

# Satellite Development Project

**Joint Announcement at Parliament by  
The Hon Mosibudi Mangena, Minister of Science and Technology  
and  
Professor Chris Brink, Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Stellenbosch University**  
3 October 2005

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Minister Mangena  
Members of the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Stellenbosch University is proud to join the Minister at this announcement of a partnership for such a major project in satellite engineering and capacity-building.

The motto of our University, as you may know, is “Your knowledge partner”. The business of a university is knowledge. We create knowledge (and we call that research), we disseminate knowledge (and we call that teaching), we apply knowledge (which we call intellectual property), and we integrate knowledge (which we call learning). But *why* do we do these things? Not just for the sake of knowledge itself, but so that the benefits of knowledge can reach people. The knowledge business of a university must also involve a partnership with the community, and should in the long run benefit the community, within which that university is situated.

It is exactly such a project we are launching today. It is high-tech, requiring scientific and engineering knowledge of the highest order. Our engineers at Stellenbosch University, and our spin-off company SunSpace, have already proven their expertise in this regard by building and launching Africa’s first satellite in 1999. We are now adding several extra dimensions. What we announce here today is also a capacity-building project, designed to increase and enhance scarce skills. It is a project with a strong African focus, which will put us into partnership with other African scientists. And, perhaps most importantly, it will in the end have practical outcomes improving the quality of life for ordinary people in areas such as the Minister has mentioned: monitoring land, water and vegetation, and enhancing our capacity of dealing with issues such as health, resource management and poverty. In all these respects, the project is a good illustration of three key concepts of the vision statement of Stellenbosch University: academic excellence, scientific capacity-building in an African context, and being a role-player in society.

I would like to extend our thanks to the DST, and to Minister Mangena in particular, for entering into this partnership with us. And I would like to congratulate them on their farsightedness in conceptualising such a project in the first place. I also say thanks and congratulations to our team from the Faculty of Engineering and SunSpace Ltd.

Permit me, Honourable Minister, a general comment in conclusion. We have had, in South Africa, what some people call the democratic miracle, as manifested in the elections of 1994. We have also had, secondly, what some people call the economic miracle, with a currency that has shown remarkable resilience against major world currencies, decreasing inflation, and increasing economic growth. It is time now, I believe, for a third miracle. South Africa must lead in Africa with a scientific miracle. We have to show the world that when democracy takes root in Africa, and the economy is stabilised, science can flourish. It is with the hope the satellite-building project we are launching today will contribute to this third miracle that I salute you for leading us forward with this project.

Thank you.