

**Stellenbosch University Rector and
Vice-Chancellor Prof Wim de Villiers
welcomes newcomer
first-year students for 2021**
[*\(video recording released online\)*](#)

**Prof Wim de Villiers, Rektor en Visekanselier
van die Universiteit Stellenbosch,
verwelkom nuweling-eerstejaarstudente
aan die begin van 2021**
[*\(video-opname aanlyn uitgereik\)*](#)

Hello, Class of 2021, and welcome to Stellenbosch University! *Wamkelekile! Baie welkom!*

The flags you see are some of those planted by our new students this week. Our newcomer first-years are staking their claim as pioneers of the new era we have entered. The world has changed, and our students have shown that they can not only adapt, but flourish in the face of uncertainty.

When the coronavirus pandemic struck last year, you persevered and, in the end, achieved sterling results. Well done! We're proud of you! *Ons sê ook dankie aan almal wat julle tot hier gehelp het – jul ouers, jul skole en die res van die gemeenskap. Nou stap ons graag die pad verder saam met julle.*

Students, you've shown grit and determination, agility and resilience ... qualities that will stand you in good stead as you take on the challenges and opportunities of this next stage of your life's journey.

Julle betree nou 'n wonderlike fase – 'n tydperk wat julle eendag waarskynlik as die beste jare van jul lewens sal onthou. You will make friends and memories that will stay with you for the rest of your lives.

You will be exposed to new knowledge and led on a journey of discovery by excellent mentors, teachers and researchers at this world-class higher education institution with its top facilities.

Which is why you've come here, of course! Around 20 000 individuals completed newcomer first-year applications for 2021, an increase of 9%. And from this pool, we only had space for 5 200 students. So make it count!

Dit gaan dit nie net maanskyn en rose wees nie! Julle is almal toppresterders, maar onthou, eerste jaar op universiteit is nie graad 12 nie! Julle sal vir seker harder as vantevore moet werk – reg van die begin af – om sukses te behaal. Maar ek glo julle kan dit doen!

Please remember that we are here for you every step of the way. We have an extensive network to support you – from the student leaders and mentors in your residence or PSO, to the lecturers and other staff in your faculty and the administrative units of the University, including our dedicated Division of Student Affairs.

Don't hesitate to ask for help. It's not a sign of weakness, but of strength. We're all in this together, and we will go forward with you.

Dit is ook hoe ons die pandemie sal oorkom – deur saam te werk. As elkeen van ons verantwoordelikheid vir ons eie optrede aanvaar, kan ons ons kampusse oophou. En so sal nie net die Universiteit nie, maar ook omliggende gemeenskappe en sakeondernemings kan floreer.

We want to ensure a successful academic year *and* promote health and safety. This is why we all need to act in a spirit of social solidarity and keep in mind that what we do affects the broader community.

We've put in place comprehensive measures to ensure compliance with COVID-19 regulations, and these will be strictly enforced. Please behave responsibly, both on and off campus, whether you stay in res or private accommodation.

So, **wear your mask, keep your distance, and sanitise**. If we all stick to this simple regimen, we will be able to remain *on* campus. And the lockdown has certainly taught us the value of that special experience.

Of course, a major part of the campus experience is our learning and teaching offering. We want this to take place on-campus as far as possible this year. So, we will be combining face-to-face lectures with online elements, giving you the best of both worlds. *Kom ons maak die beste daarvan.*

As part of the Welcoming Programme, we will again be hosting our signature DREAM WALK on campus – albeit in small groups for everyone's safety. So, take a moment to consider your dreams. *Julle drome as jongmense aan die begin van jul volwasse lewens.* Also think of your dreams as parents, guardians, friends and family – *julle drome vir jul kinders, wat julle graag wil sien uitblink in die lewe.*

And then let's consider our dreams as a university – a place where we “advance knowledge in service of society” ([SU Vision 2040](#)). *'n Plek waar ons mense se lewens verbeter.*

And let's think of our country, our continent, our planet ... if we dream of a better tomorrow, we need to act *today* to make it possible. In all of this, *you* have a crucial part to play. And you could not have come to university at a more crucial time.

Yes, we live in a "VUCA" age – it's **V**olatile, **U**ncertain, **C**omplex and **A**mbiguous. We don't know for sure what lies ahead. But what we do know is that we need to act now to shape the post-COVID future. We'll do this together, as the extended Stellenbosch University family, which includes staff, students and alumni.

We are proud to have a large and diverse community of former students, who have gone on to use the knowledge, skills and values they obtained here to make a positive difference in society, globally.

From world-renowned researchers and innovative entrepreneurs, to highly regarded thought leaders and captains of industry, they once walked this campus, as you will now do.

Students, we've spent years preparing for this day – your arrival at Stellenbosch University – and so have you. This is the hour, this is your chance ... *our* chance to go forward together! *Saam vorentoe. Masiye phambili.*

(Recorded at the Danie Craven Stadium, Coetzenburg, on 2 March 2021)