



## **2009 YEAR-END MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR OF RHODES UNIVERSITY**

Warm Greetings to the Alumni of Rhodes University in North America!

The past year at Rhodes University has been eventful in many respects. I would like to share with you recent developments and the emerging trajectory of Rhodes in the coming years.

### **Current Academic Initiatives:**

- The Astrophysics facility to support South Africa's astronomy and astrophysics program, including the country's bid, in competition against Australia, to win the international vote for construction of the world's largest radio telescope (bid pending).
- A program in Social Policy that combines research, postgraduate education and policy dialogue and co-operation with universities in other African countries, Scandinavia and Oxford University.
- Extension of the Mining Geology program to further enhance Rhodes contributions in this field.
- Building academic and scientific relationships with select universities in India, China and other parts of the world in areas of mutual interest and benefit.
- A Grahamstown Schools Partnership between Rhodes, the local Department of Education, local historically disadvantaged secondary schools, and a teacher trade union. This seeks to address the challenges of developing effective secondary schools in the historically black areas of Rhini/Grahamstown.

### **Sizing Up and Taking Shape**

Our staff has grown to over 1,200 members, including 325 academic staff with an astounding 9,000 applicants received this year. Of the 6,900 students, 59% of students are women; 25% are postgraduates and 21% are international students from some 50 countries around the world. Rhodes continues to enjoy most favorable academic staff to student ratio among South African universities, guaranteeing students easy access to academics and close supervision. This high ratio results in Rhodes students having among the best undergraduate pass and graduation rates in South Africa, including outstanding postgraduate success rates. In addition, among South African universities we have one of the highest proportions of academic staff with doctoral degrees, and the best research output per academic staff member.

We will also continue to give attention to assisting our staff to purchase affordable accommodation and to improving their remuneration in accordance with our means.

Here are some of our achievements throughout the past year:

- 2009 UNESCO/L'Oreal Award for the most outstanding woman scientist in Africa and the Arab States awarded to Prof. Tebello Nyokong of the Chemistry department. This is only the fourth time that a local scientist and the first time that a life scientist has won this award. Prof. Nyokong is engaged in path-breaking cancer research and holds a prestigious Chair in Medicinal Chemistry.
- The award of a further prestigious Chair in Mathematics Education to Prof. Marc Schafer, to complement the two South African Research Chairs held by Prof. Nyokong and Prof. Christopher Mcquaid in Marine Science.
- South African Association of Botanists awarded its Senior Medal in Botany to Prof. Ted Botha.

The U.S. Board of Trustees is keen to find additional Old Rhodians who have time to devote to alumni relations and communications in the U.S. and rest of the world. If you have talents, experience or inclinations in fundraising, online publishing, public relations, business administration, and contact networks, do let us know.

While we're cognizant of the constrained economic times, we do have immediate funding needs to which any assistance would be greatly appreciated. Here are a few of our targets:

- The Library Expansion Project is due for completion at the end of this year, the new library will possess every facility that is essential for cutting-edge academic and research endeavors. At the same time we will also extensively refurbish the current library. This is a R90 million investment on our part, the single biggest investment in the history of Rhodes University and in the town of Grahamstown. For more information please go to: <http://www.ru.ac.za/libraryexpansionproject>.
- Two new residences opened in 2008 and another two in 2009. We will now construct three more new residences that will house an additional 255 students at a cost of R57 million
- Student Financial Aid at all levels of study.
- The Rhodes Sports Trust – an initiative which was established by a generous donations from Donovan Neale-May, a U.S.-based alumnus.
- Development and implementation of an Alumni Annual Fund. This is a long term project to develop ongoing alumni giving to the institution, the proceeds of which will be used to support University projects.

The above highlights our major initiatives, while there are many other so-called 'second tier' projects and needs which are important to the various Faculties. Please contact me for any additional information.

In as much as we seek to be a great small university we are, alas, a relatively poor university. Our needs, as you can see, are great, and the support of friends and alumni like yourselves is vital to our development. Rhodes University has a vital contribution to make to the development of our country and continent and of new generations of students and scholars. By making a bequest to Rhodes, you can help the University fulfill its responsibilities and commitments, and also help ensure that it will continue to be an institution Where Leaders Learn!

Merry Christmas and a happy New Year, and please do visit your alma mater when you are next in this part of the world.

With best wishes

Saleem Badat  
Vice-Chancellor

Rhodes University  
<http://www.rhodesalumni.com/>