

MEDIA RELEASE

Emeritus Justice Sisi Khampepe installed as 10th Chancellor of the University of Pretoria

PRETORIA – Emeritus Justice Sisi Khampepe was officially inaugurated as the 10th Chancellor of the University of Pretoria, today (Friday, 30 September 2022).

The inauguration ceremony was held at the Aula on the Hatfield campus and was attended by among others, CEOs of companies, donors and senior members of the legal fraternity. The Electoral College of the University, comprising members of Council, Senate and the President of the Convocation, elected Emeritus Justice Khampepe for a five-year term in May, with the possibility of appointment for a further consecutive term, subject to due process.

The highly revered Justice, who dedicated the past four decades of her legal career to upholding the principle of equality, said: “while the focus for many years in our country was on the attainment of a democratic society, that is something which we have now achieved”.

She explained that students played a critical role in confronting the apartheid system in the fight for a just society but they “have a different fight now – that of defending our democracy, Constitution and its commission. In particular, they are fighting to improve the quality of life of all citizens in a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.”

Justice Khampepe said South Africa remains a very unequal nation, facing myriad challenges.

“These manifest most noticeably in the unacceptably high rate of unemployment and the dignity-robbing poverty which still grips a large part of our society. ”

She referred to the critical issue of fundraising that was on the agenda at a meeting of the South African Universities Chancellor’s Forum. From this meeting, it was clear that universities will experience higher levels of sacrifice over the next five years and beyond.

“Fundraising is necessary to make up the shortfall in state funding that all universities currently face,” Justice Khampepe explained.

Referring to the “missing middle,” she said while funding from the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has increased more than fivefold in six years, the solution has meant budget cuts in funds allocated to universities.

“This severely impacts those students who come from working-class households that do not qualify for funds from NSFAS, but cannot afford higher education. The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened the situation. More people are now unemployed and unable to pay their fees, where previously they could make a plan or take out a loan to get by.”

She lauded the University's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Tawana Kupe, for championing the Giving Day Campaign, which was launched at the end of May to raise an additional R100 million for major projects over the next three years. The initiative targets staff, students, alumni, the Executive Committee and the University Council. It also has an international outlook focusing on alumni abroad, UP's foundations in the UK and the US, large corporations and high-net-worth individual relationships.

Funds raised will be used for student support including tuition fees, accommodation, textbooks, food and devices for academically deserving students whose families cannot afford their study costs. Other projects which will receive funding include the Faculty of Veterinary Science's Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital, TuksSport, and a range of research projects across all faculties that contribute to South Africa's sustainable development.

While the main aim of this campaign is to raise funds, it is also to further entrench the culture of philanthropy at the University, as giving needs to become part of everyone's mindset, said Justice Khampepe. "The philosophy of giving extends beyond financial donations and can take on many forms. These include mentoring, participating as guest lecturers or sitting on advisory or industry boards for university Centres, Institutes, faculties and professional programmes."

"Why, you might ask, must we increase our giving, when already we are all feeling financially stretched in the face of rising costs? Our motivations for giving might differ from individual to individual, but collectively, as a university community, we are deeply influenced by the concept of ubuntu, the idea that we are dependent, rather than isolated beings," Justice Khampepe said.

"As we are supported, guided and inspired by so many people in our own journeys, we are in a position to in turn, to help others," she added.

"During the height of the COVID-19 crisis, we saw this embedded ethic come to the fore as staff and students rallied to assist those in need. Mobile networks collaborated with universities to provide low-cost internet access; alumni donated laptops; and we learnt that we can do far more together than we can alone."

Justice Khampepe urged the UP community "to carry this sense of compassionate urgency forward as we give, even when it hurts."

"As your Chancellor, I commit to doing everything that I can to continue navigating the University of Pretoria along the intentional road it is marking out towards long-term societal impact, change and sustainability," she said.

Prof Kupe said: "Justice Khampepe embodies all the values which we espouse at UP, and we are truly grateful to have this extraordinary South African icon as our Chancellor. She will have much to contribute to our institution, and I look forward to working alongside her as we relentlessly pursue the lofty goals which we have set out to achieve in our 15-year long-term strategy, which serves as a blueprint for the University's role as a national asset, and guides its responses to national, regional, continental and global challenges."

Kuseni Dlamini, Chairman of the University's Council said: "Creating an enabling environment in which individuals can flourish is a principle by which Justice Khampepe has lived by... She has strived to use her position and title to help others with opportunities to grow and learn."

He added that Justice Khampepe "reminds us that as we progress towards our goals, we must never make the advancement about ourselves, but instead look out for others who need to climb as well."

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ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on the Hatfield Campus, Pretoria. This 114-year-old institution is also the largest producer of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country that has a Faculty of Veterinary Science which is ranked top in Africa, and overall has 120 academic departments, as well as 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes.

UP is one of the top five universities in South Africa, according to the 2019-2020 rankings by the Center for World University Rankings. It is also ranked among the top 100 universities worldwide in three fields of study (veterinary science, theology and law), and among the top 1% in eight fields of study (agricultural sciences, clinical medicine, engineering, environment/ecology, immunology, microbiology, plant and animal sciences and social sciences).

In May 2020, the annual UK Financial Times Executive Education Rankings once again ranked GIBS as the top South African and African business school. The University also has an extensive community engagement programme with approximately 33 000 students involved in community upliftment. Furthermore, UP is building considerable capacities and strengths for the Fourth Industrial Revolution by preparing students for the world beyond university and offering work-readiness and entrepreneurship training to its students.

For more information, go to www.up.ac.za