

From cottage campus to national impact: Sacap celebrates 25 years

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In 1997, clinical psychologist, Marc Feitelberg, founded [Sacap](#) (The South African College of Applied Psychology). From its early beginnings with 18 students in a cottage in the Cape Town suburb of Wynberg, Sacap today has a well-developed campus in each of South Africa's four main urban centres, a thriving online campus, and over 3,000 students countrywide.



An early proponent of work-integrated learning (WIL), over the last 25 years, Sacap has deployed thousands of students across a variety of more than 60 workplace and community settings, providing much needed mental health services at a grassroots level, whilst affording the students an opportunity to hone their skills and work-readiness. This is testimony to Sacap's purpose-driven growth as one of the country's top private tertiary education institutions.

Sacap was formally registered as a private higher education institution with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2005, and three years later its Diploma in Counselling and Communication was fully accredited by the Council of Higher Education (CHE).

2010 brought new leadership with Dr Ashley Smyth in the role of Sacap's academic dean, and Lance Katz becoming the majority shareholder and CEO responsible for expanding the organisation's vision and driving a new business growth strategy. In the years that followed, the Cape Town campus was moved to a new, modern site in Claremont, and Sacap opened its first Johannesburg campus in Rosebank in 2012. In 2017, Sacap opened a campus in Brooklyn, Pretoria, and in 2019 Sacap launched its Durban campus in Morningside, whilst also relocating its Johannesburg campus to a sizeable 11,900 m² property in Sandown in order to accommodate the increased demand for its programmes. The last 12 years have also seen the rapid expansion of Sacap's online campus from just 59 students in 2011 to 1,500 students in 2022.

Over this same time period, Sacap has steadily increased its range of programme offerings to include, inter alia, a number of bachelor's degrees, honours programmes and other postgraduate qualifications including a masters. In addition, Sacap also offers entry level higher certificates as well as a diploma programme.

At the core of Sacap is an unwavering belief in the value of applied psychology, not just as an imperative to address South Africa's mental healthcare needs, but to promote and deepen the understanding of human behaviour in all spheres of endeavour and across the country's diverse communities. In addition to its faculty of Applied Psychology, Sacap also has a Community Development and Social Work faculty as well as a Management and Leadership faculty.

The college recently launched a Bachelor of Social Work at its Johannesburg and Cape Town campuses to complement its Bachelor of Psychology professional degree, making Sacap one of the only private higher education institutions in South Africa that is training both registered counsellors and social workers. Sacap has also distinguished itself as a leading provider of accredited coaching practitioner education, offering a range of courses including a Post Graduate Diploma in Coaching. More recently Sacap have added a Human Resource Management (HRM) Honours programme and two new higher certificate accreditations in Business Management and HRM.

Dr Jaclyn Lotter, Sacap's current academic dean says: "The introduction of faculties has paved the way for the broadening of our academic offerings to disciplines that don't fall strictly within the traditional understanding of psychology, but which are focused on the interdisciplinary application of psychology in people-centred settings. Over our 25-year history, we've remained deeply committed to relevant and applied psychology, and a great example of this is our Master of Social Sciences in Community Mental Health Promotion, which was launched in 2017. Going forward, our intention is to have a professional designation as the pinnacle of each faculty, as well as then building programmes in each faculty across the National Qualifications Frameworks, within the vocational, academic and professional spaces."

From the start, Sacap adopted a person-centred approach to higher education, offering students a journey of personal transformation as they gained academic knowledge and skills, and put them into practice during the pursuit of their studies. Sacap has always maintained small classes enabling unusually close student engagement with educators and peers. An early proponent of work-integrated learning (WIL), Sacap has deployed thousands of its students into workplace and community settings to develop their work-readiness, whilst providing much needed mental health services at a grass roots level.

As an institution, Sacap has a keen focus on agility and adaptability which was put to the test during the onset of the Covid pandemic and lockdowns. While many education institutions floundered, Sacap benefited from an already well-developed online campus with educators trained in online pedagogy, and managed to rapidly migrate its entire student body and staff online to minimise disruptions.

Sacap managing director, Zerina Royeppen, says: "In a very short space of time we were able to move the entire organisation online, provide remote internet access for all students and staff, and continue with teaching and learning largely uninterrupted. We designed and developed different kinds of support as well as teaching and learning methods to ensure no one was left behind. We also focused on greater levels of communication with all our stakeholders as the landscape changed to ensure the successful and safe return to campus at the beginning of this year. Pandemic lessons have shaped our implementation of a new hybrid work model that has helped establish Sacap as an employer of choice allowing flexibility and optimising efficiencies that result in increased employee engagement and greater work satisfaction. As a result, we are well-positioned to face the future of work, as well as to centre our teaching and learning in the 4iR context that demands a far greater capacity for agility, from the institutional to individual level. An example of this is the launch of our Sacap Global platform which offers a range of short courses and micro-credentials for working professionals who need to up-skill, re-skill and build in-demand skills for our fast-changing world."

For Lance Katz, Sacap's executive chairman, it is the vision of Sacap as a progressive player in South Africa's tertiary education field that has underpinned many of its successes. He says: "With public universities unable to meet the tertiary education needs of so many young South Africans, we are in dire need of high quality, fully accredited private institutions to increase access to relevant study opportunities. From the outset, 25 years ago, Sacap has always been focused on the contribution we can make to improving lives in South Africa. We are committed to nurturing work-ready graduates with rigorous academic knowledge and relevant skills and experience, whether they may be psychologists or community counsellors, social workers or human resource practitioners. Sacap's graduates apply their knowledge and skills across a range of contexts from the corporate workplace to the community. We're playing our role in developing change makers and innovators who do have the capacities to thrive and support others as the next few decades of disruption and volatility unfold. As always, [Sacap](#) is looking forward, towards a better future for all South Africans."

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