The Chancellor, the Hon Judge President Lex Mpati

The Vice-Chancellor, Dr Sizwe Mabizela

The Deputy Vice-Chancellors Prof Boughy and Dr Clayton

The Registrar, Dr Steve Fourie

Deans of our respective Faculties

The Director of Student Affairs, Dr Colleen Vassilliou

Directors of our respective Divisions

HODs Present and Academic Staff

Former SRC Presidents Present

SRC Alumni and SRC Members

Members of our Student Forum

The Mabizela Family and friends

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

Good-evening.

It is an honour and not to mention what a privilege it is on behalf of the entire student body past and present, to officially welcome our new Vice Chancellor, Dr Sizwe Mabizela.

Dr Mabizela is today officially joining us for the first time as Vice-Chancellor to a University to which I am exceptionally proud to be a part of and to serve as its SRC President. It is a University in its truest sense a place in which we’re free to explore the joy and opportunity of learning as prescribed by our sacred constitution. Our journey here is to become enlightened individuals with a true sense of our place in the world. It is a place of the fusion of ideas, people and experiences; it is, I believe a University that leaves its mark in South Africa, the African Continent and the World beyond as a leading place of knowledge and research.

I am delighted that Dr Mabizela’s academic journey has brought him to Rhodes University, first as the HOD of the Mathematics Department and then later on as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs and now finally as Principal and Vice-Chancellor.

Rhodes University’s approach to learning at its core is a belief that practical experience should not be an afterthought which should be a vital part for degrees and qualifications that also demand intellectual rigor and creative thinking. It is no accident, or stroke of luck that this is the university in its ascendant that challenges the very best universities in areas like graduate employment and student life and satisfaction. Rhodes University students are encouraged to seize every opportunity that opens up for us to transform our lives while we’re here and to be passionate about our work and our future.

The former SRC President Mr Bradley Bense as a sitting member of Council promised the SRC and the student body last year that he would use his status and valued input on Council to appoint a tremendous leader. The SRC together with the Student Body wanted a leader who truly fits the ethos and values that Rhodes takes to pride. A leader who embraces change and would earn the trust and respect of the entire Rhodes Community. I feel our efforts were successful, for what a leader we have found in Dr Mabizela.

In his short tenure as acting Vice-Chancellor he has gone above and beyond the Student Body’s expectations and has truly embraced his role. In his capacity as both DVC and Vice-Chancellor, Dr Mabizela has shown a true compassion and understanding of students and student life. His approach to the issues most prevalent to the student body is characteristically gentle, but firm. It is qualities such as these that give us confidence that Dr Mabizela will work towards and with the SRC towards a greater and fuller representation of the student body.

The University is always striving to include students in the decisions that affect them. And now as SRC President I am confident that Dr Mabizela understands and values student involvement, student governance and Management-Student-Partnerships.

Dr. Mabizela – PAUSE.

You come into office in a difficult time in our country where there are barriers to higher education and training to those that find themselves in situations of previous disadvantage. You also take office in a University in the Eastern Cape, a province battling with basic education, amongst many other things. The winds of change are however blowing, (PAUSE) as SRCs all over the country have committed themselves to address these socio-economic setbacks in collaboration with their respective institutions. It is our hope that never, (PAUSE), never and never again shall we see students turned away from opportunity as a direct result of their socio-economic background. Our mantra as the SRC 2015 is “Students Remain Central”. We are comforted in the knowledge that Dr Mabizela embodies this mantra as seen in his interactions with students from all walks of life.

Rhodes University has for a number of years exceeded my aspirations and expectations. And I am sure that Dr Mabizela as a Vice-Chancellor will find that it does the same for him. Students here as you rightly know, pride themselves in Rhodes’ reputation by participating in a number of avenues such as Purple Thursday’s , Societies, Sports Clubs and the infamous “Spot the VC campaign” where you took a world record of selfies all over Grahamstown even while you were shopping in Pick ’n Pay.

**We’re therefore delighted today to entrust that reputation to you as our brand new Vice-Chancellor. Dr Mabizela, on behalf of a multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-national student body, I welcome you and your family officially as the Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University**!