

Brand new residence at Onderstepoort provides impetus to the University's plans to expand its Faculty of Veterinary Science

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Posted on 24 February 2012



Prof Cheryl de la Rey, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, unveils the commemorative plaque at the official opening of the new residence at the Onderstepoort Campus.

The brand-new, modern student accommodation that was officially opened by the University of Pretoria at the Onderstepoort Campus on 22 February 2012 will contribute to the University's plans to significantly expand its Faculty of Veterinary Science. This was according to Prof Cheryl de la Rey, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria and also the keynote speaker at the event.

The opening event produced an enchanting evening, spurred by the jovial atmosphere that was created by the chairperson of the house committee of Huis Onderstepoort, Wynand van der Merwe and the rest of his student house committee as well as the presence of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Cheryl de la Rey, the Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, Prof Gerry Swan, Prof Roelf Visser, Director: Residence Affairs and Accommodation at UP, the Registrar of the University of Pretoria, Prof Niek Grove, and Prof Antonie de Klerk, UP Executive Director, to name but a few.

Addressing the guests at the event, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof de la Rey emphasised that being the only faculty of its kind in South Africa, a special responsibility is placed on the University to see to it that the Faculty of Veterinary Science serves all groups and all geographical areas in the country. She added that food security is at risk if there are rural areas that do not have the services of veterinarians at their disposal. The country's shortage in veterinary professionals, especially in these rural areas, has been reported widely. According to Prof de la Rey, discussions between the University and the Department of Higher Education and Training to address the problem are looking positive and UP hopes to increase its intake for the BVSc degree by more than a third as early as 2013. The increase will require further infrastructure development, as capacity of, for example, teaching laboratories, will have to be expanded. The Principal highlighted the fact that a healthy and safe living environment is conducive to an excellent study environment and promotes the academic experience of students. She, in particular, thanked the Dean of the Faculty, Prof Gerry Swan for the role that he has played in initiating the project in 2007 as well as the Department of Residence Affairs and Accommodation at the UP, spearheaded by its Director, Prof Roelf Visser.

During his message, Prof Swan said that the new residence is perhaps not the largest at the University, but should definitely be judged as the greatest as facilities have been provided that are world class (according to the number of beds, the Onderstepoort residence complex is the second biggest at the UP). He was most grateful to the University and University Council for their support and proud of the beautiful new facilities and the upgrades at the residence complex which come at a very opportune time as the Faculty is considering an increase in student numbers. According to Prof Swan the new facilities are conducive to creating a vibrant and exciting student environment. He referred to the uniqueness at the University of the combined undergraduate and postgraduate facilities at the residence complex which will stimulate interaction between students. The new facilities also provide for the first time, a high quality Postgraduate residence for the housing of full time students and a Postgraduate Centre which will form the HUB of postgraduate activity on the Campus. Prof Swan thanked the project team and commended the excellent cooperation that existed between the parties in the process that

was followed to make the project a reality. He also thanked the Head of Residence, Dr Jan Myburgh and his wife for their support to the students.

Prof Roelf Visser gave a short overview of the process that was followed after Prof Swan's request for additional student accommodation at Onderstepoort. Two proposals by his Department were then put forward to the UP Executive in 2007. After thorough consultation, the final briefing was approved in principle. Consultants were then appointed followed by feasibility studies, cost engineering initiatives, an innovative final design, tender documentation and tenders after which the site was handed over on 17 May 2010. The total estimated cost of the project was R90 million and it was completed and handed over on 31 October 2011. Prof Visser also commended the cooperation between all role players and thanked everyone involved in the project.

The official unveiling of the commemorative plaque was performed by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Cheryl de la Rey. It represented the symbolic start of a new era in the history of the Faculty of Veterinary Science's Onderstepoort Campus.

When looking out of the window of my office at the Onderstepoort Campus, one can see the new House Onderstepoort Complex in the distance. The feeling that you get when looking at it now is that it bodes well for the future of the Faculty and the University and new generations of veterinary professionals to come.

Groucho Marx once said: "I have had a perfectly wonderful evening, but this wasn't it". Groucho was not at the opening of the new residence at OP. As for the evening, for all of us present, this was definitely it.



Prof Cheryl de la Rey, Vice-Chancellor and Principal (middle), Prof Gerry Swan, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science (far left), Prof Niek Grove, Registrar (next to Prof de la Rey), Prof Roelf Visser, Director: Residence Affairs and Accommodation (behind Prof de la Rey), and the Head of Residence, Dr Jan Myburgh (far right), together with the house committee of House Onderstepoort at the opening of the new residence. The chairperson of the committee, Wynand van der Merwe is second from right in the back row.