**PRESS RELEASE**

Launch of PSEM at UJ to target black engineering managers

***09 November 2015:*** *The newly-launched Postgraduate School of Engineering Management (PSEM) at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) is ideally placed to bridge the skills gap in the South African engineering industry.*

Delivering an address at the official launch, Dr. **Tom Marshall**, COO of SMEC’s Africa Division, commented that the PSEM would “develop the engineering management skills and knowledge of its students to produce innovative young engineering managers with key competencies.”

Dr. Marshall highlighted that “the industry suffers from a shortage of black mid-management candidates, as well as a very small number of senior black engineering managers, to serve as mentors and role models.”

However, the looming management succession crisis “will create new opportunities for graduate engineers who are equipped and willing to fast-track their careers and take on higher-level management responsibilities at a relatively youthful age.”

This is particularly relevant in an African context, with South African engineering graduates having access to the entire continent. “Africa has become one of the fastest-growing economic regions in the world. For engineering graduates, the opportunities are as many as one could possibly imagine.”

Dr. Marshall pointed out that a power-hungry continent was being fuelled by economic growth, demographic change and urbanisation. As the costs of low-carbon energy fall, Africa could leapfrog into a new era of power generation, on the back of ongoing utility reform and new technologies and business models.

“Globalisation has created many opportunities for the export of professional services to all parts of the world,” Dr. Marshall added. South African engineering companies have a proud track record in this regard.

“We are generally more expensive in the more commoditised engineering markets, especially when compared to India, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan and China, but the weak rand is our ally in hi-tech markets where we can offer cutting-edge skills and knowledge at a competitive price.”

In terms of the major challenges, Dr. Marshall highlighted the dearth of appropriately skilled, top-class engineering managers. These were sorely needed to bridge the gap resulting from the skewed age distribution in the South African engineering profession.

“We need large numbers of appropriately educated and experienced engineering and technology managers to manage, lead and mentor South Africa’s young technical human resources. When compared to international benchmarks, our future engineering managers will be young themselves.

“The PSEM will therefore have to ensure that it produces well-grounded, solid engineering managers who have preferably had the opportunity of sufficient exposure to gain appropriate financial, legal and human resource management skills and knowledge,” Dr. Marshall emphasised.

The PSEM is headed up by Professor **Jan-Harm Pretorius**, supported by a number of industrial experts. The master’s programme on offer is a combination of course work and a research project or mini-dissertation.

“Frequently students align their mini-dissertation work to strengths of those offering the programme, but also to the interest of a given industrial sector. The approach helps to explore, in depth, the shortcomings of a given sector and develop solutions based on best practices world-wide,” commented Professor **Saurabh Sinba**, executive dean, FEBE.

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**Notes to the editor**There are numerous photographs specific to this press release. Please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click the SMEC link.

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