



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

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Dear Rhodes University graduate,

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic earlier this year, our University was unable to hold its graduation ceremonies scheduled for April 2020. This denied us an opportunity to recognise and celebrate your hard-earned accomplishments in the way we have always done at Rhodes University.

Graduation is a significant milestone in any university student's academic journey. This is particularly so for those who are first in their family to earn a university degree. A feeling of disappointment is not being able to mark your important personal academic achievement is understandable and justified.

I wish to assure you that, once the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic has receded, we will invite you, your family and friends back to our University to publicly celebrate your accomplishments together with your classmates, lecturers and those who supported you and helped you along the way. At that celebratory event, you will take part in that traditional experience of having your name called out by your Dean, walk across the stage in your academic gown and with your hood over your arm, the Chancellor tap your head with his folded round cap and the Registrar to hood you; your family, friends and the Rhodes University staff screaming with excitement and cameras flashing to capture your truly special moment of glory. In this way, together we will celebrate your momentous achievement.

In compliance with the University Statute which states that "a person is not entitled to any of the privileges conferred by any degree until he or she has been admitted to such degree at a congregation," the University Chancellor, Judge Lex Mpati, [in this video](#), constitutes a virtual congregation of Rhodes University for the conferral of degrees and award of diplomas and certificates *in absentia*.

The Chancellor will confer degrees and award diplomas and certificate to 2 422 candidates. Of these, 1221 have received an undergraduate degree and 1 201, a postgraduate degree, diploma or certificate. I am delighted that 61% of the graduating candidates are women, 18% international students, and 130 PhD graduates (up from 89 in 2019). I am deeply humbled and inspired by this stellar achievement of our students and our University. Our heartiest congratulations to you all. Your hard work, perseverance and sacrifices have paid off. I couldn't be prouder of each and every one of you! You have more than earned your place as a member of our Rhodes University alumni family. May you always live out the spirit and values of our motto: *Vis Virtus Veritas* (Truth, Virtue and Strength) and be a source of hope and inspiration for a better society and a better world.

The Chancellor will also confer four (4) 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. The recipients of the honorary degrees are Gogo 'Madosini' Latozi Mpahleni, Fr Alan Michael Lapsley, Ms Mary Maria Burton and Professor Patricia Ann Whitelock.

I continue to be hugely inspired by and proud of the outstanding contribution made by our students, staff and alumni in our national efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of them are on the frontlines of this global health crisis, risking their own lives and those of their loved ones to save the

lives of others. I salute them; I honour them; and I applaud them. Continue to fight this good fight and save lives and livelihoods. You represent the best and the finest!

Once more, heartiest congratulations on your graduation. I am immensely proud of you and your tremendous academic success.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sizwe Mabizela'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Sizwe' and the last name 'Mabizela' clearly distinguishable.

Sizwe Mabizela,
Vice-Chancellor, Rhodes University.