



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MANDLA MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

GRADUATIONS

30 March 2016

- Chancellor of the University of South Africa, Judge Bernard Ngoepe
- Distinguished guests
- Unisa's Registrar, Prof Gordon Zide
- Members of Unisa's executive and extended management
- Parents, spouses, partners, family and friends of our graduates
- And most especially this evening, Unisa graduates.

It is a real pleasure to welcome you to this very special occasion – your graduation! I can assure you that it is as special for Unisa, as it is for you our graduates and your loved ones.

At a recent graduation ceremony our Chancellor, Judge Bernard Ngoepe shared a little about the history of the university, explaining that after the church, the university is the oldest institution in the world, having endured and flourished for nearly 1000 years. Along with that history, we have inherited age-old traditions, some of which are western in orientation but the majority of which have evolved to capture and reflect the cultures and traditions of the various countries. In all cultures there is some *rite of passage*, for acknowledging the knowledge that has been mastered by the student during the course of his or her studies.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you will undoubtedly experience this evening, Unisa's graduation ceremonies have a joyful and colourful character, which speaks directly to our conscious decision to reflect our African culture and ethos. Loud exclamations of pride and pleasure, joyous ululations and even the odd tune on a mouth organ feature in Unisa's graduations across the country and the continent. It seems that Unisa's students of all hues, and their families, are intent on making the most of this really special occasion in all of our lives.

However, inasmuch as we encourage your celebration, *we insist on being heard* and neither whistles, nor vuvuzelas will be allowed to block out the sound of any student's name being read to our audience as

they make their way across the stage. I ask that you respect that and exercise the necessary decorum. Every single student deserves to enjoy this moment to the full. Above all, graduations are a very formal and solemn acknowledgement by one's peers, of knowledge that has been acquired and mastered successfully by the student. When students kneel on the bench to be capped, they do so as students. When students rise after having been capped they do so as graduates who join their peers as this country's intelligentsia - and Unisa's alumni. It is a moment of honoring and acknowledging and let us not forget – very solid achievement. As academics, some of whom are seated on this stage, we too have cause for joy and celebration. We live for the moment that our students become confident and proud graduates. It is what makes it all worthwhile, because it means that our academics have also succeeded in their tasks - and so you will appreciate that that graduations mean so much to so many people.

This year marks the University of South Africa's 143rd year of existence. And as we celebrate this magnificent achievement in South African - and African - higher education history we are cannot but appreciate afresh that this is an institution whose character has been informed and shaped by the many decades that have marked its transition from an examining body at its genesis, to the largest Open Distance Learning

University on the Continent; by the people who have led Unisa; the staff who have worked for Unisa; and by the countless thousands of graduates who are to be found in every conceivable profession and in every country in the world.

One finds the full spectrum of society represented in the legions of our graduates. Their commitment and diligence have enabled them to go on and do extraordinary things with their lives. Many of our graduates have played key roles in the shaping of our country and its history (now more than ever before). In fact, the role of honour amongst our graduates reads like the *who's who* of international and national politics, business and industry, and many of our most illustrious professions. In fact, it is our honour tonight to introduce Honourable Mr Julius Malema, Commander-in-Chief of the Economic Freedom Fighters, who has successfully completed his degree amidst his very busy schedule. We know that he has been a diligent student who even found time to consult personally with his lecturers. He is a good example and inspiration to many students who are currently toiling with the hope that completing their studies is within reach.

Unisa has made a massive contribution to the growth and development of this country (and our Continent) over the past 143 years, and this contribution has been shaped by the individual and collective

contributions of people of every hue and persuasion and from all walks of life, in a manner and to an extent that is truly remarkable. So you have every reason to proud Unisa graduates.

Unisa Graduates, education empowers by providing a context that is only achieved through study. As you apply the knowledge that you have gained, I have no doubt that you will begin to realise there is still so much more to learn! They say that *a little knowledge is a dangerous thing* and that if you are feeling a bit unwell, and you were to type your symptoms into the “University of Google” you would probably find that you have about 500 potentially fatal illnesses affecting every organ in your body! That is why at Unisa, we encourage the practice of lifelong learning, of using your intellect to its full potential, of being discerning and appropriately informed so that you are able to develop fully as an individual, a scholar and a productive and responsible member of society.

Unisa’s vision is to be *The African University*, shaping futures in the service of humanity. As you join the ranks of Unisa alumni and as you plan your futures, I would ask that you take time to reflect on the contribution that you can and will make – not only to your own growth and development and the welfare of your families, but also to the

growth and development of our beloved people, country and continent, towards the bright future that we all desire.

Well done on staying the course! This evening you will reap the rewards. I know that I speak on behalf of the entire university and all of the people gathered here this evening, when, on behalf of the university council and executive and extended management d I extend my congratulations and very best wishes to you, our graduates, for fruitful and prosperous futures.

I thank you.