

Annual TuksLaw Recognition of Achievement Function

Wednesday 26 March 2014 at 19:00, Rautenbach Hall

Keynote Address: Prof Cheryl de la Rey

Prof André Boraine, Dean of the Faculty and Master of Ceremonies, Prof Anton Kok, Deputy Dean and colleagues from the Faculty

Representatives of Donors and Sponsors of Bursaries and Prizes, many of whom are Alumni of the University and Faculty (see list attached)

Graduates and Students

One of the most enjoyable tasks that I have as Vice-Chancellor and Principal is to officiate at functions where the University celebrates the success and achievements of its students and staff. It is my pleasure to join you tonight to deliver the keynote address at this joyous occasion when the Law Faculty recognizes and celebrates the achievements of its students during 2014.

It is especially gratifying for me to be able to congratulate not only the individual students whose academic performance during 2013 earned them a prize, bursary or scholarship, but also the Faculty as a whole. The Law Faculty achieved exceptional milestones in 2013, both in terms the University's strategic goals and in relation to international rankings. Through hard work and dedication, the students and staff of this Faculty truly lived up to the University's aspirations and goals as captured in UP2025, our long term Strategic Plan. The pursuit of excellence in all our activities lies at the heart of UP's five strategic goals.

Last we were pleased to celebrate the University's progress up the QS World University Rankings to among the top 500 universities worldwide. Of particular relevance and importance within the context of today's proceedings is the fact that, in SA, UP ranked especially well on the criterion of employer reputation. This means that UP graduates, are sought after by employers in the workplace. Furthermore, in the subject area of Law and Legal Studies, the University is ranked between in the top 150 worldwide. Given the resource constraints we face here on the southern tip of Africa, we are extremely proud of this achievement. The Faculty of Law was also proud to announce recently that its LLM in Corporate Law has again been ranked the best in the Africa Geographical Zone and in the Top 200 Best Masters in Business and Commercial Law in the world by the international Eduniversal 2013-2014 Masters Rankings.

The Faculty also has ramped up its research performance substantially over the last three to five years reaching a record high in 2013. The academic output has increased in every single department in the faculty, in some instances more than doubling. I wish to give credit to the leadership of the Heads of Department and the Dean, Prof Boraine for this exceptional performance.

Supporting its aspirations of being a leading research-intensive university, UP also strives to strengthen its international profile. The Faculty of Law also showed improvement on this regard by increasing its percentage of international students from 12% in 2010 to 14,6% in 2013 This is in a large part thanks to collaborative initiatives such as the highly regarded LLM/MPhil in Human Rights and Democratisation, which is a regional initiative offered in conjunction with 12 other universities in Africa.

The University further strives to increase access, throughput and diversity while strengthening its impact on economic and social development. A brief look at the student and staff profile of the Faculty, its student throughput statistics and the professional activities of its staff and alumni is sufficient to confirm the Faculty's positive contribution to UP's endeavours to achieve these two strategic goals. The Faculty delivers a steady stream of qualified legal professionals to the SA economy. A glance at the list of foremost law firms and corporates willing to sponsor prizes and bursaries for our students, and, might I add, at the alumni among the representatives of these firms present tonight, provide clear evidence of the impact of University's graduates in the legal profession and related fields. I could also supplement this by mentioning the UP law graduates who are past or sitting judges in the highest courts of the land, advocates of note, partners and leaders of local, national and international law firms, leaders in the corporate world and academe, and leading legal scholars, who helped shape the profession, the economy and our country in multiple ways.

The achievements and reputations of universities and faculties are wholly dependent on the people – the staff and students. So let me turn the spotlight back to the real stars of this evening's proceedings – the students who are the recipients of the Faculty's Achievement Awards. These students are the true and most visible measure of the success of the Faculty's pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning. They also symbolize the Faculty's continued contribution to our country's future leaders.

I wish to congratulate each of the recipients and wish them well in their future careers. I also wish to give credit to the staff who have supported the students throughout their academic journeys to date. Thank you too to the many donors. In a time of severe resource constraints, your generosity has assumed increasing significance enabling our students and ultimately the University of Pretoria to continue to strive for excellence.

To our awardees, my hope is that you continue the work ethic and commitment that led to the success for which you are being rewarded tonight. I invite you to take inspiration from our late former President, Nelson Mandela who urged us all to keep striving to live the best life that we can live, and never settle for anything less than what we are capable of achieving.

Thank you.