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MEDIA RELEASE

UP to collaborate with Dr Sam Motsuenyane Rural Development Foundation to alleviate poverty and unemployment

PRETORIA – The University of Pretoria (UP) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Dr Sam Motsuenyane Rural Development Foundation to collaborate in areas such as rural development, poverty and unemployment alleviation, and the economic revitalisation of townships.

The foundation was established by Dr Sam Motsuenyane, a pioneering businessman who has dedicated his life to empowering individuals and communities to participate in rural and township economies. In the 1970s and 1980s, Dr Motsuenyane was president of the largest African business organisation, the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce, and played a significant role in the development of black business in South Africa. He also founded the African Bank.

His foundation is designed to address challenges that hinder the development of township and rural communities in South Africa, specifically in the agricultural sector, with special focus on the unproductive use of land. Flagship agricultural projects in grain, vegetables and citrus production are situated in Gauteng, Limpopo and the North West provinces.

“Meaningful relationships, a nuanced understanding of rural development challenges, and the appropriate mix of technical expertise and community reach are key elements of success for rural development partnerships,” said Professor Barend Erasmus, Dean of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (NAS) at UP. “Land degradation, triggered by unsuitable farming practices in the face of climate change, can be halted, and degraded lands restored to increased productivity – NAS has the expertise to do so, and has demonstrated this capability to other land owners. We look forward to doing so again with the foundation to the benefit of our rural communities; this will also be a flagship project that validates how universities and communities can partner for a better future.”

Professor Tawana Kupe, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UP, welcomed the collaboration, “which comes in the wake of South Africa’s burgeoning unemployment rate and the need to make strides towards a green economy” he said.

He pointed out that in South Africa, small-scale farmers face many challenges, including elevated levels of land degradation, a shortage of effective farming skills and ailing agricultural infrastructure. This is coupled with tough economic conditions. “UP has one of the leading agricultural economics departments in the country, where academics use the application of management and economic principles to solve practical problems in the food and agricultural industries. Our research programmes and outputs are geared towards addressing current business and policy issues in these industries, in South Africa and beyond.”

Prof Kupe added that UP’s Faculty of Veterinary Science trains small-scale farmers on farming best practice. “This will all contribute to our collaboration with the foundation, as the University is committed to improving lives and contributing to resolving unemployment, thereby improving the economy.”

“Some of the biggest challenges this country faces are poverty, food insecurity and inequality,” said Paul Ntshabele, Chairperson of the foundation. “We are excited about the partnership, where the foundation will provide a platform as an interface to reach communities. This is an opportunity to use UP’s vast research and technological capabilities to solve the issues affecting communities, and have a positive impact on rural and township economies.”

He added that the partnership will create a platform for applied research to be tested and for the creation of new knowledge through research “that is rooted in and mirrors the conditions of our communities”. The collaboration will be a springboard for solutions “that are in line with the challenges faced by our communities, and will leverage the human capital and expertise within the University to improve the lives of our people”.

Captions:

Paul Ntshabele, Dr Sam Motsuenyane and Prof Tawana Kupe

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About the University of Pretoria

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on the Hatfield Campus, Pretoria. This 113-year-old institution is also the largest producer of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only University in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked top in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 55 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes.

UP is one of the top five universities in South Africa, according to the 2019-2020 rankings by the Center for World University Rankings. The QS World University Rankings also placed UP among the top 100 universities worldwide in three fields of study (veterinary science, theology and law), and UP is in the top 1% in eight fields of study (agricultural sciences, clinical medicine, engineering, environment/ecology, immunology, microbiology, plant and animal sciences and social sciences), according to the Web of Science Essential Indicators.

In May 2020, the annual UK Financial Times Executive Education Rankings again ranked GIBS as the top South African and African business school. The University also has an extensive community engagement programme with approximately 33,000 students involved in community upliftment. Furthermore, UP is building considerable capacities and strengths for the Fourth Industrial Revolution by preparing students for the world beyond university and offering work-readiness and entrepreneurship training.

For more information, go to www.up.ac.za

About the Dr Sam Motsuenyane Rural Development Foundation

The foundation focuses on township and rural economies, and has its roots in these communities. It believes that the biggest challenge of economic development in rural and township areas is transforming them from markets into economies. The foundation stimulates economic activity by focusing on increasing and aggregating fragmented production efforts by township SMEs and entrepreneurs. It aims to achieve this by

creating partnerships and mobilising resources that are consequential to SME development, as well as creating links for access to markets. For more information, go to: <https://drsammotsuenyane-rdf.org>

