



Dear All

The University is working on a broad range of transformation concerns and is committed to continuing the quest to find solutions to remaining challenges together. As we are committed to democratic ideals, opportunities for students' and staff voices, concerns and suggestions to be heard are vital as we strive together to create a University that truly benefits the society that it serves.

The Vice-Chancellor addressed students at a Student Body Meeting held on Tuesday, 15 September 2015, on processes of transformation as well as short vacation accommodation.

The SRC President, Mr Zikisa Maqubela, chaired the meeting. The Secretary General, Mr Lindokuhle Zungu-Lushaba, gave a report back on the activities of the SRC for 2015.

Dr Mabizela thanked the SRC for the invitation to address the student assembly and noted that there were staff in attendance who were interested in hearing the concerns raised by students. Further he congratulated the SRC of 2016 who were elected in August.

"I'm truly proud of the manner in which we conducted our elections, with a very high voter turn-out and so the SRC that you have elected enjoys the support of the students of this University."

He further thanked the Independent Electoral Board for running a credible, open, free and fair election process.

A VC's challenge – Nine Tenths

"Nine Tenths of education is encouragement"
Anatole France

On becoming Vice-Chancellor, Dr Mabizela made a commitment to change Rhodes from a university that operated from Grahamstown to a university that operates in Grahamstown. The chief business of Rhodes University is learning and teaching, so one of the dimensions of locating a university in Grahamstown must be to forge meaningful ways to help equalise basic education or public schooling in this town.

Practical work carried out by GADRA Education this year has shown that Grade 12 learners in township schools who are mentored perform academically much better than those who are not mentored. With only a few months of mentoring Grade 12 learners' results improve.

The late French socialist poet Anatole France famously said, "Nine Tenths of education is encouragement" and therefore Dr Mabizela has decided to call this mentoring programme *Nine Tenths*.

Final matric examinations commence next month and it is unlikely that certain township schools in Grahamstown will obtain a 30% pass rate. Some of the six township schools will not get a single one of their current Grade 12 learners into Rhodes University in 2016. We must help grow excellent township schools in Grahamstown.

Dr Mabizela has made a commitment to the Principals of Ntsika and Mary Waters High Schools that Rhodes University will provide student mentors for each and every one of their Grade 12 learners in 2016.

"Each of you will change our schools when you become mentors and in the process change our University. We will transform our University and together we will transform our City."

Dr Mabizela challenged students to mentor a scholar in 2016 so that many are able to come to Rhodes University in 2017.

Processes of transformation

"This is an exciting time to be in higher education but it is also a challenging time, it is a time that we have to pay greater attention to issues of transformation."

Dr Mabizela highlighted seven priority areas of transformation that Rhodes University needs to address. However, this is not an exhaustive list. These are summarised below:

1. Social and demographic composition of our student body

Every young person who has an opportunity to succeed must have the opportunity to come to Rhodes University. If we have students that come from diverse cultural, linguistic, social and geographical backgrounds it creates a very rich educational experience for all students. We will continue to provide opportunities for these students. The biggest challenge for students from rural and working class backgrounds in accessing university is Financial Aid. There are also those in the middle, children of civil servants, who cannot afford University and Dr Mabizela said that they are working hard as Vice-Chancellors to find solutions to assist students who deserve to be in university but who by nature of their birth cannot afford to pay fees to be at university. The Minister of Higher Education has repeatedly said that universities must not look to government for more funding. However, state funding for higher education continues to decline. Possible solutions include negotiating with banks and accessing money from the Public Investment Company (PIC).

2. Staff Equity

Dr Mabizela noted that there are very few Black and female academics in the senior echelons of Rhodes University. There are also very few Black staff in Senior Management positions. The University through accelerated development programmes is trying to grow our own academics. We are a poor University and cannot entice staff with competitive packages. The University is paying a great deal of attention to create opportunities for academics to move through the ranks.

The Vice-Chancellor pointed out that as an institution of learning we must create opportunities for development and growth for support staff in particular those in Grades 1 to 5.

3. Curriculum

Students have a critical role to play in engaging academics so that they draw on knowledge that comes from diverse parts of the world. Dr Mabizela challenged students to engage lecturers, to sit down with them and look at

what is taught, how it is taught and how it is assessed. Universities are spaces of continuous learning and this includes academics.

4. Naming of buildings and names we use

We have endeavoured over the past number of years to include names of segments of society that were previously excluded and as we go forward we will continue to enrich the names of our residences, halls and buildings to include names that were not included in the past.

5. Institutional Culture

There are segments of our student body and staff who find Rhodes University to be an alienating environment. They do not feel welcome. Every person at Rhodes University must feel welcome and they must feel that they are able to pursue what they are here for, without any fear or any threat. It is the responsibility of all of us to make Rhodes a welcoming and affirming space for all.

6. Ceremonies and Traditions

We need to examine our ceremonies and traditions and the way we do things in order to ensure that we are inclusive in all that we do.

7. Visual Representation

Rhodes University needs to make campus a space where everyone feels visually represented, where students and staff see themselves reflected in the corridors. We have International Students who make an incredible contribution to the holistic educational experience. We need to ensure that these students feel safe. The University will not tolerate any chauvinistic behaviour.

Advancing transformation is not the sole responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor, it is the responsibility of each one of us.

Transforming our University

Dr Mabizela reassured the audience, "Transformation by its very nature is uncomfortable, it creates a lot of discomfort, there is no need for anyone to feel any anxiety or concern, everything is fine. Let us work together, let us

hold hands and let us deal with these challenges that confront us. Real transformation is not just about tinkering with the margins, it is about changing the very sense of who we are. And we have an opportunity to remake and reshape this institution into the best that it can be. Higher Education is by its very nature transformative, it has to transform you as a person, it has to transform our society and it must help us build a better world. And you have an important role to play in that regard."

The floor was then opened for questions where students posed a number of questions relating to the VC's address and transformation, updates from the Vice-Chancellor are summarized below:

Independent Investigation

The events of the Senate meeting of Friday 28 August 2015 are currently under investigation. The purpose of the investigation being conducted by an independent body is indicative of the University's commitment to a fair process. The Vice-Chancellor has requested that the investigation should ideally be completed by the middle of October 2015.

Name Change

The Institutional Forum met on Tuesday, 15 September 2015, and have finalised the Terms of Reference for the Task Team. These Terms of Reference will be presented to Council on Tuesday 22 September 2015. Council's decision will be communicated to the University Community. Should Council accept these Terms of Reference, the University Community will be canvassed for names of suitable people to serve on the Task Team. It is expected that a two year timeframe for them to conduct their research regarding a name change is likely.

Short vacation accommodation

At a Senate meeting held on 7 September 2015, a proposal to convene a Task Team to look into a sustainable solution to the issue relating to short vacation accommodation, was approved. The Task Team has been assigned the task of suggesting a long-term solution for 2016.

Updates regarding recent issues relating to transformation

The University received a memorandum from NEHAWU on Monday 7 September 2015 informing the University that they would show their support for the issues that the BSM are raising by gathering in solidarity as the BSM

handed over their memorandum. The University received a memorandum from the BSM, on Wednesday 9 September 2015, calling on the University to resolve a number of transformation challenges. The Vice-Chancellor addressed both students and staff outside the Main Admin Building. The University responded, in writing, to the BSM memorandum on Friday 11 September 2015.

Transformation is an ongoing process at Rhodes University, and while many people have been working tirelessly to address transformation challenges, and there are achievements to be celebrated, it is an ongoing process and we need to continuously strive to achieve more.

The Vice-Chancellor calls on all members of the University Community including academics, support staff and students to work together and contribute towards the advancement of our transformation imperatives.

Kind Regards



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