

NEWS RELEASE

UP receives funding from Kresge Foundation to enhance student success initiatives



From left to right: Kgadi Mathabathe, Director of Student Affairs and Siyaphumelela grant institutional lead; Jennie Glennie, Executive Director of SAIDE; Alan Amory, senior programme specialist at SAIDE; and Professor Loretta Feris, Deputy Principal: Academic at UP.

PRETORIA - The University of Pretoria (UP) has formed a significant partnership with the Kresge Foundation, having received about R4 million in funding over three years. The support forms part of the Siyaphumelela initiative, which aims to improve student success across South African universities.

The Kresge Foundation has been active in South Africa since 1989 and focuses on promoting post-secondary access and success. This collaboration forms a crucial part of UP's efforts to support students from diverse backgrounds, particularly those facing financial barriers.

Kgadi Mathabathe, Director of Student Affairs at UP, expressed gratitude for the support.

"Receiving funding from the Kresge Foundation and joining Siyaphumelela 3.0 as a partner institution is a testament to a commitment to fostering an inclusive educational environment," Mathabathe said. "This partnership allows the University to enhance initiatives that level the playing field for students, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds."

Siyaphumelela 3.0 now involves 20 universities including UP, and builds on previous phases to strengthen institutional capacity through data analytics and evidence-based practices. This funding will support projects at UP that seek to improve pass rates in critical modules, enhance mental health support for students and provide comprehensive support for financially disadvantaged students. The student success initiatives funded by the grant foster a stronger collaboration between the teaching and learning portfolio and the student life/affairs portfolio at UP.

“In the midst of the economic challenges facing our country, this financial support reaffirms that our vision for an empowered and equal society resonates widely,” added Professor Loretta Feris, Deputy Principal: Academic at UP. “We are deeply grateful for this gesture. In today’s economic climate in South Africa, support for student access and success is more vital than ever. This funding enables us to address disparities and ensures that more students have the opportunity to excel. UP has supported more than 50% of its recent graduates, underscoring the profound impact of such support.”

Bill Moses, managing director of the Kresge Foundation’s education programme, affirmed the foundation’s commitment, stating that Kresge is proud to continue its partnership with UP and the Siyaphumelela network. He added that their goal is to foster systemic change and promote equitable outcomes in South African higher education.

The countrywide Siyaphumelela network is coordinated by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), a non-profit that focuses on transforming education to increase equitable outcomes for all.

“We are hugely grateful to the Kresge Foundation for the vision, links, financial and intellectual support given to the Siyaphumelela Initiative,” said Jennifer Glennie, SAIDE’s Executive Director. “Kresge is so much more than a funder. SAIDE is extremely proud to have built this collaborative and vibrant network of universities that is committed to student success.”

Glennie added that the Kresge Foundation’s sustained investment underscores its dedication to transformative education in South Africa. The Siyaphumelela initiative empowers institutions to use data effectively, enhancing interventions that support student progression and success.

The collaboration between UP and the Kresge Foundation reinforces the University’s role as a leader in driving student success and fostering socio-economic transformation through education.

“As Kresge celebrates its centennial, the education programme has the great privilege of championing a rich body of investment, marking 35 years of working in South Africa,” Moses said. “Kresge remains committed to South Africa and its future. When you are tackling systemic challenges, especially issues that have manifested over generations, it doesn’t take one, two or even three grant cycles to adequately address those issues. Systemic change requires time and intentionality to succeed.”

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Media enquiries can be directed to Mr Sashlin Girraj - Public Relations & Events Manager

Email: sashlin.girraj@up.ac.za | Cell: +27(0)72 447 3784

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 its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers 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 the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their 2024 World University Rankings (WUR). UP was the only South African university featured in the 2023 World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

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