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UCT appoints new Dean of Health Sciences

Please cite Ms Patricia Lucas, Manager: Communications & Media Liaison, University of Cape Town

The University of Cape Town has appointed Professor Willem (Wim) de Villiers as the new Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Professor de Villiers has recently been Chief of the Division of Digestive Diseases and Nutrition at the Department of Medicine at the University of Kentucky, where he was professor of the same division for over six years. He has earned great respect for his research in gastroenterology (GI) during his career.

The incoming Dean has won several awards for his studies and work, from being Dux Scholar at Paul Roos Gymnasium and the best final-year MBChB student at Stellenbosch University (SU) to being selected as a prestigious Nuffield Dominion Medical Fellow at Wolfson College at the University of Oxford, followed by several consecutive annual awards for "Best Doctors in America".

Professor de Villiers, who will take up his new appointment on 1 July, 2013, has been welcomed by the Vice-Chancellor of UCT, Dr Max Price.

"We look forward to the critical contribution that Professor de Villiers will make to the faculty and the university through his leadership," Dr Price said in a letter to staff and students.

Professor de Villiers holds the degrees MBChB (Summa cum Laude, SU), MMed (Int) (Summa cum Laude, SU), DPhil (Oxon, University of Oxford) and Masters in Health Care Management (Harvard School of Public Health, Harvard University).

Professor de Villiers has extensive experience as a local, regional, national and international speaker on inflammatory bowel disease, pathophysiology, translational science and clinic management. He is a Fellow of the American Gastroenterological Association and Honorary Fellow of the South African Gastroenterological Society.

His industry-sponsored studies include building up one of the largest GI clinical research centres in the US.

The Inflammatory Bowel Disease Programme currently has more than 2500 active patients, with about 600 patients on biologic therapy. Professor de Villiers has also been the principal investigator on more than 35 industry-sponsored studies into inflammatory bowel disease.

The appointment of Professor de Villiers comes shortly after the 2012 Times Higher Education World University Rankings rated UCT among the top 50 universities offering clinical and health subjects.

The Health Sciences Faculty celebrated its 100th birthday last year and is sharply focused on advancing its teaching and research agenda to respond appropriately to the health needs of the African continent and the rest of the developing world.

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