Stellenbosch University Research Commons helps researchers seek solutions for pressing problems in society

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“We need to put serious, substantial work into strengthening working partnerships between our centres of research and knowledge expertise and our factories and business organisations, our municipalities, our schools and community organisations. This is surely a project in which a Research Commons can play a constructive role.”

Prof Russel Botman, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University, Mr Pravin Gordhan, National Minister of Finance and Prof Fikile Mazibuko, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Zululand at the opening of the Research Commons.

These were the words of the South African Minister of Finance Mr Pravin Gordhan at the official opening of the Research Commons – an initiative of the HOPE Project – at Stellenbosch University’s JS Gericke Library on Monday.

The Research Commons is a new, modern space in the Library where postgraduate students and researchers can work and meet. It aims to enhance the Library’s contribution to accelerating post-graduate through-put and increasing research output by providing an environment conducive for research exchange and production and scholastic debate, and offering services which directly support research endeavours of post-graduate students and researchers.
Prof. Russel Botman, Rector and Vice Chancellor, said in his welcoming address that in a world of science, researchers take the real-world problems of everyday life and convert them into research problems. And then they look for solutions – again and again (Mouton, 2011).

“This is why research is important – it helps us find solutions to tangible problems we face every day in our society.

“At Stellenbosch University we have positioned ourselves to use our key strengths as a top research university to address seemingly intractable problems in society. We are convinced that if we work to eradicate poverty and related conditions, and promote human dignity and health, democracy and human rights, peace and security, as well as a sustainable environment and a competitive industry, we can make a meaningful contribution and leave a lasting footprint in society.

This is Stellenbosch University’s HOPE Project and I am proud to say that Library’s Research Commons is one of these HOPE Project initiatives. It serves to promote student success and research excellence, which count among our strategic goals,” Prof Botman continued.

Mr Gordhan added to this and said the academic project is not just about universal knowledge, it is also about specialized expertise and that researchers have to seek solutions to our most pressing challenges like among others the unacceptably high infant mortality rate and high unemployment rates.

The lounge area of the Research Commons

“Progress in these and a thousand other areas of specialization depend on special people with extraordinary knowledge, but it also depends on the networks through which they work with others with related or complementary interests. And supporting these networks is part of what the Research Commons project is all about,” Mr Gordhan said.

The Research Commons boasts a well-designed lounge area for use, amongst others, as a facility for researchers to engage in discourse and collaborative research. This is complemented by state of the art seminar rooms, video conferencing facilities and carousel computer workstations.

Prof Arnold van Zyl, Vice-Rector: Research, said: “The opening of the Research Commons reflects our commitment to expand the body of knowledge and also to provide those highly skilled individuals needed to drive the economy of this country. In expanding the body of knowledge and providing those people we will be able to move South Africa from a primarily resourced based economy to an economy that is knowledge based.”

Ms Ellen Tise, Senior Director of the SU’s Library and Information Service, thanked the Carnegie Corporation of New York – who are major proponents of the research commons concept – for their support and partial funding of this project. This is part of its Research Libraries Consortium initiative in South Africa – of which the Stellenbosch University Library and Information Service is a member.

- Read Mr Pravin Gordhan’s speech here.
• Read Prof Russel Botman’s speech here.

Click here for a video.

Click here for photos.

Academic, Access to Electronic Resources: Student Success and Support for Research, Corporate & Alumni, General, HOPE Project, Research

HOPE Project; HOOP Projek; Research Commons; Navorsingsentrum; Prof. Russel Botman; Ms Ellen Tise; JS Gericke Biblioteek; JS Gericke Library; Toegang tot Elektroniese Hulpbronne; Access to Electronic

Arianna String Quartet from USA participates in Endler Concert Series

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• May 2011 (48)
• April 2011 (81)
• March 2011 (123)
• February 2011 (98)
• January 2011 (62)
• December 2010 (41)
• November 2010 (63)
• October 2010 (111)
• September 2010 (112)
• August 2010 (114)
• July 2010 (67)
• June 2010 (37)
• May 2010 (72)
• April 2010 (89)
• March 2010 (107)
• February 2010 (104)
• January 2010 (62)