

Report to Rhodes Foundation Investment Committee

17 February 2011

Enrolment plan, 2011-2013

Following discussions with the Department of Higher Education & Training, Rhodes University's enrolment plan for 2011-2013 has been finalised.

With 7 192 students last year, Rhodes target enrolments are 7 390 in 2011, 7 576 in 2012 and 7 645 in 2013, an overall growth of 2.2% over 2011-2013. These enrolments mean that we will remain the smallest university in South Africa by far.

Provision has been made for an intake of 1 500 first-time entering undergraduates during each of the next three years, meaning a very modest overall growth in undergraduate enrolments of just 0.1% - from 5 309 students in 2010 to 5 329 students in 2013.

Much of the new enrolment growth in coming years is targeted at postgraduate level. Growth of 8.2% is planned to occur – an increase in postgraduate numbers from 1 840 in 2010 to 2 273 in 2013. If these targets are realized, postgraduate enrolments at Rhodes will increase from 26% in 2010 to 30% in 2013.

Women as a proportion of the total student body are projected to remain at 59% and international students at 20%. The number of black students will increase; the extent to which the proportion of black students (currently 58%), and specifically black South African students, especially from the Eastern Cape, will increase will depend on the availability of state financial aid and the ability of the University to mobilise donor funds to support needy deserving students. In recent years Rhodes has devoted substantial amounts of its own core funds (that is, non-state and donor financial aid funds) to financial aid, but has now reached the limits of its own internal financial allocations.

Finally, the current proportions during 2011-2013 in terms of fields of study is intended to remain constant: at 26% natural sciences/pharmacy, 12% commerce, 6% education and 56% arts, humanities, social sciences and law.

A number of considerations underpin the 2011-2013 enrolment plan. One is the need to consolidate the considerable undergraduate growth that occurred between 2007-2009, when some 800 new undergraduates entered Rhodes. This will also provide the space to investigate key long-term institutional growth issues, including within the Grahamstown context. Another is to give effect to Rhodes' overall institutional development strategy of increasing further the current postgraduate and research-orientation of Rhodes.

Academic Planning

The very modest increase in undergraduate enrolments during 2011-2013 signals that there are no plans to introduce any new undergraduate programmes. Instead, our tasks will be to

- Maintain our status of possessing the best undergraduate pass rates and graduations rates among South African universities
- Ensure that we provide effective support to all our students, and especially black South African students who are from historically disadvantaged public schools
- Decide on the appropriate balance between face-to-face teaching-learning and other forms of teaching-learning that harness the potential of new information and communication technologies
- Finalise, informed by a recent review, an appropriate model for extended studies programmes for students that do not meet our usual entrance requirements but display talent and potential.

Much attention will be given to

- Identify potential new postgraduate and research niche areas and programmes
- Decide on such areas and programmes and ensure there is effective planning and implementation
- Support the Humanities Faculty to ensure that it increases its contribution to postgraduate and research outputs
- Develop appropriate institutional arrangements to effectively support larger numbers of Honours, Masters and Doctoral students, as well further enhance their academic and social experiences.

Currently, five prestigious South African Research Chair's awarded by the National Research Foundation exist in Medicinal Chemistry, Marine Science, Astronomy and Mathematics Education (two). The University will continue to pursue further chairs in proven areas of academic excellence.

This year will see the introduction of three new postgraduate and research focus areas funded by the Mellon Foundation: in *Southern African Literature*; in *Critical Sexual and Reproductive Health Studies*, and in *Visual and Performing Arts of Africa*. Funds permitting, there will be hopefully a fourth focus area on Media and Democracy under Prof. Herman Wasserman of Journalism and Media Studies. We have also set aside funds for a new postgraduate and research focus area in another Faculty.

New Masters programmes will begin this year in Creative Writing, Social Policy, Bioinformatics and Applied Computer Science, as well as a new Honours specialisation in Health Journalism in partnership with Discovery Health. There will be continued expansion of the new Doctoral programme in Higher Education Studies that was initiated last year.

Other new postgraduate and research programmes to consolidate our excellence in water, isiXhosa and multilingualism, medicinal chemistry and fisheries science are intended to follow. On the basis of our breadth and depth in water education and

research, we hope to become a key institutional hub on the African continent in this field.

To give impetus to our plans and support strategic new academic initiatives the University's Council and Board of Governors have agreed to create the Sandiswa *Imbewu* ('We are growing/multiplying our seeds') Fund.

R 12.5 million has been pledged over the next five years as seed funding for new initiatives. The Fund is intended to help consolidate and enhance current areas of academic excellence at Rhodes; facilitate ventures into new academic and research areas, especially at the postgraduate level; support Rhodes to exploit new opportunities that can develop research and knowledge production, and further enhance the quality of graduates produced.

Key, of course, to institutional and academic quality are committed staff. In this regard, attention will be given to:

- Improving teacher: student ratios overall and in specific areas
- Improving the equity profile of academic and senior support staff
- Continuing to build the next generation of academics, and especially black and women academics
- Effectively supporting new and emerging scholars academics
- Finalising, after consultation with staff unions, a remuneration policy
- Systematically moving to remunerate all staff on the 50th percentile.

Infrastructure planning

Supported by R 142.5 million of government Infrastructure and Efficiency Funding, donor funding and alumni support, recent years have seen the construction of a spectacular new library, five new residences and a dining hall, a environmental education learning centre, and new equipment for life sciences. This year, construction will begin on a new teacher education building.

The new 8000 square metres Library with its state of the art and technology facilities will help further cement Rhodes' standing as one of Africa's leading teaching and research institutions.

It embodies our determination to continue to provide a high quality education and experience to our students who come from diverse social and national backgrounds; to continue to push forward the frontiers of knowledge and understanding, and to continue to possess the best undergraduate pass rates, among the most outstanding postgraduate graduation rates, and among the highest per capita research outputs of any South African university.

Supported by staff who are being trained locally and in the United States as research librarians, the Rhodes and wider Grahamstown community will have at their fingertips extensive print holdings and the latest digital research databases for engaging with current knowledge and for creating new knowledge.

Our R75 million investment in the library extends well beyond the bricks and mortar of this impressive new infrastructure. More importantly, it embraces the tasks of cultivating new generations of graduates, professionals and critical citizens, and of producing knowledge, the lifeblood of human development in the 21st century.

The initial budget for the new library was R97 million. We settled with contractors on an all-inclusive cost of R 86 million. The final bill was R75 million, some 13% below the original estimate, achieved through disciplined and honest project management.

We understood that we were using gifts and citizen's taxpayer public funds that had to be accounted to the last cent. We pledged to donors that we would use their investment scrupulously, creatively and wisely, and we discharged our pledge with grace and style.

During 2011, there will be an opportunity to apply for new Infrastructure and Efficiency Funding for 2012-2014. We have great need for a new life sciences building, expanded medicinal chemistry facilities, a postgraduate centre, and new postgraduate residences and we will strongly motivate for generous government support for these. In addition, a new indoor sports centre or the considerable expansion of the current one is now overdue, given the increased student numbers and the burgeoning of sport at Rhodes.

New infrastructure development at Rhodes will be guided by a long-term Campus Development Plan, so that we remain a beautiful campus and also incorporate environmental considerations in our planning.

Anniversaries

Finally, this year we celebrate a number of important anniversaries. One is the 100th anniversary of the History Department. Another is the centenary of the Old Rhodian Union, founded in 1911 by Professor Cullen Bowles and Sir George Cory to form a link between alumni and their alma mater. And the Rhodes Student Representative Council celebrates its 101st anniversary this year. Various activities are planned to celebrate all the anniversaries.