

Alumni

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WORLD-CLASS TALENT

ALUMNI

This issue spotlights SMU's young alumni who are redefining industries and breaking new ground with their innovative contributions in their communities and on the global stage. With a perfect blend of youthful energy and professional excellence, these pioneers are shaping the future and impacting the world.

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Editor's NOTE

At Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), we do more than teach; we craft the architects of tomorrow's world. This issue celebrates the youthful energy and professional distinction that our graduates bring to their fields. It shines a spotlight on those who are breaking new ground—those who see opportunity where others see obstacles, who pursue innovation where others tread familiar paths. Their work is an inspiring reflection of SMU's commitment to creating leaders who are as compassionate as they are competent and as visionary as they are versatile.

Every graduate featured in this edition exemplifies what it means to be world-class. Their contributions—whether in pioneering medical breakthroughs, advancing equitable policies, or leading innovations that uplift society—speak to the power of an SMU education. These are not just professionals; they are leaders whose impact resonates across continents, a living testament to SMU's status as a premier health sciences institution.

SMU's impact extends far beyond the walls of our university. It is felt in communities transformed by healthcare leaders who heal, policies reimaged by alumni in government, and lives improved by the research and innovation born from our institution. These are not just graduates; they are ambassadors of our values and our vision, carrying with them the legacy of a university deeply rooted in the pursuit of excellence.

The foundation of their success lies in the unique environment that SMU provides: a blend of rigorous academic training, forward-thinking research, and an ethos of social responsibility. Here, we mould individuals who excel in their fields and understand the importance of using their skills for the greater good. This is the hallmark of SMU—a university that not only meets global standards but dares to exceed them.

As you turn the pages of this publication, I invite you to reflect on the role SMU continues to play in shaping South Africa's future. From addressing Africa's most pressing healthcare issues to influencing global health policy, these young alumni prove that SMU is not just producing graduates but cultivating a legacy of excellence and impact.

To our students and staff, this is your story, too—a shared legacy that reflects the strength of our collective ambition. To our alumni, let this issue be a source of pride and a reminder of the heights you can achieve as part of the SMU family. To all our readers, may this be an unmistakable declaration: SMU is not just a university; it is a hub of innovation, leadership, and world-class talent.

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SMU: The cornerstone of South Africa's healthcare evolution

By Tshimangadzo Mphaphuli

As Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2024, it stands as an academic institution and a cornerstone of South Africa's healthcare system. The university's role extends far beyond education; it has become an integral force in shaping both the future of healthcare in the nation and the wider African continent. The impact of SMU—rooted in a rich history of medical training and social justice—remains an enduring force in tackling some of the most pressing health challenges facing the country.

SMU's journey is deeply entwined with South Africa's history. Founded in 1976 as the Medical University of South Africa (Medunsa), the institution was established at a time when apartheid policies had left many communities in the country without adequate access to healthcare. Medunsa's creation was a direct response to this inequality, focusing on training healthcare professionals who would serve in under-resourced and rural areas where healthcare was most needed. At the time, South Africa's healthcare system was marred by disparities, and Medunsa's role was pivotal in addressing these inequities. It produced generations of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals who were committed to social justice and health equity, giving Medunsa a distinct place in the country's medical history.

The renaming of the university in 2014 to Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University marked a significant shift in name and purpose. The new name was a tribute to a respected leader of the African National Congress, symbolising a commitment to transformation, inclusivity, and progress. This new chapter emphasised the university's forward-looking vision and the importance of developing healthcare professionals who could respond to the changing needs of a democratic South Africa. With a focus on integrating modern medical research, clinical practice, and public health advocacy, SMU set out to expand its role from merely an

academic institution to a global leader in health science education and research.

The university has since built upon the legacy of Medunsa, consistently striving to improve the quality and reach of its educational offerings. Its faculties and schools continue to lead in medical research, focusing on some of the country's most critical health issues, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and maternal health. For example, the university has been at the forefront of clinical research, addressing challenges that uniquely affect South Africans and others in the Global South. This research is scientifically significant and aims at practical solutions to real-world problems.

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Rooted in a legacy of resilience and transformation, SMU continues to shape the future of healthcare in South Africa, producing leaders who are driving innovation and social change.

The university's alumni have played a substantial role in transforming the South African healthcare landscape. Many SMU graduates trained under the institution's early commitment to social responsibility now occupy leadership roles in hospitals, clinics, and governmental health agencies across the country. Some have also gained international prominence, working with global organisations to address health crises around the world. These alumni are advocates for reform, pushing for improvements in healthcare delivery, public health policy, and patient care, particularly in underserved communities.

SMU's emphasis on social responsibility remains at the heart of its mission. The university has long supported community-based health initiatives and outreach programmes, which allow students to engage directly with the communities they will serve. These initiatives, often focused on rural and disadvantaged areas, embody the university's deep commitment to improving health and well-being across South Africa. Through its work, SMU has demonstrated the power of academic institutions to serve as catalysts for social change.

Looking forward, SMU's role in shaping South Africa's healthcare system is poised to grow even more influential. With new international partnerships, expanding research opportunities, and a dedication to cutting-edge technologies, the institution is strengthening its position as a global leader in health sciences. The university is attracting talent from across Africa and the world, further solidifying its place as a key player in addressing the world's most complex health challenges.

As South Africa continues to tackle the evolving challenges of healthcare provision in the 21st century, SMU stands at the forefront, committed to developing the next generation of healthcare professionals who will shape the future of the country's health system. With its rich legacy of excellence, social responsibility, and innovation, SMU is a symbol of South Africa's resilience and dedication to providing equitable, quality healthcare for all.

SMU alumnus advocating change at Mr World 2024

By Tumelo Moila

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) continues to affirm its reputation as a premier institution, producing world-class leaders and change-makers. This was exemplified by alumnus Samuel Chauke, an accomplished Occupational Therapist, who represented South Africa with distinction at the prestigious Mr World 2024 competition held in Vietnam from 5 to 23 November 2024. The global event, which highlights talent, fitness, and social advocacy, attracted 61 contestants competing for the title while championing meaningful causes.

Crowned Mr World South Africa 2024 in August, Chauke entered the competition with a profound mission: to advocate for mental health awareness among men and empower people with disabilities. Reflecting on his journey, Chauke remarks: "This journey has been incredible for me. I had to dig deep, and I have grown immensely. I gave it my all, but God's timing is the best. There is so much to look back at—I was seen and made my mark. The journey continues."

Chauke's performance at Mr World 2024 was nothing short of remarkable, earning him recognition in several categories:

- He achieved a **Top 5 placement in Charity Work**, showcasing his dedication to impactful social projects.
- His **Top 17 position in Multimedia** reflected his strong online presence and storytelling prowess.
- Chauke highlighted South Africa's rich cultural heritage with a **Top 20 placement in National Costume**.
- His talent as a pianist earned him a **Top 37 position in the Talent Category**.
- Demonstrating discipline and athleticism, he also secured a **Top 13 spot in Sports**.

"These rankings are a testament to the preparation, resilience, and authenticity I brought to the competition," Chauke says, crediting his achievements to thorough preparation and a commitment to his values.

Advocacy beyond the crown

For Chauke, the Mr World platform provided more than an opportunity to compete—it was a chance to advance causes dear to his heart. His "Beauty with a Purpose" project, supported by the Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA), focused on raising awareness about mental health and disability empowerment.

"I want to highlight not just the limitations but the strengths of individuals with disabilities," Chauke explains. "This platform

allows me to advocate for the dignity and empowerment of these individuals." His dedication to advocacy underscores SMU's ethos of nurturing socially responsible leaders who address critical societal issues.

Chauke's journey to Mr World required careful navigation of his dual roles as a Senior Occupational Therapist at Potchefstroom Hospital and a national pageant title-holder. He described the experience as both challenging and transformative.

"Sponsorship and time management were my biggest hurdles," he shared. "Working at the hospital and fulfilling my duties as Mr World South Africa required sacrifices and careful energy management."

His preparation included rigorous physical training, endurance exercises, and artistic development. "Mr Sport is significant because it reflects your mental and physical readiness," Chauke says, adding that he engaged in jogging, strength training, and other endurance-building activities to maintain peak form.

In Vietnam, Chauke embraced the vibrant culture and forged meaningful connections with fellow contestants. "The accommodation was amazing, and the food and culture are so vibrant. I have been inspired by the warmth and unity of everyone involved," he remarks.

His commitment to authenticity also shone through. "The best I can be is my authentic self. I enjoyed the moment and pridefully represented South Africa's rich heritage," he says.

Despite not making the Top 20 overall, Chauke's journey resonated with purpose and inspiration. Offering advice to future contestants, he emphasises the importance of understanding the title's responsibilities. "Start small, build confidence, and remember that it is about the difference you make, not just the crown," he advises.

A catalyst for global leadership

SMU celebrated Chauke's achievements as a reflection of its mission to mould leaders who excel globally while making meaningful contributions to society. "We are incredibly proud of Chauke for his dedication, resilience, and advocacy," the university said in a statement.

As Chauke returns to South Africa, his journey at Mr World 2024 stands as a powerful testament to the calibre of SMU's alumni. His dedication to purpose-driven leadership is an enduring source of inspiration for the SMU community and beyond.



Revolutionising SA's healthcare: Challenging inequality, redefining equity

By Tshimangadzo Mphaphuli

South Africa's healthcare system is a battlefield for resources, resilience, and reform. At the forefront of this fight stands Aluwani Manenzhe, a proud alumna of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), whose work exemplifies the university's commitment to producing healthcare leaders who leave an indelible mark on society.

Born in Thohoyandou, Limpopo, and raised in a modest community where resources were scarce, Manenzhe's rise to prominence as the President of the Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA) is a story of grit, determination, and an unwavering belief in the power of education. Her journey underscores SMU's pivotal role in transforming students into agents of change who tackle some of the nation's most pressing challenges.

Manenzhe grew up as the eldest of four daughters, finding early inspiration in her Catholic education. Guided by a mission to counteract the oppressive Bantu Education system, her schools instilled a belief in education as a tool for empowerment and justice. But life was not without setbacks.

When her initial matric results were insufficient to qualify for university, she boldly decided to repeat the class at a less-resourced school. It was here, amid chalkboards in disrepair and a shortage of books, that she learned one of her most enduring lessons: "Hard work matters more than circumstances," she recalls.

It was through SMU, however, that her life took a transformative turn. Despite the challenges of transitioning to higher education, Manenzhe flourished in SMU's inclusive and rigorous environment. The university's emphasis on excellence and adaptability prepared her to face the complex realities of South Africa's healthcare landscape.

From student to changemaker

Graduating in 1997 as an occupational therapist, Manenzhe credits SMU for cultivating the leadership qualities she would later deploy on a national stage. She recalls the painstaking insistence of her lecturers on excellence: "They wouldn't tolerate mediocrity, even in the smallest task. That discipline shaped my entire career."

Today, Manenzhe's name is synonymous with transformation in occupational therapy. Under her leadership, OTASA has pushed for increased recognition of the profession, particularly in underserved communities. "Occupational therapy brings hope to lives that challenges would otherwise shatter," she explains.

Her initiatives include community-based rehabilitation programmes that empower caregivers and advocate for patient autonomy. These programmes have restored dignity and functionality to countless South Africans, from children with cerebral palsy to adults recovering from strokes.

Manenzhe's story is not merely one of personal triumph but a mirror reflecting SMU's broader mission: to serve marginalised communities while elevating healthcare standards. She is acutely aware of the disparity in access to rehabilitation services, a challenge that has long plagued South Africa's healthcare system.

Her leadership in OTASA has resulted in groundbreaking collaborations with policymakers, healthcare funders, and corporate stakeholders. By advocating for the inclusion of rehabilitation in the National Health Insurance framework, Manenzhe is paving the way for occupational therapy to be recognised as a cornerstone of comprehensive healthcare.

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“Leadership requires growth and consistency. Build a solid foundation, fail enough to be cautious, and dare enough to know the value of calculated risk.”

Manenzhe's leadership style—assertive, compassionate, and solution-focused—is a testament to SMU's unique approach to education. From her first days on campus, she was immersed in a melting pot of cultures, ideas, and challenges. The university's interdisciplinary programmes and clinical rotations exposed her to the stark realities of South African healthcare while equipping her with the tools to effect meaningful change.

Her presidency of OTASA is only the latest chapter in a career that has spanned both public and private healthcare. From initiating caregiver empowerment programmes in Limpopo to spearheading policy reforms at a national level, she embodies the spirit of SMU: a relentless drive to improve lives.

For current SMU students, Manenzhe offers this advice: “Leadership requires growth and consistency. Build a solid foundation, fail enough to be cautious, and dare enough to know the value of calculated risk.” She also stresses the importance of humility: “Serve those you lead, and they will make you their leader.”

Looking to the future, she envisions SMU playing a central role in healthcare reform through partnerships with its alumni. She urges the university to leverage its research capacity and alumni expertise to shape South Africa's health policies and community development.

SMU's enduring impact

Manenzhe's journey from a determined young girl in Thohoyandou to a nationally recognised leader is a testament to SMU's impact on its students and society. Her achievements prove that SMU does not merely produce graduates; it produces leaders, innovators, and change agents who transform communities. In a country where healthcare equity remains an elusive goal, the story of Manenzhe offers hope. She is proving that education is the most powerful tool for change when harnessed effectively.





From Ga-Rankuwa to pioneering physiotherapy research with global impact

By Tumelo Moila

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) continues to cement its reputation as a premier institution for healthcare education and research, producing trailblazers like Dr Violet Matshake Rapoo, who recently earned her PhD in Physiotherapy. Her groundbreaking research, focusing on enhancing treatment protocols for patients with femur fractures and lower-limb injuries, not only addresses gaps in healthcare delivery but also underscores the university's commitment to advancing medical science.

"This study identified challenges and gaps in the health-care interventions that we provide for our patients. It makes it worthwhile to ensure patients receive high-quality care that is consistent and collaborative, where healthcare professionals work together," says Rapoo. Her passion for improving patient outcomes reflects the ethos of SMU, where the fusion of academic excellence and practical application propels its graduates to make transformative impacts in the health sector.

Born and raised in Ga-Rankuwa, Rapoo's journey to academic excellence is as inspiring as it is remarkable. Overcoming the loss of her father at a tender age, her mother's resilience became the bedrock of her ambition. "Before I came to Medunsa (now known as SMU), I wanted to work with people and make an impact in their lives. I knew from high school that I wanted to be in the health sector," she recalls.

Driven by a desire to help others, she pursued physiotherapy, a field that would allow her to play an active role in restoring patients' mobility and dignity. Her years of practice, particularly in orthopaedics, gave her the insights to delve deeper into improving healthcare protocols.

Her PhD journey, though challenging, was a testament to her unrelenting determination. Balancing a demanding career, single parenthood and her academic aspirations required extraordinary perseverance. "At times, I would spend sleepless nights working on my research and have to

report for duty in the morning. It was not easy, but by God's grace, it was doable," she reveals.

Through her research, Rapoo has brought to light the critical need for interprofessional collaboration in healthcare. Her findings could potentially influence policy development, ensuring that patients receive comprehensive and cohesive care from hospital admission to rehabilitation. "This study may impact policy development for effective physiotherapy services for patients who sustained femur fractures. It highlights the importance of collaboration among healthcare professionals, especially in discharge planning and treatment follow-up," she notes.

Rapoo's illustrious career includes serving as a Sports Physiotherapist for Team South Africa and travelling to international events like the Paris Olympic Games with top athletes. Her work with athletes, alongside her clinical and academic achievements, paints a portrait of a professional who embodies excellence in all facets of her career.

Reflecting on her journey, she expresses her deep gratitude to SMU, where she completed her under-graduate, master's, and PhD studies. "SMU is unique because it focuses only on health sciences. I did my junior degree, my master's, and now my PhD here, all under the same institution," she proudly states.

As Chief Physiotherapist at Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital, she leads a team dedicated to delivering high-quality patient care. Beyond her clinical role, she is committed to mentoring the next generation of healthcare professionals, nurturing the same values of leadership and advocacy instilled in her by SMU.

Her success inspires the healthcare community and highlights SMU's pivotal role in shaping leaders who make a global impact. Through individuals like Rapoo, SMU continues to shine as a beacon of excellence, producing healthcare professionals who are catalysts for positive change.

Transforming South Africa's pharmaceutical landscape

By Relebogile Mabusela

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) continues to make waves in shaping the future of healthcare through its outstanding alumni. Among them is Dr Ntobeko Mpanza, the Director of Pharmaceutical Economics at the National Department of Health (NDoH), who recently earned her PhD in Pharmacy from SMU. Her groundbreaking thesis, "Correlation between medicines registered by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority and used in South Africa in the context of the Burden of Disease spanning over six years," underscores SMU's commitment to fostering impactful, evidence-based research that transforms lives.

Mpanza's passion for pharmaceuticals was rooted in her upbringing in a household that valued education and healthcare. With a nurse for a mother and a father with a background in chemistry, discussions about science and health were a part of daily life. This foundation inspired her to pursue a career that combines these elements and contributes to improving South Africa's healthcare system.

Her research explored a critical question: Are medicines registered in South Africa aligned with the country's burden of disease? The findings were striking. Mpanza discovered that only 16% of registered medicines reach patients, revealing significant gaps in the accessibility of life-saving treatments. Particularly notable was the prevalence of mental health conditions, which accounted for the highest volume of medicines dispensed nationwide—outpacing even anti-infectives. Medications like Aropax (Paroxetine) for depression and Ativan (Lorazepam) for anxiety dominated pharmacy shelves, highlighting the urgent need to address mental health more comprehensively in South Africa.

"The main goal of my study was to ensure that research efforts translate into real patient benefits," she explains. "By

focusing on whether regulatory outputs align with the country's healthcare priorities, we can make evidence-based decisions that truly serve the population."

Her choice to further her studies at SMU was deliberate. After obtaining her Pharmacy degree at Rhodes University, Mpanza was drawn to SMU's reputation for academic rigour and world-class training. "SMU, formerly Medunsa, has always stood out as a beacon of excellence in healthcare education," she shares. "It was my dream to have something associated with Medunsa, now SMU, on my resume."

Balancing her demanding career, family life, and PhD studies required discipline and resilience. The support she received from SMU's academic team also played a pivotal role. "I am incredibly fortunate to have had exceptional supervisors, Professor Moliehi Matlala and Dr Mothobi Keele," she reflects. "Their guidance and encouragement were instrumental in helping me navigate my research challenges."

Mpanza's career trajectory is a testament to the real-world impact of SMU's education. Her work at the NDoH, particularly on the Ministerial Pricing Committee, involves conducting in-depth research on the pharmaceutical supply chain and preparing policy recommendations. These contributions ensure that medicine pricing policies are evidence-based and aligned with the needs of South African communities.

Her journey began during her community service at Mosvold Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal, where she became the first and only pharmacist at the facility. This experience, which involved training pharmacy assistants and ensuring compliance with regulatory standards, solidified her interest in regulatory pharmacy. "It highlighted for me how

critical it is to uphold operational standards and compliance to ensure effective healthcare delivery," she recalls.

Mpanza's aspirations extend beyond her current role. She hopes to inspire the next generation of pharmacists to engage in regulatory pharmacy, a field she believes is vital for South Africa's healthcare future. "Teaching mathematics and physics to students and lecturing occasionally at institutions like SMU brings me immense joy," she says. "It's a privilege to contribute to the academic and professional growth of others."

As she reflects on her achievements, her gratitude to SMU remains clear. "The education and support I received at SMU have been life-changing," she says. "This institution doesn't just prepare you for the field; it empowers you to make a real difference."

Mpanza's success and contributions epitomise SMU's transformative impact. Her commitment to aligning pharmaceutical policies with the country's healthcare needs demonstrates the university's role in producing leaders who are not only experts in their fields but also catalysts for change.

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“SMU doesn't just prepare you for the field; it empowers you to make a real difference.”





Faith and medicine: Transforming women's healthcare in Southern Africa

By Tumelo Moila

In the heart of South Africa's medical landscape, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) is shaping world-class professionals driven by medical skills and an enduring commitment to public service. Dr Lawrence Marapo, a distinguished Registrar in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at SMU, embodies this spirit. Known for his blend of clinical excellence and faith-based compassion, Marapo's journey—from his rural upbringing in Botswana to the forefront of women's healthcare innovation—highlights the power of resilience, faith, and a relentless pursuit of quality care.

At just 38, Marapo has carved out a remarkable career, setting a record by completing his Obstetrics and Gynaecology qualifications in just four years. Today, his work is indispensable in advancing women's health and developing the next generation of healthcare leaders. His life motto, inspired by Dr Zhu Fu Tang, founder of the Chinese Pediatrics Academy of Science—"Selflessness, benevolence, diligence, and congeniality"—reflects his commitment to service. "I am the result of teenage pregnancy; my mother was only 15 when she had me. Knowledge became my defence, and faith my foundation," he shares, reflecting on the challenges that fuelled his journey.

Marapo's dual roles as both a Doctor and Pastor enrich his approach to patient care, especially for those facing critical health challenges. "Being a pastor and a gynaecologist allows me to provide comfort and dispel myths for patients in distress," he says. His research into metabolic syndrome among peri- and postmenopausal women, recently presented at an International Menopause Congress in Melbourne, underscores SMU's commitment to impactful research and innovative solutions. "My work is inspired by the need to address real issues affecting South African women," he adds.

His rise began in Mafikeng Provincial Hospital as a Medical Intern, where he soon discovered his calling in obstetrics. "Working in the labour ward during my internship cemented my love for obstetrics. It felt like a calling," he recalls. Today, under the mentorship of experts like Dr George Mothupi and Professor Lineo Matsela at Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital, he is refining his skills to champion maternal health standards across Southern Africa. His vision is ambitious: to establish a "safe obstetrics practice

committee" that will promote evidence-based care and reduce maternal risks.

As an educator, Marapo is deeply invested in SMU's future healthcare leaders. In 2023, SMU honoured him as the Best Junior Undergraduate Lecturer—a recognition he treasures. "Mentoring is essential to healthcare's future," he says. "Our impact multiplies through the young doctors we train, equipping them with skills and ethical standards to elevate public health."

An accomplished author, Marapo has written two books, *Destiny Map to Prosperity* and *Favour of God*, offering hope to those facing adversity. His academic contributions, including an influential paper on perimortem caesarean sections, underscore his dedication to advancing medical knowledge. "Writing is my way of reaching out, to show that despite challenges, faith and effort can shape a better future," he says.

As he prepares to embark on a PhD in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, with aspirations to integrate artificial intelligence into maternal care, Marapo's vision extends far beyond personal achievements. His goals include creating accessible, cost-effective fetal monitoring devices and building a Southern African maternal care committee endorsed by American and European health bodies. For Marapo, it's about offering cutting-edge, compassionate healthcare to the most underserved communities.

Even outside the hospital, his commitment to balance is evident. As a husband and father, he often sacrifices personal time for his patients. "This is a calling like no other. We push ourselves beyond limits for the health of others," he says, describing how he missed his own and his child's birthdays to save a patient's life.

Marapo's message to aspiring doctors is simple and profound: "This is doable; apply your mind and leave everything to faith." His story—a powerful testament to SMU's role in nurturing talent committed to serving humanity—continues to inspire future generations and redefines what it means to be a healthcare professional in South Africa. Through his dedication, faith, and vision, Marapo exemplifies the calibre of talent that SMU cultivates and the transformative impact of health sciences on the nation.

Driving innovation in rural healthcare

By Tumelo Moila



From the rural village of Madadzhi in Limpopo to the forefront of healthcare innovation, Divhanani Sithi's journey is an extraordinary narrative of resilience, dedication, and pioneering spirit. Now the Chief Speech-Language Therapist and Audiologist for the Mopani East District, Sithi exemplifies the calibre of graduates from Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), showing how a South African university can inspire and nurture world-class talent dedicated to public service and transformative healthcare solutions.

Sithi, armed with a Master's in Audiology from SMU, is passionate about improving access to health services in underserved communities. Her recent research project, "Evaluating the Feasibility of a Mobile Tele-Diagnostic Auditory Brainstem Response Service to Rural Communities in Winterveldt," showcases her commitment to accessible healthcare and the high standard of SMU's academic training. She is tackling one of South Africa's critical healthcare challenges: ensuring timely, quality healthcare in remote areas. "Quality healthcare should reach every corner of South Africa," she says, embodying SMU's service and academic excellence ethos.

Sithi's path to audiology was inspired by her sister, SMU alumna Dr Makoma Sithi, who encouraged her to pursue studies in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. Beginning her studies at SMU in 2013, she was introduced to a challenging yet supportive academic environment that ignited her passion for healthcare innovation. From her time as a community service therapist to her current role in leadership, SMU prepared her for each step, equipping her with practical skills and instilling a sense of purpose. She reflects, "SMU nurtured my ambitions and helped me navigate the demands of healthcare."

Through her academic journey and practical experience, Sithi has identified a critical need in rural healthcare: the early detection of paediatric hearing loss. This gap in rural health services has profound implications, often leading to language delays in children. Driven to address this, she pursued her Master's degree, exploring telehealth as a means to bridge healthcare access gaps. "Telehealth has become a focus in my practice because it can reach remote communities and provide essential care for children who would otherwise lack access," she explains.

Sithi's dedication to rural healthcare is underscored by her persistence through personal setbacks. While collecting data

for her research, she experienced both the theft of essential equipment and a serious car accident. Yet, her commitment to her work, supported by her family and faith, saw her through. "I backed up my data religiously, and with my family's support, I could focus on recovery and complete my thesis on record time," she says. Her resilience reflects her strength and the tenacity fostered by SMU's rigorous academic standards.

Raised in Limpopo, Sithi's multilingual background and sensitivity to diverse cultures enrich her patient interactions. She is currently learning sign language to broaden her communication skills with patients, a testament to her belief in truly patient-centred care. "I adapt tests, ask clear questions, and make sure my patients feel safe sharing their symptoms," she says. Her empathetic approach highlights SMU's emphasis on culturally relevant and responsive healthcare education.

As she continues to serve and advocate for improved rural healthcare, Sithi is now pursuing a PhD in digital healthcare, aiming to expand telehealth-based audiology services across South Africa. Her forward-thinking vision is to make speech and hearing services widely accessible in rural areas, using digital health solutions to overcome logistical barriers. "Telehealth has the power to create awareness and increase accessibility, especially in underserved areas," she asserts. "SMU has prepared me to take this challenge head-on, providing me with a foundation in technical skills and a sense of responsibility to my community."

Looking forward, Sithi is determined to mentor and inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals, ensuring her journey sparks further innovation. Her advice to future SMU students and healthcare professionals is heartfelt: "Focus on your path, believe in yourself, and always consider how your efforts can benefit others."

Sithi's story is not just a personal journey; it's a testament to the transformative education offered by SMU. Her work is pioneering a path for rural healthcare solutions in South Africa and serves as a beacon for aspiring health professionals across the country. In her achievements, SMU's mission to educate and empower leaders for societal change shines brightly, showcasing the university as a powerhouse in cultivating healthcare professionals who bring hope and tangible improvements to South Africa's most underserved regions.



Serving the underserved and healing beyond medicine

By Tshimangadzo Mphaphuli

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"Healthcare isn't just about treating illnesses—it's about restoring dignity and building trust in communities that are often forgotten."

In the heart of rural Venda, where medical resources are scarce and healthcare challenges profound, Murendeni Magosha, an alumnus of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), is making an indelible impact. As a Radiographer at Tshilidzini Hospital, he is bridging the technological divide and delivering compassionate care that extends far beyond the confines of medical diagnostics. Magosha's story is a shining example of SMU's mission to produce healthcare leaders who combine technical excellence with an unwavering dedication to service.

A career driven by faith and service

Magosha's journey into radiography was shaped by an early fascination with medical imaging and its profound effect on patient care. A significant influence on his dedication was the late Dr Petrus Masole Ragimana, Pastor and founder of The Living Gospel World Mission. Ragimana, revered as an unsung hero of South Africa, linked faith to action through his doctrine of servant leadership, inspiring countless individuals, including Magosha. His ethos—"To serve God is to serve humanity"—has become a guiding principle in Magosha's life, influencing his journey from SMU to the heart of underserved communities.

"I chose SMU because it offered a rare combination of robust technical training and a curriculum that emphasised the human side of healthcare," Magosha recalls. "It wasn't just about learning the machines; it was about learning how to connect with patients."

At SMU, Magosha's training was comprehensive. Through extensive clinical placements, he gained hands-on experience that prepared him for the complexities of real-world healthcare. However, the focus on patient care and interpersonal relationships resonated most with him. "SMU didn't just teach me how to be a radiographer; it taught me how to care," he says.

Challenges and triumphs in rural healthcare

Now a seasoned professional, Magosha faces the harsh realities of healthcare in rural communities, where outdated equipment and high patient volumes are the norm. At Tshilidzini Hospital, he works tirelessly to overcome these obstacles with grace and ingenuity, often going beyond his clinical duties to ensure patients receive the care and dignity they deserve.

"The challenges we face here are many," he admits. "But I see them as opportunities to make a meaningful difference. Every patient deserves the best care, no matter the circumstances."

Magosha's work extends beyond diagnostics. He has become a mentor to younger radiographers, leading efforts to

optimise patient care and improve workflow. "Healthcare isn't just about treating illnesses," he asserts. "It's about restoring dignity and trust in a community that's often forgotten."

Guided by the teachings of his pastor, Magosha approaches his work with a sense of mission that transcends technical proficiency. His faith informs every patient interaction, imbuing his practice with empathy, respect, and a profound commitment to equity in healthcare.

"My faith has been my anchor," Magosha says. "It helps me maintain perspective, especially on the tough days. When I look at a patient, I see a person—someone's mother, father, child. It's my job to treat them with the respect they deserve."

Magosha's faith-driven approach to healthcare aligns with SMU's broader ethos of producing healthcare professionals who are not only skilled but also compassionate and committed to uplifting their communities.

SMU's role in shaping changemakers

Magosha's success highlights the unique role that SMU plays in shaping healthcare leaders who are not just clinicians but also advocates for social justice and equity. The university's focus on community engagement, combined with its rigorous training, produces graduates who excel under pressure while never losing sight of the human element of healthcare.

"The mentorship I received at SMU was crucial," he reflects. "It wasn't just about technical expertise—it was about learning to serve with heart. I was taught that healthcare is as much about humanity as it is about technology."

Magosha's journey from SMU to the rural hospitals of South Africa exemplifies the transformative power of education, compassion, and faith in healthcare. His work at Tshilidzini Hospital models how healthcare professionals can lead with skill and empathy, transforming the medical landscape and the communities they serve.

As Magosha continues to mentor young radiographers and advocate for improved healthcare access in underserved areas, his legacy grows—not just as an alumnus of SMU but as a beacon of hope and excellence in the fight for healthcare equity.

His story is a powerful reminder of SMU's enduring mission: to produce professionals who excel in their fields and elevate the lives of those who need it most. Through his work, Magosha is proving that healthcare is about more than just treatment—it's about transforming lives.

Youngest graduate triumphs mental health struggles to conquer BSc in Mathematical Sciences

By Tumelo Moila

Jo-Anne Mahlobo's journey to becoming the youngest graduate at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) in the 2024 Spring Graduation Ceremony is nothing short of extraordinary. At just 22, this dynamic young woman earned her Bachelor of Science in Mathematical Sciences and embodies the spirit of resilience, determination, and ambition that defines SMU's exceptional academic community.

Raised in the heart of Pretoria, Mahlobo's upbringing was shaped by a blend of humble beginnings and immense family support. Her parents, navigating their own growth while raising four children, instilled in her the values of hard work and perseverance. "We had a humble beginning, but as my parents grew, so did our family and our lives," she reflects, underscoring the tenacity that would come to define her educational journey.

Her academic trajectory at SMU began in 2020 when she enrolled in a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematical Sciences, majoring in mathematics and statistics. Although the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic altered her original plans to pursue Nuclear Engineering in China, Mahlobo's passion for the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field remained steadfast. "Mathematical Sciences still allowed me to stay within the STEM space, which has always been where my heart is," she says, adding that the decision to pursue a degree in a field predominantly male and underrepresented by black women fuels her desire to change the narrative and inspire others.

Mahlobo's academic journey, however, was not without its challenges. In the midst of her studies, she was diagnosed with severe depression and had to navigate the complexities of mental health while continuing her degree. She remembers writing exams from a hospital bed during her recovery. Yet, her unwavering faith, combined with her inner strength and the support of loved ones, helped her persevere. "Nothing is too big or too small for God," Mahlobo says, drawing strength from her faith during her most difficult moments.

Her story is a testament to the holistic support system that SMU offers its students. It's a university where not only academic excellence but also the well-being of students is a priority. Mahlobo's academic journey, though marked by

personal trials, exemplifies the nurturing environment at SMU that empowers students to overcome adversity and excel in their chosen fields.

Her commitment to her studies paid off when she graduated as SMU's youngest graduate in the Spring 2024 cohort, a moment of triumph that allowed her to celebrate both personal and academic milestones. "It is lovely to have achieved my degree early; I think it allows me ample time to further my studies, explore different career fields, and just overall take advantage of the time graduating a bit earlier has given me," she shares.

Beyond her degree, Mahlobo is already making her mark as a qualified make-up artist and digital content creator. She plans to pursue her international makeup accreditation while continuing her data engineering studies. "The statistics and computer science parts of my degree allow me to pursue a career in data analytics, and I hope to move into data engineering," she explains, demonstrating how she intends to use her knowledge to break new ground in the digital space.

Mahlobo's story highlights the importance of academic rigour and the incredible resilience of SMU's students. It is an inspiring reminder that success is not just about overcoming personal struggles but also about the way a university community comes together to support its students, fostering growth that goes beyond the classroom.

As she steps into the next phase of her career, she carries with her a profound sense of purpose: to inspire future generations, particularly young women in STEM, to believe in their potential. "I want others to know that anything you set your heart to is possible, through God and hard work," she says, quoting her father's advice, "I have never seen a tombstone that reads: 'So and so died of hard work'. Hard work won't kill you but will set you up for a good life."

Mahlobo's triumph is her own and a reflection of SMU's commitment to shaping tomorrow's leaders. As she continues her journey, she will undoubtedly pave the way for countless others, proving that anything is possible with faith, resilience, and the right support.





Redefining global nutrition care from Limpopo to Qatar

By Dimakatso Modise

Sibusiso Reuben Kutama's journey from a modest upbringing in Limpopo to an esteemed role as a Clinical Dietitian at Qatar's Hamad Medical Corporation highlights resilience, ambition, and world-class training. A proud alumnus of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), Kutama credits the institution's rigorous and holistic dietetics education for equipping him to excel on an international stage. His career not only underscores the global impact of SMU graduates but also illustrates the vital role of nutrition in transforming healthcare worldwide.

Kutama's story began with a simple yet profound curiosity about the role of nutrition in health. As a young boy growing up in Limpopo, personal health challenges ignited his passion for understanding dietetics. His drive led him to SMU, where the university's emphasis on producing well-rounded healthcare professionals nurtured his talent.

“My undergraduate studies at SMU laid the foundation for my global career. The comprehensive programme and hands-on training ensured I was equipped with technical skills, empathy, and the ability to adapt to diverse challenges,” Kutama recalls.

After refining his craft at the renowned Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital, Kutama's dedication saw him thrive under resource constraints, managing enteral feeds and parenteral nutrition for complex cases. This experience became instrumental in preparing him for his current role in Qatar.

“Working in South Africa taught me to be resourceful and innovative. These skills have been invaluable in Qatar, where I work with patients from diverse cultures and backgrounds,” he says.

At Hamad Medical Corporation, Kutama represents the excellence of SMU graduates as the only South African dietitian in the organisation. Despite challenges such as cultural differences and language barriers, he takes pride in delivering patient-centred care. “Each day presents an opportunity to learn and grow. It's fulfilling to see how nutrition can transform lives,” he shares.

Kutama's commitment to research and innovation remains a defining feature of his career. His interest in preventative nutrition—a field with profound implications for global health—drives his work. Recent studies on probiotics and prebiotics have influenced his approach, underscoring his dedication to evidence-based care.

Reflecting on a particularly memorable case from his time in South Africa, Kutama recounts helping a young patient recover from post-surgical complications through a structured nutritional plan. The patient eventually regained his health, completed his education, and moved abroad—a testament to the transformative role of dietetics.

For Kutama, sharing knowledge is as important as acquiring it. He actively encourages SMU students and recent graduates to think globally and embrace opportunities to work in diverse environments.

“Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University's Bachelor of Science in Dietetics and Nutrition is globally recognised. My advice is to use this as a springboard to dream big, think creatively, and make a difference wherever you go,” he says.

Kutama's journey demonstrates the transformative education provided by SMU. As a university dedicated to health sciences, SMU equips its students with the skills, resilience, and mindset to excel globally. From its state-of-the-art facilities to its commitment to fostering research, the institution remains a beacon of academic and professional excellence.

As Kutama continues to make strides in Qatar, his story inspires aspiring healthcare professionals and powerfully illustrates SMU's ability to produce graduates capable of shaping the future of healthcare.

From Limpopo to Qatar, Kutama's career epitomises the values of perseverance, innovation, and dedication. His journey underscores the global reach of SMU, a cornerstone in nurturing healthcare leaders who inspire change and improve lives across borders.



Leading the transformation of psychology through cultural research

By Tumelo Moila

At Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), excellence is not just a goal but a standard embodied by its exceptional academics. One of SMU's brightest stars is Lethabo Muila, a Psychology Lecturer and researcher whose work advances understanding of mental health and infertility while placing SMU on the global map as a leader in culturally sensitive health sciences education. Her journey from humble beginnings to international acclaim highlights SMU's pivotal role in nurturing leaders who make a difference.

Raised in Seshego Township, Limpopo, Muila developed her love for learning under the guidance of her family of educators. Her stellar academic achievements paved the way for her undergraduate studies in Psychology at the University of Limpopo's Medunsa Campus, now part of SMU. This foundation ignited her passion for mental health and human behaviour, leading her to pursue Honours and Master's degrees in Clinical Psychology at SMU, where her master's research received distinction. Her story reflects the quality of mentorship and resources provided by SMU that empower students to excel.

As a psychology lecturer at SMU's renowned School of Medicine, Muila is at the forefront of academic excellence. She is deeply invested in developing the next generation of psychologists by teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses, mentoring students, and innovating curriculum development. Her dedication to her students embodies SMU's commitment to fostering academic and personal growth.

"The most rewarding aspect of my work is witnessing students' growth," she shares. "Helping them overcome challenges and achieve their dreams brings immense fulfilment, especially during graduation season, a true celebration of SMU's transformative impact on its students."

Muila's groundbreaking research is a testament to SMU's emphasis on addressing real-world issues through culturally relevant scholarship. Her studies explore infertility from an African cultural perspective, highlighting the integration of traditional practices and modern medical interventions. Rooted in her Bapedi heritage, her work explores how communities view infertility not only as a medical condition but as a cultural and ancestral challenge, with remedies involving rituals and herbal treatments.

Her PhD research, also undertaken at SMU, focuses on the lived experiences of black married men diagnosed with infertility, a field often neglected in academic discourse. By shedding light on their struggles, she is championing SMU's mission to advance socially responsive health sciences research that benefits society as a whole.

Muila's academic journey extends beyond SMU, with her research presented at prestigious international forums such as the International Congress of Psychology in the Czech Republic and the International Academic Forum in Japan. These platforms amplify SMU's reputation as a hub of innovation and thought leadership, demonstrating how its scholars contribute to global health sciences dialogues.

Balancing her roles as an academic, wife to SMU alumnus Dr Seshoka Muila, and mother of three, she exemplifies the SMU ethos of excellence, resilience, and community impact. Her dedication to advancing culturally sensitive approaches to health sciences is a reflection of SMU's core values.

Muila's story is not just her own—it is a testament to the transformative power of SMU in shaping lives, advancing knowledge, and addressing societal challenges. Through her work, SMU continues positioning itself as a premier health sciences university, inspiring future generations of students and researchers.

Redefining success across physics, media and mental health

By Tumelo Moila

In an era that celebrates narrow specialisation, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) takes immense pride in its alumni who embody versatility and excellence across multiple disciplines. One such alumnus is Vukosi "VJ" Mashele, whose journey from the rural Bonn village outside Tzaneen to international acclaim in media, physics, and life coaching exemplifies SMU's commitment to nurturing well-rounded leaders who address South Africa's pressing challenges with innovation and purpose.

Born into a family of educators, Mashele grew up in an environment that instilled intellectual curiosity and empathy. "My mother, a passionate advocate for therapy, taught me the value of open communication and emotional intelligence. My father, a respected community leader, instilled in me the importance of leadership and service," he reflects. These foundations would later shape a career as diverse as it is impactful.

Drawn to the structured elegance of physics and statistics, Mashele earned his Bachelor of Science degree at SMU. Reflecting on his time at the university, he notes, "Physics taught me dynamic problem-solving, while statistics honed my analytical skills. SMU provided me with a robust academic foundation that transcends traditional boundaries." This multidisciplinary approach, championed by SMU, laid the groundwork for his ventures into media, academia, and mental health advocacy.

It was at SMU FM, the university's radio station, that Vukosi discovered his passion for broadcasting. Encouraged by SMU's Public Relations Officer, Tumelo Moila, he auditioned and began a journey that would connect him to millions of listeners. "SMU FM was where I first realised the power of media to educate and connect communities," he recalls. His ability to simplify complex concepts for rural audiences has since become a hallmark of his broadcasting style.

Guided by empathy and a desire to make a difference, he pursued certifications in Life Coaching and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). He conducts grief counselling, personal development masterclasses, and mental health initiatives through his organisation. His work has earned him accolades, including the title of Best Motivational Speaker at

the South African Social Media Awards (SASMA) in 2022 and recognition for leading the Best Coaching-Anchored Organisation at the Africa Coaching & Consulting Awards in 2023.

A physicist bridging academic and global platforms

Beyond his achievements in mental health and media, Mashele remains a dedicated physicist, serving on the board of the South African Institute of Physics (SAIP). He actively champions the role of physics in education, research, and innovation, highlighting SMU's emphasis on producing graduates who contribute to critical national and global conversations.

In 2024, he hosted the African Energy Week, facilitating discussions on eradicating energy poverty across the continent. Reflecting on this milestone, he shares, "Standing on such a global stage affirmed my belief in the power of multidimensional education, much of which I attribute to SMU's holistic approach to learning."

From winning a Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans award to starring in acclaimed South African productions like *The Queen*, Mashele's achievements are a testament to his multidimensional talents. Yet, he remains grounded, focusing on impact over accolades.

"My analytical background enhances my creativity," he says. "Whether I'm developing radio segments, leading conferences, or innovating my men's grooming brand, I approach each endeavour with the versatility SMU encouraged in me."

His advice to young professionals is simple yet profound: "Embrace your uniqueness. Your multidimensionality is your strength, not a weakness. Trust your inner voice—it will always guide you towards fulfilling your potential."

As a proud alumnus, Mashele embodies SMU's mission to produce leaders who address South Africa's most pressing challenges. The university remains committed to nurturing trailblazers like Mashele, who redefine boundaries and leave an indelible mark on the world.



7 illustrious

SMU alumni leading the way in health and beyond

By Dimakatso Modise

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) has a proud history of shaping healthcare professionals who go on to make a profound impact in the healthcare sector, academia, and public service. Graduates of this esteemed institution have consistently excelled in their fields, breaking new ground and paving the way for future generations. This feature celebrates some of the most distinguished SMU alumni whose achievements are shaping South Africa and the world.



Dr Mpho Phalatse, a medical graduate of SMU, seamlessly transitioned from medicine into public service. As the former Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Phalatse utilised her medical background to address pressing urban healthcare challenges. Her efforts focused on improving the city's healthcare infrastructure and service delivery, and her legacy continues to influence Johannesburg's healthcare landscape.



Dr Dikeledi Mokone, a proud SMU graduate, made history as South Africa's first African female professor of surgery. Her exceptional achievements in surgery and medical academia have made her a trailblazer for women in medicine. Mokone's dedication to advancing medical education and providing world-class surgical care has paved the way for future generations of female surgeons and medical professionals.

Dr Refilwe Mokgatla, another ground-breaking SMU graduate, became the first black female to qualify as a Prosthodontics Specialist. Her passion for advancing dental health, particularly within underserved communities, has made her a vital force in improving access to specialised dental care. Mokgatla's pioneering work continues to inspire future dental professionals and elevate the standards of care in the field of prosthodontics.





As a graduate of SMU, Professor Mathilda Mokgatle has become a leader in public health research. Her appointment to the National Health Research Committee has allowed her to influence critical health policies in South Africa. Her research focuses on improving public health systems to ensure they meet the needs of all South Africans, particularly vulnerable populations. Mokgatle's work has left a lasting imprint on the national health policy landscape.



Professor Ephraim Thibedi Mokgokong's visionary leadership as the former Vice-Chancellor of Medunsa played a crucial role in transforming the institution into a premier health sciences university. His contributions to medical sciences and education earned him the prestigious Order of Baobab in Gold. As a graduate of Medunsa (now SMU), he continues to be celebrated for his lifetime of work in advancing health sciences and higher education.



Dr Phophi Ramathuba, an esteemed SMU graduate, strongly advocates healthcare in rural and underserved communities. As the former MEC for Health in Limpopo, she worked tirelessly to expand healthcare services in the province, focusing on increasing access to care in remote areas and addressing systemic issues within the healthcare system. Ramathuba's leadership continues to transform healthcare delivery in Limpopo. Now serving as the Premier of the province, she remains at the forefront of driving change and improving lives.



Dr Molefi Sefularo, a graduate of SMU, has been a tireless advocate for public health policy reform. He used his medical expertise to drive significant changes in South Africa's health policies, focusing on expanding healthcare access and equity, particularly for underserved communities. Sefularo's efforts have helped shape the country's healthcare systems, ensuring they are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the population.

The remarkable achievements of these distinguished SMU alumni serve as a testament to the university's significant contribution to South Africa's healthcare system and beyond. From spearheading healthcare reforms to pioneering groundbreaking medical research and redefining academia, SMU graduates are at the forefront of shaping the future of healthcare locally and globally.

As we celebrate their success, we honour SMU's enduring legacy. The university's unwavering commitment to excellence ensures it will continue to nurture visionary leaders who are dedicated to improving lives, driving change, and shaping the future of healthcare on a global scale.

A university deeply rooted in the pursuit of excellence

By Tshimangadzo Mphaphuli

In just a decade since its inception, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) has firmly established itself as a beacon of excellence in the context of health sciences education in South Africa. Built upon a foundation of world-class research, cutting-edge medical training, and a commitment to social justice, SMU has consistently elevated the standards of healthcare education in the country, positioning itself as a global leader.

From its roots in the vibrant health sciences sector, SMU has been deeply committed to integrating innovation with its academic rigour, forging a path of excellence that is evident in every facet of the institution's operations. This dedication is seen not only in the quality of its graduates but also in the research output that resonates on a global scale. This combination of impactful research, academic achievement, and forward-thinking leadership distinguishes SMU as a force in the international academic community.

Shaping tomorrow's health leaders

A key driver of SMU's success has been its unwavering focus on producing health professionals who are skilled in their fields and equipped with the critical thinking and leadership abilities necessary to address the challenges of a rapidly evolving global health landscape. This holistic approach to education ensures that SMU graduates are not merely participants in the healthcare field but leaders who shape policy and practice across Africa and beyond.

The university's commitment to academic excellence is reflected in its world-class faculty members, who are at the

forefront of research in fields such as drug discovery, forensic anthropology, and public health. SMU's research initiatives have been consistently recognised internationally, with numerous collaborations with leading global institutions. These collaborations not only bolster SMU's academic standing but also contribute to the development of new treatments and innovations that address some of the most pressing health challenges of our time.

Equally important is SMU's deep engagement with local communities. The university has developed initiatives that not only respond to South Africa's healthcare needs but also offer solutions to global health issues. By actively engaging with the communities it serves, SMU demonstrates that excellence in education and research is inseparable from its responsibility to contribute positively to society.

In an era of increasingly complex global health challenges, SMU's focus on interdisciplinary collaboration ensures that its students are trained to work across borders and understand the complexities of health systems worldwide. Its partnerships with international universities and organisations provide students with opportunities to gain invaluable global perspectives, while its faculty members contribute to international policy discussions on health-related issues.

Innovation at the core of SMU's teaching and learning

The university's impact is not limited to academic circles.

SMU students and graduates are transforming the healthcare landscape, contributing to clinical practice, research, and public health policy advancements. Many of SMU's alumni occupy prominent positions within healthcare institutions, government, and international organisations, where they continue to drive innovation and set new benchmarks for the healthcare sector.

SMU's commitment to developing leaders who are both academically proficient and socially responsible is integral to its philosophy. The university's ethos is rooted in the belief that education should extend beyond the classroom, empowering students to become advocates for health equity and social justice. This is evident in the numerous community outreach programmes the university runs, where students and staff work to provide healthcare solutions in under-resourced areas. As SMU looks to the future, it remains steadfast in its mission to be at the forefront of health sciences education in South Africa and globally.

In just ten years, SMU has proven to be a university deeply rooted in excellence. Through its unwavering commitment to research, teaching, and community service, the institution has built a competitive, dynamic, and innovative reputation, ensuring that its graduates are equipped to tackle the world's most urgent health challenges. With an eye on the future and a firm grasp of the present, SMU stands as a true leader in the health sciences, embodying the values of excellence, innovation, and social responsibility.



Built upon a foundation of world-class research, cutting-edge medical training, and a commitment to social justice, SMU has consistently elevated the standards of healthcare education in the country, positioning itself as a global leader.



From SMU lecture halls to disrupting and reshaping the healthcare system across Africa and beyond,

SMU alumni are dismantling barriers and revolutionising the future of healthcare. As pioneering leaders, relentless innovators, and compassionate caregivers, they are transforming lives.

Their unwavering commitment to excellence and service is a testament to the transformative power of an SMU education. This is more than a legacy—it's a movement that's just getting started.

