

## **OLD RHODIAN REUNION - Johannesburg**

**4 November 2011**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

As Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University a warm welcome to you, the Johannesburg-based members of the Rhodes community.

It is a great honour to be surrounded by inspired and inspiring Old Rhodians such as yourselves. I very much appreciate your continued valuing of your student days, and thank you for making the time this evening to reminisce and to discover how your alma mater continues to navigate our fast-changing world.

On all the important and relevant indicators, Rhodes continues to be one of South Africa's outstanding universities.

But it is through the achievements and successes of our graduates, the ever-growing community of Old Rhodians, that the University really impacts on South Africa and different parts of the world.

The annual Old Rhodian Awards celebrate the achievements of alumni that enhance the reputation of the University and serve as role models in society.

Recently, we honoured three deserving and distinguished Old Rhodians.

The first is Mr Connie Molusi, once a student in Journalism and Politics, a man with a highly developed social conscience and a fierce guardian of an independent media.

Connie is currently Chairperson of the Board of Telkom Media, chair of Sishen Iron Ore Trust, and previously held the position of CEO of Johnnic Communications (now Avusa).

The second was Mrs Judith Bishop, who is a BSc Honours graduate is today an internationally renowned Computer Science academic and Director of Computer Science at Microsoft Research. Her fondest memories of Rhodes include singing protest songs in the Great Hall.

Our third recipient of the Old Rhodian Award was Mrs Margie Keeton, a Rhodes Board of Governor and prominent leader in the field of corporate social investment. She was the founding CEO of Tshikululu Social Investments.

For the first time this year we also presented Emerging Old Rhodian Awards in recognition of alumni under the age of 40 who are already acknowledged leaders in society.

Dr Garth Cambray has taken his PhD in Biotechnology to entirely new levels. Having developed advanced technology to make mead using locally produced honey, the Makana Meadery has scooped multiple local, national and international awards.

Mr Tandeka Ngcukaitobi is an attorney and advocate of the High Court who grew up in the rural Transkei and obtained a Masters in Constitutional and Administrative Law from Rhodes. He is an inspirational man whose is passionate about responsible citizenship and holding those who wield power accountable.

Our students too continue to excel, win awards and make their mark.

The United Nations Environment Programme has awarded Alex Lenferna, a Masters student and Mandela Rhodes Scholar, the Young Environmental Envoy Award for his efforts in the area of sustainable development and climate change. Alex is the chairperson of South East African Climate Consortium Student Forum (SEACC SF) and a founder of the Bluebuck Summit.

Third-year law students Lara von Wildenrath and Armand Swart recently won the second annual Child Law Moot Court held at Pretoria High Court. The event is intended to attract more lawyers to the practice of child law.

True to form, third-year Microbiology students excelled at the Intervarsity Brewing Competition held at the SAB Training Institute in Kyalami recently, winning the Speciality Beer category and the Best Label Floating trophy.

Three academics, all women, must be singled out.

Professor Janice Limson, the recipient of the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award for 2010, was the runner-up in the Distinguished Young Women category of the NRF Women in Science Awards.

Her cutting-edge research focuses on the design and development of biosensors, which are being engineered to detect early-stage cancer and malaria, to monitor toxic environmental pollutants, and to identify beneficial plant compounds.

Our highly acclaimed Professor Tebello Nyokong, the director of the Nanotechnology Innovation Centre at Rhodes, continues to scoop awards. This year she has been awarded the Distinguished Women in Chemistry Award by the prestigious Royal Society of Chemistry and the Pan Africa Chemistry Network.

The American-based Association for Women in Psychology has awarded Professor Catriona Macleod the 2011 Distinguished Publication Award for

her book 'Adolescence, pregnancy and abortion: Constructing a threat of degeneration'.

Building on the solid foundations of an increasingly diverse and cosmopolitan student body, highly qualified staff and outstanding pass and graduation rates and research outputs, our priorities in coming years are three fold.

First, we plan to become a more postgraduate and research intensive university.

With 7300 students this year, we plan to cap new undergraduate enrolments at 1 500 and only enrol 29 new undergraduates between 2011 and 2013. Instead, we will focus on recruiting over 400 postgraduates. We will move from 27% postgraduate to 30% postgraduate in coming years.

To this effect, the following developments have occurred this year:

- A new Honours specialisation in Health Journalism in partnership with Discovery Health
- Four new Masters programmes - in Social Policy, Creative Writing, Bioinformatics and Applied Computer Science, and
- Four new postgraduate and research focus areas in Humanities funded by the Mellon Foundation.

Other developments, such as additional new postgraduate and research programmes, a new postgraduate centre, new postgraduate residences and the like will follow.

Our second priority is to bid for and host a UNESCO Institute for Water Education and Research.

Water education and research at Rhodes occurs in numerous disciplines and three dedicated research centres. Our research ranges from studying water at its sources through to the Antarctic; our contributions range from involvement in municipal waste water management to national policy advice to government.

Water will be a critical issue in the decades to come. We wish to put our knowledge and expertise to work for the continent and to become a key hub in Africa for the production of postgraduates and research related to water.

Support has already been pledged by the departments of Higher Education & Training and Science & Technology and Water.

Discussions have already occurred with select Southern African institutions, and a consortium with Fort Hare and NMMU is being formed.

The Life Sciences - Biochemistry, Microbiology and Biotechnology, Zoology and Entomology, and Chemistry – are the most research-productive departments at Rhodes and hold two of Rhodes' five prestigious national research chairs. They also produce large numbers of postgraduates.

Our third priority, therefore, is necessarily a new Life Sciences building to ensure that these disciplines continue to perform in the way they have. This is likely to be a R200 million project, the largest infrastructure project in the history of Rhodes.

This will be on the heels of a spectacular state of the art and technology new library that was opened late last year at a cost of R75 million. R23 million was raised from alumni and donors. A new Environmental Learning Centre will be opened soon and construction will begin on a new teacher education building later in the year.

Prof. Matthew Lester, the renowned Rhodes tax guru, says that in an informational and knowledge society and globalised world investment in higher education gives you one of the best returns at both individual and societal levels. I agree!

Usually, I leave it at this and hope that this is your cue to pledge your support to your alma mater. This year I want to be more direct: to continue to be an outstanding university, we need your support as alumni and Old Rhodians.

The 2011 Rhodes budget is R 450 million. Only 55% of our income comes from the state. 30% is from student fees. The other 15% has to be generated by us through research awards and contracts, foundation and corporate grants, and alumni giving.

The great universities of the world depend significantly on alumni giving. We are a small university – the smallest in South Africa by far – but we do not lack in ambition and we are determined to be one of the great universities of our continent.

We hope that the newly created Rhodes Annual Fund will become the key mechanism for giving on your part. No matter how small or big, your financial contribution is critical for Rhodes to remain at the forefront of knowledge production, to continue changing the lives of those who otherwise cannot afford a university education, to undertake community engagement with local communities, and to be a lively and lovely campus of fond student memories.

Take Unathi Kamlana, the current Chief Director of Financial Markets and Stability, who was raised in Mdantsane, East London, and supported by his grandmother on a state pension.



Through the grace of a small donation of R100 for his taxi fare, Unathi was able to make the trip to Grahamstown to apply to Rhodes. Alumni giving made it possible for Unathi to undertake undergraduate studies and eventually graduate with a Masters degree in Taxation.

A number of those present this evening have generously contributed to the Annual Fund. They are recognizable by the distinctive badge they wear.

As you mingle and relive memories please do enquire how you too can make a contribution, no matter how small, to the Rhodes Annual Fund.

Your contribution, combined with those of thousands of others is critical to ensuring that there are more Unathi's, more path-breaking research on cancer and water, more cutting edge equipment and facilities to sustain such research, and more community development initiatives in Dwesa, Keiskammahoek, Grahamstown and elsewhere.

Thank you for joining us this evening.