

Centre for Mineral Biogeochemistry set up at UFS

A Mineral Biogeochemistry Research Infrastructure Platform, the Centre for Mineral Biogeochemistry, has been set up at the Bloemfontein campus of the University of the Free State (UFS).



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The construction project, funded by the Department of Science and Innovation and currently underway, is part of the Biogeochemistry Research Infrastructure Platform (BIOGRIP), a South African research initiative that drives discovery in how biological, geological, chemical and physical processes interact to shape natural environments over time and space.

To be selected, the UFS had to have existing infrastructure that could be interlinked with the larger BIOGRIP, such as a high-performance computing centre, an accredited water lab, and competent specialists. Therefore the node is housed in the Institute for Groundwater Studies.

Dr Mariana Erasmus, deputy director of the newly established Centre, says, “The Mineral BIOGRIP Node is an independent, multidisciplinary research centre.

“It has a number of existing industry partners and clients with active projects, providing research outputs as well as services in the mining and agricultural sectors.”

The main hub or central management node is located at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Four nodes

The BIOGRIP consists of four nodes:

- Mineral BIOGRIP Node – UFS
- Atmospheric BIOGRIP Node - North-West University and WeatherSA
- Water and Soil BIOGRIP Node - Stellenbosch University
- Isotope BIOGRIP Node – UCT

“In each of these specialisations, the node purchases its own world-class equipment and appoints competent teams,” says Erasmus.

“The UFS has a unique opportunity to engage and collaborate with these teams of specialists, gaining access to world-class equipment, with the potential to increase the collaborative efforts and research output of the UFS significantly,” she adds.

The project will expose UFS students to world-class equipment and industry partners through applied research opportunities in the field of biogeochemistry and bioaugmentation.

“There are many exciting opportunities for students to pursue relevant, applied research interests and to be part of the teams that find solutions to real-world problems in the current South African and international socio-economic system,” says Erasmus.

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