

NEWS RELEASE

Business thought leader Dr Reuel Khoza receives UP Chancellor's Medal during GIBS autumn MBA graduation ceremony



Chancellor's Medal awardee, Dr Reuel Khoza, delivers his address at the graduation ceremony.

PRETORIA - "There should be an insistence on knowledgeability as a criterion for anybody in a leadership position... They cannot be motivated by self-enrichment or be morally degenerate."

These are the words of Dr Reuel Jethro Khoza, leadership pioneer and accomplished businessperson, academic and author, who was awarded the Chancellor's Medal by the University of Pretoria (UP) during the autumn MBA graduation ceremony held by UP's business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), on 16 April.

Upon acceptance of the award, Dr Khoza said, "As it says in the Bible, a prophet is never really acknowledged at home but rather further afield, and so it is a crowning achievement to have this recognition on home territory."

He was nominated by GIBS Dean Professor Morris Mthombeni, who praised him for always being "driven by principle, rather than populism; by transparency and accountability rather than expediency".

During a recent interview Dr Khoza expressed concern that many leaders today “do not stack up on the criterion of knowledgeability. Instead, they ride on the wave of populism.” In South African politics, for example, he says this strongly departs from the history of an organisation like the ANC, “which was led by members of the intelligentsia. Lawyers, teachers, doctors... I see no reason why there should not be the same insistence today.”

He says national success requires cooperation between the state and the corporate sector, which “should operate in a near perfect tango”. Without this, he says, “... we will be witnessing a further unravelling degeneration into a kleptocracy unless South Africans of goodwill, of which there are many, definitively intervene.”

Dr Khoza is currently Chairperson of investment holding company Dzana Investments and Discovery Bank, among others, and has previously served as a Director of JSE Limited.

He is Emeritus Professor Extraordinaire of the University of Stellenbosch Business School and currently a Visiting Professor at Rhodes Business School, the University of the Free State Business School, and Wits Business School. He also holds three honorary doctorates.

Leadership and ubuntu

His management approach has always been based on ubuntu. “The world view that is ubuntu emphasises the importance of human connectedness. It says we are an interdependent species and we grow by interfacing with each other and learning from each other.”

Dr Khoza has authored numerous articles and books on leadership and governance. His seventh book, *The Spirit of Leadership – Insights from Business and Faith*, will be published in May.

Among the numerous awards he has received, in 2021 he became the first African to be inducted into the Thinkers50 Management Hall of Fame, described by the Financial Times as “the Oscars of management thinking”.

Foundations of excellence

Dr Khoza was born in Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga in 1949. His father was an evangelist who set a high standard of academic achievement. During school holidays he looked after his grandfather’s cattle, which instilled a love of farming. Today his companies are among the largest exporters of avocados and macadamia nuts.

His other love is music – he produced nine CDs for late choral music composer and “brother by choice” Shalati Joseph Khosa.

After graduating with a BA Honours in Psychology at the University of Limpopo, he became a junior lecturer at the university in 1974, but his involvement with student politics led to his dismissal. Decades later, in 2007, he was asked to be Chancellor of the same university. Today he is the Chancellor of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Dr Khoza’s dismissal from academia led him to start his business career. After four years as a marketing assistant and product manager he was awarded a scholarship to do his master’s in marketing at the UK’s University of Lancaster.

In 1981 he established his own marketing and management consulting firm. It wasn’t easy going: “During apartheid you could not apply for offices in ‘white South Africa’, and I needed an office in downtown

Johannesburg. I had to forego 51% of my company so that it came across as a white company.” At the same time he joined and later became one of the directors of the Black Management Forum, which today promotes the creation of managerial structures and processes that reflect the demographics and values of South African society.

Eskom turnaround and current leadership deficit

In 1983 Dr Khoza was invited to join Standard Bank’s Advisory Board. Later, he led a turnaround at Eskom as Chairperson from 1997 to 2005.

As Prof Mthombeni explained: “Dr Khoza attributes the successful turnaround to strong collaboration between board members and the executive team, and significant investment in acquiring and developing the right skills... Under Dr Khoza’s leadership, Eskom greatly improved its productivity, financial performance and creditworthiness. In 2001, Eskom won the Financial Times award for the best global power utility. By 2004, Eskom was operating in more than 30 African countries.”

In Dr Khoza’s view, the key contributor to Eskom’s current crisis is a failure to implement proven good governance strategies and leadership skills.

He says this failure is widespread in South Africa today, and repeats what he said as Nedbank Chair in 2011: “The integrity, health, socioeconomic soundness and prosperity of SA are the collective responsibility of all citizens, corporates and individuals. We have a duty to build and develop this nation and to call to book the putative leaders who, due to sheer incapacity to deal with the complexity of 21st-century governance and leadership, cannot lead. We have a duty to insist on strict adherence to the institutional forms that underpin our democracy.”

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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 its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers 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 with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than

56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their 2024 World University Rankings (WUR). UP was the only South African university featured in the 2023 World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

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