

VC'S GRADUATION ADDRESS AT THE 16TH CONGREGATION OF MSU- 25TH NOVEMBER 2016

It is a great honor and privilege for me to welcome you all to this grand occasion, the 16th congregation of the Midlands State University. Today is certainly a great day for the institution and its stakeholders as it is the epitome of our academic year. Accordingly, our shining graduands, their parents, spouses, guardians, relatives, staff and key stakeholders as well as friends and well-wishers of the University and other agencies have every reason to join us, as we celebrate the fruits of an arduous, yet well orchestrated academic endeavor.

We wish to extend our sincerest gratitude to you, Your Excellency and Chancellor of the Midlands State University, Cde R G Mugabe, for gracing the congregation with the honor of your esteemed presence and personal participation at this significant graduation ceremony. We warmly welcome you to your home, away from home and cherish your good company, astute vision and wise counsel in the delivery of our mandate.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, I wish to inform you that on the 18th of May this year, death dealt us a heavy blow when we lost a founding and valuable member of the University Council, Mr Alexander Johnson in a fatal car crash and again, on the 17th of October death pounced heavily on us when we lost Dr Cephas George Msipa, a longstanding friend and honorary doctoral graduate of the Midlands State University, who was a tireless benefactor of several of our indigent students. Accordingly, may I, with your indulgence Sir, take this opportunity to request the congregation to stand up and observe a minute's silence over the passing of Mr Johnson as well as Cde Msipa, a national hero and philanthropist *par excellence*.

May we all rise... I thank you and we pray that the Good Lord will rest their souls in Eternal Peace. Shall we all take our seats.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, in line with our broad mandate and national aspirations as espoused in your insightful Ten Point Plan as well as the Zim-Asset philosophy, the Midlands State University is keen to contribute towards economic transformation in real terms. Rallying around the MSU motto, "*our hands, our minds, our destiny*", which dovetails well with the thrust of your well thought out Ministry for Liaising on Psychomotor Activities in Education as well as the successful and country-wide STEM Initiative by our own Minister, we are

certainly embracing a paradigm shift that is intended to produce a more productive and entrepreneurial human capital that has a changed mindset. In this regard, it is our fervent hope that the new curriculum will embrace both entrepreneurship and the STEM ethos right at the Early Childhood Development level (ECD) to revamp our Zimbabwean culture. At our level as a university, we decided to invest in the dispatching of all our academic deans to India to learn at close range, how these issues have been productively woven in the mandates of the institutions of higher learning of that prosperous nation.

Following the trip to India by our academic deans, all our faculties are seized with developmental projects that can be domesticated in line with local needs.

For instance, our Faculty of Mining and Mineral Processing Engineering is setting up business incubation facilities for our students in partnership with the Mining Industry and the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development. This is intended to help nurture a new type of graduate who is not a job seeker, but an employer. In fact, one of our students is currently undertaking MSc studies in India to learn how to design and manufacture efficient, automated small scale mining and mineral processing equipment.

Without doubt, our Faculty of Law continues to be a beacon of excellence in the nation, the region and on the continent. In a clear demonstration of excellence, the Faculty excelled in the 25th edition of the African Human Rights Moot Court competition that was held at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. Our team, which was competing in the English category, emerged 7th out of 50 law schools, which is the best result by a Zimbabwean law school in 24 years. Midlands State University also came second in the Pan African Moot Court Competition, with our student, Zwelithini Eugene Xaba being adjudged the best oralist on the African continent, thereby winning himself a 3-month internship at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, based in Arusha, Tanzania.

To crown it all, for the first time in Zimbabwe's post-independence legal history, today the MSU Faculty of Law will present to you 22 Master of Laws in Constitutional and Human Rights Law graduands, drawn from the public and private sectors. We are encouraged by the fact that this Masters programme has plugged a lacuna in postgraduate legal education in Zimbabwe which was

characterized by limited options for our citizens to advance their legal qualifications.

Meanwhile, our Faculty of Medicine, which enrolled its first cohort of students this year, is attracting some of the country's doyens in the medical profession to impart knowledge to our enthusiastic students.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, our programmes in the Faculty of Commerce have become overwhelmingly popular with communities both in Zimbabwe and in the region. In an effort to further enhance its global appeal, the Faculty of Commerce has attained membership with the internationally renowned Central and Eastern Europe Management Association (CEEMAN), while the Graduate School of Business Leadership, in addition to its accreditation with the Association of African Business Schools (AABS) clinched membership with the Association of MBAs (AMBA). This novel achievement by a Zimbabwean business school will not only enhance the visibility of MSU, but also of the landscape of Higher Education in Zimbabwe.

Heeding our plea that there cannot be meaningful development without Local Government, our very own Midlands Province Minister of State for Provincial Affairs, Cde Jason Machaya has led by example as the congregation will witness him receiving a BSc Honours degree in Local Governance Studies. Additionally, the Department of Local Governance Studies scored a first in the history of the University as 50 students are set to receive \$300 each, from the Centre of African Studies of the University of Copenhagen, for fieldwork as they work on their final year dissertations.

Outside the lecture room, the University has not been sitting on its laurels as we have moved in sync with the provisions of the Zim-Asset cluster number 3 on Infrastructure and Utilities, through construction projects and renovation of teaching and learning facilities across all our campuses. Among the major projects is the extension of our massive Multipurpose hall, with a capacity of over 15000 people, which the congregation is utilizing today. The University also took significant steps to increase the number and quality of student amenities while enhancing security at the halls of residence. It is regrettable that since inception, while the University has promoted religious life among its community, we have lacked the most important building on campus, a Chapel. Your Excellency and

Chancellor, I am extremely delighted to inform you that construction of the much-desired Chapel is now approximately 80% complete.

There has also been extensive construction at the Zvishavane campus where 12 lecture rooms, student amenities and a dining hall have been completed while an office block for academic staff is 95% complete.

In a demonstration of good neighborliness, ZINARA, the Vungu Rural District Council and the City of Gweru have pulled efforts with us to see to it that roads leading to and from the Main Campus remain navigable and in good condition throughout the year. In this regard, it is our hope that the spirit of good citizenry displayed by our Minister of State for Provincial Affairs, Cde. Jason Machaya and our local authorities shall continue to grow from strength to strength.

Turning to the business of the day, your Excellency and Chancellor, today we shall be presenting to you, a record 4 708 graduands, made up of 2 349 females and 2 359 males, 3 988 receiving Undergraduate Degrees whilst 713 will graduate with Masters Degrees. It gives me immense pleasure to report that 7 academic members of staff will be attaining PhDs, including our first female PhD graduand, Dorothy Goredema.

I am also pleased to inform you that we have remained fully awake to the dire need to entrust our students in the hands of a highly qualified human capital. For instance, we now have 131 PhD holders amongst our academic staff and 25 Professors who offer the much needed academic leadership. In addition, 240 of our academic staff members are already registered for PhDs in their respective fields of study.

Your Excellency and Chancellor, in all these developments, we are deeply indebted to Professor Emeritus Ngwabi Bhebe, the founding Vice Chancellor who has been a visionary captain of the ship during the growth and expansion of the present day multi-campus Midlands State University. Whilst his administrative responsibilities have been highly demanding, the renowned historian, Professor Bhebe has not detached himself from his profession as evidenced by his keen participation in the supervision of PhD students, 5 of whom will be graduating today, including the history-making Dorothy Goredema. **Your** Excellency and Chancellor, with your indulgence, May I ask Professor Emeritus Bhebe to kindly

rise so that we can give him a well deserved round of applause. *We thank you Professor, for running a good race. You may take your seat.*

Additionally, without the sterling helicopter view of Mr Canaan Dube, the founding MSU Council Chairperson and his committed councillors, MSU would not have come this far. Words fail me but suffice it to say that we are grateful to these men and women of goodwill, who selflessly devoted their time, energy and minds to the development of the Midlands State University into a premier institution which has become the envy of many in Zimbabwe and beyond. The founding Vice Chancellor and Chairman of Council respectively, exhibited amazing staying power since inception of the University. Accordingly, their names shall forever be etched in the annals of the Midlands State University and we wish to extend deep gratitude to them.

In the same vein, I wish to point out that whilst the MSU vision might have been formulated with the highest degree of craftsmanship, it's rolling out and operationalisation would have come to nothing without the unwavering support of council members, staff and students, parents and guardians, captains of Industry and Commerce, friends of the University as well as our valued alumni. I can only say thank you to all our stakeholders and other agencies.

As mentioned before, we have been able to achieve all that I have narrated because of the unfailing support and encouragement, from our government through our parent Ministry, under the sage guidance of you Sir, our Chancellor and President. When we talk of enhanced productivity, people often ask the question: "*which comes first the chicken or the egg?*" Many times we forget to think about the nest. I see our Government's role as the provider of the nest, in which we incubate our youth.

Finally, to our dear graduands, I say, as you leave behind the hallowed walls of the Midlands State University and stride into the world, the onus is upon you to ensure that the knowledge you have acquired benefits not only yourselves and your families but the nation and indeed, the world at large.

We expect you to become the best in your various gainful engagements; to remember the development of your *alma mater*, the Midlands State University; to

self actualize while paying due attention to sustainability and climate change issues and to hand over a better planet to the next generations after you. I thank you!

Makorokoto! Congratulations! Amhlope!

