

Welcoming of newcomer students and their parents, Coetzenburg, 22 January 2015, 18:00.
Address by Prof Leopoldt van Huyssteen,
Chief Operating Officer and Acting Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Stellenbosch University.

Thank you, Dr [Gillian] Arendse [of Student Affairs, today's programme director]. *Good evening everyone! Naand, almal. Molweni; wamkelikile.* It is great to see you all, especially our guests of honour ... all our newcomer students. You are the most important people present, although we also welcome your parents, of course! A warm welcome also to our members of Council and our colleagues present, members of the Student Representative Council and house committees, as well as other student leaders and mentors.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to Stellenbosch University for the 2015 academic year. Our new students are starting a great journey of discovery. And we will be there with you every step of the way. Make no mistake ... it won't be a leisurely stroll. You will find the going tough from time to time! But it will all be worth it in the end!

An incomparable experience is awaiting you. Here, you will have the opportunity to sharpen your mind. Here, you will be challenged to aim higher than ever before. Grasp these opportunities! You are here to make your dreams come true, as will be demonstrated shortly with the launching of balloons. Your ambition of becoming a doctor, an engineer, a scientist, a teacher – whatever you want – it is all attainable. But *you* have to take responsibility for it yourself.

The fact that you are here means that you are an achiever. We received 22 000 applications for only 5 000 places. Therefore, each one of you has been selected by hand. We believe in you! Remember, though, that university is not high school. Here, you have much more freedom. But that brings responsibility, as befits young adults.

This University plays in the big league, but we also care. We care very much about your academic success. Last year, Stellenbosch broke into the top 300 of Times Higher Education's World University Rankings. In other words, we are now amongst the top 2% of higher education institutions. But just as importantly, for several years now we have maintained a first-year retention rate of more than 86%, compared with the national average of 50%. And our undergraduate success rate is more than 83%, which is the very best in the country.

So, I want to reassure all the parents and guardians of new Maties that your "young adult" is in good hands. As a highly successful university, Stellenbosch offers a very solid value proposition. We realise that you are making a substantial investment in the future of your child. In return, we offer a world-class education by top academics in a stimulating environment with facilities that are constantly being upgraded.

We also aim for accessibility. Stellenbosch offers more bursaries than most other universities in the country – around half a billion rand a year. In this way we are opening the doors of learning to those who dream of a top-notch education but may not be able to afford it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, just as each of you have dreams for the future, Stellenbosch University has a dream, too – to produce thought leaders for the future. In other words, dynamic, independent young adults who face challenges with confidence; open-minded, responsible young adults able and willing to help our country and our continent and our planet to prosper and become a better place.

At Maties we are inclusive, innovative and future focused. This is our vision as a successful university.

You are looking so splendid in your Matie T-shirts, demonstrating how we are united in our diversity. Each one of us is an individual, but we are all Maties – that's why we are celebrating the strength of diversity. As Maties we stand together, regardless of our differences. What unites us is greater than what divides us.

As Maties we take responsibility not only for ourselves, but also for others. In the past few years the University has spent an additional R10 million to improve campus security. We also work very closely with the authorities concerned to make our environment safer. But you yourself can do much to help. Take care of your possessions, take care of yourself, take care of your friends. Stellenbosch is an open campus; keep that in mind. Do not move about on your own, especially at night, and always be aware of what is going on around you.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have taken a good look at the future. But I wonder if you are aware of the historical significance of this moment. In 2018 Stellenbosch University will be celebrating 100 years of being a public institution – the oldest university in the country, along with the University of Cape Town. But already this year, as well as next year and in 2017, we shall be passing important milestones underway to our centennial in 2018. Therefore, your study years come at a very special time. You are following in the footsteps of hundreds of thousands of Maties the past century, but you are also going to be breaking new ground for the next 100 years!

So, welcome to Maties, where the future starts now! Together, we will experience much between today and the day when you graduate with a qualification from Stellenbosch University. And by then, each of you – and us – will be a different person, changed and enriched by our experiences as Maties. Enjoy the journey. These promise to be the very best years of your life!

Ladies and Gentlemen, in conclusion let me introduce a few people who will accompany you on this journey. I will start with the DEANS: Prof Nico Koopman, Theology; Prof Jimmy Volmink, Medicine & Health Sciences; Prof Sam Tshehla, Military Science; Prof Maureen Robinson, Education; Prof Sonia Human, Law; Prof Hansie Knoetze, Engineering; Prof Johan Hattingh, Arts and Social Sciences; Prof Louise Warnich, Sciences; Prof Stan du Plessis, Economic & Management Sciences; and Prof Danie Brink, who is the acting Dean for AgriSciences.

Now, let me also introduce some members of SU MANAGEMENT: Prof Arnold Schoonwinkel, Vice-Rector for Learning & Teaching; Prof Eugene Cloete, Vice-Rector for Research & Innovation; and Mr Johann Aspeling, Registrar.

Again, Ladies and Gentlemen ... welcome, *wamkelikile*, *welkom*! And remember: Once a Matie, always a Matie! Maties forever!