



## COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

# SCHOOL OF LABORATORY MEDICINE AND MEDICAL SCIENCES

### DEAN'S COMMUNIQUE JANUARY 2019



Dear Colleagues

A warm welcome to all of you, I trust that you had a restful and safe festive season. Welcome to our first issue for the year where we continue to strive for enhanced communication throughout the School. The School had a lot to celebrate in 2018, in this issue we will highlight these as well as the School's strategic initiatives for 2019.

#### Research update

The School held its annual research symposium and we congratulate all the participants. In an effort to increase our Masters enrolment for 2019, the School hosted Bachelor of Medical Science students from the University of Limpopo to share with them postgraduate opportunities in LMMS.

We would like to congratulate Professor Thumbi Ndung'u on his appointment as the Deputy Director (Science) at AHRI effective 1 September 2018 and we wish him well in his new position. Furthermore, we would like to congratulate Dr Zaza Ndhlovu (HPP) on acquisition of a state-of-the-art Digital droplet PCR, 3500 Sequencer and a microscope. We would also like to congratulate Dr Paradise Madlala who was awarded the IAS/Abivax Research-for-Cure Academy Fellowship award during the 2018 AIDS Conference and Dr Andile Khathi who received an excellence award for emerging academics during the College's Teaching and Learning symposium. Professor Tulio De Oliveira and his team published 5 articles in high impact journals (2 Science, 1 Lancet and 1 Nature article in 2018) and together with Professor Manormoney Pillay were recipients of one of the research flagship awards. Professor Anil Chuturgoon was also part of another team that received the research flagship award and we would like to take this opportunity to applaud them for their achievements. Both Professors Chuturgoon and Pillay were Academic Leaders for Research Themes in the School. KRISP launched the Durban SPARK Breakfast which meets every first Wednesday of the month. The aim at these Breakfasts is to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in Durban. The meetings attract not only academics but also representatives from government, clinicians, investors, law-makers, entrepreneurs and industrialists to an intellectually engaging exchange of ideas. These breakfast meetings therefore have the potential to initiate transdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, multidisciplinary and inter/intra disciplinary collaborations which will see UKZN and Durban competing with the best in the world in terms of technological innovation and entrepreneurship.

#### Staffing

The School received very few applications for academic promotions in 2018. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr Pamela Pillay (Senior Lecturer) and Prof Lelika Lazarus (Associate Professor) for their successful applications.

We also filled some of our vacant positions in the latter part of 2018. Please join me in welcoming Dr Sizwe Mhlongo (Lecturer: Medical Microbiology), Dr Sibusiso Senzani (nGAP Post Doctoral Fellow: Medical Microbiology), Ms Bonisiwe Msibi (Principal Technician: Human Physiology). We bade farewell to Professor Kapil Satyapal (Anatomy) who retired after a long service to the Institution. We wish him well in his future endeavours but knowing that his research spark has not dimmed, I am sure we will be seeing him soon. We sadly also bade farewell to Mr Salem Kharwa who passed away tragically.

#### Appointment of new Academic Leaders in 2019

Please join me in welcoming the following staff members to the School management team as academic leaders:

Dr Brenda De Gama –Academic Leader: Research

Dr Bongani Nkambule—Academic Leader: Cellular and Molecular Diseases Theme

Dr Pamela Pillay– Academic Leader: Teaching and Learning

#### Reflection on the 2018 activities

We coined 2018, 'the year of efficiency' for our School and throughout the year we have worked tirelessly to meet this

declaration. I would therefore like to extend my gratitude to all Staff for contributing towards improved efficiency.

#### School communication strategy

We launched the Dean's meet and greet sessions where we received feedback from staff on a number of issues. While some of the issues raised at these meetings were addressed, we are still in the process of addressing the rest and we will keep the School updated on the developments. In addition, the School also launched a fun run/walk which was well received. Both these initiatives were aimed at increasing communication and comradery between the two domains (professional services and academic staff) as well as introducing postgraduate students to the School ethos in line with the REACH<sup>T</sup> principles. We also received an overwhelming response from sponsors to whom we are truly grateful for their support. On the professional services front, we also launched our staff appreciation awards and we congratulate all the recipients for their hard work and dedication. We hope to expand these in 2019.

#### Development of the new four-year undergraduate programme

The School has made progress towards re-engineering its undergraduate curriculum. We developed a concept note of the new programme and it is currently being finalised for submission to the College. Once again, this would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of all the teams that participated in the workshops. We also conducted a stakeholder survey regarding the new programme and we received positive responses from companies, we will share this with the School in due course.

#### Strategic initiatives for 2019

In 2019 we will continue with the development of the undergraduate programme and we are optimistic that the documents will go through all the statutory structures in the University for approval before the end of the year. Furthermore, feedback received from stakeholders was the need for us to engage with industry to ensure that we produce graduates with the right skill set. We will therefore be initiating discussions with industry to kick start these partnerships. We will also be evaluating our PBL programme to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose. In addition, staff and student surveys will be conducted to improve the working environment for staff and gauge the students' appetite for a 4-year programme, respectively.

Even though the School has improved in its research drive, there is still room for more improvement, therefore this continues to be a high priority area for us. We have discussed a few initiatives to improve not only productivity but also the quality of research outputs. We have also developed strategies to increase our student throughput rates and I will share these during our meet and greet sessions. The new academic promotions policy has been approved and I would like to encourage staff to familiarize themselves with the document and most importantly apply for promotion in 2019. We will be conducting a few in-house workshops to prepare staff for promotion.

The School office (Medical School) will be undergoing refurbishments in order for us to maximize the space allocated to us, we will communicate this once the logistics are finalised with IPP. This year, we also aim to continue with our initiative of improving communication in the School. The meet and greet sessions will begin in the latter part of term 1. We are also looking at continuing with the fun run/walk, and staff appreciation awards. Having said that, we do welcome suggestions for programmes aimed at improving communication in the School. I would like to invite everyone to keep an open mind and participate in as many activities as possible as we continue to build a School that we can all be proud of.

Finally, I would like to wish all of you a very prosperous 2019.

*Professor Musa Mabandla*