

Welcoming new students and their parents to Stellenbosch University
Coetzenburg, 18:00, 21 January 2016
Address by Prof Arnold Schoonwinkel, Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching

Verwelkoming van nuwelingsstudente en hul ouers tot die Universiteit Stellenbosch
Coetzenburg, 18:00, 21 Januarie 2016
Toespraak deur prof Arnold Schoonwinkel, Viserektor: Leer en Onderrig

Thank you, Phumzile [Mmope, Senior Director: Corporate Marketing, programme director of the event]. Good evening everyone! In the interest of effective communication, I shall deliver my message in English, and for emphasis repeat some key concepts in Afrikaans as well.

It's great to see all of you here, especially our newcomer students. In case you didn't know it already, this is Day 1 of the best years of your life! So, welcome, Maties! Make that [#WelcomeMaties](#). [Molweni; wamkelikile](#). [Goeienaand, en baie welkom](#).

[Dit geld ook al die trotse ouers in die gehoor](#). A hearty welcome, also, to all the parents here tonight. Your child has done very well to reach this stage. We share your joy! I also want to acknowledge my colleagues present, as well as members of our Council, the Student Representative Council and House Committees, other student leaders and mentors. On behalf of our Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Wim de Villiers – who is on his way back to South Africa from the USA – it is my pleasure to welcome all of you to Stellenbosch University (SU) for the 2016 academic year.

INSPIRATION

To all our new students, well done! You have worked hard at school and excelled in your exams. Congratulations! Now you are taking the next step towards realising your dreams ... of becoming a doctor or engineer or lawyer or teacher ... whatever you want. The responsibility of making the most of this opportunity is yours. A fantastic time awaits you, but make no mistake, it won't all be plain sailing. You're going to be challenged like never before. You will have to work harder than ever before. You will learn things you've never known, do things you've never done, go places you've never been ... all so that you can become the person you want to be. IT'S UP TO YOU. Your destiny is in your own hands.

This is the exciting thing of going to university ... you get to be an active learner, not a passive one. Adults learn differently. They learn independently. They are self-directed, self-driven, self-motivated. [Die grootste verskil met jou skoolervaring is dat jy aan die Universiteit in vele dimensies self gaan leer, en dosente gaan nie alles vir jou met lesings lepetjievoer nie!](#)

SUCCESS STORY

Speaking as an educator, it's wonderful to see this process of growth and development unfold. Let me tell you a story to illustrate what I mean – and it happens to be a true story. Last month, we had three sets of twins graduating from the University at the same time! One of the sets of twins were the brothers Ganya from Khayelitsha ... Wanele and Wandile Ganya. They come from a family of six children raised on the wages of their mother, Sylvia, a domestic worker.

In 2009, during their matric year, Wanele contracted TB, but Wandile made sure his brother didn't fall behind academically. He would rush home from school each afternoon to share the day's lessons with his twin. At the end of the year, both of them passed with flying colours, and they came to Stellenbosch to study medicine – the first members of their family to attend university.

Their dedication to succeed against the odds earned them Rector's Awards, and after their six years of medical studies, they walked out of the Coetzenburg Centre last December degree in hand.

This year, the DOCTORS Ganya are doing their internship at Ngwelezana public Hospital in Empangeni KwaZulu-Natal, living their dream of helping others and building our nation. This shows IT CAN BE DONE!

Wandile had this message to young people like yourselves. “Just know that you can achieve whatever you want.” Wanele had a message too. He said, “We look forward to this new chapter in our lives, but we will be missing home. We will be calling home every day.” I think the parents will appreciate that one.

Dames en here, die storie van Wanele en Wandile Ganya illustreer ’n aantal belangrike beginsels oor universiteitstudies: dat jy enige struikelblok KAN oorkom, met toewyding en harde werk; dat jy jou drome KAN verwesenlik, met visie en passie; en dat hierdie Universiteit DAAR IS vir sy studente.

SUPPORT

Now, Stellenbosch University has a reputation of excellence. Students come to us because they seek quality. We have the highest success rate of all SA universities – 85% of our students who enrol for modules pass, though not all of them eventually graduate. There will be tough times, but remember, the key to success is to GET UP when you TRIP UP. And we will be there to lend a helping hand. Stellenbosch University offers what is probably one of the world's most comprehensive mentoring support programmes for 1st years, which will help you achieve academic success, and help you grow as a person in every aspect of your life.

Each 1st-year gets access to a mentor, a senior student appointed to show you the ropes. They’ve been where you are now, plus they’ve been specially trained. So, they will help you to not only succeed but to flourish. Mentors are allocated in Residence and PSO context, organised in Clusters – so that includes all of you. [Ons belê in ons studente se Welwees, US het programme in plek om julle te ondersteun, en ons moedig julle ten sterkste aan om van ons mentors se hulp gebruik te maak.](#) Get a mentor – it might just save your student life!

PROTEST ACTION

Student success is a priority to us because we know attending university is a precious opportunity not to be wasted. The nationwide protest action by students last year had as central idea the notion of “affordable higher education for all”. Stellenbosch University supports this goal, and we pride ourselves in cultivating critical thinkers and thought leaders. A university is a place of ideas, around which there should be contestation – even if it makes us feel uncomfortable.

We remain committed to dialogue with our students and staff, and to finding solutions to pressing matters – be that student finances or language or discrimination or transformation in general. Students have the right to lawful and peaceful protest. But such protest should respect the rights of others. Neither academic nor administrative activities should be disrupted. We have a responsibility to protect the University and its people, property and activities, as per the directive of the Department of Higher Education and Training.

[Ons erken die reg van studente om te protester – dis ’n geleentheid om uit ons gemaksones te kom en ernstig met mekaar te praat oor moeilike kwessies. Aktiwisme mag egter nie ander studente se reg om te kan studeer en vryhede aantast nie, of eiendom beskadig nie of ander se veiligheid bedreig nie.](#)

HEALTH AND SAFETY

In terms of safety and security in general, remember to take care of each other and look after your possessions. And don’t hesitate to contact Campus Security for assistance. Always behave in a way that protects yourself. As a university sector, we too are vulnerable to HIV, TB, sexually transmitted infections, and to gender-based violence. Avoid factors that compromise safe behaviour. This University is committed to the values of caring and support for all.

STUDENT FEES

A few remarks about finances. The University understands that South African households are under financial pressure. Therefore, we try to assist all financially needy students who are academically

deserving. Last year we paid out more than R650 million in bursaries and loans – from our own funds and allocated amounts – and 2016 won't be any different.

We support the ideal of affordable and even free higher education, but no university can function without fees if the shortfall is not made up from other sources. This forms part of discussions at national level with the government, and hopefully satisfactory answers will be forthcoming soon.

In the meantime, the welcoming programme, registration and the start of academic activities should proceed unhindered. Along with all other public universities in South Africa, Stellenbosch is a national asset providing a crucial service to the country as a whole and all its people. Let us work together to improve higher education to the benefit of all.

We are very excited about an initiative by our SRC to raise funds for students who have been accepted for studies at SU, but do not have proof of sufficient funds to register. The campaign is called **#RegisterALL**, and we encourage all staff, alumni, students and the general public to contribute to this wonderfully supportive project of the SRC aimed at making education accessible to all. The fund will be managed by the University's Bursaries and Loans Office.

[Die US het begrip vir die groot finansiële druk waaronder studente en hul ouers verkeer. Daarom bestee ons massiewe bedrae aan beurse en hou ons as universiteitssektor die druk op die nasionale regering om hoëronderwys beter te finansier.](#)

LANGUAGE

Another pressing matter at Stellenbosch is our language policy. Some fear that our use of Afrikaans may exclude English-speaking students, others fear that our use of English is putting Afrikaans at a disadvantage. Let me allay these fears by saying that the University is committed to multilingualism without any exclusion. [Die Universiteit Stellenbosch is verbind tot meertaligheid sonder uitsluiting. Kom ek verduidelik.](#)

Towards the end of last year, our Council affirmed that “language may never be an obstacle to any student who has no command of Afrikaans or only the minimum required command of English.” [“Taal mag nooit 'n hindernis wees vir enige student nie,” sê ons Raad.](#) So, our offering of lectures in both English and Afrikaans is being expanded the whole time. [Ons brei voortdurend ons lesingsaanbod in sowel Afrikaans as Engels uit.](#)

It is not an either-or situation but a case of Afrikaans and English. If you don't understand any Afrikaans, you will get the information you need in English – that's our commitment. If you struggle with academic English, we have support for that too. Just ask for help!

The same goes for the administrative language of the University. English and Afrikaans – and if possible, also isiXhosa – is used, but at all times the guiding principle is that nobody should be excluded.

We consider the growing diversity in student and staff demographics at the University a great asset to both the academic and personal development of everyone who chooses to study and work here. Diversity enriches us. You will grow as a person by getting to know others who might be different from you, in whatever way.

WELCOMING CULTURE

Stellenbosch University strives to provide an inclusive, welcoming home to all. Everyone is entitled to be treated with respect and dignity, regardless of colour, belief, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity. Discrimination and dehumanisation will not be tolerated.

If you are wondering about “initiation” ([“ontgroening”](#)) – this is not allowed! Instead we offer a welcoming programme, with the emphasis on WELCOME. Any conduct that is not friendly and dignified is unacceptable. You should not feel obligated to take part in anything that is in conflict with these values. Contact our Student Affairs Division in case of any problems. We even created a

special e-mail address where you can report any experience of dehumanisation and expect it to be followed up: unfair@sun.ac.za

CONCLUSION

Dear students, the experience you are embarking on today is set to be deeply transformative. University will not leave you unchanged. But neither does the University as an institutions stay the same. If we don't move FORWARD, we will stagnate ... and worse, regress. [Ons verklaar immers in ons visiestelling dat ons 'n toekomsgerigte instelling is en daarom is verandering 'n gegewe](#). In a very real sense, you, our new students, are the future – of Maties, of South Africa, of our continent and the world at large. Let us go FORWARD TOGETHER.

I said earlier it's up to YOU to make the most of this opportunity, but let me assure you, you are not alone. You will find many fellow travellers on your journey – from your classmates and lecturers, to friends in Residences or your PSO, to buddies in a student society or sports club. And by using the [HASHTAG WelcomeMaties](#) on social media, you will soon become part of our virtual campus community in cyberspace.

Management is also there for you. Let me now introduce the senior members to you. As mentioned earlier, our Rector, Prof Wim de Villiers, could unfortunately not be here tonight, but he sends his best wishes. Here on stage we have:

- Prof Leopoldt van Huyssteen, Chief Operating Officer / [Bedryfshoof](#)
- Prof Eugene Cloete, [Viserektor: Navorsing, Innovasie & Nagraadse Studies](#) / Vice-Rector: Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Studies
- Prof Nico Koopman, Acting Vice-Rector: Social Impact, Transformation & Personnel / [Waarnemende Viserektor: Sosiale Impak, Transformasie & Personeel](#)
- [Mnr Johann Aspeling: Registrateur / Registrar](#)

We also have Faculty management represented here:

- Prof Jimmy Volmink, Dean of Medicine & Health Sciences / [Dekaan van Geneeskunde & Gesondheidswetenskappe](#)
- Prof Samuel Tshehla, Military Science / [Krygskunde](#)
- Prof Maureen Robinson, Education / [Opvoedkunde](#)
- Prof Sonia Human, [Regsgeleerdheid](#) / Law
- Prof Hansie Knoetze, Engineering / [Ingenieurswese](#)
- Prof Louise Warnich, [Natuurwetenskappe](#) / Science
- Prof Stan du Plessis, Economic & Management Sciences / [Ekonomiese & Bestuurswetenskappe](#)
- And Prof Johan Hattingh, [Lettere & Sosiale Wetenskappe](#) / Arts & Social Sciences
- Prof Hendrik Bosman, Theology / Teologie
- [En prof Pieter Gouws, Waarnemende Visedekaan, Agriwetenskappe / Acting Vice Dean, AgriSciences](#)

And also on the podium with us Ms Phumzile Mmope, Senior Director: Corporate Marketing ... and programme director this evening. Thank you, Colleagues.

It is now my pleasure to introduce your SRC Chair to you. Mr Axolile Qina is doing his master's degree in Theology. His nickname among fellow students is Diamond. He is a former Primarius of Helderberg Men's residence. And he was recently awarded a Mandela Rhodes Scholarship for further postgraduate studies. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you your SRC Chair, Axolile Qina ...