

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS AT THE 11TH CONGREGATION ON THE 1ST DECEMBER 2012

Indeed it is always a most singular honor and privilege, for me to welcome you, Your Excellency and Chancellor to Midlands State University. Without doubt, your presence and personal participation is highly cherished as it accords the ceremony the pomp and the grace that it so deserves.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, it is now axiomatic that university education is the great engine of economic and social transformation. Moreover, this education also confers considerable benefits to the individual, through its power to promote social mobility and to enhance earning capacities. It is this strong faith we have in the efficacy of higher education as an invaluable catalytic developmental public good to our people and to the nation, which inspires us with an almost evangelical commitment to our mission.

Thus as a fragment, albeit a most revealing fragment of our zealous mission, today, we will be presenting to you a total of **2 338** highly trained men and women, who we are most confident will add value to the creation of wealth in this country and the other sister countries we serve. Of this total, **57%** are male while **43%** are female, **1917** are gaining their first degrees while **421** are post graduates and 18 are graduating with first class degrees.

One of the principal hallmarks of a sound university is its international character as revealed by its student and staff make up. In her report to the United Nations Population Division, on "Globalisation and Internationalization of Tertiary Education", Mary Kritz (2006) observed that in today's globalisation era, knowledge has increasingly become a commodity that moves between countries, and that institutions of higher learning are building partnerships with universities in other countries and setting up branch campuses abroad that are changing the structure and relationships that traditionally existed in higher education. In pursuit of internationalization as a desirable value in higher education and heeding a similar and Pan Africanist call in the Arusha Convention of 1981, the Midlands State University has made its doors wide open to students from the sub region and put in place funding for scholars from sister universities to come and especially supervise our postgraduate students.

The upshot is a luxuriant cultural foliage characterizing our student body as is going to be witnessed from the music entertainment which the congregation is going to enjoy. Moreover we have a strong representation of graduands from the Kingdom of Swaziland among others.

As we congratulate our graduands on their attainments we also wish to take this opportunity to applaud our Midlands State University students who confidently represented Zimbabwe in the recent Students in Free Enterprise SIFE/Enactus competitions that were held in Washington D. C. Your Excellency and Chancellor, we are exceedingly pleased to inform you that our students came fourth in the world's biggest entrepreneurial competitions to date, out of a total of 1600 universities from 39 countries, thereby raising our national flag high and placing Midlands State University on the august international academic landscape.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, fully conscious of the fact that however well crafted and articulated an institutional vision might be, it takes competent, motivated and well qualified human resources and of a high caliber to translate such a lofty ideal into reality. For instance by 2008 this critical factor of intellectual activity and production had almost vanished from right across our Higher Education landscape. We had to start almost from a clean slate. Almost half of the entire teaching staff of MSU was made up of first degree holders. Today, just four years down the line, only 20 members of our staff do not have a Masters degree, which is the minimum qualification required to teach in our universities in Zimbabwe. And these 20 should complete their MAs by June next year. Similarly we are steaming ahead with our doctoral studies so that in three years' time it should be difficult to throw a stone near a crowd of lecturers without it falling on a PhD holder. To achieve all this, we have established a well resourced Research and Postgraduate Studies Office headed by an indefatigable woman professor. We have put in place funding to enable our doctoral students to register and be supervised by experienced colleagues in universities in neighbouring countries. We also fund such supervisors to come to the Midlands State University to interact with their students. The net result is that we now have 135 registered doctoral students. We have also moved from the position where we were in 2009 when we had only 16 PhDs on our staff to the current status where we have a complement of 68 PhDs. All I can say is that the Zimbabwean Higher Education giant which has been slumbering is slowly awakening and will soon be making its rightful intellectual bellows on the African terrain.

To motivate and retain our staff, we have made their welfare an integral part of the university business. One of our targets in this area has been housing. We have gone into partnership

with FBC Building Society to enable our middle and lower income earners to access some 100 housing units in Mkoba as a beginning. We have also engaged Old Mutual, who are assisting our members to acquire 500 housing stands. Your Excellency and Chancellor, nothing causes me more heart-aches than student accommodation and in my sleepless nights I am looking for ways and means to solve the problem. At this juncture suffice to say, I am extremely heartened by the support for our initiatives, which we are receiving from our parent Ministry and other Government quarters. Such sympathetic support speaks volumes about the humanity of the people who occupy high offices in our Government.

Finally, Your Excellency and Chancellor, I wish to extend the institution's profound gratitude for the unwavering support that we are receiving from Government through our line Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education. Needless to say, such generous support comes about in response to your solid commitment to the development of the entire education sector in this country. We also remain eternally indebted and grateful to our University Council, Industry and Commerce, Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE), parents and guardians as well as all our valued stakeholders for their unwavering support and guidance that we receive perennially. I also wish to take this opportunity to remind graduands that Midlands State University has made you a complete person, not one who is the most educated, but one who is best equipped to acquire knowledge and skills and become more versatile. Armed with knowledge and expertise your call in life is to exercise leadership, with humility, wherever you find yourself – be it in the classrooms; in legal practices and the courts; in research institutions and scientific laboratories; in universities and the media, and in financial and public services. I congratulate you all and wish you Godspeed in your next agendas.

Congratulations, Makorokoto, Amhlope!

I thank you.



Our Hands Our Minds Our Destiny