

## **VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS ON THE 15<sup>TH</sup> CONGREGATION – 10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2015**

It is a distinct honour for me to welcome you all to the Midlands State University's 15<sup>th</sup> congregation where we have gathered to witness the conferment of degrees and distinctions to our dear graduands. As we welcome all of you who tirelessly labour to assist us to produce these well-rounded graduands, I wish to especially acknowledge the presence of a celebrated scholar and academic, our Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development, Professor Jonathan Moyo who is here with us today. To our co-patrons of the Midlands State University Fundraising Committee, Mrs Sekai Holland and Hon. Vice President Cde Emmerson Mnangagwa, it goes without saying that you are most welcome at Midlands State University.

Ladies and gentlemen, the entire Midlands State University community feels exceptionally privileged and deeply indebted to our President and Chancellor Cde R G Mugabe, for graciously according our university a record second graduation ceremony within a period of less than a month this year. This historic occasion, which arises from the fact that we are a fully semesterised university, which enrolls and examines its students twice a year will immensely benefit our dear graduands who were otherwise going to wait until 2016 to graduate. Moreover, this graduation ceremony today, which arose entirely out of our Chancellor's own compassionate consideration of our graduands, is ample testimony of the tremendous value that his Excellency attaches to the role of higher education as an engine for socio-economic development. It is in that light that I am exceedingly thrilled to invite you all to join me in extending a hearty welcome to a rare intellectual and leader, His Excellency and Chancellor of the Midlands State University Cde R G Mugabe, who has squeezed in time, in the midst of extremely important proceedings of the revolutionary ZANU PF party conference to officiate at our graduation ceremony today. Your Excellency and Chancellor, we always cherish your refreshing company and wisdom.

Today we present to you a total of 2 612 graduands, a figure which comprises 47% female and 53% male graduands, 2228 undergraduates and 384 gaining Masters degrees, 121 graduating with first class degrees and 31 international graduands. Accordingly, Your Excellency and Chancellor, you will therefore be capping a total of 505 graduands, who will come onto the dais in line with your perceptive and instructive observations on the last graduation ceremony that we have implemented.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, we wish to assure you that we are also seriously taking on board your spot on observation that our commerce graduates need to be provided with such skills and knowledge as would turn them into more productive citizens. In this regard, we have decided not to reinvent the wheel but we have already thoroughly researched the Indian economy whose entrepreneurship education programmes have resulted in a thriving society there. Of particular interest in the Indian system is the fact that Entrepreneurship education has focused on measures designed to encourage self-employment and the establishment of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Indeed, we look forward to benefitting from the south to south collaboration and cooperation which we are initiating through staff and student exchanges with our Indian Higher Education counterparts, with a view to preparing our own graduates for a productive economy that generates full employment for our young men and women.

Furthermore, Your Excellency and Chancellor, our growth and expansion strategies are also now predicated upon the five ranking criteria for universities that were recently presented to us by our informed Minister, Professor Jonathan Moyo, namely, publications and citations, teaching, income augmentation, international outlook of our university and research. To promote a university-wide culture in which all university employees become seized with issues pertaining to our goal to penetrate world university ranking systems, we are setting up a Ranking Committee, which has set targets and which is chaired at the level of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

In the area of publications and citations, we are increasing our research output that is published in refereed journals in order to gain access to university ranking through citation analysis. Furthermore, taking account of the fact that our national, regional and global rating and ranking are critically dependent on the visibility of our university to the rest of the world, we are continuously redesigning and updating our website so that it reflects strongly the work that we are doing in our core business of teaching, research and community engagement. Our website being the main window through which the world accesses us, we are posting on it information about our academic staff, including their designations, key research areas and publications, community engagement activities and how all these inform our curriculum. To date the visibility of the research output of our academic staff on the internet has seen a number of them being invited either to facilitate or present papers at international forums.

With respect to teaching, apart from our strategic partnerships with better resourced and endowed sister universities to enable our teaching staff to attain PhDs, we have simultaneously launched an innovative training programme to equip them with pedagogical and research skills that improve on the quality of their delivery. We also recruit qualified part-time lecturers from Industry, with a view to infuse a practical component in the teaching of some of our modules. In all our teaching and training initiatives, we remain fully mindful of the fact that the quality of our products should be judged by those who ultimately employ them.

As regards the mobilization of a third stream income for the university, we remain fully awake to the fact that governments the world over cannot sustain the funding of institutions of higher learning on their own. Thus, in addition to our fundraising activities, our faculties are building fundable research partnerships that can bring financial resources into our university. Your Excellency and Chancellor, at our last graduation ceremony I informed the congregation that our Faculty of Law had been awarded a grant of US\$97 000 by the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA). This time around another case in point is our Department of Local Governance Studies, which has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Centre for Local Democracy in Sweden, part of whose provision is to capacitate 50 local women councilors to be more effective and efficient in their jobs. The Swedish International Agency (SIDA) will provide funding to the tune of US\$700 000 for this three year project. The outputs of this research initiative will be used for teaching purposes. In addition, the same department has another (MOU) with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and has initially received US\$4000 for research into the constitutionalisation of local government in Zimbabwe, a project which is already in its final stages. Upon submission of the report, the department will receive a further US\$3000. From the research outputs, the department is in the process of writing a book, which again will be used for teaching purposes. Thus, in addition to supplementing our fees income, these research initiatives are also driven by our submission that there cannot be any meaningful development without robust local government system.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, given the fact that the world of academia knows no geographical boundaries, our enrolment of international students from Namibia, Botswana, Malawi, Angola, Mozambique, Nigeria and South Sudan currently stands at 1 075. We have also successfully won the bid to host the Pan African Students Debate at the Midlands State

University in 2016, an event which will attract international media attention as well as financial benefits to the university.

Finally Your Excellency and Chancellor, we will forever be profoundly grateful to you for gracing and personally participating in our graduation ceremonies twice this academic year. We also cherish the wise guidance that we receive from our Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development and the rest of his officials. Indeed, the strategic oversight that we get from our University Council is never taken for granted. The parents, guardians, spouses and friends of our students are without doubt staunch partners in our production of the much needed human capital for the nation. We thank you all.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, I wish to take this opportunity to eminently congratulate our shining graduands and to remind them that indeed a great deal of value addition was done by our dedicated staff and our partners to their intellectual, social, spiritual and physical growth and wellbeing during their stay at Midlands State University. Accordingly, my dear graduands, as our new alumni, you remain part of our valued MSU family. As you take up your engagements both in and outside Zimbabwe, we implore you to continue upholding our core values of honesty, integrity, hard work and care for others. I am exceedingly happy that you have managed to graduate. My parting words are that you should always remember that wealth, money and indeed happiness have a tendency to follow men and women of integrity and character. Congratulations, Makorokoto, Amhlope! I thank you.