

**Launch dinner of the  
Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Institute for  
Student Leadership Development,  
SU, 29 March 2011**

**Bekendstellingsdinee van die Frederik Van  
Zyl Slabbert Instituut vir  
Studenteleierskapsontwikkeling,  
US, 29 Maart 2011**

**Keynote address by  
Professor H Russel Botman,  
SU Rector and Vice-Chancellor**

**Hoofrede deur  
prof H Russel Botman,  
US-rektor en -visekanselier**

*Dankie, voorsitter. Goeie naand, dames en here, kollegas en vriende. Molweni. Good evening, and from my side, welcome again to you all.*

*Ons is bevoorreg om vanaand so 'n uitgelese gehoor hier te hê. Prof Fourie has already welcomed everyone, but let me just acknowledge the presence of a few guests in particular:*

- The Consul-General of Germany in South Africa, Mr Hans-Werner Bussmann
- *Dr Slabbert se vrou, Jane, sy suster, Marcia en sy seun, Riko.*

*Dames en here, ons bring vanaand hulde aan 'n man wat diep spore in ons land en by hierdie Universiteit getrap het – ons voormalige Kanselier, wyle Dr Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert. En ons doen dit deur 'n struktuur te skep wat 'n nuwe geslag leiers in staat gaan stel om in sy voetspore te volg – die Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Instituut vir Studenteleierskapsontwikkeling.*

When Van Zyl passed away on 14 May last year, I promised the University would “maintain and expand the legacy of his leadership”. Tonight we are doing exactly that by launching an Institute for Student Leadership Development that is named after him.

The Institute took three, four years to take shape, and started with its initial activities earlier this year. It is the first of its kind in higher education in South Africa. Congratulations to everyone involved. The Institute offers programmes to strengthen the leadership of our students, as well as boost their graduate attributes. It also caters for students from other universities and colleges and school learners.

*Die Instituut wil etiese leierskap kweek en studente se rol as leiers in Afrika- en wêreldverband beklemtoon. Dit is ook daarop afgestem om studente se leiers-, kommunikasie-, konseptuele en besluitnemingsvaardighede te ontwikkel. We aim to empower young leaders with the skills they need to help create the kind of world Van Zyl would have been proud of – an open society, free from discrimination and injustice.*

Now, what are these skills? We don't have to look further than Van Zyl's life for inspiration. The first aspect I want to highlight is that he was **a strong critical thinker**. *Luister bietjie na wat Van Zyl eenkeer in 'n koerantonderhoud gesê het:*

*“Ek het 'n broertjie dood aan politieke korrektheid waar jy nie jou bek mag oopmaak nie. Wat nodig is, is kritiek, kritiek, kritiek. Dis al hoe foute ontdek en blootgestel word, en in die toekoms vermy kan word.”*

Van Zyl's critical thinking manifested itself from his early days as a student here at Stellenbosch. He didn't just accept what was being presented to him, but questioned the status quo. He was a bright student and popular primarius of Wilgenhof residence, and later a charismatic lecturer, keen scholar and the head of Majuba and Simonsberg residences. He would later also teach at Rhodes University, the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand, where he became professor and head of the Sociology Department.

*As ons Van Zyl se kritiese ingesteldheid deurtrek na die hede, sluit dit aan by die US se strewing om afgestudeerdes op te lewer wat as verantwoordelike en kritiese burgers 'n leiersrol in die samelewing kan vervul. Ons beskou al ons gegradueerdes as agente van verandering.*

*Sowat 700 studente het reeds ingeskakel by die kursusse wat die Slabbert Instituut aanbied. Daar word gefokus op uitdagings op drie gebiede: die politiek, die ekonomie en die omgewing.*

- Some of the political challenges addressed in the Institute's courses are human rights, human dignity and democracy
- Secondly, under economic challenges, the Institute looks at such issues as development, unemployment and poverty
- And thirdly, sustainability, climate change and global warming are addressed under the Institute's focus on environmental challenges

Some of the programmes of the Institute are stretched over a period of one full academic year, others over a period of two weeks. Some are accredited short courses at our University, and others take the form of workshops and tangible opportunities to plough back in the community.

Ladies and gentlemen, Stellenbosch University has positioned itself to play a meaningful and relevant role in the community, in society, and the vehicle that we are using for this purpose is the HOPE Project. *Deur middel van die HOOP Projek gebruik ons die Universiteit se sterkpunte – ons akademiese uitnemendheid en toonaangewende wetenskaplike navorsing – om probleme in ons land en op ons die vasteland te takel, en ontwikkeling vir al ons mense na te streef.*

This vision of using science for society was supported by Dr Slabbert. In his installation address as Chancellor in 2008, he said that South Africa faced “enormous challenges in the areas of health, crime prevention, skills development, etc.” He also warned that “we have to get away from a passive dependence on the government” for solutions.

Civic engagement was very important to Van Zyl. As we saw in the video clip, he threw in his weight with civil society in 1986 when he and Dr Alex Boraine, who is also here tonight, left Parliament because it had become irrelevant. They co-founded Idasa and subsequently organised the Dakar safari.

This demonstrates the second aspect of Van Zyl’s leadership that I want to highlight, which is his **commitment to doing the right thing**, regardless of the sacrifices that he had to make.

Taking lessons from Van Zyl’s life, the Institute at Stellenbosch that now bears his name will be focusing on exposing students to the principles of ethical leadership. This forms part of the University’s emphasis on student success.

*Daar is tans bykans 2 000 studente in leiersposisies aan die US – op die studenteraad, in koshuise, verenigings, sportspanne, fakulteitskomitees en ander strukture. Hulle word reeds deur bestaande programme met belangrike vaardighede toegerus. Die Van Zyl Slabbert Instituut sal dié slyping verder voer.*

*Dit gaan egter nie net oor studente in spesifieke posisies nie. Elke afgestudeerde het die potensiaal om die wêreld binne te gaan met ’n universiteitservaring wat van hulle leiers in die samelewing maak. En dít, dames en here, is die Slabbert Instituut se grootste bydrae.*

The Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Institute for Student Leadership Development will help us produce more graduates willing and able to tackle the challenges of our time. This is the critical point. You can reengineer the past all you like, but if you try to use that as your launching pad to the future, you are not going to get very far.

*Kyk, my geslag dra swaar aan die bagasie van die verlede. En daar is ’n groot klem in ons samelewing op regstelling. Maar is die grootste uitdaging van jongmense vandag nie om ’n beter toekoms te ontwerp nie? M.a.w. dit gaan nie daaroor om die verlede te HERONTWERP nie, maar om die toekoms te ONTWERP.*

*As ons kyk na hoe Van Zyl dinge benader het, sien ons hy het ’n probleem geïdentifiseer – in sy geval was dit die onreg van apartheid. Toe het hy ’n beter manier van doen geïdentifiseer, en uitgewerk hoe om daar uit te kom, en momentum begin bou om soveel mense moontlik saam te vat.*

This is the legacy of the leader of substance that Van Zyl Slabbert was. He did not seek to reengineer the past, but to design the future. And – crucially – he brought people together to reach consensus and hammer out the details. This is this legacy that we want to maintain and expand through the leadership skills we impart to students.

Van Zyl was not honoured enough in his own land, he never became prime minister, but as I said at the occasion of his installation of Chancellor, we consider him the “president” here at Maties. *Die Universiteit waar sommiges hom eens verguis en verwerp het, het hom in 2008 ten einde laas verwelkom as Kanselier, as ons seremoniële leier. Hy het die breë oorgang in Suid-Afrika help moontlik maak, wat ook die gewenste uitwerking op sy alma mater gehad het. En vandag vergestalt hy die soort plek wat ons wil wees, en die rol wat ons wil speel om ’n nuwe geslag jong leiers daar te stel wat ons land na ’n beter toekoms kan lei.*

*U kan hieraan meedoen deur u kundigheid met ons studente by die Instituut te deel, en ambassadeurs van die Instituut te word.* The head of the Institute, Dr Leslie van Rooi, is here tonight. Please speak to him or to me or our team in University Advancement about getting involved and supporting this work and Van Zyl’s legacy.

*Dames en here, ek wil graag dankie sê aan almal wat na aan Van Zyl was, almal wat hom deur die jare ondersteun en bewonder het – en dít sluit die meeste van u hier vanaand in. Rudolf [Gouws], dankie vir jou mooi woorde vanaand, en Breyten [Breytenbach], vir jou huldeblyk en die vergunning om daaruit aan te haal.*

*Dr Borraine het vanmiddag by die Instituut se bekendstellingseminaar so lekker prentjie geskets van hoe graag Van Zyl saam met sy familie en vriende gekuier het. Hy het ook vertel hoe lief Van Zyl vir Stellenbosch was, en dat dit hom juis daarom kwaad gemaak het dat sy alma mater destyds apartheid ondersteun het, maar dat hy verlig was toe Maties later al hoe meer ’n oop, nie-rassige universiteit geword het.*

We are sad that Van Zyl is no longer with us, but in recognition of his contribution to society, all of us – his family, friends and fans – stand united in celebrating his legacy and in our efforts to fully realise his vision and build on his legacy.

*Baie dankie dat u hierdie mylpaal met ons deel.* Thank you and enjoy the rest of the evening.