

**Welcome Address at
National Schools Festival Official Opening**

Settlers Monument, Grahamstown

9 July 2007

Ms. Clayton, our distinguished speaker, other distinguished guests and officials, and above all our student and teacher delegates: molweni, good morning.

On behalf of Rhodes University, welcome to the Standard Bank National Schools Festival and welcome to Rhini/Grahamstown. Above all, welcome to Rhodes University.

Over the next few days you will have a wonderful introduction to South African art and artists, and opportunities to develop an awareness and appreciation for the arts. You will also be exposed to the possibilities that exist for a higher education in the arts at Rhodes University and other institutions.

It is really wonderful that through the National Schools Festival you will have these opportunities and exposure. At the same time, it is also truly a pity that our schools are not able to provide such opportunities and exposure to

all our students and are unable to include to any significant extent an education in the arts within our school curriculum.

Around the world and in South Africa, great priority is given to science and technology. This is understandable, given science and technology's contribution to economic development, and our need for economic development to enable us to address our pressing challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment, social equity and HIV/AIDS. However, it would be very unfortunate if the level of economic development was used as the sole measure of South Africa's development.

Food, clothing, shelter, jobs, high quality education and health care are all crucial to ensure a better life for every South African. But true human development and leading rich, rewarding and productive lives mean more than satisfying only our basic needs.

The arts – drama, prose, poetry, dance, painting, sculpture, weaving, music and the like – are also a vital part of what it means to be human and to be South African. Through the arts we display the wonderful abilities of our human mind and spirit to imagine, to create and to reflect. Through our writings, poetry, designs, productions, and performances we express in the

various art forms who and what we have been, who and what we are, and what we may be becoming. We convey our joys and sorrow, fears and hopes. We celebrate our unity and our diversity, and our triumphs and achievements. And we also without fear and with courage ask difficult questions about our lives, our values and attitudes, and our cultures and society.

South Africa needs and must develop scientists and technologists. But we also need and must also nurture the arts and artists. Without promoting and supporting the arts we will deny ourselves the richness of human development. Can you imagine a South Africa and world without music, novels, drama, poetry, ballet and paintings? We will become a dull and drab society, and ultimately an intellectually and culturally impoverished people.

As Rhodes University we are extremely pleased to be associated with the National Schools Festival. I invite you to enjoy our beautiful campus, our comfortable residences and our lecture theatres and seminar rooms. I also urge you to make good use of the knowledge and expertise of our academic staff that you will meet.

Rhodes is the smallest university in South Africa, with only some 6 000 students. 57% of our students are

women, which is not only nice for men, but also very good for women, as women are assured greater opportunities for intellectual and social development and success. 25% of our students are international students from 57 countries around the world, which makes us a very cosmopolitan university.

Rhodes has a proud reputation of excellence in teaching and learning and research. We have low student to teacher ratios which helps us to have the best undergraduate pass and graduation rates among all South African universities. Our slogan is 'Where Leaders Learn', which is our commitment to being a university where students can develop as intellectuals and professionals, as people, and as leaders. It is said that 'you are who you are'. That's not quite true. More accurately, you are who you learn to become. At Rhodes University we support you to learn, and to learn to become.

I hope that you will use this festival to ask whatever questions you may have about studying at Rhodes and that we will be able to persuade you to join us at Rhodes next year. Those of you who have already decided that Rhodes is where you wish to be next year, I can assure you that you have made an excellent choice and I look forward to welcoming you early next year.

In closing, on behalf of Rhodes University, welcome to the National Schools Festival, and welcome to Rhodes University.