

## **VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS AT THE MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY'S 12<sup>TH</sup> CONGREGATION - 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2013**

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all our valued stakeholders to this graduation ceremony, and to address you on this momentous occasion at which we acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of students of the Midlands State University.

At the outset, as we welcome you, your Excellency and Chancellor, we wish to take this opportunity to extend our profound and heartfelt congratulations to you, the First Lady and the revolutionary party on the thunderous victory in the July 31 harmonized elections and on the subsequent appointment of your new cabinet. In the same vein, we welcome our new line Minister, Honourable Dr Olivier Muchena, and her deputy Dr Godfrey Gandawa. We also wish to especially welcome Honourable Dr Phinias Magagula, the Swaziland Minister of Education and his delegation from the Africa Management Development Institute (AMADI), who have come to witness the culmination of our joint efforts.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, in response to the demands of the dynamic and ever-changing global environment we are constantly rebranding our programmes in order to produce graduates who can think innovatively, systematically and communicate effectively. Today the result of this rigorous process is a bumper harvest of a record 3 854 men and women graduands. As the university is becoming more internationalized and cosmopolitan, 106 of our graduands are from Swaziland, 15 from Namibia, 1 from Angola and 59 from the local Trust Academy. In terms of gender proportions, 51% of the first degree recipients are female while 49% are male, and 42% of the postgraduates are female while 58% are male. Sadly, two of our students who have passed on, Dylan Musekiwa and Benny Mtetwa will graduate posthumously with a BSc Human Resource Management Honours degree and a BSc Natural Resources Management and Agriculture General degree respectively. 91 graduands will receive first class degrees and 2 of our staff members will gain postgraduate research degrees. Ignatius Chagonda will receive a Master of Philosophy Degree in Agronomy while Simon Marimo will gain a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education.

At the same time as our staff are driven by the desire to become authorities in their respective areas of specialization, as an institution we also actively support them to ensure that they are of the highest caliber in terms of knowledge, expertise and pedagogy. For instance from the 2008 situation when first degree holders held the fort in the lecture rooms to support the

higher education system in the country from collapsing, we now boast of a teaching staff compliment of 460, of whom 15% are PhD holders, 82% are Masters degree holders and only a mere 3% are first degree holders who are on their way to completing postgraduate training. Of the 82% Masters degree holders, 41% or 190 are registered for PhD's with national, regional and international universities and 8,4% of these are due to complete their doctoral studies next year in 2014. One innovation we have introduced for our teaching staff is the requirement that they must go through pedagogical training and certification in order to become effective and versatile in their trade of knowledge imparting and dissemination.

Research being the life blood of any reputable university, and when it has become an axiom that postgraduate studies are the cutting edge of any higher education institution, Midlands State University devotes a substantial portion of its annual budget, as much as 5% of it, to postgraduate studies by research as well as to research by its established teaching staff. This stimulating and highly supportive ambience has enabled some of our staff members to conduct research that has immediate relevance and application to developmental needs of Zimbabwe and the region. Cognizant of the fact that we have inherited the earth for safe keeping for future generations, in his PhD thesis Steven Jerie, a member of staff from our department of Geography and Environmental Studies has sought to assist the planning department of the Gweru City Council to come up with a sustainable strategy in the management of solid waste such as batteries and used oil in the informal sector. In another exciting case Dr Loraine Chikoko of our Banking and Finance Department received the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Merit Award for 1<sup>st</sup> place in Phd Economics in the 2012 year of study. Dr Chikoko also received the Economic Research Southern Africa [ERSA] Award for Meritorious Performance in Economics in the same year. Her thesis, proposes a comprehensive liquidity management framework that clearly identifies, measures and controls liquidity risk consistent with bank-specific and the country's macroeconomic developments. Indeed it is a requirement at MSU that any research that is funded by the University should clearly demonstrate its relevance to national, regional or pan-Africanist needs and aspirations. Through the university's efforts to fund institutional linkages and collaborative supervision of our postgraduate students by experts within the region, we avoid the detrimental effects of in breeding, we promote comparability and transferability of qualifications and also encourage staff and student mobility, which are the hallmarks of the Arusha Convention of 1981.

To be sure, in pursuance of the principle of comparability and transferability of our qualifications in Africa, the Midlands State University has gone a step further to benchmark the delivery of our core business with continental standards. Our Graduate School of Business Leadership joined the elite group of 27 other leading business schools in Africa through its accreditation with the Association of African Business Schools (AABS). We are pleased to inform you that the first group of our MBA students to graduate under this accreditation is among our graduands today and their certificates will bear the prestigious and internationally recognized AABS logo.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, in all our academic efforts, we do not lose sight of the equally important need to provide the requisite infrastructure to accommodate our expansion in terms of both core business and student accommodation. We are in the process of concluding the finer details of acquiring extra properties and facilities in Zvishavane town to house some of our teaching and research programmes on a relatively long lease agreement as well as reasonable rentals. As we spread our operations in the province, taking the university to the people as it were, we are also engaging mining houses on the Great Dyke with a view to partnering with them in the setting up of our mining engineering and architecture programmes.

With respect to student accommodation on campus, an issue which has given me personally sleepless nights for quite some time, I am exceedingly pleased to inform you that we have made tremendous progress in alleviating this challenge. By this time last year, the total carrying capacity of our on campus halls of residence stood at only 1029, leaving many of our students to desperately search for accommodation outside campus. Although we went out of our way to assist students in finding such accommodation and transport them to and from campus, we still found the situation unsatisfactory as the supply and demand market forces left us at the mercy of landlords. Driven by the motivation that as an institution we exist for and because of our students we were jolted out of our comfort zones to embark on a massive construction project to build student accommodation, with a view to decongest the nearby Senga and Nehosho Townships. Currently, only twelve months down the line we have managed to put up 24 new blocks of student residence, which translates to a total carrying capacity of nearly 3000 students on campus, an increase of 186% in student accommodation. In real terms, this significant increase in student accommodation is only a drop in the ocean when compared to the student population. However its impact is found more in the fact that

we managed to remove a large number of students from the townships and in turn that prompted some landlords who had hitherto treated our students with callousness to treat them humanely and lower rentals. All these efforts have been possible because we managed to engage a Category 'A' Chinese Contractor, who works with a zealous commitment to deliver results once the project is initiated as opposed to some of our contractors who lack professional business commitment, and tend to whine, whinge and even demobilize at the slightest delay in receiving payment.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, true to the Shona or Ndebele idioms that say *zanondega akasiya jira mumasese*, or even *injoboehleitungelwaebandla*, we distinguish ourselves, both in our vision statement and in practice, as a stakeholder driven institution. To become the University of First Choice that we are takes informed and unwavering support from our various stakeholders and partners. We remain indebted to your visionary leadership, Your Excellency and Chancellor, through our parent Ministry and other government agencies, our University Council, the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education, Captains of Industry and Commerce, our various churches, donors and well-wishers, parents, guardians, spouses and of course the staff and students themselves who diligently converge directly at the coal face of the academic activity. We remain forever indebted to you all.

I proudly take this opportunity to welcome our new graduates who now add to the ever-growing numbers of our alumni. As enlightened, critical, ethical and compassionate citizens, indeed we have prepared you to become leaders in the various sectors of our society. We have trained you to understand that leadership is not a function of material wealth, high office or status, but rather of integrity, imagination, creativity and commitment to the people and your society. It is our hope that the Midlands State University values that you have been exposed to will make you pursue a culture of what the Basotho call *Batho Pele* (People first) rather than what the Basotho would say *Batho Morago* (People last). In the not so distant future we look forward to applauding your successes and achievements as our Midlands state University alumni. We will especially celebrate if as alumni you do not forget your alma mater, and contribute generously to our fundraising efforts. It is against this background that I wish to invite the whole congregation to join me in congratulating these men and women who are a product of the 21<sup>st</sup> century university education practices. Indeed we all say to you Makorokoto! Congratulations! Amhlope!