

Esteemed Chancellor of Walter Sisulu University, Dr Brigalia Bam

Members of the Walter Sisulu University Council

Interim Vice-Chancellor of Walter Sisulu University, Professor Khaya  
Mfenyana

Members of the Institutional Management Committee

Chairperson of Convocation Ms Nomnikelo Puzi

Student Representative Council Presidents

Staff of Walter Sisulu University

Government Dignitaries from National, Provincial and Local Government

Invited Guests from the business sector and the many communities of  
Walter Sisulu University

Graduands and your families and friends

Thank You for affording me the honour and privilege to address this  
esteemed audience at the 2014 Faculties of Health Science and Science,  
Engineering and Technology graduation ceremony.

Madam Chancellor, I am a daughter of KwaZulu Natal, where I was born and grew up but I am a product of the Eastern Cape.

- I attained my first degree from the Eastern Cape
- I made my very first vote in the Eastern Cape and exercised my democratic right to be heard
- I found a husband in the Eastern Cape
- I also found a family, a home in eDikeni where my in-laws come from

Attending graduations is always a special occasion, it is the culmination of endless hours of dedication, the endless hours of perseverance and of course the endless hours of sacrifice as you have had to forego many a distraction such as friends, social occasions i.e. parties and even family to get to where you are. All of this with the end goal in mind of attaining a qualification. This morning is about celebration, reflection and pride of reaching a milestone. You came here over 3 years ago as bright eyed, naïve high school students and today you leave as graduants. Many of you may be the first graduants in your families – an achievement indeed. This morning however is about more than about you, it is also about your loved ones, your family, those that made many a sacrifice and afforded you the

opportunity to be the graduates you are today. It is the great Nelson Mandela who said and I quote "Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farmworkers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another." I now invite you to turn around and tilt your cap to give acknowledgement and recognition to those in the audience that made this sacrifice to where you are today and say Enkosi.

We have come a long way as a country, in 1985 PW Botha in addressing his cabinet made the following in his speech, I paraphrase "Let us all accept that the Blackman is a symbol of poverty, mental inferiority, laziness and emotional incompetence. Isn't it plausible therefore, that the whiteman is created to rule the Blackman....and here is a creature (Blackman) that lacks foresight...The average Blackman does not plan his life beyond a year" close quote...Today, you all have proven PW Botha wrong, you are neither average nor shortsighted.

Madam Chancellor, now that we are done with all the warm, inspirational and congratulatory stuff, as my 10 year old son would say....Let's now get Real.

To whom much is given, much will be required ...You are now part of a privileged club, an unfortunate minority in this beautiful country of ours but however a reality. You may even be called names such as Clever Blacks, my advice to you is to hold steady, be proud and indeed own that name.

The reality is as follows:-

Out of the 2009/2010 matric class, possibly your matric class

- 1,5m pupils had started school in Grade 1
- Out of those only 550,000 got to write matric
- And out of those, only 109,000 received university endorsements/exemptions
- Only 8,700 received maths distinctions and a paltry 999 received Science distinctions

Hence I stress again, you are part of a privileged club.

Now that you are graduates, the turmoil is not over yet.....It is reported that there are over 100,000 unemployed graduates in South Africa. These

are 100,000 of your peers who sat in various graduation ceremonies across the country just like you today but however find themselves unable to ply their trade, frustrated and fast losing hope. The irony however is that when you look at the Sunday papers and go through the jobs section, you see a thick wad of vacancies – what a conundrum. Furthermore you hear Corporates crying aloud for the lack of skills this country faces. So what is the problem and what is the solution? The answer lies in the inability to match the available skills to the required skills by the economy – the issue of relevance. The question is, do you have the relevant skills that are required by the economy? My simple answer to you is...You are graduates of the Faculties of Health Science and Science, Engineering and Technology – there is no more appropriate time to have these sought after skills, your timing is perfect. To give you a sense of what I mean – the whole of the African continent, all 54 countries with a combined population of over a billion people, have the same electricity generation capacity as Spain with a population of 40m people – one country vs a continent. As graduates of the Faculties of Health Science and Science, Engineering and Technology that either excites or depresses you. Exciting because of the opportunities it poses and building the continent's infrastructure. I must warn however,

that there is competition for skills out there. You no longer compete with the person next to you or with other graduates in the country or even on the continent. We now live in a global village and compete with people across the globe for the same roles and opportunities. Countries such as India and China continue to churn out graduates. How would you compare?

Madam Chancellor, we have recently concluded our 5<sup>th</sup> Democratic election - an occasion am sure is close to your heart, and I must say that it still feels magical, and an utter privilege to exercising ones right to vote. For that, we have to be thankful to the many a people who sacrificed for us to enjoy this privilege.

It was Sir Isaac Newtown who said "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction". We are a nation that often talks of rights.....a right to education, a right to basic health, a right to clean water, sanitation etc..... We shout about these rights and we even fight for these rights, rightfully so, however you rarely ever hear us shouting about the obligations and

responsibilities that these rights come with. The Yin and the Yang, the bitter and the sweet, rights and obligations. As much as you have the right to life, you also have the right to preserve and not take life. Today, you celebrate your right to education.....now what about the obligation that comes with that right.

*Joke..*

“My Lady”....., my apology - Madame Chancellor – I put it to you, that all of the graduants here today have a duty and responsibility to contribute towards the growth and development of this country of ours. I further put it to you that no other qualification is better positioned than that of the Faculties of Health Science and Science, Engineering and Technology. We have a country to build, we have a continent to build. Makes me think of a famous speech made by former President Mbeki on 8 May 1996 at the adoption of the constitution bill, “I am an African” – what an iconic speech which still resonates today. Africa is the world’s second fastest growing economic block after Asia – Africa has an Infrastructure and Technology backlog, you have the skills and qualifications....now connect the dots and get working. The truth of the matter is that if this beloved country of ours

doesn't work, then we don't work irrespective of how skilled or qualified we are.

Madame Chancellor, a topic very close to my heart and am very passionate about, Entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs build great countries and indeed great companies. The environment that we live in, both domestically and globally is changing – there are no longer guaranteed jobs and even worse, there is no such thing as jobs for life something maybe our parents were used to. You will face one of the toughest challenges post graduation and that is ....landing that first job. Everyone is looking for experience yet no one is willing to give you that opportunity to accumulate that experience. Entrepreneurship creates jobs, drives the economy. Indeed the top 5 countries in the world are driven by their entrepreneurial culture – in the US, up to 50% of all people would at some point ventured into a business, Germany is a conglomerate of family owned businesses. We unfortunately still remain behind in this phenomenon as our psyche is still to find a job as opposed to creating a job. Starting a business is not easy, besides the business pressures, there are the social issues that we have to overcome as we have not yet embraced people who are brave and actually go and



start businesses. Go gain the experience, learn the disciplines, respect the profession and then go build a legacy you can be proud of.

Madame Chancellor, as I conclude I would like to leave the audience with these two themes. The first one being, Think Beyond Your Term in Office. This metaphor can be applied to various situations, it could be life, it could be a job, it could be right here at this University. Thinking Beyond Your Term in Office is about leaving things in a better state than what you found them in – will the next batch of students to have it better than you had because of your efforts? When we eventually pass on, have we left the world in a better place for our children or have we destroyed it in pursuit of our individual endeavors.

The second is to Shape the Future. Be part of the conversations and actions that help to shape our continent, have a voice, be heard, be present and alive - participate. Have a sense of duty, a sense of patriotism, a sense of comraderie. Be part of the solution. For if we don't, our future will be shaped for us.

Travel widely, be curious and most of all be awesome.

In closing, former President Mandela said that "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world", use yours wisely and make that change.

I thank you