



**DRAFT**  
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## **SAP invests in South African technology research skills**

**PRETORIA — June, 2005** — By launching a research group in Pretoria – its first on the African continent – global business solutions giant, SAP AG, today (Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2005) became one of the few multinationals operating on the continent to establish a South African research capacity and to invest in the development of local research skills.

It is also one of the few to focus such skills on South African conditions – in terms of using information and communications technology (ICT) to enable socio-economic development - and then package the understanding and experience achieved in such a way that other developing societies can benefit from it.

And, it is one of the first to directly involve masters and doctoral students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds in local projects that will have international significance.

Speaking at the opening of the SAP SA Research Group's offices, director Danie Kok said that SAP's reasons for locating a research group in South Africa included understanding the developing context within which SAP operates and using this experience to not only enhance the sustainability of SAP products but also build world class solutions for emerging markets. In addition, it would provide the means for researching the application of ICT for socio-economic development and make a contribution to advanced human capital development in South Africa.

“Clearly, developing local research capacity is vital. It makes the technology solutions deployed in South Africa less dependent on research done by non-South Africans – and therefore more relevant to this country's needs, particularly in respect of development and multi-cultural issues. Also, the solutions can be developed as socio-economic transformation tools instead of being primarily business tools that need adaptation to be transformative.

“But, above and beyond that, we want the group to be a centre for human capital development in world class research. We'll achieve that in several ways. Firstly, we'll fast-track previously disadvantaged graduates on to projects that have practical applications right here, right now.

Secondly, we'll build alliances with local and international academic institutions, which will give our graduates access to the experience and knowledge of world-class specialists in the fields covered by the projects. And, of course, we'll transfer skills from SAP AG's eight other research groups in Germany, France, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia – where the emphasis is on more technical issues such as software engineering and architecture, business process modeling and management, and smart items.

“In other words, we're focusing on furnishing our society with human capital that is not only academically capable but can also apply theoretical knowledge to real socio-economic problems in a way that enables practical, tangible, constructive progress.”

The SAP SA Research Group's first four doctoral students and six research graduates - nine of the ten are from previously disadvantaged backgrounds - have been recruited and the first five projects identified. The projects cover the training and development of in-service educators, improving demographic research and insight into community patterns in order to improve health service delivery, improving the administrative efficiency, transparency and accountability of non-governmental and non-profit organisations, providing access to technology through multi cultural interfaces, and improving access to technology for people with disabilities.

All the projects involve close co-operation between the SAP SA Research Group and local academic institutions such as the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, the University of the Northwest, the Wits School of Public Health, the University of Pretoria and the Meraka Institute (the African Advanced Institute for ICT). The group's first relationship with an international university - Darmstadt University in Germany – has also been established.

In addition, the group is building a collaborative relationship with the Department of Science and Technology, whose major objective is to support national economic growth and social development through the strengthening of South Africa's knowledge generation and innovation capacities. The Department therefore promotes human capital development for science and technology as well as frontier science and needs-based research - including innovation leading to products and services based on ICT.

Speaking at the launch, the director general of the Department of Science and Technology, Dr Rob Adam, expressed his appreciation for SAP's investment in South African research - especially the human capital development opportunities offered to researchers from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. “The Department and SAP Research share a commitment to knowledge generation and innovation, especially the harnessing of science and technology as a critical instrument for sustainable development. I hope that the establishment of an SAP research group in South Africa will facilitate the international networking and co-operation of South African researchers.”

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