

**RHODES UNIVERSITY
POSTGRADUATES ORIENTATION WELCOME**

15 February 2008

Good morning, molweni.

It is a great pleasure, on behalf of Rhodes University, to welcome our new postgraduates to Rhodes University and to also say hello again to our returning postgraduates.

To those transferring to Rhodes from other universities, a special welcome! You have made a wise choice and I am confident that you will confirm this in the coming month and years.

Those of you who are beginning postgraduate studies now embark on a new phase of professional and intellectual development, which involves grappling with higher levels of knowledge, a greater challenge to your intellectual and organisational abilities, and requires a greater autonomy of learning and discovery. I trust you will find your postgraduate degree and programme intellectually challenging, stimulating and rewarding.

Those of you continuing with postgraduate studies should know what is involved though the challenges will naturally become greater and more exciting. I wish you good progress.

As postgraduates, you make up almost 24% of the Rhodes University student body. This is an already very healthy and proud feature of Rhodes. However, in planning the shape and size of Rhodes for the next five years we are looking to growing our postgraduate enrolments even further – both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the total student body. Of course, this means that we must develop effective strategies to pursue this goal, create opportunities for new areas of postgraduate studies, ensure that we build new infrastructure in the form of buildings, laboratories, the library and the like, and also mobilise additional funds for

these new developments and also especially for scholarships and bursaries.

Another healthy feature is that our postgraduates come from a number of countries in the rest of Africa and from other continents. The presence of international postgraduates is a very important welcome feature of Rhodes. It helps to make us cosmopolitan, contributes to the intellectual and social diversity of Rhodes, and also enriches our institutional culture.

As you are aware, in countries such as the United Kingdom international students, in contrast with local students must pay a considerable premium on their fees. At Rhodes as international students you pay, apart from a modest levy, the same fees as local students. This levy is used to promote internationalisation at Rhodes, support the International Office, support international students that may have financial needs and also contribute towards ensuring that we are able to accommodate a healthy enrolment of international students. This, in my view, is in the best spirit of internationalism. It is also a practical way of demonstrating our refusal to embrace the commercialisation and commodification of higher education, which has been promoted by some developed countries who have sought to define higher education as just another service and make it subject to World Trade Organisation rules.

Importance

As postgraduates, you play an immensely important role at Rhodes and make a valuable contribution in at least 7 ways.

1. First, as postgraduates you serve as tutors and so contribute to supporting academic programmes and enhancing undergraduate student development. Of course, this is also a valuable mechanism for you to advance your own intellectual and academic development.
2. Second, you serve as role models for undergraduates,

hopefully inspiring them to consider postgraduate study.

3. Third, you potentially act as catalysts of the production of new knowledge through hopefully inspiring and innovating new and fresh approaches to the development of knowledge or through helping to push knowledge production into new areas
4. Fourth, you sometimes provide valuable support to our leading scholars and researchers, assisting them in their research in various ways and also potentially growing to become their collaborators
5. Fifth, you are also potentially apprentice academics and the new generation of lecturers and researchers.

Every society at the same time that it produces must also ensure its reproduction. An issue of great concern to me is ensuring the reproduction (and transformation of the social composition) of the next generation of scholars.

As a consequence of our apartheid heritage, we have a serious and immediate challenge in so far as employment equity and the current social composition of our academic force are concerned.

The age profile of our academic force, the pull of the public (government, public enterprises and science councils) and private sectors that offer better remuneration, the opportunity costs for first generation black graduates in terms of family expectations and deferred income, competition from other knowledge producing institutions, and the loss of experienced and emerging scholars to other countries all compound and increase the challenge.

We must also ensure that we cultivate a new generation of critical scholars – historians, sociologists, philosophers, educators and other scientists who are passionately committed to honest, critical and independent scholarship, and can serve as the critical voices and public intellectuals of our society.

I very much hope that some of you will seriously consider becoming academics. You may not become hugely wealthy as an academic in the financial sense, but the profession and calling of scholarship is immensely fulfilling and allows you to become wealthy in other senses.

6. Sixth, some postgraduates serve as sub-wardens and senior hall students in our residences and oppidan structures. This is very much appreciated as you have much to offer our residence and oppidan undergraduates as mentors and important resource people.
7. Finally, you contribute, through the Postgraduate Student Liaison Committee (PGSLC), to governing Rhodes University. The PGSLC is represented on the Council of the University, the Senate, the Joint Research Committee, and various other committees, including the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Quality Assurance Committee. The PGSLC also participates in the budget process by which the University budget and tuition and residence fees are decided on.

Through your PGSLC, you have many and diverse opportunities to have your views made known and to contribute to shaping the nature and direction of the University. The PGSLC also provides you with invaluable opportunities to develop leadership qualities and skills.

The PGSLC also has a vital role to play in contributing to postgraduate student development, either through your own initiatives or in partnership with the Office of the Dean of Research or other bodies.

The PGSLC is your body, it of you and for you. It is important that you value, nurture and develop it. The PGSLC has an open door to the Dean of Research, the Dean of Students, to the other Deans and to myself, and we are all very happy to engage with you on any matters related to your postgraduate experience, and especially how we can enhance it further.

In closing I wish you a stimulating, productive and great

year, and I look forward to your contribution in maintaining and further enhancing Rhodes University as an outstanding postgraduate institution.