

VICE-CHANCELLOR’S WELCOME ADDRESS

2019 GRADUATION CEREMONIES

Thursday, 11 April 2019

09:30: Faculties of Humanities and Education

Prof Ian Scott *(hc)*

14:30: Faculties of Pharmacy, Law and Commerce

Prof Glenda Gray LLD (*hc*)

Friday, 12 April 2019

09:30: Faculty of Science

Prof Emeritus George Ellis LLD (*hc*)

14:30: Faculty of Commerce

18:30: Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences

Prof Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, LLD (*hc*)

Saturday, 13 April 2019

09h30: Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences

Chief Oyenike Okundaye, DFA (*hc*)

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# Brighten the corner!

* The Chancellor, the Honourable Justice Lex Mpati,
* The Chairperson of the Rhodes University Council, Mr Vuyo Kahla, and other members of our Council,
* The Chairperson of the Rhodes University Convocation, Professor Emeritus Peter Mtuze,
* Our honorary graduands,
* The University Public Orator, Distinguished Prof Paul Maylam,
* Deputy Vice-Chancellors,
* Deans,
* Registrar,
* Heads of Academic Department and Directors of Administrative Divisions,
* Academic and support staff colleagues,
* President and other members of the Student Representative Council,
* Proud parents, guardians, siblings and friends of our graduands,
* Honoured guests,
* Ladies and gentlemen,
* And most importantly, our graduands.

This is the day of joy; this is the day of celebration!

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you all to the first of six graduation ceremonies of 2019 at Rhodes University.

Graduation ceremonies are an important highlight in our University calendar. They afford us a special opportunity to recognise, honour and celebrate the academic success and achievements our new graduates.

Graduation is a significant milestone which marks one of the most memorable experiences in the life of our graduates of any age. It marks the end and a new beginning. It is a culmination of many years of hard work and personal sacrifice; a celebration of a great personal accomplishment, a moment of joy and pride for parents and other family members; a time to reflect on the road travelled and to look forward to a future filled with great promise.

On behalf of our Chancellor, Council and the entire Rhodes University community, I offer our warmest and proud congratulations to each one of you, our graduands, on your wonderful achievements. Completing a Rhodes University qualification is a particularly demanding undertaking. You and your family are justifiably proud of your remarkable personal accomplishment. We are immensely proud of you.

Let me extend our special heartfelt congratulations to those graduands who are the first in their family to earn a university degree. Having been one myself, I know too well just what a proud and special moment this is for you. You have achieved what no one in your family has achieved. Heartiest congratulations!

This day will remain deeply etched on your memory and will be remain a source of inspiration for you for the rest of your life.

Each one of you, our graduands, has your own unique story to tell about your journey to the glorious achievement we are celebrating this morning. For some of you, the path to this day has been a long and a rocky one requiring persistence, perseverance and hard work. Others have had to confront and negotiate struggles of financial hardships that left them uncertain at the beginning of each year as to whether or not they would be able to continue with their studies.

You’ve pulled through! Well done and hearty congratulations!

I hope that this public celebration of your achievements has consigned to a distant and ever-fading memory all the difficulties you encountered along the way.

Over the years that you have been at Rhodes University, you have been sustained by the unfaltering support, loving sacrifices and constant encouragement of your parents, guardians, siblings, friends and loved ones. They have been there to provide advice and to cheer you up and cheer you on at times when you might have lost all hope. This day belongs as much to you as it does to them too. Please never turn your back on them.

*[Can we please give a warm round of applause to all the families and those who supported our students.]*

We can only imagine the deep sense of happiness and fulfilment that they must be feeling knowing that their many financial and other contributions have successfully supported the completion of your degree.

The success and achievements we celebrate this morning attest to the dedicated and committed support of our academic staff, tutors, laboratory technicians, computer assistants, support and administrative staff. We also acknowledge with great gratitude the important role played by our cleaners, cooks, gardeners, janitorial staff, wardening staff and student leaders in creating a rich and supportive intellectual, social and physical environment for our students to develop, grow and succeed in their academic endeavours.

In our 2019 graduation ceremonies we will also confer five (5) honorary degrees on highly eminent individuals in recognition and celebration of their extraordinary lifetime achievements and contributions in a field of knowledge or scholarship, in public service or in artistic creation. Their personal journeys and selfless service and sacrifices serve as an inspiration and an example worthy of emulation by all of us. These distinguished women and men are: Prof Ian Scott, Prof Glenda Gray, Professor Emeritus George Ellis, Prof Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, and Chief Oyenike Okundaye.

*Graduation statistics…..*

In the 6 graduation ceremonies of 2019, a total of 2321 students will receive their degrees and diplomas. Of these, 1261 (or 54%) are undergraduate Bachelor’s degrees and 1060 (or 46%) are postgraduate degrees and diplomas. Of the 1060 postgraduate students, 230 will be receiving their Master’s degrees.

Of the 2321 graduates, 61% are women (*Malibongwe*!), and 19% are international students.

This year we have produced 89 PhD graduates. The Faculty of Science has produced 38 PhD degrees; the Faculty Humanities has 30; the Faculty of Commerce 3, the Faculty of Education 16, and the Faculty of Pharmacy 2. All Faculties have done exceedingly well. Our warm congratulations to all our Faculty Deans, Heads of Department and the academic and support staff of our academic Departments.

*Brighten the corner where you are…*

Let me, for a moment, address myself to our graduands.

You have received the best education from one of the finest universities. With your Rhodes University qualification, you can embrace the future with confidence courage and conviction.

Not only do you carry light with you, you **are** the light of the world. May your light shine before others and dispel the darkness of ignorance, inequality, greed, selfishness, cynicism, hopelessness and despair.

May you brighten the corner wherever you find yourself! And as Germany Kent suggests, “Let your light shine as an inspiration to humanity and be the reason someone believes in the goodness of people.” Always endeavour to improve the lives of the people around you.

Now that you have a qualification from this great University, you are able to make life choices and define what success, happiness and fulfilment mean for you.

Whatever choices you make in life, never elevate personal ambition or single-minded pursuit of material or financial gain above everything else. There is no honour in the abuse of public trust for private or personal gain. Never allow the lure of instant gratification or convenience to cloud your good judgement.

Whatever the future holds for you, always strive to be the best that you can possibly be. Always strive to live a life of virtue, a life of consequence.

How ever you choose to define success, fulfilment or happiness, never forget who you are or where you come from. Never forget those who have supported you; those who have stood by you through all your ups and downs.

How ever you choose to define success, fulfilment or happiness, never fail to treat others with respect, kindness and decency.

How ever you choose to define success, fulfilment or happiness, never fail to pause once in a while to assess what it is that really matters in life and take time to appreciate little things in life.

In all that you do, may you be guided by the values of social justice, empathy, integrity, honesty, compassion and human solidarity.

Always endeavour to brighten the corner where you. You have so much to offer the world! Never for a moment doubt your capacity to make a positive change in our society. Never allow the fear of failure to drive you into the safety and placidity of inaction.

When I became the Vice-Chancellor of this great University I made a public commitment that we would make quality and transformative education to academically capable young people of our country accessible and affordable regardless of their financial circumstances. Indeed, we must do all in our power to attract the best and the brightest from every section of our society and provide them with an opportunity to realise their hopes, dreams and aspirations. In this regard, I humbly request you to help us honour this commitment by contributing generously to our annual fundraising campaign and other initiatives aimed at making the learning experiences we value so greatly here at Rhodes University more available to all.

As a graduate of this great University, you join a special community of our alumni – extraordinary women and men who are making remarkable contributions and leading change in many and diverse fields of human endeavour. We will expect no less from you! We welcome you to this special and ever-growing community with whom you share a deep affection for this great institution. We invite you to visit the alumni table in the foyer to receive your special graduation gift as a *memento* of this momentous occasion.

In the years to come, we will follow your growth, development and success as a professional with keen interest and we will applaud you for the honour and credit you bring to your *alma mater*.

Today is your special day to cherish and remember. May you cherish your university experience and the privilege of an excellent education you have received from this great University.

May you cherish and treasure the bonds of friendships formed at Rhodes University and rooted in shared experiences and memories and, may these sustain you and last a lifetime.

We wish you much success, happiness and fulfilment in the years ahead. We know that you will play your part in making this world a better place for all of us and for generations to come as you brighten the corner where you are!

To all of you, our graduands, Mazel tov!

*Appreciation ….*

For two of our highly esteemed colleagues, the 2019 graduation ceremonies are their last ones in which they will participate in their official capacities. Our Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic & Student Affairs, Dr Chrissie Boughey, and our public orator, Distinguished Professor Paul Maylam, will relinquish their roles in the course of the year 2019. Both of them have served our University loyally and with great honour, dedication and distinction for many years. On behalf of our Chancellor, Council and the entire Rhodes University community, we wish to convey to you both our heartfelt appreciation and deep gratitude for all that you have done for our University. Our University is much the better for the immense contribution you have made over many years. We wish you well in the next phase of your ever-unfolding future.

Asante sana. Enkosi. Ke a leboga. Ngiyabonga. Ke a leboha. Ndo livhuwa. Ngiyathokoza. Obrigado. Inkomu. Shukraan. Merci beaucoup. Baie dankie. Thank you very much.

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