

SMU Contribution to African Renaissance



Prof Gboyega Adebola Ogunbanjo (second from right – front row) alongside the Senior Academic Management of the Université Protestanté au Congo (UPC), DRC.

SMU is playing a vital role in health care education in other sister African countries with severe shortage of skilled health care specialists. For example, the academic collaboration between SMU and Université Protestanté au Congo (UPC), in which Prof Ogunbanjo, Professor and Head of Department of Family Medicine & Primary Health Care is involved, witnessed the graduation ceremony of the 13 family medicine specialists who commenced their training in 2012, in the DRC. Of the remaining graduates, five more are expected to graduate in 2017 after they comply with the requirements of the university as set by the DRC's Department of Higher Education.

The graduation ceremony took place on 30 July 2016 at the Université Protestanté au Congo (UPC), Kinshasa, DRC. In 1997, the Medical University of Southern Africa (MEDUNSA) initially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a health NGO – Santé Rural (SANRU) to assist the country to train specialist family physicians. The MoU continued with University of Limpopo (Medunsa Campus). Thereafter, in January 2015, SMU continued with the MoU by signing a service level agreement (SLA), with Université Protestanté au Congo (UPC), Kinshasa DRC.

“According to the MoU/SLA, SMU was to provide teaching and research supervision in family Medicine to DRC family medicine registrars, act as external examiners, provide faculty support

for their lecturers and conduct academic visits twice a year to UPC in Kinshasa” said Prof Ogunbanjo. In 2014, a new group of 30 postgraduate family medicine registrars commenced their training with funding from a German NGO linked to UPC. The duration of the masters’ training is 4 years and similar to the M Med (Family Medicine) programmes offered in South Africa.

Initially operating under the auspices of SANRU, the project experienced a setback. A number of family medicine graduates after completing their training, emigrated from the DRC to South Africa. That compromised the good intentions of the project to encourage retention of specialists in the DRC. It is for this reason that the new Service Level Agreement (SLA) was signed to stem the tide of graduates emigrating to Southern African countries, including South Africa.