



UFS Autumn Graduation inspires perseverance

Autumn has seen the UFS's first graduation ceremonies of the year on the Bloemfontein Campus. From 14 to 17 April 2015, a total of 3 660 graduates were rewarded for their hard work while top speakers addressed them in the Callie Human Centre.

UFS Chancellor, Dr Khotso Mokhele, commented the more than 250 students who passed their degrees with distinctions at the autumn graduation.

Prof Soodyall, a Medical Scientist at the South African Institute for Medical Research as well as Principal Medical Scientist for the National Health Laboratory Service, and Director for the Human Genome Diversity and Disease Research Unit at the University of Witwatersrand delivered the first motivational message of the April Graduation. The group of graduates in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences listened as she shared her story with them.

"My own career – with no grand design or script – steered me into conducting genetic research on human populations from sub-Saharan Africa with a focus on a better understanding of human evolution, and to reconstruct the prehistory of African populations. While giving graduates a glimpse on how her career progressed, Prof Soodyall said: "I share these stories with you to give you some reassurance that you do not need feel that you have to figure out every minute detail of where to from here. Things fall into place with hard work, dedication, and dreams.

The developed world is forging ahead with interventions, so the gap between the developed world and the developing world continues to grow bigger. Prof Soodyall said: "You have the unenviable opportunity to think strategically, and to use the modern tools in your respective fields to make significant advances to transform our society, and to contribute to making it a better place for all. We need to embrace the current challenges, and build networks and bridges across disciplines to close the gaps, to work beyond the cultural barriers, and to ensure equity in access to health, water, education, etc, **for all**, as we would wish these things for ourselves and our families.

Graduates of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences were awarded their degrees at two separate ceremonies on 15 April 2015. They were addressed by guest speaker, Ndumiso Hadebe, Founder and Managing Director of Master Frontiers Consulting, as well as an entrepreneur and winner of "One day leader" competition 2013. This inspiring young entrepreneur and community builder encouraged graduates to pursue their dreams, and know that they are the leaders of tomorrow. "Graduations are a great milestone in the life and family of a graduate," said Ndumiso.

On day three of the Autumn Graduation, diplomas and certificates up to and including Honours degrees were awarded in the Faculty of the Humanities. The speaker at the ceremonies of the day was multi-award winning South African TV presenter, Leanne Manas.

"I remember the opportunities that awaited me in the so-called "real world" when I graduated 20 years ago," Manas said. "I was ready – or was I? Let me tell you, no one is ever really ready for the real world.

"You may not find what you love doing in your first job, or in your second or even third job. But you will find it, and don't give up until you do. Keep looking till you find it. Don't settle. Never sell yourself short. We live in a country that desperately needs you. You can make a difference. You hold the key to change the course of history. Never underestimate yourself, but never think yourself better than anyone else."

At this ceremony, Dr Mokhele, referred to the recent xenophobic attacks that had shaken South Africa. He said it is a pity that incidents like this are still happening in our country. "Today is not just about you, but also the 51 million other citizens in South Africa. It's also about those who are being killed because their countries could not uphold them. All of us as South Africans should show a displeasure in the

xenophobic attacks that took place in Kwa-Zulu Natal,” Dr Mokhele said before asking for a moment of silence.

A highlight at this event was when Louzanne Coetzee, the first blind woman student on the SRC, received her degree in Corporate Communication with distinction. Louzanne is now working on her Honours Degree.

On the last day of the Autumn Graduations, degrees were awarded in the Faculties of Education, Theology, Health, and Law. Miss Deaf SA, Elzane van der Bergh, obtained her degree in BEd (Foundation Phase). She plans to finish her studies in remedial education and to obtain a degree in sign language next year. Elzane, who is deaf, assists parents with deaf children, teaching parents how to communicate with their children.

Guest speaker, Dr Maria Phalime, award-winning author, medical doctor, and motivational speaker, spoke about the journey of her career, and the challenges she faced. She encouraged graduates not to fear changing direction in their life paths; change is not equal to failure. “You are called to cause change and heal this broken world,” she said. Dr Phalime challenged students to play a different game; one that will make the world a better place.