

An elephant in the entrance hall: ways to motivate staff and students to utilise a newly opened Skills Laboratory

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A skills laboratory should be seen as an exciting opportunity for staff and students to enhance clinical training, not as another duty. With the Onderstepoort Skills Laboratory launch, measures were taken to counteract a possible lack of enthusiasm.

Pre-opening, a Zumba-dance evening, preceded by a suture practical, was organised. This “sneak preview” showed the progress up to that stage. The atmosphere foreshadowed future fun in the Skills Lab.



A life-size fiberglass baby elephant was placed in the entrance hall. In line with a popular African theme, this resulted in a positive reaction from staff and students entering, signalling that the Skills Lab holds more surprises.

Ten third year veterinary students were trained in the use of models and stations, to give guidance to novice visitors during opening week.

These students wore t-shirts displaying the Onderstepoort Skills Laboratory logo. The t-shirt will be available to students and staff, to heighten Skills Lab awareness on campus, and give ownership of the laboratory to the student body.



Clinicians were asked to develop learning objectives for specific models within their field of expertise. This familiarised them with the models and improved their ownership of the learning processes in the Skills Lab.

A competition to name a colic horse-simulator created much participation, resulting in an immediate connection to the model.

Feedback indicates that much interest has been generated. Future steps include a Facebook page, lunchtime yoga, postings in the local faculty and student newspapers, a “Model development” information board and a “Station of the Month”.

