

**Lunch-time briefing for school principals and liaison teachers of Careers@Maties schools,
STIAS, 23 May 2012**

Remarks by Prof H Russel Botman, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University

Middag, almal. Molweni. Good afternoon. Thanks for coming, and from my side, welcome here.

As you have heard from Beverley and Hambly, our relationship with schools is vital to us. Your learners become our students, so it is in our mutual interest to maintain strong links

The schools invited to this event have yielded numerous Maties through the years. Thank you very much for your loyal support.

Access to the best higher education is important to everyone, but absolutely crucial to previously disadvantaged communities. Education is the ultimate way to break out of poverty. And it is a ripple-effect – families, relatives, and eventually the whole community is benefitted.

This is why I said in my inauguration speech in 2007 that both the daughter of the farm worker and the son of the farmer must be presented the same opportunity for success. Now, at the beginning of my second term, I am pleased (to be able to) to say that we are making good progress with this. Although we still have some way to go, we now have significantly more black students than five years ago. However, increasing the diversity of our student body remains a key priority for us.

It is not just about numbers, though – it is about empowering individuals and communities, and ultimately, transforming society.

We have a variety of initiatives to support schools and learners – before students come to us; and once they have enrolled with us. I want to highlight just a few examples of each. I think you will find that Stellenbosch is taking the lead nationally, and doing ground-breaking work

BEFORE STUDENTS COME TO US:

HOPE@Maties

The SU's institutional Schools Partnership Project is now known as HOPE@Maties. There are various different strategies that are followed within this project. I will briefly talk about a few, namely:

- Careers@Maties
- Saturday- and Holiday schools
- "Pipe lines" for learners on school level to SU
- The improvement of matric results
- Support to teachers and school managers; as well as
- Bursaries and loans

Careers@Maties

Like we heard, from Hambly, Careers@Maties is aimed at better preparing top grade 11- students from disadvantaged school communities for studies at SU. The rationale is that more informed career choices lead to greater student success. This is very important in the knowledge economy of the information age.

Saturday Schools & Holiday Schools

These are designed to improve access to university. Talent is spread evenly in the population, but not resources. So, we add something: the best teaching by top personnel.

In Grade 11, schools identify top learners (marks over 70%); In Grade 12, they attend HOPE@MATIES tutelage programmes.

We already have eight such centres:

- Saturday School: in Mitchells Plain, Elsie's River, Atlantis, Paarl and Stellenbosch
- Holiday Schools: in Malmesbury, Worcester and Overberg

"Pipelines"

We speak of "pipelines" that have to take the learner from the school to SU. We do this by offering support – in mathematics, science and language – to local high schools, like Cloeteville, Stellenzicht, Kayamandi, and soon maybe also to schools in Worcester.

Matric results:

Telematic platform:

Having a wider impact, thanks to satellite broadcasts, is the WCED's Telematic Project, with SU facilities. It reaches 14 000 learners in 145 schools.

The Matric pass rate in these schools improved by 10,9%. In 20 of these 145 schools, the improvement was 50%.

Support to teachers and school managers

Currently 168 candidates in our School Leadership Course. This Advanced Certificate in Education is presented by the SU's Centre for Education Leadership and Management.

BURSARIES en LOANS

Bursaries and loans is an important way to improve access for black students. In this way we improve diversity at SU. And this transforms our institutional culture.

In 2012 SU spent R73 million on bursaries and financial help to students. We want to expand this in the future, and also place awarding of bursaries partly in the hands of schools.

ONCE STUDENTS HAVE ENROLLED WITH SU :

Actually, the first example is an in-between step... our Science & Mathematics Bridging Programme, called SCIMATHUS.

We are very concerned that only 10,4% of Grade Nine students passed the recent Western Cape numeracy tests.

SciMathUS provides talented and motivated matriculants who do not pass well enough to go to university with a second chance. With an intake of 125 per year, SciMathUS has had a 100% success rate the past four years.

But more than that – all students improved their Grade 12 marks. One of last year's stars improved in Science from 32% to 82%.

FIRST-YEAR ACADEMY

My second example of what we do to assist students once they enrol with us, is our First-year Academy. Launched in 2007, it was the first initiative of its kind in SA.

It entails the entire University supporting new students. It entails early assessment, teaching and learning coordination points, tutor and mentor programmes, ResEd programmes, Centre for Student Counselling and Development, etc.

We now consistently maintain a first-year retention rate of over 85%. And our overall undergraduate success rate is 84%, one of the highest in the country

CLUSTER HUBS

My last example is Res-Ed Cluster Hubs and Hub Villages. After lunch I would like all of you to walk across the road to our new amaMaties Hub. It is a facility where we bring together commuting students with students in residences.

Residence students on average do better than commuting students, because:

- They spend less time travelling
- They can eat healthy meals affordably
- They have an academic and social network on campus

The amaMaties Hub therefore offers support to commuting students that, for example, live at home. When students commute from Elsie's River or Mitchells Plain or Khayelitsha and arrive on campus in the morning, they must have home base. A Place where they have friends, where they can safely lock up their valuable items, where they can eat, and study, and if need be – for example because they want to study late for a test – even stay over a night.

This is what the Cluster Hubs will offer them, as you will see

CONCLUSION

Ladies and gentlemen, finally, the directional motive of SU is hope – therefore, the HOPE Project. We believe a university has to create hope through what it does. We want to be relevant to the people in whose service we stand. We want to address society's big challenges. And we want to do this with our partners.

Schools are some of our important partners. Let us strengthen our ties ever more.