

Health Sciences school launched

Ruimsig — Monash South Africa officially launched its School of Health Sciences at a function held at its Ruimsig, Johannesburg campus on 9 November 2010.

The School will be enrolling students to begin their three-year Bachelor of Public Health degree in February 2011.

The Bachelor of Public Health will offer graduates a wide range of interesting career options in the areas of public health, health management, health promotion, programmes and policy.

According to Prof Geoffrey Setswe, Head of the School of Health Sciences, "Graduates will be multi-skilled professionals equipped to find employment in government and non-government public health settings as well as in

the pharmaceutical or broader health industries."

Monash Public Health graduates can also continue to study toward a Bachelor of Public Health Honours and/ or Masters degree.

Pro Vice-Chancellor and President of Monash South Africa, Professor Tyrone Pretorius, said that the opening of this school relates to a priority area in South Africa where additional skills are clearly needed: "Our vision for the future is to add a range of programmes, such as nursing, physiotherapy and dietetics and I am confident that under the capable leadership of Prof Geoffrey Setswe, a comprehensive School of Health Sciences will be established."



Prof Geoffrey Setswe and Prof Steve Wesselingh. Picture submitted.

"The key criteria that guided us in the establishment of a School of Health Sciences were that it forms part of Monash University's vision of 'engaging the world' and being responsive to issues of concern to the region in which we find ourselves. It also forms part of our vision to operate as a public-purpose institution and to engage with government and the Higher Education sector to offer programmes that will strengthen, rather than be in competition to, other Faculties of Medicine and Health Sciences in the country.

"We believe it will give us an opportunity to establish meaningful partnerships and collaborations with other institutions and provide articulation opportunities with other degrees.

"What this School is offering should complement education and training already being offered by other universities.

"In line with our mission to be a research-led institution, it is important that this degree will also offer opportunities for research and research development to take place."

Prof Pretorius said the process leading up to the establishment of this school has been a long one.

He thanked all those who have assisted along the way, including Prof Steve Wesselingh, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University, Australia and Prof Brian Oldenburg, Associate Dean of International campuses in the Faculty.

Prof Steve Wesselingh said that the establishment of a School of Health Sciences at Monash South Africa is in line with the University's vision of striving toward excellence, equity and research intensiveness.

"We believe it's important to have an impact on the provision of health both locally and globally.

"We are proud of the work Monash has already undertaken in Malaysia.

"In terms of sharing of ideas on curriculum development and capacity building, Monash could have a meaningful impact in all three countries where we operate."

"There are common problems being experienced around the globe in terms of health reform, many of which centre around manpower problems, but there is also lots of great research being undertaken worldwide that is not being translated into policy.

"There is also much to be gained in the area of health by participating in the North/ South dialogue where both regions can benefit through the sharing of ideas — sometimes by achieving quantum leaps forward not previously believed to be possible."

"Sometimes finding solutions may need to be undertaken on a global platform while adapting programme design and solutions to have local relevance. Government institutions around the world are increasingly looking to academic institutions to provide and develop solutions to health issues.

Prof Geoffrey Setswe said: "We intend to partner with government agencies and with the Monash campuses in Australia and Malaysia to work toward finding solutions in health care in South Africa and the continent."

Prof Setswe, who has a Doctorate in Public Health and was a Fulbright scholar in the USA, was previously Research Director at the Human Sciences Research Council, where he headed up the Social and Behavioural Aspects of HIV/ Aids Unit.

He has been working in the health services for the past 29 years and plans to build a health sciences programme with a strong research and community-engagement focus.

