

**PUBLIC LAUNCH OF STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY'S HOPE PROJECT**

**21 July 2010**

**Prof Russel Botman, Rector and Vice-Chancellor**

[www.thehopeproject.co.za](http://www.thehopeproject.co.za)

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Goeienaand, dames en here. Good evening. Molweni.

Welcome to all of you.

Allow me to acknowledge a few of our special guests:

- Members of the diplomatic community:
  - Ms Alberta Mayberry, the Consul-General of the US
  - Ms Irene Flükiger, the Swiss Consul-General Cape Town
  - Mr Mridal Kumar, Head of Office: Cape Town, High Commission of India
  - Mr Simon Tu, Director-General, Taiwanese Liaison Office, Cape Town
- Members of the Western Cape Provincial Government:
  - Mr Donald Grant, Minister of Education
  - Mr Sakkie Jenner, Minister of Cultural affairs, Sport and Recreation
  - Dr Ivan Meyer, Minister of Social Development
- Mr Clarence Johnson, Deputy Mayor, Cape Winelands
- A special word of welcome to Dr Max Price, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town.
- Members of the Council of Stellenbosch University, including the Chairperson, Dr Paul Cluver
- Members of the Board of Trustees of Stellenbosch University
- Member of the Advisory Committee of the HOPE Project, Messrs Gys Steyn, Jannie Mouton and Thys du Toit
- From the South African National Defence Force and Military Veterans, Brigadier-General Thancuxola Mandela, and Brigadier-General NP Yam, who is also Commandant of the Military Academy at Saldanha.
- Members of the University's management team, deans, academic initiative leaders
- Members of the media
- Friends of Stellenbosch University
- And a special word of welcome to everyone on campus and around the world joining us on the internet via live streaming.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure you will agree with me that the Libertas Choir performed excellently. They will be back later to entertain us some more.

On this note, congratulations to the University Choir. They were just crowned world champions at the World Choir Games in China. The SU choir won two gold medals and received the highest total mark of all 450 participating choirs – an impressive 95,8%. Congratulations to the conductor, André van der Merwe, and his choir members. You held the University's name high.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, we are here to launch Stellenbosch University's HOPE Project. The video you have just seen provided some background. What I want to do now, is to expand on the challenges we face and how we intend meeting them.

I will also have a surprise for you in a few minutes' time, but more about that later.

### **WHAT IS THE HOPE PROJECT?**

We have three responsibilities as a university.

The first is a moral responsibility. Given our history, we have a moral responsibility to the poor, to rural communities and to a diversity of individuals in our country.

Our second responsibility is the historical responsibility to face up to the lingering burdens of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The third responsibility is the responsibility to embrace the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world of a new generation of young people, new ways of learning, new opportunities for research and the need for harnessing emerging technologies on an ongoing basis.

The HOPE Project is our way of living up to these responsibilities. It is our new, long-term strategic plan – and it is ambitious, comprehensive and integrated.

The HOPE Project allows us to do three things.

1. To be of service to society, addressing both existing problems and meeting future needs.
2. To be the best university we can possibly be for a new generation
3. And to galvanise others into joining us in our quest to help make the world a better place.

We are committed to these aspirations true to the *raison d'être* of the University "to create and sustain, in commitment to the universitarian ideal of excellent scholarly and scientific practice, and environment in which knowledge can be discovered, can be shared, and can be applied to the benefit of the community" (SU, 2000).

### **THE INFORMATION AGE**

A decade into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, life on the cutting edge of society has exceeded some of the wildest predictions of yesterday's science fiction authors.

As our ability to communicate and travel faster and easier grows, so the world is getting progressively smaller. In the global village of today, we are all closely connected to each other.

The world is getting smarter, with a micro chip in almost every device and intelligence embedded into everything from medicine to biotechnology.

Our epoch has been called the Information Age, in recognition of the fact that the most important commodity is no longer a specific natural resource or industrial product, but knowledge itself.

In short, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has emerged as a time of "supercomplexity" (Barnett). This is exciting, but also challenging.

### **WHOSE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY?**

Whose 21<sup>st</sup> century is it going to be (Lange, 2010)? Not everyone has arrived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, regardless of what the calendar says.

In large parts of the world, people are still battling with basic challenges – getting enough food to eat and clean water to drink, a roof over their heads, peace and security in their streets, a decent job with a fair salary, and quality education for their children.

Only a minority of people of the world and of our country and continent have arrived in the digital age. Most people still need a bridge to this better future.

## **ORIGINS OF HOPE**

The notion of Stellenbosch University as a place of relevance, a place of meaning for the people of South Africa and the rest of the continent and the world can be traced back to Stellenbosch University's *Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond*. The aim was to re-evaluate our priorities in light of both the birth of a democratic order in South Africa, and the dawning of the 21st century and its knowledge-based economy.

On the one hand, this called for Stellenbosch to build on the high standards it had achieved as a world-class research university. But it also required of the institution to change. So, the university acknowledged that it had been a role player in the injustices of the past. And it expressed a commitment to redress, which would be pursued through:

- Equity – building a staff and student corps demographically more representative of society; and
- Service – promoting development in the context of pressing needs in South Africa and the rest of the continent.

When I was appointed rector three years ago, we discussed these ideas in the management team, and committed ourselves to the practical realisation of this commitment. And I am proud to say that the University community united behind this vision.

A campus-wide process of intensive consultation followed, in which our management team played a key role. They are Prof Julian Smith, Vice-Rector for Community Interaction and Personnel, Prof Arnold van Zyl, Vice-Rector for Research, Prof Magda Fourie, Vice-Rector for Teaching, and Prof Leopoldt van Huyssteen, Executive Director for Operations and Finance.

They were supported by the deans of our 10 faculties. As the banners outside this hall depict so powerfully by showing some of the many individuals involved, “We” – the whole university – “are the HOPE Project”.

One source of inspiration for this plan was the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which world leaders had agreed to in 2000. At Stellenbosch University we looked at the international and national development agendas, and weighed up our own strengths and goals as an institution to see how we could make a contribution. In the end we distilled five themes from them to guide our core activities of teaching and learning, research and community interaction.

Our five development themes are the eradication of poverty and related conditions, and the promotion of human dignity and health, democracy and human rights, peace and security, as well as a sustainable environment and a competitive industry.

Our vision for our country and continent is a future free from poverty, where the human dignity of all people is protected, where our social and ecological systems are healthy, and where peace, security and democracy are safeguarded. We want to be seen to have played a role in realising this vision.

The HOPE Project puts into action the University's commitment to play a role in working for such a country, such a continent, such a world.

By following a science-for-society approach, we are bringing about tangible change within communities. Whether it is a renewable energy supply for the region, food security in Southern Africa, conflict resolution in communities torn apart by poverty and violence, or rural healthcare and development, we are throwing our weight of our science behind the country and the continent's most pressing needs.

## **INITIATIVES OF HOPE**

How are we doing this? Leaders, academics, researchers and students in our various faculties have developed more than 20 hope-generating academic initiatives – from the Ukwanda Rural Clinical

School ([www.thehopeproject.co.za/ukwanda](http://www.thehopeproject.co.za/ukwanda)) for training doctors and health workers for rural areas, to the Stellenbosch University Water Institute ([www.thehopeproject.co.za/water](http://www.thehopeproject.co.za/water)), an interdisciplinary effort to help preserve and sustainably utilise the precious water resources of our country and continent.

There are so many exciting initiatives that I could easily talk until tomorrow morning. You can read more about all our initiatives in the *HOPE Times* (<http://www.myvirtualpaper.com/doc/stellenbosch-University/hope-times-english/2010072001>) and in the HOPE Project brochure available tonight ([www.thehopeproject.co.za](http://www.thehopeproject.co.za)).

In addition to the various academic initiatives, the HOPE Project also includes steps taken by the University to maintain its position as a leading 21st century institution of higher learning. This we are doing by:

- Recruiting the best calibre students, researchers, lecturers and support staff, and actively assisting them so that they produce top results;
- Improving our diversity profile;
- Expanding postgraduate study further; and
- Establishing excellent facilities and infrastructure.

In this way we can be a place of importance and meaning. We are working hard to be a multicultural, non-racial, diverse institution of excellence – one that also fulfils our responsibility to Afrikaans.

Let me mention an example of what we are doing to promote student success.

Stellenbosch is the first institution in South Africa to introduce a First-year Academy, a university-wide initiative to improve the academic success rate of our new students. In the Faculty of Health Sciences alone, this initiative has led to an improvement in the pass rate from 92% to 96% over the past three years while simultaneously increasing our intake of students from disadvantaged schools. Across all our faculties, the success rate of the first year cohort peaks at 87%.

## **JOIN US**

If we want to be of service to society and be a place of excellence, we must ensure that our activities are sustainable. This we cannot do without the help of our partners, networks and supporters.

Therefore tonight is not just an announcement of the HOPE Project; it is an invitation for greater involvement by individuals, alumni, friends, companies and organisations to join us in changing the world.

Universities worldwide are under tremendous financial pressure as state subsidies decrease and the demands of access, relevance and excellence increase.

In South Africa, education is one of the government's strategic priorities, and higher education is well-supported. Stellenbosch University is grateful for the state support it receives, but it has none-the-less become clear that subsidies and class fees on their own are no longer sufficient for everything we need to do at this critical juncture.

So, as part of the HOPE Project, we are tonight publicly launching the largest fundraising campaign ever by an African university. Our goal is to raise gifts of at least R1,75 billion by 2015.

We can announce with pride that the past three years – in the silent phase of the HOPE Project – we have raised nearly R500 million in philanthropic contributions. More than 4 500 donors have supported Stellenbosch since my installation in April 2007, when the idea of the University as a centre of hope in Africa started taking shape.

Someone who personified the idea of hope through service to society was SU's former chancellor, Dr Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, who unfortunately passed away in May this year. The University plans to honour him by establishing the Frederick van Zyl Slabbert Institute for Leadership Development. This

institute will focus on, among other things, the development of youth and student leaders with a sense of responsibility towards the country and its people.

Dr Van Zyl Slabbert's successor, Dr Johann Rupert, is not only our new Chancellor but also a benefactor of the University. He has announced the establishment of an Endowed Chair in Intellectual Property at the University in the context of the HOPE Project, to be funded by Richemont, the company of which he is Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer.

We are in negotiations to finalise this gift, and this may turn out to be first fully endowed chair at Stellenbosch University.

The HOPE Project received its first monetary injection from the Council of the University. An amount of R320 million was reallocated from existing University funds. Among other things, this money is used as leverage to obtain more funding from the state and other institutions.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Training appropriated R192 million to the University for the upgrading and extension of existing facilities and buildings.

Our 4 500 donors include national and international alumni, friends of the University, corporations, foundations, trusts and development agencies.

From alumni who give small, regular gifts, to those who are in a position to make major gifts, and those who have shown their commitment through legacies, we deeply value your contributions and partnership with the University.

We thank all our past donors for their trust and foresight in investing in Stellenbosch University, enhancing our ability to make a difference.

We cannot, this evening, name them all, but all the details will be on the website in due course ([www.thehopeproject.co.za](http://www.thehopeproject.co.za)).

One of the goals of this campaign is to inspire more of our alumni to support their alma mater. We would like to increase the rate of those who give back to the University from less than 2% to closer to 10%.

Setting an excellent example in this regard, are recent Stellenbosch graduates Nico Mans, Paul Antohnie and Alphonso Primo. They recently set up a bursary fund to help underprivileged students based on their own experience on campus, when they struggled financially to keep head above water, but persisted because they realised the importance of education.

These young Stellenbosch alumni started putting R100 each per month into a kitty, and when they reached R4000, they approached the University and launched a bursary fund for needy students. They call it the MAP bursary, using the first letter from each of their surnames – Mans, Antohnie and Primo.

Paul Antohnie is currently an articled clerk at our Legal Aid Clinic, Nico Mans is a teacher at Leeu-Gamka Primary, and Alphonso Primo taught English in Korea and is now temporarily on the staff of the Centre for Prospective Students.

It is not only people with links to the University who support our work. Amongst recent bequests I want to mention, is that of Ms Marietjie Kuchler who left the largest donation yet received from an individual – and she was not an alumnus.

There are also companies who support specific initiatives, and leading local and international philanthropic foundations that support the University. Contributions can be made for chairs, bursaries, research, our library services, residences and faculties.

Delivering the next generation of academics is a key question facing universities. Two foundations – one international, the other local – recently donated funds to Stellenbosch to support us in this regard.

The Andrew W Mellon Foundation of the US donated R6 million for bursaries for young postgraduate students and postdoctoral research fellows in the social sciences. The Claude Leon Foundation of South Africa has granted a significant award for postgraduate students in the science and engineering fields.

It is clear that we have already received considerable local and international support, and know that we will gain many more partners. It is significant that our strategic partners support our vision of being a builder of hope, as well as the steps we have taken to ensure that Stellenbosch University's proud tradition of excellence is maintained. Their contributions are a motion of confidence, but also an investment in a better future.

## **VIRTUAL BRIDGE**

We have now reached the surprise I promised you at the start of my speech.

As many of you know, Stellenbosch University has a strong partnership with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the oldest technological research university in the USA. We concluded an agreement last year to ensure capacity building in science and engineering, and to encourage the youth to focus their studies on the global challenges of our time.

Dr Shirley Ann Jackson, the President of Rensselaer, visited us last year. Described by *Time* magazine as "perhaps the ultimate role model for women in science" and by the United States National Science Board as "a national treasure", she was the first woman to graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a doctorate in Particle Physics.

Her presidency of Rensselaer as its first woman and first black President – driven by her mission of "Why not change the world" – has seen the institute transformed and repositioned as a leader in science, engineering, management, and arts and social science education and research. Under her leadership, Rensselaer last year concluded a \$1,4 billion development campaign.

I called on Dr Jackson earlier this year as part of a successful trip to the US to get support for the HOPE Project and other initiatives.

We discussed a number of key questions, including how we can take university exchange to the next level. Rensselaer's "Virtual Bridge to Africa" fitted the bill perfectly.

The Virtual Bridge raises the bar for educational exchange and research collaboration at a distance. Constructed of moving photons rather than steel, this bridge will use high-capacity fibre-optic cable to move information from Stellenbosch, via Cape Town, all the way up to London, across the Atlantic, into the NYSERNET loop that spans New York State, and straight to Rensselaer.

Dr Jackson is there tonight, but she now joins us live over the Virtual Bridge. Over to you, Shirley ...

[Shirley Jackson's input via Virtual Bridge]

Thank you, Shirley! I must mention that Dr Jackson is my mentor, and has supported us in the development of the HOPE Project. The Virtual Bridge demonstrates what can be achieved through innovative collaboration between institutions who share a common vision.

Stellenbosch University is also building partnerships with other African universities through our Graduate School ([www.thehopeproject.co.za/graduateschool](http://www.thehopeproject.co.za/graduateschool)), African Doctoral Academy and the Partnership for Africa's Next Generation of Academics (PANGeA).

## **CONCLUSION**

Ladies and gentlemen, a number of negative stereotypes of Africa were shattered through South Africa's recent successful hosting of the soccer World Cup. It changed the world's perceptions of Africa.

More importantly, though, Africa's World Cup opened African eyes to Africa's potential. It united the people of this continent like never before – not around political slogans and aid programmes but around pride in our own achievements. It convinced Africa that it can stand tall on the world stage.

Our challenge now is to sustain this momentum. And the best way of doing this, is by investing in education. Higher education, in particular, unlocks and imparts reliable knowledge, which can be used to change the world for the better. And it produces professionals in a variety of fields, equipping them with the necessary skills to fulfil leadership roles in society and drive the economic growth required for improving people's lives.

Stellenbosch University's HOPE Project is tailor-made for this challenge. It allows us to deploy our key strengths to tackle some of Africa's biggest problems, in the process developing the human resources the continent needs to progress to the next level.

Ladies and gentlemen, we live in a fast-changing world that makes heavy demands on us. The 21<sup>st</sup> century's knowledge economy demands continuous adaptations. At the same time, we live with the heritage of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The HOPE Project enables us to tackle existing problems and future challenges with equal earnest.

The HOPE Project is the right thing to do. Now is the right time for hope. Future generations deserve nothing less.

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## REFERENCES

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