

Environment Awards Ceremony

20 October 2010

by

Sizwe Mabizela,

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic & Student Affairs, Rhodes University

Municipality Manager, Ms Ntombi Baart

Makana Municipality Councillors,

Honoured guests,

Colleagues,

Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for taking time off your busy schedules to attend this ceremony in which we launch Rhodes University Green Fund and also recognise, celebrate, honour and pay tribute to those who have championed the cause of sustainable development and environmental awareness. These are colleagues who have demonstrated visionary leadership in advancing practices that protect and enhance the natural environment which is the greatest inheritance handed down to us by our fore-bearers.

Our Vice-Chancellor asked me to convey his apologies that, due to a University commitment outside of town, he couldn't be with us this afternoon. He conveys his best wishes for a successful launch and his heartfelt congratulations to the recipients of the 2010 Environmental Awards.

Let me also take this opportunity to convey my hearty congratulations to the recipients of the Environment Awards. Our University is immensely proud of the contribution that you have made and continue to make in advancing the

cause of sustainable development and environmental awareness. You have demonstrated profound vision and unwavering commitment and determination in ensuring that Rhodes becomes a greener university.

The challenges of environmental degradation, climate change and global warming are no longer issues of interest to a small fringe in a society. They are matters that will determine the future survival of the human species and other life forms on earth.

I would like to convey our deep gratitude and profound appreciation to the members of the University Environmental Committee for their outstanding leadership and for stewardship they exercise in respect of our natural environment awareness and sustainability issues.

We are privileged and honoured to have at Rhodes University committed and dedicated champions on environmental and sustainability matters. People like Fred Ellery, Mark Hazell, Nikki Köhly and many others provide sterling leadership in our endeavours to raise awareness and action on environmental issues.

Let me comment very briefly on the Green Fund initiative:

Green Fund

The Green Fund initiative had its genesis in the projects of the Environment Science students who, in 2009, had to calculate the University's carbon footprint and propose ways to "reduce carbon emissions and mitigate its negative impact on the environment"¹. Following their work, the students proposed the creation of a Green Fund to "support initiatives that could contribute to Rhodes University reducing its carbon footprint and becoming a more environmentally friendly-institution"². The Vice-Chancellor subsequently challenged the entire University community to contribute to the establishment of the Green Fund.

¹ Rhodes University Green Fund and Green Challenge (document)

² Rhodes University Green Fund and Green Challenge (document)

As has already been mentioned, “[t]he purpose of the Green Fund is to support Rhodes University in reducing its carbon footprint in order to contribute to environmental sustainability, and more generally to become a more environment-friendly institution. The Green Fund will be a special ring-fenced fund entirely devoted to advancing the ‘greening’ of Rhodes University”³. Through this initiative, we would like to position Rhodes University as “the leading Higher Education institution nationally with respect to its ecological footprint and best practice around sustainability”⁴.

We, as a University, are immensely proud of this initiative. We would like to challenge staff, students, parents, alumni, members of Council, members of convocation, and other university stakeholders to support this initiative. We urge all university constituencies to raise awareness and popularise the Green Fund initiative. We challenge academic staff to infuse their academic curricula with ideas and concepts of sustainable development and environmental awareness.

Once again, warm congratulations to all the award winners and I wish you continued success.

Thank you very much.

³ Rhodes University Green Fund and Green Challenge (document)

⁴ [Hod] Environmental Committee Green Fund Run and Challenge - e-mail of 14 September 2010