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Journey
towards becoming
a **Mathematician**

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success in the midst of adversity



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SMU registers its first ever patent Emmanuel Kiyonga's journey of success in the midst of adversity

Mr Emmanuel Kiyonga was born in Kampala, Uganda where his educational journey started. When he reached the school going age, his parents did not have money to take him to school. As a result, his mother started teaching him from home. While at home, a community member who was opening a school approached her and asked if she could allow him to join their school.

With no other alternatives at her disposal, his mother agreed. That was the first school that Emmanuel had attended. The joy

of going to school was short lived because resulting from his parents' inability to pay the fees, he was expelled from the school. This was to become a common feature in his pursuit of education. As he stated,

“I was always being kicked out of school. I attended 9 schools in my early primary school levels, until I got a scholarship at St. Barnabas Primary school where I received my Primary school education”.

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Did You Know?

SEFAKO MAKGATHO HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY **10 YEARS ANNIVERSARY 2014-2024**

SMU Celebrates 10 Years of Academic Excellence on 17 May 2024.

Save the Date... Watch out for further announcements!



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Emmanuel then moved to South Africa in 2009 where he attended his High School at the Christian Progressive College in Pretoria. After Matric, he was admitted to study for a Bachelor of Sciences in Occupation and Environmental Health at the University of Limpopo-Medunsa campus, in Ga-Rankuwa, which is now known as Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University.

He was later admitted into the Bachelor of Pharmacy as his second degree; after which he went on to register for his Masters of Pharmacy, specializing in Pharmaceutics. This involves drug design, synthesis and formulation development. His research focussed on the formulation of co-crystals to be used in cancer and osteoporosis treatment. This marked the beginning of the research that led to the development of the, now, patented drug. This, as Emmanuel indicated, was not only challenging, but demanding extra commitment from him. As he explained, "I spent so many hours in the lab, at times sleeping there. Screening different compounds and reading multiple articles. I wanted to do something unique. I was reaching out for something beyond the horizon. I wanted to be innovative and to invent something mind-blowing. So I kept on trying out different techniques and methods. This is when I discovered the new compound with the help of my co-supervisors Mr. Mamdan Poka and Dr. Witika who journeyed with me and provided the much needed support and guidance, Emmanuel explained enthusiastically".

The discovery of Raloxifene Hydrochloride Hydrate solvate drug for cancer gained momentum, winning multiple awards, notably, at the SMU research week and the Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences of South Africa (APSSA) where he won the young scientist award.

As with all new inventions, for them to be further developed, there is always a need for resources to be extensively invested. This was when Emmanuel's work went on to receive the Technology and Innovation Agency (TIA) seed fund, facilitated by SMUs Technology Transfer Office (TTO), within the Research and Innovation Directorate, for further development, leading to research producing a patent.

The patent is for a Raloxifene Hydrochloride Hydrate solvate. This is a new novel molecule with better dissolution and solubility properties. As to his motivation, Emmanuel further explained that this discovery and patent is a product of his background, "My greatest motivators to persevere education was

the extreme poverty I grew up in, lack of resources and limited opportunities. Throughout my university life, I struggled financially, facing multiple financial exclusions from the university that I had to appeal time and again. I also had no form of funding, never been able to secure a bursary. I had to use the little opportunity I had for accessing higher education to push myself beyond the limits. I always told myself that research is all I have got, but I had to do something extraordinary and that required maximum discipline and spending more time in the lab", Emmanuel explained emotionally.

Testifying to Mr Kiyonga's commitment, his co-supervisor, Dr Witika stated that "Mr Kiyonga is a delight to work with. The young man has an indomitable spirit and a very high drive to execute tasks in the lab. He has a hunger to learn and it is evident in his drive. The invention is an embodiment of his work ethic."

These sentiments were further echoed by his co-supervisor, Mr Poka who remarked that, "This is a remarkable achievement and a testament to his dedication, creativity, and hard work. This innovative contribution has added significant value to the academic community and beyond. It's not every day that a student's work receives such recognition, and I am truly impressed by this accomplishment".

Emmanuel's story is testament to the fact that SMUs investment in research and innovation, managed through the Technology Transfer Office, will produce more SMU students who will follow in his footsteps. It is important to note that this, SMUs first ever Intellectual Property (IP) from research with the Patent Office at the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC), comes just 21 months after the office was established. This is, indeed, evidence that SMU has abundance of talented researchers conducting research with potential to produce new innovations that remain untapped. As Emmanuel further stated, "Also, I was privileged to meet Mr. Pontsho Mampuru from the TTO office who introduced me to the idea of intellectual protection. He guided me and assured me that it is possible to achieve huge milestones with my research".

The magnitude of this patent is aptly summarised by Emmanuel when he stated that, "Timeless life hurdles, limited access to opportunities, class discrimination and segregation are some of the biggest challenges an African child faces at all times. Therefore, at times, one has to fight through these unfortunate realities with the hope to one day get a breakthrough.

It takes years of persistence, resilience and uttermost discipline to make it out as many do not and many give up along the way. My drive to pursue academic success is backed up by these past struggles. Everything I do along my pursuit for success is dependent on consistent reminders of where I have come from to be where I am. I am also a firm Christian who believes that the hand of God is upon my life. Education is a weapon, when used correctly, it can change the entire scope of a generation, Emmanuel concluded emotionally.

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In response to this great institutional achievement, the SMU Deputy Vice Chancellor, DVC Academic and Research, Prof. Prof Tandi Matsha-Erasmus stated that, "I would like, on behalf of Council, Executive and Senior Management, and the broader SMU community, to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Emmanuel Kiyonga, a Masters student in the School of Pharmacy for his innovation aimed at treating post-menopausal osteoporosis and breast cancer prevention which promises to revolutionize clinical management of these post-menopausal conditions. Furthermore, I would also like to thank the unwavering support of SMU's Innovation Evaluation Committee (IEC) comprising representatives from all five Schools, Finance and Legal Offices at SMU; Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), the National Intellectual Property Management Office (NIPMO) and our industry partners who tirelessly reviewed the Non-Disclosure Forms through which innovative ideas are submitted and assessed for innovativeness".

These sentiments were echoed by Prof Mapaseka Seheri, Director Research and Innovation who stated that, "This product has a huge commercialization potential, further entrenching SMUs commitment to research and innovation. This should serve as an encouragement to other students that with dedication and discipline the sky could indeed be the limit", Prof. Seheri concluded excitedly.

Emmanuel's journey and his struggles, most probably, resonate with many students at SMU. It is one that should serve as an inspiration to many not to ever give up. The impact of Emmanuel's achievement has been aptly summarised by his younger sister, Sanyu Kiyonga, who is also a student at SMU when she said,

"I would like to congratulate my older brother Emmanuel Kiyonga on securing a patent. This proves his determination, smartness and hard work in his field of study and as his younger sibling it motivates me to work even harder. I am so proud of him because I know it was not easy but he managed to pull through and produce excellent results. Moving forward, I hope others are motivated as well and can learn something from this. Once again, congratulations, she concluded."

For SMU, this patent has come at a time when the institution is celebrating its ten years anniversary. One reason to celebrate even more! 🔍

Celebrating our history-projecting into the future.

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SMU Welcomes New Members to the Institutional Forum

The Chairperson of the Institutional Forum of the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University Dr JG Tshifularo welcomed the newly elected members to an induction workshop that was held at the Premier Hotel Roodevalley, Pretoria on 16 April 2024. The workshop intended to equip newly elected members of the Forum with the necessary information and insights into their roles and responsibilities.

The Institutional Forum (IF) serves as a pivotal statutory structure within the Higher Education sector, advising the University Council on various critical issues in alignment with the Higher Education Act as well as the Institutional Statute. As outlined by Dr Jeffrey Mabelebele, the Registrar of SMU, the IF's mandate encompasses advising the Council on higher education policy implementation, race and gender equity,

senior management appointments, mediation, and dispute resolution procedures, and fostering an institutional culture which promotes tolerance, respect, and high academic standards.

The SMU's Vice Chancellor, Professor Peter Mbatl, presented the university's Strategic Plan (2024-2028). He stated that the plan prioritizes the centrality of the academic project, financial sustainability, service quality improvement, efficiency enhancement, and the strengthening of the institutional brand. Emphasizing the importance of collaboration, Prof Mbatl highlighted the need for a culture of cooperation among university stakeholders, including management, council, labour unions and students, to achieve SMUs Strategic goals.

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“The university's performance has continued to show positive trends on several indicators, with significant increases in research outputs. We are implementing a new business model to boost revenue, introducing new academic programs to attract more students, and advancing our digital transformation strategy with a focus on virtual labs and online learning,” said Vice Chancellor Mbatlana.



Mr Henno Croucamp, Deputy Registrar: Governance and Records Management, emphasized the IF's crucial role in facilitating dialogue, decision-making, and governance within higher education institutions. He outlined areas where the IF could enhance its effectiveness and impact, including representation and inclusivity.

members to actively engage, collaborate, and commit to enhancing the IF's effectiveness and impact in fulfilling its statutory function.

"Aligned with the Higher Education Act and the SMU Statute, the IF advises the University Council on matters affecting the University, such as policy formulation, senior management appointments, codes of conduct, and fostering an institutional culture characterized by tolerance, diversity of opinion, and respect for fundamental human rights," stated Mr Croucamp.

"As we welcome the new members to the IF, we look forward to their contributions, insights, and collaboration in advancing the IF's mandate and supporting SMU's commitment to excellence, innovation, and transformation in higher education," concluded Dr Mabelebele.

In conclusion, Dr Mabelebele reaffirmed the IF's relevance and importance to the governance arrangements of universities in South Africa. He encouraged the newly elected



SMU Welcomes New Employees

Onboarding of new employees is an activity that must never be underestimated. This is because it presents new employees with a better understanding of expectations about how to conduct themselves, connection with other staff members and available support and development services and facilities available for their utilisation. Not only do these processes begin to acclimate employees before their first day of work, but they can also play an integral role in the degree of success those employees experience.



Furthermore, it is important because it helps new employees to acclimate to their new work environment, integrate into the organisation's culture, and become effective contributors. A good onboarding experience shows employees that their workplace will be supportive, as well as one that encourages professional development.

Remarking on the importance of the onboarding programme, the Project Leader, Ms. Mercia Makgati stated that the main objective of the programme is to induct newly appointed employees to be able to: Perform in a way that contribute to value creation within the departments and across SMU, to familiarize them with the goals, policies and processes of the University, to understand the culture of the university to form strong peer networks and a community of practice to support their role, and to become aware of the personal development opportunities within the University.

It is against this background that the SMUs Human Resources department organized a two-day onboarding session from 25 to 25 April 2024 for new SMU employees.

In his welcome address, the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbatlana made a presentation on the University's new

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strategic plan; highlighting the need to ensure that SMU needs to be financially sustainable to ensure effective support to effective teaching and learning, innovative research agenda, the SMU values, digital transformation and the introduction of market driven academic programmes. Emphasis on the centrality of the academic project and the need to ensure that the university provides quality teaching and learning experience and ensuring high quality research was further emphasized by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Research, Prof. Tandi Matsha-Erasmus.

The delegates were further encouraged to see themselves as leaders in their own areas of operation. To this end, the Senior Director: Human Resources, Ms. Odette Ramsingh, indicated that “at SMU we are powered by our people”. She further emphasized that leadership is not only the responsibility of the Executive Management, but of all of us because “you need to lead where you stand”.

In his presentation, the Acting DVC: Operations, Prof. Patrick Demana indicated that SMU plans to maximise the utilization of the university land for the purposes of commercialization to assist in the generation of third stream income. He further indicated that the university is increasingly making investments in ICT infrastructure. As it is commonly known, the management of these major projects requires prudent financial management. In this context, the CFO, Mr Eminos Manyawi, outlined the role of the Finance department as that of effective management of university finances to ensure its sustainability. A critical aspect in his presentation was the development of the New Business Model (NBM). This is SMUs long term financial sustainability strategy.

Reflecting on his onboarding experience Mr Legodi Mashiane, SMUs Institutional Advancement Officer, stated that “Crucially, the program covered essential topics such as HR policies, SMU's organizational structure, and its overarching values. We gained insight into the university's culture, strategic plans, budgetary considerations, and ongoing initiatives. Moreover, the opportunity to engage with presenters and ask pertinent questions enriched our understanding and facilitated meaningful connections within the SMU community.

What has become evident from the day's activities is that an on boarding programme of this nature will, inevitably, not only enhance employee productivity, but helps increase loyalty and engagement, and decreases staff turnover.

“I believe the Onboarding Program is a vital component of integrating new employees into SMU's vibrant culture. Its comprehensive nature and emphasis on interaction make it a must-attend for all newcomers seeking to understand and contribute to the university's mission”, Mr Mashiane concluded.🗨️



SMU strengthens SASUF relationship

SMU has formally been part of the South Africa Swedish University Forum (SASUF) since October 2022. The University joined 40 other institutions from South Africa and Sweden to strengthen ties in research, education, and innovation. The initiative is supported by the National Research Foundation (NRF) and its Swedish counterpart, the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT).

Annually, the Forum hosts a Sustainability Forum where researchers can present their work either through poster presentations (which are used to find collaborators) or workshops (for those who are already working in a collaboration). In 2024, the Sustainability Forum will take place in Sweden from the 12th - 18th of May. SMU had a record number of applicants who entered posters and workshops for the 2024 Sustainability Forum. Based on the acceptance of entries and funding availability, eight SMU staff will attend the Forum. They will join colleagues from around South Africa in representing our country and the higher education system.

The Forum also has an active student network where SMU will be represented by Mr Tshepo Aphone. Mr Aphone is currently working with the Internationalisation Directorate at SMU to establish the SASUF Student Network on campus. Currently, he attends monthly online discussion forums hosted by students from South Africa and Sweden. The group discusses various topics in the realm of education and social paradigms.

In anticipation of the upcoming Sustainability Forum, the Swedish Embassy in Pretoria hosted all those involved with SASUF for a formal 'send-off' on the 4th of April 2024. SMU

was well represented with over 10 staff and students in attendance. Dr Nkosi Xhakaza from SMU was asked to be the moderator for the full-day event. Dr Xhakaza has a virtual exchange grant from SASUF and is currently working with colleagues at Uppsala University on South African medicinal plants with antidepressant properties. The first half of the event discussed the Sustainability Forum in depth. The participants were given the opportunity to listen to presentations from researchers in the SASUF network. The event concluded with a panel discussion on bridging the gap between academia and the real world.

The SASUF Network Coordinator, Ms Helin Bäckman Kartal also visited SMU for the first time. Academics working within the SASUF network and students wanting to learn more about the SASUF student network were invited to have a lunchtime discussion.

"I found the session to be truly inspiring. Ms Bäckman Kartal's insights were invaluable in envisioning the potential for impactful collaboration that transcends geographical boundaries," said Mr Tshepo Aphone.



School of Medicine Urges its Graduands and Students to Uphold Ethical Standards



The School of Medicine (SOM) held an Oath-Taking Ceremony for the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) graduands. The graduands solemnly declared to contribute to the safety and well-being of their patients. They took a Hippocratic oath to practice their profession respectfully to the best of their knowledge and abilities, without discriminating and subjecting the patients to ill-treatment.

Deputy Dean of the SOM Prof Risenga Chauke gave the keynote address during the ceremony and directed the oath taken by MBChB graduands. In his speech Prof Chauke stated that “It is important to understand that you are moving from a position of responsibility to a position of accountability as you proceed in your careers. It is important that as you leave our shores, you proceed to give service to our people and not only make money. It is by giving service that money follows and it never works the other way around. Comprehend that you are being qualified so that you can create jobs for others and improve people’s quality of life.”

Subsequently, the SOM First-Time Entering students (FTENS) also took an oath to uphold the ethical standards of their respective professions as they embark on their medical journey. Approximately 350 students enrolled for MBChB, Bachelor of Diagnostic Radiography (BRad), and Emergency Medical Care (EMC). They declared their commitment to provide proper care and treatment, keep patient information confidential, pass knowledge to the next generation, and not conduct research without patient permission. Acting HOD of

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Medical Physics Prof Mpumelelo Nyathi and Acting HOD of BRad Ms Mabatho Thulo led the oath taken by MBChB, EMC, and BRad FTENs, respectively.

Prof Risenga Chauke further stated that the students are taking an oath as a symbol to the patients they will be servicing. He said the oath taken is not meant for these students but dedicated to the community. He mentioned that since the FTENs are now part of SOM, they are required to abide by what its mission stands for. He then emphasized the importance of having discipline, determination, and honesty. He said, "We are here to initiate you into the profession that you have chosen. To wear 'Kobo ya Thuto' depends on what you are going to pledge today and not how to get rich soon. It is going to be about the service provided to the community."

Practice of Medicine (POME) Coordinator Ms Gerda Botha unpacked the role that POME plays within the university. She explained that POME is the module where they integrate knowledge from sciences, humanity, psychology, community medicine, anatomy, and physiology for students to become better doctors to their patients. She indicated that POME is the only module that students select every year until the final year. She said a student can only grab out of the POME what he or she is willing to learn.

She advised the FTENs that if they do not use every opportunity at their disposal in their programmes, they are not going to learn successfully.

"While you are attending to patients, workshops, hospitals, or the community, think about what it means and how you can use your learning in physics, biology, chemistry, and human sciences to become a professional doctor. Use all those learning opportunities to improve your attitude and approach to patients because all of the above are part of the curriculum. We did not put any module in the curriculum just because we wanted to fill space. Everything is important. We created opportunities for interprofessional education and collaboration. Some of you already had the opportunity to go to the community to meet real patients, to see how they live and work, what their challenges are, and what they are faced with in terms of access to the healthcare centre. Everything we do in POME is trying to prepare you to become the professionals that you wish to be," shared Ms Botha.

On behalf of the SOM Student Council, Deputy Chairperson Matimu Chauke stated that the FTENs that they are the chosen ones and that being here is a blessing. He encouraged them not to take the oath-taking lightly because they were in the right place and the universe did not want them anywhere else.

"I would like to call doctors superheroes and people who like to play God because sometimes patients arrive with many gunshots thinking they will not survive. Then you as doctors are there in time to save the patient all because of this exact moment of today. I would like to encourage you to respect patients. Please treat them as people before as patients. This applies to the issues of taking pictures for content, being excited about treating a disease then posting it on social media which is a contradiction to patient confidentiality. Assist each other and be a team. You will see in the hospital that there is no individual Doctor. If you see your classmate falling behind, assist them and you can also ask us to assist as the student council and we shall be there when you need us," advised Matimu. Q



Erasmus+ Funding Programme: Guiding Participation at SMU

On 11 April 2024, the Internationalisation Directorate in conjunction with Prof Anna Oettle from the School of Medicine's Department of Anatomy and Histology hosted the first of a series of information sessions on the Erasmus Plus Funding Programme. Erasmus Plus is the abbreviation for the European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students. The Funding Programme is the European Union's (EU's) programme to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe. It has an estimated budget of €26.2 billion. This is nearly double the funding compared to its predecessor programme (2014-2020). The 2021-2027 programme places a strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life.

In the past 10 years, Prof Oettle has been part of four different Erasmus Plus programmes that received funding. The first programme was with the University of Pretoria, the second as part of MEDUNSA and the last two as part of SMU. With Prof Oettle's knowledge of the Funding programme as well as the application process, the first information session discussed the Programme in general as well as the identification of a concept and international collaborators. Prof Oettle advised the session that even though the proposal writing will be a lot

of work, they should try because "if you don't try you will never succeed."

The priorities for Sub-Saharan Africa, which is the group South Africa forms part of, have been published by the Funding Programme as green deal (environmental challenges, green and efficient energy, climate awareness, etc.); digital transformation (digital technology, AI, distance learning, etc.); integration of migrants (access to education, support for academic, social, physical and psychological development, etc.); governance, peace, security and human development (health and wellbeing, public policies, respect for diversity, etc.); and sustainable growth and jobs (entrepreneurship, uptake of STEAM skills, prevent brain drain, address school dropouts, etc.). Prof Oettle commented that one must remember that "you don't have to opt for only one priority, you can touch on more than one strand." She further advised that academics should try to find common ground in their concepts so that they can submit a proposal with a common goal, but various touch points.

The Internationalisation Directorate would like to urge SMU academics to engage with the Directorate on how they can prepare to submit a proposal for the 2025 cycle. [Q](#)



Aspiring Specialists Prepare Their Career Paths



Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)'s Department of General Surgery recently hosted a three-day Basic and Essential Surgical Skills Training (BESST). The course aims to train and prepare doctors who are going to write their primary exams within the department about basic and essential open surgical techniques, suturing techniques, trauma debridement and tendon repair, and Minimal Access Surgery (MAS).

The BESST course was facilitated by Prof Damon Bizos from Wits University's Department of General Surgery. The department's Laboratory Technician and course coordinator Ms Tabea Kgoadi indicated that the course is spread over three days to allow flexibility for structured learning, which focuses on different lessons each day. She stated that this course is hosted four to five times annually, depending on the number of doctors who enrolled, and that it involves the demonstration of laboratory procedures, including sample collection and testing, and that trainees are exposed to routine and non-routine analysis of products and raw materials.

“The trainees received training in equipment installation and repair, and servicing of laboratory instruments, enhancing their overall proficiency in surgical practices and laboratory operations. They also gained valuable skills in suturing techniques, which are essential for various surgical procedures, thus, contributing to the overall improvement of medical practice. This course is mainly created for doctors who want to enhance their surgical skills and are interested in

pursuing a career specializing in surgery. To enrol for the BESST course, an individual needs to be a registrar or doctor intern.

Head of the Endocrine and Soft Tissue Surgery Unit Prof Arianne Mokhtari reflected on the history of BESST, indicating that it was introduced by the Royal Colleges of Surgeons in

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England He indicated that Prof Bizos, a Wits Professor, went to the United Kingdom and saw the value of this course for training surgeons in South Africa, then decided to introduce it in 1998. He further added that Prof Bizos selected pilot institutions to run the course and SMU was one of them.

“Basic surgical skills are vast and there are variables that affect different tissues of the body that the surgeons in training must master. The course needs to go into different sub-disciplines and teach surgeons how to handle bowel tissue, soft tissue, and blood vessels for instance. There is also a component of modern surgery known as minimally invasive surgery which has already been established at SMU. The last day of the course was dedicated entirely to laparoscopic surgery which uses small incisions and a camera to operate on organs inside the abdomen or pelvis,” explained Prof Mokhtari.

Dr Tumelo Maake, a Medical Officer (Community Service) at the Odi District Hospital stated that he enrolled on the BESST course because he has a passion for furthering his studies in a department that deals with surgical procedures, specifically in obstetrics and gynaecology.

He indicated that this course was beneficial for polishing his skills around surgery and was a revelation of things he thought he knew. He said that they were taught diverse types of knot tying, bowel and vessel anastomosis, tendon repairs, and how to use laparoscopic.

“My highlight from the course was the training on how to use the laparoscopic machine because laparoscopy has become the new norm in the country, with SMU being among the leaders. After the course, we were awarded Certificates which contribute to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points. According to the Health Profession Council of South Africa (HPCSA), CPD points assist health professionals in updating and developing their knowledge, skills, and ethical attitudes that underpin competent practice. To those who want to become medical doctors in the future, I hope you are ready to be public servants. Challenges are there, but the satisfaction you get when you have a successful resuscitation or seeing patients benefit from your help, is unmeasurable,” concluded Dr Maake. Q





School of Health Care Sciences introduce Pbl Method to Augment Teaching and Learning

As a result of higher education transforming its curricula, the SMU Teaching & Learning, Curriculum Development & Quality Assurance Committee members, within the School of Health Care Sciences, participated in a week-long training session, focusing on the problem-based learning (PBL) methodology. The committee members were divided into two cohorts, attending separate sessions from 15-19 and 22-26 April 2024, respectively. The sessions covered various topics about PBL, applying the combination of workshops, lectures, practical demonstrations, and group work.

PBL revolves around four learning principles, namely, constructive, contextual, collaborative, and self-directed learning. It is an enquiry-guided learning method characterised by active learning in small groups where solving interesting real-life problems is central to the learning process. The key focus of PBL is the process that students go through to reach a solution. This involves activating their prior knowledge, developing theories or hypotheses, working in teams, conducting research and explaining findings.

The delegates were introduced to PBL, a non-traditional method of teaching and learning to enhance student-centredness and improve their learning. This method emphasises that effective learning cannot be limited to the delivery of information, but that active participation of the learner is essential. It places students at the forefront of learning by encouraging active participation, critical thinking, decision making and clinical judgment. It encourages students to develop skills that are essential for the labour market in the 21st century.

Occupational Therapy Lecturer, Ms Mahlako Makhubela shared her feedback on PBL.

“We came in to learn about a new methodology and a way of teaching which is problem-based learning. I have learned to acknowledge the knowledge that the students come with and how to put a scenario together. It is easy for the students to engage in self-study and self-knowledge. Probably, I am going to apply this in my classes where I direct learning and not impose knowledge on students, and I am looking forward to going full PBL in 2025,” she said.

Associate Professor in Health Systems Management and Policy, Prof Soga Matlala said, “We learned a lot about problem-based learning, which is where the students take the lead in the learning process and lecturers take the back seat, but you just have to ensure that the students are on the right track. You give them an opportunity. This is still a new concept; we are going to discuss it with my colleagues at the Department of Public Health and see how we can implement it more especially since our programme is online. We can start with the process through our winter and summer schools, but we will see how it goes. But so far it looks like something that we can implement.”

In his concluding remarks, Dr Ruud Heijnen, PBL Consultant and Facilitator, from Maastricht University, Netherlands concluded that, “By immersing students in real-world healthcare scenarios, this approach cultivates a deep understanding of the subject matter and enhances critical thinking skills, interdisciplinary collaboration, and lifelong learning attributes of a successful healthcare practitioner in the South African context.



Journey towards becoming a Mathematician



The Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics recently held a postgraduate workshop under the theme 'Journey to become a Mathematician'. The workshop exposed honours students to career opportunities available for Maths graduates. It further exposed them to organisations such as the National Graduate Academy (NGA) and the Centre of Excellence in Mathematical and Statistical Sciences (CoE-MASS), which aims to collaborate with different organisations around the training of the next generation of mathematicians to serve the National System of Innovation.

The Department's HOD Prof Maggie Aphane informed the students that the NGA's Strategic Committee is working with the National Research Foundation and the Department of Science and Innovation on training the next generation of mathematicians, statisticians, and data scientists. The major goal of training is for the students to be given the opportunity to develop greater breadth and depth of knowledge of contemporary developments in these disciplines. She emphasized that these consortiums identified the shortage of

research in the fields of mathematics, statistics, and data science to broaden the research base, improve the quality of teaching in these fields, and pool experts to train the postgraduate students.

“The NGA and its partners aim to build their timber, to address the academics and isolation of the South Africans, to identify and develop areas in mathematics, statistics, and data science that are strategically important and vulnerable. From the NGA we also have CoE-MASS, South African Theory and Computational School (SATACS), and National Institute for Theoretical and Computational Science (NITheCS) as the centre of excellence in mathematical and statistical sciences,” added Prof Aphane.

The Acting HOD of Student Housing Mr Mohale Machete talked about the significance of work ethics. Mr Machete explained that ethics are set principles and values that guide individuals' behaviour and professional conduct. He identified work ethics which include commitment, excellence, time management, professionalism, respect, integrity, honesty, and good communication skills. “Adhering to ethics is essential for personal and organizational success meaning that as a post-graduate student, you need to have strong ethics to be successful. You need to strive for high academic standards in research,

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writing, and presentation of ideas. You need to honour time management to efficiently manage your responsibilities, balance coursework, research, mentoring, and lab work, and meet deadlines consistently to be able to achieve your goals. You need to conduct yourself professionally in all academic and work-related interactions by showing respect,” informed Mr Machete.

Maths Lecturer Dr Claude Moutsinga talked about the importance of software and defined it as the language used by a computer. He said a computer needs a language the same way as human beings do, in this case, namely, software. He further said software is a platform that allows individuals in this field to communicate since most things are now done through the computer. “There is no way you can do data analysis using chalk; you can only use a computer for that. Data needs to be downloaded somewhere, and some people may use Microsoft Excel to gather it. We have types of computational languages namely MATLAB, Python, and Octave. You need to know the computational language and writing language for mathematics because it will be part of your potential projects, especially for those who want to be data analysts,” shared Dr Moutsinga.

Mr Bokodisa presented various fields which are the focal point of the department, namely, Topology, Graph Theory, Mathematics of Finance, Lie Symmetry and Functional Analysis. This was done to assist honours students to choose for their research project. He further elaborated on the applications of Mathematics.

Mathematics honours student Koketso Malebana shared that she enjoyed interacting with experts in the field of mathematics and learning about different programmes that her classmates want to venture into in this field. “I learned about various fields in mathematics, several Mathematical Bodies and Foundations in South Africa. I learned about work ethics and being an impactful graduate. I got motivated at the workshop that I must have goals to push myself to the best ability. To have a consistent routine in the workplace and set boundaries. To reward and celebrate myself when I have achieved something and have partners to hold me accountable and push me to perform my profession excellently” said Koketso.

A topic regarding impactful graduates also transpired to stress issues that define what is required to become an impactful graduate and the expectations that follow. The role and responsibilities of a student and his/her supervisor within the body of research ethics were highlighted. 

Postgraduate Mathematics and Applied Mathematics Students Sharpen their Research Skills



As part of SMU's drive to build capacity in research and innovation, the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics recently hosted a scientific article writing and submission process in an accredited journal workshop focusing on postgraduate students.

The purpose of this initiative was to enhance the students' scientific writing skills to for successful publishing in accredited journals.

Post-doctoral fellow, Dr Hamed Abass made a presentation titled 'Writing a Scientific Article: A Step-By-Step Guide for Beginners'. The purpose of his presentation was to guide postgraduate students on

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how to conduct research and write articles for publications in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)'s accredited journals.

Mr Muhammad Abubakar an MSc student in Mathematics made a presentation titled 'Research Methodology through the Lens of Graph Theory'. The objective of his presentation was to expose postgraduate students to research methodologies in the field of graph theory, particularly in the niche area of chemical graph theory with applications in drug design and machine learning and introduce them step-by-step approach to writing and publishing their research outcomes in DHET accredited journals.

In conclusion, the students were encouraged to work hard, perfecting their writing skills, mastering the required software to write articles and to understand the requirements that need to be met for their research to be published in accredited journals.🔍



Students enhance their application of Mathematics in IT and 4IR

SMU's Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics students and staff attended a computer science workshop organized by Founder of Tomorrow's Innovation and Software Developer Ms Pamela Ngwenya. The workshop catered to the need of postgraduate students to learn more about the applications of mathematics in Information Technology (IT) and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). It was organised after the department held a session about a journey

to become a mathematician for its postgraduate students who raised the need for computer science training.

Ms Ngwenya spearheaded the computer science workshop and highlighted that its mandate was to spark curiosity and equip young minds with the fundamentals of computer science and its diverse subfields, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), game development, and programming. "This workshop is a fantastic

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opportunity to ignite young people's passion for technology and empower them to explore future possibilities in computer science. The attendees will gain a foundational understanding of computer science concepts while exploring various exciting career paths in the field. Engaging in interactive activities will solidify their learning," explained Pamela.

She indicated that local and international experts from the technology industry shared their knowledge and experiences with the attendees. They each made presentations unpacking subjects around learning computer science through digital opportunities offered by libraries. Blockchain and coding methodologies were discussed and how they contributed to the community through teaching and learning; the evolution of AI and the opportunities available for youth; the Young Ladies Tech Hub which promotes digital inclusion and empowerment for young ladies was also reflected; and the evolution of Game Development.



Maths Lecturer Mr Joseph Fatlane stated that the department engaged with an organisation that can assist with emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). He indicated that postgraduate students need to be exposed to digital transformation. "The workshop provided students with the opportunity to engage with possible employers. They were able to get the experience of the after-graduation life. They were able to identify and observe what mathematics can do outside the classroom and its application in real-life situations," informed Mr Fatlane.



AI Technology Consultant Niki Lee from Singapore covered topics that include AI Skills Building with Google Suite, Data Science for Industrial Development Tools, and powerful tools available in Google Suite. He indicated that in today's digital age, AI skills are increasingly crucial across various industries. He said the "AI Skills Building with Google Suite" programme is designed to equip youth and beginner learners with foundational AI competencies, preparing them for exciting opportunities in the tech industry. He indicated that this comprehensive programme combines theoretical knowledge with practical applications, using the accessible and powerful tools in Google Suite.

"The Data Science for Industrial Development Tools programme is a cutting-edge educational initiative designed to equip youth and beginner learners with the essential data science skills needed to thrive in various industries. This programme focuses

on practical applications of data science tools and techniques to solve real-world problems, enhancing industrial processes and innovation. These tools include the Microsoft and Google Suite of Web-based Tools," informed Lee.

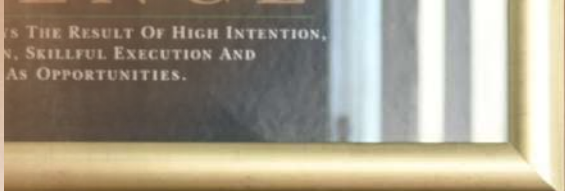
Game Developer Amani St Clair focused the concept of game development. In his presentation, he defined game development as creating interactive electronic games, typically using software development tools and techniques. He indicated that game development involves a combination of programming, design, art, audio, and sometimes storytelling. Game development follows a structured pipeline, consisting of several key stages such as Conceptualization and Planning, Design, Development, Testing and Debugging, and Deployment and Distribution. He emphasized challenges in game development, its trends and innovations, and tools of trade.

He motivated aspiring Game Developers by saying "Begin with simple projects to build your skills, learn continuously by staying updated with the latest tools and technologies, join game development communities, and work on projects with others, perseverance is key because game development can be challenging. Game development is a multidisciplinary field that combines creativity with technical skills. Whether you are passionate about creating immersive worlds, thrilling game play experiences, or engaging narratives, game development offers endless possibilities for expression and innovation."

WeThinkCode Alumnus and Junior tester Mr Sandile Ndlovu introduced youth venturing into software development to an approach of learning about the advancement of software and how AI is progressing faster than we think. He emphasized effectively harnessing practical and theoretical knowledge of software tools, and AI, and understanding how the tools can produce satisfactory results throughout the software development lifecycle. He expressed that the workshop was a wonderful way to collaborate and network with peers.

Bachelor of Science in Biology third-year student, Tina Nasira Ntsham said she learned how important it is to have computer competencies, especially for employment and business purposes. "The Software Development, AI Programming, Microsoft digital literacy, and digital marketing short courses that were taught to us were my highlights. I learned that it does not matter which degree or diploma you have because it is crucial to explore what technology has in store" concluded Tina.





Elaine Mahlobogoane's story of hope



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“From a very young age, I wanted to become a dentist. We used to have a family dentist who I used to consult for dental problems when I was younger. He was always so nice and professional and was good at his job. I saw myself doing the same job later on in life. Being called Dr sounded cool”, Elaine remarked.

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Her passion for dentistry led her to upgrade her Matric results in 2017 to meet the minimum requirements for admission to the dental school. After upgrading her matric results, she was accepted to study Bachelor of Dental Therapy (BDT) at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). Against all odds, she obtained her Bachelor of Dental Therapy (BDT) in 2020.

Testament to her commitment to furthering her studies, Elaine registered for Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) where she was also the

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Her dedication is demonstrated by the fact that she is one of the top academic achievers, who received numerous awards throughout her studies.

She won the South African Dental Association (SADA) award in her final year of BDS studies for best academic record in all three years.

best Anatomy student in Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) in 2022. However, her dream of completing her qualification almost came to a halt when she initially could not register for the 2024 academic year due to her outstanding balance of R313 997. This was until, working with Dr Dorette Kritzinger, a Senior Lecturer at the School of Dentistry, she secured the sponsorship.

How did this happen, one may ask?

Radio is, indeed a powerful medium. Accidentally, coming across the Jacaranda FM New Year's bursary campaign, which was sponsored by Willard Batteries, part of the AutoX group, Elaine and her lecturer, Dr Dorette Kritzinger worked on a submission for consideration by Willard.

Although not part of the initial five bursaries awarded each day on Jacaranda, they were contacted by Mr Dave Arnold from Willard Batteries who indicated that the company would like to help Elaine with her study fees and requested further information for consideration.

“Elaine is an extremely hard-working student, very motivated and consistent. She is one of our top academic achievers,” Dr Kritzinger remarked.

Following a review of Elaine's application, she was informed that her application was successful. Thanks to Willard Batteries' sponsorship, and to her relief, Elaine's outstanding balance was paid in full.

“Receiving the sponsorship took so much weight off my shoulders and has helped me to focus better on classes and during clinics. I am still hoping to receive a bursary that will carry me throughout the remainder of my degree and will help me with necessities such as books and food allowance. I look forward to graduating soon. My parents must not worry about paying for my fees as they are unemployed,” Elaine remarked delightfully.

She further indicated that hard work and discipline are what helped her to be where she is today. She also stated that she makes sure that a day never passes without doing something related to her academic work, even during her leisure time. She further stated that this involves just 30 minutes of reading or watching an educational YouTube video as this helps her to gain new knowledge. Her biggest motivation is making her family proud and fulfilling her goal of becoming the first Dr in the family.

What we now know is that Elaine Mahlobogoane was depressed and hopeless about her future because of her financial exclusion. She even stopped attending classes as she never thought there would be a way forward. Given her experience and the financial assistance that she received from Willard, she now has renewed hope of completing her studies. As she concludes her story, she advised that:



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“Students who are financially excluded should never lose hope. They must seek help by speaking to their mentors and lecturers because they are always willing to help. If I had not spoken to Dr Kritzinger, it was not going to be possible for me to get the sponsorship. To this day, it still feels unbelievable. I am filled with so much gratitude,” she concluded. Q

SMU celebrates National Library Week

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) recently celebrated South African Library Week (SALW) under the theme, “Libraries foster social cohesion”. The theme emphasizes the National Library's commitment to bridging the knowledge gap, fostering inclusivity, providing a space for intellectual growth, enabling informed community participation, stimulating dialogue, and promoting mutual respect among people from diverse backgrounds. The purpose of this annual celebration is to highlight the key role that libraries play in fostering knowledge, promoting literacy, and preserving our cultural heritage.

The Director of the Library and Information Services (LIS), Dr Rirhandzu Mhinga in her address stated that

“Libraries are not just buildings full of books, they are vibrant hubs of community engagement, where dialogue flourishes, and lifelong learning takes centre stage. Libraries are also superheroes in the fight for a better world. They are like the attackers of the social cohesion universe, tackling issues like quality education and sustainable development head-on. From promoting literacy to bridging the digital divide, libraries are on the front lines, making sure one gets left behind,” Dr Mhinga stated.

She further stated that, “People must not forget about education because it is the cornerstone of any cohesive society. Libraries are about sparking curiosity, igniting imaginations, and

nurturing a deep understanding of the world around us. Through educational programmes that celebrate diversity and encourage tolerance, libraries are moulding the leaders of tomorrow and laying the foundation for a more harmonious society. Libraries embrace the power of information technology to connect communities like never before. From social media to online platforms, libraries are breaking down barriers and building bridges between people from all corners of the globe. Libraries are the unsung heroes of social cohesion, the glue that holds our communities together in good times and bad,” she added.

Keynote Speaker and Head of the Mathematics and Applied Mathematics Department, Prof Maggie Aphane alluded to the fact that all libraries have a collective mission to democratise access to information and learning, regardless of where they are located or the type of community they serve.

“The library is a trusted space, integrated into the local community and accessible to all. It is a resource for developing digital skills and literacy, it provides cultural and educational outreach programmes that empower communities, facilitate community cohesion, reduce isolation, and contribute to the pride of place,” Prof Aphane concluded.

Thato Phasha, a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Life Sciences student, expressed her gratitude about the event indicating that attending the Library Week event was an enriching experience that celebrated the essence of literature and knowledge.

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“From captivating author talks to engaging workshops, the event offered a plethora of opportunities to immerse oneself in the world of books and learning. The organizers did a commendable job curating diverse activities that catered to all interests and age groups, fostering a sense of community and appreciation for the written word. It was heartening to witness students from different schools coming to celebrate the importance of libraries in our society. Overall, the Library Week event was a resounding success, leaving students inspired and eager to continue exploring the endless treasures found within the pages of books and learning,” Thato shared delightfully. Q



SMU Joined the Global Community in Commemoration of World Obesity Day

The Department of General Surgery (DGS) at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) commemorated World Obesity Day (WOD) under the theme 'Let's Talk About Obesity And...!', on the 4th of April 2024. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness and improve understanding amongst SMU students and staff members about the causes of obesity and what

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needs to be done to address them and the associated stigma. Obesity is a complex disease that occurs when an individual's weight is higher than what is considered healthy for his or her height.

In her address, Dr Winnie Mathe, a bariatric surgeon at the Bariatric Unit at the Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMH), highlighted the unit's five-year experience with weight-loss surgery, established in 2019, under the leadership of HOD of General Surgery, Professor Zach Koto.

"The unit has assisted hundreds of patients in fighting obesity. The average hospital stay after surgery is three days. After twelve months, 70% of patients experience relief from hypertension, 94% see their diabetes mellitus resolved, and 95% experience a resolution of hypercholesterolemia. The average excess body weight loss is 65%," Dr Mathe remarked.

Obesity affects children as well as adults. The factors that can contribute to excess weight gain include eating patterns, physical activity levels, and sleep routines. Dr Mathe further emphasized that bariatric surgery is a tool, not a quick fix and it requires a lot of work from the patient.

"Fighting obesity is a lifelong journey that demands patience and dedication. Surgery assists, but it does not replace the effort you need to put in as an individual," she explained.

Ms Lungile Mvuyane, a representative of Medtronic; a company which sponsors SMU's Department of General Surgery (DGS), in her address spoke about their dedication to advancing healthcare technologies.

"We focus on high-tech instruments used in surgery to help patients recover faster. Our mission is to ensure patients have access to healthcare. This means having the right skills and technologies available. If a patient needs an operation but the skills or facilities are not available in their country, we believe we must help bridge that gap," says Ms Mvuyane.

Kutlwano Menyatsoe, an SMU staff member and a bariatric surgery patient who benefited from the weight-loss surgery, shared her story.

"I weighed around 110kg before the surgery and now I am down to 68kg. I was diabetic, hypertensive, and had high cholesterol. Two days after the surgery, I stopped using insulin for diabetes, and that continues to this day. I started living a healthier life and learned about portion control from dietitians. It is not about feeling full after eating. It is about giving your body the nutrients it needs," Menyatsoe explained.

Nqobile Nkosi a fourth-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) student shared her experience from the event.

"I learned how food choices impact weight and the importance of a healthy body for a long and fulfilling life. The patient stories were particularly informative and inspirational," Nqobile shared.





SMU joins the rest of the World in Commemorating World TB Day

Campus Health and Counselling Unit at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) in collaboration with Khulanathi EduHub recently observed the World Tuberculosis (TB) Day under the theme 'Yes! We can end TB.' The purpose of this day was to raise awareness about the disease and its impact on global health, as well as to promote early detection and treatment.

SMU Health Promoter Ms Kelebogile Nonkwelo explained that they commemorated this day to inform SMU students and staff that TB is preventable and curable even if a person is HIV positive. She said early diagnosis and treatment of the disease can minimize its spread.

“It is important to educate people about the symptoms of TB and that they should seek medical attention if they suspect that they may have the disease. Although Campus Health does not offer testing and treatment, students can be referred to the nearest institutions for care,” stated Ms Nonkwelo.



She added that service providers who participated in the commemoration screened attendees for TB to refer those who showed signs and symptoms to the nearest clinic. Organizations that participated in the commemoration activities included MIET Africa which was responsible for HIV/STI/TB PrEP initiation, and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) screening, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and Blood Pressure (BP) testing; Ga-Rankuwa Young Adult Against HIV/AIDS; (Ga-Rankuwa young adults for BP, HIV, TB, STI) DKMS Africa for blood cancer awareness; Childline for psychosocial support; Khulanathi EduHub (Campus Health peer educators) for distribution of condoms and recruitment; and the Katekani Community Project responsible for social welfare.

Emphasising the importance of collaboration, Ms Bontle Baloyi, n of the health promoters stated that “I also liked the relationship between the organizations in their fight against TB and promoting a cheerful outlook among the individuals. To the SMU community, we will always be there for you when you need our assistance. It is never too late to go and screen for TB and if you have TB-related signs, please feel free to go test for it, and remember, there is nothing to be scared about TB because it is curable when taking your medication as prescribed,” concluded Bontle. Q



SMU hosts *Wellness Day* in Support of its Employees



Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) hosted its annual two-day Employee Wellness Day (EWD) from 24-25 April 2024. The EWD Programme was aimed at promoting and enhancing physical, social, emotional, and spiritual wellness, quality of life, and financial, and intellectual wellness of staff and students.

The event was attended by companies such as Sanlam, Bestmed medical aid scheme, Bonitas medical aid scheme, Sizwe Hosmed medical aid scheme, South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA), Virgin Active, Alexander Forbes, Old Mutual, Standard Bank, Corporate Wellness SA, Momentum, and Metropolitan.

The services provided during the event included prophylaxis cleaning, vaccination, stress management, screening and testing for HIV/AIDS, hypertension, diabetes, cholesterol, Body Mass Index (BMI) and

eye testing. Furthermore, presentations were made focusing on mental health issues, drug and substance abuse, healthy eating habits, fitness training and financial management.

At the end of the event, Mr Garry Nkosi Facilitator at SANCA, Soshanguve branch, stated that; “I believe that from the services we offered during the event we were able to educate and raise awareness about the dangers of drugs and also different substances that are currently trending in our communities. I would encourage participants to be open-minded, curious, and always willing to learn,” Nkosi expressed.

In response, an SMU employee, Mr Radipoonono “The Honourable One” Tladi expressed his gratitude, indicating

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that it was indeed a special day for him since the event allowed him to interact with different stakeholders.

“This is a special day hosted by my employer Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. I like this initiative of Employee Wellness Day as it allowed me to interact and communicate with different stakeholders which provided a variety of services to help me understand my benefits as an employee,” said Mr Tladi.

A fourth-year, Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition and Dietetics student, Mahlatse Mothapo, shared her gratitude indicating that the event offered her the opportunity to conduct nutritional screening and nutritional education.


“I believe that our clients went home with more knowledge on healthy eating, and they were informed about the benefits of good nutrition and how to achieve it,” Mahlatse concluded.



Risk Champion Forum Adopts the Business Continuity Management Plan

“The absence of a BCM plan could have negative consequences for the university as a whole. As such, Risk Champions will be working with their departments and schools to identify critical functions and develop plans to ensure that these functions can continue in the event of a disruption,” Mr Manaka concluded.

The Department of Risk and Internal Auditing hosted its Risk Champions forum on 4 April 2024. The forum was aimed at introducing the Business Continuity Management (BCM) plan to Risk Champions. The Champions provide advice to their departments and schools on how to identify critical functions and create contingency plans. The plan seeks to protect people and equipment during and after an incident which may have caused a disruption, thus enabling the business of the university to continue uninterrupted. It includes emergency response mechanisms, crisis management plans, and applicable policies.

The forum was facilitated by Mr. Gape Manaka, the SMU Risk Management Officer, focusing on BCM, risk implementation plan, monitoring of key risk indicators and tolerance levels. 



School of Dentistry Raises Funds for Students



The SMU's School of Dentistry (SOD) in partnership with the Gauteng Department of Health and SHAD-OU Fitness Zone hosted a fundraising initiative on 17 February 2024 to support the Dental Students' Council's (DSC) fundraising drive. SMU Oral Health Centre's Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr Ntsakisi Mukhari-Baloyi, Dr Daisy Kotsane, and Dr Mathabo Mathebula Chief Operating Officer (COO) at the Office of Health Standards Compliance participated in the fundraising fun walk.

SMU students, staff members and their families came in numbers to make a difference through the fun-filled 5km walk and aerobics-thon that contributed to raising funds on the day. SOD's Acting Dean Prof Dini Mawela explained that the initiative was not only organized as a day for the school to meet the first-year students in the school, but most importantly, to raise funds towards the School's students. The initiative aimed at providing the necessities to the students.

The 5km Walk, led by Prof Mawela, was followed by a 3-hour aerobics marathon facilitated by coaches from SHAD-OU Fitness Zone. Prof Mawela indicated that the Student Support Committee worked hand in hand with the DSC to organize and prepare for the campaign.

“The School will be planning more activities of this nature because these extra-curricular activities are important to support and promote the holistic development of our students, concluded Prof. Mawela. [Q](#)




NEXIO donates computers to SMU

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) recently received a donation of twenty HP All-In-One desktop computers from Nexio (formerly Storage Technology Services). The contribution was made to assist SMU towards effective teaching and learning. Furthermore, this is in compliance with the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment and ICT charter codes of Good Practice, where ICT companies are encouraged to support black communities with ICT-related goods and services as part of their Corporate Social Investment (CSI).

Nexio was one of the successful bidders on the ICT Network Refresh Project, to supply and install networking and Wi-Fi solution which has a 5-year support and maintenance contract. This donation further demonstrates their commitment to SMU's technological advancement. The computers will be utilized for online teaching and learning and to support academic activities in general.

The donated desktops boast impressive specifications, featuring 23.8-inch displays, powerful Intel Core i5-1335 processors, 8GB of DDR4 memory and ample 512GB M.2 solid-state drives for a speedy performance. Each computer comes with a 3-year hardware support plan. While the university will manage ongoing maintenance and eventual disposal according to its established policies, the educational software licenses will be procured separately.

The computers will be connected to the university network domain and will be secured through the Firewall to prevent unauthorized activities on the university network. In addition to the computers, other peripherals are a Projector, Smartboard and SmartScreen's.

The Director for SMU ICT Mr Ignatius Makgoka indicated that the university is expecting an additional twenty computers from Nexio in the next two months. 



SMU takes steps to address Gender-Based Violence



Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University's (SMU) embarked on a Gender Based Violence (GBV) awareness campaign. The campaign was intended to raise awareness about the impact of GBV in society and to inform students and the broader SMU community about the GBV reporting procedures, both internally and externally, including early signs of GBV and their rights.

The event was graced by representatives from Higher Health South Africa, the National Department of Social Development (DSD), the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Gauteng Department of Community Safety, the National Prosecuting Authority, and the local NGOs (Katekane Community Project and Youth for survival).

In his welcoming address, acting Deputy Vice Chancellor: Operations, Prof Patrick Demana indicated that “ GBV is not merely about statistics or headline. It is a stark reality that affects individuals, families, and communities across the globe”. He emphasized that it is SMU's duty, as an institution of higher learning, to not only acknowledge this reality, but also to take proactive steps towards prevention, support, and advocacy.



“As we embark on this journey of awareness and advocacy, let us not forget the voices of those who have been silenced by violence and oppression. Let us stand in solidarity with survivors, empower them to speak their truth and work tirelessly to dismantle the systems that perpetuate GBV in all its forms,” he indicated.

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Ditebogo Manana from DSD in her address urged students to report any form of GBV, highlighting different types of GBV which include sexual, verbal, emotional and financial abuse. She emphasized that when GBV happens, students must stand up for themselves.

She encouraged students not to keep quiet when GBV happens, emphasizing that they must talk about it, report it, more, especially sexual abuse. "When it happens, they must not fiddle with the evidence", she stated.

"When a person sleeps with you, even if you agree that you and that person are going to be intimate partners, when you do not feel like it that day and he forces himself on you, you must go and report it. Take that dirty underwear, take the sheets that you were using on that day and go report the matter. Don't hide things because once you start to hide you are making it easy for the perpetrator to win.

Furthermore, she encouraged students to familiarize themselves with their institution's policies on GBV as these policies empower them to understand their rights and the support the institution provides.

Detective Ntombi Mapala, from the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS) at Ga-Rankuwa SAPS in her address emphasized that GBV can affect anyone, regardless of educational or social status.

"We are investigating all sexual offences crimes or GBV-related crimes. There are many doctors, many teachers, many police officers who are abused, and do not talk about it because of fear of being stigmatized," stated Detective Mapala.

Additionally, she urged those experiencing GBV to report it as soon as possible, ideally, within 72 hours and mentioned that a victim's body becomes a crime scene and evidence collection is crucial for prosecution. She assured those participants of the support and confidentiality provided by the police.

Ms. Velencia Maupye, Manager of the GBV Unit at SMU, indicated that the university has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to GBV through its policies. She urged students to report incidents to the GBV office. Additionally, she stated that the office provides support for survivors with the assistance of social workers.



Department of Physiotherapy forges Social Cohesion through Family Sports Day



Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)'s Department of Physiotherapy (Physio) held its annual Family Sports Day which was filled with a variety of sporting activities to create social cohesion between the student body and its alumni. As part of promoting the physiotherapy profession, attendees contributed towards the fundraising initiative for physiotherapy students' flagship project, the Comrades Marathon.

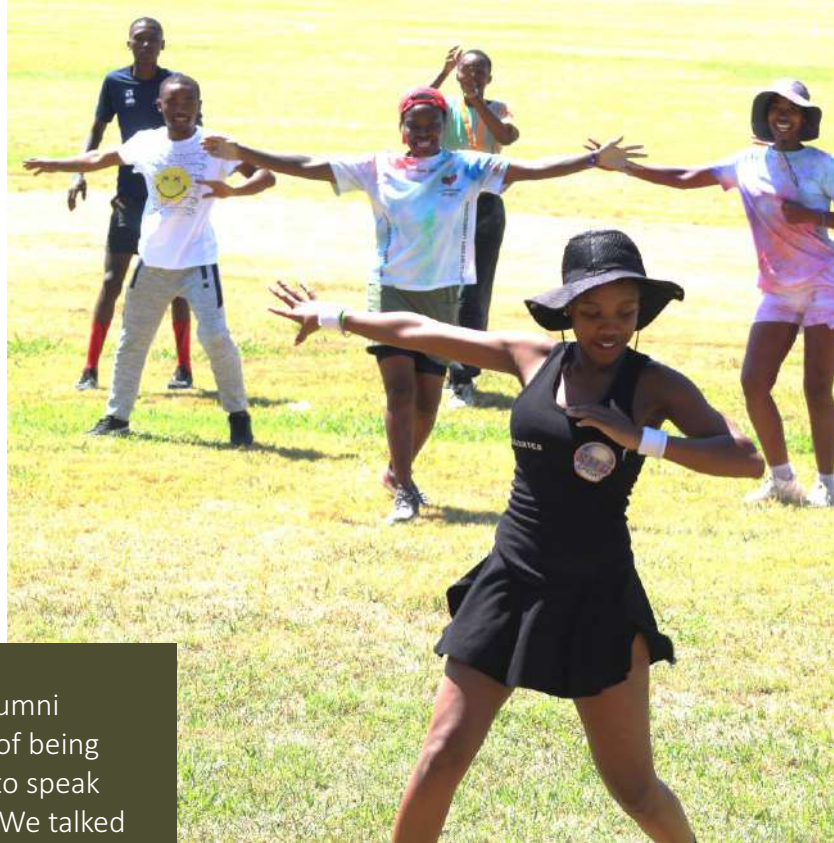
The objective of the Sports Day involved fostering relationships between the Physiotherapy Department, its graduates, and other departments within SMU. The day created opportunities for Physiotherapy students to receive mentoring from the alumni and allowed the department and SMU's community to engage in physical activities such as the colour run, aerobics, soccer, netball, volleyball, and board games.

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In his opening address, the Acting Dean of the School of Health Care Sciences, Prof Douglas Maleka shared that the physiotherapy department turned 50 years old in 2023. He indicated that, “This is the third year that the department is hosting such an initiative and that it intends to familiarise physio students with their lecturers in a relaxed environment outside of the classroom”.

Further stating that “A journey of becoming a Physio-therapist is not going to be easy though it is possible to conquer difficulties along the way and obtain your degrees. Apart from mentorship, the alumni are there to cushion you regarding social issues you might be experiencing. We know that most of you depend on NSFAS to fund your studies and so, the alumni are also there to assist and ensure that you have bread to help you continue with your studies,” said Prof Maleka.

The SMU Physiotherapy Alumnus, Olebogeng Masilo stated that he was inspired to attend this event to provide financial support to SMU's physio students. He said that the relationship they want to build with the physio students is another factor that motivated him to come. He added that it was good to see current students comfortable around the alumni and their lecturers outside of the classroom.



“It was an immense pleasure to meet other alumni because we barely see each other, so the feeling of being together again was wonderful. We had a chance to speak about our experiences at our different workplaces. We talked about life and got to be the SMU physiotherapy family we know. My highlight for the day was seeing the alumni team dominate the students in all sporting activities and retain the trophy. I would like to encourage physio students to study smart, not hard and to engage in extracurricular activities. Always put your mental health first and always remember that you are doing this for yourself and no one else,” expressed Olebogeng.



Physiotherapy first-year student, Naledi Gololo mentioned that she was thrilled to be part of the physio family sports day experience. She indicated that her highlights for the day were the games played and seeing everyone tap into a world outside of academics and work.

“I got a chance to network with a few of the alumni and realised that they all have one thing in common. They love being physiotherapists and I think that is what keeps them going. They are all resilient beings. Students who were not present at this event missed out, not only on the fun but on opportunities to meet inspiring people. It was so interesting and inspiring to see that one day I will be an alumna, and that first year is doable along with other levels of studies,” concluded Naledi excitedly.



Sport Officer Scoops Administrator of the Year Award



SMU Sports Officer, Ms Busisiwe Sijora scooped the Administrator of the Year award during the Gauteng Women in Sport Awards, 2024. The award is bestowed on individuals who have significantly advanced opportunities for women in sports, demonstrated excellence in their administrative roles, fostered inclusivity, contributed to capacity building, engaged in self-development, and promoted excellence in sports management.

Being a finalist amongst esteemed sports administrators in the province was a testament to the calibre of competition and the rigorous standards set by the award criteria. Winning this award undoubtedly opens doors for Busisiwe to further her career, providing opportunities to engage in more significant initiatives, expand networks and inspire others in the field of sports administration.

“Winning the Administrator of the Year award was an unexpected honour amidst fierce competition. It reaffirmed the significance of persistent dedication and unwavering commitment to sports administration. This recognition not only validates the demanding work invested but also serves as a motivation to continue pushing boundaries and making impactful contributions to the sports community,” said Busisiwe.

As an administrator, her approach to performing duties diligently is founded on two key principles, namely, effective planning, and continuous personal development. “Firstly, I precisely organise tasks through a detailed to-do list, breaking them down into manageable segments on a monthly, weekly, and daily basis. This structured approach ensures that I stay on track and effectively manage my workload. Secondly, I prioritise communication with student-athletes, actively engaging with them to understand their challenges, aspirations, and feedback. By listening attentively, I can tailor administrative approaches to better meet their needs and foster a supportive environment,” shares Busisiwe.

Ms. Sijora recognises the importance of personal development in staying abreast of industry trends and best practices. To this end, she regularly participates in short courses and seeks opportunities to network with senior administrators. Additionally, she draws insights from Europe-based content on sports management, recognising that she can learn valuable lessons from institutions that are ahead of us in this field. “Furthermore, I actively seek guidance from mentors and engage with other professionals in senior sports positions at different spaces in the sports industry. This allows me to gain valuable insights into effective administrative practices and refine my approach accordingly. By continuously learning and adapting, I ensure that I am equipped to effectively meet the demands of sports administration and contribute positively to the field,” she said.

Her plans for the Sports Officer portfolio at the SMU Sports and Recreation Department involve implementing initiatives to enhance inclusivity and diversity within sports programmes, ensuring equitable opportunities for all; strengthening partnerships with external organisations to provide additional


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resources and opportunities for sports development; to enhancing administrative efficiency through the implementation of innovative technologies and streamlined processes; continuously advocate for the advancement of women in sports through targeted initiatives and awareness campaigns; Foster a culture of excellence and sportsmanship within the university's community through various engagement activities and events; Putting SMU Sport and Recreation out there in terms of sharing our stories.

“Additionally, there is a strong need to develop and expand mentorship programmes to nurture leadership skills and personal development among student-athletes. These kinds of programmes would aim to provide guidance, support, and opportunities for growth, empowering students to reach their full potential both on and off the field.”

In addition to her role as a Sports Officer at the SMU Sports and Recreation Department, she is actively engaged in the following leadership positions within the sports community: Vice Chairperson – USSA Football, Secretary – USSA Handball, and EXCO Member – South African Handball Federation. “Two years ago, I started an initiative to support sports graduates by creating a WhatsApp group dedicated to sharing sports-related job opportunities every week. This platform has served as a valuable resource for aspiring professionals, providing them with access to career opportunities and networking connections within the sports industry. I am proud to say that this initiative has not only opened doors for numerous sports graduates but has also brought hope and encouragement to many individuals pursuing their passion in sports administration and management,” she recalls.

Busisiwe is a multi-award-winning administrator, boasting an award-laden cabinet that encompasses a ten-year awards haul:

Through her multifaceted involvement in sports leadership roles and initiatives, she is deeply committed to driving positive change and fostering growth within the sports community. She believes that collaboration, innovation, and mentorship are essential components for advancing the field of sports administration and creating impactful opportunities for all individuals involved. 



- **2024 Administrator of the Year** - Gauteng Women in Sports Awards - Provincial
- **2023 Champion of Service** - SMU Student Affairs Excellence Awards
- **2023 Full Colours** - SMU Student Affairs Excellence Awards
- **2023 Administrator of the Year** - Gauteng Women in Sports Awards - Tshwane
- **2022 Administrator of the Year** - Gauteng Women in Sports Awards - Tshwane
- **2017 Administrator of the Year** - TUT Sports Awards
- **2017 International Participation** - TUT Sports Awards
- **2014 Best Student Administrator of the Year** - TUT Sports Awards

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

1. delegated without abdicating accountability.

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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