

# Catalysing African Research: The strategic imperative to optimise shared facilities

Renate Meyer<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa, [renate.meyer@uct.ac.za](mailto:renate.meyer@uct.ac.za)

Universities are home to a myriad of research facilities and resources. These facilities and the specialized skills required to run them are a pivotal part of the research ecosystem and academic institutions are recognizing that they are also key components of the university's strategic vision.

Both globally and locally, the higher education sector is looking for ways to improve graduate education, develop sustainable career paths for emerging researchers and encourage collaboration through research and innovation. Driven by research needs of the faculties and the institution's strategic vision, these facilities play a large part in enabling cutting-edge research, developing and retaining leading scholars and they serve as a nexus for inter-disciplinary collaboration. It is clear then, that these institutional facilities are part of a growing trend that emphasizes a team-based approach to research. They facilitate collaborations and advance the research mission of universities. As such they have joined libraries, laboratories and computing center's as the physical embodiments of shared resources on campus.

Institutions, national and regional infrastructures, across the continents, use varying models to address the changing landscape and research needs. Within the African context there is a further drive to accelerate African scholarship and enable the use of emerging technologies to support scientific research on the continent. While a number of national and regional collaborations are building the framework for such research, there is further potential for universities to optimize research innovation through the effective usage of the myriad of research facilities based within their institutions. This drive requires strategic leadership from the institutions coupled with effective change management strategies to ensure sustainability of the model.

## References

- Ashveen P & Vincent M (2005). Sharing research facilities: Towards a new mode of technology transfer?, *Innovation*, 7(1), 23-38. doi: 10.5172/Imp.2005.7.1.23
- Haley R. (2009). A framework for managing core facilities within the research enterprise. *Journal of biomolecular techniques : JBT*, 20(4), 226–230.
- Turpen, P. B., Hockberger, P. E., Meyn, S. M., Nicklin, C., Tabarini, D., & Auger, J. A. (2016). Metrics for Success: Strategies for Enabling Core Facility Performance and Assessing Outcomes. *Journal of biomolecular techniques : JBT*, 27(1), 25–39. doi:10.7171/jbt.16-2701-001