

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE 2010- ADDRESS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, DR MVUYO TOM

The Hon Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Executive Management of the University, Executive Deans, Senators, Heads of Departments, Chairperson of the Institutional Forum, President of the SRC and Members of the SRC, Members of Convocation, Members of various formations (Organised Labour Nehawu, and student formations), Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

This marks the beginning of a significant academic year, the end of the first decade in the 21st century, 2010.

A lot is expected of us as we remember significant historical milestones in our country starting with 1910, a century ago. It is hundred years ago in 1910 when the warring forces who had settled in South Africa made peace amongst themselves and united to form the Union of South Africa to the exclusion of the majority Black people of the land. That accelerated the call for unity amongst the Black people who had been working separately as tribes against the colonial forces for years. The year 1912 saw the formation of the organization that later became the African National Congress which was banned half a century later in 1960, which also happens to be a half century ago, only to be unbanned in 1990. Twenty years ago there was a realisation by the oppressive regime that “Le rona re batho” (We too are people, nathi singabantu, ons ook is mense). After about 400 years it dawned upon the Afrikaner that with the international and national pressure for change they were on a road to nowhere and that the development of the country could not take place without the full participation of the indigenous people of the land. The human dignity of the nation was restored twenty years ago.

I hope the brahman cow that my friend from Catha Village in Qoboqobo told me about will also soon realize that there is value in mixing and associating with those who seem to differ with you. This brahman cow was bought by my friend from a farm where it apparently knew only brahman cattle and brought to the village where various breeds of cattle graze in a commonage. There were no brahman cattle amongst my friend’s cattle until the arrival of this brahman cow. The brahman decided to discriminate against the other cattle and isolate itself from these. It was grazing alone until it met another brahman from a neighbour. It has since decided it can only stay and relate with this cow of similar origin. All the other cattle are not recognized as being of the same species, but as animals of another species, simply because they are of a different breed from brahmans. Discrimination is dangerous and retrogressive. It should not be allowed to be practised even by cattle. This brahman cow has grown amongst similar brahmans and has not been able to develop further and embrace diversity. Its horizon has been narrowed by associating only with those who look and think like it. This brahman is not free.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the release of Nelson Mandela and the attainment of our human dignity we should not lose sight of the fact that we have to be very vigilant so as not to reverse the gains of hundreds of years of struggle against colonialism and discrimination. The birth pains of this freedom

were accompanied by blood and death with the actual delivery of the newborn child having to take place in 1994, when majority rule was achieved.

It is very significant that 20 years after the unbanning of liberation movements and the restoration of our human dignity Africa has been recognized as a continent that can also host the FIFA World Cup tournament. Africa has attained its continental dignity in football. Kontinente ya Afrika ke lefatsi lelikholo! (The continent of Africa is also a great land).

We are opening the University at a time when gradually the economic recession that originated in the USA in 2009 is abating. Its effects will, however, be with us for some time. Big business will suffer from risk aversion for a year or so before they venture into vast expenditure and huge capital outlay again. Higher education will also not have the same benefits it has had from surpluses in government budgets for quite some time. We are all aware that funding for higher education in institutions like Fort Hare relies heavily on government subsidies and grants. We were beginning to celebrate the differentiated allocations on infrastructure grants during the period of surpluses following lean years of limited funding. It is no secret that the per capita budget allocation has actually been declining since 1996 for social services like education and health. This has been happening at a time when about 2.8 million young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are not in employment, education or training (CHET, 2009). The commitment of government in ensuring that education and health become priorities is to be applauded.

The Ministerial Statement on Higher Education Funding (2009/10 to 2011/12) states clearly that planning, funding and quality assurance are the three mechanisms used to steer the South African higher education system towards the goals set out in the 1997 White Paper on higher education transformation. We have had to grapple with issues of a budget deficit in this institution for years. This obviously affects the planning and quality assurance measures. At the same time we have to deal with “the national policy imperatives which require higher education to make major contributions to the social transformation of South African society and, at the same time, to national economic growth and development. Higher education is expected to deliver the high professional skills, the new research, and the innovative ideas which are needed by the economy. Higher education is also expected, through its student admissions and its teaching/learning activities, to assist with the creation of a fairer, more just, society in South Africa” (Ministerial Statement, 2009).

The University of Fort Hare is trying to make its contribution to these imperatives and has significant achievements in some while struggling in certain areas. The identified priorities by both the national and provincial government in the Medium Term Strategic Framework and the Provincial Strategic Framework, respectively, are getting serious attention. We are operating in a context of a new government following the elections of 2009. The government has identified priorities to be addressed in the 5 years of their mandate, however, it should be remembered that higher education has a much bigger role than meeting the immediate short-to-medium term economic needs. The scientists have to be allowed space to think about solving challenges that may arise 30-40 years from now whilst not ignoring the present. It is appreciated that the National Planning Commission Green Paper has seen it fit to have a long-range plan for the country. The concept of a 2025 vision which includes looking at,

amongst others, what numbers of children will be at school and what numbers should be at university is a significant step forward to avoid short-termism. A long-term human resource plan for the country is going to assist universities in their enrolment planning. A social compact can then be entered into with government on how to resource universities to meet that challenge.

Planning has been emphasized in the Ministerial Statement 2010/11 and 2011/12. Planning must not, however, paralyse institutions into inaction. The year 2009 was a year when we had to deal with various task teams to address sector matters and also specific institutional challenges. Recommendations have come from those task teams and they need to be addressed. We received the recommendations and commendations from the Council on Higher Education (CHE) following the institutional audit of 2008. We now have developed an institutional improvement plan which has been incorporated into our strategic plan 2009-2016. The Ministerial Task Team on Racism and Other Forms of Discrimination also tabled its report with recommendations we have to attend to. The Ministerial Task team that reviewed the National Student Financial Aid Scheme has also finished its task. The specific task team that assisted the University with the turnaround process also presented its recommendations which are being dealt with through the strategic plan and other steps not necessarily captured in the strategic plan. It is in the context of such plans that we start 2010. We have not been paralysed by the planning but instead have been spurred into action.

The UFH strategic plan that was finalized last year has finished its first year of implementation. The focus is on the core functions of the university, excellence in teaching, research and community engagement, which have to be supported by certain enablers. The enablers include: Financial sustainability and viability, improving student experience, optimization of the multi-campus model, developing a service culture, harnessing technology effectively and human resource development.

It has already been indicated from the Ministerial statement how funding is crucial to ensure that the mandate of an institution of higher learning is met. For the major part of the last 15 years the University has been operating with budget deficits except for years when there was a deliberate injection of funds by the DoE. We started the 2009 financial year with a huge projected deficit and with the measures we adopted we have managed to whittle that down to a manageable amount and we aim to have a balanced budget by the end of 2011. Stringent cost-cutting measures were introduced and these included human resource planning where as much as possible attrition was the rule in vacancies that emerged during the year. Academic staff was, as much as possible, maintained at levels that would not negatively affect the quality of our core functions. With the assistance of the Department of Higher Education and training (DoHET) we managed to source a company that developed a tool that will assist us in planning our human resource needs, academic programmes, student enrolments, fee structure etc. A need to review our organizational structure was reached and that is now being discussed with stakeholders.

Student numbers in 2009 went beyond the enrolment plan for the year with a head count of 10112 and full-time equivalents (FTEs) were 8461. The head count according to our enrolment plan should have been 9250. This means that there were lots of students who could not be subsidized by the DoHET. This year our projected numbers are 9750 students (head count) and 8154 (FTEs). Our student (FTE):

academic staff ratio in 2009 was 1:26 whilst the DoHET established a norm of 1:20. As we think about restructuring we have to be mindful of these shortages. In 2009 our undergraduates were 82% of our enrolment and postgraduates were 18%. This year our plan has 79% vs 21% respectively. Slight changes in the priority areas of study have been effected this year. [SET: 21.9% (19.8%), BEM: 26.6% (28.2%), All Hum: 51.5% (52%)]. Throughput rates show that the 3 year undergraduate degrees have a lower throughput rate than the four year programmes. This has been used as argument to support the notion of four year degrees to be the rule in South Africa but that debate has not been finalized yet.

The core functions of the University are receiving priority in all our planning and in the restructuring process. The following section will deal with intellectual development and curriculum renewal, developing a culture of scholarly excellence in teaching/learning, research and community engagement, internationalization, technologically-enhanced learning, and academic equivalence in a multi-campus institution.

Intellectual development and curriculum renewal is an objective we have set ourselves as we move towards the centenary.

An academic review is being undertaken. Departments have handed in their documentation and a committee will be analysing these before conducting departmental interviews in July. One of the key focus areas in this exercise is curriculum renewal to ensure that departments are offering courses that are relevant to current needs without compromising on the long term vision in knowledge creation and application.

Life Knowledge Action-GP was successfully launched in 2009 and will be offered in EL this year, so there will be two cohorts of 360 students on each campus. The EL students are mainly law students as the course has been made a compulsory part of the law curriculum. Other faculties have been requested to ensure that the course is better integrated into their curricula. This programme is very important for social cohesion and critical thinking amongst our students. It encourages the transdisciplinary approach and promotes ubuntu. It has been rated highly by the students who went through it last year.

Developing a culture of scholarly excellence in Teaching/Learning, Research and Community

Engagement:

The research trajectory in the University is on an upward trend but we still have to work harder in order to meet our target of 1.06 research output unit per FTE academic per annum set in the strategic plan. In September last year the National Research Foundation awarded a prestigious research chair in social change to Prof Gary Minkley. This award is tenable for five years, and is renewable, and will certainly enhance UFH's research standing. More of our academics received NRF ratings last year. There are now 12 rated scientists in the University, an increase of six last year.

Some members of faculty have been recognised by their peers nationally and internationally for scholarly excellence in their fields. Amongst these I may mention the following:

Prof F Lategan from the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, through the work he has been doing in agricultural research in South Africa and Africa, has been selected as the National Consultant for the SADC-wide priority-setting study for the proposed Centre for Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa to coordinate the implementation of the 15-year SADC Multi-country Agricultural Productivity Programme. Congratulations Dr Lategan. This is over and above the work our faculty is doing in food security programmes like the Agri-parks. The Faculty has entered into a new contract with the Ministry of Rural Development and Land Affairs on the establishment of agri-parks and the promotion of local economic development in district municipalities.

Prof C. Seethal was elected as the president of the Society of South African Geographers and Prof A Okoh was elected to the SA Microbiology Association, and he is collaborating on the International Surveillance of Reservoirs for Anti-biotic Resistance. Prof A Afolayan is now a Fellow of the Academy of Science of South Africa and Prof G Bradley is a Member of the Advisory Committee to the National Department of Agriculture in the directorate of Bio-safety.

Excellent work has been done in our Accounting Programme leading to the recognition of the University by SAICA and ABASA as the one to lead development of similar programmes in other PDI institutions. Mr Temba Zakuza has since been requested by the accounting profession to assist the University of Limpopo and Zululand in their quest to have their programmes accredited.

More and more recognition of our academics nationally and internationally is occurring. Dr Wilson Akpan has been elected as the national president of the South African Sociological Association. The University has also been chosen to host the 2010 International Sociological Conference. Prof Abraham Olivier has been elected as the editor of the South African Journal of Philosophy, a prestigious national/international position in the discipline.

The Nelson Mandela Institute for Education and Rural development continues to do sterling work in rural schools and innovative research in the classroom experience. We salute Ms Kim Porteus and Mr Ramadiro for their endeavours.

The CE office is in full swing. Under the leadership of Ms Jay Thakrar, Prof Gary Minkley and Dr Wilson Akpan, UFH applied for and received NRF funding to investigate CE at the university, not only in relation to current and future projects on offer, but also to establish a sound intellectual framework to underpin CE at UFH. At present a national call has been made for two post-doctoral scholarships as well as for postgraduate scholarships at all levels for research into CE at UFH.

Jay Thakrar has been elected to the executive of the national community engagement body that was launched in November 2009, the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF).

Deans have been requested to monitor carefully the enrolment of postgraduate students to ensure that proper staff : student ratios are maintained. This will hopefully enhance the quality of supervision and also the throughput rates for postgraduates, especially Master's students, which is a cause for concern.

Internationalisation:

This is an area that needs concerted management intervention this year to improve operational capacity. The current staffing infrastructure is inadequate and cannot cope with the demands that are placed on this office. The reputational risks associated with the lack of capacity are high.

On a brighter note: A number of memoranda of understanding are being operationalised with some success. For example, The Memorandum of Understanding that was signed with the University of Newcastle in Australia last year is being implemented and signs are that the relationship between the two universities will be a fruitful one, impacting not only on research, but also on curriculum development, staff development and community engagement activities. We already have strong links in agriculture, with Prof Francois Lategan having visited Newcastle and in January links were established in the field of early childhood development when a Newcastle specialist visited UFH. We are also exploring collaboration in the field of social dynamics.

Prof Lategan has also been instrumental in establishing links with Mendel University in Hungary. He and Prof Graham Bradley of the department of Biochemistry and Microbiology have visited Mendel on separate occasions in the past six months and UFH a doctoral student from Mendel has arrived at UFH to conduct research here.

Last year UFH hosted a delegation from the University of Syracuse with Prof Nasila Rembe being our link person. He had visited Syracuse prior to this delegation coming to UFH. There are some good possibilities for collaboration especially regarding the Syracuse experience in urban renewal.

The University also successfully hosted the International Education Association of South Africa conference on "Internationalisation: bridging the Rural-Urban Divide in Higher Education"

Technology-enhanced learning:

This is a focal area of the Teaching and Learning Centre. A pilot project in this regard is being implemented and hopefully there will be better rollout once our technology constraints have been lifted. This project cannot be successful without proper infrastructure in place.

Inter-campus Academic equivalence:

This is an ongoing matter and is another focal area of the Academic Review process. It is an important aspect of our multi-campus model. Formal equivalence has in the main been achieved and the same curriculum is being offered on all the campuses. The focus now will be on equivalence in practice. The quality of service delivery is uneven and greater attention will be given to this aspect during the course of the year.

The Institutional Forum after some years of dormancy became a vibrant governance structure last year. It interacted with the Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions. The IF contributed significantly in formalizing an institutional response to this report. They also drove the process of developing the University Statute. This year it aims to focus on the following areas:

- The further strengthening of the IF in ensuring that it has the capacity to discharge its legal mandate as outlined in the Higher Education Act of 1995. This shall be done in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education and Training and other institutions of higher learning. Furthermore, we fully support the initiative taken by the Department of recognizing the significance of IF's by establishing a national platform in an effort to strengthen them to share and engage on issues of national importance that are critical in the democratization of governance for radical transformation of higher education and the advancement of values, solidarity and equality.
- Secondly, the IF shall also focus on curriculum renewal. This will be done working closely with the Senate and the SRC in ensuring that our curriculum is responsive to the socio economic needs of our society. The IF's curriculum renewal programme of action shall entail the following:
 - Focus on strategies of the implementation of the grounding programme,
 - Organizing curriculum indaba where various stakeholders shall be invited. This will include business, government and NGO's to share on what skills are required for the next ten to twenty years and.
 - The interlacing of our community engagement work into the academic mainstream in order to promote the University's contribution to the development of our society.
- Thirdly, the IF shall also focus on the turn-around strategy of the University in ensuring that it is self sustainable and is financially viable. The strategies should redefine the UFH's role in the current conjuncture. This shall be informed by various factors including:
 - The outcomes of the national summit on higher education to be held this year,
 - The subsidy review and the NSFAS review
 - The recommendations by the National task team that assisted the UFH, PSP Icon report and an engagement on the strategic reconfiguring of the university structures, being sensitive to the social and economic conditions in our country and the strategic consideration of the government's key focus areas.

- Developing a UFH transformation charter that will capture the recommendations from the “transformation, social cohesion and elimination of discrimination” report that was commissioned by the minister.
- Lastly, the IF shall also focus on the strengthening of the SRC and the student formations, ensuring that they are capable of providing leadership to the challenges faced by the students and the youth. This shall include the following:
 - Organising workshops targeting both the SRC and the General Student Council
 - Workshops that will also target student associations etc.

These efforts shall succeed if there is a general support and respect for the IF by stakeholders including attending meetings and accountability to their constituencies. The issue of the statute will also assist the capacitating of the IF and we hope the Minister shall speedily deal with the gazetting processes.

The need to **foster a service culture** is clearly indicated in the strategic plan. This is to ensure that all sections of the University drive towards our slogan of “Together in Excellence”. All support sections of the University (HR, Finance, Operations, Student Affairs, Bursaries and Student Financial Aid, etc) have to enter into service level agreements with those they serve internally.

For instance, in the Registrar’s office Service Level Agreements were developed and signed with all five Executive Deans in respect of academic administration. Review sessions were held with the Deans in November. User satisfaction levels were as follows:

Law	80%
Management & Commerce	73%
Science & Agriculture	65%
Social Science & Humanities	80%
Education	89%

Individual Performance Agreements and Personal Development Plans were developed for the managers in sections like the Registrar’s Office to ensure the employees live up to the required service culture. This should be emulated by other sections in the University.

High standards in service culture are to be underpinned by sound ethical principles and values. In 2009 we have tried to popularize the UFH Charter of Ethical Principles and Values. This year we have to link this with the development of a framework and indicators for transformation in line with the recommendations of the Ministerial Committee on transformation and social cohesion, and the elimination of discrimination in public higher education institutions.

Good governance is a key requirement for a functionally effective university. Last year a new University Council was installed and has taken a keen interest in the turnaround process. The new Chairperson of Council, Mr Johann Evertse, has shown drive and passion to ensure that we succeed in our plans.

We also had a smooth transition between the SRCs with elections held earlier last year to allow for consultations on fees. Both old and new SRCs were consulted in the process leading to a very smooth transition. The SRC has to work very closely with the international office in ensuring the coordination of international student affairs is run through proper governance structures. In this regard we need to ensure the experience of the Zimbabwe students and entities that administer their affairs are in line with University policy. The Dean of Students and the SRC have to work hard to avoid a repeat of the 2009 experience.

The proposed Institutional Statute was developed and approved by all structures, including Council. It was submitted to the DoHET for gazetting.

A register of Acts and Policies regulating the UFH was developed and is updated as and when there are additions.

The **integrity of University records** must always be of the highest standard and the Registrar's Office has to ensure that all systems and procedures are in place to safeguard this.

Charteris & Barnes audited the completeness and accuracy of 2009 first year student files. The achievement level is 95%, owing to the late submission of some documents by the students. This year we have to ensure we achieve 100%.

Graduation certificates were printed directly from ITS and the accuracy level was 95%.

The electronic document management system was installed for Committee Officers and they were trained for its use.

Migration from V13 of ITS to a higher version, Migrator, is scheduled for 26 March to 07 April 2010. Thereafter, the project plan for the on-line applications and registration systems will be finalized.

Promotion of good student life is essential for academic excellence. Students should have access to quality teaching, research and community engagement facilities, residences, social and cultural activity, governance etc.

The infrastructure grants from government are assisting to have some of these dealt with. In 2009 we finished the 3-year cycle that granted UFH R150m for infrastructure. The last major structure to come up from that fund is the new teaching complex in EL which is still under construction. It is our hope that the Ministry will approve the purchase of the Transnet land next to the Mirriam Makeba Audiovisual centre for a future student village. This was budgeted for in the previous infrastructure grant cycle and the funds are still available. That land would afford the EL campus some sporting grounds and possible university-owned residence.

The new infrastructure grant cycle with R143m allocated starts this year and goes on to 2011/12 financial year. It is all for Alice and more than 50% of it is on residences. During the vacation work started in Jabavu and Jolobe. Cooperation between management and the SRC in this work

has been excellent. These residences have been finished and were handed over to the University on the 5th of February 2010.

We have been disappointed with the contractor who was supposed to start erecting new residences in the Alice campus and we have put him on terms because this is an urgent and important matter for student life. We need more residences and we need to accommodate students that will be moved from residences that will be renovated through the course of the year.

The estimated backlog costs for refurbishments and modernisation of the residences is R200m. This was obtained through a feasibility study that was approved by Council in 2009. The study was to look at whether a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement would be feasible for the UFH residences. This would deal with residences that will not be refurbished through the current grant. We now have the results of the study and these will be shared with the University community including Council. No decision has been taken yet to go through a PPP route.

The University is looking at various options to ensure a life conducive to study. Access, retention and success can only be achieved with improved student life in all activities that affect them. The classroom or lecture room experience must also assist our students to achieve. The humanizing pedagogy we continuously talk about has to be practiced so that the lecture room is a joy for both the student and the academic.

It is amazing that our students can perform so well in sports like rugby, soccer, cricket and netball with such limited resources. Some of them represent the provincial sides in their codes. We also applaud our students who have been consistently lifting the UFH flag in national student debating competitions. In this regard I would like to congratulate Mr Siphon Kilani, the SRC General Secretary, for having been elected to lead the national association.

In conclusion, the University of Fort Hare has a proud tradition and record of catering for a student body whose majority is from a very poor socio-economic background. Currently fees account for 40% of our recurrent budget and student debt is a major challenge. The government subsidy, although it accounts for the major portion of recurrent funds is still not sufficient to address the backlogs and on-going operational costs of the institution. We, therefore, welcome the decision of the Ministry to review the funding formula. A deliberate decision and effort to address the continued underfunding of higher education in general and previously disadvantaged institutions in particular is welcome. These previously disadvantaged institutions need recapitalization to address backlogs. It is not sustainable to continuously increase fees to address both backlogs and current operations. The fees should be addressing current operations and assist maintaining the University assets. We are eagerly awaiting the NSFAS review report to see how it will address the current student debt and lack of access to higher education for those who have no of funds. We appreciate positive and progressive action like the one from the Premier of the Eastern Cape who assisted students who owe the University to settle their debt.

The University student financial aid office will be strengthened so as to ensure efficient and effective administration of all the funds received for student aid.

We shall continue to raise funds from other sources like the private sector and other benefactors. Great strides have been made with the lottery, various sporting codes like the South African Rugby Union and Cricket South Africa, public sector organizations (Dept of Labour, Bankseta, Department of Social Development, etc) and the private sector (Nedbank, Lafarge, Old Mutual, Anglo-American, De Beers, etc).

There is a continuous need for computers in EL with the computer:student ratio being too low. We are doing better in Alice in this regard (ratio of 1 computer for every 6 is met), even though some of the computers are now old. It is our commitment that the EL situation will be completely turned around in this first term.

One of my commitments when I assumed office was that this University should have a new library by 2012. Various sources have been approached to have this realized and recent negotiations with one company are the most positive we have had so far. I would like to introduce to you Mr Joseph Safra from Brazil, whose company has agreed to fund the construction of our new library. He is here to see for himself what our needs are and may do more than funding the library. With him are Messrs Matunda and Bozaaier who have been pivotal in striking this deal.

Finally, Honourable Minister, colleagues, students, ladies and gentlemen, a period of change is not an easy road to travel. Recent discussions on the possible restructuring process in the University have reminded me of words said by the late Mr Raymond Mhlaba on leading a difficult process. He was advising the 2004 government as it started its term of office. His words of wisdom were, "You must never run faster than the horse you are riding". A process as sensitive as managing change in the University of Fort Hare requires that wisdom. Patience is a virtue that leaders in any formation must have. Leaders must be prepared to explain even repeatedly when they are not understood. They must also listen to the other side. They must at all times be prepared to listen to a different or even dissenting voice. Diversity is a powerful instrument for any organisation. We should not behave like my friend's Brahman cow.

We have a challenging year ahead of us and it is through working together that we will be able to make a lasting positive contribution to the life of Fort Hare.

Thank you.

Dr MVUYO TOM