

African Rainbow Minerals invests R20m into research at Wits, gets building named after it

African Rainbow Minerals (ARM) and the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment at the University of the Witwatersrand have launched a new initiative to develop the high-level skills needed to tackle the issues of energy shortages, water scarcity, and a skills gap in digitalisation that plague South Africa.



The Chamber of Mines building will be renamed.

Dr Patrice Motsepe, founder and executive chairman of ARM and a Wits alumnus, emphasised the importance of partnerships with higher education institutions in driving innovation, skills development, and sustainable growth. He highlighted ARM's commitment to supporting students from undergraduate to postgraduate levels, particularly those from communities neighbouring ARM's mining operations.

"ARM is proud to partner with Wits University which is a globally respected academic institution. Partnering with South African institutions of higher learning is paramount in our pursuit of knowledge, innovation, skills, and sustainable development," he said.

"Public-private partnerships are crucial in addressing the socio-economic and environmental challenges confronting our communities and country. ARM works with several top universities across South Africa, supporting young people from undergraduate to post-graduate studies, helping them to realise their dreams."



Mercedes-Benz SA plant receives renewable energy boost with R100m investment

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The ARM Postgraduate Fellowship Programme at Wits University aims to cultivate a critical mass of skills in South Africa. It will support a new cohort of postdoctoral fellows specialising in water resource management, digitalisation, and the just energy transition.

Renaming the Chamber of Mines building

ARM has pledged a R20m endowment for the programme, which will be invested into perpetuity. The returns on this investment will fund research in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment.

“We recognise the importance of digital transformation in the mining industry, and the necessity to develop the critical skills needed to advance our economy,” says Prof Zeblon Vilakazi (FRS), vice-chancellor and principal of Wits University.

“This investment is firmly located in the Wits University Mining Precinct and dovetails with our broader initiatives in quantum computing, fintech and innovation. We are confident that through more private sector partnerships like the ARM Postgraduate Fellowship Programme, Wits University can help make a real difference in developing the critical skills and research needed to secure the long-term sustainability of the mining industry.”



As part of the partnership, the current Chamber of Mines Building on the Braamfontein West Campus will be renamed the Wits ARM Building. This building, a crucial component of Wits University’s academic and research infrastructure, houses the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment’s administration, the School of Mining Engineering, the School of Electrical and Information Engineering, and several research entities.

Critical challenges

Prof Thokozani Majozi, the dean of the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, stated that research and promotion of accessible, affordable, and socio-economically just renewable energy solutions are their top priorities.

He also highlighted the importance of water as a critical resource and the faculty’s aim to contribute to its sustainable

management through research, education, increased awareness, and community engagement. This includes addressing challenges related to water scarcity, pollution, and climate change.

In a similar vein, Phillip Tobias, CEO of ARM, expressed the company's dedication to tackling critical challenges in water, energy, and digitalisation that impact both their business and the country. He said that the ARM Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme is a testament to this commitment.

This initiative aims to create a pipeline of future critical skills that will cater for future business needs. Tobias believes that through this collaboration, they can make a significant impact and leave a lasting legacy that will provide innovative and sustainable solutions that will benefit not only the mining industry but broader South African society as well.

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