what you want, write it down, apply your mind to it and set your targets. Be realistic when setting those targets because if you are unable to meet them, you will be frustrated. Remember that, it is okay to make mistakes, it is from the mistakes that we learn. Build a solid professional relationship with your supervisor, check on how s(he) is doing, and don't make contact only when you are following up on the chapter that you submitted to them. Update your supervisor on your progress. Remember that there are also other stakeholders who are a direct part of your PhD journey including university administrators, research subjects, and family members among others. There is a need to effectively incorporate them into your planning.

What are your views on mentorship in academia?

Mentorship in academia is a positive aspect of skills development. It is a proven method of transferring skills and capacities that one has acquired over the years to juniors and colleagues. With mentorship, academia can directly target a person of desired intellectual and professional calibre and set out to develop others who follow the identified candidate's skills and traits. It is easier to say we want someone who can write and articulate themselves as exceptionally as Dr X. We can then ask Dr X to help to develop such a person through mentorship. Mentorships, therefore, support the multiplication of high-quality, specific, critical skills in academia.

They further facilitate the continuation of a particular critical ability even when the mentor leaves.

However, mentorship works best when persons of matching or at least compatible personalities meet. This personality match aspect, in my view, is more of a weakness than a strength given our differences as human beings. Also, the flexibility of mentorship processes may compromise quality outcomes compared to more structured skills development processes like competency courses, diplomas and degrees. In this vein, I argue that mentorships only work when they are standardised quality management parameters as well as structured mentor-mentee relationships. Additionally, we must document the important aspect of this mentorship. In my observation, in poorly managed mentorships the mentee may end up aimlessly following the mentor around achieving nothing in the end.

Any other thing you wish to say to our readers?

Universities do not exist in isolation. Support staff are the engine behind the success of any university. We need to be equally supported in terms of research. You will be surprised as to how many papers support staff could publish. We have support staff members, who can review existing policies, and facilitate team building sessions amongst other critically challenging tasks. The university needs not to look outside but utilise its own to handle some of these functions. Support staff are more than capable to generate income for the university given the opportunity and support. It is time that the University start growing their own timber. To the young upcoming researchers, let us make education fashionable. It is my wish to see SMU having the most qualified support staff than any university. We can do it. 🔍





DFFE Donates Indigenous Evergreen Trees to Promote SMU Campus Greening

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) visited Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University on 16 September 2022 to donate 30 indigenous evergreen trees, to help the University with its sustainable development and campus greening goals. The trees donated include *Searsia*, *Lancea/pendulina* and *Combretum imberbe*, which were planted along SMU's various student residences. The initiative is part of the DFFE's Ten Million trees programme, with the theme, "Forests and sustainable production and consumption".

Receiving the trees on behalf of the University, COO Mr Fana Sibanyoni said trees will play an important role in SMU's sustainable development agenda. "Going green is what we want to sustain as a university to make our campus green and beautiful," he said. He further indicated that the greening of the campus is part of the University's spatial development plan, and encouraged students to take care of the trees because they are planted next to their respective residences.

Mr Mike Modise, Deputy Director for Forestry development, indicated that the department champions the greening of the environment. "The collaboration of the University and the department is especially important for researching the best ways to enhance the sustainable development of the environment," said Mr Modise. He stated that the urban forests are killed by the shothole borer beetle and as a result, the department is engaging with universities to help come up with a solution to the problem so that the trees can be well sustained. Modise challenged the university to look at waterwise treatment techniques and also look at chemicals that can be used to sustain our trees against the drought that has hit the world in general. He further indicated that drought and environmental changes are a threat

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to forestry. He advised on the need for research on ways to ensure the sustainability of forests amid these changes.

Six of the indigenous plants were planted near the 5A and 4B residences by the Director of Communications and Marketing Dr Lusani Netshitomboni, COO Mr Sibanyoni, HOD: Biology and Environmental Sciences Prof Piet King, Director of Students Affairs Mr Tulani Nkuntse, SRC President Philani Mdakane and NEHAWU Chairperson Dr Tshifhiwa Mulaudzi. Prof King concluded the event by thanking the gardening services for assisting in planting the trees and making sure that they would continue looking after them afterwards.



Mathematical Career Fair Addresses the Graduate Unemployment Rate Challenge



The Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics recently held a fruitful Mathematical Career Fair that sought to address the graduate unemployment rate challenges and also explore possible career paths in mathematical sciences. The Career Fair also created opportunities for direct engagements with company representatives who motivated students and staff to explore more mathematics opportunities. “The Career Fair provides companies with opportunities to recruit and groom young talents. We are looking forward to forming a healthy and strong working relationship with companies involved in this career fair for the benefit of our students,” said Dr Maggie Aphane, Head of the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics.

Aphane further told attendees that their future depended on what they did today and that their destiny should not be defined by where they came from. “The biggest challenge we have is that there is a war for talent. Many companies are fishing from the same pool with very few people with the required skills. Try to see the positive in everything presented to you. Be more than your qualifications,” said Dr Aphane.

Keynote speaker and Director of Communication & Marketing Dr Lusani Netshitomboni appealed to the maths professionals to correct the wrongs made during the apartheid era. “We are told that South Africa is one of the worst countries in the world when it comes to maths education, and look at it and say why? Is it because we are not the brightest people? I don't think so. My view is that this was designed to make sure that a black child is not able to do maths and be exposed to a whole lot of opportunities that come with teaching and learning maths. Now we have a responsibility, Dr Aphane and all of us have to change that narrative and be able to say it can and must be done. There is a responsibility that we have as maths researchers, academics, lectures or employers who are here to demystify this concept of maths to say there is a chance, there is a possibility,” said Dr Netshitomboni in response to the quote made by the then Minister of Native Affairs Hendrik Verwoerd, which reads as follows, *'What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when he cannot use it in practice: there is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour'*.

The Career Fair was introduced in the 2020 academic year and the department has previously invited several companies including Eskom, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Momentum, Standard bank, Absa bank, Sanlam, Optinum-Pro and Deloitte, to mention a few. Virtual presentation slots for at least two companies per semester were arranged targeting final-year undergraduates, and post-graduate students, though it was also open to

all. This year representatives from the CSIR, South African Mathematics Foundation (SAMF), Elite Tutor, and Kakanyo Business Solutions came on board and presented to a captive audience who were thrilled to meet and engage with company representatives who shared their knowledge and on how they apply mathematics on daily basis at their workplace, and internship information.

“My reason for presenting at the SMU Mathematical Career Fair 2022 was mainly to expose students from the School of Science and Technology to the vast opportunities available for graduates in possession of Bachelor of Science (BSc) degrees. As an SMU BSc Alumna currently working at the Centre for Robotics and Future Production where we are aiming to innovate various manufacturing industries with the latest technologies in the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), I saw it fitting for us as the centre to honour the event and showcase some of our latest work to the students so they can realise their potentials beyond their classroom performance. Furthermore, I wanted the lecturers to be aware that they can visit organisations like ours (CSIR) to get informed about the latest disruptive skills required from the students with Mathematics as their subject/major,” explained Windy Mokuwe, SMU Alumna and Machine Learning Researcher at CSIR.

Additionally, the department is involved in community engagements, subsequently adopting secondary schools in the Tshwane region, namely Modiri Secondary School (Ga-Rankuwa), PH Moraka Secondary School (Hammanskraal), NM Tshuene Secondary School (Ga-Rankuwa) and Kgatoentle Secondary School (Ga-Rankuwa). Selected learners from the PH Moraka and NM Tshuene schools graced the occasion and participated in the Mathematical Career Fair Quiz, snatching an ultimate prize by competing against the SMU undergraduate and postgraduate students. One of the Grade 11 learners from NM Tshuene expressed his excitement about their achievement and indicated that the Career Fair was a great opportunity to explore more career opportunities in the field of mathematics.

Meet Dr Cornelia Phetla



For Dr Cornelia Phetla, obtaining a PHD is a dream come true. She warns that it is a demanding, frustrating and lonely journey that it is difficult to explain to someone. She appreciated the support from family and her research supervisor, who made it doable.

She explains that the title of her study is “Development and implementation of nutrition and exercise programme at primary schools in Tshwane West District, Gauteng, South Africa”.

Using a single group pre- and post-test quasi-experimental design, the study was conducted in 3 phases. A cross-sectional descriptive design was applied in phase 1. Phase 2 applied development and validation design while Phase 3 applied an implementation and evaluation design.

“The study was conducted in 3 phases. The findings of phase 1 of the study indicated that the learners' daily consumption of water, fruits, and vegetables was below the South African Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (SAFBDGs) recommendation. There were poor eating habits among the majority of learners even though most learners had adequate nutrition and exercise knowledge. Few learners were able to meet WHO's (2018) recommendations for physical activity. During phase 3 the programme was implemented in a few primary schools in Tshwane's west district”, she said.

Thereafter, the post-test and impact evaluation was conducted. It was concluded that the programme had a positive impact, creating an interest in healthy eating and exercise among the school learners. The programme proved to be well received by learners and school staff as it is easy to follow and sustain. It is recommended that the programme be rolled out to all primary schools in Tshwane and even further.

She registered for the PHD in July 2018. “The whole of 2019 was spent defending the research proposal to different committees in the university. However, in 2020 March when I was due to collect data from the primary school I had to pause due to the COVID-19 lockdown because the schools were closed, however I continued writing the literature review. I continued with data collection from 2021 when the regulations were eased. I had to work very hard to catch up”, emphasised Dr Phetla.

She found the literature review and discussion parts of her study to be challenging because they required studying the scientific articles, which demanded a lot of time and concentration.

Asked how the study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field, Dr Phetla said “The ANGELO framework used in the development of the nutrition and exercise programme made the study to be unique, as this framework had never been used in South Africa. This framework made it possible to identify and classify aspects that can be changed in the short-term, medium-term, and long term. The study led to the establishment of vegetable gardens in schools to curb food insecurity. This addresses Sustainable Development Goal number 2: “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable Agriculture”. Conducting this study allowed the BSC (Dietetics) students to be trained on the implementation of nutrition at the school level.

She recalls that special writing retreats organized by the University were very helpful and found collaborating with the Department of Basic Education Tshwane West district to be eye opening while SMU UCDG made the process smooth. She also had a fascinating experience by engaging with different academics during this period of pursuing her PhD.

“Going into the future I need to pursue the implementation of the nutrition and exercise programme that I developed for the entire primary school in Tshwane West. This will be achieved through community nutrition practicals of the BSC(Dietetics) students and as part of our Department community engagement activity. I also intend to bring the Department of Physiotherapy on board to assist with the exercise programme.

Furthermore, the findings of this study will be shared at national and international scientific conferences. In addition, the manuscripts will be harvested and published in DHET-accredited journals”, she explained.

Dr Phetla advises those who wish to pursue PhD studies to first locate a supervisor that has an interest in their research topic, establish a working good working relationship with the supervisor, and most of all to respect their supervisor. “Work very hard and stick to your schedule. If you are afforded opportunity to receive a grant, allocate funds for the replacement staff that will assist you when you are on study leave. If you are a student, prioritise your studies and shelve everything else. PHD is a fulfilling qualification especially if you are interested in the world of academics”, emphasised Dr Phetla.

She also has something to say about mentorship in academia: *Mentorship is very critical in academia. Postgraduate students should be given priority and support such as organising special writing retreats for them, etc.* 🔍



Department of Sport and Recreation equips its staff with Level 1 First Aid Training



The Department of Sport and Recreation at SMU recently organized a level 1 First Aid Training for sports officers and coaches to perform basic life support and first aid procedures. The participants were taught theoretical knowledge and had to perform practical skills competently, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and choking.

First Aid level 1 is the minimum required qualification for all workplaces in South Africa (as per the Occupational Health and Safety Act). The course prepares participants with the basic principles of assessing an emergency and contacting the emergency services as quickly as possible and equips those trained to perform the basic skills required to sustain life. Coaches are the first line of contact with players during training sessions and matches. They will be the first contact in case of an injury while waiting for an ambulance.

"As part of capacity building, we decided that it is necessary as a department to take the staff and coaches to a first aid course and provide them with a skill that they can use and to also assist others in cases of emergencies", alluded Busisiwe Sijora, SMU Sports Officer.

Those who are trained are expected to understand the laws of first aid, including the principles of emergency care; demonstrate an understanding of emergency scene management; treat wounds and arrest bleeding; know the first aid required for different injuries; utilise the correct equipment and safety precautions when administering first aid; understanding potential hazards in the work environment; and CPR. "The training was very enlightening and informative in terms of fieldwork with players," said Ronewa Munyai, SMU netball head coach who was part of the training.

First Aid principles entail preserving life, protecting the unconscious casualty, preventing the condition from worsening, promoting recovery and calling for medical assistance. The certificate received after completing the course is valid for three years.

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SMU Harambee Annual Fund Challenge

*In the Spirit of Harambee, Ubuntu and Oneness,
we pledge to pull together to raise a minimum
of One Million Rands for SMU's needy students.*



WAYS TO GIVE

1. Payroll donations
2. Online donations:
<https://smu.devman.co.za/devman/online/qiving/>

3. Pay Scan – Zapper
4. SMU banking details:

Ref - Standard bank
Acc - 070754128
Branch code - 020909
Q013 - Name Surname



OUR MISSION

SMU is to deliver a high level cadre of health care professionals trained by experts from the Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, Oral Health Sciences, Health Care Sciences and, Science and Technology.

We have a large number of brilliant students but lack sufficient resourcing to finance their various needs to fully experience a dignified university student life.

It is against this background that SMU has initiated the **SMU HARAMBEE ANNUAL FUND CHALLENGE** to raise funds to support our needy students.

THE NEED

Join our Vice Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbatia and SMU in raising funds for a bursary program designed to assist academically qualified but financially disadvantaged students. Additionally, the initiative intends to donate to the university's Hands of Compassion food security project, which delivers meals to underprivileged students on campus.

THE CHALLENGE

Prof. Mbatia encourages students, staff, academics and alumni to participate in a structured giving program. We are called to make a minimum monthly contribution of R10 for students, R100 for staff, and R200 for alumni. In response, Prof has given a lead donation of R10,000 and invites SMU executives to donate as well.

