

**Continuity and change, scholarship and community, quality and equity**

**Inhuldigingsrede van Frederick C.v.N. Fourie**

Rektor en Vise-kanselier, Universiteit van die Vrystaat

7 Februarie 2003

*Honourable (new) Chancellor, Chairperson of Council, Minister Asmal, Former President Nelson Mandela, Premier Direko, Mayor Mokoena.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, members of the University community, Bloemfonteiners and Free Staters, friends from far and wide.*

*Good afternoon.*

*Goeie middag.*

*Dumelang. Bo mme, bo ntate.*

*Thank you for being here.*

We celebrate today an old ritual, a joyous and solemn ritual, which is part of a centuries old university tradition all over the world. This ritual reinforces our sense of tradition as a university and our sense of our critical role in society.

This year, 2003, marks the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the existence of this institution as a higher education institution in the Free State. Our Centenary will be celebrated in 2004.

We also stand here exactly a week after the formal opening of the newly incorporated Qwaqwa campus of the University of the Free State. What you see today is the reconstituted, augmented, 'greater' University of the Free State. At Qwaqwa we jointly celebrated an incorporation process that has gone smoothly, and a key step in the achievement of a long-cherished dream of having one, non-racial University of the Free State in the central regions of the country. This process is still incomplete, and awaits the incorporation of the Bloemfontein campus of Vista University in the near future.

In very dramatic fashion this reconstitution of the UFS also signals how much a university can and often must change, but also that it does so amidst its continuity of existence *as a university* – as part of the centuries old university tradition all over the world. At the same time it signals that this University, like others in South Africa, has a significant role to play in shaping our new nation.

\* \* \*

Om mee te begin wil ek graag almal erken wat voor ons hier was, wat hierdie universiteit help bou het van 'n klein verlengstuk van Grey Kollege tot die lewenskragtige universiteit wat dit vandag is.

Hierdie geleentheid gaan dus oor veel meer as een individu of pos. Die UV se rol en prestasie is die resultaat van almal wat hier gewerk het en steeds hier werk en leef as deel van die akademiese gemeenskap – van almal (akademiese én steundienspersoneel) wat hulle deel doen in die nimmereindigende strewe om 'n baie goeie universiteit 'n nog beter een te maak.

Nogtans wil ek vandag besondere erkenning gee aan die leierskap van die laaste groep rektore wat nog vars in ons (of ten minste my) geheue is:

- Flippie Groenewoud, wat so 'n groot bydrae gemaak het om akademiese verdieping aan die destyds jong, onafhanklike universiteit teweeg te bring.
- Benedictus Kok, wat die eerste sterk groeifase in die 1970s en gepaardgaande uitbreidings van fisiese fasiliteite so bekwaam gelei het.
- Wynand Mouton, wat die UV gevestig het as sterk nasionale navorsingsuniversiteit, waarvan ons die vrugte steeds pluk, en in immer groeiend mate.
- Francois Retief, die grondlegger van die transformasieproses in die laat 1980s, wat die eerste moeilike oorgange vanaf “ou” dae na die 1990s moes lei, die konsep van multikulturaliteit moes vestig, die eerste aanstelling van swart topbestuurslede, en die invoer van PMO as dalk die enkel grootste strategiese besluit die laaste 50 jaar. Hy en sy mede topbestuurslede (van wie baie vandag hier is) het groot veranderinge nagelaat.

In die besonder wil ek egter vandag erkenning gee aan die leierskap van Stef Coetzee, wat ses jaar gelede hier ingehuldig is. Sy visie en toegewydheid, sy besondere insig oor die posisionering van UV in die nuwe nasionale en internasionale konteks, en sy kragtige leiding oor transformasie het die universiteit in feitlik alle opsigte 'n veel sterker universiteit gelaat as aan die begin van sy termyn.

Stef, dankie vir die platform wat jy vir die Bestuur gegee het, vir die Universiteit gegee het, om die volgende era se uitdagings te takel. Jou termyn het 'n reuse verskil gemaak. Re ya leboha, Ntate.

\* \* \*

Vandag beleef ons weer die inhuldiging van 'n nuwe Rektor. 'n Mens wonder soms waarom 'n inhuldiging van 'n Rektor soveel aandag geniet. Die aanwysing van 'n Rektor is ook sonder uitsondering 'n *kontroversiële* geleentheid – veel meer as die aanwysing van 'n hoof van 'n groot maatskappy.

Die rede hiervoor, glo ek, het iets te doen met dit betekenis van universiteite (en ander hoër onderwys instellings) vir gemeenskappe.

- Universiteite gaan oor ons kinders en hul toekoms. Universiteite is die simbole van ons en ons kinders se drome.
- Universiteite is ook die plek waar baie van vandag se leiers se toekoms bepalend gevorm is.
- Universiteite is ook die draers van idees en paradigmas, die bronne van nuwe idees en paradigmas.
- Universiteite (en idees) staan dus sentraal in die ontwikkeling van enige samelewing.
- Universities signal something about the substance, soundness, essence and core values of a society.
- But, mostly, universities, those most enduring societal institutions, carry and sustain our dreams about the future, about our children.

Therefore, here in South Africa universities have a central role in shaping a new nation, in shaping the new South African society in a new century.

This places a heavy responsibility on the management of any university (and obviously on any government that shapes the policy environment of universities).

Which brings me to my main theme for the day. This is not about me *or* Franklin Sonn. *Today we are here to recommit ourselves to the university's enduring service to society – to recommit ourselves to all the different communities that surround a university, and this university in particular:* from families to schools and churches and other non-governmental organisations, to government, the public sector and policy-making community; business, industry and agricultural communities; the education, health and social welfare communities, and so forth;

- and then: the scientific community, nationally and internationally, our university peers, other higher education institutions, the student community, parents and alumni.

We are here to serve you.

### **Serving society as a university**

To be more specific, we are here to serve you AS A UNIVERSITY, not as just any institution.

*What does this mean? How should this commitment be manifested? What is our responsibility to society? In this country?*

In pondering these question, one is struck by the many creative tensions that are to be found in universities.

- Between ancient traditions and focusing on the future, on new knowledge.

- Between being open to listen to ideas, but sifting them rigorously and with healthy skepticism.
- Between preserving valuable knowledge and discarding knowledge that has become obsolete.
- Between basic science/research/knowledge and applied (or mode 2) knowledge.
- Between knowledge for its "own" sake (whatever that may mean), and knowledge that is deemed useful to society at a given moment.
- Between being a purely academic, so-called "ivory tower" university and an engaged, "relevant", "applied" university.

We must NOT allow these apparent tensions to tear us apart.

These are creative tensions, and we must cherish these tensions and use it as a source of intellectual stimulation.

For instance, there can be no applied knowledge without good quality basic science/knowledge.

- This is especially true of future needs and future problem solving: since we do not yet know what those problems will be, we must to the best of our knowledge and foresight provide a solid foundation of basic knowledge, principles and analytical skills to underpin future problem solving.

Any good university must nurture all the various types of knowledge. We remain committed to that.

### **Making a difference: a broader service to society**

But, this intrinsic nature of the university must be manifested within the context of a particular society in a particular phase of its history.

So the question is: *what is the role of the university in Africa, Southern Africa and the developing world, and particularly in South Africa with its sad political legacies, its poverty and inequalities, huge community needs and development backlogs?*

**My view is that**, for a long time to come, universities in South and Southern Africa, and elsewhere in Africa and the developing world, will have to take on several additional, a-typical and even unconventional tasks – and that they must and can do so with enthusiasm and distinction, and thereby make a real difference.

So, whilst we cherish and foster the continuity of the university as part of the age-old international tradition of universities, this University embraces its particular role in *this* country *now*, embraces

the changes in the *form and scope* of its role in this crucial period of our history. We are committed to making a real difference to the new nation.

We have seen that this is indeed possible. The UFS has for many years been intensely active in community service activities such as:

- MUCPP (Mangaung University Community Partnership Programme)
- Rural community health and social care
- Sustainable agriculture
- Development support
- Health systems research
- Teacher training and upgrading

Also:

- Plant health, food science and food security
- Affordable construction methods for poor communities
- Environmental management
- Governance and transformation
- Nursing training and upgrading
- Management development for working adults
- Language skills and interpretation

And then also:

- Sports development and sports excellence
- Arts and culture development, notably music

several of these in partnerships with the Free State Provincial Government and community organisations.

One special area to mention is our current approach to community service, i.e. in the form of community service learning and community service research. This approach has the immense benefit that it doesn't define community service as an "add-on", but as an integral part of the core activities of the university. In the normal course of their studies, students would complete community service modules, learning from applying knowledge in a community service context.

### **The intrinsic nature of the university as foundation**

This approach to community service is so powerful because it recognises and builds upon what is most distinctive about universities: scholarship and critical inquiry, where knowledge and truth and insight and understanding are pursued - without fear or favour - not for gain or foreseeable tangible reward or because of a research contract from a well-endowed company, *but because it is our task.*

- The interesting point is that these somewhat unconventional tasks can only be undertaken, as a broader service to society, BECAUSE of the foundation of scholarship and *independent*

critical inquiry, knowledge and insight in universities (and similar higher education institutions).

- The extraordinary “usefulness” of a university in this time of our history FLOWS FROM its intrinsic nature as a place of scholarship.
- Changing societies, especially, *need* the continuous creation of new insights that flows from critical inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge.
- There is no tension in this relationship.
- Therefore, when universities provide a broader service, their underlying distinctiveness must be fostered and kept intact, otherwise their basic “power base” of knowledge and scholarship may be undermined – and that will make them relatively useless for future generations.
- They may also lose the inquiring minds (academic staff) that can carry their core competencies forward. Such a loss would not be readily reversed. Who will then challenge the minds of future generations of students and up-and-coming leaders?

*Let me summarise this by taking up (or taking on?) the analogy of the university as an ivory tower – a cherished caricature in modern folklore. If one ponders that notion for a moment, it strikes one that such an existence can only be true of ivory that has been deliberately detached from the elephant and turned into a lone-standing piece of jewelery or a lone ornament.*

*That is not the kind of ivory we want to be or should ever be.*

*This University of the Free State, this IVORY, is still very much attached to the elephant, to the African elephant, in the veld of the Free State and Southern Africa. Our ivory finds its meaning and its nourishment and vitality from being rooted in the elephant (i.e. the broader environment of the province and the country). At the same time it is a vital part of the elephant – without its ivory, the African elephant is a sad, unbalanced, unwholesome sight, a vulnerable creature. It cannot do without the ivory.*

Our task then is to promote and teach critical inquiry and understanding and research. Not the soft understanding that glides over questions of right and wrong, but the hard-won comprehension that comes from deep and critical inquiry and a relentless pursuit of a better understanding and a deeper grasp of issues.

- We owe it to future generations to do this. We have a grave responsibility to manage universities so that their potential to make an *enduring* contribution to this and especially future generations is sustained and strengthened.
- Our task is to teach the next generation of leaders not to shy away from difficult and honest questions, to liberate their minds from the constraints of orthodoxy and ideology, to continually reflect critically on the questions they are posing and researching.

- We must also assure that graduates from our universities are equipped to comprehend, to master, to work with the scientific developments that are transforming the world in which we will all work and live, within the internationalisation of knowledge and work.
  - In South Africa this comes on top of the need to equip students to deal with diversity and development challenges.
  - At the same time we, in Africa, must be open to the potential of indigenous knowledge systems.
  - At the University of the Free State we want to nurture and produce scholars and students who are imbued with these abilities and insights.
- Similarly, our research must continue to be of the highest quality.

*To summarise this point: The greatest contribution the UFS can make to the Free State (and Qwaqwa) community is to be and continue to be, now and in 25 years' time, a very good, high quality university.*

I will expand on this statement, in a broader context below – which brings me to the urgent and important topics of equity and transformation, and nation building.

\* \* \*

### **Equity and transformation**

In addition to our commitment to quality, our commitment to equity is the second core notion in our vision as a university.

The shaping of a new nation also requires work on the fabric of society, the workplace and human interaction.

Equity is not just about numbers, though that is one important measure. For a university, equity in its broader meaning is about the institution's role in promoting social justice. Given the legacy of the past, of exclusion and denial of opportunity, this university is confronting these realities head-on, in various ways.

### **Access**

A key issue in this context is access. Unwarranted barriers to access should be avoided. One of these can be the language of instruction. Having realised this, the UFS is dedicated to multilingualism.

- On the main campus in Bloemfontein this has taken the shape of a parallel-medium model, enabling us to provide a good service to all the communities in the Free State, with students having the option of classes in Afrikaans or English.
- This model was introduced as early as 1989, long before – and not requiring nudging from – government policy initiatives to encourage multilingualism on university campuses to enhance access.
- This historic step of the UFS had a huge impact on the access of black students to higher education in the Free State, enabling the significant change and transformation in the student profile of the UFS.

Aside: We are serious about multilingualism, about making it work. For example, the use of interpretation services at Council, Senate, Management and Faculty Board meetings has become standard practice, as well as at public functions such as this today. SeSotho is used in announcements and key information services for parents and inquiring students, and will be developed further. The UFS also houses and supports the SeSotho dictionary project.

We are committed to opening the doors of learning to all, especially those from poor backgrounds, utilising special financial aid schemes and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

Our growth has also been actively supported with innovative academic access mechanisms. During the last decade the UFS has developed an innovative career preparation and extended curriculum programme which assists students from disadvantaged school backgrounds to make the difficult transition to university. This programme has produced outstanding results, in some cases producing higher success rates in subjects such as mathematics and chemistry than in the normal contact mode of teaching. Some of these students have also gone on to succeed in programmes such as Medicine and MBA.

In other words, the UFS preaches *and practices* access with success.

Another example is the BML, the Bachelor of Management Leadership, designed specifically for working adults – often in leadership positions – who never had the opportunity to study at university. Many managers and administrators in the corporate world and public sector have enrolled, including the national Department of Labour, which uses it as the vehicle for its internal training.

- This unique programme, which has changed the lives of many adult workers previously excluded from university education, is also delivered via the internet. It is the core of the UFS online learning project, “eDegree”, and part of our initiatives to service SADC and other African countries (e.g. Kenya).

The incorporation of the Qwaqwa campus into the UFS, I believe, will further assist the UFS in broadening access to disadvantaged students, for the benefits of the institution and Qwaqwa community.

- However, there still is grossly insufficient financial aid at a campus such as Qwaqwa where almost all the students are extremely poor. This is something that urgently requires attention from government, for the sake of Qwaqwa's success.

### Staff equity

As far as staff equity is concerned, South Africa's history has restricted the opportunity of blacks and women (and disabled persons) to pursue academic and management careers at higher education institutions. This is a legacy we are confronting directly.

- Some years ago we initiated a project called: *Grow your own timber*, obtaining funds from the Mellon and Atlantic Foundations in the US. More than 20 promising young black men and women have gained entrance into the programme in the past two years, and the first of these have just completed their PhD dissertations. It is something to celebrate.
- The UFS management recently decided to set aside an additional R5-million to assist faculties and departments to meet the targets of the institution's equity plan.
- Just this week the management approved a block of promotions of white and black women to reverse most, if not all, of the cases of academic career backlogs that developed in the past due to various barriers to promotion for women (despite the fact that the UFS implemented gender-neutral salary scales decades ago).
- Currently we are working hard to achieve employment equity goals (although not without many difficulties in attracting designated persons to a university career in a very competitive labour market).

To paraphrase president Thabo Mbeki, who was speaking of the business context:

*We want the UFS to be a university where it will be natural for women, blacks (and disabled people) to have an active and significant participation in management, in decisionmaking, academic planning, teaching and research.*

### **Beyond redress: What does equity and transformation really mean?**

We regard the employment of designated groups as much more than a legal requirement, or satisfying the honourable minister.

- These are steps in a steady pursuit of equity as *a way of life, of answering to justice as the highest norm.*
- It is part of a process of creating a high quality university *of justice.*

- We regard it as part of the process of ensuring quality, of attracting the best teachers to give our students the best education.

The UFS is proud of its transformation successes during the past decade, as noted with reference to the previous two vice-chancellors. These include the introduction of the parallel-medium language model, the transformation of the student profile, the promotion of multiculturalism, and the general management of diversity.

The successes have been widely recognised. In November 2001, the UFS conferred an honorary doctorate on former President Nelson Mandela. At the conferment ceremony he praised the University as a model of transformation, multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism.

We remain committed to these goals, especially the urgency of employment equity.

Nevertheless, as befits a university as a place of critical inquiry, we must also ask the difficult next question: Is that all we want in shaping a new society? What is the true fabric, true nature of the 'promised land'? What should be its core values? What principles should guide behaviour towards *and* after the "redress phase" of our history?

I pose these questions within the broader context of building the new South Africa, of new nation building. This new society will be built piece by piece, i.e. by shaping new institutional cultures within each individual institution in the entire diversity of societal institutions.

- These questions obviously go much beyond the current debates on employment equity (especially the analysis of equity in terms of numbers) – but recognises that these are constitutive elements of building such a new society.
- These questions relate to the real meaning of concepts such as non-racialism, non-sexism, multilingualism, multiculturalism, and equity – the creation of institutions and behaviour where people from diverse backgrounds, cultures and abilities can live and feel "at home" and work together in tolerance and fairness.

This is what true transformation and nation building is about (rather than a relatively one-dimensional notion of transformation).

I believe that higher education institutions must display leadership in this regard. And this university has embarked on this road.

With this in mind, a debate was recently initiated in the Executive Management of the UFS in pursuit of a better and "deeper" understanding of equity and justice. For several days we went into critical inquiry mode and asked: what does being a non-racial, non-sexist, multicultural, multilingual, equitable university really entail? Which values and principles must guide our behaviour? Can we translate these principles into simple guidelines and start living them in

practice? Can we thereby create a new institutional culture instead of replacing one dominant culture with another?

- Or are we just struggling – albeit in a very sophisticated, ‘academic’ way – for a switch in power relations and/or the protection of current power (status/remuneration) relations?

I believe that asking these questions about social justice is not simply an “academic exercise” (which, by the way, is another favourite, subtle term to deride universities). I believe that the broader objectives behind transformation and employment equity policies will not really be achieved unless universities and other institutions really come to terms with these kinds of questions. Uncertainty, anxiety, misunderstandings, tensions and fear will continue to distort or frustrate employment equity initiatives as long as a new culture of tolerance, accommodation and fairness with regard to language, culture and diversity has not been established. And we will not get to “best practices” in employment equity.

We do not have the answers to all these questions. But this University will work hard to start generating answers.

*One way may be to initiate a debate on a kind of social contract on a campus, a manifesto of a “new society” university, to underpin our road forward.*

- *It could perhaps be a useful instrument in conveying a clear vision and providing a firm basis for level-headed thinking and planning surrounding all the issues, for addressing fears as well as fuzzy thinking arising from uncertainty about “where are we going”.*

We must also form and shape our students in their thinking, to help them grasp what it means to build the new non-racial, non-sexist, multicultural, multilingual, truly equitable society – the new nation.

- True *academic discourse* on the campuses of higher education institutions is necessary. We must challenge our staff to debate and grapple with these issues. We must challenge our students to tackle these issues.

### **Innoverende benadering**

‘n Derde element in hierdie universiteit se benadering, ook in die volgende termyn, is ‘n klem op innovering. Innovering in sy breedste sin, maar ook in die sin van entrepreneuriese inisiatiewe.

In sy breedste sin is innovering die sleutel tot gehalte. ‘n Universiteit kan net op die voorpunt van die wetenskap bly as voortdurend innoveer word in navorsingsmetodes en navorsingsvrae, in onderrig- en leermetodes en kurrikulumontwerp, in wyses om studente te stimuleer om te dink, en in wyses om kreatief om te gaan met geïntegreerde samelewingsdiens.

Net so verg goeie en professionele dienslewering deur steundienste voortdurende innovering in bestuur en administrasie.

In hierdie sin is die UV absoluut verbind tot die leuse van "'gehalte deur innovering'".

Die UV het reeds die afgelope paar jaar die vrugte gepluk van hierdie soort innovering. Geweldige vernuwing het plaasgevind in akademiese programme en kwalifikasies (meer as 80 nuwe programme is ingevoer). 'n Sterk opbloeï in navorsing is gestimuleer deur 'n spesiale strategie wat hierdie jaar verder uitgebou sal word. Vernuwende onderrigmetodes met bv. internet-ondersteunde leer, op die kampus en elders (insluitend Afrika-lande), het inslag gevind en word steeds verder ontwikkel, en sal geleidelik deel word van die wyse van leer op die "digitale" kampus.

Dit (tesame met kreatiewe bemarkingsmetodes) was die sleutel tot die huidige sterk groeifase van die UV: vanaf ongeveer 10 000 studente 3 jaar gelede, tot meer as 15 000 studente op die kampus in 2002. Met aanlyn-studente, die inkorporering van Qwaqwa en dan ook Vista, is 'n studentetal van 20 000 nie ver in die toekoms nie, dalk selfs hierdie jaar.

Dit is alles ondersteun deur die dramatiese sukses van die finansiële draaistrategie, wat dit reeds moontlik maak om toenemend te investeer in akademiese kapasiteit, navorsingstoerusting, inligtingsbronne, rekenaar-tegnologie en -infrastruktuur, lesingsaaltoerusting, opgradering van die kampus en fisiese fasiliteite, personeelontwikkeling, mentorstelsels vir studente, ens. Die nuwe studentesentrum, 'n belangrike simbool van hierdie nuwe groeifase, verrys reeds en sal later vanjaar ingewy word.

Die UV is nie meer 'n middelgrootte universiteit nie.

Saam met die groei, kom egter ook die verantwoordelikheid om groei goed te bestuur, om die dividende aan te wend om te konsolideer, en om dit in te ploeg in die verbetering van gehalte en dienslewering. Die volgende jare sal dus gekenmerk word deur konsolidering en 'n fokus op die gehalte en diepte van ons werksaamhede en kapasiteit (menslik en andersins), eerder as groei as sodanig.

'n Laaste aspek van innovering het te doen met entrepreneuriese aktiwiteite. As deel van die finansiële draaistrategie, maar ook om die universiteit se bande met die industrie te versterk, is 'n sterk entrepreneuriese inisiatief geloods. Ná die groot sukses van die Farmovs-Parexel inisiatief op farmaseutiese gebied, is ons tans besig met talle projekte, veral in die breë veld van biotegnologie – maar ook in die geesteswetenskappe. Hierin speel vennootskappe met die privaatsektor en die skepping van "spin-off" maatskappye 'n groot rol.

Ons sien dit egter ook in 'n veel breër verband. Daar is talle voorbeelde in Europa waar hierdie soort inisiatiewe 'n groot rol gespeel het in die ekonomiese ontwikkeling van 'n streek. Ons sien dus hier ook 'n groot geleentheid vir die UV om, in vennootskap met bv. Technikon Vrystaat, plaaslike regerings en die Provinsiale Regering, 'n belangrike bydrae te maak tot ekonomiese ontwikkeling, die opbou van gepaste plaaslike industrieë (bv. in biotegnologie), en daardeur die aanspreek van armoede en werkloosheid.

- UV-kundiges se rol ter ondersteuning van die Premier se Ekonomiese Adviesraad is hierin ook 'n belangrike element.
- Hierdie vennootskap met die Provinsiale Regering staan naas ander belangrike samewerkingsinisiatiewe, bv. rondom sportontwikkeling asook die ontwikkeling van die kunste (en musiek), gesondheid, en sosiale dienste.

\* \* \*

To expand on my statement of earlier: The greatest contribution the UFS can make to the Free State community and South Africa is to be, now and in 25 years' time, a very good university – but always a creative, innovative, dynamic, equitable, socially responsive and pro-active university, never static or isolated.

Therefore my vision for the University of the Free State: to be a university of excellence, equity and innovation – a leader in research, teaching, community service, adult learning, transformation, non-racialism, non-sexism, multiculturalism and multilingualism; a contributor to our country and our continent's growth and development; a truly South African university.

This means that amidst its continuity of existence *as a university* – as part of the centuries old university tradition all over the world – the University of the Free State will continue to change to make a real real difference in the *communities* it serves.

***(Twin roots, two layers: the university tradition, and the community/society in which we are situated...)***

\* \* \*

I have indicated that I see the significance of today's function as follows: that we, as a university, are here to recommit ourselves to the university's enduring service to all the different communities (academic and non-academic) that surround this university.

Although this may be unusual, at least at this university, I now wish to pledge my personal commitment to play a leadership role in this context.

At the same time I wish to ask the senior members of management here on stage, and all the university staff sitting below in their gowns, to stand up, with me, to signal our joint re-commitment to this university's service, *as a university and place of scholarship*, to society ... and to signal our commitment to excellence and justice, quality and equity.

#### Pledge

*On this occasion of my inauguration as thirteenth Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State, I pledge to serve this institution and its broader community, the province and the country, by:*

- *remaining true to the vision and mission of the University of the Free State, which includes the pursuit of high quality scholarship, critical inquiry and academic excellence, social justice and equity, innovativeness, and a foundation of sound and sustainable financial management;*
- *ensuring that the university plays its role in the realisation of the national restructuring and transformation processes affecting higher education;*
- *contributing as a university towards reconciliation and nation-building, as well as the economic and social development of the country and the continent;*
- *respecting and fostering the intrinsic nature of the university for the greater glory of God.*

*Together with the management, staff, students, alumni and other support communities, I shall strive to fulfill this pledge for the good of the university, province and country.*

\* \* \*

Ons het gesien dat dit moontlik is om, met die seën van Bo, baie moeilike tye te oorleef en amper skouspelagtig te oorkom. Nogtans is enige universiteit vandag kwesbaar.

Daar lê dus steeds uitdagende tye voor, veral rondom die temas van gehalte en billikheid. As ons egter voortgaan om goed strategies te beplan, innoverend te dink en die inherente kreatiwiteit en dinamiek in diverse individue saam te bind in opregte en integriteitvolle samewerking, is daar waarskynlik min dinge wat ons, met genade en seën van Bo, nie kan regkry nie.

Die Here was vir ons goed die laaste jare. As ons die regte dinge doen, in geloof, sal dit met ons goed gaan. Dan kan dit ook nie anders as om van die Universiteit en die Vrystaat en hierdie pragtige land 'n nog beter plek te maak nie.

\* \* \*

Bedankings:

Geagte Voorsitter van die Raad, geagte Kanselier, dis is vir my 'n geweldige eer om die pos van Rektor en Visekanselier te aanvaar. Dis 'n grootse verantwoordelikheid om met mense se lewens en kinders en drome te werk. Dankie vir die vertrouwe in my.

- Dankie aan dr Sonn vir sy inspirerende boodskap. Dankie vir soveel waarmee ek graag saamstem, byvoorbeeld: Ons mag nooit met middelmatigheid tevrede wees nie. Balans is so dikwels die sleutel tot wysheid. En ons moet altyd geregtigheid as die hoogste norm nastreef. Dit alles met durf maar ook menslikheid.
- My vrou en kinders
- Broers en hul gades
- My groot vriend Elwil Beukes
- Ander kollegas en vriende wat my altyd ondersteun het
- Die simfonie-orkes...

Bloemfontein

7 Februarie 2003