

## **Faculty of Science Centenary Dinner**

**Spier, 1 October 2018, 19:00**

### **Congratulations by SU Rector and Vice-Chancellor Prof Wim de Villiers**

Good evening, everyone. Molweni. Goeienaand. Ek is bly om almal hier te sien. Dis lekker om hier te wees. It is an honour to welcome you all on behalf of the University, and thanks for the opportunity to attend the Centenary Dinner of one of our founding faculties.

Toe die Universiteit van Stellenbosch in 1918 uit die Victoria Kollege tot stand gekom het, was jul voorganger daar – Wis- en Natuurkunde, soos jul fakulteit toe geheet het, plus nog drie fakulteite: Lettere en Wysbegeerte, Landbou, asook Opvoedkunde.

Vandag spog ons met tien fakulteite – insluitend Natuurwetenskappe. En waar ons destyds net 500 studente en 40 dosente gehad, het ons vandag 'n lewendige en kosmopolitaanse gemeenskap van meer as 30 000 studente en 3 000 personeellede, versprei oor vyf kampusse.

Just like the University as a whole, the Faculty of Science has undergone many changes over the years. And like you said, Prof [Louise] Warnich [Dean of the Faculty of Science], many people have contributed to where we are today ... a world-class University – and Faculty of Science – making a meaningful difference not only to the pursuit of knowledge but to the lives of people ... in our country, on our continent and globally.

So, in this, our Centenary year, we have been celebrating our many successes and achievements the past 100 years. But, at the same time, the University has acknowledged its contribution to the injustices of the past, as the Dean mentioned. And like you so aptly put it, Louise ... we wish to heal these scars. I want to commend the Faculty of Science for what you are doing in this regard. Let's stay the course, because we still have a long way to go!

We want to be a “national asset that serves the diverse needs of our communities” ... also with impact on our continent, and with global reach. This much we state in our new vision & strategic framework.

We aim to become “Africa's leading research-intensive university”, and in realising this bold ambition, the Faculty of Science has an indispensable role to play.

There will be challenges, for sure ... such as (1) ensuring our sustainability despite pressure on public funds for higher education, which is a world-wide trend.

In South Africa, the state has made substantially more funding available to students from poor and working-class families, which is fantastic. But, the money has to come from somewhere, so unfortunately there has been challenges with regard to research funding by the National Research Foundation.

We will have to find creative solutions. On the one hand we must generate more income ourselves. And on the other hand, we will have to build even stronger partnerships with industry, alumni and donors.

So, I support the Faculty's fundraising with its Catalyst Fund for bursaries wholeheartedly. You can put me down for the full purchase price of your Centenary book ([\*A particular frame of mind: Faculty of Science, Stellenbosch University 1918–2018\*](#)) as a donation.

Another challenge will be to (2) strengthen interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. We have to collaborate beyond traditional academic divides to advance the knowledge project.

I am glad to report that Council last week approved new "Rules on academic entities within and alongside departments and faculties". This paves the way for establishing a school for data science and computational thinking at Stellenbosch University. Because big data and artificial intelligence will fundamentally change not only the 'world of work', but also *OUR* world as 'knowledge workers' at universities.

Ek sien baie uit na hierdie boek. Julle weet dit dalk nie, maar ek was 'n eerstejaar in hierdie fakulteit (in 1978, met Chemie, Fisika, Wiskunde en Biologie as vakke). Dit was toe mediese studente nog hul eerste jaar op Stellenbosch gedoen het, en daarna oor is Tygerberg toe. So, one could say that even though I would go on to *marry* the Faculty of Medicine and Medical Sciences, the Faculty of Science was my *first love* ... academically speaking. There is no doubt that the Faculty of Science is indeed a jewel in the crown of SU, as you said, Louise.

It therefore gives me the greatest of pleasure to congratulate you on your Centenary, in this, the Centenary year of Stellenbosch University. And long may you thrive!

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