

PPS commits R5m over 5 years to launch PPS Chair in health economics for activist advocacy

The Professional Provident Society (PPS), a financial services group dedicated to serving graduate professionals exclusively, has pledged R5m over a five-year period to create the PPS Chair in health economics.



Source: [Pexels](#)

This initiative aims to foster an outspoken advocate for health economics, extending its influence beyond the confines of academic settings.

Located within the Commerce, Law and Management Faculty at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits), this is the sole active Academic Health Economics Chair in South Africa and the second of its kind.

Led by Professor Frikkie Booyesen, the chair's mission is to "conduct cutting-edge research with a view to informing policy and practice that will improve the health and wellbeing of all, not only in South Africa, but particularly in the Global South as well as globally, where the achievement of the third Sustainable Development Goal of health and wellbeing for all, continues to evade policymakers.

Commenting on the need for the PPS Chair in Health Economics, PPS chief executive officer Izak Smit said: "This is an appropriate time for research as South Africa exits from the pandemic and addresses the need for universal healthcare and the National Health Insurance (NHI). Not many institutions have such a strong research focus, especially in the research of

health economics.

“We believe that research informs forward-looking strategies and decision-making in setting of policy, the allocation of medical resources, funding requirements and ensuring the sustainability of South Africa’s health system. This relies on the retention of skilled healthcare professionals who are central to the positive outcomes of a fully functional healthcare industry and economy,” says Smit.

Booyesen explained that there are four inter-related goals that form the pillars of the Chair’s work.

- Any research Chair is grounded by the work in scholarship, excellence and collaborative arrangements, not only institutionally where many potential synergies exist but also locally, nationally, regionally and globally. This will be progressed through the Lelapa Consortium and the collaborative work with the University College London for research on family health and development.
- The Chair will seek to expand expertise in health economics to develop a larger pool of health economists in South Africa and the Global South. This will be addressed through an integrated approach to training, teaching and capacity building to deliver short courses and micro-credentials at its core through undergraduate courses to, at the apex, post-graduate qualifications.



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- The Chair will develop researchers to grow this field of academic excellence. “Investing in expanding expertise in health economics with a view to the future-, emergent- and early career researchers working in the field of health economics needs to take prominence as the third pillar of what I will focus on. This includes the supervision of postgraduate students’ research and the mentoring of both post-doctoral fellows and younger researchers,” says Booyesen.
- The Chair will engage, not only with other scientists, but with practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders, as well as communities. “This gives the Chair an activist voice reaching beyond academic fora, to translate knowledge into policy and practice, and to leverage scientific knowledge to bring about real change impacting the lives of ordinary people.

“An example of such ongoing engagement includes planned collaboration with Sonke Gender Justice and the Westbury Youth Centre to advance research on mental health and diseases of despair in young adult men living in poor communities,” says Booyesen.

“As PPS, we are acutely aware of developments and risks within the healthcare environment and that, as a voice for medical professionals who make up a third of our membership, PPS can make an impact through accredited, independent research that will contribute to policy to the benefit of private- and public-sector stakeholders and the South African community,” adds Smit.

“The ethos of professionalism is based in education. We have had a long relationship with Wits in the development of a pipeline of professionals through our university initiatives such as campus lounges, financial education and engagement with students and through the efforts of the PPS Foundation aimed at aiding students and young professionals with the necessary skills, tools and mechanisms,” concludes Smit.

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