



The Office Of The Principal and Vice-Chancellor

PROF MANDLA MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

ADDRESS: LONG SERVICE AWARDS CEREMONY

ZK MATTHEWS HALL

25 NOVEMBER 2019

Thanks Programme Director, Dr Nic van Staden, Manager: Administration and Remuneration, HR and our resident retirement expert

- Dr P Mokgobu, Vice Principal: Institutional Development
- Mr Z Dlamini, Executive Director: HR and other and members of senior and extended management present
- Esteemed colleagues
- And our VIP guests this morning – our long service awardees

A very warm welcome to you all.

The University of South Africa is a very interesting place to work at. Like many of you today, I have been a Unisa employee for a long time – in fact few years ago I also received a long service award. During this time, I have worked in both the Academic and the Admin/support sides of the University and so I think I can say with some authority, that I have a good knowledge of this university and of the people who work here.

And I have to tell you that as a sociologist by training it is the *people* who fascinate me. Just when you think you have a grasp of the institutional dynamics, just when you think you know your staff and what each is able to bring to the table, the unexpected occurs: a quiet academic will unexpectedly blossom into a superb researcher, a humble administrator will demonstrate natural authority and phenomenal leadership, and a “thank you” email will be sent from a staff member or a student, that is so touching that it both reaffirms your belief in humankind and reminds you that no gesture goes unnoticed.

I say this because in so many ways, Unisa is like a family – in fact, Unisa *is* a family – we even call ourselves *Unisans*. And our metaphorical “blood,” that bond which cannot be denied, and which

binds us together, is our service, our loyalty and our commitment – to one another and to this University.

But In the same breath I feel obliged to remind us of that old saying which goes: *You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family*. Basically, what that means in the Unisa context, is that we cannot choose who the members of our Unisa family will be. We are appointed into this huge family and as that happens we inherit a whole new cohort of family members. And somehow, we have to make it work. We have to find harmonious ways of working with those in our spaces and across the institution, to the extent that we are comfortable with one another, we rely on one another, we trust one another, and we are loyal to one another and to the university. We have to create a happy and nurturing “home away from home”. It isn't easy - I think we all know that too. I am sure you have all experienced instances where we have felt terribly let down by our colleagues or by the institution itself.

I'm sure in our own families we all have the one “uncle” who is a deadbeat, the one “aunty” that causes problems at every family gathering, the “brother” who expects his siblings to fund his lifestyle, the one “sister” who is always creating dramas, or the parents who are too strict or too lenient. But we also have that family member

who achieve such heights that we are able to bask in the glory of their achievements. We also have that family member who is so loving and wise that they remain deeply embedded in our hearts long after they have passed. We all have our favourites who we spoil and nurture expecting nothing in return. Despite these contradictions we love our families and we love those family gatherings! because at some deeper level we are connected, and we understand that warts-and-all, these are *my* people, and good or bad, I am stuck with them.

And so, it is with Unisa staff. You are my people and I am yours. And we are stuck with each other - through good or bad and through thick or thin. And goodness knows, your time at Unisa has certainly brought with it the good and the bad, but I have no doubt that the good has outweighed the bad.

Today I will be handing out certificates that span periods from 10 years' service right to 45 years. And that colleagues, tells me that you are the kind of family member that everyone wants around. You are the ones who go quietly about their business, fulfilling your commitments and serving your fellow Unisans and our students. Matthew 12:25 (NKJV) says: ... "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself

will not stand. You, our esteemed colleagues present today, are the glue that holds the Unisa family together. Much of that, I believe, has to do with the fact that you understand and support this magnificent university and the role that it plays in our society and on the continent.

Unisa shapes futures. Unisa offers opportunities and Unisa offers hope. Unisa has contributed and continues to contribute to the flourishing of our society - and that colleagues is something of which we are immensely proud. But equally, Unisa is proud to have staff who understand and are committed to fulfilling this very honourable and critical responsibility and who have done so with distinction.

The people I see before me this morning, are precisely those of whom I have just spoken. Each and every one of you, irrespective of the role that you fulfil at Unisa or the responsibility that comes with that role, has made Unisa what it is today. More importantly, each of you has contributed in a material way, to the improvement of the life and living of every single Unisa graduate, over the course of your employment. There are few other jobs that offer such a satisfying outcome.

But you know, it is not one-way traffic. Being a Unisan brings with it many benefits. We are a good employer no matter whom one might want to compare us with. And I know that for many of you, myself included, Unisa has given us what we have today and Unisa has made us who we are today and for that we should be, and I'm sure we are, immensely grateful. We have enjoyed economic stability, we have been able to buy homes, buy vehicles, and educate our children. At a more personal level we have been encouraged to grow our own careers and we have been offered incentives for research and development which are the envy of many other institutions. So yes, Unisa has also been and is still, good to us.

I have no doubt that you appreciate that, and you are proud of that. This is a long service awards ceremony, which for me, says that you are loyal and committed - and today we come to celebrate and honour your contributions to our university, our students and indeed, our country.

Colleagues, Unisa owes its longevity and success to your efforts and the efforts of those who have gone before you. As an institution we are deeply appreciative of, and thankful for your service and contributions to Unisa, our students present and past, to South Africa, our Continent and the rest of the world. On behalf of the

Council and Management of Unisa, please accept our very sincere thanks and appreciation for your contributions over the years.

Well done!