

Minister Pandor's speech at the opening of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences Building (CHS) building at the University of the Western Cape

UWC campus, Bellville

13 November 2018

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today to open the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences Building here in Bellville's Central Business District.

Government provided R124.268 million towards the cost of the Community and Health Sciences (CHS) building.

This building cost R244.622 million and is equipped with offices, meeting rooms, laboratory and tutorial facilities and various skills laboratories to support four departments: Nursing, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Natural Medicine.

The building was in a dire condition when the University Administration decided that it should become its first initiative in developing a multi-site campus.

From what I understand, it had multiple occupants – a church, markets, restaurants and living accommodation.

But this is the kind of transformation that happens when you tackle projects with strategy and determination and I congratulate the University administration for its forward looking vision.

I have been associated with the University of the Western Cape for many years and in many roles – first as Education Minister, then as Minister of Science and Technology and now as Minister of Higher Education and Training.

Throughout these roles, I have witnessed the university's determination to outgrow and shed its apartheid roots.

The first coloured students, who enrolled at the University College, as UWC was known in 1961, would be in awe of what has been achieved in this building.

Moreover, the apartheid architects, who dreamt up a university for coloured people only and stuck it on the Cape Flats, could never have imagined your spirit and resilience.

When I look around me, I see a young and ebullient university that is flourishing through strategic expansion and outgrowing its apartheid footprint.

Through prescient investments over the years, UWC is transforming itself into a multi-campus institution.

UWC offers lessons for our universities and one of those lessons is that you don't have to let your past determine your future.

With capable leadership and the right support, all universities can play a vital and significant role in providing higher education to generations of young people.

Certainly, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd must be turning in his grave as he sees this state-of-the-art facility where future nurses and other health professionals will be trained.

I hope that many of the 1 600 undergraduate and 250 postgraduate students, who will be taught here each year, will see the benefit of entering into a career in the public health sector.

It is in this context that I'm extremely pleased to see UWC's campus expansion is starting with the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences and with four of its departments.

Because it is in inner cities like the Bellville CBD, where people work, and where there is access to major transport routes, that we must invest in resources and facilities.

I hope that all the stakeholders involved in this process will ensure that this project receives the attention it deserves.

Because delivering key services to all South Africans – irrespective of their economic status, race, gender or class – is what our national project of building a better South Africa is all about.

In this regard, a UWC community health facility that serves a broad sector of society will be a welcome addition to the university's other community services such as the dental facilities at Tygerberg Hospital and in Mitchells' Plain.

UWC's presence in the CBD will act as an important stimulator of the economy and the regeneration of this inner city.

Through the presence of students, a demand will be created for safe spaces, decent accommodation and places of entertainment.

I am sure that, in the years to come, the CBD will be a vastly changed space.

The City of Cape Town and the Greater Tygerberg Partnership must be excited about the arrival of UWC in the CBD.

Allow me to acknowledge the many partnerships that have led to the opening of this building.

I hope to see many more of its kind at our universities across South Africa and at UWC in particular.