

## Phase 2 of Sol Plaatje University precinct set for completion in mid-2022

Phase 2 development of the R800m Sol Plaatje University (SPU) precinct in Kimberley in the Northern Cape is currently under way. While AECOM's current involvement is expected to continue until at least mid-2022, the infrastructure delivery company has been awarded a further contract extension, according to Toit Scheepers, AECOM team lead and programme manager.



As the principal agent for the client, AECOM is overseeing 30 projects at present, from refurbishments to new-build infrastructure. The project consists of three campuses in proximity, namely: North Campus, which houses the administrative functions, South Campus, catering for the student residences and sports facilities and Central Campus, for all the academic functions, including the university library.

With Kimberley officially designated as a semi-arid area, AECOM has been incorporating sustainability features at the project. These range from synthetic surfaces for the sports fields to water-saving measures such as artificial landscaping materials for the landscaping.



### Community skills development

Apart from providing employment for around 1 ,000 residents, a specific focus of the project has been community involvement. Specific targets for local participation, empowerment and skills development have been set in conjunction with the Department of Higher Education.

“We are training a significant portion of the local workforce and these are skills that will remain in the Kimberley area long past the project’s completion. This ranges from small business development to community upliftment and local procurement. We are putting in place a legacy that will stand by itself, not only for the students, but for the local community as well,” comments Kevina Kakembo, candidate quantity surveyor at AECOM.

## **Challenge of hard lockdown**

The biggest challenge to date has been the remote location, which has complicated the logistics of procuring specialist materials and services. “These are the types of challenges that we have had to manage effectively,” stresses Scheepers. Another major challenge, the hard lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, was turned into an opportunity for a breathing space for the team to finalise the design evaluation for 12 new projects and carefully plan how to ensure the best collaboration.

“During the stricter lockdown we managed to make major inroads into the design development process, to the extent that we have already been able to commence with these programmes now that the restrictions have eased.”

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