

MBCHB ECP 2023

*Top Achievers
recognised*

Significant
progress made in
**SMU's Network
& Infrastructure
Overhaul project**



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Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University recognizes excellence through the Vice-Chancellor's Awards



Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University wrapped the year on a high note during the annual Vice-Chancellor's Excellence awards on 17 November 2023 at the Premier Hotel in Roodevalley to celebrate established and emerging researchers and academics.

Speaking during the occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof Peter Mbatlana stated that the occasion was meant to recognize excellence in the academic core business, in teaching and learning as well as research and innovation at all levels. "It's always good to have a day like this where academics are recognized and re-emphasize their importance as stakeholders in our university. We have a commitment to grow our brand as the only dedicated health sciences university in Southern Africa and this is also reflected in our strategic plan", Mbatlana said.

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Mbati added that SMU wants to grow the number of NRF rated researchers from within, grow the number of special category academics and postgraduate students. “There is also a commitment to grow partnerships at local, regional and international levels. The University can only grow if there are sufficient resources to do that and therefore, deliberate steps are being taken to ensure we are financially sustainable through the new Business Model”, he said.

Mbati used the occasion to also announce the departure of the Director for the Centre for University Teaching and Learning (CUTL), Dr Senoelo Nkhase. The VC thanked her for being committed and dedicated and wished her well.

The guest speaker during the awards ceremony was Dr Molapo Qhobela; the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Change, Strategic Partnerships and Societal Impact at the University of the Free State. During his address, Qhobela said, “It is an honour to be invited to deliver a few remarks in celebration of the exceptional work performed by the men and women of the Sefako Makgatho University who are the Seekers of Knowledge, the Pathfinders and the Trailblazers on a journey to enlightenment, who will receive awards today”.

“In 2024, South Africa will be commemorating 30 years as a young democracy. We have been on a journey of providing a better life for all, following the fall of Apartheid. Excellence in research and capacity development is an imperative for achieving this solemn commitment and our goal of establishing a vibrant contextually relevant and globally competitive research system.

These awards being presented tonight serve to reflect the commitments of the university to excellence, whether academic excellence in teaching and learning, or research and innovation; or NRF ratings”, he added.

Qhobela defined Excellence as an idea that is more than a benchmark, more than a goal, more than a distant destination and that excellence is the foundation of rigour in the advancement, application or imparting of knowledge. The awards were presented in different categories such as Teaching and Learning Symposium winners, Teaching Excellence, Research and Innovation Excellence, Research Days and recognition of NRF rated researchers. Q





SMU on track to accommodate 2000 students on campus




Shortage of accommodation at tertiary institutions is increasingly becoming a major problem. In the case of SMU, this is worsened by the lack of readily available student accommodation in Garankuwa and the surrounding areas. In response to this challenge, the university is pursuing a solution that expands living options for students while providing the convenience and benefits of an on-campus location. It is envisaged that by 2030 SMU will be in a position to expand campus accommodation to 3500 new beds to accommodate student growth targets.

The 2000 bed accommodation

Built on the SMU campus with the mountain as a beautiful backdrop, the five clusters of the 2000 units of accommodation are progressing well. This project will add 2000 new beds to SMU's on-campus accommodation, providing the additional accommodation required to support the SMU growth targets and a growing student population. The residence structure comprises five clusters and five story sections. The accommodation options will consist of single and double units, providing lounges, study spaces, laundry and a communal kitchen. Taking into consideration the electricity challenges in the country, the facility is designed to include backup power.

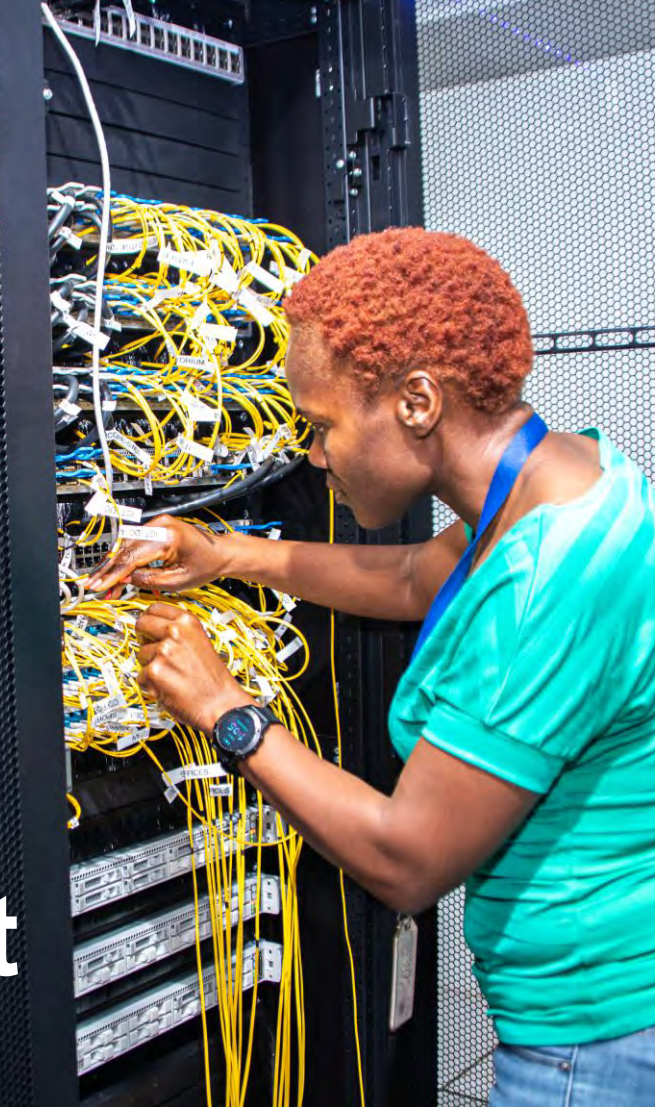
On the outside, the buildings' brick and façades and symmetrical windows are designed to complement the existing campus architecture. The buildings will be complemented by landscaped gardens to augment the residence's active outdoor life.

When the project was launched in 2021, a critical aspect was the creation of inclusive spaces that accommodate the needs of persons living with disabilities. As such, each floor has accommodation dedicated to students living with disabilities.

As the Director of Built Environment, Ms. Yandisa Lengoasa indicated, this and many other infrastructure development projects will help improve the look and feel of the campus, but more importantly, create a conducive living and studying environment for SMU students. 



Significant progress made in SMUs Network and Infrastructure Overhaul project



Nestled amidst the lush landscapes of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), a sweeping transformation has been quietly reshaping the digital foundations of the institution. For the past few years, the dedicated Information and Communication Technology (ICT) team at SMU has embarked on a journey to rejuvenate the university's aging network and infrastructure. Their mission - To ensure the reliability, efficiency, and security of SMU's ICT systems. The progress is indeed worth celebrating.

As we approach the end of 2023, the results of this ambitious endeavour are becoming increasingly visible and indispensable. The data centre, the heartbeat of SMU's digital operations, has been wholly revitalized, meeting stringent data centre standards. This achievement underlines SMU's unwavering commitment to providing resilient ICT services that will support the university's academic and administrative functions with unwavering reliability.

The server and storage component, fundamental for data and application hosting, marks another significant milestone in this transformation. This core infrastructure establishes the groundwork for a dynamic and responsive digital

ecosystem, facilitating the university's research, teaching, and learning activities.

The progress in switching and routing, including Wi-Fi, is currently at 84%, promising improved connectivity throughout the campus. A robust network is quintessential in today's digital age, where the exchange of information and ideas happens in real-time. SMU's dedicated efforts in this area are set to enhance communication and productivity for students, faculty, and staff alike.

The extensive cabling project, encompassing a full fibre ring around the campus and the introduction of new Ethernet cabling in all buildings, stands at an impressive 99%. This component, often operating behind the scenes, is the essential backbone of SMU's digital infrastructure. With the near completion of this phase, SMU ensures that the campus is fully prepared for the digital demands of the future.

Despite these remarkable achievements, the project has not been without its fair share of challenges. Civil action interruptions, weather-related setbacks, and the need for community engagement and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) approvals have put the project team's

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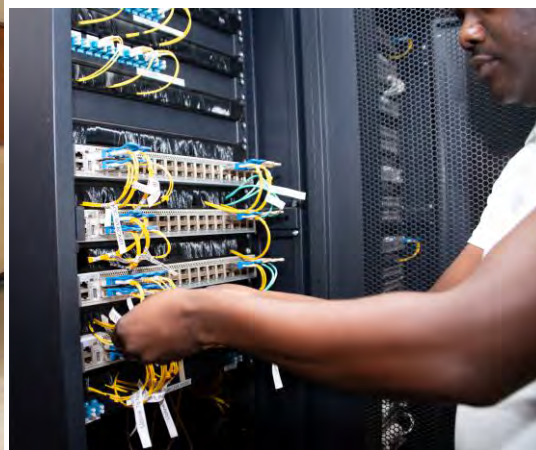
determination and expertise to the test. Yet, their ability to surmount these challenges underscores their dedication to managing complex projects efficiently.

As the project nears its conclusion, the university community anticipates the significant benefits it will bring. Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University can look forward to a more resilient, efficient, and secure ICT environment that empowers innovation and learning. We celebrate the tireless efforts of the ICT team, project managers, and all those involved. They are ensuring that SMU remains at the forefront of technological advancement, offering students and faculty the tools and infrastructure needed to excel in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.



The network and infrastructure transformation project at SMU is a testament to the university's commitment to providing a cutting-edge learning and research environment. It is an investment in a future where technology is seamlessly integrated into every facet of university life. As the project comes to a close, it's essential to acknowledge that progress is a journey, and when undertaken with determination and vision, it can reshape the future. Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University is confidently embracing that future, ensuring it remains a leader in the ever-evolving landscape of higher education.

The significance of this project goes beyond its immediate outcomes. It is a testament to the idea that, in ICT, you can't fully embrace the possibilities of innovation and progress without a solid foundation. The network refresh project forms the bedrock that will enable SMU to achieve its digital and technological goals, leveraging this new infrastructure to reach greater heights. Q





Workspaces of the future:

Redesigning workspaces at SMU

Introduction

The evolution of Academic workplaces in the past decade has prompted institutions of higher learning, worldwide, to rethink the workplace design to ensure that workplaces adequately support the academic project. Growth in the number of students in the Higher Education sector and the fast pace of technological developments are the key drivers in the need for changes in the utilisation of workspaces.

Academic institutions are, increasingly, looking to implement new ways to support teaching and learning, research and innovation and community engagement. According to Ms Yandisa Lengoasa, Director: Built Environment at SMU, the workplace design strategy has been developed to ensure the creation of an environment conducive for teaching and learning and ultimately improved student and staff wellbeing and improved productivity.

This strategy is meant to meet the current and future work and learning space demands in the everchanging university environment. "Our Workplace design aims to align the University strategic goals, integrates physical workplace (space, branding and furniture) with technology, policies and institutional academic excellence" Ms. Yandisa Lengoasa declared.

The elements of the new SMU Workplace design

The workplace design will include:

- *University Interior design standards* - This will recreate spaces that reflect a rebranded SMU to support a new culture. Other elements of the strategy will focus on the wellbeing and sustainability in the workspace.
- *Inclusive (universal accessibility) design standards* that

cater for the needs of people living with disabilities, removing the barriers that create undue effort and separation, enabling everyone to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday learning and working activities.

- *University Furniture standards* focusing on ergonomic design to ensure employee and student wellbeing. This is meant to standardize the provision of furniture in alignment with institutional brand to reflect SMU's aspiration of becoming a world class university.
- *Campus buildings Exterior design standards* to improve the campus look and feel, creating a modern and vibrant campus that attracts students as a physical representation of academic excellence.
- *Campus Biodiversity design* - The University has a beautiful campus setting which can be used as a tool to enhance the overall campus environment.

The guiding principles

- Placing people (students, staff, visitors) at the centre of the design process;
- Acknowledgment of the importance of diversity and difference;
- Offering a choice in instances where a single design solution cannot accommodate all users;
- Provision of flexibility of use;
- Provision of buildings and environments that are convenient and enjoyable to use for everyone; and,
- Enhancement of campus living, learning, recreational and working life.

The envisaged benefits

The following are the envisaged benefits of the strategy:

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- *Achieving the highest and best use of space and optimization of campus space utilization:* This involves ensuring that the assets are fully utilized and that they meet the evolving needs of staff and students.
- *Responding to new ways of working, new teaching and learning patterns:* This relates to the need to ensure that the envisaged changes respond to the changes in technology and a new generation of technological savvy students with different needs. Hence, the need to rethink the utilisation of spaces on campus.
- *Increasing financial sustainability:* While people costs outweigh space costs, space is the second operating cost for the university. Space is expensive to build, operate, and change, particularly when factoring in the extent of its utilisation. The plan is to apply innovative space design concepts to optimize the usage and design of space to reduce the total cost of occupancy, thus freeing much needed financial resources for the core academic project.
- *Achieving environmental sustainability:* We want the campus spaces to not only be well utilized and financially feasible, but environmentally sustainable, as we because buildings account for almost 40 percent of our carbon footprint. New kinds of work environments

with more shared and open space require less space per person, which is more sustainable. This will be reflected in engineering design concept for new buildings and retrofitting of existing campus buildings.

The project roadmap

The effective provision of the academic and support workplace requires close collaboration between all SMU stakeholders to ensure a common understanding of the overall project, buy-in and support. This will require the provision of updates to the SMU community on a regular basis. Q

“We believe that the outcomes of the new workplace design strategy can only be achieved with collaboration across the university”, Ms Lengoasa emphasized.

Energy and Carbon Management at SMU: a step in the right direction

The world is facing a climate crisis, hence the need for a paradigm shift in the way we think about sustainability. The increasingly devastating effects of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) on the climate system are evident. Scientists are warning of a climate emergency and untold suffering, should humans continue to ignore planetary vital signs pointing to very troubling trends. Along with the little progress made by humanity to address climate change we are catapulting ourselves towards catastrophic events.

South Africa's GHG emissions are expected to peak between 2020 and 2028, plateau for approximately 10 years, and then decline from then on. It is for this reason that South Africa developed and adopted the South Africa's Low-Emission Development Strategy 2050 (SA LEDS 2050) which aims to place South Africa on a low-carbon trajectory whilst ensuring a broader socio-economic development.

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These developments should serve as a rallying call for SMU to strive to reduce the carbon footprint across the SMU property portfolio. As Ms Lengoasa, Director, Built Environment at SMU indicated, the *Net Zero Carbon and Energy Management Strategy* has been adopted as a critical sustainability operational objective in the university's Facilities and Infrastructure Management Strategic Plan 2024-2028.

To this end, the university has developed the Carbon and Energy Management policy and plan approved by Council.

What the policy and plan seeks to achieve

The university has set a target of 15% carbon and energy reduction by 2028, against nationwide energy supply constraints. This brings with it both opportunities and challenges to reduce SMU carbon emissions. In order to achieve this objective, SMU has adopted principles listed below to serve as enablers for SMU to realise its sustainability targets:

- Taking a full life-cycle view when assessing energy and carbon performance.
- Incorporation of energy and carbon performance considerations into business and procurement decisions, design specifications and operational functioning.
- Improvement of SMUs energy efficiency by choosing energy efficient technology solutions and elimination of waste.
- Management of SMUs carbon intensity by optimising energy choices, awareness creation, reducing waste and growing sustainability.
- Ensuring business continuity at all levels of SMU, by addressing energy requirements and pursuing alternative and independent energy solutions.
- Enabling behavioural change along the value chain to minimise environmental impact, carbon intensity and energy intensity.
- Employing the latest advanced technology solutions to

integrate smart measurement and control capability to facilitate energy and carbon performance measurement and management.

A call to the SMU community

Available data suggests that 55% of SMU emissions are due to operation of diesel generators, whilst 25% of emissions can be estimated to be contributed to SMU employee's commute and travel.

To achieve the target of 15% carbon emissions reduction, all staff and students are encouraged to embrace the drive to reduce carbon emissions. Our first step is to critically reduce energy consumption across our buildings. This will contribute to reductions in operational costs, environmental impact and carbon emissions.

Key initiatives

The following supporting initiatives in our commitment to achieving a low-carbon trajectory have been identified:

- **Energy efficient lighting** - we are installing LED lighting to SMU buildings and installing efficient lighting control through our annual maintenance programme
- **Rate performance of buildings and obtain energy performance certificates** - as a building owner, SMU is mandated to display and submit energy performance certificates in compliance with regulations. A service provider has been appointed to commence with assessment and rating of SMU buildings.
- **On site generations from solar PV panels** - we are currently busy with feasibility studies for PV panels to switch to renewable energy generation and to reduce energy consumption from the Eskom grid
- **Building energy management** - The aim is to install a building management system to monitor and control heating and cooling, delivering comfortable, efficient temperature and humidity levels
- **Sustainable Travel** - The annual monitoring and incentives to support low carbon travel will be implemented.🔍





SMU Vice-Chancellor signs MOUs with three African Institutions

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University is committed to strategies that enhance SMU's footprint in the SADC region, the African continent and beyond. As a University, we seek to build a solid internationalisation foundation that is aimed at enhancing SMU's global footprint through fostering a climate for long-term sustainable linkages and partnerships, among others. Under the guidance of the Internationalisation Directorate, this is facilitated in line with the Department of Higher Education and Training's Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa (2020).

As SMU's profile grows globally and our university's internationalisation needs become clear, the Internationalisation Directorate seeks out universities and institutions to collaborate with for the benefit of the institution, Schools, staff and students.

These interactions are always guided by input from the various Schools and Departments, and more often than not are based on work already being done between the institutions at departmental level.

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An MOU signing is preceded by not only making sure that the Directorate does due diligence for the institution, but also that Schools, Units or Departments support the collaboration and can identify possible projects that they can work on with the international institution. Based on extensive prior work and collaborative meetings, SMU signed three significant MOUs with African institutions.



The first MOU signed was with the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR). This highly reputable medical research institute is a point of reference in basic, applied and operational research for the promotion of national health and development in Nigeria. By collaborating with NIMR, SMU and NIMR can commence collaboration on research into prevalent, communicable and non-communicable diseases as well as neglected tropical diseases. As NIMR is also tasked with the dissemination of research findings, SMU can learn and benchmark against the structure NIMR has in place to disseminate research findings as well as training within the medical research field.



The second MOU signed was with Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), based in Kenya. The signing of the MOU was preceded by a visit by Professor Peter Bukhala, Director Institutional Advancement Office, and Mr Kaleb Adamba, Lead Co-Investigator, from MMUST. The international guests visited the SMU Skills Centre and met with various Deans and Senior Management during their visit. At the signing of the MOU on the 13th of November 2023, Professor Bukhala stated that: "Now that the MOU is signed, we look forward to greater interaction and activities." The meeting discussed some of these interactions, the first being a benchmarking exercise where SMU will host MMUST staff on campus, as well as a joint research collaboration.



The third MOU signed was with the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS), based in Ghana. This collaboration is unique in that SMU and UHAS are both dedicated health sciences institutions. The possibility of a collaboration was initiated by Prof Deliwe Phetlhu, Head of Department of SMU's Nursing Department in the School of Health Care Sciences. "A journey of a 1000 miles starts with one step," Professor Phetlhu said in her remarks regarding the significance of the MOU. As initiator of the MOU, she further commented: "It is important to have South-South collaborations. This partnership can serve not only the School, but the whole university." Professor Peter Mbat, Vice-Chancellor of SMU agreed and stated that: "SMU is committed to working together with UHAS. As a dedicated health sciences institution, we have found a sister institution to benchmark against."

These three MOU's are significant in that it illustrates SMU and the University's academics willingness to work with, learn from and share knowledge with other African sister institutions. Q

Pharmacy programme receives accreditation from the South African Pharmacy Council



As a norm, receiving a qualification in an accredited programme provides the student, employers and other relevant stakeholders with the assurance that the training provided meets the set quality standards and criteria.

What, then, is accreditation?

Accreditation relates to how employers, institutions and other interested parties can trust that a student has been sufficiently trained and meet the set standards without necessarily subjecting them to a test. In simple terms, it means a **quality check!** It creates standards that allow students to transfer between institutions and to give employers the assurance that the prospective employee knows what is expected from them in the job for which they are being considered. As such, an accredited degree from an accredited institution is valuable.


South African Pharmacy Council accreditation

Against the above background, the South African Pharmacy Council had previously given conditional accreditation to the SMU's pharmacy programme, contingent on the completion of SMU pharmaceutical laboratories. As such, the Council visited SMU on 01 November 2023 to inspect the newly completed pharmaceutical laboratories, and their possible impact on the quality of the Bachelor of Pharmacy (BPharm) programme. All this was done for the purpose of final accreditation. The panel inspected the two newly built pharmaceutical laboratories, namely, the Pharmaceutical Chemistry Laboratory and the Pharmaceuticals Laboratory which comprise of sterile and non-sterile manufacturing units. The panel congratulated the Dean of the School, Prof. Patrick Demana and his team on this historical achievement.

The delegation was, especially, impressed with the state-of-the-art facilities that simulates pharmaceutical manufacturing and testing of medicinal products. They found all systems to be in order and agreed that the laboratories are ready for the provision of high quality training to undergraduate pharmacy students.

“This is, indeed, a historical achievement as it is for the first time that SMU will be offering a BPharm degree making use of its own laboratory facilities”, asserted Prof. Patrick Demana.

Whilst acknowledging this milestone, Prof. Demana emphasised that this achievement came through teamwork, indicating the role that SMU Executive Management has played in supporting this project, further indicating that the Director of Built Environment, Ms Yandisa Lengoasa worked tirelessly to ensure that the laboratories are fully functional. Whilst acknowledging the role of the School in this achievement, he particularly, expressed appreciation for the contribution and efforts by Mr Madan Poka who is the Acting Head of Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences who was central to the concept designs of the laboratories which are expected to make a significant contribution to the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry.

The School is, now, poised to soar to greater heights, Prof. Demana concluded. 



RAM, a collaborating partner, visits Sefako Makgatho University (SMU) as an initial step to establishing a Rare Disease Centre of Excellence

Nadia Bodkin, founder of the Rare Advocacy Movement (RAM) and Dora Mugambi, Rare360 Team Lead, recently visited SMU through the Health Equity Diagnostic Infrastructure (HEDI) initiative to identify potential steering committee and advisory board members for a global centre of excellence (CoE); whose focus will be to launch the first health equity diagnostic infrastructure for rare diseases at SMU, providing access to clinical and genetic sequencing services required to advance the medical understanding of how to treat debilitating conditions.

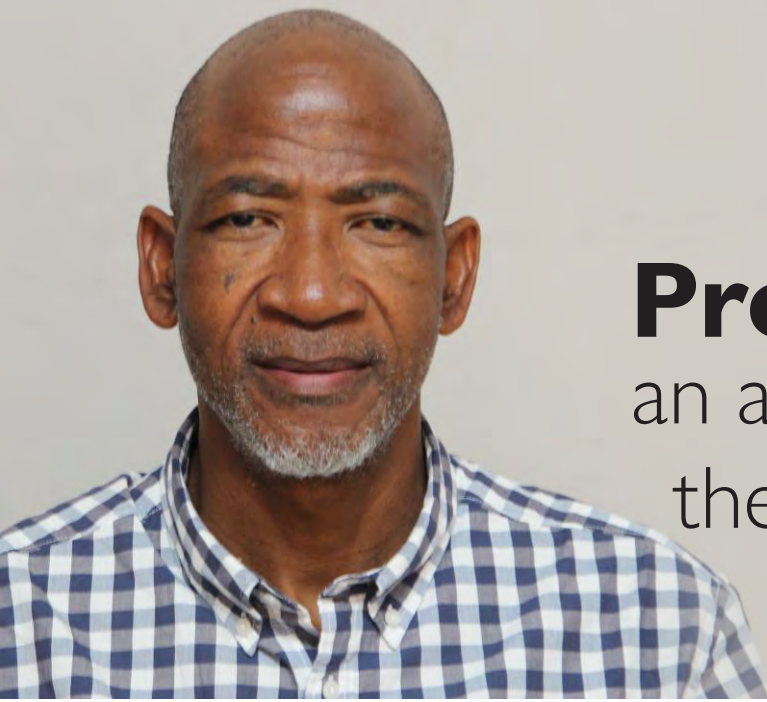
Following discussions with SMU academic staff members, who have extensive expertise in clinical, diagnostics, research and therapeutic drug development, fourteen (14) highly qualified and experienced professionals were

inaugurated into SMU's steering committee for the establishment of this centre of excellence.

The HEDI initiative will effectively allow researchers to finally gain access to valuable human health and genomic data from regions that have been otherwise marginalised by the Western world, beginning with Africa.

In anticipation of the globally recognized International Rare Disease Day, the CoE's Steering Committee will, together with SMU, host Rare Disease Day at SMU on the 29th of February 2024. Stay tuned for more information regarding this exciting event through our social media platforms. Rare Disease Day at SMU promises to be a vibrant confluence of industry, community, advocacy groups and academia, ushering in a truly unique milestone in the history of rare disease management.📍





Meet Prof Sogo Matlala

an academic veteran from
the SMU Department of
Public Health

Prof Sogo Matlala joined Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University's (SMU) Department of Public Health (DPH) on 1 September 2023 as an Associate Professor. His main responsibilities include leading health systems management and policy areas within the department.

Born and bred at Mohlalaotwane village in Sekhukhune district, Prof Matlala completed his matric at Mokoneamabula Secondary School. He obtained a Diploma in Nursing Sciences and Midwifery from Grootshoek College of Nursing, a Secondary Teachers Diploma from Kwena Moloto College of Education, a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Arts Honours in Psychology from the University of South Africa (UNISA), a Master of Public Health from the University of Limpopo and a Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in Health Studies from UNISA.


Before Prof Matlala came to SMU, he was a Lecturer at the University of Limpopo for a period of 16 years. He later became a Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor in the Department of Public Health. He also worked as a Professional Nurse in government health facilities such as Dr CN Phatudi Hospital and Matamanyane Clinic. He also worked at various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Ithuseng Community Health Association, Cancer Association of South Africa and World Vision South Africa as a Project Coordinator.

Prof Matlala was recently appointed by the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) from 2023 to 2026 where his responsibilities include determining guidelines for the functioning of health Research Ethics Committees (RECs) including Animal Ethics Committees (ARECs). He will amongst other things register and audit RECs and ARECs, set norms and standards for conducting research with human participants and research using animals, as well as for conducting clinical trials.

He is also a member of the Provincial Health Research Committee (PHRC) for Limpopo province as the Deputy Chairperson elected for a second term. He explained that this

committee facilitates health research in Limpopo and ensures that research is conducted ethically to protect participants, communities, and health facilities. "The committee approves or declines requests from researchers to conduct research in provincial government health facilities. One needs to have advanced knowledge of research ethics to serve in this committee and members are appointed by the Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) of Health," explained Prof Matlala. Additionally, Prof Matlala is also a member of the Research Output Evaluation Panel of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). He mentioned that this panel evaluates research output publications (scholarly books and conference proceedings) of public higher education institutions as submitted annually to the Department for subsidy purposes. "Each member should know research to be able to evaluate books, book chapters, and conference proceedings submissions by other researchers," advised Prof Matlala.

Prof Matlala also serves as an Academic Editor for PLOS ONE. His responsibility in this organization is to assess manuscripts from authors and decide if they are suitable for publication in the PLOS ONE journal. "If the manuscripts are suitable, I identify and invite reviewers, then handle the whole review process until I make a final decision which could be either to accept or reject the manuscript. This requires a vast understanding of academic writing and writing of manuscripts for publication," explained Prof Matlala.

According to Matlala, SMU's DPH is well developed with high-profile staff members, both academic and support staff. "I see opportunities to grow my career here by rubbing shoulders with giants and helping the department to excel. I am impressed by the fact that there is a dedicated team specifically for this area of health systems management, and everyone is committed to growing and developing health systems management and policy to produce competent health systems managers," expressed Prof Matlala. 



Dr Busisiwe Mahlangu


regards dentistry as a special profession



Dr Busisiwe Mahlangu is a clinical dentist from the School of Oral Health Sciences and was appointed at SMU in January 2023. Her responsibilities include supervising operative dentistry third-year students and Oral Biology first and second-year students. Her journey with SMU started as a student before she was employed. She obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Oral Hygiene (BOH) in 2014 and a Bachelor's Degree in Dental Surgery (BDS) in 2019. Dr Mahlangu excelled during her varsity life and has proven this by obtaining two awards under the categories of: Top Achiever for Integrated Clinical Dentistry and Top Achiever for Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology in 2019.

As an efficient leader, Dr Mahlangu has begun introducing 'class outside class' as a flagship to assess how the students would respond to this type of learning. She said it was evident that the students were more confident in the way they approached the subject and were enthusiastic about

coming for lessons while working hard towards achieving their goals. "I am part of the health committee that mainly focuses on community outreach and engagement programmes at a local Seventh Day Adventist church. We offer free health screenings and education in various communities," mentioned Dr Mahlangu.

She explained that her journey with SMU has been eye-opening and realized that even though it is mandatory to be a natural giver and nurturer when in the health profession, she learned that going above and beyond to give back to our communities and educating upcoming generations is a habit she quickly grasped. "Dentistry is such a special profession and I love being able to enlighten so many who without blame, have overlooked this career path for so long until they had issues about their Oral Health. It is so rewarding and there is just so much to discover and learn" added Dr Mahlangu. 



Meet Dr Kolisa Siqoko - Operations Manager *(School of Oral Health)*

Dr Kolisa Siqoko is the Operations Manager at the School of Oral Health Sciences (SOHS) focusing on strategic development, implementation of school resources, integration of operations, academic planning and administration. She is also accountable for stakeholder relations and partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, and resource management including human, infrastructure and financial. Focus on SMU Reporter interviewed Dr Siqoko who outlined her responsibilities in the SOHS.

Who is Dr Kolisa Siqoko?

I was born in a village in the rural Eastern Cape and later went to study for my first degree, a Bachelor of Arts Degree at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and then went on to complete a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Nelson Mandela University (NMU). I later became a lecturer for Business Administration to first-

year students in the Faculty of Business Sciences and Law at former Border Technikon now part (of Walter Sisulu University). I subsequently completed a second Master's Degree in Rural Development from the University of Fort Hare. I lectured Business Administration at Border Technikon for three years and moved on to become a regional director for a non-profit trust which placed high school students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds at South Africa's best high schools. Later I became an academic project manager at the University of Fort Hare's Teaching and Learning Centre and when my family relocated to Gauteng, I became a Deputy Director at the Institutional Funding Branch of the Department of Higher Education and Training. Four years later I ended up as a School Operations Manager at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University in the School of Oral Health Sciences. I am a happily married mother of two children.

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What led you to apply for the position of Operations Manager?

Firstly, I believe I am a strategic thinker, my experience in the higher education sector ensured I have a 360-degree view of the operations of an academic enterprise, from staff to students to administration and research. I have the financial acumen to ensure our school focuses on implementation and I am results-driven. So, I believe I have something to contribute to our school and SMU at large. Lastly, I am passionate about student development and student success. The key to running successful academic enterprises is to have a student-centred approach to development.

What is your vision for the SOHS?

I would not say it is my vision. Let me say I bought into the vision of SMU and into what the current Acting Dean of Oral Health Sciences is doing to execute that vision. In a nutshell, the school is gravitating towards seamless and strengthened academic administration, creating an academically engaged and accountable student body and a capacitated staff complement to run a seamless academic project. This is not easy as you have to be intentional about a staff and student culture that exists and intentional about promoting excellence. We are really focusing on student success and research outputs.

Which management style do you apply?

Self-leadership and to me that means leading by doing or leading by example. The standards you require of others, you must first set them for yourself. I also believe in having a good balance between a concern for productivity and a concern for people. By understanding that people come from homes and families and work is an extension of that, they have to navigate a life-work balance. Most importantly leading with compassion and kindness.

Which major projects have you earmarked for the SOHS?

I would like to see student agency, discipline and consummate professionalism emanating out of our student body. An improved student engagement at Oral Health Sciences. I would like to see our students upholding rules and an intention to receive the quality of education they deserve by engaging constructively and educating themselves in this aspect. I believe we have incredible staff and incredible and dedicated academics in our School. I would like to see more and more research outputs and ground-breaking research coming out of our school and a restoration of pride in academia emanating from a culture of kindness, humbleness and professionalism. More importantly, I would like to see the school improve its pursuit of third-stream income generation and deepen its community engagement initiatives.

Since you arrived at SMU, which milestones have you achieved?

The focus has been on assisting the Acting Dean in pursuing the implementation of capital projects approved through grants such as the expansion of

the clinical training platform and the revamping of the undergraduate space. The other focus has been on creating cohesive relationships between HODs and students through the Dean, HOD's and student forum established by the school. The school went through two programme accreditations by the HPCSA (BDS and BDT/BOH). To also focus on writing retreats to improve the research outputs which this year the output has improved significantly from 4 in the previous year to 10 publications in 2023.


Introduced the quarterly Dean/HODs/COORDINATOR and student forum in our school. Helped the school to formalise student support through formalising academic guardianship, defining the roles and outlining clear avenues for both academic and psycho-social support in the School.

Strengthened the newly introduced finance committee of the school, consisting of HODs and senior managers of the Oral Health hospital to leverage grants and funding within the school.

EDUCATION CREDENTIALS

- **Completed PhD: University of Pretoria (UP), Education Humanities 2023**
Thesis: "The constitution and negotiation of rural students' identities at an urban university in South Africa. The proposal is currently being defended and collecting data. Doing the final year in 2021.
- **Master's Degree: University of Fort Hare, Rural Development/Completed 2017**
Thesis: "Buffalo City and its development discourse, partnerships or silos".
- **Masters Degree: Port Elizabeth Technikon (NMU), Business Administration/ Completed 2004**
Thesis: "An investigation into the knowledge management practices of Old Mutual Buffalo City".
- **Bachelor of Technology: Port Elizabeth Technikon (NMU), Business Administration/Completed 2003**
- **Bachelor's of Arts Degree: University of the Western Cape (UWC) Completed 1996**
- **Completed Matric: St Cuthberts Senior Secondary School 1991**

ACADEMIC COMMITTEES SERVING ON:

- Academic Planning Committee, School of Oral Health Sciences
- Research and Ethics Committee, School of Oral Health Sciences (Protocol reviewer)
- Chairperson of the Student Support Task Team for the School of Oral Health Sciences
- Finance Committee School of Oral Health Sciences (Deputy chairperson). 

Ms Monica Maseko - Operations Manager (School of Medicine)



Ms Monica Maseko was born in Irene, Pretoria. Her family later relocated to Mabopane, where she started primary school. She completed her secondary education at Hlanganani High in Soshanguve, where her family still resides. Ms. Maseko holds a National Diploma in Public Administration, a Bachelor of Public Administration, a Master's in Public Administration, and certificates in Risk Management, Customer Services and International Computer Drivers Licence (ICDL). The School of Medicine faces an ongoing challenge related to the shortage of teaching and learning space; however, there are efforts to repurpose and modernize the available spaces for the benefit and utilization of all departments within the school. *Focus on SMU* Reporter recently interviewed Ms. Maseko, the Operations Manager of the School of Medicine to gain insights into her role within the institution.

Vision as the Operations Manager

The profile necessitates a significant set of administrative and general managerial skills within a complex and high-pressure environment. It also requires a strong drive, adaptability, and effective team leadership abilities.

Considering these requirements, Ms. Maseko's vision is focused on several key priority areas, which include, but are not limited to:

- Aligning the School's function with the University's overall strategic plan and annual performance plan.
- Maintaining effective leadership, governance, and management to ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, as well as the efficient

delivery of administrative services.

- Efficiently managing human resources, finances, and infrastructure within the School in accordance with University policies.
- Overseeing academic planning and administration, including scheduling school activities and committee meetings.
- Providing secretariat services, such as appropriately allocating secretarial support to school committees and reviewing meeting documentation, including agendas and minutes. This includes a particular focus on the School Board and the Executive Committee of the School of Medicine (MEDEX), ensuring accuracy and compiling school reports for various University structures like ECS, Senate and its subcommittees.
- Maintaining ongoing communication with the Centre

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for University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) to obtain feedback regarding student referrals for academic support and development, especially for students who have been re-admitted following academic exclusion.

This vision is aimed at ensuring that the School of Medicine charges its responsibilities in a manner that aligns with the broader University's strategic plan.

Decision to apply for the position of Operations Manager

Having previously held roles such as Assistant Administrative Officer, Senior Administrative Officer, Principal Administrative Officer, Senior Committee Officer, and Interim Head of the Enrolment Management Unit, the application for the Operations Manager position resonated with her career aspirations and career progression; notwithstanding the experience accumulated over the years. As a seasoned administrator, she is well-equipped to thrive in complex and dynamic environments, having interacted with numerous government departments and professional bodies. Additionally, she possesses a strong understanding of the Higher Education sector, along with problem-solving and interpersonal skills that make her an excellent fit for the Operations Manager role. She is enthusiastic about making a meaningful impact at SMU.

Management style as the Operations Manager

Ms. Maseko places her faith in a range of leadership styles, but she believes that a combination of transformational and democratic leadership styles aligns best with the institution's culture. She is strongly focused on achieving results and emphasizes the importance of individual accountability in one's work. Moreover, she actively encourages and motivates team members to commit to their tasks and maintains an open-door policy, allowing her to address issues in the most effective manner possible. Ms. Maseko believes that open communication serves as the cornerstone of success, enabling her to connect with people and foster a productive and positive environment. She takes deliberate steps to instil trust within the team and exhibits strong listening skills. She approaches her role with diligence, assertiveness, and friendliness while maintaining a professional yet approachable demeanour. Her goal is to ensure that departments within the School operate cohesively, recognizing that their processes are interrelated rather than mutually exclusive.

Major projects earmarked for the School of Medicine

The following are some of the important projects that Ms. Maseko has outlined for the School of Medicine:

- To support the ongoing accreditation of departments within the School in alignment with accreditation bodies.
- To oversee the renovation and regular maintenance of the school's infrastructure.
- To advocate for the filling of vacant positions within the school.
- To conduct a comprehensive situational analysis regarding the training and development requirements of support staff, and to make recommendations to the HR department as part of the school's development plan.
- To reinforce collaborations with both internal and external stakeholders.
- To provide effective management to team members, ensuring their competence and motivation to perform optimally and meet their key performance objectives.

Milestones achieved as the Operations Manager so far

Since assuming the role of Operations Manager in November 2022, she has gained a deeper insight into the operations and challenges faced by the School of Medicine. Among her accomplishments during this period are the following:

- She has developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Deanery, which are currently in the process of being reviewed and approved.
- She has conducted a review of the Terms of Reference for several School Committees, aiming to ensure alignment with the school's vision and mission.
- She has undertaken the review and revision of the School of Medicine Undergraduate and Postgraduate Rules to be approved by the relevant structures.
- She has overseen a comprehensive renovation of Lecture rooms N201 and N401, including the replacement of furniture and equipment.
- She has taken the lead in renovation projects and the procurement of equipment and furniture for various school departments.
- She has facilitated the installation of advanced technology equipment in the school boardroom.
- She has been instrumental in the effort to fill vacant positions within the school, with some positions currently in the shortlisting phase, while others are awaiting interviews, and a few have already been successfully filled. Q

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SMU Development Grants Office hosts the NGAP internal workshop



Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University's Development Grants Office hosted a hybrid internal workshop of the New Generation of Academics Programme (NGAP) under the theme 'Revitalising and transforming the academic profession on 10 October 2023.

In opening the session, Prof Tandi Matsha-Erasmus Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Research, indicated that the purpose of this session was to welcome SMU's new nGAP lecturers into academia as key people in the University's academic enterprise. She said nGAP lecturers need to be able to understand the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of the programme they are in. She mentioned that they want to be able to build a clear understanding among nGAP beneficiaries of the University's policies that affect them as NGAP lecturers.

Prof Matsha-Erasmus further highlighted that this workshop would clear anything that the nGAP lecturers are concerned about. "You are not just an NGAP lecturer, but a full-time SMU staff member. Most importantly, this is for you to see what opportunities are there that SMU offers to its academic staff members because you benefit from all of them. The one thing I want to encourage you is to attend what Centre for University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) is offering on an ongoing basis so that you can acquire a full understanding and skills of teaching students," advised Prof Matsha.

Director of the Development Grants office, Mr Theo Bhengu made a presentation about the introduction and structure of the NGAP programme. He explained the NGAP's application process and other key aspects which include different grants offered by the Development Grants Office. He shared with all attendees that

SMU has been participating in the nGAP since 2016, highlighted achievements, and some of the challenges experienced throughout. He indicated that the grants office reports to SMU's CFO. He indicated that DHET developed the Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF).

"Priority is given to people under 40 years to participate in the NGAP who will be assigned mentors during the course of the programme. NGAP participants must contribute 80% of their time towards their PhD study and 20% to teaching in the first three years of the programme. On the fourth year, their teaching responsibilities go up to 50% and they are expected to take a full load during the fifth year. Those with a PhD already take 50% teaching responsibilities from Year 1 and a full load from Year 4 onwards. SMU currently has 16 NGAP lecturers from various departments," informed Bhengu.

Other presentations were made by the National Research Foundation (NRF) and CUTL regarding opportunities they have for NGAP participants. The Human Resource business partner Ms Busisiwe Mbanjwa and the Grants Accountant Ms Maite Letsoalo made presentation on HR and financial policies and processes to undergo to help NGAP participants understand the requirements and procedures related.

Finally, Dr Livhuwani Tshivhase, who has completed her PhD and the programme, reflected on her NGAP journey to show the new nGAP beneficiaries that it was possible to do the programme, as long as one is diligent and dedicated. She also shared some of the challenges she experienced as one of the earliest nGAP beneficiaries at SMU.





To rank or not to rank: understanding the implications of rankings for SMU

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor, in conjunction with SMU's Internationalisation Directorate, hosted SMU's first Rankings Workshop recently. The ranking of higher education institutions by global ranking agencies has become a much debated and contested topic. Prof Peter Mbatlana, Vice-Chancellor of SMU, initiated the discussion around rankings at the University's Strategic Planning Workshop by stating: "Whether we support the concept of rankings or not, we are being ranked. The question becomes: What are we as SMU doing about it?"

The SMU Rankings Workshop programme was developed in such a way that attendees would firstly be introduced to the concept of rankings, the methodology behind it, the various ranking agencies operating in the space and then listen to internationalists, and higher education experts discuss various aspects of rankings. The experts invited to participate in the workshop came from across the globe to discuss the intricacies of rankings, and offer SMU senior management, representatives from the various Schools and student body information to answer the question: should SMU participate in rankings or not?

One of the most prominent observations about rankings is that individuals who consult rankings, for instance prospective students, do not know how the rankings instrument work, what is being measured and why some institutions are not being ranked. A sentiment shared by Dr Tafadzwa Ruziwe, a Postdoc and Research Associate at the University of the Free State who discussed perceptions on

rankings with the attendees. For this same reason, the SMU Rankings Workshop programme set out to define rankings and identify how some of the most prominent rankers go about ranking institutions. Ms Veronica Omeni, a principal consultant from Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Ranking discussed their methodology, while Mr Tristan Horlick from Times Higher Education (THE) Ranking provided a presentation on their ranking methodology. Currently, SMU is ranked by Webometrics, which bases its ranking on quality, quantity and access to web content from the University. According to Webometrics, SMU is ranked 19th in South Africa and 3041 globally. SMU also participated in THE's Sub-Saharan African Rankings, where the institution is currently ranked 61-70th in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Dr Pieter Stek, the chief analyst for ranker AppliedHE (based in Asia), offered an alternative view on why universities should engage with rankers. He indicated that rankings should rather be viewed as a measurement tool that can assist institutions to identify areas that they can enhance so as to continuously grow and increase their standards. As rankings also include new trends in higher education, rankings can also assist in identifying areas that universities should invest in for the future, for instance ensuring that there's a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This sentiment was echoed by Dr Peter Wells (Head of Education, Southern Africa, UNESCO). Dr Wells concluded his talk by stating: "I have never before heard such considered and reflective discussions at the institutional level on the advantages or disadvantages of ranking. I

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applaud you Prof Mbatl, Dr Jooste and your colleagues for this frank and collaborative internal approach.”

The second half of the workshop focused on the different perspectives on rankings from South African universities. Prof Sioux McKenna, Director Centre for Postgraduate Studies at Rhodes University, discussed why Rhodes University has decided to not participate in rankings, while Dr Segun Obadire, Director International Relations and Partnerships at the University of Venda, discussed why UNIVEN has now decided to start focusing on rankings and what it has meant for their institution to date. The workshop was privileged to also have globally recognized higher education internationalisation specialist, Prof Ellen Hazelkorn (Professor Emeritus at the Technological University Dublin) offer her input regarding rankings, especially for a niche institution like SMU. She asked that SMU consider what we would like to measure. “Will you measure what you value? Because there is an assumption that we can measure quality using an aggregate of indicators (such as those found in rankings), but that’s not true.” She concluded her talk by advising SMU to act strategically and investigate why we want to rank.

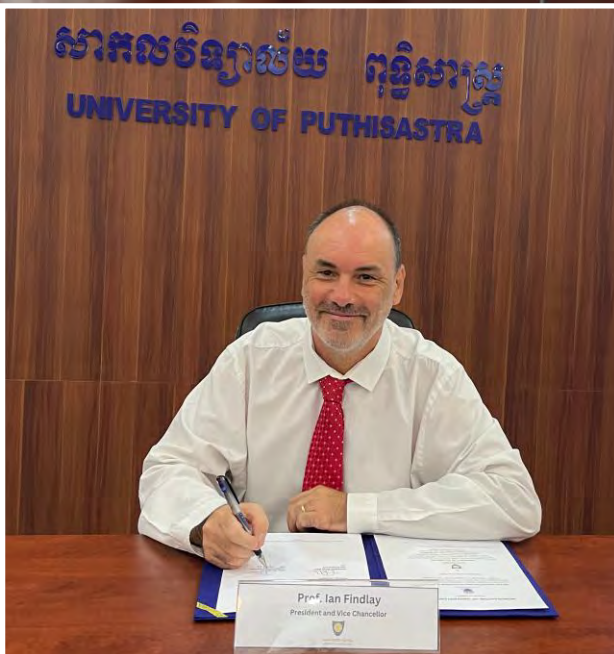


The SMU colleagues discussed this at length, and it was decided that an additional workshop will be held to further unpack rankings at SMU. The conclusion of this will see the publishing of a Rankings Strategy for SMU, which will be driven by the Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance Department, Internationalisation Directorate and Marketing and Communications Directorate, and overseen by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. Q





SMU's School of Oral Health Sciences signs MOU with Cambodian university



Partnerships, collaborations and linkages form part of the mandate of the Internationalisation Directorate at SMU. The Office's role is to create linkages with international institutions for the benefit foremost of the academic project and the institution as a whole. However, for any partnership, collaboration, or linkage to be a success, the support and willingness to envision the possibilities that a certain partnership can offer are needed.

The Internationalisation Directorate introduced SMU's School of Oral Health Sciences to the Faculty of Dentistry of the University of Puthisastra (UP) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Established in 2007, the private university is known for its excellence in teaching, being student-oriented and its community service operationalised through its outreach and aid programmes. The institution focuses mainly on health sciences as well as business, entrepreneurship and technology, and English studies.

The first meeting between SMU and UP saw both Deans and HOD's discuss synergies and possibilities. It was agreed that both institutions would like to sign an MOU and commence with research projects as well as virtual exchange of knowledge. The MOU was signed on the 28th of November. Prof Dini Mawela, Acting Dean of the School of Oral Health Sciences observed during the MOU signing: "The following quote is especially relevant today: "Any positive change in the world is seldom achieved by one person; more often than not, amazing things happen when like-minded people are committed to a singular goal".

The School and colleagues here today are inspired and encouraged by this opportunity to collaborate with UP." Dr Sandeepa Singh, HOD of Maxillofacial and Oral Radiology commented: "I am sure we will find that our strength lies not only in our similarities but equally in our differences."

SMU looks forward to entering into more mutually beneficial relationships with institutions that can assist in growing, strengthening and internationalising our academic project.

Mr Fundile Simane – Operations Manager

in the School of Pharmacy
plans to create an environment
that fosters efficiency,
innovation, and excellence

School of Pharmacy Operations Manager Mr Fundile Simane is always eager to expand his horizons as he develops strategic plans and Annual Performance Plans, coordinates the School's operations to ensure improvement of its performance and efficiency towards achieving its strategic objectives, conducts research for executive strategic advice and collates background information to support the executive in the execution of his functions, amongst others. He spoke to Focus to outline his responsibilities in detail.

Take us through your early years and academic journey

My life journey has been marked by resilience, ambition, and a relentless pursuit of knowledge. I am a second born in a large and close-knit family of eleven children raised in the scenic yet challenging environment of rural areas, where I learned the values of hard work and the importance of community from an early age. From my earliest years, I harboured a deep-seated desire to rise above the constraints of my environment and make a meaningful difference in my life and the lives of others. Education emerged as the beacon of hope that would light my path to a brighter future.

My educational journey began at a local junior and secondary School in my village before, Walter Sisulu University, where I embarked on the pursuit of a Bachelor's degree. This was a significant milestone that laid the foundation for my academic endeavours and my commitment to personal growth.

Fuelled by an insatiable thirst for learning, I decided to pursue an Honours degree, further specializing in my chosen field of study and went on to complete a Master of Public Administration at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, which broadened my understanding of public affairs and administration. I recently completed a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the prestigious University of Johannesburg Business School. This accomplishment was a

culmination of years of dedication and hard work, and it has equipped me with the skills and knowledge necessary to make a meaningful impact in the business world.

Take us through your professional journey

My professional journey in higher education administration has been a dynamic and enriching one, characterized by a series of diverse and progressively responsible roles. It all began at Cape Peninsula University, where I launched my higher education career as an Administrative Officer in the Registrar's Division. This role laid the groundwork for my passion for academic administration and the vital support it provides to the academic community.

Building on this foundation, I transitioned to the Central University of Technology, where I continued my career in the Office of the Registrar. Here, I honed my skills in various aspects of academic administration, contributing to the smooth functioning of the institution's educational and administrative processes.

My journey then led me to the University of Mpumalanga, where I continued to work within the Office of the Registrar. This role allowed me to further expand my expertise and knowledge in the area of academic administration while contributing to the academic success of the university and its students.

In June 2022, I took another significant step in my career by joining Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University as a School Operations Manager. This role represents a new and exciting chapter in my professional journey, where I have the opportunity to manage and oversee the operations of the school, contributing to the development and success of both students and the institution as a whole.

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My career in higher education administration reflects my dedication to supporting the academic community and ensuring the smooth and efficient operation of academic institutions. I am excited to continue this journey and make a positive impact in my current role at SMU.

What is your vision for the School of Pharmacy as the Operations Manager?

My vision is focused on creating an environment that fosters efficiency, innovation, and excellence in all aspects of the school's functions. Here are the key components of my administrative and operational vision:

- **Streamlined Administrative Processes:** I aim to optimize administrative processes to ensure they are efficient and user-friendly. This includes implementing modern administrative systems and technologies that simplify tasks like admissions, student records, and financial management.
- **Resource Management:** Efficient allocation and management of resources are crucial for the school's success. I will work on developing a comprehensive resource management plan that ensures the School's financial and human resources are used effectively to support academic and research endeavours.
- **Student-Centric Services:** Students are at the heart of our institution, and I envision a service-oriented approach that prioritizes their needs. This includes providing easily accessible student services, academic advising, and support to ensure the best possible learning experience.
- **Professional Development:** Investing in the ongoing professional development of staff is vital. This ensures that the team remains well-equipped to handle the evolving challenges and demands of the higher education landscape.
- **Compliance and Regulatory Adherence:** I will work to ensure that the school is compliant with all relevant regulations and standards. This includes accreditation requirements, licensing, and adherence to national and international educational standards.
- **Continuous Improvement:** A culture of continuous improvement will be encouraged throughout the school. Regular assessments, feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for staff and student input will drive positive change and growth.
- **Community Engagement:** The school will actively engage with the local and healthcare communities to ensure that our educational and research activities align with their needs.
- Additionally, part of the vision is to create an environment where the administrative and operational aspects of the School of Pharmacy are not only efficient but also contribute to the overall excellence and success of the institution. By focusing on these key areas, we can ensure that the School of Pharmacy continues to thrive and provide a high-quality education for our students while contributing to the advancement of pharmaceutical sciences and healthcare.

What motivated you to apply for the position of Operations Manager?

I applied for the position of Operations Manager at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University with a combination of professional ambition and a genuine commitment to making a positive impact in the field of higher education and healthcare. Several compelling reasons guided my decision to pursue this role:

- **Alignment with My Educational Background:** My educational journey, culminating in a Master of Business Administration, has equipped me with a strong foundation in organizational management, leadership, and operational efficiency. This position aligns well with my academic and professional background.
- **Growth and Leadership:** I aspire to continuously grow as a professional and a leader. The position of Operations Manager presents a platform to develop innovative solutions, improve processes, and lead a team to achieve the strategic objectives of the institution.
- **Professional Development:** The position offers ample opportunities for professional growth and development. It enables me to continually learn, adapt, and take on new challenges in the ever-evolving field of higher education.
- **Sefako Makgatho Reputation:** Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University is known for its commitment to healthcare education and research as is considered a health sciences university. Joining an institution with such a strong reputation aligns with my desire to work in an environment dedicated to excellence.

Overall, my decision to apply for the position of Operations Manager at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University was motivated by a combination of my qualifications, passion for education and healthcare, a desire to contribute to the institution's mission, and a commitment to personal and professional growth. I believe that this role aligns well with my aspirations and offers an exciting opportunity to make a meaningful impact in the higher education and healthcare sectors.

Which management style do you apply as the Operations Manager?

As an Operations Manager, my management style is adaptive and situational, meaning I tailor my approach to best suit the specific needs and circumstances of the situation, the team, and the organization. Different situations call for different management styles, and it's important to be versatile to effectively address various challenges and opportunities. My approach as an Operations Manager is driven by the belief that effective leadership should be adaptable and responsive to the needs of the team and the organization. By using a combination of management styles as appropriate, I aim to promote a positive work environment, foster growth and innovation, and help the organization achieve its goals.

Which major projects have you earmarked for the School of Pharmacy?

As the Operations Manager at the School of Pharmacy at

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Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, I have identified a few major projects and initiatives that I believe will contribute significantly to the school's growth, excellence, and impact in the field of pharmaceutical education and healthcare. These projects are designed to address various aspects of the school's operations and development. Here are some of the major projects earmarked for the School of Pharmacy:

- **Curriculum Enhancement:** Review and update the curriculum to ensure it aligns with the latest advancements in pharmaceutical sciences and meets the changing needs of the healthcare industry.
- **Infrastructure and Facilities:** Upgrade classrooms to create a conducive learning environment for students and provide modern research facilities for faculty and students.
- **Alumni Engagement:** Establish and strengthen an alumni network to provide ongoing support for graduates, encourage mentorship opportunities, and tap into the expertise of alumni for the benefit of current students.
- **Accreditation and Quality Assurance:** Provide support towards accreditation by relevant professional bodies and implement quality assurance measures to ensure that the School of Pharmacy meets national standards.

Since you arrived at SMU, which milestones have you achieved as the Operations Manager?

Since I assumed the role of Operations Manager at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), several significant milestones have been achieved. These accomplishments have been part of a collective effort involving the dedicated team at the School of Pharmacy and the larger university community. Here are some of the key milestones and achievements:

- **Alignment of Bachelor of Pharmacy Academic Structure:** Collaborated with the academic departments to review and update the school's academic structure, ensuring that the delivery is aligned with the approved and captured academic structure at the institutional level. This effort has resulted in smoother coordination and delivery of the programme.
- **School governance structures:** Successfully formalized School governance structures and developed Terms of Reference (ToRs) for all School committees.
- **Quality Assurance and Accreditation:** Worked diligently toward accreditation by relevant professional bodies, along with the implementation of quality assurance measures to ensure that the School of Pharmacy meets national standards.
- **Infrastructure Upgrades:** Oversaw the upgrade/improvements of School facilities, (Pharmacy building) including offices and classrooms, creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning. However, there is still quite a lot that needs to be done in this regard.

These milestones reflect the ongoing commitment of the School of Pharmacy to advancing the quality of pharmaceutical education, research, and community engagement. They demonstrate our collective dedication to excellence and continuous improvement.📄



Meet Dr Vuyokazi Soga-Kamdem - Operations Manager in the School of Health Care Sciences

School of Health Care Sciences Operations Manager Dr Vuyokazi Soga-Kamdem manages the academic administration of the School, ensuring effective liaison with all relevant central administration departments, and compliance with all applicable university-wide rules and procedures. She spoke to Focus about her role as the Operations Manager.

Who is Babalwa Soga-Kamdem?

I was born in Mdantsane in the Eastern Cape. I come from a family of six children: five girls and one boy. I am a mother of two, a wife, a daughter, a sister and a role model. I was raised by both parents: my mother, who was

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a domestic worker and my dad, who was a labourer. I had a wonderful childhood despite some socio-economic challenges in certain instances. I come from a very Christian background and was raised in the Anglican Church. My parents will not let us miss a church session on Sunday. I am still within the Anglican Church. As we were growing up as girls, my parents, who were both very strict, taught us independence, resilience and confidence. My father, who, as I later realised, was quite ahead of his time regarding gender equity and equality, always emphasised that there was nothing a man can do that I cannot do. It was up to me to develop myself socially, academically and professionally and deal with both opportunities and challenges appropriately and accordingly as they come.

After matric, I left my home to study in Cape Town at the then Peninsula Technikon (PENTECH), where I completed my National Diploma in Office Management and Technology. Whilst at PENTECH, I worked as a student assistant in various departments. This created in me the love of working with students and in an academic institution. After completing my B-Tech, I got a job at Technikon Pretoria (now Tshwane University of Technology). I would say I have learnt much of what I know at TUT. I had mentors who taught me everything I needed to know about working in an academic institution, from the time students apply until they graduate, including internal administration processes, post-graduate administration, budget management, recruitment and selection. I went further and obtained certificates in Human Resources. I have spent most of my career in Higher Education and would not trade it for anything. As a child growing up, you obviously have dreams and certain things you want to achieve in life. I am still working towards achieving some of my dreams. I am inspired to assist students who come to the School as I am aware that they have dreams and aspirations and they also face challenges.

Why Did You Decide to Join SMU?

This job resonated with my interests, skillsets, experience and, above all, my aspirations. The job represented an opportunity to be part of something big – to be part of a critical solution to South Africa. The healthcare profession is quite critical and our lives depend on it. Being part of the School provided an opportunity to play a central, intrinsically motivating part in the development of professionals whose hands, bodies and minds will directly promote and support a healthy society. The School has been an opportunity for personal learning and career growth. I plan to remain in this role and play my part.

What is your Vision for the School

As the School's operations manager, my vision is fully aligned with that of the School. If I can put it wittingly – My vision is to see the School attain its vision. The School's vision is: *"To be a leading school of Health Care Science that is nationally relevant, regionally and globally competitive in holistic education"*.

I aspire to see the School taking its rightful place in the national, regional and global healthcare science education

arena. The "relevance" aspect of this vision demands from us, as staff, and me as the School's operations manager, to work together to ensure that whatever output comes from the School contributes to the resolution of healthcare challenges that baffle our communities, region and world. Our output, be it trained healthcare practitioners' intellectual resources, must be part of a solution to challenges. This demands a "holistic" education that first develops a professional with the targeted attitude, behaviors, skills, expertise and knowledge. This professional is capable of meeting global healthcare best practices and applying those practices for the betterment of humanity.

As an operations manager, I must ensure that the operational systems that we have effectively support the academic and practical skills development systems that produce the type of professional whose attributes are described by the above vision.

What are the major projects for the School?

I have earmarked various projects that will benefit the current and future students of the School. Among these is the preparation of students for entrepreneurial life as an alternative and a first career choice. This requires networking with entrepreneurship support agencies like the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA) and The Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) so that they provide training and start-up support to our graduates who may wish to take the entrepreneurship route. This will contribute to the reduction of unemployment in our communities while empowering innovation.

Among the current students, I have been trying to formulate projects that address common socioeconomic challenges. These include finding ways to enhance students' financial management knowledge. Students struggle with managing their income versus expenditures, and this often leaves many stranded and unable to focus on their academic goals entirely. Financial management is, therefore, a tool that each student must be equipped with when they get to the School. Related to this, food security projects, including a food bank for the School, would go a long way in alleviating hunger among students. Fundraising activities and sponsorship searches for the School will help needy students reduce the income versus costs gap, enabling them to focus on their studies. For career guidance purposes, the School could revive the "Bring your child to work day" targeting Grades 11s and grade 12s. This is intended to motivate and inspire them towards greatness. As a School, we owe our communities the duty of guiding and developing future healthcare workers.

Other projects I have earmarked for the School are research-oriented. The School needs to conduct research studies that enable us to understand students better. Rather than generalising, we need to appreciate their challenges, needs and interests fully. More importantly, the research projects would help us to help the students better. We have many and diverse student groups. Everyone deserves to be listened to, understood and assisted. Research will provide a baseline from which this can be achieved.

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What are the Milestones Achieved So Far?


I am the first School Operation Manager to be appointed at the University. A significant challenge that I encountered was that my role was not clearly defined, as there was no previous person in the role. I ended up having to do everything that was given to me. While this involved long hours of hard work, I have been able to stabilise the expectations, processes and outcomes of this job and office. I believe that my future successors to this job will find much structure to it. Now, the School's internal and stakeholders fully comprehend and appreciate what to expect from the operations manager's office. Important links have been created with other administrative departments and the academic units as well. Academic units can now focus and concentrate on their core businesses of research, teaching and learning, knowing well that the operational and logistical side of academia is well-covered. Other support departments have also been able to focus on their core areas. This enhances the School's efficiency and effectiveness in the journey towards the attainment of our vision and in the process of driving its mission.

To add, much responsibility comes with this office, and therefore, I do not take it for granted. I respect the roles and

responsibilities that come with it, and I desire to continue with it. The position of operations manager does not stand in isolation. It is the cooperation, coordination and cohesion with fellow teammates, with students, with other units and departments and with the university leadership that enables this office to achieve for the School. Therefore, I urge continued cooperation with other stakeholders and a culture of continuous improvement of team relationships. This will strengthen not only this office's capacity to execute the School's mission but also the capacities of all concerned stakeholders as well.

What are your Future Plans?

For now, I am focusing on publications. I recently presented a paper titled, *“Educator versus student in the adoption of chatbots in education – a technology diffusion approach”* which will be part of the book project at the University of Fort Hare, Faculty of Law. Next year I will be attending the Management Development Programme (MDP) to help me develop skills to perform management responsibilities effectively within a changing and competitive business environment and also acquire the required competencies to deal with functional and cross-functional business processes. 



Naledi Mathole: Speaks about her role at SMU

Tell us about yourself, early days and schooling

I am a qualified Veterinary Technologist working within the Department of Hand and Microsurgery where I train medical professionals on Basic Microsurgical Skills. I am currently completing my Masters in Health Sciences(MHSc) with a focus on the Impact of Microsurgery within the various disciplines in Medicine. I

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currently also a CoP member of the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) which is a University Education Branch of the Department Higher Education and Training, where I am a coordinator and representative of the University for Student Entrepreneurship.

When did you join SMU as an employee?

I joined SMU in December 2018. I previously worked at the University of Pretoria where I worked in Veterinary Genetics and Molecular Diagnostics.

Explain to us what your role as a medical technologist entail?

Currently my role as a Technologist is to train and instruct aspiring surgeons on basic microsurgical technique. Microsurgery is any surgery that requires the use of fine instruments underneath a microscope. It allows surgeons to repair damaged blood vessels and nerves, transplant tissues and other procedures which would require this specialised skill.

What do you find exciting about your job?

I think it speaks to my passion for teaching and the fact that we get to train one surgeon who will go on to impact the lives of many patients. This surgery spans over many different disciplines from Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery to Ophthalmology, Orthopaedic surgery and the likes. This allows me to also interact with different medical professionals from varying disciplines every two weeks and also get an opportunity to learn from them.

What sort of training does a person require to serve in a similar role?

As an Instructor I was required to have an undergrad BTech in Veterinary Technology. I however did not have a similar background as I was coming from Genetics. So I would like to believe a passion for teaching and working with people. The medical professionals we train are either aspiring or qualified surgeons.

You are known for your interest in entrepreneurship, take us through this, what drives you and what do you hope to achieve?

I have such a passion for people and helping them achieve their dreams. To see someone who has an idea in seed form and see it come to life for that person, is an amazing. I am such a firm believer in empowering people. As the principle of Ubuntu is loosely translated, "I am because we are". We all have God given talents and sometimes it is not that we are not good enough, it is that we have not encountered the right opportunity that speaks to that. By empowering another, you essentially empower yourself and as a collective, we all win. I think way too many of us have

been in situations where we required people to believe in us and our dreams and when you do eventually find that, it is one of the most impactful things that could happen to you. I believe this is what the students need, to know that we believe in them. The students have the ability to be active participants in the economy by building companies and disrupting industries which create lasting impact for our surrounding communities and theirs.

Do you think it's important for students to acquire entrepreneurial skills?

I definitely think so, not just students but staff too. Entrepreneurship is not just about starting a business but its about a mindset shift from waiting for someone else to solve a problem to being an active participant to the solution. It's about being innovative in our way of thinking and utilising the knowledge we have gained through our degrees to impact the lives of others for good. It's about the students reaching their full potential. They have the ability to change the world as we not and have the ability to disrupt industries with their way of thinking.

What have been your observations since you started working with students on such issues?

There are a lot of students who are actual entrepreneurial and require guidance on where to go or what to when they have ideas. Some of these ideas are actually patentable but they are at times too afraid that their ideas are too "small". I think even if the idea might be something that needs to be refined, a seed would have been planted that it is possible. As a Health Sciences University we need to have more students thinking about the innovation behind their research or businesses which could ultimately lead to breaking barriers within the health industry or even the formation of spin off companies.

What are your future plans and aspirations?

I will definitely be more involved in the Student Entrepreneurship space and aspire to create greater awareness. There is some much potential for Intellectual Property(IP) which emanates from Research as well. I hope to personally develop myself even further and further contribute towards research. I will always have a love for teaching so that's definitely something that I will continue to do.

What do you like about SMU?

The culture here is amazing! We all have shared values on what it means to be part of this organization and the opportunities that exist for both students and staff are phenomenal. I am really proud to say that I am part of SMU and to be in an organisation with such great leadership.🔍



SMU Department of Occupational Therapy

Lecturer Dr Hanlie Pitout finally completed her PhD Degree



Dr. Hanlie Pitout was born and bred in Moot, Pretoria in the Gauteng province where she completed both her primary and secondary school education. “My father was the only breadwinner and even though my parents only completed grade 10, they were both adamant that all three of their children should go for tertiary education,” Dr Pitout expressed.

Dr Pitout holds a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy from the University of Pretoria (UP), a master's in occupational therapy from the University of Limpopo (Medunsa Campus), and a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education from UP. She recently completed her Doctor of Philosophy in Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice (IPECP) at Wits.

Moreover, she won an award at the international congress called 'All Together for Better Health', in November 2023. The Hugh Barr Award, given by the Journal of Interprofessional Care, is awarded for the best research presented at the congress. In July, she was invited to Charite University to present the research that she did on Curriculum Mapping at the LOOOP symposium. She was also invited to the IPE Global Partnership meeting in Doha as one of the forty international IPECP experts to plan IPECP implementation globally.

Her dedication to academics led her to become a Convenor, coordinator, and chairperson of the SMU

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IPECP core committee with representatives of eleven professions, since 2018. Research committee member of the School of Health Care Sciences since 2011, School of Health Care Sciences Teaching, Learning and Quality Assurance member since its inception, School of Health Care Sciences Internationalisation Committee member since its inception in 2023, Clinical Sciences Coordinating Committee member, School of Health Care Science EXCO member responsible for IPECP committee. She initiated the research committee of the Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTAS) in 2012.

Her professional journey started when she was working as a clinician at the HF Verwoerd Hospital, which changed its name from HF Verwoerd Hospital to Pretoria Academic to what is now known as Steve Biko Academic Hospital. She was very involved from the beginning of her career in planning the occupational therapy department for Steve Biko Hospital and ended up leaving the hospital before the final move to the new premises. She spent one year, using unpaid leave, working at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Hospital in England in 1990. She learnt to appreciate her profession and the South African health system during her time in England.

Dr. Pitout joined the University in 2005 and was working as a clinician, and this experience as a clinician guided her teaching. However, she realised that there was a need for her to use the opportunities that the university offers to expand her knowledge and skills. She had the opportunity to complete her master's degree, Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education, and PhD during her time at the university. "I have seen many staff members come and go during this time. Each one made a valuable personal and professional contribution to the university in their unique way," said Dr Pitout.

Dr. Pitout's responsibilities at SMU's Department of Occupational Therapy include a variety of modules in almost all subjects. She is responsible for teaching Management to 3rd and 4th-year students, teaching physical conditions in both Intervention Theory and Occupational Therapy Applied for third-year students, and aspects of Therapeutic Media for both 2nd and 3rd-year students. She also supervises both undergraduate student research groups and individual master's Students' research. She was previously involved in coordinating Clinical Sciences for third-year students – a subject that teaches occupational therapy students about medical speciality areas such as Orthopaedics and Neurology. Fortunately, after an extended period of negotiation, the responsibility of the coordination of the subject was taken over for the last year by the School of Medicine. Dr. Pitout represents the department on a variety of committees in the School. She is responsible for the coordination of timetables in the department. She is also the class councillor for the third-year students in the department.

The Department of Occupational Therapy is responsible for preparing graduates who are practice-ready to work in a variety of settings and to treat a wide variety of conditions. The department is involved with the rest of the School of Health Care Sciences in providing services in different hospitals, schools, and communities. Engagement in school committees provides opportunities to collaborate on projects with staff from different departments. Pitout's passion for involving SMU students in leadership positions led to SMU students initiating the student charter of Pitout's Passion Therapy Association of South Africa.

Dr. Pitout presented the IPECP programme nationally and internationally at different congresses. As part of the IPECP project, they train lecturers to become IPECP facilitators and also involve a group of students IPECP champions, called Face of IPECP. "We hope that we will soon have an IPECP unit with permanent staff who will be able to further strengthen the IPECP programme. I would like to promote Interprofessional research to develop IPECP as a research niche area at SMU. I have been involved in AfrIPEN, the African Regional IPECP network where I am one of the board members and we collaborate with others in sub-Saharan Africa, to share resources and develop IPECP further. I am also an active member of AfriVIPE, the virtual Interprofessional education initiative where we have students from twenty-one countries and a variety of professions who participate in a two-hour Interprofessional event. SMU yearly makes a video for this event, to show the students the context of the specifically designed African case study," Dr. Pitout remarked.

"I aspire to inspire colleagues to continue studying and improving their qualifications and publishing their research. I would like our department to continue to strive towards empowering our graduates with knowledge and skills to further improve our profession. Collaboration with lecturers from other departments and other universities helps us grow and keep on improving the quality of our services. I am enthusiastic about making sure that SMU receives national and international recognition," Dr Pitout motivates.

"Through my PhD journey, I learnt that each of us is very different in the way that we approach and prioritise tasks. A PhD is a way that you can contribute to the body of knowledge in your profession but by no means the only way to do it. Having a PhD does not mean that you know everything. I have been very fortunate to have the opportunity to present my research at different places. I would not have been able to do this without the support of my family, my friends, and the support of the IPECP community, both at SMU and in AfrIPEN," said Dr. Pitout. Q

SMU Internationalisation Director chosen to participate in international programme

SMU's Internationalisation Director, Dr Carlien Jooste, was selected to form part of the 2023/2024 DIES/DAAD Management of Internationalisation programme. Only forty participants from countries in Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia were chosen to participate in this year-long programme. The programme sees each internationalisation specialist work on a project for their institution, while creating networks to supplement the project through engagement with the other participants. Dr Jooste was the only participant chosen from South Africa to participate.

The "Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies" (DIES) programme is jointly coordinated by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The programme focuses on specific challenges university staff are confronted with at various levels of the organisation.

The Management of Internationalisation programme targets the heads of international offices and university managers responsible for coordinating international activities at their university. In this three-part course at the Leibniz University, Hannover, Germany universities in Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia are given support to improve the management of key tasks in an international office. The main topics of the course are internationalisation, strategic management, management of partnerships, mobility at home and abroad, as well as counselling and marketing.

The first introductory workshop was held at Leibniz University. A visit to DAAD's headquarters in Bonn was also arranged and participants spent two days meeting and interacting with various funding agencies specific to their region. Each participant had to present a poster as well as a presentation on their project and will be providing regular updates regarding the progress of the project. Dr Jooste's project will investigate the possibility of a Virtual Exchange Hub for SMU.

Opportunities like this not only allows for skills development, but also for networking with university leaders that may be difficult to reach purely via cold calling or emails. "Furthermore, this opportunity, which sees most costs covered by DIES/DAAD, also allows the Internationalisation Directorate to fulfill its mandate without paying the exorbitant travel costs usually associated with traveling to the various countries represented," commented Dr Jooste.



Department of Anaesthesiology Meet and Greet Research Networking Opportunity

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University's (SMU) Department of Anaesthesiology hosted a meet-and-greet research networking session to introduce the South Africa-Sweden Universities' Forum (SASUF) collaborative project to colleagues at SMU, and to explore further opportunities for collaborative research.


Prof Hyla Kluyts, the Head of the Department of Anaesthesiology has recently been awarded a National Research Foundation (NRF)-SASUF seed fund grant to support the Swedish-South African collaboration between clinicians and information system specialists for enhancing a digital health platform. Prof Kluyts explained that the Perioperative Shared Health Record (PSHR) is a patient platform enabling the sharing of information between the surgical patient and the healthcare team throughout the perioperative journey (before, during, and up to a year after a patient's surgical procedure).

Prof Kluyts further explained that the project is centered around using patient-reported outcomes measures (PROMs) to improve the quality of care and the requirements for digital health tools to support such initiatives. She said the collaboration has community engagement and involvement at its center, to define digital health requirements through an iterative human-centered design process. The research project activities provide the participating emerging and lead researchers in South Africa and Sweden with the opportunity

to build research capacity domain expertise and gain recognition in the field of digital health.

Prof Carl Orre from Malmo University made a presentation titled: What is person-centred health care and Prof Greg Foster from Rhodes University made a presentation titled: What is Design Thinking amongst other esteemed presenters. Prof Kluyts said that these colleagues are co-investigators in a study on Factors Influencing the South African Implementation of Patient Reported Outcomes Measures to improve Quality of Care using a Digital Health Platform for Perioperative Information Exchange. She further said other guests that graced the session comprised information technology scientists, information system scientists, and experts in digital health.

The Department of Anaesthesiology is a central clinical service delivery department for surgical and perioperative care. "There is significant potential for the department to contribute to the evidence base for patient-centered surgical care delivery and outcomes, global surgical initiatives and surgical system strengthening, the improvement of quality perioperative care in South Africa and on the African continent through collaborative partnerships," added Prof Kluyts.

In conclusion, Prof Kluyts indicated that her South African team members will be traveling to Sweden for the 2024 SASUF event, funded by the NRF-SASUF seed grant. 





SMU School of Medicine MBChB ECP 2023

Top Achievers recognised

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)'s School of Medicine held a prize-giving ceremony. The prize-giving ceremony is held annually to Motivate, award student excellence and recognize good leadership. The event took place in Clinical Pathology building, School of Medicine boardroom. This event was initiated in 2017 and during the covid-19 it was halted following covid-19 rules and regulations.

The prize-giving ceremony was graced by the guest speaker Dr Brenda Kubheka including SMU senior staff members such as Prof Ho ey Mabuza, Prof Risenga Chauke (Deputy Dean), Prof Mpumelelo Nyathi (MBChB-ECP Coordinator), MBChB-ECP I lecturers and SRC Chairperson Keabetswe Molefe. The ceremony was spearheaded by Prof Nyathi. Prizes were sponsored by Abacon BlueStar and Sanlam, while Prof Nathaniel Mofolo (Dean of the School of Medicine) sponsored the function.

The top three achievers from MBChB ECP I to MBChB-ECP VII were selected totalling to 21 winners (three from each level). The criteria used when selecting the winners was the average percentage mark for all modules.

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SMU Department of Radiography hosts CMT to address students' social concerns

Speaking during the award ceremony, Prof Risenga Chauke said, “we are proud of you because besides the fact that some of you come from disadvantaged schools, you all complete at the same level. We are happy that as an institution, we allowed you to prove yourselves. In this journey, there were times when you felt excited and indifferent. To make MBChB ECP students fulfil their dreams, we must partner together so that we can lead them to where their paradise is. Do not kick the ladder when you are at the top”.

Dr Kubheka in her address indicated that all the MBChB-ECP students who are part of the prize-giving ceremony are high achievers, because of their dedication and the result of what they do. “You do not choose where you are born and where you go to school, but that has an impact on your life, at the same time when you have opportunities like this, it is always good to look back and say the starting point does not define you. You have the power to define the end, which is different from where you started”, Dr Kubheka emphasized.

Moreover, Dr Kubheka urged MBChB-ECP students to make use of the other opportunities that are outside their field of study indicating that other skills will make them better professionals and better citizens of South Africa. She also advised them to raise their hands when help is required so that they can acquire additional skills which they cannot get in the lecture, theatre hall or at the hospital.

Kopano Manamela, MBChB ECP third-year level student who got position one out of fifty students with an average of 80.4% indicated that for her to be selected in the program was all because of the hard work she put in. “We are all smart, the only way to make it in life is to work hard and that is why we were selected for this program. We must not only rely on our talents but also hard work, so strategies, I would say, any study method that works for you that you have been using, you just have to put more work into it, and it will work, even when you are not feeling like it”, Kopano remarked.🔍

The Department of Radiography invited representatives from the Community Media Trust (CMT) non-profit organization (NPO) to have a four-day engagement session with their first-level year students to address social issues on the 3rd to 6th of October 2023.

Radiography Lecturer Mabatho Thulo mentioned that students had some social concerns that emanated from adjusting to life away from their guardians. She indicated that they needed to be encouraged, motivated, and engaged on issues relating to relationships. “As we were brainstorming in the department, we decided to look for an organization outside SMU that could assist in this regard. The students needed to be free to participate in the engagements with people they do not see daily on campus and most of them are hesitant to consult on campus due to fear of stigma,” said Mabatho.

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Nkululeko Mkhize the structured programme facilitator from CMT explained that they were able to build a healthy facilitator-participant relationship throughout the week spent with the students. He said the students voiced out the challenges they faced every day and that their main purpose was to inform and inspire them by promoting transparency, accountability, and democracy. "Some of the concerns raised by the students were the issues of diversity within the campus. They expressed that there should be awareness campaigns regarding mental health and Gender-

Based Violence (GBV) issues on a regular basis. Students should realize the power they possess within themselves and that their well-being always comes first", said Mkhize.

Radiography first-level year student Siphosethu Mkhonto said it was truly inspiring to have visitors from outside SMU. He expressed that their presence brought a fresh perspective and new ideas that enriched their learning experience. "Interacting with individuals from different backgrounds broadened my understanding about GBV and encouraged cultural exchange which made the experience incredibly valuable. From day 1 to the end of these sessions, I learned the importance of collaboration, effective communication, and problem-solving. Setbacks are natural parts of any learning experience and what matters the most is the commitment to keep learning and improving," explained Siphosethu.



Radiography first-level year student Nicolas Madonsela said as intimidating as it was at first, he later understood that CMT facilitators came to benefit them by educating and guiding their class accordingly. "My takeaway from CMT facilitators was that no matter what kind of distractions are thrown at me, I must discern between assets and liabilities," shared Nicolas. Q

SMU Physics Department visited the NRF- ITHEMBA LABS in Cape Town to provide exposure to students

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University's (SMU) Department of Physics organised an academic tour to NRF-ITHEMBA LABS (Laboratory for Accelerator-Based Sciences) in the Western Cape Province. The trip was an initiative from Work Integrated Learning (WIL). WIL is a program developed to increase the employability of students through the provision of work experience. The programme was aimed at taking students to different companies or industries for career exposure and to provide them with an insight into the opportunities they may have upon completion of their degrees.

The tour was organized and facilitated by Ms Mphelane Mmathapelo (WIL representative and Technical officer) and Mr Rambevha Renny (Natural Scientist) from the physics department.

On the 22nd of October 2023, 15 physics and chemistry master's students, alongside 2 physics staff members and 2 WIL officers travelled to Cape Town to visit ITHEMBA LABS facilities for a week. The program at ITHEMBA LABS ran for a week covering different fields which included materials and, nanoscience, experimental nuclear physics, accelerator physics and particle physics. During the arrival, SMU personnel and students were welcomed to the facility by Dr. Gillian Arendse.

Prof Tshivhase Makondelele Victor the director of the NRF Ithemba Labs also had an opportunity to meet them and converse about the importance of working together and thanked them for the initiative.

During the first day of the tour, SMU personnel and students were introduced to accelerator physics by Dr. Joele Mira, Dr. Skye Segal and their team of scientists. It was their first time getting exposed to the accelerator physics. This field comprises machines that use magnetic fields to propel charged particles to very high speeds and energies. It links the discoveries of electrons made by the British physicist and Nobel laureate in Physics JJ Thompson in 1897. These are the types of accelerators at the facility Sanderson accelerator, First linear accelerator (Wideroe accelerator), synchrotron accelerator (type of linear accelerator), and separated sector cyclotrons (SSC). It is also important to note that a new facility was recently developed named the South African Isotope Facility (SAIF). This cyclotron is capable of producing two beams of High-energy protons simultaneously. The main reason for this new facility is to help increase the production of isotopes and research because NRF-ITHEMBA LABS produces isotopes for both local and international nuclear medicine and research fraternity.

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During the second day of the tour, Dr Mlungisi Nkosi together with Prof Malik Maaza from the nanoscience and material science department gave a short introduction to what they do. The nanoscience and material science field comprises studying structures or molecules on the scale of nanometres (1 to 100 nm). Students were also introduced to a few techniques that are available at the facility such as Atomic Force Microscope (AFM), X-ray diffraction, and RBS. Prof Malik Maaza urged the students to study the indigenous plants that were used by their great-grandparents to raise awareness of how they survived in the olden days and to further educate us on the importance of those plants.

On the third day of the tour, Dr. Peane Maleka, Dr. Randell Fisher, Prof Elena Lawrie and their team introduced both SMU personnel and students to experimental nuclear physics. The presentation noted topics such as nuclear radiation, radiation protection, radiation biophysics, Milky Way galaxy and pulsars. They also indicated that their equipment could produce beams of different radiation types or qualities. The particles were accelerated from the SSC, which then they can bombard a target with atoms that emit particles such as gamma rays. The gamma rays produced are then studied by the use of gamma-ray spectroscopy for research purposes.

The third day of the tour was mainly for presentations by the scientists from the facility and some of the SMU students. Dr. Rudolph Nchodu deputy director of NRF-ITHEMBA LABS during his presentation highlighted how SMU can use the facility for educational purposes for free since it is the national facility. He further pointed out the opportunities and funding available which can assist in the development of new courses that help to align with what the industries need and lecturing of those modules depending on the agreement or arrangement between the university and the facility.

Moreover, Dr Edward Nkademeng presented on his involvement with the large hadron colliders ATLAS (A Toroidal LHC Apparatus, located in Switzerland) Tile Calorimeter Phase-II project at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN). Dr. Zihle Buthelezi, the

Coordinator of the South Africa-ALICE (A Large Ion Collider Experiment) team at iThemba LABS, and Deputy Team Leader of the SA-ALICE Collaboration facilitated the virtual tour of the Alice facility (located in France). The virtual tour was focused on the particle production in proton-proton and heavy-ion collisions in detail.

The program at NRF-ITHEMBA LABS ended on the fifth day of the tour, this was because most of the presenters who were scheduled on that day were not available. However, that day was dedicated for students to explore the beauty of Cape Town city. Some of the places that students visited were V & A Waterfront for boat cruises and the red sightseeing bus which took them on tour to Table Mountain and the camp's bay. Due to the weather, which was not favourable, students were unable to go on the cableway.

SMU, second year Master of Science (MSc) in physics student, Hlulani Mthombeni mentioned that during the tour he was given the opportunity to present his research project to his peers, different scientists and researchers for feedback. "The tour was very educational because I got to learn more about the scientific knowledge and scientific research, and how important is collaboration in the scientific field. The tour was a success and with the knowledge I gained from this educational trip, I would recommend that this kind of excursions or events to be arranged regularly for students in science to learn more about science and get exposure to the applied part of science and research", Hlulani remarked.

"This year the department had two trips, on the first trip we visited NECSA with the 3rd year's students on the 04th of August, followed by a visit to Ithemba LABS for a week. We are planning to have more trips under the same program (WIL), we hope to extend to second years and then eventually the first years. The first semester will be used for the undergraduates and the second semester for the postgraduates. Research facilities that we are targeting are South African Large Telescope (SALT), CSIR, VAALPUTS, NTP Radioisotopes, Sabinano, NECSA, and Ithemba LABS ", explained Ms Mphelane, the WIL representative. Q





SMU Department of Physics hosted its 9th Annual Collaboration Symposium


Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University's (SMU) Department of Physics recently hosted its 9th annual collaboration symposium which was spearheaded by the Physics Lecturer Dr Thembinkosi Malevu. The primary focus of this symposium was to harness the power of collaboration and innovation with universities nationwide to translate their wealth of knowledge and groundbreaking innovations into tangible business opportunities.

The key speakers and guests included Prof Sandile Songca: Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, and Dr Thokozani Mncube: The Research, Development, and Innovation Manager from Mhlathuze Water Research Institute and Prof Elias Motaung from UNISA's Physics Department.

Speaking at the symposium, the Dean of the School of Science and Technology Prof Obi spoke about the 4th Industrial Revolution and the challenges of skills development in Africa. He indicated that he chose this topic because of the rapid changes in science and technology and its benefit to society in general.

“The first revolution was based on steam power which was used to drive the manufacturing sector like the steam

engines in the mining sector. The second revolution was characterized by the use of electricity to drive industrial processes and that heralded the third industrial revolution which focused mainly on computerization and web-based interconnectivity. It caused an immense revolution because it signalled a shift from face-to-face learning to online which blended learning that we are currently experiencing. So those are the forerunners to the 4th Industrial Revolution now characterized by a lot of innovations which is one of the key aspects of this symposium (innovation, collaboration, and decolonizing the curriculum),” emphasized Prof Obi.

The occasion was also used to celebrate and award emerging and established scholars. Three PhD and Master of Science Students from Wits University, University of Limpopo, and SMU obtained awards for their impeccable presentations. Dr Thembinkosi Malevu (SMU) and Prof Richard Ocaya (UFS) were also celebrated for publishing books within this cycle of the symposium. Dr Malevu published: *Perovskite Solar Cells: From Materials Science to Device Engineering* and Prof Ocaya: *Extraction of Semiconductor Diode Parameters: A Comparative Review of Methods and Materials 1st ed. 2024 Edition.* 





SMU holds a three-day training on matters of reproductive health

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)'s Centre for International Reproductive Health Training (CIRHT) curriculum Team conducted a three-day CIRHT training on 3-5 October 2023. The training was aimed at the technical expert in CIRHT (funders of contraceptive and reproductive health training project in SMU) to hold a conversation with SMU project members to see where there could be curriculum enhancement in contraceptive and reproductive health training. This is done as one of the deliverables of the project in improving training and care in reproductive health.

The overall objective was to assess the curriculum content and the competencies for contraception and comprehensive abortion care for Medical and Midwifery Training to be enhanced. to ensure that by the end of the project, there has been curriculum enhancement in all project partners so that SMU training in contraception and reproductive health is aligned with skilful professionals and productive learning and teaching strategies.

The training was also attended by two delegates from Ethiopia namely Dr Solomon Worku Beza and Dr Abderahim Shide Mohammed, as well as Dr MP Mathebula and former SMU Dean of School of Health Care Sciences Prof Sebi Lekalakala-Mokgele. Dr Abderahim Shide Mohammed is a Medical Doctor with a master's degree in public health. He has been serving as a Technical Officer and Director of training for the (CIRHT) whilst Dr. Solomon is currently serving as a technical director for (CIRHT), with the primary role of RH curriculum integration, and faculty development in African countries.

The training mainly targets the academic staff from family medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology, pharmacy, department of nursing science, and skills laboratory lecturers responsible for teaching reproductive health in their curriculum.

In his presentation, Dr Solomon Worku the Director for training and skills development at CIRHT, stressed the concepts which ensure competency-based education in a curriculum; Course syllabus: Highlight – content and importance; Writing learning outcomes; Define learning outcome by academic year (group work and presentation); Identifying teaching and learning methods (group work and presentation); Identifying knowledge and skills assessment methods (group work and presentation).

Dr Abderahim Shide Mohammed, the technical advisor in the CIRHT his presentation, introduced different knowledge and skills assessment methods (OSCE, Mini-CEX), Constructing multiple choice questions and the checklist for single-best answer MCQs.

According to Dr Mygirl Lowane from public health, the CIRHT project will ensure continuous curriculum capacitation, provide the required equipment to enhance teaching and learning of relevant skills about students' level of training and lastly provide research support for the development of scholarships. Inter-Professional Education and Collaborative Practice (IPECP) will be applied to ensure networking amongst the different health professions targeted in the project. “This funding will last for two years, and the aim is to ensure that its objectives when realized will form part of the curriculum in the training of all health professionals at SMU “, Dr Lowane explained. Q



SMU Commemorates World Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week



Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) celebrated World Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week (WAAW) under the theme 'Preventing antimicrobial resistance together' in conjunction with Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMAH) from the 22nd to 24th of November 2023.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), WAAW is a global campaign to raise awareness and understanding of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and promote best practices among One Health stakeholders to reduce the emergence and spread of drug-resistant infections. AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites no longer respond to antimicrobial agents. As a result of drug resistance, antibiotics, and other antimicrobial agents become ineffective and infections become difficult or impossible to treat, increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness, and death.

SMU and DGMAH hosted a three-day workshop and symposium for pharmacists or Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) champions across all Gauteng institutions where various healthcare professionals or stakeholders were invited to attend and share information regarding their roles, experiences, and commitment in AMR activities. This event was successfully organized by Professor Andries Gous, the

chairperson of the DGMAH AMS Committee in collaboration with SMU's Department of Clinical Pharmacy, members of the Gauteng AMS committee, and AMS Champions across the Province.

Nazeerah Muller, a Pharmacist from Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital said that the 2023 WAAW workshop/symposium was a great opportunity for AMS champions from the different health institutions to come together and share their ideas and challenges related to AMR. She mentioned that the workshop was informative, and she enjoyed learning about AMS from the perspective of other healthcare professionals. "There were a few new things that I learned but one thing that stands out the most is that AMR is not limited to hospitals and there is a real need for AMS awareness in the Primary Health Care sector as well as our communities. My take-home message is that AMR is real, it is here and serious. Now is the time to be vigilant and implement AMS to spread awareness wherever we can because this affects us all" advised Nazeerah.

Kwena Mokwele, a Quality Assurance Pharmacist from Bheki Mlangeni District Hospital said his experience with the WAAW workshop/symposium was very good. He described it as a refresher, reminder, and reinforcement of their duties as Pharmacists. "Hearing how other clinical pharmacists are making changes, makes me want to be on their team as I am on my way to studying Clinical Pharmacy. The workshop/symposium was very informative and antimicrobial resistance is a global problem. Like they say, 'prevention is better than cure and knowledge is power'. I have learned how other stakeholders feature in this battle of antimicrobial resistance and how technology plays a role in AMS. For greater success in winning the war against AMR, the community must

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be engaged in the battle against this factor,” motivated Kwena. Anisha Chetty, a Clinical Pharmacist from Tembisa Provincial Tertiary Hospital described her experience as informative and engaging as they had the opportunity to learn from experts in their respective fields as well as to interact and share ideas with colleagues from similar and different occupational backgrounds. “I learned about newer antimicrobials available to treat Multiple Drug Resistance (MDR) organisms and the need to ensure the preservation of these. I also learned new strategies to employ in making sure AMS interventions are taken more seriously. My take-home message is not only to

apply AMS principles but to impart this awareness to everyone from patients to professors as anyone misusing antimicrobials will have an impact on the rest of us,” stated Anisha.

It was emphasized that the significance of the presentations made during the event was to raise awareness of antimicrobial resistance and to reinforce the role needed to be played to help combat this global health threat. Let us join hands and fight antimicrobial resistance because we all have a role to play!📍



Department of Radiography Commemorated Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)'s Department of Radiography conducted a three-day Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign on the 11-13 of October 2023 under the theme “Early Detection Save Lives”. The theme was aimed at emphasizing that early detection of the condition can lead to effective treatment and a positive prognosis. The campaign was held in three different locations namely Brits District Hospital, SMU and Jubilee Hospital.

Breast Cancer Awareness is commemorated every year in October. SMU Radiography Department initiated a breast cancer awareness campaign in October 2022 with the primary objective of raising awareness about breast cancer across society.

Breast Cancer is a disease in which cells in the breast grow uncontrollably. The most common kinds of breast cancer are invasive ductal carcinoma and invasive lobular carcinoma. About 90% of patients survive for many years after diagnosis when breast cancer is detected at the early stages. Regular self-breast examinations and regular mammograms are key to early detection.

During the first day of the campaign, SMU Department of Radiography lecturers and students visited Brits District Hospital in the North-West province where they raised

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awareness and educated the patients and the community members about how to perform Breast self-examination. Many women discover breast cancer symptoms themselves, they must be breast cancer aware



so that they will have the knowledge, skills and confidence to detect breast changes and present promptly to a healthcare professional.

Subsequently, during the second day, the campaign was held at SMU where the Department of Radiography was in conjunction with the Campus Health Department.

Radiography students and lecturers were raising awareness about breast cancer while Campus Health personnel were conducting screening for SMU students and staff members. The last day of the campaign was spent in Hammanskraal, Jubilee Hospital where the community members were educated about breast cancer and how they can perform breast self-examination.

Fisokuhle Mabuza a third-year Bachelor of Radiography student indicated that the breast cancer awareness campaign is very important because it allowed her to learn and educate people on how to screen themselves at home and provided them with pamphlets that contained information about breast cancer. "We enlightened people about the risk factors of breast cancer which includes, causes, symptoms as well and prevention and briefly explained that some risk factors may be inherited from the family history, whereas some of them are influenced by our lifestyles for example what you eat, has an impact on the disease, excessive drinking of alcohol may cause breast cancer as well as smoking," Fisokuhle remarked.

"Teaching the nation how to perform breast self-examination and breast cancer awareness programs are scarce and when available, they function on a very limited scale. This is an attempt to increase cancer awareness and screening among women. Breast cancer awareness should be carried out daily at Primary Health institutions for continuous and improved early detection," SMU lecturer Mrs Tebogo Baloyi mentioned.





SMU Physiotherapy Department partnered with BMW Montana for a cycling event

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)'s Department of Physiotherapy in partnership with BMW Montana hosted the Soshanguve cycling club with over 300 cyclists on the 23rd of September 2023 as part of a community engagement programme.

The cycling started from Montana (Pretoria) to Rustenburg in the Northwest province. The cyclists covered 300 kilometres throughout the day. SMU physiotherapy students were split into 3 groups and provided recovery rehabilitation and refreshments to the cyclists at each stop. This community engagement prepared the students by giving them practical exposure to practice their profession on patients(cyclists). This event served as a platform for the students to gain real-life experience, especially those who want to become sports physiotherapists.

Second-level-year physiotherapy student Nonhlahla Ngcobo said that she was happy to get the opportunity to be part of this event. She indicated that during this event, she got to apply and practice the things that were taught during lectures. "I got the opportunity to link theory to practice and treat real-life patients. I got to learn how to deal with certain situations that patients presented towards my seniors. It was a wonderful and fun learning curve all thanks to our lecturer Ms Mabena", said Ngcobo.



"I was very scared to touch and treat patients because I never treated patients since I was still doing my second year, but during this event, I managed to perform Soft tissue mobilisation to more than five cyclists and I enjoyed working on them", said Andy Ramontja.

In conclusion, Mr Dreyer from BMW Montana gave a vote of thanks and gifts to appreciate the dedication and efforts shown by SMU personnel and students. Q





Human Resources OD Section Celebrates Thank You Cleaner's Day

Celebrating Thank You Cleaner Day (CP Building Cleaners)

Human Resources Department celebrated *Thank You Cleaner Day* on the **18 October 2023** since this is an international event celebrated world-wide on this day.

Thank Your Cleaner Day has been recognised at the World Federation Building Services Congress (WFBSC) in Berlin in 1995.

HR is intending to celebrate this event annually in order to thank SMU Cleaners on this special day. This year it started with Cleaners in the CP Building. The purpose of this event is to show Cleaners that they are valued and appreciated. This might seem simple yet is a powerful concept of showing appreciation and will promote employee satisfaction.🔍




SMU Technology Transfer Office hosts their first Annual Innovation Challenge

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University's (SMU) Technology Transfer Office (TTO) hosted an innovation challenge for the first time in partnership with the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) on 5 October 2023, which involved researchers and postgraduate students to pitch their ideas.

Mr. Pontsho Mampuru said the purpose of this event was to give SMU researchers and postgraduate students the platform to take their proof of concept to commercialization.

The following four Postgraduate students pitched for the innovation challenge, Raikane Seretlo: A mobile health application to address sexual-reproductive healthcare services & needs for queer individuals in Gauteng Province, South Africa, Khutso Mengwai: Developing exclusive breastfeeding mobile app, Vince Mbanco: Data-Driven catalyst design and optimization: integrating machine learning and advanced simulations and lastly Nondumiso

Nkosi: Hepatitis B core-related antigen assay for samples testing negative for hepatitis B surface antigen.

“The TTO prepared a scoring criterion on the basis that the innovation satisfied the following requirements: Market for innovation, Feasibility, and the budget as well as the potential for intellectual property. The objective of the innovation challenge was achieved because there is a potential for intellectual property emanating from the research projects presented,” said Mampuru. 



SMU Nursing Science Department visited learners at Itsoseng Secondary School to speak about Mental Health issues



Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), Nursing Science Department (NSD) visited Itsoseng Secondary School at Hebron, Northwest on the 10th of October 2023. The purpose of the campaign was to educate and empower Itsoseng learners with life skills that will help them deal with issues of bullying, substance abuse, and mental illness in general.

The visit was to commemorate World Mental Health Day under the theme: Mental health as a universal right, and its objective was to celebrate the power of Community Kindness.

The visit included nursing Science department clinical lecturers with third and fourth-year students. The NSD's level 4 students presented on mental health challenges post-teenage pregnancy and the impact on academic performance (focusing on teenage mothers), mental health challenges and impact on academic performance for teenage fathers, Interpersonal violence amongst learners (bullying), substance abuse and its implication on academic performance, strengthening family interpersonal relationships between learners and families.

Nursing Science Lecturer Ms Dikeledi Maphake said the learners had the opportunity to engage with the students and the clinical lecturers on mental health issues. She indicated that there is a great need to continue with these types of projects and that the Nursing department is planning to make this an annual awareness. "Since this project will be conducted annually, we shall be engaging other organizations like the South African Police Service (SAPS), and other partners", added Maphake.

Fourth-year Nursing student Dineo Ntshingila indicated that she had a nice experience through her engagement with Itsoseng learners while teaching them about teenage pregnancy, focusing on the mental health of the teenage father. She said they taught learners about the impact and consequences of it, especially on their mental health and were satisfied that the learners engaged them on these matters. "We would like this to continue annually on Mental Health Day for us to come and address a variety of topics, and not only focus on teenage pregnancy. Learners in high school are the ones experiencing teenage pregnancy which leads them to suffer mentally," shared Dineo.





SMU Library & Information Services Department hosted a Man in The Mirror Session to boost staff morale

The Department of Library and Information Services at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University hosted a first-of-its-kind "Man in the Mirror session" on the 8th of November 2023 to boost employee morale and enhance staff performance in the workplace.

Dr Rirhandzu Mhinga, Director of the Library and Information Services initiated this session to enhance communication with the library male staff. This was prompted by an observation that they needed to be reached in a special way to increase motivation levels, and to learn how best to relate to them.

The library male personnel used the occasion to speak about their challenges and things that require improvement to make their work easier and a work environment conducive for them and the people they serve. Over ten male staff members from the Library and Information Services department attended the session. Dr Matsontso Mathebula and his colleagues, the SMU social workers Mr Mashudu Muthala and Ms Sonja Martin facilitated the event

Dr Mathebula indicated that the session's primary objective was to initiate an open discussion to hear from the staff what they find and identify as major hurdles in personal motivation. "It was heartening to learn that this meeting was long overdue in the view of the men who were in attendance. They appreciated it and wished they had been given time to think it through as it was called in a short space of time. The session led to a personal understanding of the self and how this impacts on reaching personal goals or contributing to success in the workplace. Some comments made appreciated the fact that men are allowed to reflect on themselves and express themselves in a forum that will enable them to find counsel," Dr Mathebula explained.

Thabang Lediga, a library staff member, said that the session was a success as it also served as a team building exercise for library male employees. He further said this was a good cause because it brought unity and transparency out of all the attendees as anticipated by the department. "We were afforded the opportunity to know each other better as colleagues and received some guidance on what to do based on our challenges. We hope another session of this nature can happen soon,"





The second week of November each year marks the International Fraud Awareness Week in South Africa and Globally. This was meant to create awareness about the efforts to minimise the impact of fraud by promoting anti-fraud awareness and education. In the same vein, SMU joined the global village in commemorating the fraud awareness week in acknowledging the strides made in creating and promoting a fraud free institution. Fraud has the potential to destroy lives and societies, and in the higher education in South African it has denied education to some deserving students and delayed the sustainability of some of the institutions.

Fraud is designed as a purposeful deceit to provide the perpetrator with unlawful gain or to deny a right to a victim. Fraud in a sense refers to dishonest acts that intentionally use deception to illegally deprive another person or entity of money, property, or legal rights, thereby irregularly enriching another person being the perpetrator.

As opposed to the crime of theft, which involves the taking of something of value through force or stealth, fraud relies on the use of intentional misrepresentation of fact to accomplish the taking.

Elements of Fraud

- A misrepresentation of a material fact: An example of this is a student or employee claiming excess travel kilometres on an approved institution trip.
- Knowledge of falsehood: This may occur when a student or staff member making the false statement must know or believe that it is untrue or incorrect. That will be when a student knowingly plagiarizes an assignment of another student.
- Intent to deceive: The false statement must have been made expressly with the intent of deceiving and influencing the victim. This might take a form of when an employee falsifies leave records or academic results.
- Reasonable reliance by the victim: The level to which the victim relies on the false statement must be reasonable in the eyes of the court. This may be in a instance when the institution relies on incorrect bidding documents submitted by a bidder.
- Loss or injury suffered: The institution suffered a loss as the contractor performed sub-standard work due to payment of an unwarranted gratuitous payment.

Some of the common indicators of fraudsters

- Living beyond one's means, whether students or employees.

- Financial difficulties due to personal life changing situation.
- Unusually close contact with vendor/supplier/lecture/student etc.
- Unwillingness to share duties and/or not taking leave or leave office of responsibility.
- Easily irritable, suspicious and/or defensive.
- Bullying and/or intimidating tactics.
- Habitual gambler.
- Uncontrollable abuse of substance and/or drugs.

Types of corporate fraud:

- **Embezzlement** - occurs when an employee, contractor student or executive misappropriates institution's funds for personal use.
- **Forgery** - gaining unauthorised access to institutional resources by forging signatures and documents to deceive stakeholders.
- **Falsification of record** - the common example is generating an irregular academic transcript using institutional branding and/or resources.
- **Bribery or Corruption** - involves offering, giving, or receiving something of value to influence supply chain and/or assessments results and/or decisions e.g. kickbacks.
- **Financial Statement Fraud** - involved manipulating financial records and statements to mislead users of financial information such as council, donors, creditors etc. to create a better picture of the institution's financial position.
- **Staff/students Claims Fraud** - This may involve the manipulation of travel claims, student financial claims, overtime claims and re-imburement claims.
- **Plagiarism** - This may involves using another academic/student's work, words, ideas, or information without citing it correctly, creating an impression that it's your own work.
- **Qualifications Fraud** - This occurs when an undeserving individual is awarded a qualification without have the required competencies and completing the credits for the program.
- **Cyber Fraud** - With the advent of digitisation of institutional processes, digital reports, electronic communications and record keeping. Security needs to be tight to prevent data breaches and hacking.

Therefore, each member of staff, student, academic, contractor, manager and stakeholder should be aware of their action and decisions in combating fraud for the sustainability of the institution. Q

Institutional

Values

Aligned to Strategic Plan 2021-2025

Accountability:

We are obliged to answer for the execution of our responsibilities. Accountability cannot be delegated, whereas responsibility can be delegated without abdicating accountability.

1.

Effective Leadership

We are results-driven and focus on achieving strategic objectives and positive outcomes.

2.

Efficiency

We pledge to be efficient stewards of the resources entrusted to our care for maximum benefit to the University.

3.

Excellence

Performance excellence in the core and operational functions of the university.

4.

Integrity

We act with integrity in accordance with the highest academic, professional, and ethical standards.

5.

Respect

We respect and honour the dignity of each person, embrace civil discourse, and foster a diverse, inclusive, and safe community.

6.

Student Centered

Promoting student-centeredness as the heart of the academic enterprise.

7.

Ubuntu

encompasses respect, dignity, value, acceptance, sharing, co-responsibility, humanness, social justice, fairness, personhood, morality, group solidarity, compassion, conciliation etc.

8.

The University is a values-driven institution. Our people adopt and live on values and shapes our culture lived by the alignment of the objectives of all stakeholders. Our institutional values guide our behaviors and actions every day.

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