



UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA

Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Rector
Kantoor van die Visekanselier en Rektor

Welcoming message

Higher Education South Africa (HESA) Colloquium, 6-8 May 2013

I write to warmly welcome university delegates to the 2013 HESA Colloquium on Transformation on the Bloemfontein Campus of the University of the Free State. It is an honour to host you in this historic South African city with its trauma and triumphs of battles past – and present. I think of our university as a bold experiment in human relations and as a place of inquiry and action about how to deal with our violent past and our imagined futures.

We have in response to the national challenges of transformation, tested the construct itself; what does it mean to do transformation beyond the simple arguments about demography, to something much more engaging that encompasses students, staff, curriculum and campus cultures. We grapple here with deep change that satisfies the demands of academic ambition, as well as human reconciliation. Our Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice sits at the heart of these endeavours, and our compulsory first-year curriculum (UFS101) openly teaches controversies from history, anthropology, science, ethics, law and theology as we engage students about themselves and others. The ongoing transformation of our student residences is a unique space in which to observe the significant progress made and the long road we still have to travel.

As a South African university we have a long way to go, but we believe that by being open and honest about our individual and institutional brokenness, we begin to open spaces for meaningful dialogue and a more durable transformation.

With this as background, your coming to this campus is cause for excitement, since it allows us to once again engage on this important subject of transformation with colleagues from other universities and see new perspectives on institutional change. Welcome, please take a look around the campus and tell us what you feel, hear and see about this South African experiment.

Prof Jonathan D Jansen

**Vice-Chancellor and Rector
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