

THE MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY 17TH CONGREGATION

02 December 2017

A/VICE CHANCELLOR'S SALUTATION (GRADUATION)

Your Excellency, The President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Head of State and Government, Commander-In-Chief of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces and Chancellor of the Midlands State University, Cde Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa;

The First Lady, Honourable Cde Auxillia Mnangagwa *in absentia*

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The incoming Minister of State for Provincial Affairs in the Midlands Province, Honourable Cde Owen Ncube;

The incoming Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development, Honourable Professor Amon Murwira;

His Worship the Mayor of the City of Gweru, Councillor Charles Chikozho,

Incoming Honourable Ministers, Members of Parliament and Members of the House of Senate here present;

The Permanent Secretary for Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development, Professor Francis Gudyanga;

The Chairman of Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education, Professor Emeritus, Ngwabi M Bhebe;

The Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education, Dr Evelyn Garwe;

The Chairman of the Midlands State University Council, Eng Caleb Makwiranzou;

Co-Patron of the Midlands State University Fundraising Committee, Mrs Sekai Holland;

The Chief Executive Officer of Vungu Rural District Council, Mr Alex Magura;

Vice Chancellors of Sister Universities or their Representatives here present;

Pro-Vice Chancellors of the Midlands State University, Professor Kadmiel Wekwete and Professor Doreen Moyo;

Acting Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences, Professor Albert Chawanda,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps, here present,

Midlands State University Staff;

Our graduands, parents, guardians and spouses,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**A/VC'S GRADUATION ADDRESS AT THE 17TH CONGREGATION OF
MSU- 2ND DECEMBER 2017**

Introduction

This occasion marks the much awaited special day of our academic year when we all gather to celebrate the culmination of our various initiatives towards achieving the socio-economic development of our country. As I welcome you our esteemed stakeholders to the Midlands State University, I wish to underscore the staying power of education as the single most important catalyst in promoting the realization of a nation's aspirations and vision.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, I wish to invite the 17th congregation of MSU to join me in welcoming you to your home, our home, and to wish you God's blessing in your attaining the highest office in the land.

Your Excellency, and Chancellor, considering the onerous tasks ahead of you, we are very grateful that you have managed to squeeze in time for us; we cherish your presence and personal participation at this propitious occasion. Once again, congratulations and welcome your Excellency.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, as a university community, we are happy you appointed Prof Amon Murwira, a renowned and astute scholar as our line Minister. We welcome him and pledge our full support to work with him in achieving the tasks before us as the higher education sector. In the same vein we welcome Cde Owen Ncube, the incoming Minister of State for Provincial Affairs in the Midlands.

However on a sad note, I wish to inform you that as we celebrate our graduation today, we remember with a deep sense of appreciation and collegiality, our

departed members of staff and students, who were part of the closely-knit MSU family. On the 19th of November 2017 we suddenly lost , Dr Samson R Mhlahlo. He was a man of character, who was once a ZANU PF Councillor of the City of Gweru, and a pacesetter at MSU. He was the first person to be awarded an MSU PhD in 2010. We also remember the loss of distinguished members of the MSU inaugural council Dr Angeline Kamba and Dr Elizabeth Xaba this year. Commissioner Dr Kamba, the first African woman to be appointed Director of the National Archives of Zimbabwe from 1981 -1990, was a recipient of an honorary doctorate from MSU. Commissioner Dr Xaba, a provincial heroine also played a sterling role in the socio-economic development of the nation and MSU. We also remember with deep sadness, the passing on of national icons such as Ambuya Maria Msika, Ambuya Maud Muzenda, Cde George Rutanhire, Cde Don Kwayedza Muvuti, Amai Mahofa, and most recently Dr Timothy Stamps. These are men and women who contributed immensely towards the socio-economic development of Zimbabwe. We pray that the Good Lord will rest their souls in eternal peace.

Developments and Growth Strategies

Your Excellency and Chancellor, allow me to take this opportunity to inform you that from a broad perspective, all our achievements and future plans as the leading institution of higher learning are informed by our dynamic strategic planning which is aimed at contributing to the industrialization and modernization of our national economy. Our strategic plan is development-oriented and focuses on key issues such as research and innovation, industrialization and modernization, and poverty alleviation. Our strategic plan is informed by the ZimAsset philosophy, as well as the STEM thrust with its need for equipment acquisition and other initiatives.

MSU through its own internal initiatives has to date established 6 campuses which include the Gweru Main Campus, Batanai campus in Senga suburb, the Graduate School of Business Leadership, and the Faculty of Commerce and Law campus along Senga road. We also have Zvishavane, the Harare campus at number 1 Kwame Nkrumah and the MSU School of Social Work, located at the corner of Chinhoyi and Grant Streets in Harare.

Plans are afoot to relocate our Faculty of Law and that of Natural Resources Management & Agriculture to the Kwekwe Campus. We are confident that the Kwekwe campus will significantly enhance the socio-economic development of that area. This envisioned campus will accommodate institutes and centres in specialized fields of Law thereby enhancing the development of the nation's legal systems. As we are poised to embark on your well thought out Command Agriculture philosophy, the campus is intended to double up as a research centre, which focuses on small grains and new crops adapted to climate change such as *quinoa grain* and *amarandas*.

Student Enrolment

Today MSU has over 22 000 registered students. However, of critical importance is the fact that due to the innovative nature of our programmes, 30% of our students are life-long learners. This cohort of students are not job seekers but people who are already in gainful employment or in business. Essentially, these life-long learners are yearning to acquire new managerial skills and other competencies at university level in order to keep abreast with the latest developments pertaining to their respective engagements.

In line with our internationalization thrust, we have students from the Republic of South Africa, South Sudan, Namibia, Swaziland, Angola, Botswana, Bangladesh, Zambia, Nigeria, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Our tentacles have also stretched into the region where we are incubating institutions in Botswana and Swaziland, which are close to attaining university status of their own.

Locally, in pursuit of the ZimAsset cluster of value addition and beneficiation, MSU successfully incubated the recently established Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences, which currently offers the same degrees as those in our Zvishavane Faculty of Mining and Mineral Processing Engineering. We are pleased that the first cohort of graduands from that institution, who are eager to create wealth for Zimbabwe, will be awarded MSU degrees today.

Meanwhile, the economic challenges that have stunted the infrastructure development of the country's tertiary education sector have enabled us to think outside the box. While operating in this challenging environment MSU has been a pacesetter in the optimal utilization of our scarce resources. We have been able to refurbish and construct a reputable national institution of higher learning. To that end, our campuses are characterized by a hive of quality brick and motor activities by our own building brigade. Among buildings that have been face-lifted are halls of residence, libraries, laboratories, dining halls, sporting facilities, which have attained Olympic Games standards, and classrooms, which now have 26 interactive boards across our campuses to date. In the same vein, a variety of construction projects have also been undertaken in a comfortable, cost effective and hassle free manner. We are pleased to inform you, Your Excellency, that while our building Brigade has long completed construction of an office block, dining hall, and

classrooms at our Zvishavane Campus, here at the Gweru Main Campus a grand multi-denominational 1200 seater Chapel, as well as the Faculty of Commerce Block of Offices for 150 members of our staff are complete. These two projects were constructed in record time by our local **Building Brigade**. To date these two projects have drawn budgets to the tune of US\$1 055 000-00 and US\$1 450 000-00 respectively. The model of using of our building brigade is cost effective.

Strategic Business Units

With regards to efforts that are targeted at self sufficiency, MSU has a flourishing Strategic Business Unit called SODEW, which superintends over all the commercial entities of the University. For instance, SODEW acquired a brick making machine, which provides all the bricks that are required for our construction ventures. Additionally, our Gwenero farm in Shurugwi specializes in citrus, vegetable production and poultry, the farm produces the much sought after *Palmer naval* and *Delta Valencia* oranges and a variety of vegetables on a commercial scale. The farm effectively operates on a twin strategy, whereby its activities are driven by locals from the surrounding communities, an initiative that creates employment for our people, while simultaneously serving as a research crucible for students and staff in our Faculty of Natural Resources Management & Agriculture. The farm supplies the University canteens with fresh agricultural produce.

Community Engagement

Cognisant of the fact that knowledge transfer is critical to any university, we are actively involved in capacity building and empowerment of the youth in our communities. Our presence has already been felt in Mberengwa through the Gomututu Community Engagement Project where we provide technical, financial,

material and other assistance necessary for the socio-economic well-being of the local communities. In addition, we have partnered with the community in poultry and nutrition gardening projects as a means of generating income and improving the livelihoods of local communities. Apart from the community engagement project in Mberengwa, the University has replicated the projects in Silobela and Buhera where communities are benefitting from income generated from selling chickens. Plans are underway to expand the project in Silobela through incorporating aquaculture, which will result in the community increasing their revenue streams.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, in furtherance of an initiative that is of grave national concern, MSU contributed to the *fiscus* through remitting taxes and subsequently clinching the region 3 ZIMRA Tax Payer Award. We view this gesture as ample testimony of a patriotic institution of higher learning that complies with fiscal legislation and good citizenship for the development and dignity of Zimbabwe. Accordingly, we are naturally delighted to be a citadel for the socio-economic development of our beloved nation.

Meanwhile, the adoption by the higher education sector of four key areas of specialization in university education namely Medicine, Engineering, Culture & Heritage and Technology came as no surprise to MSU as the institution had already established offerings along these lines. We are consolidating and improving on the relevance of our curriculum from the experiences of other successful universities in countries such as Singapore, Brazil, Cuba, India and Taiwan.

Faculty of Medicine

Regarding the Faculty of Medicine following rigorous inspections by our regulatory authority, the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) and the Medical and Dental Practitioners Council of Zimbabwe, the first cohort of 20 students, (8 females and 12 males), were admitted in February 2016. Considering that the sanctity of human life has always been held in the highest regard in our initiatives, another thorough annual inspection of both our Faculty of Medicine and the Gweru Provincial Hospital by ZIMCHE and the Medical Council was carried out in February and March 2017, leading to permission being granted to us to admit the second cohort of 20 students. In addition to local fulltime teaching staff, MSU has enhanced its international dimension through employment of experienced part time senior academics from the World Health Organization and top universities in South Africa to teach and examine our students. I can therefore assure you, Your Excellency and Chancellor, that our medical students at MSU have access to first class teaching and learning facilities.

As for practical clinical attachments for our students, the Faculty of Medicine has established strong links with the Gweru Provincial Hospital, the Midlands Provincial Medical Directorate and the Health Department of the City of Gweru. In a synergistic relationship, we have contributed clinical doctors to Gweru Provincial Hospital, including specialists in Anaesthesia, Obstetrics & Gynecology and Surgery. This facilitated the opening of an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) as well as the launching of the National *Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid* and *Cervicography* (VIAC) for screening cervical cancer at Gweru Provincial Hospital on the 25th of August 2017. We are excited that an initiative that we long embarked on fits

perfectly well with the current thrust of the joint taskforce on transforming higher education through links with Local Government and other stakeholders.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, we strongly believe that the functions of teaching and learning should never be divorced from those of research, hence our Faculty of Medicine has an ongoing collaborative study on the “Effect of Anti-Retrovirals on Gestational Diabetes” with the University Of Zimbabwe College Of Health Sciences, the University of Cape Town as well as Cambridge University. Additionally, our Faculty of Medicine recently secured a grant to conduct research entitled ‘the Pregnancy Care integrating translational Science, Everywhere (PRECISE): a sub-Saharan network for placental disorders’. We will be working with other partners from St George's University of London, University of St Andrews, King's College London, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and University of Oxford. Our research team will lead in collecting data in various countries in Eastern, Western and Southern Africa. Our Department of Geography and Environmental Studies in collaboration with that of Chemical Technology, is exceedingly excited to be a contracted partner in a consortium led by the Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management (SASSCAL) which has recently won a grant under the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and African Support Programme. The research work to be done is entitled ‘Wetlands Monitoring and Assessment Service for Local and Transboundary Basins (WeMAST) in Southern Africa.’ In the research project titled “**Sizimele** – Action for Resilience Building in Zimbabwe”, we have managed to position ourselves as a technical partner in a consortium that is led by DanChurch Aid (DCA), and which won a United Nations Development Programme grant, where the research funds will be availed to us in batches. I am also excited to inform you that a cutting-edge breakthrough has

already been made by our Chemical Technology Department. In collaboration with the Department of Roads, the Ministry of Transport and ZimChem, our department has worked to reduce the toxicity of the locally available tar to usable levels. This successful initiative resolved that local tar can be used in road surfacing instead of importing Bitumen. This scientific breakthrough will result in a remarkable saving of the much needed foreign currency for the nation.

Staffing and PhDs

Your Excellency and Chancellor, our members of staff with PhDs have increased by 5.3% since our last graduation ceremony and we now have 141 PhD holders and another 240 academic members of staff are registered for PhDs. Furthermore, an international dimension of our qualifications is that of the 240 67% are registered with external universities while 82% have external supervisors. As for academic leadership at MSU, our number of professors has increased by 25% from last year and our STEM publications stand at 48%.

quality.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, we are fully aware that a nation that ignores its culture will not meaningfully progress. It is for that reason that we are making frantic efforts to domesticate our culture and heritage right across all aspects of our university work. For instance, in one of our 5 public lectures this year, we hosted the Speaker of the National Assembly, Advocate Jacob Mudenda for a stakeholder meeting with tertiary institutions. Following the insightful lecture, we are working in consortium with six other universities to translate the constitution into all local languages. Additionally, I am pleased to inform you that MSU has also already translated our economic ZimAsset socio-economic blueprint document into Kalanga and Sotho, and that the documents are currently with our local press. Riding on Albert Einstein's famous maxim that, "*Logic will lead you from point A*

to point B; *Imagination will take you everywhere*”, our department of Film and Theatre Arts Studies premiered its inaugural feature film production in Zvishavane District on the 19th of October 2017, titled ***Toro: The Tribe***. Participants at the premiere applauded the quality of the production which can easily be commercialized.

Bearing in mind our national thrust to restore Zimbabwe as the bread basket of Africa, we are immensely indebted to you Your Excellency and Chancellor, for your own public lecture in which you delivered a brilliant expose’ on the topic, ***‘Command Agriculture in Zimbabwe: Myths, Lessons and the Future’***. Challenging universities to be centres of excellence for agricultural innovation, research, and development, you revealed to us lasting lessons that government was aware that factors like irrigation and mechanisation, soil testing and water harvesting were critical for successful food security initiatives. From that take home masterpiece, our Faculty of Natural Resources Management and Agriculture is now part of the command agriculture initiative and is keen to set the pace in Zimbabwe.

As for our Faculty of Law, the academic excellence that has been demonstrated by our students since inception of the Faculty in 2005 has continued to impress the entire nation, the region and the international legal fraternity. MSU came first in the Heads of Argument category in the 9th Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competitions that were held at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland from the 18th to 21st July 2017. By all standards, this achievement is very clear testimony to the quality of legal education at MSU and Zimbabwe at large.

Quality of

Sporting and Out-of-Class Activities

As we strive to produce total and well-rounded graduates, MSU has also become the leading university in the Zimbabwe Universities Sporting Association games. Our programmes are firmly hinged on the strong belief that the essence of education is character building, this should produce responsible citizens. Accordingly MSU Building On Opportunities for Student Talent (BOOST) Enactus team came first in the National universities competitions in Zimbabwe. The MSU Enactus team went to represent the country in London and did a splendid job as they ended up reaching the semi finals.

International Linkages

Your Excellency and Chancellor, with our Department of Local Governance in the lead, we hosted an insightful two day Local Economic Development Symposium funded by the Commonwealth Local Governance Forum and UNDP. The symposium attracted 33 urban and rural local authorities. We are pleased that in a South to South co-operation, UNDP brought in 3 practitioners from eThekweni Municipality in Durban to share their experiences with their Zimbabwean counterparts. Additionally, following the funding of research on *Constitutionalisation* on Local government in Zimbabwe by the CLGF, the department is in the process of producing a book which is currently being printed by Mambo Press.

To buttress all our initiatives, our growth and expansion as a multi-campus institution is firmly hinged on robust Information Communication Technologies that enhance efficiency and effectiveness across the board. We have also equipped

our learning environments as well as our halls of residence with over 200 WIFI Access points, and internet connectivity for our students. As regards our new campuses, it has become the norm to immediately install wireless technology to enhance learning through access to digital Library resources.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, allow me now to focus on the culmination of our business in 2017. We shall be presenting to you a record 6612 graduands who are made up of 3228 females and 3384 males. Of this total, 5429 graduands will be attaining first degrees, while 1176 will attain Masters Degrees. 1583 are STEM graduands, 282 will be graduating with distinctions and 7 will attain D Phil degrees. Life-long learners constitute 30% of the total graduand population while 3% are international graduands from Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland and Zambia . On a sad note 2 students will be graduating posthumously. While our BA French Honours students will graduate for the first time, we also have a progressive tilt towards STEM programmes with students graduating for the first time in BEng Chemical and Mineral Processing Engineering, BEng Mining and Mineral Processing Engineering, BSc Applied Biosciences and Biotechnology and Biostatistics and MSc Epidemiology degrees.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, we are deeply indebted to ZINARA and the City of Gweru who in a collegial demonstration of good citizenry, have greatly improved the access roads to our Main Campus to improve the general ambience of our status as a leading institution of higher learning in Zimbabwe. We are deeply grateful to our neighbours for their progressive alertness to synergistic and inclusive development.

It would be amiss for me not to thank our government for all the support. Thank you so much. True to John Maxwell's assertion that everything rises or falls on leadership, we are pleased that our new Council led by Engineer Makwiranzou

possesses a fascinating skills mix and recently received an insightful induction is keenly development-oriented. Their leadership and oversight motivates our staff and students, parents, captains of industry and commerce, our valued alumni as well as friends of the university and other agencies.

Conclusion

My final word to you our shining graduands is that in line with our time tested *motto*, “our hands, our minds our destiny”, as you leave MSU we expect you to be resolute, respectful, courageous and persistent in all your endeavors and to treat life not as a single sprint but a marathon to be won. Be men and women of character. Be team players. You are now our ambassadors and alumni, you ought to touch people’s lives with integrity, at the same time always plant the seed that will lead to the continuous growth and expansion of your stakeholder-driven *Alma Mater*, the University of First Choice, Midlands State University.

I thank you! Makorokoto! Congratulations! Amhlope!