



FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

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THANKS TO THE SUCCESS with which the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) could put its strategic targets into practice in 2009, we currently are in a good position to achieve the strategic priorities and objectives of the Overarching Strategic Plan of the University in 2015.

The sustained efforts to match the diversity profile of our student corps to that of the Western Cape – and eventually of the country – again bore fruit. In 2009, black students comprised 43,8% of the total of 1 730 undergraduate students. Against the current growth rate, approximately 50% of the undergraduate students of the FHS will be black students by 2015. Student success also improved substantially over the past few years, from 92% to 96%, despite more students from educationally disadvantaged schools. A significant investment in tutor-mentor programmes, First-year Academy facilitators and learning facilitation for senior students in their clinical study years were among the aspects that contributed to this success. Undergraduate student numbers grew slightly, by about 2% per year, over the past five years. It is envisaged that numbers will grow considerably in the next five years to provide in the current shortage of professional health workers in South Africa.

Postgraduate student numbers have continued to grow, particularly among master's degree and postgraduate diploma students. The growth in the latter occurred particularly in Nursing, where the Faculty entered into an agreement with the Department of Health of the Western Cape Province to significantly increase student numbers in certain specialised fields in order to fulfil regional and national needs. Postgraduate black students comprised 57,1% of the enrolled total of 1 715. The number of postgraduate students from the rest of Africa continues to increase and currently amounts to about 10% of the total. Partnerships with companies in the health industry, bursary funding from international research contracts and other third money-stream income have contributed to a further increase in the number of master's degree students in particular. As a result of this growth and the specific needs of postgraduate students, a dedicated postgraduate administration office was established in 2009. The functions and administrative processes of this office will be coordinated with those of a similar office to be established on the Stellenbosch Campus in 2010.

Research publications by academic staff published in peer-evaluated journals have increased by more than 33% over the past three years – and this while publication outputs by most of the South African universities remained static or even decreased. International funding also made an important contribution to research achievements. Large research awards, primarily from international sources, grew from less than R30 million in 2005 to close on R120 million in 2009. This contributed to research projects and outputs of exceptional quality – so much so that the Faculty has been acknowledged by institutions such as Elsevier Publishers as a world leader in fields such as TB research (*and paediatric TB research in particular*), mental health and brain imaging. Along with the FHS's growing reputation for research excellence there was again great interest from international researchers in 2009 to collaborate with researchers and clinicians of the FHS on a variety of projects concerning TB, HIV and diseases of poverty and lifestyle, which form an extending research field in the Faculty.

In the year under review a great deal of time and attention was focused on the establishment of a rural clinical school in the Boland/Overberg region, centred in Worcester. The purpose of this school is to give our students experience in rural health. As the first clinical school of this nature in South Africa it can serve as a unique laboratory for a workable African model for health sciences training in a region with limited resources. The involvement of other University faculties has also been negotiated in order to broaden the initiative considerably, with sustainable rural development as the core objective.

The foundation for the school had already been laid by the FHS's Ukwanda Centre for Rural Health in the Overberg, which has established a strong academic training platform in the rural areas in close cooperation with local communities, health authorities, municipalities and nongovernmental organisations. Just like Ukwanda, the new clinical school will integrate community service and interaction, a key function of the Faculty, with teaching and research. As a central component of a new rural satellite campus of the University in Worcester, the clinical school will create opportunities for postgraduate students and for inter-faculty collaboration on projects that are related to all aspects of human security in the rural areas. In 2009 a process was begun of buying land for the erection of the academic building and it most likely will be possible to accommodate the first students in 2011.