

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

## **Settlers Monument, Grahamstown**

**10 July 2006**

Ms. Clayton, our distinguished speaker Mr Deon Opperman, other distinguished guests and officials, and above all our student and teacher delegates: good morning, Molweni.

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 the 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 great that through the National Schools Festival you will have these opportunities and exposure. At the same time, it is truly a pity that our schools are not able to provide such opportunities and exposure to all our students and to significantly incorporate within our curriculum an education in the arts.

Around the world and in South Africa too, great priority is given to science and technology. Given the contribution of science and technology to economic development, and our need for economic development to address the pressing challenges of poverty and unemployment, social equity and HIV/AIDS, this is understandable. However, it would be most unfortunate if we were to use the level of economic development as the sole measure of the South Africa's development.

Food, clothing, shelter, jobs, high quality education and health care are all crucial to ensure a better life for all South Africans. But as much as these are vital, true human development and the leading of rich, rewarding and productive lives entail more than the satisfaction of these basic needs alone.

The arts – drama, prose, poetry, dance, painting, sculpture, weaving, music and the like – are also a vital dimension of what it means to be human and to be South African. Through the arts we display the wonderful abilities of the human mind and spirit to imagine, create and reflect. As we design, produce, and perform in the various art forms we express who and what we have been, who and what we are, or are becoming. We put on show our joys and sorrow, fears and hopes. We celebrate our unity and our diversity, and our triumphs and achievements. And we also fearlessly and courageously ask difficult questions about our lives, our values, cultures and society.

In much as South Africa needs and must develop scientists and technologists, we also desperately need and must nurture the arts and artists. Without the arts, we will be a dull and drab society, and we will be an impoverished and undeveloped people.

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

Rhodes University is the smallest university in South Africa, wherein also lies our distinctiveness. We have a proud reputation of excellence in teaching and learning and research. We also take pride in being a nurturing environment in which students can develop as intellectuals, professionals and people. This and the fact that we have low students to teacher ratios ensure that we have the best undergraduate pass rates in South Africa and also the best undergraduate graduation rates.

In the years to come we are determined to maintain and further enhance our current excellence so that Rhodes will continue to benefit our students, our people and our country with respect to producing knowledgeable, skilled and committed professionals, producing knowledge for human understanding and social development, and also community engagement.

We hope you will use the time at this festival to ask whatever questions you may have about studying at Rhodes and that we can persuade you to give serious consideration to joining us at Rhodes next year. For those that have already decided that Rhodes is where you wish to be next year, you can be assured that you have made a very good choice and I welcome you in advance.

Once again, on behalf of Rhodes University, welcome to the National Schools Festival, welcome to Rhodes University.