



22 Feb 2012

Daily Dispatch

Millions to be spent at Rhodes

By ADRIENNE CARLISLE and DAVID MACGREGOR

RHODES University has exciting plans for 2012.

Picture: DAVID MACGREGOR AIMING HIGH: Rhodes University vice-chancellor Dr Saleem Badat unveils exciting plans for 2012

In an hour-long briefing, Rhodes vice-chancellor Dr Saleem Badat yesterday revealed South Africa's smallest university would again be punching well above its weight after raising millions for new academic and infrastructure projects.

Badat said 2012 would be a "big year" for the humanities department at Rhodes. Badat explained that:

The university had been awarded a R12.5-million renewable grant from a "wonderful alumnus" for a centre on leadership and ethics in humanities which would "cultivate and promote the idea of service and leadership";

A R9-million new unit for the humanities called the Unit for the Humanities at Rhodes University (Uhuru) had been established to expand the university's team approach to research and establish themes and focuses that engaged with critical historical and contemporary issues in the arts, social sciences and humanities;

Start-up funding of R1.2-million had been secured for a project based in the history department aimed at addressing legacies of the apartheid wars;

A roughly R10-million project located in the Centre of Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL) to conduct a national project on enhancing postgraduate supervision. The funds would be used to develop a course on supervision and to roll this out at South African universities, particularly those with low PHD graduation rates; and

Rhodes and CHERTL are also mobilising support for a R40-million national programme that will see it partnering with the Council on Higher Education to help build the teaching and learning capabilities of academics and universities in South Africa.

On the infrastructure side, Rhodes will put in its bid for a big slice of government's R3-billion university infrastructure pie.

"We will be requesting support for a new life sciences building; a new school of languages building, which will take African languages and work in multi-lingualism to new heights and also help free up space for numerous new projects in the humanities; upgrading of facilities in pharmacy; a new postgraduate residence and upgrading/renovations to some residences," he said.

The life sciences building will come in at a cost of about R180-million, the school of languages building at R60-million and the post grad residence at about R20-million, he said.

Badat also declared the university was "not disappointed" to have been awarded five of 60 new research chairs available to universities as part of the South African Research Chairs initiative.

"The award of the five new chairs takes to 10 the chairs Rhodes now holds. The five chairs represent 8.3% of the new chairs awarded; the 10 chairs make up 7% of all chairs awarded thus far." Not at all bad, considering Rhodes comprises only 0.8% of South Africa's university students and 1.9% of all academic staff.