



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn



**WE WELCOME
DR SIZWE MABIZELA**



RHODES EXCHANGE

Bringing you news about research, progress and development #gorhodes

*ISSUE 014 / FEBRUARY 2015



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WELCOME, DR SIZWE MABIZELA

This month we delayed release to bring you a special edition of *The Rhodes Exchange* celebrating the inauguration of Dr Sizwe Mabizela as the sixth Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University. Read about the challenges Dr Mabizela will be taking on during his tenure and find out why he believes that Rhodes should be the light in Grahamstown’s back yard. We also bring you highlights from the Registration Weekend that show just how much our VC takes our students to heart.

THE LIGHT IN GRAHAMSTOWN’S BACKYARD

As Dr Sizwe Mabizela takes up the mantle as Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University and embraces the challenges that will come to bear on its future, his signature departure point is to develop a culture of doing “Business Unusual”. His approach recognises

and embraces the mutually dependent relationship between town and gown and Rhodes University, under his leadership, will “Be the light in your own backyard”. He aims to begin by tackling head on, three key areas of initial focus that will strengthen the

foundation of Rhodes University and the City of Grahamstown, these include: education challenges; working collaboratively with local, regional and national government; and introducing the concept of a ‘wireless Grahamstown’.



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THE GRAND CHALLENGES

Dr Sizwe Mabizela's inauguration on 27 February 2015 was a true coming of age celebration for Rhodes University and in part a homecoming for a valued member of the Rhodes family.

Dr Mabizela is in every sense a family and a community man and, proudly acknowledging his immediate family, his wife Dr Phethiwe Matatu and their girls, Zama and Zinzi, he also made fitting tribute to others who have had a significant impact on his life and acknowledged and honoured members of the Biko and Mxenge families who were also present: "The selfless dedication, deep commitment, courage, bravery and resolve of your loved ones to advance the cause of freedom, justice and human rights inspire us all"

"There are two people who are with us only in spirit: my late father and my late elder brother, Siza. Knowing my father, he would have hired a number of buses and invited the whole of our village to travel with him to Grahamstown for this celebration!"

In his address, Dr Mabizela elucidated some of the challenges faced by higher education in South Africa and globally: "The declining level in real terms of State funding of higher education; time-consuming bureaucratic compliance and onerous reporting requirements; ever-growing demand for access to higher education; inadequate funding for financially needy students; high drop-out rates and low graduation rates; fierce competition for talented academic, support and administrative staff; poor public schooling which delivers inadequately prepared students to higher education; ageing staff; dubious world rankings and global league tables; and commodification of knowledge."

"I want Rhodes to be an institution that erects powerful signposts for how the pathways of the future must differ from those of the past. The capacity to model a different and better future lies clearly in our hands today, here in South Africa, here in the Eastern Cape, here in Grahamstown."

He then went on to describe how Rhodes intends to tackle these grand challenges:

First, we must enhance the quality of education and overall experience of our students.

Second, we must make Rhodes University accessible to academically talented students from diverse racial, social, cultural, economic and class backgrounds and provide them with the support they need to succeed.

"When I became a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I made a salary sacrifice to contribute to a bursary fund intended to help academically talented but financially needy students. In my capacity as Vice-Chancellor, I am able to increase this salary sacrifice in order to advance our strategic objective to make higher education accessible to those who come from poor families. I call on others to contribute in whatever ways they are able to make the learning experiences we value so greatly here at Rhodes University more available to all."

Third, we must attract, nurture and retain academic, administrative and support staff of high calibre.

Fourth, we must create and maintain an inclusive, welcoming, affirming and positive institutional environment.

Fifth, we must advance the transformation imperative of our University.

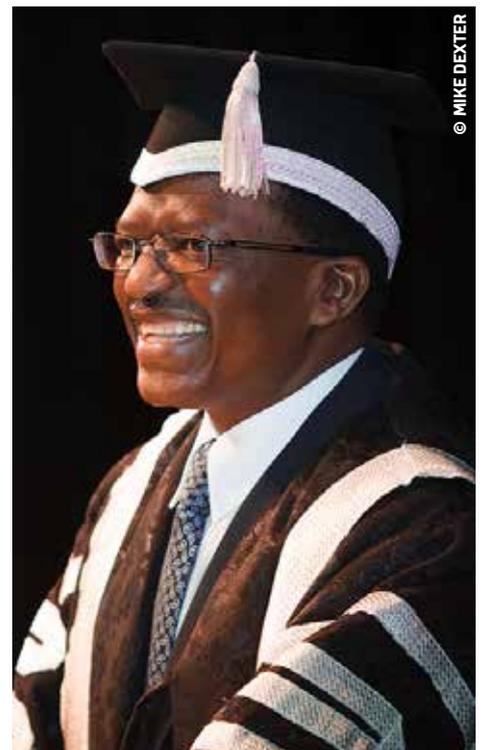
Sixth, we must maintain and grow the intellectual outputs and scholarly reputation of our university.

Seventh, we must provide the best academic infrastructure, equipment and facilities to support our academic project.

Eighth, we must ensure financial sustainability and long-term viability of our University.

Ninth, we must make our contribution in building a vibrant and sustainable Grahamstown community.

Tenth, we must cooperate and collaborate with the other three institutions of higher learning in the region to address pressing development challenges facing our province, including addressing the enormous challenges presented by the quality of Basic Education and contributing to real change for the better, and sharing facilities and equipment to strengthen capacity to research water issues.



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BROADENING THE RESEARCH BASE

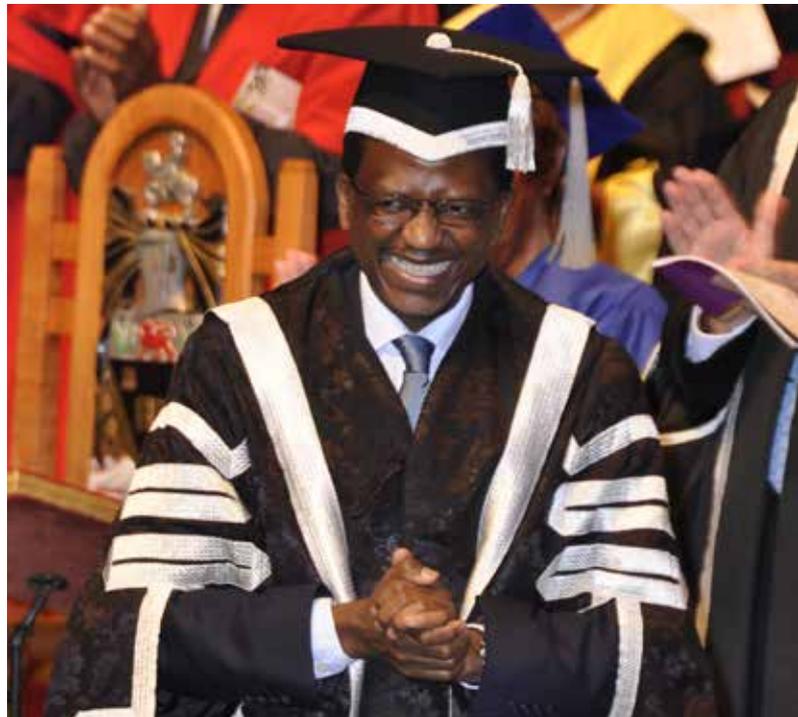
Although Rhodes is in the top three universities producing the highest number of research outputs per academic staff member, the bulk of the university's research outputs comes from a relatively small group of highly productive researchers.

The Sandisa Imbewu Initiative and Mellon Focus Areas have helped to build critical mass behind certain focus areas but further time and resources need to be invested to significantly broaden the research base. Dr Mabizela outlines the University's commitment in the next 10 years as follows:

- Significantly increase the percentage of academics with doctoral level qualifications to at least 70%;
- Raise the total research output for the institution by encouraging and supporting all academic staff members to produce at least one accredited output per year;
- Maintain the postgraduate proportion of the student body to 30% whilst, at the same time, ensuring the diversity of the postgraduate population;
- Grow the number of research focus areas, with significant critical mass behind them, for which the university is known as a place of scholarly excellence across all faculties of the university.



INAUGURATION IMAGES: FOTOFIRST





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BRIGHTEN THE CORNER WHERE YOU ARE

Given what Dr Mabizela describes as Rhodes's particular responsibility to contribute to the creation of a well-functioning, economically sustainable and prosperous Grahamstown, there are three areas that will underpin the University's engagement with the greater Grahamstown community.

MAKANA MUNICIPALITY ...

Failure by the Municipality to provide basic services such as water, electricity and sanitation will have serious and far-reaching ramifications for our university and its intellectual project. "Right now our Municipality is under administration because of poor management and poor leadership," said Dr Mabizela. "It is in our own best interest that we work with our Municipality to develop the necessary capacity and capability for it to fulfil its constitutional mandate to the benefit of all residents of Grahamstown."

EDUCATION....

Acknowledging with delight the presence of officials of the District Education Office and Principals of local schools, Dr Mabizela indicated his sincere commitment to working together towards the betterment of education in the region. "It is a matter of public record that the Eastern Cape Province is the worst performing province when it comes to public education. Since 2007, except for two years in 2009 and 2010, the Eastern Cape has come last of all provinces in matric pass rates," he said.

"In Grahamstown, we have a collection of some of the best schools in the country interspersed with some of the most dysfunctional schools imaginable serving the majority of our young people. I look forward to meeting all important role-players in the education sector to discuss how we might work together to make Grahamstown a true centre of academic excellence – from Early Childhood education to University, and a model for consideration more widely."

"As an institution of higher learning, indeed, as a greater community that cares, we cannot sit and watch when young people amongst us are condemned to a life without hope; a life of despair because of the failure to provide them with the education they need and deserve."

WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY...

The third leg of the strategy is to work with the local municipality and other role-players to make Grahamstown a wireless city. This initiative will underpin efforts to improve the quality of education, to spur economic development and to improve service delivery in the Grahamstown community. Indicating Rhodes' commitment, Dr Mabizela described how the Information & Technology Services Division has already started to create Wi-Fi networks in some strategic sites in the township, and that Rhodes will soon conduct a detailed feasibility study on funding such an initiative to ensure its long-term viability and financial sustainability.

Kerry Peter
*WORD WEAVER

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"These are times for us to think and act creatively, imaginatively and boldly. We cannot be complacent in a highly competitive higher education environment. We cannot continue with business as usual. While we cannot do everything at one go; we must prioritise and not shy away from taking hard decisions."

LINKS

Listen the Dr Mabizela being interviewed on Algoa FM prior to his inauguration: <https://soundcloud.com/search?q=sizwe%20mabizela>
An interview shortly after the announcement of Dr Mabizela's appointment as Vice-Chancellor: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFAOf3LmD48>

#myvciscoolerthanyours

There's something special about 2015 at Rhodes, there's a palpable spirit of optimism and goodwill on campus. All eyes are the University's newly inaugurated Vice-Chancellor, Dr Sizwe Mabizela, a man who we strongly suspect will remain as close as he can to the real experiences of the students' academic lives. **Cindy Deutschmann**, a staff member of the Development & Alumni Relations Division, invited him to join students as they took their shuttle to their new residences and brings us a firsthand account of "the students' VC".

Registration of first-year students is a hectic, exciting time at all universities, Rhodes included. This year though, there was something new and vibrant about Registration weekend; an air of hope, optimism and expectancy, even an old cynic like me could feel it. I couldn't quite put my finger on why 2015 was so markedly different from any other registration period. Well, on Saturday, 7 February I found out what "it" was! One man, with a vision, a mission and quiet charisma, Dr Sizwe Mabizela, our new Vice-Chancellor!

I had the honour of spending a few hours with Dr Mabizela on a campus shuttle, ferrying new 1st years to their residences. This amazing academic, our "makhulu boss", refused to sit up front with the driver, preferring to take the "gaardjie" seat where he could open the shuttle door for his students, be with them and chat to all.

I was struck by Dr Mabizela's humility, his sense of fun, his genuine love of his Rhodents and his pride in his university. Wherever we went, as students saw him the chant would go up: "Dr Mabizela!!!" "Sizwe Mabizela", all the commotion was greeted with a shy smile and genuine joy. I watched our VC mingle with students, parents and Rhodes staff, treating all with respect and dignity and thought to myself, "Rhodes University is so blessed, this man is indeed a treasure".

Thank you to Cindy Deutschmann, the Division's social media savvy staff member for creating the hashtag #myvciscoolerthanyours which we anticipate will engage more student interaction and feedback.

Follow these links to witness firsthand why Rhodes students believe that #myvciscoolerthanyours

<https://vimeo.com/120565218>

<https://vimeo.com/120565217>

<https://vimeo.com/120565219>



#myvciscoolerthanyours



#myvciscoolertthananyours

