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## UCT gets massive R200m donation from Donald Gordon Foundation

***The transformative leap for the university's Neuroscience Institute will advance pioneering neuroscience research***

- [Download pictures of the Neuroscience Institute building.](#)
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The University of Cape Town (UCT) is pleased to announce a momentous donation of R200 million from the Donald Gordon Foundation (DGF), marking a transformative leap for the university's Neuroscience Institute. This substantial contribution is set to accelerate innovative neuroscience research in Africa and on a global scale.

Recognising the brain as a frontier for 21st century exploration, researchers across UCT joined forces to establish the interdisciplinary Neuroscience Institute (NI), with a vision to create a future for Africa where individuals could realise their full potential through optimal brain health. This vision garnered substantial support from both funding agencies and philanthropists, which, in part, facilitated the construction of a state-of-the-art facility on the iconic Groote Schuur Hospital campus. Opening its doors in 2020, the Neuroscience Institute has served as catalyst for emerging researchers' careers through scholarships, fellowships, and research grants.

The historic contribution from the DGF ushers in a new era for the institute, moving it forward as the Donald Gordon Neuroscience Institute (DGNI). As described by the Director of the Neuroscience Institute, Professor Graham Fieggen, "the most exciting aspect of the NI is how it has grown the neuroscience community at UCT and elevated the visibility of our research globally. This landmark donation by the Donald Gordon Foundation is a vote of confidence in this remarkable group of neuroscientists and the impact of their work."

UCT Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Internationalisation, Professor Sue Harrison, added: "This will significantly advance our capacity to do world-class interdisciplinary research on a foundation of deep disciplinary expertise."

UCT Vice-Chancellor (interim) Emeritus Professor Daya Reddy underscored the significance of the massive financial boost from the DGF. "The support of alumni and donors such as the Donald Gordon Foundation is critical to UCT's Vision 2030 and our goal of unleashing human

potential for a fair and just society. This partnership allows us to work successfully towards this goal, in and for Africa.”

Sarah Archer, Executive Director of the UCT Development and Alumni Department, added: “This transformational gift amplifies contributions from foundational donors and is an enormous step which showcases the power of philanthropy.”

This major donation empowers the institute to intensify research into pivotal aspects of brain development across the human lifespan, and a wide spectrum of injuries and insults affecting the human brain and mental health. This research spans all life stages, from the adverse impact of factors such as HIV and alcohol before birth; through conditions such as trauma, infection, epilepsy and stroke; extending into old age, investigating disorders such as dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. This endeavour aligns with the broader mission of improving health and saving lives and is characterised by its visionary and pioneering approach with the potential for global impact.

The personal connection to this research is profound, as Sir Donald Gordon himself lived with dementia, making the mission to destigmatise the condition and ultimately find a cure a top priority for the DGF.

Sir Donald Gordon, a visionary leader, founded Liberty Life in 1957, rapidly propelling it to become one of South Africa’s premier insurance and financial services providers. His philanthropic journey has always been underpinned by a deep commitment to making a transformative difference in the world. In 1971, he established the DGF, one of the oldest and largest private foundations in South Africa. The foundation’s longstanding commitment to excellence has been evident in its focus on postgraduate training and capacity development, particularly in specialised fields such as business education and the health sciences within South Africa.

The life story of Sir Donald Gordon underscores the remarkable influence his vision, innovation and compassion have had on society. In a fitting tribute to this legacy, the DGF’s partnership with UCT has given rise to the Donald Gordon Neuroscience Institute. The transformational contribution from the DGF demonstrates the profound value attributed to neuroscience and signifies an extraordinary investment in research on the African continent. By endorsing excellence and innovation in this pivotal field, this contribution takes a major step toward unravelling the mysteries of the brain, pioneering novel treatments for brain and mind-related disorders, and elevating the UCT as a global hub for neuroscience research and innovation.

Wendy Appelbaum, a trustee of the DGF, said: “Neuroscience is the frontier that still needs so much exploration – we can prolong life and replace organs, but, as yet, we can’t have the brain keep pace. Coming from the life insurance industry we understand how life expectancy has been extended by the progress of modern medicine, so if we want to live not just long but also well, we need a deeper understanding of the brain.”

***ENDS***

***Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department***

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