

## NEWS RELEASE

### University of Pretoria (UP) and African Rainbow Minerals (ARM) launch virtual centre to enhance students' educational experience and expand collaboration opportunities



*Mr Phillip Tobias, CEO of ARM (African Rainbow Minerals) and Prof Sunil Maharaj, Vice Principal for Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Education at UP.*

PRETORIA – The [University of Pretoria](#) (UP) and [African Rainbow Minerals](#) (ARM) are excited to announce the official opening of the UP-ARM Virtual Conference Centre, a state-of-the-art facility aimed at enhancing collaboration between academia and industry.

“This innovative centre will empower staff and students to connect and engage virtually with local and international institutions of higher learning, academic communities, research organisations and industry leaders”, stated Prof Wynand JvdM Steyn, the Dean of the [Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology](#), at the University of Pretoria (UP). By fostering collaboration, the virtual centre will enrich students' educational experiences and facilitate the rapid exchange of information and data, ensuring the timely delivery of high-quality results. It will also serve as a collaborative space for various departments within the faculties of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT) and [Natural and Agricultural Sciences](#) (NAS),

enabling high-tech meetings, workshops and seminars that enhance engagement among staff, students and industry partners.

Key departments, including [Geology](#) (NAS), [Mining Engineering](#) (EBIT), [Minerals Science and Metallurgical Engineering](#) (EBIT) and [Mechanical Engineering](#) (EBIT), which host over 150 postgraduate students, will greatly benefit from this facility. By providing access to cutting-edge technology, the UP-ARM Virtual Centre aims to modernise academic research and industry applications, enabling more effective collaboration between students, faculty members and industry leaders.

“The UP-ARM Virtual Centre exemplifies the spirit of partnership and innovation that defines our collaboration with African Rainbow Minerals,” stated Prof Barend Erasmus, Dean of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. “This facility will not only enhance our teaching and research capabilities but will also empower our students to engage meaningfully with industry.”

André Joubert, Chief Executive of ARM Ferrous and an alumnus of the University of Pretoria, emphasised the importance of this initiative in strengthening the long-standing partnership between ARM and UP. He noted that ARM’s commitment goes beyond this collaboration, as the company also provides financial assistance to approximately 50 undergraduate and postgraduate students across various faculties through its corporate and mine bursary programmes. This effort underscores ARM’s dedication to advancing academic excellence and underscores the vital role of education within its communities.

In closing, Phillip Tobias, Chief Executive Officer of ARM, expressed his excitement about supporting institutions of higher learning in South Africa, aligning with ARM’s commitment to advancing virtual learning and innovation. “This centre will be instrumental in bridging the digital divide in our universities, nurturing the next generation of leaders and thinkers equipped to thrive in the digital age.”

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#### **Image captions:**

501 – Prof Sunil Maharaj, Vice Principal for Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Education at UP.

502 - Prof Natasia Naude, Head of the Department of Materials Science and Metallurgical Engineering.

507 - Mr Phillip Tobias, CEO of ARM (African Rainbow Minerals) and Prof Sunil Maharaj, Vice Principal for Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Education at UP.

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#### **ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of

the largest producers of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their 2024 World University Rankings (WUR). UP was the only South African university featured in the 2023 World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

For more information, please go to [www.up.ac.za](http://www.up.ac.za)