



UWC supercomputer set to 'crunch' HIV

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The University of the Western Cape has just received the ultimate in research hardware - a supercomputer that will help its scientists to research into HIV in South Africa and to map human genes.

The US-made Cray supercomputer, which was delivered to the UWC-based South African National Bio-informatics Institute last week, is one of the most powerful data-processing tools in the world and will enable Sanbi's researchers to carry out work that had previously been near-impossible.

Win Hide, director of Sanbi, said: "It's a giant data-cruncher. It enables you to do extremely thorough research. You can't do experiments using the human genome code without doing some guessing first. The supercomputer allows you to stop guessing by running all the (millions of) alternatives instead of just a few."

They intend calling the supercomputer Crunchie the Cray, after Seymour Cray, the American who invented supercomputers in the 1970s. The first two projects Crunchie will be used for are investigations into the genetic mutations of the HI virus in South Africa and into exactly how many genes there are in the human body.