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Learning Commons proves SU's commitment to student success

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“The Learning Commons is a step towards giving our students optimal access to the latest technology, and to equip them with the necessary knowledge and attitude to use it at its best. It is an investment in excellence, which has always been the cornerstone of Stellenbosch University.”

This was the words of Prof Russel Botman, Rector en Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University (SU) at the official opening of the ultra-modern Learning Commons for undergraduate students in the JS Gericke Library, on Wednesday (16 February).



The Learning Commons, an interactive, vibrant learning space in the JS Gericke Library was officially opened yesterday.

The contemporary Learning Commons in the JS Gericke Library provides an integrated library service, and has over 100 computer workstations where registered students will have access to the Library's collections in printed and electronic format; databases to which the Library subscribes; the Internet, as well as user software. The Commons also offers wireless Internet access, laptop user areas, scanners and printers, and another 16 computers exclusively for swift cyber research. In an adjacent e-classroom with a total of 48 workstations, equally modern technology is utilised to provide training.

Bright colours inspired by a Smarties box; stylish design elements and furniture; unique finishes; a variety of seating, and both open and private meeting areas all contribute to an aesthetically pleasing and inspiring space for students in which to be creative, innovative, productive and, above all, successful in pursuing their studies.

“It is a truly 21st century facility filled with high-tech equipment and innovative learning spaces, but it also follows the old-school approach of having suitably qualified and well-trained staff on hand to help students navigate the high seas of higher learning,” Prof Botman added.

The Learning Commons is one of the first facilities of SU's HOPE Project – which inter alia aims to promote student success and exceptional research – that has been completed and made available for use since the campaign's launch in July 2010.

Prof Arnold van Zyl, Vice-Rector: Research, said libraries and learning have been and always will be inseparable and added that the Learning Commons (and the Research Commons that will follow) again affirm the role libraries have to play in learning. He added that the storage of knowledge shifted from libraries to the digital realm.

“As collections move into the digital realm, physical collections are being replaced by electronic ones. The growth in the ‘electronic collection’ and the decline in the hardcopy collection make provision for the decrease in book stack area in favour of an increase in seating with network jacks and power sockets.”



Ms Ellen Tise, Senior Director of the US's Library and Information Services, with Prof Russel Botman, Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Dr Paul Cluver, Chairperson of the SU's Council and Prof Arnold van Zyl, Vice-Rector: Research in front of the Learning Commons at its official opening.

Ms Ellen Tise, Senior Director of the SU's Library and Information services agrees: “The model of student-centred learning is inherent within the conceptualisation and design of the Learning Commons. This kind of learning focuses on locating the student within the learning process where they are proactively involved in acquiring knowledge and gaining skills.”

Since the Learning Commons opened its doors on 31 January 2011, it has already received more than 19 800 visits, with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Mr Jan Greyling, Chairperson of the SU Student Council, said the Learning Commons is not only symbolic of the future of knowledge, but is also proof of the University's commitment to its students.

“It is also important to keep in mind that what we see here would not have been possible without the HOPE Project. Students often ask me what the HOPE Project is all about and then it is difficult to convince them. But here you have it now. This is the HOPE Project. Less than a year after it has been officially launched every Matie can walk into the Learning Commons and say: This is what the HOPE Project has done for me.”

- Read more about the HOPE Project at hope.sun.ac.za.
- Click [here](#) for Ms Ellen Tise's presentation and [here](#) for her speech.

- Click [here](#) for Prof Arnold van Zyl's speech.
- Click [here](#) for the Rector's speech.
- For Jan Greyling's speech, click [here](#)



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2 Responses to “Learning Commons proves SU's commitment to student success”

1. Wynand February 18, 2011 at 16:04

I think it looks stunning! Congratulations and I hope the university student population reap the benefits of all your hard work and dedication.

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1. [Finance Minister to open innovative Research Commons at Stellenbosch University | News - May 6, 2011](#)

[...] research university,” Prof Botman added. “The Research Commons as well as the recently launched Learning Commons, a contemporary and high-tech learning space for undergraduate students, form part of SU's HOPE [...]

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