

GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

President Hifikepunye Pohamba has hailed the University of Namibia School of Medicine as a “worthwhile investment” that will enable Government to achieve some of the Millennium Development Goals and contribute to the fight against diseases that include HIV/AIDS, measles and polio.

Officiating at a groundbreaking ceremony for the school, the visibly excited Head of State was optimistic that the school will contribute to the development of “sufficient and trained professionals” to manage the national health care system to ensure preventative, and cost effective rehabilitative healthcare.

Chairperson of the University Council Prof. Fillemon Amaambo encouraged the trainee doctors to be ready to be stationed in rural areas when they finish their studies, to address resources disparities in the health delivery system. “The battles of health first have to be won in rural areas before overall victory can be declared during our generation and your generation.”



He said it should be fairly easy for Namibia as a small country, to increase its doctor per population ratio to at least 1 to 500 or better. “This target should be achievable for a population of less than 3 million. I, therefore, call upon all stakeholders to join forces in addressing this matter.”

The Vice Chancellor Prof. Lazarus Hangula reaffirmed the University’s commitment to assisting Government achieve short and long-term goals. “With today’s groundbreaking we wish to assure the nation that UNAM is here, firm and ready as a true partner to assist government in its commitments and efforts to pave the way for the Namibian people to march towards their development dream.” He urged the private sector to assist government in equipping laboratories for the school.

Describing the school as long overdue, Health & Social Services Minister Dr. Richard Kamwi expressed appreciation to all stakeholders who enabled the establishment of the school to be a success.

SEIBES-BOCK RE-ELECTED TO COUNCIL

Assistant Human Resources Director Barbara Seibes-Bock has been re-elected by more than a two thirds majority of administrative staff members, to represent the interests of this group of employees on the University Council.

Speaking to Forum Online on her re-election, Seibes-Bock expressed appreciation at the high level of trust the administrative staff members showed in her. She warned that she however has to think broadly at the interests of the University in general and employees in particular.

She described her just ended term as a learning experience that has also aided her in her substantive portfolio as Assistant HR Director. “I got to hear and know the feelings and vision of Council for the University which enabled me to come up with relevant human resources policies.”

Challenges include balancing the interests of the university with the interests of the employees, highlighting deliberations on salary increases as one thorny issue.

“Sometimes demands are inconsistent with the resources at hand,” she said.

Among her goals for the current term is coming up with policies supporting the university’s five year strategic plan, among them a retention policy, improved staff development policy, and a policy ensuring compliance to national affirmative action legislation with a focus on understudies and skills transfer.

UNIVERSITY PLANS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH

The University is considering a series of research projects to respond to priorities set to existing climate change and development policies. The policies refer to international instruments such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, Vision 2030, as well as the third National Development Plan (NDP III).

The research programme will similarly look at identifying the gaps in the research agenda, and where appropriate, foster North-South research collaborations. UNAM has requested for N\$15 million for research and development, and it received N\$5 million last year, which will be used for some of the planned research areas identified under this programme.

This will be a collaborative project with various UNAM bodies taking part, as well as the University of Oxford through the Tyndall Centre.

Pro-Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration with Unam, Dr Boniface Mutumba, said though Namibia’s contribution to greenhouse gasses is negligible; the country is singled out as most affected by the impacts of climate change.

In Namibia there is a general perception that climate trends differ remarkably from the past: there are more droughts and flooding; the rainy seasons are shorter with more irregular rainfall.

STAFF URGED TO CONTRIBUTE TO NEWSLETTER

You are again kindly reminded to send contributions, story ideas on major developments and highlights in your faculties and departments and adverts for the next edition of the Forum Online to: uhoveka@unam.na and copied to eaniceto@unam.na