

UP strengthens partnership with MSU

During a virtual ceremony on 1 June, the University of Pretoria (UP) and Michigan State University (MSU) signed a new bilateral memorandum of understanding to strengthen the existing partnership between the institutions. The agreement was signed by UP vice-chancellor and principal, Professor Tawana Kupe and MSU president Dr Samuel L. Stanley, Jr., MD on behalf of their institutions.



Prof Tawana Kupe in a meeting with Michigan State University

The partnership between the institutions is currently facilitated by the Alliance for African Partnership (AAP), a consortium comprising MSU, 10 African institutions, and the Regional Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes (ReNAPRI) think tank, with UP being the only South African member. The AAP has enabled the establishment of an innovative and equitable model of partnership that directly addresses African challenges through engaged research, outreach, and capacity strengthening.

The institutional agreement between UP and MSU extends and strengthens the AAP model of partnership, leveraging both institutions' complementary strengths. MSU's origins as an agricultural college and one of the leading land-grant universities in the US has made it a preferred partner by African institutions, with more than 250 MSU faculty members engaged in research, teaching, and development cooperation across the African continent. The University of Pretoria is one of the leading research-intensive universities in Africa, with the largest contact campus in South Africa and a large footprint on the continent in relation to its alumni network and the impacts of its research.

During the signing ceremony, Prof Kupe noted that through this institutional partnership "the University of Pretoria will be able to share our experiences in teaching and learning together with our postgraduate education and research programmes, which are enabling us to have greater societal impact in South Africa, Africa and beyond."

UP's recently approved transformative internationalisation and global engagement initiative – the African Global University Project (AGUP) – will be the main mechanism to facilitate the partnership with MSU. This will be enabled by UP's four transdisciplinary platforms: the Future Africa institute and campus, Engineering 4.0, the Javett-UP Art Centre, and Innovation Africa@UP. These platforms are anchored by multidisciplinary entities across UP faculties.

"Africa has long been the centrepiece of MSU's international engagement and helped form our approach to global partnerships," Dr Stanley said. "This agreement reinforces the great importance and high priority MSU places on our relationships with African scholars and institutions. We are proud to build on this commitment and formalise our already vibrant connection with the University of Pretoria."

Recent collaborative programmes between MSU and UP include joint research programmes to address food security and sustainable food systems; initiatives focused on research and capacity building for entrepreneurship and youth innovations across Africa; and professional development support for early-career African women scholars.

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