

R3.38 billion-rand infrastructure forges ahead at new universities

1 October 2015 - In August 2013, the Minister of Higher Education and Training established two new universities, the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) and Sol Plaatje University (SPU) as comprehensive universities offering a range of formative and technology-focused undergraduate programmes.

The Department has provided a total of R1.32 billion in the 2015/16 financial year to finance the current construction underway for 2016 and 2017 academic expansion. A further R1.05 billion will be made available in the 2016/17 financial year and R1.1 billion in the 2017/18 financial year to fund Phase Three of the planned new building and infrastructure development.

Over the past three years, DHET has been directly managing the development of the new infrastructure with the assistance of a project management team based at the University of the Witwatersrand and in partnership with the two new universities. The two universities are developing their own capacity to take over the management of their infrastructure development from March 2016 onwards.

The Minister has recently also approved the release of R183 million for the current programme directly to the two universities as they prepare to take over the management of planned infrastructure development for the 2017 academic year and beyond.

The next phase of infrastructure development which will begin towards the end of this year will enable enrolments at SPU to increase to 1,235 students in the 2017 academic year, and enrolments at UMP to increase to 1,550 students (500 at Siyabuswa and 1,050 at Mbombela).

Photograph: *Sol Plaatje University multipurpose building composed of residences for 120 students, dining hall and kitchen facilities for 600 students (including day students), offices, and lecture venues.*