



15 June 2017

Tertiary qualification remains a key to meaningful employment, Universities SA assures on Youth Day

The first quarter findings of South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey corroborate Universities SA (USAf)'s belief about tertiary education being an enabler of social mobility and a catalyst for economic equality, Prof Ahmed Bawa, USAf's Chief Executive Officer said this morning.

He was responding, on the eve of Youth Day anniversary, to the recent announcement by Statistics SA, that unemployment had risen in quarter one by 1,6% to 38,6% among young people in the 15-34 year group. StatsSA further stated that the unemployment rate had emerged particularly high at 33,1%, among youth who had not completed Grade 12. This meant that unemployment stood at 5,4 percentage points higher than the 27,7% national average in those with less than a national school certificate (NSC), in comparison to the 7,3% unemployment rate among tertiary education graduates.

Prof Bawa advised South Africa's youth to meditate on these, what he called "telling" figures, as they contemplate their future careers. "Unless you are already set in a successful business, obtaining a tertiary education is your only passport to employability and an acceptable living standard. Research long proved that people with a tertiary qualification are assured to earn better, to live better and longer and to enjoy a comparatively good social standing." He added that those already enrolled in institutions of higher learning must aspire to graduate and take their place in the labour market.

The USAf CEO said the Quarterly Labour Force Survey therefore validated USAf's two long-standing arguments: *firstly*, the need to adequately resource the post-school education and training sector - if it is to continue to discharge its core function of knowledge generation, and, *secondly*, the need to safeguard tertiary education and training institutions, if they are to continue equipping youth to participate meaningfully and profitably, in South Africa's economy.

"Even though youth unemployment remains disproportionately high by all accounts, it is heartening to see that, armed with tertiary education, young people are being proven to fare much better. Grade 12 learners should therefore aspire to, and optimise all opportunities to enrol at a tertiary institution. To that end, learners must remember that TVET colleges offer much-needed skills in artisan trades such as boiler-making; bricklaying; fitting and turning; machine operation and motor mechanics. These skills remain in high demand, and therefore provide as good an opportunity as degree qualifications from universities. Artisan skills also open doors for self-employment."

Wishing South Africa a safe, reflective Youth Day, Prof Bawa concluded by borrowing from the late Nelson Mandela, who said "It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of a mines, and a child of farmworkers can become a president of a great nation."

Inquiries: 'Mateboho Green, Manager: Corporate Communication

Mobile: 0728074677

END