

**Welcoming new students and their parents
to Stellenbosch University
Coetzenburg, 18:00, 23 January 2020
By Prof Arnold Schoonwinkel, Vice-Rector:
Learning and Teaching**

**Verwelkoming van nuwelingstudente
en ouers by die US
Coetzenburg, 18:00, 23 Januarie 2020
Deur prof Arnold Schoonwinkel,
Viserektor: Leer en Onderrig**

Hello-o-o, Maties! Naand, almal, en baie welkom. Molweni. Wamkelekile. Welcome to your new home, first years, for the next few years ... and hopefully for a very long time after that. Soos die gesegde lui, eenmaal 'n Matie, altyd 'n Matie! Vandag begin jy 'n lang reis.

Let me reassure all our new students and their parents or guardians ... you've made the right decision, coming to Stellenbosch. Maties is indeed your dream destination ... die plek waar jy jou drome kan bewaarheid. Alles is moontlik in die tyd wat jy met ons deurbring.

To all our new students, well done with your excellent matric results! We received 45 000 applications for admission this year, but only have space for about 5 500 newcomer first-year students – so if you made it here, you are really a top student. Baie geluk!

Stellenbosch is a top university with top students. Just as you are a very select group, Maties is in the top 1% of universities in the world, according to international rankings.

But, as you would know, to achieve anything in life takes a lot of hard work. That goes for all of us. We are all in this together. We pride ourselves in doing our best for our students, and we expect the same from you ... to give it your all!

Parents, you can take comfort from the fact that this University works hard to create an environment that will lead to the success of your child. Maties has the highest graduation throughput of all universities in South Africa, and we intend to keep it that way.

But this does not come easy. Our students have to work very hard to make a success of their time here. But, as President John Kennedy of America said way back in 1962, "We choose to go to the Moon ... in this decade ... and do the other things ... not because they are easy, but because they are hard..." And, in fact, before the decade was out, Neil Armstrong indeed stepped onto the surface of the Moon – that "giant leap" which had its 50th anniversary last year.

Yes, sometimes progress comes at a tremendous cost, but learning to overcome obstacles will make you stronger. Remember, never give up ... just get up ... and carry on! Moenie opgee nie ... staan net op! En gaan aan, dis wat ons sukses noem.

En as jy jou hand uitsteek, gaan daar iemand wees om jou op te trek. You have entered an ecosystem of assistance all around you ... from the student assigned as mentor to you in your res, PSO or cluster, to student leaders, to the staff and deans in your faculty, and beyond.

And all you have to do to get help, is ask. There's nothing shameful about struggling with challenges – and asking for help. We have a whole Division dedicated to Student Affairs, headed by Dr Choice Makhetha. They are there for you. Reach out when the going gets tough.

Laat ek vir 'n oomblik as 'n ouer wat self vier kinders deur universiteit gesien het, my rig tot die ouers. Bly betrokke by u kind. Hulle sprei nou hul vlerke, hulle ontdek nuwe vryheid, hulle verlaat die nes,

maar u bly – soos ek – altyd die ouer. Vra vir hulle hoe dit gaan. This is my call to parents – stay completely involved with your child. Keep abreast of their academic progress. Note that we will keep them informed of their progress, not you. It's not like school, where the parents receive a report. Ons gee uitslae aan student, nie ouers nie. We treat them as young adults. We respect them as adults. They must take responsibility for their progress and development. Ons moet aanhou belangstel in hul ontwikkeling, aanhou vra hoe dit gaan, aanhou ondersteuning bied – ons as Universiteitspersoneel en u as ouers.

Terug na ons nuweling-studente. Ek wil julle darem nie net bangpraat met waarskuwings oor hoe hard julle gaan moet studeer nie! Dit wel, maar daar lê ook 'n verrykende ervaring voor, 'n wonderlike tyd. En ons gun julle dit ten volle.

One comes to university not just for a degree, but for a whole education. And for that, you need exposure to a whole range of activities ... beyond the classroom as well. Join one of our many student societies. Attend talks and discussions to broaden your insights and understanding of society. Participate in sport. Audition for our world-renowned Choir ... the options are limitless. Use this time to build strong networks, which will last you for life.

The future belongs to you, but more than ever before the future is uncertain. In many respects, humanity has made progress, but we face huge challenges: Climate change, global warming, species extinction, an energy crisis and water shortages, the threats – and opportunities – of the 4th Industrial Revolution, and growing socio-economic inequality.

However, the greater the challenge, the greater the opportunity to do something about it. And for that, you are at the right place, at the right time to be prepared to make a great difference. Stellenbosch University is the most research productive institution in the country, and we focus on research for impact. Julle is nou by 'n universiteit wat met relevante navorsing en gehalte-onderrig studente voorberei om 'n groot positiewe verskil te maak aan die uitdagings rondom ons.

What a wonderful opportunity to start your university life here at Maties, in 2020, the year of clear vision. By the way, here at SU we have also declared 2020 the Year of Disability. We are completely committed to inclusivity and equality. We want all our students and staff members to participate in all aspects of university life to the fullest extent possible.

Yes, we all come from different parts of the country and from different backgrounds. That's what makes university so appealing. Hier gaan jy blootstelling kry aan 'n groot verskeidenheid mense en idees – en dis hoe dit hoort. Dis deel van jou ontwikkeling om ander mense te leer ken, en om almal met respek te behandel en dieper insig te kry in die lewe. Dis die rykdom en krag van verskeidenheid. If you want to grow, embrace diversity. It is an indispensable component of excellence.

At Stellenbosch University, we believe that multilingualism is an asset for any graduate. In our diverse society, we are committed to inclusivity through language – that's why we use English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa in our academic, administrative and social settings. Ons Taalbeleid het geen ideologiese motiewe nie. Dit stel nie een taal bo – of ondergeskik aan – 'n ander nie. Ons bevorder meertaligheid ter wille van toegang tot kennis, en ter wille van studentesukses.

Let me now go into something we feel strongly about. I want to talk straight to every newcomer, every student leader, every parent, who I am sure will support us in this. It is a matter that concerns

us a lot because it has devastating consequences: If you abuse alcohol and other substances, it will have a negative impact on you and others. That is why we decided to tackle it head on this year.

One of the social ills associated with consuming too much alcohol is gender-based violence (GBV). We shall not tolerate gender-based violence at this University. We condemn it, whether alcohol is involved or not. We are fortunate that our students are taking the lead in addressing this scourge – with us in management, they have joined work groups to go into every aspect of the problem and find solutions.

We feel equally strong about combating alcohol and substance abuse. In fact, we have banned the sale of alcohol in all student residences. The Division of Student Affairs is engaging in robust conversations with student communities to establish firm regulations for responsible alcohol use at SU. We want to go about with alcohol use at SU in a way that is congruent with our value system.

Onthou, jy het 'n verantwoordelikheid teenoor jouself en tenoor andere. Accountability is one of our values. This means always accepting the highest level of responsibility for all our actions – towards yourself and to others.

Stellenbosch University has an excellent security system. We try our best to ensure that we are a safe community, but we operate in an open environment that is part of town and the rest of the country. And though we do as much as we can, we can't be everywhere all the time. Be careful where you walk at night. Make use of the pedestrian escort service provided by Campus Security ... Kampusekureiteit se saamstapdiens. Don't take chances. Members of Campus Security are there to help you. But you have to do your part as well. Kyk mooi na jouself en andere.

Let me conclude by asking you to look around you. Take it all in. What a magnificent sight! You look fantastic in your maroon T-shirts! It always puts a smile on our faces to see students from a particular cohort wearing their Matie T-shirt with pride. Dra jou T-hemp met trots, geniet dit. Onthou net om dit so af en toe te was!

Now, the next time you come here, will probably be for a Varsity Cup rugby game. The season starts soon! And Maties are the reigning champions and we hope to keep it that way with your support!

But apart from that, your next big occasion here will probably be your graduation day, in a few years' time. You will gather here not wearing your maroon T-shirt but dressed to a tee in your graduation gown, before walking across the sports fields to the Coetzenburg Centre, where you will receive your well-earned degree to much jubilation.

Dit is jou doel – om 'n gerespekteerde kwalifikasie van 'n gerekende universiteit te verwerf wat vir jou deure gaan oopmaak. Moenie dit vergeet nie. Hou jou oog op daardie bal. And when the going gets tough, remember this great day. Remember the dreams that brought you here. It will sustain you.

Maties, you've arrived at the launch pad, and your countdown starts now! Are you ready?! Let's now go forward together as Maties. Saam vorentoe. Masiye phambili.