

MEDIA STATEMENT

DATE: Wednesday, 27 November 2019

TO: All media

ATTENTION: News Editors/ Reports

For Immediate use:

MINISTER NZIMANDE CONGRATULATES THE WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY (WSU) MEDICAL ORTHOTICS AND PROSTHETIC STUDENTS ON GROUND BREAKING INVENTIONS

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Dr Blade Nzimande, congratulates the Walter Sisulu University Medical Orthotics and Prosthetic students, Zanodumo Godlimpi and Siphosethu Mgwili's ground-breaking prosthetic leg inventions.

The pair have innovated a prosthetic leg which may give financial and physical relief to the over three million below-knee amputation casualties occurring annually.

Their innovations are expected to save children and adolescent amputees thousands of rands in upgrades as they go through physical changes over time.

Siphosethu Mgwili's innovation will allow amputees the ability to adjust their own height in their homes to their comfortable and functional height.

While Zanodumo Godlimpi developed a pneumatic actuated below knee prostheses that utilises pressurised air and pneumatic cylinder that can plantar-flex and dorsi-flex to achieve a range of motion of 360 degrees.

Siphokazi and Zanodumo joins another WSU's pharmagnostic researcher, Dr. Taiwo Olayemi Elufioye, who earlier this month (November 2019) innovated another ground-breaking anti-aging drug, through her research study titled: "Metabolomic Profiling of Selected Medicinal Plants With Memory Enhancing And Related Potentials Using Direct Or Hyphenated Spectroscopic Methods." Dr. Elufioye used modern methods to identify active agents in some medicinal plants that are traditionally used by African traditional medical practitioners either as memory enhancers or as anti-aging.

"it is pleasing to note the increase in research and innovation output from a Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI), such as WSU, which for decades have been systematically left out of the research and scientific ecosystem of our country and the world," said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande said that he has committed to ensure an increase in the number of HDIs who partner with foreign universities and colleges to learn and share best

practices, particularly with those lead institutions who are renowned globally for their scientific and innovation advancements.

The Minister said that it is undisputed that innovation is the keyword of our times in response to modern day challenges facing our society, be it socially, environmentally and economically.

Minister Nzimande further said that “the central role of knowledge creation in post-industrial economies and societies has given our universities and TVET colleges a pivotal role to drive socially responsible innovation, which can contribute towards the improvement of our country’s trade balance, thereby improving the prospects of increasing our economic growth through stimulating the demand side of our economy for inclusive growth,” the Minister emphasised.

Minister Nzimande believes that our post school education and training institutions have to be highly responsive, adaptable, strategically directed, and create a network of public and private partners to adequately respond to challenges facing our communities.

Thus, their key functions is to conduct research whilst educating future academics and professionals, leaders and innovators,” said the Minister.

In the 2019/20 financial year, the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) will be investing R1,498 billion in support for students, researchers and interns, with a projected total investment of R4,6 billion over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period.

These funds will support at least 8279 pipeline honours and master's students, 2538 PhD students, 4 500 researchers, and 690 interns.

Amongst the leading projects are:

- The launch of the Mandela Mining Precinct, a project established to facilitate the coordination of mining research, development and innovation activities and collaboration amongst stakeholders;
- The grassroots innovation programme which is aimed at generating the required learnings on how best to design and deliver support to grassroots innovators;
- Funding the project to build a South African titanium industry, Fluorochemicals Expansion Initiative and the hydrogen fuel cell research development and innovation initiative;
- Support to a range of large and small firms through our Technology Localisation Programme (TLP) which aims at increasing the turnover of small and medium enterprises, enabling them to secure better contracts with large private sector companies.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), has implemented the University Capacity Development Programme since the beginning of 2018.

This represents the next stage of the Department's work to transform universities to improve student success, enable equitable and quality staff development opportunities, and implement initiatives to reform and strengthen programmes and curriculum,

The UCDP represents an investment of approximately R1 billion annually and amongst others focuses on:

- Implementing the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Programme to develop student entrepreneurship, strengthening the entrepreneurship focus in academic programmes and on building entrepreneurial universities.
- The Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme, which will recruit high achieving postgraduate students who want to become academics into academic internship positions. The first cohort of 100 Masters students will be taken into the programme in 2020.
- The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) supports universities to recruit new academics, through providing financial resources that enable the universities to employ the new academics on a permanent basis from the outset, and to support them on a 6-year development programme. Thus far, 478 posts have been allocated, accounting for an investment of approximately R1.2 billion by the State. From the 2019/20 financial year, a minimum of 100 new posts will be added each year. 80% of these posts must be taken up by black and/or women scholars aged 40 years or younger.
- The University Staff Doctoral Programme (USDP) is supporting approximately 250 existing academics at universities to achieve doctoral degrees, including through partnerships with US and UK universities.
- The Future Professors Programme (FPP) aims to grow the black professoriate in universities. In 2019/20, 29 promising academics will be taken onto the two-year programme that will enable them to develop as academic and research leaders and position them well for a professor position. There will be successive intakes of approximately 30 candidates each year going forward.
- The National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) is established to play a crucial role in the development of our country by informing social policy, framing the systems of thought that shape our perceptions of the world, discovering and interpreting our past and our present, stimulating creativity and making widespread tools necessary for informed debate about ourselves and our society. NIHSS has produced the 3rd cohort of doctoral graduands, and produced 200 doctoral graduands in only 5 years of its existence.

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