

NEW STAFF WELCOME

27 February 2008

The Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Deans, academic and administrative colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, molweni, good evening and welcome to the new staff party.

And on behalf of Rhodes University, an especial and warm and formal welcome to you, our new staff and colleagues and your partners and family, to the Rhodes community of scholars, administrators, support staff and students.

This evening's gathering serves two purposes.

One is to officially welcome our new colleagues to Rhodes (and perhaps iRhini/Grahamstown, and even the Eastern Cape and South Africa).

The other is to provide an opportunity for new colleagues to meet one another and also other staff members, to share initial experiences of Rhodes and Grahamstown, and perhaps exchange views and advice on how to cope with the new environment in which you find yourselves, and also how we might as an institution or administrators and academics better support you in this regard.

Just over 45 new staff members have joined Rhodes University in recent months – 28 women and 17 men, 17 academics, 24 administrators and 4 support staff. Whoever you may be – a new academic, administrator, technician, warden, messenger, cook, cleaner, or gardener – and for whatever reason you have joined Rhodes University, I hope this will be a stimulating and hospitable environment in which you will be able to develop personally, socially and intellectually.

You are joining an institution that is first and foremost a place of knowledge, a place of learning. Everything that you do and that we do collectively must ensure that there is an environment at Rhodes that is conducive to the production and dissemination of knowledge and the intellectual, cultural, social and physical development of students, academics and, more generally, all members of Rhodes.

It is our obligation:

- To develop, through teaching and learning, high quality graduates who are intellectuals, professionals and critical citizens that possess the values, knowledge, expertise and skills to make a significant contribution to

economic and social development, and an equitable, just and democratic society

- To push forward, through fundamental research and discovery and applied research, the frontiers of knowledge and human understanding, and
- To advance, through community engagement, mutually respectful relationships with defined communities that benefit them and us.

We wish to be a small but great African university, which maintains its outstanding pass and graduation rates, its unsurpassed research output per academic staff member, and its commitment to making it possible for students to obtain a broad-based education in the midst of dedicated and excellent scholars and researchers.

Like every other university in South Africa today, we face many challenges of a simultaneously intellectual, social equity, cultural and financial nature. We are well-aware of these challenges, which include:

- That we must value and embrace diversity, whether this is intellectual or social in terms of ‘race’, gender, class origins, nationality, language or geography
- That we must ensure that our community becomes progressively more representative and reflects the character of our wider society
- That we must address the needs of all the social groups that constitute the Rhodes community and ensure that in terms of its institutional culture Rhodes is a home for all
- That we must reproduce a new generation of scholars and administrators
- That we must into place the infrastructure – library, residences, new research and teaching facilities, accommodation for staff, etc. - to secure into the future our position as a leading university
- That we must make choices and plan so that we are financially sustainable in the decades to come.

These are interesting and exciting challenges which should not demoralise but rather spur imaginative thinking, academic and administrative innovation and effective implementation. Other institutions in our society look to the universities for ideas and leadership. If we cannot openly, honestly and

rationality, though adherence to certain fundamental principles, knowledge, information, and argument renew ourselves, what hope is there for other institutions in our society?

I wish to suggest that Rhodes will be well-served if all of us who constitute it, new and old, are committed to

- Upholding the fundamental social purposes of a university, which have to do with knowledge
- Embrace and practice the values of respect for human dignity and human rights, non-racialism and non-sexism, and actively reject all forms of prejudice and intolerance
- Conduct dealings with other staff and students with integrity
- Discharge our responsibilities to the best of our abilities
- Think critically about our work, and how we can improve our performance and that of our departments/sections and the University as a whole
- Taking initiative in meeting challenges
- Making use of the opportunities that the University provides to improve one's knowledge and skills
- 'Going the extra mile' and 'beyond the call of duty'.

As a small university there are many opportunities for interaction and my door and those of the Deans, HoDs, and managers and supervisors are always open to you should you wish to discuss anything.

In closing, welcome to you and your partners and family to Rhodes and I wish you a long, productive, fulfilling, and successful career at this University.