

## **Foundations have been laid**

*The best and the widest diversity of students in our country and from other countries must study at Kovsies. The future generations of South Africa must have a university that they can go to that takes academics seriously.” These were some of the words delivered by our Vice-Chancellor and Rector, Prof. Jonathan Jansen, during the official opening of our university last month.*

“Our university’s mission rests on two pillars – the Academic project and the Human project. The Academic project is our determination to go against the trend in the country to tell young people that you can pass Grade 12 with 30% and 40% and be told that with such results you can do a Baccalaureus degree here at the university. That is wrong; that is dangerous; that is not the way we should go.

“Although we have a long way to go, the foundations have been laid. I am very grateful for the fact that the Senate and the Council of the university give one hundred percent backing to this important project,” he said.

The university is also very committed to the Human project and is serious about giving students a solid academic start. “The fastest growth at our university is on our South Campus, which has been exclusively set aside for young people who need another year or two to study and to enter the mainstream programme. We cannot simply say that this is a university only for the 6-A students; it also has to be a university for the students who, through no fault of their own, have been failed by us as adults.”

Prof. Jansen said that we have full enrolment on the South Campus. The students there get intensive small-group instruction and they do much better. They become the lawyers, and the teachers, the doctors and the architects just by taking an extra year or two as we make up for the dysfunction in the public school system.

He said that our university has worked with 23 schools for a year in areas like accounting, physical science, mathematics and languages. Some of the schools, like Bainsvlei Combined, moved through one year of support from a 30% matric pass rate to a 100% matric pass rate. “I wish to congratulate our project schools for their determination and their success as partners of the UFS,” he said.

“We cannot allow the schools to send us children and then we tell them to go away. We have to make sure that the children come prepared to study at our university. Therefore I want you to think of the Academic project as setting a high standard, not dropping the standard, but enabling all our children to reach the standard, so that when they go and practise, whether it is in economics or in law, they are the best candidates available.

“However, the Human project is not an excuse for poor behaviour. It sets the standard for good behaviour. The Human project is not an excuse for bad behaviour. In fact, it is a reason and a standard set for good behaviour.

“We still have a long way to go, but I have been astounded by the mutual observations of Justice Goldstone, Oprah Winfrey and Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu as they walked across this campus; amazed by how our students have come together to live up to the ideals of the Human project; by how our young people come together across the boundaries of disability,

of national origin, of race and gender, of sexual orientation and find one another as human beings.

“As I often say, if the future of this country depended on you adults – the big people in this room – I would switch off the lights, but since it depends on your children, I can tell you there is enormous hope and reason for hope in our country and this university will be a place that insists on human decency, on respect, on how to treat women, on how to love your brother and your sister across all of our historical divides,” he said.

Prof. Jansen announced that a staff development plan for non-academics beyond 2012 will be implemented. He also announced that a new plan will be implemented at our Qwaqwa Campus during the course of this year.

“This year we will implement our placement of our brightest young academics and I am very grateful that we have had astounding responses from, among others, Yale University and in particular the Yale Medical School and Law School, Cornell University, Stanford, UCLA and others, that will place the young post-Ph.D. academics who are our outstanding future A-rated scientists and scholars of this university. In this regard I believe we will be competitive as we wait to hear the announcement on the new research chairs for the country.

“I do want to congratulate all of you on enabling these amazing achievements. For the first time in our history we have more than one hundred rated scientists with the National Research Foundation, and as the former President of the NRF, I am sure that this will be music to your ears, our distinguished Chancellor, Dr Khotso Mokhele. For the first time our research, both in books and in unit articles, just shot through the roof as people started to get the message that we are serious about scholarship of the highest order.

“Finally, to all of you who have achieved and will achieve welcome to the 2012 academic year. Dames en here, studente, personeel, mag u 'n wonderlike jaar hier by Kovies beleef,” he said.