



RHODES  
UNIVERSITY

## SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES



*Learning in a language they can understand is vital for children to enjoy their right to quality education. Mother Tongue and Multilingual Education are key to reducing discrimination, promoting inclusion and improving the learning outcomes for all....*  
“(UNESCO)”

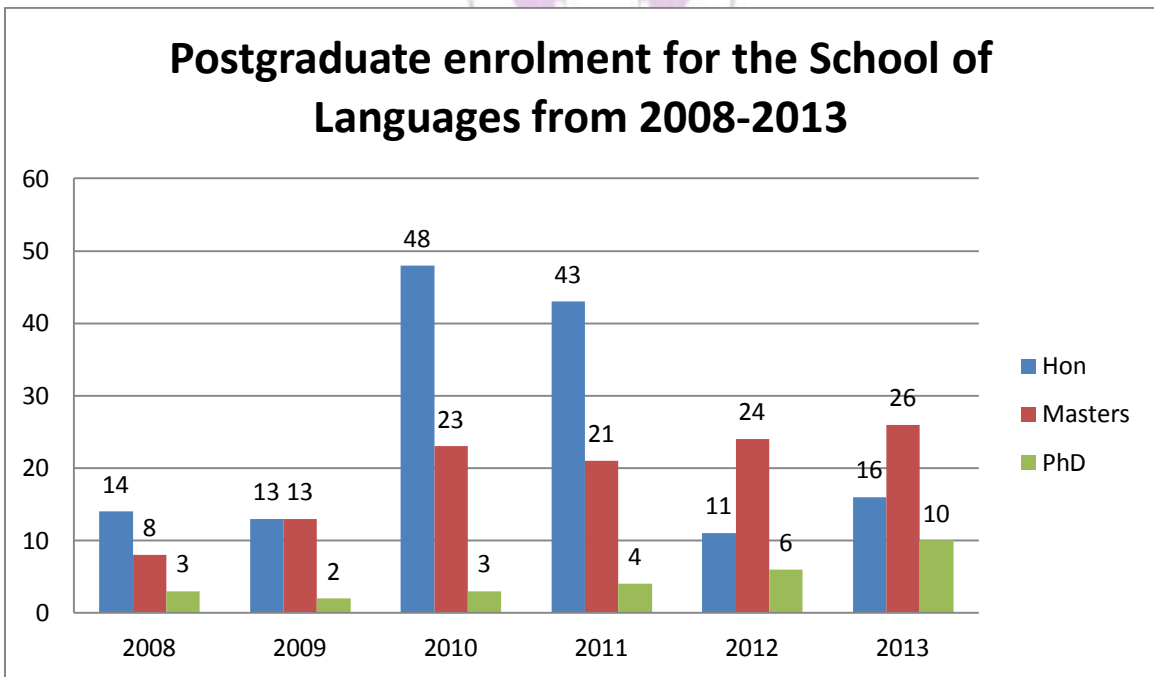
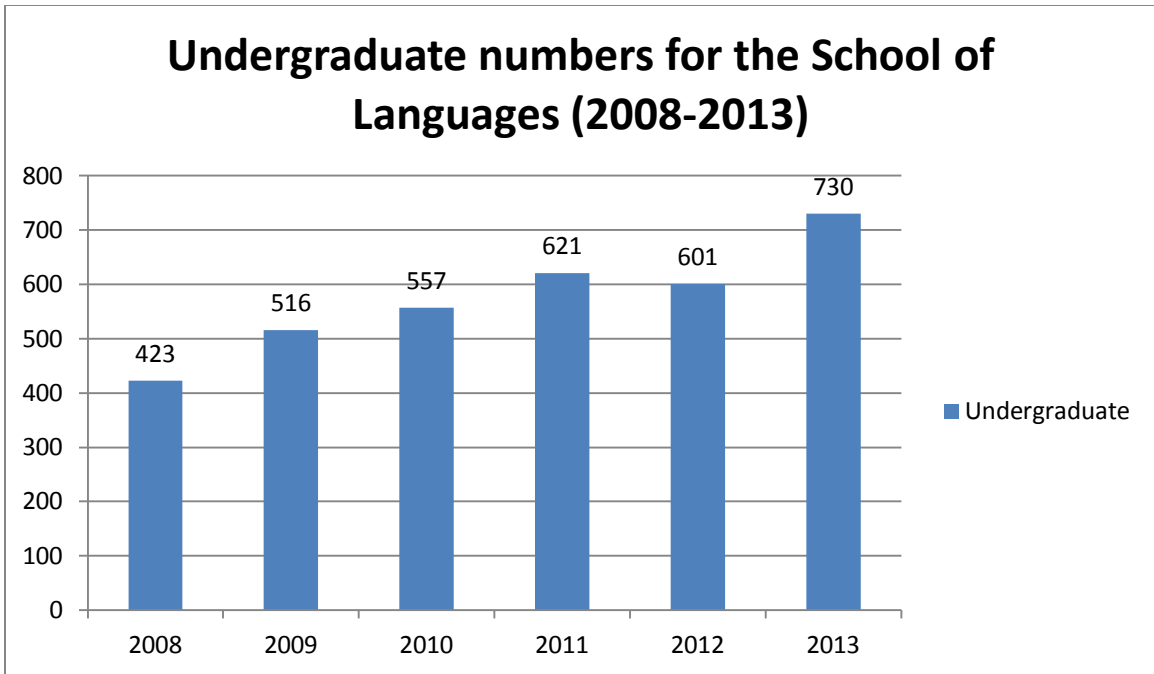
# Rhodes University School of Languages

## Campaign Case Statement

The Rhodes University School of African Languages embraces the national imperative to increase the output of undergraduates in the study of African languages, and languages more generally. In addition it recognises that for it to become a world-class language institute located on the African continent that it needs to increase its postgraduate and research output.

The concept of multilingualism is becoming a global phenomenon in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is against the backdrop of the expansion of languages such as English and Chinese. Furthermore, some countries, in particular South Africa has constitutionally entrenched multilingual language policies. As part of its contribution to the development of multilingualism on the African Continent the School of Languages has conceptualised teaching and learning programmes that prepare students to be aware and sensitive to the linguistic and cultural diversity of South African citizens. In addition the focus of the school is also on providing speaking proficiency and cultural awareness in Isi-Xhosa for speakers of other languages in both general and vocation-specific contexts, the formal study of the language by mother tongue speakers, and post graduate programmes in theoretical, applied and sociolinguistics studies. In 2012 the School was awarded the first ever NRF/DST SARCHI Chair in the intellectualisation of African languages, multilingualism and Education. It is envisaged that this Chair will accommodate at least 20 more postgraduates per annum.





**Figure 1: Student enrolment for the School of Languages from 2008-2013**

The vision for the School of Languages is to become the leading School of Languages on the African Continent, particularly in relation to the teaching of African languages and the promotion of Multilingualism, with an emphasis on globalisation and the place of particularly African Languages within a globalising context.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Training in their Language Policy for Higher Education (November 2002) recognises that a key and necessary priority for our country is a knowledgeable and highly-skilled graduate that is well-equipped not only to respond to societal needs but to actively contribute to the social and economic development of our culturally and linguistically diverse country. The School of languages places particular emphasis on the development and provision of appropriate teaching programmes and support materials for the development of academic literacy amongst students who have English as an additional language. Amongst its numerous achievements the School of Languages has produced a body of research that focusses on African Languages; has graduated a number of postgraduate students, has introduced vocation-specific isiXhosa modules in Pharmacy, Law, Education, Journalism and Computer science and also host the Confucius Institute. This has allowed the School to offer Chinese studies (three year degree) with it being only one of two institutes in the country that offers a major in Mandarin. The School is planning to grow in the directions of teaching additional languages such as Kiswahili, Portuguese, Hindi and other South African languages.

### **A new home for the School of Languages – A “Language village” at Rhodes**

The School of Languages is currently housed in one building on Rhodes University campus. There is a dire shortage of teaching venues and tutorial rooms. With the addition of the SARChi Chair and with Rhodes University’s intention to become more research orientated, the number of new academics has also increased. Currently the School is experiencing severe space constraints. This document presents a case support for the development of a new School of Languages building at Rhodes University that will enable it to realise its vision of promoting multilingualism and contributing to and promoting intercultural understanding and cooperation in the context of a “language village”

### **Why is multilingualism important?**

Language plays an important role in ensuring cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. It is also vital in preserving cultural heritage and mobilizing political will for applying the benefits of science and technology for sustainable development. As a country like South Africa strive to flourish as a democracy and develop into modernity, it is important that the majority of its citizens are engaged in languages they understand best. The new post democratic Constitution of South Africa articulates a multilingual policy very clearly, but there is a discrepancy between the language policy and the language practice, especially in education.

## **The Challenge in South African Schools**

South African educators face the challenge of coping with and finding solutions to deal with culturally and linguistically diverse urban school contexts. Young learners, without any prior knowledge of English are enrolled in English preschools because their parents expect that they be fluent in English to be able to get employment one day. Teachers have the demanding task of preparing these multilingual pre-schoolers for formal schooling.

## **The School of Languages today**

Located in the Eastern Cape at the centre of the schools educational crisis, and comprising students and staff from diverse social, cultural, linguistic, religious, educational and national experiences, Rhodes University is ideally placed to lead and promote the intellectualization of African languages and multilingualism in South Africa.

Established in 2006, the School of Languages (SoL) holds a place of extraordinary significance in a country with 11 official languages and in a province where language has become vital for social transformation. The school is a thought leader currently at the forefront of promoting global and local multilingualism through an inter-disciplinary approach to language teaching.



*Students at Rhodes taking part in the International Day parade, several are from countries on the African continent*

## Programs currently offered by the School of Languages

### 1) African Language Studies

The unit is committed to excellence in teaching, and developing and maintaining a culture of research. The promotion of scholarship in isi-Xhosa is aimed at preparing students to be aware and sensitive to the linguistic and cultural diversity of South African citizens. In addition to producing a high number of undergraduates, the post graduate output has also increased and contributed to the research goals for this unit.

### 2) Afrikaans and Netherlandic studies

Afrikaans is the third largest language in South Africa being the mother-tongue of almost six million people. The curriculum offered in this unit is highly respected by other South African Universities and continues to contribute to the academic ecology of the University.

### 3) Chinese / Mandarin studies

The School of Languages houses the Confucius Institute, the only one of its kind in South Africa. The Institute, which is jointly funded by the Chinese Language Council International (known as the Hanban), the Rhodes School of Languages and Jinan University, was established by Rhodes in 2009 to reposition itself in the world, from what used to be a colonial university into something more universal. Offering a three year credit-bearing course in Chinese, it is designed for students whose mother tongue is other than Chinese.



*Let's learn Chinese! A lecture in progress*



#### 4) Classical Studies

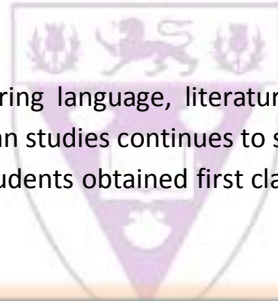
Classics is operating as a 3-year major and the enrolment of students in Greek and Latin courses compare favourably with those at much larger universities in South Africa. Postgraduate enrolment is steadily increasing with 5 Honours students and 2 MA students. Even for those not majoring in these subjects, a year's, or even a semester's, course can bring many benefits, especially in the development of English vocabulary and language skills in general.

#### 5) French Studies

French represents an important means of communication in the modern world-including Africa, Europe and America. It is estimated that there are more than 115 million people in Africa who speak French as a first or second language. French at Rhodes is offered a three year major subject in the Faculty of Humanities.

#### 6) German Studies

A three-year major subject offering language, literature, cultural studies and translation for second language students, German studies continues to strive for high standards in teaching and learning. In 2012, 43% of their students obtained first class passes and the overall pass rate was 91%.



## Significant achievements by the School of languages



*"Language is at the core of our being. Everything happens through language, whether you are a pharmacist or a botanist. We learn through language. Developing languages should be an institutional imperative"* Prof Russell Kaschula, NRF SARChi Chair: Intellectualisation of African Languages

In 2012 it was awarded the first ever *National Research Foundation/ South African Research Chairs initiative (SARChi) Chair for the Intellectualisation of African languages, Multilingualism and Education*. The SARChi chairs were established in 2006 to strengthen leadership and capacity in South African Universities. It aims to create a critical mass of world-class of work-class scholars who will train future generations of scholars and graduate to support a South African knowledge-based economy.

The Chair, headed by Prof Russel Kaschula, will focus on the development of African languages in order to enhance their effective interface with modern development, theories and concepts. It will also explore and document strategies for intellectualizing African languages for use in higher Education where the focus is on achieving quality education for historically-disadvantaged students, as well as promoting multi-lingualism for speakers in other languages.

- 1) In 2012 it had the highest post-graduate output of the whole Humanities Faculty.
- 2) While student numbers in language studies are declining elsewhere in South Africa, the School of Languages has seen continuous growth since 2006.
- 3) Ministerial Catalytic Project on Humanities and Concept Formation in African languages is described as a "national multidisciplinary project on how indigenous languages in South Africa could support the process of concept formation in the HHS, and furthermore what know-hows in these languages could enrich social scientific thinking or pedagogy. Working in collaboration with 10 South African Universities across four provinces and involving four indigenous African languages is will provide a theoretical framework for the implementation of strategies for use of indigenous languages.
- 4) The School's Community Engagement and service learning project is working in both the local Grahamstown community as well as in several rural villages in the Eastern Cape. Collaboration with local heritage initiatives involves issues such as heritage, language, music, human rights, service delivery and rural development. One of the aims of the service learning activities is to provide students with unique opportunities for cross-cultural and inter-disciplinary experiences,



as well as the chance to gain practical skills in areas such as translation, interpreting, field-work and applied linguistics.

- 5) One of the schools most important initiatives is the development of vocational language courses for other faculties. It has introduced isiXhosa for Law, Pharmacy, Journalism and Media Studies and Education. It also offers an isiXhosa course for staff which is open to any member at Rhodes University.



*The School of Languages Graduation 2012*

## THE NEW SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES

### Foreword

All of humanity is linked by language. It is the common thread that bonds us together. Allowing people to communicate within a multilingual global environment and empowering students with this skill is the central brief of the School of Languages. The School considers itself as a microcosm that reflects global realities, but also wishes to contribute to and promote intercultural understanding and cooperation in the context of a 'language village.'



**Professor Patrice Mwepu; Head School of Languages, Rhodes University**

In an advanced industrial society the knowledge of other languages becomes indispensable as it serves as a conduit of culture. It allows us to understand and learn about other cultures and people's lives. This knowledge of language and culture builds relationships, fosters trust and demonstrates respect for belief systems others. Nowhere is this more important than in South Africa, a culturally diverse country which has 11 official languages.

As the Rhodes School of Languages has become an exciting and dynamic entity that combines teaching, research and community engagement, it is the aim of the School to become the leading School on the African continent, particularly in relation to the teaching of African Languages and the promotion of multilingualism within a globalising context. There is a need to go beyond African boundaries and explore even further the experience from other parts of the world regarding issues related to multilingualism. South African languages in the 'Language Village' at Rhodes University are not learned in isolation; languages such as French (the most used language in Africa), German, Chinese, Latin and Greek also form part of the 'Language Village', thereby linking the study of South African languages with the global arena.

For all these reasons, and in order for the School of Language at Rhodes University to grow and realise its promise and potential and for the wider growth of Humanities in exciting new postgraduate and research directions, a new custom built School of Languages building is an urgent need. Investing in languages is investing in development and in the future as indicated by UNESCO. Prosperity and peace are only achievable in the world through the development of and integration into world affairs of languages and the spirit of togetherness that is embodied in multilingualism.

## **Curriculum insights informing the building**

### The 'Language Village' at Rhodes

All of humanity is linked by language. It is the common thread that bonds us together. Allowing people to communicate within a multilingual global environment and empowering students with this skill is the central brief of the African Language Studies Section and the School of Languages. The School considers itself as a microcosm that reflects global realities, but also wishes to contribute to and promote intercultural understanding and cooperation in the context of a 'language village.'

### The village would incorporate

- Shared Tutorial and Seminar Rooms between the various Sections in the School, including African Languages
- Offices for academics and administrators
- Shared spaces for postgraduate students, post-doctoral fellows and visiting scholars
- A fifty station multimedia facility – critical to developing Human Language Technology courses in African languages for the further intellectualisation of African Languages through appropriate terminology development for specific disciplines and for additional African Language learning programmes
- A communal exhibition/community engagement space which would portray the cultures associated with the various African, European and Asian languages and the ethos of the School, and also be used for community engagement initiatives
- A communal staff room and kitchen
- Ablution facilities.

## **Language Learning in the 21st Century**

Second and Foreign language learning has become a major preoccupation in the 21st century as people begin to grapple with multilingualism in the context of shared technologies, the ICT age and language revitalisation on the African continent and elsewhere. Within this context the use of technology and multimedia software in the teaching of language is of vital importance.

African Language Studies and the School of Languages concentrate on second and foreign language learning as well as the teaching of mother-tongue Afrikaans and African languages, particularly isiXhosa. For this a multimedia facility is necessary. Such a facility allows for the uploading of CD-Rom additional language learning programmes, as well as the running of Translate@thons where terminology is created for specific disciplines in African languages. Rhodes has already successfully used Translate@thons to translate Google into isiXhosa as well as create ICT terminology in isiXhosa. Terms are fed into the machines by students and a select group then discusses these terms, in the process selecting the most appropriate terms for wider distribution.

### **Teaching and learning strategies**

A range of teaching and learning strategies are used in the School. Apart from lectures to up to 130 students, these generally involve small-group teaching of between 10 and 30 students in a class. The 130 students are divided into small groups of up to 30 and they are taught intensively by a number of lecturers and tutors in seminar rooms.

The language teaching strategies are by their very nature intensive and interactive, involving group-work, discussion, cooperative learning and multimedia work.

They are also resource-rich and effective learning requires televisions, computers, overhead projectors, electronic resources, audio-visual resources and second language and foreign language teaching materials (CD-Rom) sourced from various countries.

### **Postgraduate study and research space**

There are presently 32 postgraduate students in African Language Studies alone. They are taught both individually and collectively and also require work spaces with computer stations.





## Community engagement

Community engagement is an important focus of the study of African languages and of the School. This will be reflected in the new building where the communal exhibition area will be designed to simultaneously accommodate community engagement activities.

In essence, what we seek to achieve within a new building that houses African Language Studies and the School of languages is a space where the various sections within the School can retain their unique foci and identity, yet also share theories, practices and facilities and be animated by an ethos of ubuntu, thereby highlighting the benefits of multilingualism within a global and local reality.

The above ideas express themselves in the following design principles:

Taking into account the needs of individual, small group and large group teaching and interaction

Creating learning spaces which are shielded from noise pollution

An exhibition and community engagement space as a key feature which also accommodates practical (dance, performance, etc.) and hands-on experiential learning where the community of iRhini/Grahamstown feels welcome

- A central multimedia learning hub
- Inclusivity which caters for physical diversity and disabilities
- Architectural good neighbourliness
- Current needs and possible future expansion needs;
- Possible incorporation in the future of the Department of English, the Department of English Language Studies and Linguistics, the Oxford Dictionary Unit and the Institute for the Study of English in Africa
- An ethos of Ubuntu, caring, connectedness and belonging, thereby encouraging 'unity in diversity' and cultural awareness, social cohesion and linguistic inclusivity
- As much natural light as possible
- Environmental friendliness and green dimensions
- An African motif which avoids an essentialism, and
- Fundamentally, a building that becomes an important architectural marker of renewal, remaking and transformation at Rhodes.



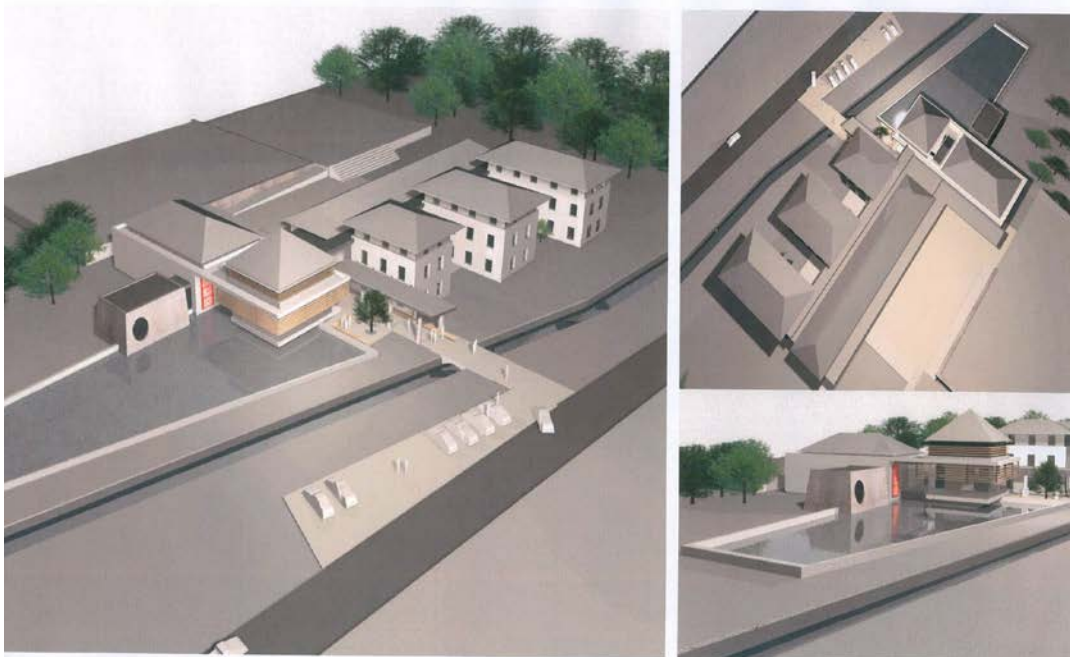
## Proposed New Building

It is proposed that a new building of 3,000 Square Metres in size (2,000 Assignable Square Metres) will be sufficient to accommodate the immediate needs and intended future developments in African Language Studies.

This new building should provide:

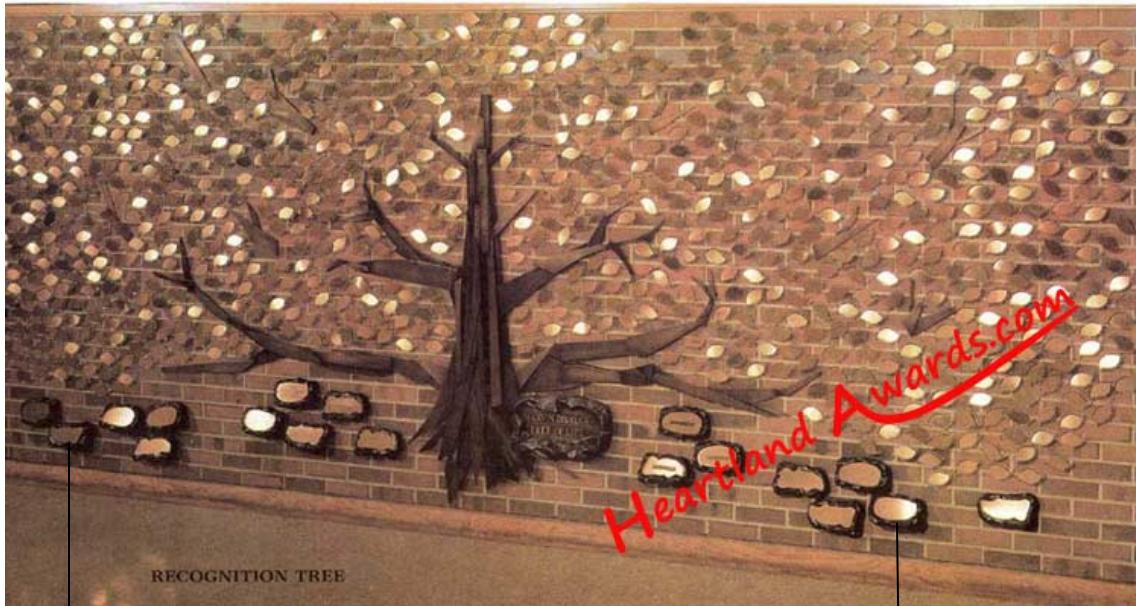
35 offices for academics and administrators associated with the Departments of African Languages as well as Afrikaans & Netherlandic Studies, Chinese Studies, French Studies, German Studies and Classical Studies, and to provide space for future growth opportunities.

- 5 offices for post-doctoral students
- A computer multimedia facility with 50 stations
- An exhibition/Community Engagement space
- Shared postgraduate and research spaces with computer facilities for 50 postgraduate students
- 8 Seminar rooms to accommodate 50 students each, to be shared by the various Departments
- Ablution facilities and
- A shared communal area including a kitchen and lounge/tea room facility.



## The Recognition Tree

Rhodes University has a long tradition of acknowledging the significant backing of its most generous philanthropic supporters. A benefaction will merit appropriate levels of recognition and acknowledgement that the University is able to offer, including naming opportunities in the new School of Languages. In addition your contribution will be recognized on the “recognition tree” which will be placed at the entrance of the new building.



Silver plate

Golden plate

The total cost of the new School of Languages building is anticipated to be R55.32 million, including construction, furniture & and equipment. A substantial amount of money has been donated by the Department of Higher Education and Training to the value of R49.788.

The Capital Campaign offers various giving categories which will be placed on the Recognition tree that will be placed at the entrance of the building.

| Gift Range Chart |                  | Recognition      |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| # Gift           | Gift size        |                  |
| 1                | R 1 Million plus | Golden Plate     |
| 2                | R500 000 plus    | Silver Plate     |
| 4                | R250 000 plus    | Golden leaf      |
| 8                | R100 000 plus    | Silver leaf      |
| 10               | R75 000 plus     | Bronze leaf      |
| 15               | R50 000 plus     | Campaign booklet |
| 20               | R25 000 plus     | Campaign booklet |
| 25               | R10 000 plus     | Campaign booklet |
| 30               | R5 000 plus      | Campaign booklet |

These are some of the additional forms of recognition the University is proud to offer:

1) *The Vice-Chancellor's Circle*

The Vice-Chancellor's Circle will be launched in 2013 to recognize those individual, foundation and corporate benefactors who have provided generous support to the University. In addition to receiving regular communications from the Vice-Chancellor and other senior officers, members will be invited to special meetings of the Vice-Chancellor's Circle. These occasions will showcase the breadth of intellectual talent at Rhodes and the significant contribution to society of alumni and friends. The Circle will engage members in the diverse, ever-vibrant life and work of the collegiate University.

2) *Acknowledgement and appreciation for pledges to the campaign*

- A campaign booklet detailing all the pledges will be published after the School of Languages has been completed;

3) *Building room and area naming opportunities;*

4) *Interactive donor walls in the Multimedia centre or the communal exhibition space*



RHODES UNIVERSITY





Pic courtesy: Sophie Smith Journalism Dept Rhodes University