

THE 'E' IS FOR 'EXCELLENCE' IN IIFASE

PROF ZODWA DLAMINI, LEADING THE MUT RESEARCH AGENDA BY EXAMPLE



Njabulo Gumede a lecture in the Department of Chemistry, left, and Prof Zodwa Dlamini, DVC: Research, Innovation and Engagement (RIEP)

Prof Zodwa Dlamini, notwithstanding her hectic schedule, has delivered her first project as DVC: Research, Innovation and Engagement (RIEP) at MUT. She recalls that she joined MUT in June 2015 when almost everyone was on vacation. "I had to call the deans for a meeting in order to get going. They were on holiday and they obliged. I am indebted to them for having risen to the occasion as that helped me get a baseline understanding of our research status per faculty," said Prof Dlamini.

"This fuelled me to develop a concept document for my first project as MUT's DVC: RIEP, and the proposal was subsequently approved," she continued. The result has been a R6 million grant to be staggered over three years she has just received from the South African Medical

Research Council for 2016 for the project "Targeting the abnormal MicroRNA and Splicing Signatures in HIV-associated cancers". This is pioneering work which could create great value in delivering clinically validated oncology targets from which new drug discovery programmes could emerge.

Prof Dlamini is the lead PI for this project. Within MUT, a collaboration with Mr Njabulo Gumede, an academic staff member in Chemistry, is being crafted to jointly work on Cancer Therapeutics/ Drug Discovery with the strategic intent of sharing expertise, attracting national and international collaboration, as well as sourcing funding. The DVC sees this as also benefitting MUT staff who work and wish to work in this area.

Besides this grant, Prof Dlamini has brought with her over R450 000 in international grants from the National Research Foundation, which assist her in being able to engage with international partners. She mainly uses her funding for international travel and thus is not dependent on the university budget for international engagements. She currently supervises two PhDs, three post-doctoral fellows and two M.Sc students in her own field of Molecular Genetics and Disease, especially cancer. Within 10 months of arriving at MUT, she has published seven journal articles within international journals with high scientific standing. She has also published two conference proceedings and currently has a few publications under review.