

**Dinner with alumni, donors and friends  
of Stellenbosch University (SU).  
Remarks by Prof Wim de Villiers,  
Rector and Vice-Chancellor**

**Onthaal vir alumni, skenkers en vriende  
van die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US).  
Opmerkings deur prof Wim de Villiers,  
Rektor en Visekanselier**

**Johannesburg, 2015/06/11**

*Goeienaand, dames en here.* Good evening, everyone. I want to do three things tonight:

- look at key factors driving change in higher education;
- update you on developments at Stellenbosch; and
- discuss the future we are trying to build there, and your role in it.

I won't be doing it neatly in this order, but these are my main issues. So, let me start by looking at higher education.

*Dames en here, universiteite se oorsprong strek terug na die Middeleeue. Die Universiteit van Bologna is in 1088 gestig, en Oxford het onlangs sy 900ste verjaardag gevier. Vir honderde jare het nie veel verander nie – kundiges wat hulle in 'n bepaalde dissipline verdiep en hul kennis aan die volgende generasie oordra. Met die koms van die 21ste eeu breek egter 'n nuwe era aan. Die wêreld word by die dag omvorm, en universiteite moet bybly as hulle nie wil agterbly nie.*

*Daar is 'n aantal tendense wat verandering in hoëronderrys globaal aandryf, waarvan ek drie uitlig. Die **1ste is demokratisering**:*

*Die aanvraag na hoëronderrys neem wêreldwyd skerp toe, want in vandag se kennisekonomie is 'n universiteitsgraad die sleutel tot sukses. Maar, baie belangrik, die rangordes van ouds – ras, klas, geslag – is vervang deur 'n strewe na gelykberegting. Universiteite se deure staan oop vir almal.*

*Uiteindelik baat die ganse mensdom by hierdie openheid, want **INKLUSIWITEIT** lei tot groter diversiteit. En hoe groter die verskeidenheid mense en idees by 'n universiteit, hoe beter die kennis daar geproduseer, oorgedra en toegepas.*

Ladies and gentlemen, we can certainly see this trend of democratisation driving change at Stellenbosch University. Our student numbers have risen sharply ... from ± 10 000 in 1975, to 20 000 around the turn of the century, to 30 000 today.

At the same time, our student body has become much more diverse – from just 762 black, coloured and Indian (BCI) students in 1990, to more than 11 200, or nearly 38% of our student body today. And our goal is 50% by 2018, when we will be celebrating our centenary.

The nature of our student body has also changed, with a third of our students now at postgraduate level, which is in keeping with what a research-intensive university should look like. And 47% of our postgraduate students are black, coloured or Indian (BCI), with the predominant language of instruction at postgraduate level being English.

Also in terms of first-years, the percentage of enrolments by students with Afrikaans as home language decreased from 47.6% for the 2013 intake to 44.5% in 2014 to 42.6% in 2015. So, we are looking at a University that is changing.

I am a proud alumnus. But I know all too well that the Stellenbosch of today is not the Stellenbosch of yesterday, and nor will it – or should it be – the Stellenbosch of tomorrow. Nothing stays the same, which means we have the opportunity of constantly changing or transforming ourselves.

*Die **2de tendens** wat verandering in ons sektor dryf, is **tegnologie** – veral inligtings- en kommunikasietegnologie vir leer en onderrig. Rekenaars en die internet het tot 'n inligtingsontploffing gelei. En al hierdie kennis is meer toeganklik as ooit. 'n Universiteit se grootste mededinger deesdae is Google en YouTube. Dis verstommend dat hulle nie eers 20 jaar oud is nie!*

*Studente van vandag – die sogenaamde ‘Millennial’-generasie leer totaal anders – julle weet dit van julle kinders en kleinkinders. Dis deur middel van ‘podcasts’ en ‘MOOCs’ en ‘flipped classrooms’ ens. Ons is besig om hierdie modelle te ondersoek sodat ons steeds relevant kan bly, en ons kyk na die gemengde model.*

*Hoewel enigiemand inligting op die internet kan plaas en soek en vind, kan nie almal die kaf van die koring skei nie – dit is waarmee universiteite goed is, om komplekse sosio-ekonomiese probleme aan te spreek. Ons sal egter baie vinnig baie beter daarmee moet raak om hierdie funksie nie net op ons kampusse te vervul nie, maar ook in die kuberruim.*

Ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to report that Stellenbosch University embarked on a five-year project in 2014 at a cost of R220 million to integrate Information and Communication Technology comprehensively into learning and teaching at the University. This includes improved support for lecturers and students, new networks and systems, as well as state-of-the-art, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning spaces.

When I toured the United States to look at innovations in higher education shortly before returning to South Africa, it was noticeable that big lecture halls are really a thing of the past. And student attendance stands at 10-15%, with them rather accessing podcasts and similar services. In terms of facilities, the emphasis is on multi-use areas that are flexible so that they can be reconfigured for smaller groups and various purposes. So, we have to do things differently.

Note, though, that technology *per se* is not the goal. It’s about using ICT **INNOVATIVELY** to extend the reach and richness of our **academic offering**.

We have telematic capabilities at Stellenbosch. We’re the only university with satellite capability. But it is not about the technology. Academic excellence remains paramount at Maties, as is borne out by our recent listing on the Times Higher Education rankings among the top 300 universities globally ... out of more than 22 000; also 17<sup>th</sup> in the BRICS countries.

Are the rankings important? One could argue we shouldn’t pay excessive importance to it, because in South Africa we have a different mission – a social mission. The rankings focus heavily on reputation by education or reputation by research. We also have community interaction.

None the less – our success is the result of sustained performance in terms of our first-year retention rate and overall student success rate, both of which have consistently been above 85% ... the best in the country, and way above the national average of 50%.

It is also the result of sustained performance in research. Our weighted research output per capita has been the highest in the country the past several years in a row.

For all of these reasons you might have heard me say that in my professional opinion, as a physician, Stellenbosch University is “fit and healthy”. It’s doing well – of course the patient has a few aches and pains – which 97-year old doesn’t?!

As you would have seen in the news, we face challenges around transformation, diversity, our language policy and so on. But, as I said at my inauguration, what is needed is a “discussion without borders”, an “open conversation”, and I am glad to say this is happening.

As I also said at my inauguration, Stellenbosch is not an Afrikaans university; Stellenbosch is not an English University; Stellenbosch is not a Xhosa university; Stellenbosch is a world-class multilingual South African university – one of the few in this category, which is needed in a country with 11 official languages.

*Dames en here, die **3de tendens** in hoëronderrys het te make met **befondsing**. Ná die finansiële krisis van 2008, is universiteite onder druk in al vier geldstrome:*

- *Staatsbefondsing word verminder om begrotings te laat klop;*
- *gesinne en individue sukkel om klasgeld en verblyf te betaal;*
- *maatskappye besnoei hul besteding aan navorsing; en*
- *weldoeners dink twee keer voor hulle skenkings maak.*

*Universiteite sal baie meer doeltreffend en slim te werk moet gaan. Ons moet dienste en produkte lewer wat in aanvraag is; en ons moet wys dat 'n belegging in onderwys steeds unieke waarde bied.*

*Dames en here, dit bring my by my slotsom – die toekoms wat ons bou, en u rol daarin. My visie is dat ons toekomsgerig is, asook inklusief en innoverend.*

The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said the “task of a university is the creation of the future”. How do we do that? First and foremost by passing “the lighted torch of the imagination ... from hand to hand.”

That’s true transformation. It’s not a numbers game. It’s about passing the passion for education (learning and teaching) and the flame of knowledge (research and engagement) from person to person.

I have experienced the power of education myself, as have you, ladies and gentlemen, I’m sure. This room is packed with successful engineers and bankers, scientists and entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers and so on.

And where did we “learn the ropes”? For 85% of us here tonight (our figures), the answer is ... Maties. *En was dit nie 'n wonderlik ervaring nie!*

*Die grondslag wat vir ons op Stellenbosch gelê is, het vir ons deure oopgemaak as individue, maar dit het ook vir die samelewing waardevolle mensekapitaal gelewer, wat tot welvaartskepping en ontwikkeling bydra.*

*Een van ons strategiese doelwitte is om ons **IMPAK** op die samelewing te vergroot. En ons alumni bewys dat die lewering van goed-gekwalfiseerde afgestudeerdes 'n baie doeltreffende manier is om 'n verskil te maak.*

*Daarom gee dit my groot vreugde om u vanaand te bedank vir u voortgesette ondersteuning. Baie van u skenk geld aan u alma mater, of is op ander maniere betrokke by ons projekte en inisiatiewe. Aan almal van u ... baie dankie.*

*Julle help om die volgende geslag dieselfde geleenthede te gee as ons ... en meer!*

I am happy to report that last year, Stellenbosch University awarded R588 million in bursaries and loans to our students. And 55% of this went to BCI students – on the basis of merit and financial need.

Because diversity is a priority for us, we want to award even more recruitment bursaries. We consider this a magnificent opportunity for real empowerment and transformation.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude with something that the Chairperson of our Development Office, Prof Niel Krige – who is an actuary – often refers to, namely that compound interest is the 8<sup>th</sup> wonder of the world. If that is so, then education is the best investment, because it keeps on paying dividends.

*Baie dankie vir u bydrae. En ek sien uit daarna om Maties met u hulp verder VORENTOE te vat.*