

**Speech for South African Association of Campus Health Services Conference
held at Windmills Conference Centre**

Dr B.K. Sebake- Dean of Students CUT

Thanks very much Program Director, Delegates from Institutions of Higher Learning, With special acknowledgement from Higher Health, social partners and distinguish guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to stand here before all of you, mindful of the important role of health practitioners in a developing society. The profession exists as part of the apex priority of government, with the outmost intention to reduce the mortality rate through various strategic interventions.

The lives of young people in universities reflect an intergeneration of young minds that require to be developed through shaping positive lifestyles. I am troubled by the escalating cost of health not in the context of price but escalating number of youths that fall sick at an early period, which we think is the problem of health system that is not responsive. One of the most antics in the reduction of mortality rate and cost of health among youth is the failure to inculcate positive lifestyle amongst youth. This therefore remains at the heart of health cost that is relatively high in South Africa. For instance, a young person who developed gaud early because of malnutrition and his cost of health before the age of 25-30 is contributing to escalation of cost amongst youth and therefore counteract the strategies to reduce mortality rate.

Program Director, a deeper analysis must be made on the youth lifestyle in higher education for the society to develop and invest in shaping capable future human capital. The escalating number of students death in universities recently supersede the number in the period three years back. These deaths relate to psychosocial challenges that students traverse from their grassroots. It is a fact that some are widely emanating from engaging in mop influence such as abuse of substances, alcohol which leads to the life of the underworld. The period between August to December 2024, in general and from observed South African perspective, the future statistic that STATSSA would issue will vindicates my assertion that we generally buried as many young people as possible than elders. As a responsible citizen, I made several calls to a few of my former students in Natal, and Cape Town as I observed the patterns of behavior they are displaying in social media. I have pleaded with them to act responsibly without the application of authoritarian stands. In early January, out of 9 that I called 3 of them thanked me because they buried their friends in December and realized that they might have been saved by my advice. This constitutes a lived experience and paints a blurry picture about the mystery of youth and responsible living.

Ladies and gentlemen, the decaying behavior of the youth we must take care of surpasses all our level of expectations. This is because we are confronted by a state of constitutional democracy, which is abused due to youth that require to be independent. We are being reminded all the time that they left their parents at home, and they are young adults and must enjoy their rights. I submit that growth must be shaped by responsibility and accountability in building a positive lifestyle for youth.

The escalating challenge of mental health amongst youth adults that is ravaging higher education is confronting us and it remains an antithesis of cultivating human development. This remains the one of the primes that requires solidarity amongst all stakeholders to defeat this invincible pathogen. This endemic of mental health requires all sidedness and therefore an integrated framework for higher education that embraces research practices to advance both praxes of enhancing support and knowledge society. As health and welfare practitioners, you are the realm of hope for a developing society. I wish to submit that higher education health practitioners must use the proximity of research capacity to lead the nation on this area of human confrontation for human development. This is mainly because the mental health speed of affecting human beings is beyond comprehension and it has potential to collapse the existing human capability which is an investment established thus far.

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Higher education must be a space where a post-conflict society welcomes the inhabitants of humankind and settle them in harmony. The stereotypical endemic of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), is engraving itself into society and the escalation of the numbers experienced recently gives us an unpalatable picture of a doomed society. The art of salvaging the gains of democracy by demonstrating the positive implication of equal society is far-fetched. This is also ravaging the universities that must not only be a microcosm of society but make up what society must be all about. I submit that the battle for this must be all sidedness and perhaps, at the Council for Higher Education (CHE), a curriculum mixed must be reviewed to offer subjects compulsory for cultivating human consciousness.

Ladies and gentlemen, the expanding levels of poverty in higher education forced the transition for reimagination of a new dispensation that is responsive to human life. The slow drop in student funding being the heartbeat of escalating levels of poverty amongst the students. These changing trends in higher education established a new set of changes in transforming higher education that is adaptive to human condition and accelerate student comfort from a multi-class society. The emergency of nutrition program was a step into transforming higher education to attempt stages of equality of life. Given the shortage of funding for this program, I submit that reimagination of introducing gardening skills and expansion of donations may come handy in pushing back the frontiers of poverty amongst students. Yet at the same time, cultivate basic skills that creates an opportunity to reduce food insecurity.

On the front of partnerships, the psychosocial challenges of students such as alcohol and substance abuse. The capitalization of agencies partners such as what Eastern Cape Liquor Board has rolled in universities and colleges must be commended as a strategic move towards symbiotic and objective view of maximizing impact. This over the past three years has reduced high failure rate and establish an umbilical court of good hope for our students. The partnership with the district on delivering health services to students is another ecosystem that responds to the challenges of establishing healthy students' generations. I submit that more still need to be done guided by Higher health, USAF and other relevant stakeholder to expand services to students.

The clocking and over looming fatigue of the health practitioners in higher education is beyond comprehension. One must acknowledge the contribution of Higher Health in this area. To demonstrate that health is an apex area, I submit that SAACHS as an important stakeholder must reach out to SAASSAP and USAF to create a basic case of resourcing the health and welfare before our practitioners shifts to the public health space given mounting work on student health in higher education.

As I conclude, the investment of technology and research is fundamental to demonstrate the agility to advance to the developing world. It must be vital that a system of scanning the health challenges of students be invested in to bring planning capacity on campuses to numerically know the challenges of students we are serving. This milestone is catalytic to establish a capable and sustainable health service for students and a step in to affect a responsive health service in higher education.

I therefore wish that the resolutions of this conference and the exchange of greater ideas would reach us in universities as we continue to respond to the challenges of intergeneration of student for foreseeable future.

I thank you
Ke lebohile.

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