



NEW FACILITIES: Artist's impression of the new health sciences facility at WSU

Picture: SUPPLIED

New R85m facilities on the cards at WSU

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THE Department of Higher Education and Training has invested R85-million for the construction of health sciences facilities at Walter Sisulu University (WSU).

According to the department, the new facilities to be built at the Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital are to improve and increase research and academic output.

Currently the university has an intake of 100 students for its medicine department and interim vice chancellor Khaya Mfenyana believes the number will increase to 200 in the next two years.

He anticipated an even bigger intake once the project is complete.

"It will allow students to be more hands-on and staff from the university do not have to go all the way to the [NMD] campus, they can just walk to lectures."

He said the new facilities will give the university more space to focus on research.

"The university is one of world's top eight medical faculties in problem-based community learning.

"With the faculty being strategically positioned and in close proximity to the Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital and the Health Resource Centre, it means operations such as administration, research, teaching and learning and training will be seamless. We will be able to maintain the standard we've set," said Mfenyana.

The first phase is now under way, with earth movers already on site.

The first phase will be completed towards the end of next year.

"This includes bulk services infrastructure, earthworks, an administration building, a teaching facility for 600 students and a gatehouse.

The administration building, according to the university, will be a 4 500m² double-storey structure that will house six clinical offices and 14 smaller clinical offices with two boardrooms. The teaching facility will be a 1 350m² double-storey building that will be the focal point when

entering the campus. On the ground floor, the building will house 10 lecture halls each accommodating 60 students. The first floor will comprise 20 smaller tutorial rooms.

Phase two of the project will be the construction of residences, an auditorium, a research lab, a library, computer labs, student common rooms and a campus cafeteria.

Construction on the third and last phase of the facility will include more residences and another auditorium, along with campus shops, teaching facilities and health sciences departments. The project is expected to be completed by 2017.

"Once complete, this world-class campus will house and educate 2 000 medical students," said Mfenyana.

Higher Education Director-general Gwebinkundla Qonde said the department has invested more than R1-billion at WSU.

The department has also allocated millions of rands for the construction of residences in the Nelson Mandela Drive and East London campuses. — abongilem@dispatch.co.za