



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

23 August 2010

Office of the Executive Director

Dear Colleagues

**HSRC PROJECT DURING AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2010
INVESTIGATING THE CONTRIBUTION OF UNIVERSITY INTERACTION WITH SOCIAL
PARTNERS TO BUILDING A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF INNOVATION**

I would like to encourage you to participate in an upcoming survey of **community engagement** conducted by the **Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)**. The project aims to map the ways in which academics extend their knowledge through research, teaching or service to the direct benefit of external social partners.

The research is part funded by the Department of Science and Technology, and part funded by the National Research Foundation to inform their new programme on university-community engagement.

We are mindful of the demands on your time, but your participation in the survey will ultimately help inform the national funding framework for the years to come.

Some academics view interaction with industry or communities or local government as inimical to their traditional academic activity and the future of knowledge production. There are those academics who engage with external partners only indirectly, through their contribution to knowledge generation and transmission. For other academics, in some fields responsiveness has meant direct research linkages with industry, while in others it has meant involvement through the curriculum in service learning, and in yet others, community engagement in relation to social or health development, or perhaps support to policy makers at different levels. These trends differ between universities, and within institutions, between academics in distinct disciplinary fields.

The survey will thus ask individual academics to reflect on their **academic scholarship over the past two years** in terms of who are the external social partners with whom they engage directly – if at all. What are the most common types of relationships and channels of interaction? The survey will also ask academics to reflect on the typical outcomes and benefits, and the obstacles to interaction with external social partners. Your participation is on a voluntary basis.

To make meaningful sense of trends at each university, the survey would need to determine the practices of a large proportion of academics, randomly selected. **The HSRC proposes to conduct a telephonic survey, during office hours, and each interview should last not more than 15 minutes.**

Ethics clearance has been obtained from the **Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee**, University of Pretoria, and from the **HSRC Research Ethics Committee**. Consent to participate in the interview will be verbal. **Attached is a HSRC consent document for your information (Addendum A)**, which explains the potential benefits and risks of participation in the project more fully.

For any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the project leader, **Dr Glenda Kruss**, of the **Education and Skills Development research programme** at the HSRC on **021-466-8086** or e-mail, **gkruss@hsrc.ac.za**.

We hope that you will be willing to give 15 minutes of your time to share your thoughts and experience, when one of the HSRC researchers calls you.

Yours sincerely



Professor Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo
Executive Director

cc **Prof C R de Beer**
 Senior Vice-Principal

Prof A van Aswegen
Director: Human Resources