

# **INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY MR T.W MCHUNU, CHANCELLOR OF THE MANGOSUTHU UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY ON 23 APRIL 2010**

Members of the University Council;

Vice-Chancellors from other Universities, Prof Irene Moutlana (Vaal University of Technology) and Prof Fikile Mazibuko (University of Zululand);

Deputy Mayor of eThekweni Municipality, Cllr Logie Naidoo;

Mayor of uMzumbe Municipality, Cllr BM Gumede;

Deputy Speaker of the KZN Legislature, Hon Mtholephi Mthimkhulu;

Sponsors of our students i.e Telkom, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, KZN Dept of Labour, KZN Dept of Transport, KZN Dept of Public Works, Mpumalanga Dept of Public Works, CETA, SEDA KZN, Igoda projects, eThekweni Electricity, uMzumbe Municipality, Umlazi High School Principals, members of Senate, SRC, Convocation Executive, invited guests & staff.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am humbled by this appointment as Chancellor of the Mangosuthu University of Technology. I wish to pay a special thanks to the leadership of this institution for the confidence they have shown in me by an appointment to such a prestigious position. I look forward to working with you in addressing some of the pertinent challenges that confront this institution and the higher education in general.

This University has, like many other tertiary institutions, had inevitable challenges that emanate from the long history of separate development and unequal resourcing of our institutions that was undertaken along racial lines. Established during the apartheid era, as Mangosuthu Technikon, the institution served the black community and was therefore regarded as inferior. But now the MUT can boast of qualifications that are recognised by all other Universities of Technology in South Africa.

I am aware of the fact that our alumni are spread across all provinces in South Africa as well as neighbouring countries like Swaziland, Mozambique, Lesotho and Namibia. As the new Chancellor of this institution, I commit myself to help realise the MUT's vision to be a leading university of technology in the SADC region and on the African continent, driven by a desire for excellence in the performance of its main functions: teaching, learning, research and community service.

This University has evolved over the past sixteen years of our democracy. It has played an important role in influencing some of the processes of change that our country has lived through.

As I delight in the knowledge that more than 3000 students have graduated from MUT, I find it important that our institution must play a role in shaping students so that they add value to our society as well. It is important that while MUT prioritises educational programmes that are conducive to the imparting of critical skills, it must also promote the culture of tolerance, unity in diversity and commitment to a democratic order.

As part of its mission, the University must continue to provide an open environment and an atmosphere conducive to the exchange of knowledge, views and innovative ideas among students, staff, alumni and visiting scholars. It must always ensure that the working environment is intellectually pleasurable for students and staff and that graduates and diplomates possess knowledge, professional competence, sense of community responsibility and a capacity to continue their professional development throughout their lives.

To be advanced in technology-based programmes and service offerings, it is important that the University is at the forefront of cutting edge technology, and that our staff members participate as leaders in their disciplines, teach with the appropriate authority, ensure that course materials are of the highest quality and maintain appropriate respect from employers of its students.

All this calls for massive investment in technology infrastructure, such as libraries, language laboratories, computer laboratories and internet access, and other teaching and practical centres. It also requires a robust staff development program that will facilitate the upgrading of qualifications and skills of our academic and administrative staff.

Our academic and professional programmes must be able to produce socially mature men and women who not only understand, use and adapt to existing technology but also improve on it and also play their role in the invention of new technology.

I am proud to join a University whose primary responsibility is to eradicate poverty by integrating the function of the University (teaching and learning, research and community engagement) into strategic responses to developmental and societal needs – particularly in the rural areas. The grinding poverty in the previously marginalised communities undermines the possible advancement of our youthful society.

Academic institutions must always focus on how they can offer simpler programmes to empower ordinary communities in addition to their commitments to advanced academic training. It is such a combination that will enable our people to confront the manifestations of poverty and be better able to fight and reduce death from preventable diseases but also eliminate illiteracy.

I have learnt that the Department of Community Outreach, which was established in the early 90's, has led the way in bridging the gap between formal and non-formal education programmes for the disadvantaged groups. Today this University talks of job opportunities that have been created through the existing programs such as cooking and baking, motor repair work skills, computer literacy, sewing and fashion designing.

Let us hope that these skills will produce a new calibre of people in the South African economic body. We hope that they will produce entrepreneurs who will own workshops, bakeries etc. When we reach that landmark, the University will have contributed to towards the economic wellbeing of our people.

The need to improve the government financial support for students cannot be over-emphasised as unfavourable family circumstances often become obstacles for the students' academic career. To this end, we support government, particularly the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, for being part of the solution in ensuring that there is financial assistance to fulfil our mission and vision as well as the government's political agenda of poverty alleviation and decent jobs for all. We know that the task is enormous and we are not suggesting that everything can be done overnight. But at least the start has been made.

Programme Director, I take this opportunity to call on all parents of our students to be our partners so that their children can have a wonderful experience at MUT and especially that their children are rewarded with academic success. The support network at home is of crucial importance, but balance in this regard is also necessary because it takes two to tango – if the student is not serious about his/her work, no amount of support from home or university can help them. Therefore, as parents be there for your child, demand accountability, but do not deny your child the opportunity to be able to accept responsibility for his/her own doings.

Some of our young people are failing to take responsibility and they abuse the sudden freedom that is afforded by the University life away from home. They fail to understand that university is not like a school and that here they will be treated as young adults who can take responsibility.

Such students do not realise how privileged they are to be able to study at a University. They do not realise the extent of the costs and often sacrifices made by parent for them to be able to study at a University. I take this opportunity to warn the students that they must prepare themselves to be leaders of our country. How they behave will determine how they exit.

This University has become an institution with student body that has a potential to engage and develop politically. But I must also warn them that as they develop politically, they must consult history. They must learn to from good history and stay away from bad history that shaped our history.

In some instances, some of our young people died and others rot in jail because of our history. The government is still dealing with amnesty issues for political prisoners in the province and in the country. A huge bulk of these are the youth of KZN.

This University is committed to operate in the context of a frame of values that include integrity, respect and care for others, a sense of fair play and a desire for excellence. It is categorically required of all staff and students of the University that they conduct themselves in accordance with these core values. As the new Chancellor, I commit myself to promote these values within and outside the institution. But I want to urge the entire community of MUT to live up to these values. Adopted and only left on paper, they are meaningless. They must be translated into practice.

For instance, if we do not handle our work with integrity, we will be assisting the University to earn itself a bad image. If we do not encourage and promote respect for others, we will invite disrespect from others, again the image of the institution will be tarnished.

I will assist in ensuring that every member of the community is free to express his/her thoughts, opinions and convictions while respecting ethical principles and the law. I will support this University in its operations attached to respect for human and civic rights and to academic freedom.

As I come in to this University, I hope that my vast experience politically and otherwise will assist me to add value to the life and the functioning of this institution. In government, President Jacob Zuma has urged all of us to work faster, smarter and harder to ensure that government achieves its mandate of a better life for all.

We are happy to realize that at long last the political environment of our province has moved away from politics of confrontation, conflict and violence to the politics of mutual understanding, respect and cooperation. We are very much encouraged by the desire of the President of the country and the President of the IFP to find a long lasting solution for peaceful coexistence in our province. This can be seen in the context of debates that take place in parliament in our days.

I hope that this institution will also adopt a culture of working faster, smarter and harder to ensure that it achieves its obligations for which it was established, ie, to produce students who are well prepared to face life and also take the development of province to new heights.

I hereby today dedicate myself to be part of the leadership of this institution and the higher education community at large. I am looking forward to the cooperation of all our academic staff, our general workers as well as our students. Let us all share ideas on how we can contribute to taking our higher education system to greater heights and overcome some of the challenges that continue to draw us back all the time.

**I thank you**