



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**Address by the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, MP, at the inauguration of Professor Russell Botman as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University, Wednesday, 11 April 2007, Stellenbosch.**

The Chancellor, Professor Elize Botha

The Chairperson of Council Dr Edwin Hertzorg and members of Council

The Vice-Chancellor elect, Professor Russell Botman

Vice-Chancellors and representatives of other universities

Representatives of local, provincial and national government

Staff and students of Stellenbosch University

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today I come to celebrate the installation of a friend as Vice-Chancellor.

Professor Botman, when you were a member of the Student Council of the University of the Western Cape in 1976, you almost certainly never dreamed that this day would come.

Today's event represents a watershed in the history of the University. It marks a real opportunity for the university to embrace transformation firmly both in and outside the university.

Given the historic significance of your appointment and the important place the university occupies in our system of higher education, you as

the first black Vice Chancellor of Stellenbosch University, will be faced with many critical issues and questions.

Some will ask whether your appointment will make a difference, while others will hope that your appointment makes no difference at all, will change nothing or very little. I am able to assert with some confidence that you will strive to make a difference.

It is important that you do make a difference for three vital reasons.

First, universities are intellectual and cultural spaces. They change society and communities. They do not mirror them.

Second, leadership implies the development of an identity for the institutions we lead, not our subordination to them.

Third, the university has much to offer South Africa in the areas of teaching, research and responsiveness.

Your concern for the quality of teaching and learning, your sensitivity to the needs of disadvantaged students, and your understanding that the curriculum will need to be reformed to address these challenges is fundamental.

You have the ability to mend and build bridges across different communities and interest groups; you have shown this during periods of strife and turmoil. This places you in a strong position to lead this institution successfully towards a brighter future.

Now a few things about the university itself.

First, I am a Matie and I have a keen interest in the university's progress.

Second, the university is too important to us to have it lagging behind other universities in having the worst student and staff equity profile in the country.

Third, contrary to the best efforts of some of our leading thinkers, the key challenge is not solely about the place of language in the intellectual progress of the university.

Rather it is the more intractable task of developing a framework and response that will map out the university community's plan for playing a decisive role in moving South Africa beyond apartheid in human and social terms.

Language is, of course, an important consideration, and for any South African university all our languages and their place in higher education are worthy of consideration and attention. I have been disappointed that the genius and the intellect we have here and in other institutions has failed to find models and solutions that promote diversity in the service of all.

Fortunately, the university has adopted a progressive strategic framework, a new language policy, and a new model for encouraging the access of non-traditional students.

I urge the Vice Chancellor, staff, and students to support these initiatives and to use them to achieve success.

I firmly believe the challenge of transformation here is not just about language.

Technology can assist with multi-lingualism. Technology can make the learning of languages a joy rather than a hurdle. The internet has encouraged the spread of languages, facilitated the academic use of

different languages, and made translation from one language to another easier than ever before.

The key challenge is not just language.

The key challenge is the task of accelerating the slow transformation of an exclusive institutional culture into one that is truly inclusive, diverse, and fully South African.

I know the university will continue to lure the brightest and the best, but it will do so with the necessary imperative to ensure access and success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as well.

Using the wealth of capacities, influence and resources that this university has, it must embrace the challenge of identifying talented students, who have the potential to benefit from university studies. It can provide them with the higher education experience needed to succeed.

Developing its own graduates to senior research levels will begin to assist in addressing the equity profile of academic staff.

The university realized some time ago that it had to play a role in improving the quality of schooling locally and throughout the province. I trust these efforts will continue. I hope that the university will work in close partnership not only with the provincial education department but also with the other universities in this province.

While the transformation of our higher education institutions includes addressing the equity profile of our students and staff, it also has to contribute to research and community engagement.

While I have no doubt that you, Professor Botman, will contribute to improving research and community engagement, your contribution is

likely to reach beyond the self-evident role of a higher education institution.

During periods of transition and transformation moral guidance is critical to ensuring that the vision and mission is shared. Shared morals, values and principles are essential to developing such a shared vision. Cultivating a new institutional and national identity is the all embracing and greatest challenge of all.

This university can count on my support in its efforts to locate itself at the heart of educational transformation and renewal in our country and more broadly.

Professor Botman, I look forward to the unfolding of this next phase of your career, as Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University. I wish you every success with the agenda that you have begun to set for yourself and the university. I have no reason to doubt that you are the right person for the job. My warm wishes and congratulations.

I thank you.