



Research in rock mechanics receives a boost

In 2013, Harmony Gold Mining Company Limited announced a donation of R4.7 million to the Department of Mining Engineering at the University of Pretoria over three years. This has allowed the Department to establish a Chair in Rock Engineering and Numerical Modelling.

Research on a safer working environment in the hard-rock mining industry is a very specific focus area of the Department of Mining Engineering. The aim of the Chair is to advance research in the field of rock mechanics and numerical modelling in the mining industry. It presents opportunities for the development of products such as software to support numerical modelling.

Another important function of the Harmony Gold Chair is to arrange much-needed liaison between academic institutions and the industry in general, but specifically between Harmony Gold and the University of Pretoria.

Harmony Gold, one of the world's leading gold mining companies, will benefit from this donation through its interaction with international leaders in the field of rock mechanics and numerical modelling research. Another benefit is the interaction with undergraduate and postgraduate students through projects at the University.

Graham Briggs, Chief Executive Officer of Harmony, said: "Ensuring the safety of each of our mineworkers is Harmony's top priority. Therefore, further research and development to ensure even safer underground conditions are of the utmost importance to us. It is a privilege to have the University of Pretoria as a partner in the pursuit of even safer mining activities."

Johann Hanekom has just been appointed to the position of Chairholder. He is a well-acclaimed rock engineering practitioner, and is currently registered for his PhD in rock engineering in the Department of Mining Engineering at the University of Pretoria. His vast experience in the field makes him ideally suited to head this Chair. He is well known in the industry, and has taught the Rock Engineering module in the Department of Mining Engineering before. ●