

**Annual Gala Dinner of the University of Stellenbosch Business School (USB),
Protea Hotel President, Bantry Bay, Cape Town, 22 May 2012**

Remarks by Prof Russel Botman, Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Stellenbosch University (SU)

Dankie, JoAnn. Goeienaand almal. Molweni. Good evening. It is great to be with you tonight, and I am glad to see all of you here.

- Mr San Reddy (MD of MARCUSBREWSTER, and guest speaker for the evening)
- Prof John Powell (Director of the USB)
- Prof Prieur du Plessis (President of the USB Alumni Association and a member of the USB Advisory Board)
- Mr Simon Susman (Chairman of the USB Advisory Board)
- Mr George Woods (Chairman of the USB Alumni Association)
- Company representatives
- Members of the public sector
- Colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen ...

I am sure you will agree that we live in interesting times. There is hardly ever a dull moment in South Africa. The past few weeks we had the brother (Moeletsi Mbeki) of a former president (Thabo Mbeki) predicting that the ruling party will lose power to a new party that will grow out of an alliance between labour and big business.

In support of his argument he pointed out that the two sectors that have most to lose if the current deindustrialisation of South Africa continues unabated are the industrialists and the workers. However, his words weren't cold yet when DA and Cosatu supporters pelted each other with stones on the streets of Braamfontein.

I checked with the JSE, and they say the event did not have a noticeable effect on the markets. That's interesting, because the 18th century English nobleman Baron Rothschild is credited with advising that "The time to buy is when there's blood in the streets."

Similar sentiments have been expressed more recently by businessman and philanthropist Warren Buffet. The thinking behind such contrarian investment advice it is that if you build up your assets during financial downturns, you will be well-positioned when the market picks up again.

Now, I must tell you, it seems that Stellenbosch University's funders share this philosophy. I say this because as you would have seen in the news, we announced recently that over the past five years – at the height of the global economic slowdown – Stellenbosch has managed to raise substantial financial contributions from the government, trusts and foundations, the corporate sector, as well as alumni and other individual donors.

This makes our advancement campaign – the HOPE Project – one of Africa's biggest higher-education funding drive to date. I think the main reason for this support is our dual focus on excellence *and* relevance. This is our Unique Selling Proposition as a higher education institution.

Our science-for-society approach is showing real dividends. We have not only shone as a research-intensive academic institution, we are also making a significant impact on major challenges deemed intractable by some.

In all three our core activities as a university – research, teaching and community interaction – we are working to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and health, consolidate democracy and

human rights, advance peace and security, and balance a sustainable environment with a competitive industry. These five goals are the themes of the HOPE Project. They were adapted from the eight Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. In this way we are doing our bit to change the world, which is something that many people want to be part of.

Now, if you want to make a difference, you need to maintain the highest standards. I am proud to say that we have been doing very well as an academic institution, and for that we have our staff to thank. Last year, Stellenbosch broke into three global rankings in quick succession – the QS and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, and the Leiden Ranking. Our business school, the USB, has also done very well. Last year, it was ranked amongst the top three business schools in the Africa and Middle East region in the QS Global 200 Business Schools Report, and among the top three in the EDUNIVERSAL report.

This excellence allows us to better serve society, which brings me to my main point tonight – the importance of collaboration and partnerships. There is only so much that can be achieved by various sectors on their own – whether that is the government or private companies or civil society or educational institutions. But working together, we can achieve much more.

Later tonight, you will learn more about an exciting new initiative at the USB: the Small Business Academy. We all know how important SMME sector is to South Africa's economy. Supporting these enterprises with the best skills and training can really unleash the power of entrepreneurship in our country. By focusing on the business sector, we can make sure that this entrepreneurship is of the kind that is not only interested in self-enrichment, but that helps us as a country to bridge the divide between rich and poor, black and white, underdeveloped and developed.

For this venture, and also for its Bursary Programme, the USB will need your cooperation. We need the collaboration of individuals and companies and foundations that realise that the best time to invest in a better future is precisely when times are tough.

I mentioned at the start that we have reached a funding milestone, and for that we are grateful to our supporters. But we are now facing a new quantum challenge, which is to sustain our impact as a 21st-century institution. The Small Business Academy and the USB Bursary Programme are part of this challenge.

So, if you want to be seen supporting small businesses; if you want to be seen stimulating entrepreneurship and job creation; if you want to help make a bursary available to others so that they can get the opportunity to excel, then this is your chance. I am sure I can count on your support.

Thanks for listening, and enjoy the rest of the evening.