

**WELCOME BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR  
AT THE DEPARTMENT OF ICHTHYOLOGY  
AND FISHERIES STATE VETS COURSE**

**15 October 2007**

Dr Motseki Hlatshwayo, Prof. Peter Britz, Mr. Rouhani, our visiting vets, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, molweni, good morning.

Thank you for the kind invitation to welcome to you all to Rhodes University. You are most welcome!

It is a source of great pleasure to me that Rhodes University is hosting this Fish Health course for state vets.

I am a simple sociologist and so my knowledge of aquaculture and marine veterinary issues is extremely limited. However, one is never too old to learn and part of the real fun of being a Vice Chancellor is to be invited to such occasions and to learn about other intellectual endeavours and research in disciplines and fields other than my own.

Permit me to make a few observations.

The first is that this Fish Health course is a wonderful coming together of disciplines and knowledge with a

central interest in linking human livelihoods, food production and conservation.

This wonderfully brings together the social (human livelihood), the economic (food production), and the ecological (conservation). It also manifests a key development challenge of our society: that is how we simultaneously, not consecutively or sequentially but simultaneously, address and balance social and economic needs and environmental imperatives.

Further, whether you may be aware of it or not, your endeavours here are part and parcel of the overall four-fold development challenge that confronts South Africa: that is how do we pursue **economic growth**, with **social equity**, and do so in a way that is **environmentally sustainable**; that recognises the need to extend, deepen and consolidate **democracy** in our societies; and do all of this also simultaneously and not consecutively or sequentially.

We need a thick conception of development that is simultaneously human, economic, social, cultural and environmental and not just reduced to economic growth.

You will well recognise that the pressing problems and challenges of our natural and social worlds have no respect for the academic disciplines and fields that have evolved over centuries, and refuse to elegantly confine themselves to the boundaries that we have drawn around our disciplines and fields. There is value to maintaining a distinction between different disciplines and fields, especially in undergraduate teaching. However, we sometimes unnecessarily make ourselves prisoners of disciplines and fields instead of being open to a meeting of minds around common problems and concerns in an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary way that can engender imaginative new approaches to formulating issues and researching and addressing them.

[Provide example of visit to Environmental Biotechnology Research Unit – need for social sciences and social understanding alongside technology – and truth of this with respect to the challenges of the UNESCO-supported Bushman's River project!]

Finally, this is a coming together of state policy makers, working professionals and academics. Having for the past 17 years been involved in higher education policy research and policy development and for 7 years having served as the head of the higher education policy advisory body to two Ministers of Education, it is my experience that the

specific constituencies of academics, government, and professional practitioners are not always easy to bring together, and especially to hold together.

Whatever the difficulties, the important thing is to appreciate the value of such coming together, to be sensitive and respectful of different views and to recognise that we need each other if we are to address the concerns, problems and challenges that are our common lot.

[In closing - story of lost keys searched for under a street light!]

I don't know what proportion of time you spend in the light or in the dark. But I am that universities and scientific disciplines and fields, must focus not only on lit areas but must also illuminate areas of darkness as part of their essential role of advancing human understanding of our natural and social worlds, and contributing to economic and social development.

Universities and scientific disciplines and fields must, however, also illuminate in another sense. Beyond communicating with a peer scientific community, they must also engage around science, knowledge, technology

and policy with other social actors like government and yourselves as vets.

This stress on communicating beyond simply a peer scientific community is a call to ensure that our universities engage actively with the South African public and act as catalysts of high level public education and training. After all, we are, as universities, meant to advance the public and social good.

For this reason, since my arrival as the new VC I have challenged academic colleagues to consider professional continuing education and training as an important function of Rhodes, to think imaginatively in this regard and to innovate so that we can contribute to the further and ongoing professional development of those who are in employment and in the professions.

Rhodes University, and the Department of Ichthyology and Fisheries specifically, has a vital role to play in enhancing the capabilities of various professional groups such as state vets, public officials in the fields of marine and coastal management and agriculture, professionals in the private fishing industry, and similar groups.

Of course, in as much as we have knowledge and expertise to contribute, we must appreciate that people

you who are professionals also have much to teach us and to contribute to our wider knowledge and understanding. Through such an approach we can set into motion a powerful and exciting virtuous spiral of the mutual development of knowledge, understanding and professional expertise that is of great benefits to us as individuals, to our institutions and organisations, to the economic sectors we work in, and to our country.

DIFS – Rural Fisheries Programme – dialogue to extend and deepen partnerships and collaboration – research, policy contribution in terms of National Aquaculture Policy and the National Aquaculture Strategy., PCE

Example of teacher development centre and school partnership

I wish you an enjoyable stay at Rhodes University and in Rhini/Grahamstown, a stimulating workshop, and a productive education and training experience.