

# Isipho .....

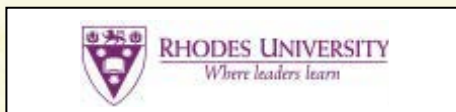


Dr Saleem Badat is the vice-chancellor of Rhodes University. He gives from his own pocket so that more young people can get a tertiary education.

In 1999, he was the first CEO of the Council on Higher Education, which advises the South African minister of education on higher education policy issues. His passion for education, particularly at tertiary level, was forged during a decade at the University of the Western Cape and he has built on that throughout his life.

With a plethora of degrees, as well as a certificate in higher education and science policy from Boston University, and honorary doctorates from the universities of the Free State and York, in England, he is also the recipient of a number of academic awards and fellowships, including the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship.

Also an author, his most recent work is *The Forgotten People: Political Banishment Under Apartheid* and he has worked hard to get the people featured in the book the support they deserve.



**Q:** As a committed educator, you have put your own money where your passion is – higher education – with the creation of the Jakes Gerwel Rhodes University Scholarship Fund, which is funded by a portion of your salary and sacrifice of benefits you are entitled to as vice-chancellor of Rhodes University. What inspired you to make this generous gesture?

**A:** Two things. One was the generous salary offered by Rhodes. While low compared with most other universities, it was more than adequate to sustain me and my family. I now had the wonderful opportunity to devote a portion of my salary and unnecessary benefits (like business-class air travel) to help open doors for others in the same way that, as a first-generation student from a modest family, local and international scholarships had opened doors for me.

The other reason was my concern about the way vice-chancellor salaries were escalating and the growing gap in relation to salaries of academics and support staff. I feared this could be very corrosive of a sense of community at universities. Recently, Old Mutual pledged up to 15 full scholarships in memory of the late Jakes Gerwel.

**Q:** You are also involved in efforts to improve schooling in disadvantaged schools in the Eastern Cape. How do you intervene?

**A:** Rhodes Community Engagement has numerous initiatives in Grahamstown preschools and schools. This is an uphill battle, as various factors make historically black schools dysfunctional. We are also working in Keiskammahoek and hope to extend this to select schools in other areas of rural Eastern Cape. Our education faculty works with teachers in rural areas and has a R21 million grant from Sishen Iron Ore Company Community Development Trust for work in Northern Cape schools, which is bearing fruit. The needs are so great and there is only so much an individual can do. My passion is higher education. It can cultivate talented, socially committed and critical graduates who have the knowledge and expertise to transform our society so that all can lead decent, rich and productive lives. It can produce the knowledge that is essential for solving our problems. I am mindful of the fact that a bigger problem is all too often the lack of political courage and will. Higher education can change the lives of not only individuals, but also families and whole communities. I have seen this.

**Q:** You were the recipient of an Inyathelo Exceptional Philanthropy Award in 2008. Do you think recognising philanthropists like yourself helps inspire others to follow suit?

**A:** I admire the work of Inyathelo in building a culture of giving and promoting know-how to mobilise funds for worthy causes. I hope the annual Inyathelo Philanthropy Awards do inspire people to give. I doubt though that anyone that Inyathelo so generously honours gives to obtain recognition.

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See the full interview at:

<http://www.ru.ac.za/latestnews/name,91442,en.html>

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