



SMU's Official Student and Alumni Publication

Dintshang

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SMU NextGen

The Future is SMU – Rising Stars in Health, Science and Digital Influence.

SMU isn't just shaping the future—it is the future. From groundbreaking achievements to digital influence, these rising stars are redefining excellence in health and science. Meet the innovators, disruptors, and leaders proving that the next generation starts here.

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Editor's NOTE

SMU NEXT GEN: The Future is SMU

Welcome to this exciting edition of Dintshang—a bold celebration of the rising stars who are shaping the future of health, science and digital influence. This issue, themed **SMU Next Gen: The Future is SMU**, invites you to meet the pioneers redefining what it means to lead, innovate and inspire—both within the walls of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University and long after they have walked its corridors.

At SMU, we are not merely preparing students for the future—we are actively creating it. Through academic excellence, innovation, and an unshakable spirit of purpose, our students and alumni are rewriting the script of what it means to be change-makers in their communities and beyond. The individuals featured in this edition are a testament to that very promise.

Among them is Dr Yolandi Malan, who earned top honours as the Best Overall Dental Surgery graduate of 2024. Her story is one of extraordinary academic discipline, professional ambition, and the pursuit of meaningful, ethical healthcare. Maishibe Langa, SMU's top Occupational Therapy graduate, swept six awards with grace and grit, proving that leadership in health begins with excellence and heart.

We shine a light on Fhulufhelo Ntsieni, our newly elected SRC Secretary-General and award-winning poet, whose journey speaks to the power of voice, identity and purpose. You'll also meet Ntshadi Bokaba, a fourth-year medical student and Deputy President of the SRC, who reminds us what it means to lead with impact and intention. In the world of digital and scientific innovation, students like Khanyisa Mokgolobotho are ensuring that SMU is not only part of the tech revolution but also at the forefront of it through the establishment of the Geekulcha Student Society on campus.

These stories are more than accomplishments—they are declarations of what the SMU Next Generation represents: possibility, excellence, and transformation. They also signal the evolving identity of this very publication.

Dintshang, now a quarterly publication beloved by our student community, is now expanding its scope to feature both student and alumni success stories. It now serves as a companion to our growing suite of digital communication platforms, designed to keep you connected, inspired and informed.

For our students, the **SMU Student Herald**—delivered to your inbox every Friday—provides timely news, achievements and opportunities curated with your university journey in mind. For our alumni, **SMU Alumni Connect** is a new monthly newsletter landing in your inbox on the last Friday of each month, sharing milestones, achievements and opportunities to give back and grow.

For those who prefer their news in bite-sized formats, **SMU QuickCast** offers weekly, audio-based news on the go—available via email and social media channels. Together, these platforms ensure that wherever you are in your SMU journey, you remain part of our collective story.

As you turn these pages, may you find inspiration, insight and pride in the exceptional individuals who embody what it means to be SMU. The next generation isn't just coming—it's already here. And it starts with us.

The Future is SMU.

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SMU's legacy of local and global impact in healthcare

- By Tshimangadzo Mphaphuli



In a world where health challenges are increasingly complex and interwoven with social, technological and economic shifts, the need for agile, principled, and visionary healthcare professionals has never been greater. Rising to this challenge is Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)—a university whose impact is not only seen in lecture halls or clinical labs, but in the lives its alumni touch across South Africa and far beyond.

The true measure of a university lies not only in the qualifications it confers but in the calibre of the individuals it sends into the world. SMU's contribution to healthcare, both nationally and globally, can be traced through the profound influence of its alumni—many of whom occupy key leadership roles, drive medical innovation, and deliver services to communities that have historically been underserved. They are healthcare professionals, scientists, administrators, policymakers and thought leaders. Together, they represent a living, evolving embodiment of SMU's mission.

From the bustling corridors of Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital, where alumnus Dr Fhatuwani Godfrey Mbara leads as Chief Executive Officer, to the fast-paced world of emergency and maritime medicine championed by Dr Realeboga Sebitso, SMU graduates continue to take up space in critical sectors. Their work extends into private healthcare, too, as seen in the inspiring journey of Drs Innocent and Dikeledi Chauke, who have built a healthcare legacy rooted in excellence and service.

Beyond borders, SMU-trained professionals are making waves across the continent and in global health arenas. One such example is Elizabeth Itotia, a trailblazer who became Kenya's first female nuclear pharmacist—her pioneering work revolutionising cancer care in her country. Whether identifying new virus variants, developing niche specialisations, or strengthening health systems in resource-limited settings, SMU alumni are increasingly recognised not just as participants in healthcare conversations, but as leaders shaping the global agenda.

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But these achievements are not accidental. They are the outcome of a university culture deeply committed to excellence, equity and service. SMU's curriculum is not only aligned with the demands of modern healthcare—it is embedded in the realities of South African society. Students are trained not just to treat illness, but to understand the systems and structures that produce health inequalities. They are taught to think critically, act ethically, and serve selflessly.

This ethos extends far beyond the academic. At SMU, leadership is nurtured through community engagement, student governance, entrepreneurship, and research. As a result, graduates emerge not only as competent professionals but as compassionate change-makers—individuals ready to lead, adapt and innovate in whichever space they find themselves.

Crucially, SMU alumni carry with them a sense of responsibility. Whether practising in urban hospitals or rural

clinics, engaging in public service, or contributing to cutting-edge research, their work is underpinned by a shared value: to serve. And in doing so, they reaffirm SMU's founding commitment—to improve the health and quality of life of all people, particularly those most in need.

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The impact of SMU is not confined to its campus. It travels through every patient healed, every system improved, and every life touched by one of its graduates.

The impact of SMU is, therefore, not confined to its campus. It travels through every patient healed, every system improved, and every life touched by one of its graduates. It is a living legacy, renewed each year as new cohorts enter the profession and old ones rise to new heights.

As SMU looks to the future, its alumni remain its greatest ambassadors—proof that a university rooted in service, excellence, and transformation can indeed shape the world.

Their journeys are not only testimonies of personal success but also affirmations of the institution that moulded them. In their hands, the future of healthcare is not only possible—it is already unfolding.



The heart of the brand: SMU students leading with pride

- By Tshimangadzo Mphaphuli

In a digital world driven by content and connection, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) has found its storytellers not in boardrooms or brochures but within its own student community. A new generation of **SMU Student Brand Ambassadors** is using creativity, authenticity, and a love for their institution to share the university's essence with the world. From TikTok to Instagram and inspiring campus content, these student leaders are redefining brand representation and embodying the values that make SMU not just a university but a community.

The newly selected ambassadors are not chosen for titles or popularity—but for the authenticity of their voice and the pride they wear like a badge of honour. In a crowded digital space, they rise above with content that reflects not only their personal experience but the character and vision of SMU. Their ability to translate student life, institutional excellence, and brand identity into relatable, positive content makes them true brand champions. What sets them apart is their deep love for the university—turning pride into purpose and content into connection.

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What unites this vibrant group is not only their pride in SMU but also their belief in the power of narrative. For **Alizwa Boco**, the lens of her camera becomes a bridge to the world. "I've been given a platform to share the untold stories hidden within the gates of SMU," she explains. Her goal? To inspire students and investors alike to see SMU as a hub of potential.

Echoing this is **Bongani Trevor Bvuma**, who sees the role as a chance to connect with current and future students and represent a brand built on trust. "SMU is one of the leading universities in teaching, learning, and innovation," he notes. "Representing it brings both confidence and honour."

For **Bonolo Malema**, it's about being part of a legacy: "SMU is well known for producing the best doctors, scientists, dentists, pharmacists... I'm beyond proud to represent it." Her excitement mirrors that of **Mamelo Letseka**, who values the exposure, teamwork and communication skills that come with being part of the programme. "It helps me grow while promoting something I genuinely love."

Each ambassador brings a unique perspective. **Mbali Ndamase** is driven by a commitment to excellence, diversity and community engagement. "The university's values align with my own," she explains, "and I'm eager to promote that." **Rolivhuwa Rasilingani** adds, "I'm thrilled to

share the amazing work our students, faculty, and staff are doing to advance healthcare."

But beyond accolades and achievements, it's the sense of belonging that resonates deeply. As **Samantha Maxase** passionately puts it, "Wearing the SMU emblem every day is one reason that makes me smile no matter what I might be going through. It carries so much importance."

This sense of pride is echoed by **Simamkele Talatala**, who says the ambassador role allows him to share his passion and inspire others. **Thapelo Mthimunye** sees the position as an opportunity to lead and showcase SMU's vibrant student experience. "SMU is a hub of academic excellence, innovation, and community-driven healthcare," he explains.

Tsakane Pearl Nghonyama, a natural content creator, relishes the chance to represent SMU with authenticity. "SMU is home to a disadvantaged black child. The warmth and support I've received here is something I want others to experience too."

Finally, **Yonela Fihlani** highlights the university's progressive spirit: "SMU empowers students with knowledge and skills to excel in the health sector and make meaningful contributions to society."

Together, these ambassadors are more than just the faces of the brand—they are its voice, heart, and future. Their stories offer a window into the soul of SMU: a progressive institution where excellence, empathy, and impact converge. Through their creativity and commitment, the world sees not only what SMU represents today, but also the boundless potential it holds for tomorrow. You can get to know each of them better through our upcoming digital features, which will be shared on SMU's social media platforms and in the SMU Student Herald weekly eNewsletter. And when you spot them filming their next campus TikTok—don't miss the chance to join the vlog and smile. Better yet, create your own vlog using these three hashtags: **#WeAreSMU**, **#SMU**, **#ProudlySMU**, and you might just get a DM inviting you to join our exclusive ambassador list—or receive some cool branded merch.





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“SMU gave me more than clinical skills— it instilled principles of service and excellence.”

Transforming global healthcare

- By Tumelo Moila

At just 31, Dr Realeboga Sebitso, an alumnus of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), has rapidly become a leader in emergency and maritime medicine. As the Lead Medical Officer for Carnival Corporation, he has visited over 45 countries, shaping healthcare decisions, championing inclusive leadership, and refining his expertise in diverse clinical settings.

“Medicine offered a way to make a meaningful impact,” says Sebitso. His time at SMU proved pivotal: rigorous academic training, leadership opportunities in student governance, and involvement in programmes like SMU FM 97.1 all prepared him for the high-pressure world of emergency care. While balancing demanding coursework and extracurricular responsibilities, he learned that “challenges are stepping stones,” a perspective he carries into his current role.

Although he is not yet a specialist, Sebitso discovered his passion for emergency medicine, drawn to its fast pace and capacity for immediate, life-saving interventions. Inspired by mentors such as Dr Junior Manyoni and Dr Kylen Swartzberg, he completed a Diploma in Primary Emergency Care, which bolstered his ability to manage complex emergencies. “The diploma gave me confidence to handle crises, even in resource-limited settings,” he explains.

Working at sea added a new dimension to his career. “I wanted to merge healthcare with travel,” he notes, highlighting his role's broad demands. Besides direct patient care, he oversees the ship's medical centre operations, supervises healthcare staff, and ensures public health compliance across multiple jurisdictions.

“When you are miles from the nearest hospital, every decision matters,” he says, recalling the high-stakes

management of a passenger suffering a myocardial infarction in the middle of the ocean. Adapting swiftly, coordinating emergency evacuations, and maintaining clear communication tested every skill he had honed at SMU.

Cultural competence is key in his role, as he leads a diverse team and cares for passengers from various backgrounds. “I approach every situation with respect, curiosity, and an openness to learn,” Sebitso explains. This mindset is vital to building trust, fostering collaboration, and meeting stringent international health regulations.

Despite his global outlook, Sebitso remains dedicated to uplifting healthcare in South Africa. Grateful for the strong foundation he received at SMU, he aims to mentor future medical professionals, contribute to policy reforms, and practise emergency medicine at home. “SMU gave me more than clinical skills—it instilled principles of service and excellence,” he reflects.

Looking ahead, his goal is to advance synergy between emergency and maritime medicine, bridging gaps in remote healthcare. He envisions innovative solutions to ensure high-quality care in unconventional settings, inspired by the sheer range of emergencies he has encountered on ships and in foreign ports. “Possibility is my greatest motivation,” he affirms. “There is always more to learn and more lives to impact.”

In striving to blend leadership, compassion, and modern medical practice, Sebitso exemplifies an unconventional doctor who has embraced the world as his clinic. His journey, driven by ambition and anchored in service, is a powerful testament to the global reach of SMU's medical alumni.

Top dental graduate achieves unmatched academic excellence

- By Tumelo Moila

Dr Yolandi Malan, a 27-year-old game-changer from Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), has raised the bar in dentistry through hard work and passion. Named the overall best student in the Bachelor of Dental Surgery at the 2024 Oath-Taking and Prize-Giving Ceremony, Malan also received the prestigious South African Dental Association (SADA) Gold Medal for sustaining a 75% or higher average across five years of study.

Her journey to dentistry was far from straightforward. After finishing school, Malan was not immediately accepted into a dental programme. Undeterred, she completed a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Genetics and Biochemistry at the University of Pretoria, continuing to apply to dental schools until SMU gave her the opportunity she had longed for. "I'll forever be grateful," she reflects, describing dentistry as the perfect fusion of helping people, practical skill, and innovative problem-solving.

Throughout her studies, Malan balanced a heavy academic load with demanding clinical and laboratory responsibilities. She credits her success to discipline, a two-hour morning study routine, and enthusiasm for each subject.

While acknowledging the pressures of exams and patient care, she emphasises the importance of allowing oneself room to reflect and regroup when necessary. "You can only control so much," she notes.

Malan's dedication did not go unnoticed by her mentors. She praises the guidance of faculty members such as Dr Shadrack Kabini, a Prosthodontist, and other inspiring figures including Dr Idah Mmutlana and Dr Ntombizodwa Zwane. Their support, coupled with encouragement from fellow students, helped her navigate difficult moments. "It's empowering to see women leading in dentistry," she says.

Among her many accolades, Malan's outstanding performance in Clinical Periodontology earned her an award from the South African Society for Periodontology. This field draws on her interests in genetics and biochemistry, which she finds "incredibly dynamic." Inspired by internationally renowned experts like Prof Anton Sculean, she remains committed to ongoing professional development.

Reflecting her integrity and commitment to patient-centred care, Malan also received the Medical Protection Society (MPS) Bio-Ethics Award. With rapidly advancing

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“What I appreciate most about SMU is the unity among students—no one gets left behind.”

technology and rising patient expectations, she believes ethical practice is more vital than ever. “We must always put patients' well-being first,” she affirms.

Currently completing her community service at George Masebe Hospital in Limpopo, Malan sees this year as a chance to refine her clinical skills while serving a vulnerable community. She ultimately hopes to specialise in prosthodontics and periodontology, teach future dentists, and contribute to research. “I want to give back by sharing the knowledge and skills I've gained,” she explains.

For those considering dentistry, Malan advises thorough reflection before committing to such a demanding field. “Make sure you're truly passionate. Discipline, consistency, and balance are key. Find a study routine that suits you, and don't neglect other areas of life.”

Above all, Malan values SMU's spirit of unity. “No matter the challenges, we stand together,” she says proudly. As she embarks on the next chapter of her career, her story serves as an inspiring testament to perseverance, dedication, and a profound sense of purpose in improving patients' lives.



Empowering students and leading with impact

- By Tumelo Moila



At just 24 years old, Ntshadi Masingita Rose Keorapetse Bokaba is making a lasting impact at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). Hailing from Mamaku, a village on the border of North West Province and Ga-Rankuwa Township, Bokaba's journey from humble beginnings to her role as Deputy President of the SMU Student Representative Council (SRC) reflects the university's dedication to developing resilient and visionary student leaders.

Bokaba's leadership is shaped by her unwavering faith and values of humility, integrity, and discipline. Inspired by Mark 10:45, which states, "Even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve," she embodies servant leadership, ensuring that student interests remain at the core of her work. Her role as Deputy President extends beyond representation—she actively advocates for enhanced academic support, mental health awareness, and student empowerment.

"Leadership is not about the title but the responsibility to uplift and transform," she emphasises. She approaches her work with a transformative vision, blending innovation with sustainable systems to enhance student life and academic success at SMU. Bokaba is advocating for more academic tutors and mentors, ensuring they receive fair recognition. She is also pushing for expanded access to mental health professionals to help students navigate challenges. "Students who mentor others deserve fair recognition. We must protect and support them at every level," she declares.

Her vision includes seamless coordination across university departments to provide holistic support. She believes in personalised academic assistance, ensuring that each student gets guidance tailored to their unique needs.

As head of the SRC's disciplinary committee, Bokaba promotes accountability, transparency, and inclusivity. She actively represents marginalised students, ensuring their concerns are addressed. She collaborates with academic committees, lecturers, and student support services to implement mentorship programmes and academic workshops. She also pushes for the integration of technology in mentorship and study workshops to enhance accessibility.

From facing setbacks in her dream to study medicine to rising as a leader, Bokaba's journey is a testament to resilience. "My story is one of an underdog who remained steadfast and eventually came out on top," she reflects.

“SMU is more than just a university; it is a space that nurtures leaders, empowers students, and provides the foundation for meaningful change.”

As a former Chairperson of the 5B Residence House Committee, Class Representative, and student mentor, she has consistently demonstrated strategic thinking and a commitment to empowering women in leadership. She is also working to reintroduce initiatives such as the Golden Key Honour Society, which rewards academic excellence. Now a fourth-year medical student, Bokaba balances academics and leadership with determination. Before pursuing medicine, she earned a BSc in Life Sciences, majoring in Biochemistry and Pathophysiology, graduating cum laude.

Her advice to future SRC Deputy Presidents is clear: "Never lose sight of your vision and the impact you wish to create. Build strong relationships with your peers—no leader achieves greatness alone. Lead with confidence and integrity." Bokaba's leadership is a force for transformation at SMU. "I am here not just to lead but to transform, empower, and ensure that every student feels supported and valued," she concludes. Her journey embodies SMU's mission to develop leaders who uplift and inspire their communities, shaping the university for years to come.

SMU students excel in Tshwane Higher Education Innovation Challenge

- By Tumelo Moila



In the pursuit of academic excellence and technological advancement, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) produces innovative thinkers ready to tackle real-world challenges. Two outstanding SMU students, Thatayaone Nkwe and Oreneile Hlaethwa, recently excelled in the prestigious Tshwane Higher Education Innovation Challenge, securing top positions in a competition designed to enhance municipal service delivery through technology-driven solutions.

Competing against students from various institutions, Nkwe, an MSc student in Computer Science and Information Technology (CSIT), claimed first place in Challenge Three with his Human Resource Management System for monitoring the progress and effectiveness of participants in the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). Meanwhile, Hlaethwa, a BSc Mathematical Sciences student, secured third place in Challenge Two with his Electronic Burial Management System, a cutting-edge solution enabling cemetery officials to manage burial records with offline functionality and wireless connectivity.

“This was the first time that we entered this challenge, and to have not just one, but two students in the top three is an incredible achievement,” said Naledi Mathole, SMU's

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Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Coordinator. She highlighted the City of Tshwane's keen interest in the projects, indicating the potential for piloting the prototypes in the city, strengthening SMU's partnership with municipal stakeholders.

The Tshwane Higher Education Innovation Challenge, hosted in collaboration with The Innovation Hub, aims to develop solutions that improve municipal services, safeguard public assets, and create new revenue streams. Participants tackled three major challenges: a multi-service municipal digital booking system, an electronic burial management system, and a human resource management system for EPWP participants.

Nkwe, reflecting on his journey, expressed gratitude for the opportunity. "I have always been passionate about using technology to solve real-world problems. Winning first place is humbling, and I look forward to refining my system with stakeholder input," he said. He acknowledged the technical hurdles, particularly ensuring functionality in areas with limited internet connectivity. "Incorporating local storage that syncs when online was a challenge, but it was essential to creating a scalable solution," he added.

Meanwhile, Hlaethwa described his experience as inspiring and transformative. His Electronic Burial Management System aims to improve real-time burial statistics and efficient tracking of graveyard plots. "Seeing my project recognised validated my efforts. As an Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP2) student, I had to teach myself advanced concepts to bring my vision to life, making this achievement even more rewarding," he said.

Both students are eager to see their solutions implemented, Nkwe envisioning an impact on public service efficiency and Hlaethwa enhancing cemetery management with greater transparency. Their collaboration with The Innovation Hub and the City of Tshwane is set to advance these projects further.

Mathole emphasised the significance of platforms like the Tshwane Innovation Challenge in fostering creativity and problem-solving skills. "These initiatives empower students, nurture innovation, and address societal challenges. We look forward to greater participation and continued success for SMU students," she said.

As SMU celebrates this remarkable achievement, Nkwe and Hlaethwa's success reflects the university's com-

mitment to excellence in education, innovation, and practical learning. Their journey serves as inspiration for future innovators at SMU, proving that with vision, determination, and the right platform, students can drive meaningful change in society.



"SMU continues to empower students, nurture innovation, and provide a platform for real-world problem-solving."

Six-award winner redefines excellence in OT

- By Tumelo Moila



Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) continues to produce high-calibre healthcare professionals, and Maishibe Langa is a shining example of the university's commitment to excellence. As a final-year Occupational Therapy student, Langa achieved an extraordinary milestone at the 2024 Oath-Taking Prize-Giving Ceremony, receiving six prestigious awards. These included Outstanding Perfor-

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mance in Physical, Psychiatric, and Community Fields of Practice, Best Occupational Therapy Student in Final Year, and Best Occupational Therapy Student from 2021 to 2024. Her achievements highlight SMU's role in shaping top-tier graduates who excel in both academia and clinical practice.

Originally from Ga-Rauwele, a small village in Mapela, Limpopo, Langa's journey into Occupational Therapy was not initially planned. "I applied after a quick Google search," she admits. However, by her second year at SMU, she realised she had chosen the perfect field. "It became clear that this was exactly where I was meant to be," she reflects.

Her success was built on perseverance and a strong support system. "My parents always believed in me and pushed me to strive for excellence," she says. "Being prayerful has also helped me tremendously because I believe God gave me the strength to complete my studies." However, transitioning from theory to clinical practice was challenging. "What you see in books is different from real-life practice," she explains. With the support of clinical supervisors, lecturers, and peers, she adapted and thrived.

Langa's approach to academic excellence was unconventional. "To be honest, I studied under pressure and often worked through the night," she admits. While she did not follow a strict study method, prioritising tasks and maintaining focus played a crucial role in her success.

Receiving multiple awards was an emotional and validating experience. "I was shocked but incredibly grateful," she shares. "It reassured me of my abilities and reminded me that I should never doubt myself." The recognition has boosted her confidence and opened new professional doors, strengthening her transition from student to healthcare professional.

Looking forward, Langa has both short-term and long-term goals. In the immediate future, she aims to gain extensive clinical experience, refining her skills and decision-making abilities. Long term, she aspires to become an independent therapist capable of making critical clinical decisions that benefit her patients. She remains dedicated to continuous learning and educating others about the significance of Occupational Therapy.

Langa attributes her success to her family, lecturers, clinical supervisors, and best friend, whose unwavering support guided her through her academic journey. Her advice to aspiring students is simple yet profound: "Be yourself, know your strengths and weaknesses, and avoid unnecessary pressure. Focus on your journey."

Her pride in SMU is evident as she encourages students to embrace the opportunities the university offers. "SMU is well-represented everywhere, and studying here is a great opportunity. Keep representing it well," she says.

As she embarks on her professional career, Langa's connection to SMU remains strong, and she hopes to contribute to the university in the future. Her journey is a testament to SMU's legacy of producing outstanding graduates who excel in their fields while upholding the university's values of excellence, leadership, and service.



Breaking new ground and setting high standards in Physiotherapy

- By Tumelo Moila

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) continues to set the standard in producing world-class healthcare professionals. Among its most outstanding graduates is Chané Siepker, who was named SMU's 2024 Physiotherapy Overall Best Student at the university's prestigious Oath-Taking Prize-Giving Ceremony. In addition to this top honour, she received awards for Best Undergraduate Research Project (UGRP), Best Student in Outpatient Department (Physiotherapy) 4th Year, and Best 4th Year Student in Applied Physiotherapy. These accolades highlight SMU's dedication to excellence in healthcare education, ensuring its graduates are equipped to make a lasting impact in their fields.

From an early age, Siepker, who grew up in Waterkloof, Pretoria, was passionate about sports and movement. Attending Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool, she was encouraged to strive for excellence and discovered her desire to help others. "My school environment cultivated my ambition, and physiotherapy was the perfect fit—it combines my love for movement with my commitment to improving lives," she says.

Her fascination with the body's ability to heal and adapt led her to pursue physiotherapy at SMU, where she thrived under the guidance of dedicated lecturers and clinicians. "Learning from experienced professionals at SMU deepened my passion for physiotherapy and strengthened my skills," she shares.

One of her defining moments came during her clinical rotations, where she realised the importance of patient-centred care. "Building deeper connections with patients and adapting treatments to their needs gave me a new perspective on healthcare," she reflects. These experiences reinforced the holistic approach to healing that SMU instils in its students.

Balancing academic responsibilities, clinical placements, and personal life was no easy feat. "The pressure to excel in

both practical and theoretical work while maintaining balance was challenging," she admits. To manage these demands, she prioritised time management and consistency. "Keeping detailed notes, actively engaging in practical sessions, and seeking feedback were crucial strategies that helped me stay on track."

Receiving her awards was a deeply gratifying experience. "It felt like validation for all the hard work, late nights, and challenges I overcame," she says. Beyond personal achievement, the recognition enhances her credibility as a healthcare professional and opens doors for further career opportunities.

Looking ahead, Siepker hopes to gain hospital-based clinical experience, focusing on sports injuries and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) rehabilitation. Her long-term vision is to establish her own physiotherapy practice, where she can promote patient-centred care and evidence-based treatment. "I want to create a space where holistic healing is prioritised," she explains.

Her advice to aspiring physiotherapists is simple but powerful: "Stay curious, embrace challenges, and always remember the impact you can have on someone's life." She encourages students to persist through difficulties and continuously strive for excellence.

Siepker remains committed to staying connected with SMU through alumni events, mentorship, and research collaborations. "Giving back to the institution that shaped me is important," she affirms.

Her remarkable achievements reflect SMU's dedication to producing compassionate, skilled, and innovative healthcare professionals. As she embarks on the next phase of her career, Siepker embodies the excellence, resilience, and leadership that define SMU graduates, proving that the university is a launchpad for those committed to making a difference in healthcare.

SMU's multi-talented student leader and literary trailblazer

- By Tumelo Moila

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) continues to affirm its reputation as a hub for academic excellence and leadership development. Among its rising stars is Fhulufhelo Ntsieni, a multi-award-winning poet, researcher, and newly elected Secretary-General of the Student Representative Council (SRC) for 2024/2025. At just 24, she embodies the university's mission to nurture well-rounded leaders who excel academically, drive social impact, and inspire change.

Hailing from Tshirenzeni in Venda, Ntsieni's journey is one of perseverance and ambition. She has gained national recognition for her poetry, winning the South African Literary Award, and securing top honours at the AVBOB Poetry Competition and Funda Mzantsi National Championships. Her acclaimed anthology, *Rudzani*, has positioned her as a powerful literary voice in South Africa.

At the same time, Ntsieni is a dedicated scientist pursuing her Honours in Biochemistry at SMU. Her groundbreaking research on the synergy between herbal plants and conventional drugs in treating

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) showcases the university's commitment to cutting-edge health sciences innovation. Guided by Dr Vuyisile Thibane and Professor Stanley Gololo, her work highlights SMU's role in fostering scientific excellence.

"SMU has provided me with the tools to grow as a leader, not just academically but in how I serve others."

Beyond her literary and scientific pursuits, Ntsieni is a passionate leader and advocate for student development. She has been actively involved in student governance for four years, serving as a class representative before stepping into her current role as SRC Secretary-General.

Her leadership extends beyond campus. As the founder of Hope to the Hopeless, she has spearheaded initiatives aimed at uplifting vulnerable communities, demonstrating her deep commitment to social impact. "SMU has provided me with the tools to grow as a leader, not just academically but in how I serve others," she shares.

In her SRC role, Ntsieni represents students in influential university committees, including the Institutional Forum and the Senate Academic Planning Committee. Her vision is to enhance student engagement, academic support, and social well-being,

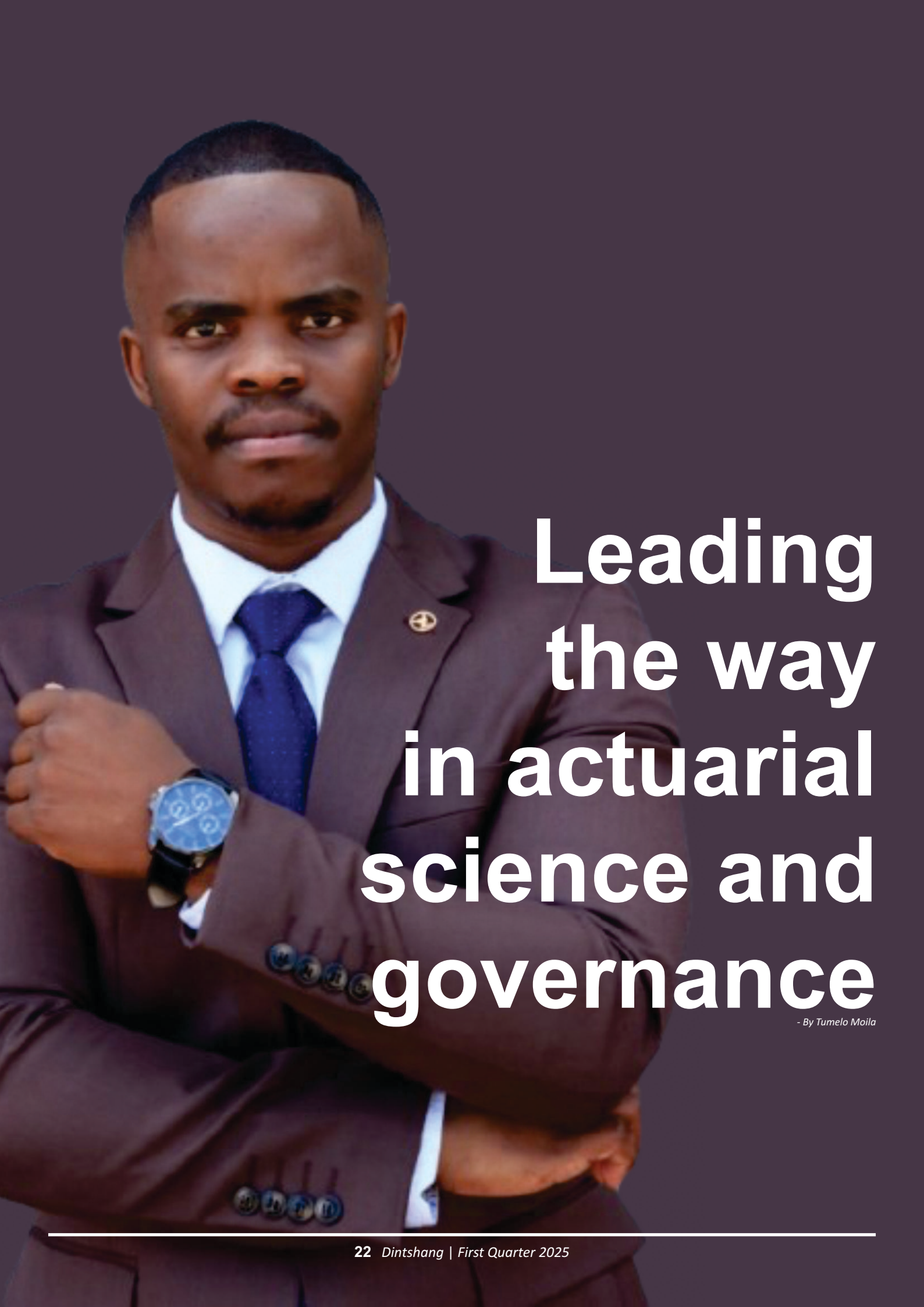
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ensuring that SMU remains a place where students can thrive holistically. “Leadership is about listening and acting. At SMU, we are building a community where every student has a voice and the opportunity to succeed,” she says.

Ntsieni's success as a scholar, poet, and student leader reflects SMU's dedication to producing well-rounded graduates equipped to lead, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to society. Her journey showcases how SMU empowers students through world-class education, leadership opportunities, and a commitment to holistic development.

Her election as SRC Secretary-General underscores her exceptional abilities and highlights SMU's role in shaping the next generation of leaders. As the university continues to position itself as a premier health sciences institution, Ntsieni's achievements stand as a testament to the power of education, resilience, and visionary leadership.





Leading the way in actuarial science and governance

- By Tumelo Moila

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) is renowned for academic excellence, but its true impact lies in shaping leaders like alumnus Jerry Thoka. Through rigorous programmes and a commitment to holistic development, SMU empowers students to become catalysts for societal progress.

Born in the rural village of Zebediela in Limpopo, 28-year-old Thoka was raised by a truck driver father and a poultry farm worker mother. Despite limited resources, he embraced education as a pathway to transformation, guided by his innate aptitude for mathematics and science. These strengths propelled him to excel at Makhutjisha Senior Secondary School, paving the way for broader opportunities.

At SMU, Thoka pursued a Bachelor of Science in Mathematical Sciences, specialising in Applied Mathematics and Computer Science. Eager to refine his expertise, he later enrolled at the University of the Free State (UFS) to study actuarial science, securing multiple exemptions from the Actuarial Society of South Africa. "Actuarial science is more than just numbers; it's about using data to solve pressing challenges and manage risks," he explains. "It influences financial security, social policies, and economic frameworks."

Currently an Actuarial Analyst at Munich Reinsurance of Africa, Thoka delves into financial modelling and risk reserving, ensuring organisational stability amidst unpredictability. He credits SMU's leadership culture for sharpening his sense of duty and service. "Leadership is about serving others and driving positive change," he observes. "My experiences at SMU taught me the value of collaboration and empathy."

During his tenure at SMU, Thoka served as a mentor and chaired the Residence Committee, honing his ability to address community issues. His passion for advocacy led him to the Student Representative Council (SRC), where he campaigned for postgraduate funding and expanded research opportunities. In 2021, he rose to President General of the Institutional SRC at UFS, influencing policy decisions, championing student welfare, and helping steer the university during unprecedented times.

A devout Christian, Thoka draws inspiration from the principle of servant leadership, citing Matthew 23:11: "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." This ethos guided his efforts during the COVID-19 crisis, when he contributed to reintegration protocols that prioritised safety without compromising academics. He also supported workers' insourcing, demonstrating his commitment to inclusion and fairness.

His impact extends beyond campus. Co-founding the Chamber of Executive Youth (COEY), Thoka aims to encourage young professionals to blend technical expertise with social responsibility. "Many experts confine their contributions to isolated fields," he notes. "COEY urges specialists in scarce industries to participate in broader societal governance. We need leaders who balance professional competence with genuine empathy."

Now serving on the UFS Council, Thoka remains dedicated to expanding access and promoting diversity in higher education. He believes that scholarships, outreach efforts, and strong community partnerships are key to uplifting underrepresented groups. "My ultimate goal is to leave a legacy of inspiration," he reflects. "I want others to see that, regardless of background, resilience and faith can open doors to greatness."

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“My ultimate goal in life is to leave a legacy of inspiration. I want others to see that, regardless of background, resilience and faith can open doors to greatness.”

SMU student sweeps Speech-Language and Audiology Awards

- By Dimakatso Modise



Keitumetse Serotoane's final year at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) culminated in a series of notable accolades during the 2024 Oath-Taking Ceremony. Recognised as the Best Overall Final-Year Student in Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) and Audiology, she also received awards for Best Student in Theory SLP, Clinical SLP, Clinical Audiology, and Best Undergraduate Research Project. These distinctions highlight her outstanding blend of academic excellence, clinical competence, and commitment to helping individuals with communication and hearing challenges.

Serotoane's passion for SLP and Audiology stemmed from a desire to improve the lives of those struggling with speech, language, and hearing conditions. Raised in an environment where access to specialist services was often limited, she saw first-hand how vital early intervention and proper treatment can be. This conviction shaped her studies at SMU, where she focused on applying theoretical knowledge in practical settings to ensure she could make a genuine difference to her future patients.

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During her time at SMU, Serothoane carried out an ambitious research project titled “The Knowledge of South African Public Sector Otolaryngologists and Audiologists of Cochlear Implant Referral Criteria.” Her findings exposed a critical knowledge gap in the referral process for cochlear implants, potentially causing delays in patient interventions. By highlighting the need for clearer guidelines and improved collaboration between otolaryngologists and audiologists, her work could have far-reaching benefits for individuals requiring cochlear implants. The project was praised for its meticulous design, relevance to South Africa's healthcare landscape, and potential to enhance patient outcomes.

Serothoane's clinical experience further solidified her commitment to the profession. Throughout her degree, she undertook placements in various healthcare environments, including district hospitals and private practices. In Clinical Audiology, she

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“SMU's supportive community truly nurtured my growth, thanks to invaluable guidance from mentors and faculty, and inspiration from my classmates.”

tested and fitted hearing aids for patients, witnessing the profound effect that hearing restoration can have on individuals and their families. One particularly memorable case involved a young child whose world opened up the moment his hearing aid was activated, reaffirming Serothoane's dedication to her chosen field.

Beyond her own endeavours, she credits SMU's supportive community for nurturing her growth. Mentors and faculty members provided invaluable guidance, while classmates became trusted peers who inspired her to persevere through academic and clinical challenges. She also found encouragement in the achievements of previous award-winners, including 2023's Best Overall Student in SLP and Audiology, Avuyile Mpiti, whose example drove Serothoane to aim higher.

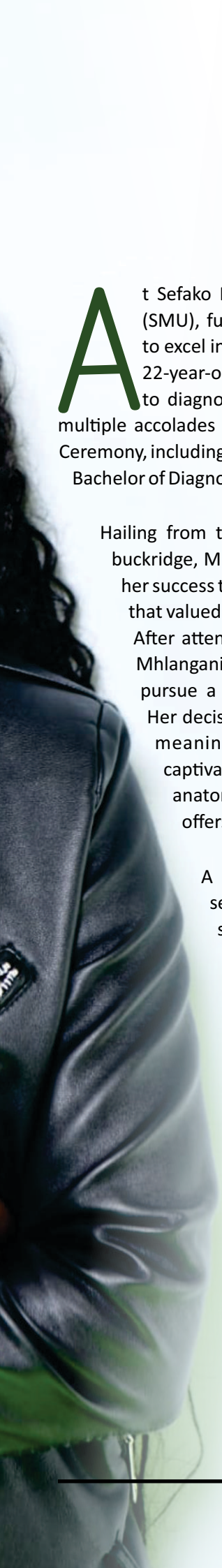
Underpinning her work is the university's commitment to ubuntu, a philosophy of shared humanity. Serothoane believes compassion, empathy, and respect must be central to any healthcare practice. With this in mind, she plans to focus on underserved communities where people often lack consistent access to speech and hearing services. Her community service internship at a district hospital in Mpumalanga revealed the urgent need for more specialists who are dedicated to delivering essential care in rural regions.

Looking to the future, she hopes to specialise in areas such as cochlear implants, auditory processing disorders, and adult dysphagia. In doing so, she aims to drive innovation, influence policy, and champion research-based improvements within both SLP and Audiology. Above all, her advice to aspiring students is simple yet powerful: “View every challenge as an opportunity to grow, remain guided by your passion for helping others, and never be afraid to seek support when needed.”



Breaking barriers in Radiography and raising the bar

- By Tumelo Moila



At Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), future healthcare leaders are groomed to excel in their fields. One standout graduate is 22-year-old Laureate Mgiba, whose dedication to diagnostic radiography recently earned her multiple accolades at the 2024 Oath-Taking Prize-Giving Ceremony, including Best Clinical Achiever and Best Overall Bachelor of Diagnostic Radiography Final Year.

Hailing from the small town of Islington in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga, Mgiba attributes much of her success to her upbringing. “I grew up in a family that valued education and hard work,” she recalls. After attending Khokhovela Primary School and Mhlangani High School, she enrolled at SMU to pursue a Bachelor of Diagnostic Radiography. Her decision was fuelled by a desire to make a meaningful impact in healthcare. “I was captivated by the combination of technology, anatomy, and patient care that radiology offers,” she explains.

A pivotal moment came during her second-year clinical placement, where she realised how critical medical imaging is to patient care. She recalls observing a delayed diagnosis caused by a suboptimal image: “That experience taught me the importance of continuous learning and attention to detail.”

Despite her remarkable achievements, Mgiba's academic journey was not without challenges. The loss of her grandmother during her final year was particularly painful. “She always believed in me,” Mgiba says. “Coping with

her passing tested my resilience, but I found comfort in my support network.” She credits her mother, a handful of close friends, and her lecturers at SMU for helping her maintain focus during difficult times.

From the outset, Mgiba approached her studies with determination. “I put God first in everything,” she explains. In addition to prayer and unwavering faith, she adopted clear semester goals, a disciplined study schedule, and the willingness to seek help whenever needed. Maintaining balance was also vital. “Each day starts with prayer, which gives me peace and clarity,” she adds.

The moment Mgiba received news of her awards was overwhelming. “Initially, I felt disbelief,” she admits. “When it sank in, I was proud that my hard work had paid off.” She views these honours as a springboard for future growth and believes they will create opportunities to advance her career. “In the short term, I am excited to complete my community service at WF Knobel Hospital in Polokwane,” she says. “Long term, I hope to specialise in radiology.”

Looking back, Mgiba offers simple yet powerful advice: “Set realistic goals, stay open to learning, and surround yourself with positive influences. Excellence is a journey, not a destination.” She remains grateful to mentors like Cecil Chauke, who encouraged her at moments of self-doubt, and hopes her story will inspire others to persevere despite obstacles.

Eager to continue supporting SMU's community, Mgiba plans to engage in mentorship and share insights through social media. “Embrace every opportunity, even the risks. SMU fosters academic excellence, personal growth, and community engagement,” she says. As she steps into her new role as a Diagnostic Radiographer, Mgiba is determined to make a lasting impact on patient care and uphold the values instilled in her at SMU.

SMU students lead a tech movement with new innovation society

- By Tumelo Moila



At Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), students are not just embracing technology—they are leading a movement to drive digital innovation. Recognising the need for a stronger tech presence on campus, Khanyisa Mokgolobotho has spearheaded the establishment of a Geekulcha Student Society (GKSS) at SMU, opening doors for students to engage in hackathons, tech skills development, and industry collaborations.

Mokgolobotho's inspiration to launch GKSS came from her experiences at national tech events, where she connected with entrepreneurs and students actively solving real-world challenges. "We need to position SMU students at the forefront of technology, ensuring they gain the skills and networks to compete nationally and globally," she explains.

With official backing from Geekulcha, a leading South African tech development platform, GKSS is set to empower students through work-integrated learning (WIL), industry exposure, and innovation-focused events. "We are in an era where technology dominates all fields, and our goal is to make this society inclusive to all students who want to explore tech, regardless of their academic background," Mokgolobotho adds.

Mokgolobotho's journey into technology and leadership was catalysed by her participation in hackathons and datathons, where she saw first-hand how technology can be harnessed to tackle societal challenges. Winning Best Female Student Participant at the CSIR DIRISA Hackathon in 2022 marked a turning point, leading to study funding and deeper immersion in the South African tech ecosystem.

"SMU students deserve more access to tech opportunities. GKSS is here to bridge that gap, ensuring that innovation and entrepreneurship are at the heart of student development," she says.

GKSS will facilitate cross-disciplinary collaborations to integrate technology into health sciences and other

disciplines at SMU. The society plans to introduce coding boot camps, data science workshops, and AI training, ensuring students are equipped with cutting-edge digital skills.

GKSS is designed to connect students with industry professionals, provide mentorship opportunities, and host practical tech events. In its first year, the society will focus on key initiatives such as hosting hackathons and datathons to provide hands-on problem-solving experience, developing entrepreneurship programmes that teach students how to build tech-driven start-ups, and organising industry networking events to bring tech leaders to campus. Additionally, it will establish internship and WIL partnerships to ensure students gain real-world exposure in tech companies. These initiatives will create a well-rounded approach to skill-building and professional development, enabling students to gain both technical expertise and industry experience.

“SMU has positioned us to compete on a national and global scale by providing the right platforms for innovation and growth.”

Mokgolobotho, alongside a dedicated executive team, aims to cultivate an inclusive, innovation-driven culture. "By merging tech with healthcare, research, and entrepreneurship, we are creating a space where students can not only learn but also actively contribute to South Africa's digital transformation," she says.

Looking ahead, GKSS envisions establishing a HealthTech Hub at SMU, solidifying the university's place in the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR). "The goal is not just collaboration between departments—it's about fully integrating technology into SMU's identity. We want to ensure that our students are equipped with the skills and mindset to lead in the digital economy," Mokgolobotho asserts.

Through visionary leadership and strategic partnerships, GKSS is set to redefine how SMU students engage with technology, preparing them to lead the next wave of digital innovation.

Recognising outstanding student achievements

- By Tumelo Moila

In the pursuit of academic excellence, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) has established itself as a beacon of intellectual rigour and academic distinction. With a steadfast commitment to fostering a culture of excellence, SMU has created an environment that encourages students to strive for the highest standards of academic achievement. From its esteemed faculty to its clinical training, SMU provides students with the ideal platform to explore their full potential and achieve academic success.

The Department of Physiotherapy recently celebrated its top-performing students at the 2024 Academic Excellence Awards Ceremony, recognising exceptional academic and clinical achievements. This annual event serves as a platform to honour students who have demonstrated unwavering dedication, outstanding academic performance, and excellence in physiotherapy practice. The ceremony also provided an opportunity to inspire and motivate first-year students, reinforcing that success is attainable through commitment and perseverance.

Among the first-year students, Nkateko Chauke emerged as a top achiever, receiving the Best Student in Principles of Physiotherapy and Best in Overall First-Year Modules awards. His dedication to understanding core physiotherapy principles set a strong foundation for his academic journey.

In the second year, Teegan Baatjies and Motheo Mapholo stood out for their academic excellence. Baatjies received the Best in Principles of Physiotherapy award, highlighting his ability to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application. Reflecting on his success, he stated, "Knowing that my dedication has paid off boosts my confidence and self-esteem. I am grateful for all the support and opportunities provided by SMU." Mapholo, who earned the Best in Overall Second-Year Modules award, emphasised the importance of discipline and goal-setting. "Excellence isn't just about passing exams; it's about preparing for real-world challenges with both knowledge and practical skills," she said.

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For third-year students, Refilwe Malane and Anze Nel received recognition for their outstanding performance. Malane was awarded Best in Applied Physiotherapy for his strong practical skills and ability to translate theoretical knowledge into clinical practice. He credited his study group, lecturers, and clinical supervisors for their support, stating that the Feynman study technique was instrumental in mastering complex concepts. Nel received two prestigious awards—Best in Principles of Physiotherapy and Best in Overall Third-Year Modules—for her consistent academic excellence. “This recognition makes the long hours of studying worth it. Hard work and determination truly pay off,” she said.

The ceremony was a true celebration of perseverance and excellence, with faculty members and fellow

students expressing immense pride in the award recipients. Senior Class Representative and organiser of the event, Samkele Jiyane, captured the essence of the occasion: “Hard work in academics always comes with its rewards. Nothing beats the feeling of being recognised for excellence.” The event not only honoured achievers but also served as a source of motivation for aspiring students.

As SMU continues to uphold its reputation for academic distinction, events like the Physiotherapy Academic Excellence Awards highlight the university's dedication to producing highly skilled healthcare professionals. By instilling a culture of perseverance, innovation, and leadership, SMU is shaping the next generation of physiotherapists who will make a lasting impact in patient care and the healthcare industry.





**Inspiring
future leaders
through
mathematics**

- By Tumelo Moila

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) continues to produce visionary leaders who make a lasting impact beyond healthcare. One such pioneer is Masego Ngwira, an SMU alumna who is redefining mathematics education. At just 34, she is a highly respected educator at Hoërskool Akasia, where she empowers young learners with the confidence and skills to excel in mathematics. By bridging the gap between secondary education and higher learning, Ngwira is strengthening the foundation for future SMU students, ensuring that more learners are equipped for careers in health sciences and beyond.

Ngwira's journey began in Lomanyaneng, Mahikeng, where she developed resilience and a deep appreciation for education. "My village shaped me into the woman I am today, and my parents put the cherry on top by believing in me," she reflects. After matriculating in 2008 from Setumo High School, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics, Physics, and Statistics from the University of Limpopo (Medunsa Campus) in 2012, followed by an Honours degree in Statistics in 2013. In 2021, she obtained a Master's in Statistics from SMU, where she is now pursuing a PhD—a testament to her commitment to education and research excellence.

Her teaching career began in 2014 at Khamane MST Academy in Mpumalanga, and in the years that followed, she refined her expertise at Ntolo Secondary School, Itirele-Zenzele Comprehensive School, and finally, Hoërskool Akasia, where she continues to shape young minds. Her approach goes beyond teaching formulas—she focuses on building confidence and shifting attitudes toward mathematics. "I believe in changing perceptions first," she explains.

One of her most effective strategies is helping Grade 9 learners distinguish between Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy, ensuring they make informed decisions about their academic future. She uses colour-coded notes, practical examples, and after-school intervention classes to simplify complex concepts. "I am good at diagnosing my learners' struggles, and I actively involve parents to provide holistic support," she adds.

Her dedication was recognised in 2021 when she received an award for improving Grade 9 mathematics results at Hoërskool Akasia. She takes a data-driven approach, using Excel and assessment tools to track students' progress and refine her teaching methods—an approach she developed during her studies at SMU, where she gained valuable analytical and problem-solving skills.

Beyond academics, Ngwira has introduced choir programmes in every school she has taught at. "Music unites," she says, recalling how choir competitions boosted school spirit and even helped reform difficult learners.

Her impact is evident in the success of her former students. Josias Muthis, current SRC Chairperson for the School of Dentistry at SMU, credits Ngwira for transforming his academic path. "Her dedication to teaching mathematics opened doors I never imagined possible," he says. "Beyond the classroom, her belief in my potential led me to SMU, shaping my career in Dentistry."

Ngwira remains deeply connected to SMU, often encountering her former students as they pursue degrees in health sciences. "When I registered for my PhD this year, I met two of my former learners—one in his Honours, the other now studying Dentistry and serving in the SRC. It was a moment of immense pride," she reflects. Seeing her students thrive at SMU is a reminder of the university's role in unlocking potential and shaping the next generation of leaders.

With her commitment to education and mentorship, Ngwira continues to inspire future generations—proving that SMU not only produces skilled professionals but also cultivates leaders who uplift communities and transform lives.

Health meets enterprise: SMU students drive a fresh produce revolution

- By Tumelo Moila

Innovation and leadership thrive where opportunity meets ambition, and at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), students are turning ideas into impactful ventures. Abundance in the Box, an inspiring health-focused business founded by Bachelor of Science students Tshiamo Diale and Nonhlanhla Nobantu Chwene, is transforming access to fresh produce on campus while fostering a culture of wellness and entrepreneurship.

“The idea was born out of necessity,” Diale reflects. “We realised there was no access to fresh produce on campus, and we saw an opportunity to bridge the gap. It's about more than selling fruits and vegetables; it's about showing that 'health is wealth,' even in a fast-paced student environment.”

What started as a small venture selling grapes quickly expanded. “Grapes were a hit,” Chwene recalls. “Every box sold felt like a small triumph.” Encouraged by the response, they diversified their selection, adding vegetables and other fruits, steadily growing their reach. “We wanted to offer a real taste of nature's abundance,” Diale adds.

SMU's vibrant entrepreneurial support system played a pivotal role in their journey. Through the Student Entrepreneurship Competition, they gained valuable insights into business development, teamwork, and problem-solving. Their hard work paid off when they received the Best Teamwork Award, a testament to their ability to collaborate effectively and overcome challenges.

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“Communication and authenticity have been our strongest assets,” Chwene explains. “We address challenges head-on and embrace our creative differences, which often lead to new ideas. Winning the award reinforced the importance of staying true to our vision.”

Starting a fresh produce business came with its own hurdles. With an initial self-funded investment of R1600, they navigated difficulties such as storage and transportation for perishable goods. “Storage was

tough without a fridge, and transporting fresh produce wasn't easy,” Diale admits. However, support from friends and fellow students, including Kamva Mokhoke and Phillip Matemera, helped them find solutions.

Their commitment to quality and consistency has been unwavering. “We restock twice a week to ensure everything is fresh,” says Chwene. Balancing business responsibilities with academics has also been a challenge, requiring time management and discipline. “We've found a rhythm—dedicating specific days for business tasks while ensuring our studies remain a priority,” Diale explains.

Abundance in the Box has grown beyond just a business; it has become a symbol of healthier living on campus. “We want to be that constant reminder for our community to prioritise wellness,” says Chwene.

Looking ahead, they plan to expand into smoothies, fruit platters, and other wellness-focused products.

Their journey is a reflection of SMU's role in fostering entrepreneurship and leadership, empowering students to turn ideas into impactful ventures. “SMU has given us the platform and resources to bring our vision to life,” Diale says.

As they continue to grow and evolve, Diale and Chwene remain committed to learning, adapting, and inspiring. “Entrepreneurship is an ongoing journey,” Chwene shares. “We constantly improve based on our experiences.”

For aspiring student entrepreneurs, Diale offers this advice: “Don't hold back. Use every opportunity to learn and be ready to implement your knowledge.”

Through Abundance in the Box, Diale and Chwene have demonstrated that passion, resilience, and the right support can drive meaningful change. Their story not only

highlights entrepreneurial success but also underscores SMU's dedication to producing leaders who make a difference in their communities.



“SMU has given us the platform and resources to bring our vision to life.”

Shaping tomorrow's health leaders today

- By Tshimangadzo Mphaphuli



In a rapidly evolving global landscape, the health sciences field is calling for more than just knowledge—it demands vision, resilience, and a strong sense of social responsibility. At the forefront of meeting this demand is Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), a proudly South African institution that is not just preparing students for the future but actively shaping it.

The health and sciences professionals of tomorrow must be agile, compassionate, and collaborative. At SMU, the journey to becoming a leader begins in the classroom but is reinforced in clinics, research labs, innovation hubs, and community initiatives. This issue of *Dintshang*, themed **SMU Next Gen**, offers a powerful glimpse into how the university is nurturing this new wave of excellence.



Across its schools, SMU is committed to producing graduates equipped to lead with both scientific expertise and a deep understanding of the communities they serve. Whether advancing breakthroughs in research or redefining academic performance, students are encouraged to embrace curiosity, think critically, and push boundaries.

SMU's forward-thinking approach to student development is not confined to traditional teaching. It fosters an environment where creativity, leadership, and innovation are valued. From community-focused projects and student-led initiatives to pioneering ideas in tech and digital health, students are emerging not only as professionals but as agents of change.

One of the most compelling examples of this shift is the rise of tech-savvy students who are bridging the gap between health and digital innovation. The launch of the Geekulcha Student Society (GKSS) on campus is a case in point—establishing a new culture of digital fluency within a health sciences institution. These initiatives demonstrate SMU's commitment to cross-disciplinary learning and its belief in preparing students to thrive in the era of the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions.

Beyond the academic space, SMU is also investing in how it tells its story. The university's growing suite of communication platforms—including the SMU Student Herald (a weekly student newsletter), SMU Alumni Connect (a monthly digital publication for graduates), and SMU QuickCast (a bite-sized weekly audio news feature)—are designed to amplify student voices, foster institutional pride, and strengthen the connection between current students and alumni.

This visibility is not just about recognition; it's about building a community grounded in shared purpose. SMU believes in creating an ecosystem of excellence—one where students, staff, and alumni are continually inspired to lead, innovate, and serve.

From research outputs to clinical practice, student leadership to entrepreneurship, SMU's impact is both local and global. Its graduates are found at the helm of hospitals, laboratories, public health programmes, and policy-making forums—not only in South Africa but across the continent and beyond.

As we reflect on the stories shared in this edition, it becomes clear: SMU is not merely educating students—it is shaping tomorrow's health leaders today. Here, dreams are nurtured, futures are built, and excellence is the standard. In every corner of campus, one finds purpose, progress, and a promise that the future of healthcare is in good hands.

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