

Welcome Address: Teaching and Research Awards

Ladies and gentlemen, It is indeed a great privilege to welcome you all to this event when we, as the SMU, institutionally recognise the achievements of our staff in teaching and learning (for the first time), and research and postgraduate studies (for the second time). We also thought it apposite to honour at this occasion a special group of researchers, namely our NRF rated scientist.

Ladies and gentlemen, recognising all of the aforementioned achievements during the same event, confirm our philosophy that the identity and purpose of the university must be firmly located within the research and teaching nexus, with community engagement founded on, and inspired by, the design, excellence and credibility of the academic enterprise. More pertinently, to institutionalise and embrace an institutional research and knowledge generation orientation, which is critical for quality teaching and learning, research and postgraduate studies, and community engagement.

Much of this, ladies and gentlemen, will already be confirmed by the recognition given to individuals this evening. I believe though that we, as the SMU, should strive to go full circle by also recognising and awarding the excellent community engagement work done by our staff, students and academic departments as an integral part of our curriculum.

I wish to take the opportunity to congratulate you all on your respective achievements. You, among many others at the SMU, are the champions of empowerment and liberation. We must empower those entrusted to us, not only with cutting-edge knowledge, but also with skills and competencies transcending the ageing effect of time and context. We are compelled to liberate our fledgling institution from negative and disparaging academic perceptions, through our excellence, relevance and responsiveness. I call on all of you this evening to use, in an exemplary way, whatever persuasive powers you may possess to get other colleagues to agree to be part of this wave of renewal.

This event, ladies and gentlemen, is an important event on the annual institutional calendar, and a testimony to the commitment of the University to grow the quality of its core functions. The SMU strives to achieve this growth amidst the reality of: Increasingly competitive local higher education environment; Research intensive focus of universities globally; Drive for internationalisation of universities; Demand for the enrolment and retention of top student talent; Fierce competition to attract and retain quality staff against the backdrop of ever decreasing resources; New political and social economic context; and Ever changing business model for higher education.

But, the SMU must remain focused in its aspiration to become more competitive, to build its institutional reputation and identity, and to enhance its academic stature. And remember, in our teaching and learning, research and postgraduate endeavours, it is allowed to enter the intersection of ideas and opinion, as threatening as it may seem, because said experience will bring innovative thinking, academic maturity and the ability to generate new knowledge.

This is the moment to emphasise again our collective challenge to unlock our potential and to embrace our aspiration to be recognised by our peers, nationally and internationally, as an institution of international repute. Significant progress has been made, but we have to broaden and stabilise our resource and participation base, sharpen our focus and further increase our quality. Our competitors are constantly improving their performance and it will require a mammoth effort just to hold our ground.

Ladies and gentlemen, my brief is not to attempt to deliver a key note address, but to welcome you all here this evening. I therefore wish to thank you all, colleagues, for setting time aside to witness this occasion. May we all join in applauding the awardees and leave this venue as an inspired, focused and committed SMU community.

It is with gratitude that I recognise the presence here this evening of our special guests. We have with us our Chairperson of Council, Justice Mavundla, and his wife, our key note speaker of this evening, Dr Molapo Qhobela who is the CEO of the National Research Foundation, other distinguished guests and participants in the programme this evening. Thank you for your support and contribution to the success of this evening.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, I may never be found guilty of not thanking our in-house pastor Mr Itumeleng Maboye for the opening prayer. It is always special for me to have you with us and to be comforted by your message and prayers. And of course our SMU Choir, with the fantastic reputation of winning almost all the awards possible. We are indeed proud of you and look forward to your entertaining contribution to the success of this very proud occasion.

Enjoy the evening with us.

Prof Chris de Beer

**REMARKS BY DR MOLAPO QHOBELA – CEO OF THE NRF ON THE
OCCASION OF THE GALA DINNER IN HONOUR OF SEFAKO MAKGATHO
HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY’S EXCEPTIONAL ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS
AND NRF-RATED RESEARCHERS**

25 JANUARY 2017

Honourable Judge Mavundla Chairperson of the Council and Mrs Mavundla;

Members of the Interim Council;

Interim Vice Chancellor, Professor Chris de Beer, and the members of the executive of the University;

Professor T Gugushe Advisor to the Interim Vice Chancellor;

The Chief Executive Office of Dr George Mukhari Hospital, Dr F Kgongwana;

Distinguished guests, and, in particular, the scholars who are being celebrated tonight,

Good evening.

It is an honour and privilege for me to address you on this very special occasion.

I am particularly pleased that this event is meant to highlight the pursuit of academic excellence in its three manifestations of teaching, research and engagement. This tri-factor of teaching, research and engagement, to me, speaks to the core of what is the mandate of the university. While teaching and research are entrenched in our understanding of the purpose of a university, engagement with the community, society and the world is an important aspect that balances research and teaching

In the past year or two an important spotlight has been placed on the interrelationship existing between universities and the context in which they operate. These institutions have had to balance being conscious of challenges emanating from our past; responsive to the demands of today; and focused on the opportunities presented by the future. It was Clark Kerr, former President Emeritus and Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, who said that Presidents of Universities need the

great “moral virtues of courage, fortitude, justice and prudence”. These words have a particular potency for our university system.

Luckily, the leadership of this institution has a stellar exemplar in Sefako Makgatho; a man who, in his youth as the son of a chief around 1879, saw the world he had known come to an end. A man who responded to the situation with courage, fortitude and foresight by pursuing education in this country and in England. A man who could have been content with just being a teacher, but instead embraced what Edward Said deemed the mission of an intellectual which is to - “advance human freedom and knowledge”.

In these challenging times, the example of Sefako Makgatho demands of us, as leaders in our respective institutions, to be courageous; to do what is right for our institutions and the university system; and more importantly, to have the courage of imagining and realising a university system that is better and stronger in all respects than what we have today; importantly, one which serves our society and young democracy.

Needless to say, such courage must be accompanied by fortitude and resilience and tempered by judiciousness and justice.

In a society such as ours that faces a myriad of challenges, the National Development Plan correctly identifies education, training and innovation as core elements in eliminating poverty and reducing inequality to ensure South Africa’s long term sustainable development.

One is, therefore, pleased to learn that, since its establishment in January 2015, Sefako Makgatho University has enrolled a total of 5 144 students and of these, 4 133 students are registered for undergraduate programmes in the four Schools of Medicine, Health Care Sciences, Pathology and Pre-Clinical Sciences and Oral Health Sciences. The remaining 1 008 are registered as post-graduate students. The university has set ambitious targets of registering 7 000 students in 2019 and at least 10 000 students by 2024.

We, as the NRF, are pleased to note that the staff component of the University is receiving great attention. Specifically, we note with interest that in 2016, SMU has 587 academic staff and of this total, 73 are pursuing PhDs while the remaining 355 are specialists with joint appointments with the Department of Health, pursuing their senior degrees up to Master's level. An area of concern for us is to ensure that the growth in academic staff pursuing and qualifying for PhDs mirrors the ambitious targets set for future enrolments of postgraduate students sustainably.

At SMU, Medicine remains the highest producer of publications, even after the demerger. Of the 108 documents produced and indexed in SciVal 2015/16, documents were cited on an average of 1.2 citations per document with a category normalised citation impact of 1.35. This indicates that SMU is doing well as publications have been cited more than would be expected based on the world average for similar publications. To be precise 35% more times than expected. It is my hope and, I trust, yours as well that your current research outputs per school will increase going forward.

With these awards we recognise the gains that have been made in this regard by SMU's knowledge producers. We honour the achievement of 25 academics whose dedication and hard work showcase excellence at this institution.

I am excited about the awards that will be bestowed this evening in the various categories including *Best Overall Female Researcher in the University*; *Teaching Excellence*; *Research Excellence*; and *NRF-Rated Researcher Awards*.

Particular acknowledgement goes to SMU's Professor Lineo Matsela and Dr Abram Ngwato Muse for their cutting-edge research on developing biomarkers for gestational diabetes, performed in collaboration with the University of Alabama at Birmingham, in the United States of America.

The multi-disciplinary research team led by Professor Modise Zacharia Koto, which performed the first African ground-breaking (hands-free) kidney transplant from a living donor, as opposed to a cadaveric donor, to a recipient through pure laparoscopic donor nephrectomy, is indeed worth celebrating. That both the donor and recipient achieved recovery demonstrates the invaluable technical skills and highly complex vascular and laparoscopic surgery experience of SMU's academic staff. Through their

research, these and other highly productive SMU teams provide us with a glimpse of the capability of the university for developing innovative and relevant evidenced-based health care systems while at the same time training highly competent health care personnel and scientists who understand the research and other related matters to improve the system.

I am pleased to congratulate Professor Lekan Ayo-Yusuf in Epidemiology for attaining an NRF C2 Rating; and Professor Rose Burnett in Virology; Professor Mapaseka Seheri and Professor Liviu Feller in Peridontology for attaining the National Research Foundation C3 Rating. I am more than confident that the number of rated researchers at SMU will increase significantly in the coming decade.

Our challenge as the National Research Foundation is to find creative ways of supporting you, the researchers, to continue to excel in your chosen endeavours. In our efforts to transform and invest in human capacity excellence, it is necessary for us to also invest in young researchers to ensure the sustainability of our system. In nurturing and supporting young scientists we enable them to realise their full potential. In this regard, we depend heavily on the efforts of institutions such as SMU to identify the best, capable and most driven young people.

Congratulations to all who are receiving recognition and may tonight represent the beachhead for growing excellence in research, teaching and community engagement at Sefako Makgatho University.

Professor Chris de Beer, thank you for providing me with this honour.

Mr T Mhlabane

2016 Research Days 1st Place: Best Undergraduate Student Paper



Dr SEP Modjadji

2016 Research Days 3rd Place: Best Postgraduate Student Paper



Ms FM Mkhonto

2016 Research Days 3rd Place: Best Postgraduate Student Paper



Ms N Mogale

2016 Research Days 3rd Place: Best Postgraduate Student Paper



Dr P Moodley

2016 Research Days 2nd Place: Best
Postgraduate Student Paper



Ms N van der Sandt

2016 Research Days 1st Place: Best
Postgraduate Student Paper



Prof M Nchabeleng

2016 Research Days 2nd Place: Best Paper
Presentation by Staff



Prof ML Seheri

2016 Research Days 1st Place: Best Paper
Presentation by Staff



Ms H Ismail

2016 Research Days 1st Place: Best Undergraduate Student Poster



Dr NP Sithole

2016 Research Days 3rd Place: Best Postgraduate Student Poster



Ms PX Ndlovu

2016 Research Days 2nd Place: Best Postgraduate Student Poster



Dr SEP Modjadji

2016 Research Days 1st Place: Best Postgraduate Student Poster



Dr NJ Chabikuli

2016 Research Days 2nd Place: Best Poster
Presentation by Staff



Dr JM Mchenga

2016 Research Days 1st Place: Best Poster
Presentation by Staff

