



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Main Admin Building, Drostdy Road, Grahamstown, 6139, South Africa
PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa
t: +27 (0) 46 603 8148
f: +27 (0) 46 603 7561
e: vc@ru.ac.za

www.ru.ac.za

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Dear Rhodes University graduate,

On behalf of our Chancellor, Council and the entire Rhodes University community, I offer you our warmest and proud congratulations on graduating with a Masters or PhD degree from Rhodes University. Without hard work, perseverance and a dogged determination, you would not have reached this important milestone in your academic pursuits.

You have now made an important contribution to our accumulated stock of knowledge; you have pushed the frontiers of knowledge and have opened up new vistas for further exploration. Writing your masters dissertation or doctoral thesis was no doubt a rollercoaster, marked by ebbs and flows in your productivity. There must have been many moments of fear, anxiety and uncertainty. And, you no doubt, also experienced exhilarating moments when you were able to make a breakthrough and progress in your work. Your sacrifices, tenacity and persistence have brought you to this splendid day of celebration. Congratulations!

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic earlier this year, our University has been unable to hold its graduation ceremonies on campus. This has denied us an opportunity to recognise and celebrate your hard-earned accomplishments in the way we have always done at Rhodes University. This is not how we had envisioned celebrating the significant milestone in your academic journey nor is it how we had imagined the launch of our inaugural graduation ceremony exclusively focused on the outstanding achievements of our masters and doctoral students. Life has its own plans and surprises. We could not risk your life and the lives of your loved ones by holding this graduation ceremony on campus. A feeling of disappointment in not being able to mark your important personal academic achievement with your family, friends and lecturers in the traditional manner we have always done, is understandable and justified. What the pandemic however could not do, was to stop us from acknowledging you for a significant milestone in your lives.

I wish to assure you that, once the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic has receded, we will invite you, your family and your friends back to our University to publicly celebrate your accomplishments together with those who supported you and helped you along the way. At that special event, you will take part in that traditional experience. Your name will be called out by your Dean. You will walk across the stage in your academic gown and with your hood over your arm. The Chancellor will tap your head with his folded round cap, and the Registrar will hood you. Your family, friends and the Rhodes University community will be screaming and ululating with excitement as cameras flash to capture your extraordinary 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 the accompanying video](#), constitutes a virtual congregation of Rhodes University for the conferral of degrees *in absentia*.

The Chancellor will confer degrees on 125 students. Of these, 79 (63%) are Masters graduands while 46 (37%) will receive their PhDs. Our female students continue to dominate with their numbers at 55%

of the cohort. Thirty percent (33%) of the students who are graduating are international students. We are a small University. However, there is nothing small about our postgraduate pedigree and standing in the country and on the continent.

The Chancellor will also confer an honorary degree, Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*), on a highly eminent individual in recognition and celebration of her extraordinary lifetime achievements and contributions in public service. Her personal journey and selfless service and sacrifices serve as an inspiration and an example worthy of emulation by all of us. The recipient of the honorary degree is our first woman Deputy President, current under-Secretary and Director of United Nations Women, uMam' uPhumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

We 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. We salute them; we honour them; and we applaud them for their courage, heroism and selfless service to our society and humanity. May they continue to fight this good fight and save lives and livelihoods. They represent the best and the finest!

We are immensely proud of you and your tremendous academic success. We are deeply humbled and inspired by your stellar achievement. You have more than earned your place as a member of our distinguished 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.

Once more, heartiest congratulations to you on your graduation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sizwe Mabizela". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Sizwe Mabizela,
Vice-Chancellor, Rhodes University.

*Please note, the graduation video will be set to private until the scheduled release of 30 October 2020 at 12:00 (noon)