

## **Installation of the MUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Nokuthula Sibiyi**

- Honourable Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nobuhle Nkabane
- Chairperson of the Higher Education Portfolio Committee, Honourable Mr Walter Letsie
- Director-General in the Minister's Office, Dr Nkosinathi Sishi
- Deputy Director General responsible for the education branch in the Department of Higher Education, Dr Marcia Socikwa
- Family of Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Founder of MUT, represented by Inkosi Zuzifa NtuthukoYesizwe Buthelezi
- Premier of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, Honourable Thami Ntuli
- MEC of Transport, Honourable Siboniso Duma
- eThekweni Mayor, Councillor Cyril Xaba
- MUT Chancellor, Mr Sandile Zungu
- MUT Administrator, Prof Lourens van Staden, and his Technical Team
- President of the MUT Convocation, Mr Sandile Dlamini
- Chairperson, Chief Executive Officer and Members of Universities South Africa
- Chairperson, Chief Executive Officer and Members of the Council on Higher Education
- Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors from sister institutions
- CEOs, Industry partners, Donors, and Distinguished Alumni
- School Principals, Teachers and Learners from Satellite School
- International community represented by our partners from the USA and Germany
- MUT Executives, Deans, Senior Management, Staff, and Students
- Chairperson and members of the Institutional Forum
- Members of NEHAWU and TENUSA
- Student Representative Council
- Members of the Community and Friends of MUT
- Family, Relatives and Friends
- All protocols observed.

## **Introduction**

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to begin by extending my warm greetings to each of you here today. I am deeply grateful to the University Administrator, Prof. Lourens van Staden for entrusting me with this leadership role, and to the university stakeholders for their confidence and support in the decision made by the Administrator. Today, it is not just my installation; it is Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) inauguration as it marks the beginning of our collective quest for a new Plateau. Today, I prophesy that the new Plateau by this installation ceremony is born! My appointment as the Vice-Chancellor and Principal comes at a pivotal moment and especially at such a crucial time when the university must embody resilience, perseverance, and unity in order to embark on a journey towards achieving excellence and greatness.

## **Acknowledgments**

Chancellor, with your permission, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to those who have played a significant role in my journey up to this moment. As I stand before you today, I am deeply mindful that this moment is not mine alone. It is the culmination of guidance, encouragement, and unwavering belief from countless individuals who have walked this journey with me.

First and foremost, I thank the Lord God Almighty for granting me wisdom, guiding my steps, and showering me with His blessings. I can confidently say that without my faith in Him, I would not be standing here today.

To my family, who have been my rock during difficult times, providing unwavering support and constant encouragement, I am deeply thankful. Their love and resilience have been my foundation, allowing me to face each challenge with strength and purpose. Their steadfast belief in me has given me the strength to persevere, even in the most challenging moments. They believed in me and motivated me to strive for personal growth. It is because of their love and sacrifices that I am able to stand here today, ready to serve, lead and embark on this journey with all of you.

I owe my deepest gratitude to mentors, colleagues, and friends who saw potential in me and offered wisdom, encouragement and consistent support at every turn, it truly means the world to me. To each member of this university who welcomed me into this esteemed community, thank you. Thank you all for believing in me and for standing by my side. It is because of each of you that I am able to stand here today, ready to serve and lead with dedication and purpose.

### **My appointment as Vice-Chancellor and Principal marks a new beginning for Mangosuthu University of Technology**

I am an African woman whose journey and success were shaped by growing up in the previously marginalized settlement of Umlazi, a community that taught me to thrive amid adversity, develop and embrace an all-enduring spirit of resilience and hope. I am deeply honoured to lead MUT as its new Vice-Chancellor and Principal. I can confidently state that my appointment marks a new beginning for MUT. As the first female Vice-Chancellor, this in itself is a testament to the new direction our university is taking. This appointment is a collective victory for all women who aspire to break barriers and lead purposefully. I believe that my appointment will inspire hope and courage among our staff and students, while also reinforcing the confidence of our stakeholders and partners as we rebuild the foundation for MUT's future. It is particularly meaningful that my appointment coincides with the celebration of our 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary—a moment of pride and reflection for us all.

### **Celebrating the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mangosuthu University of Technology's existence**

Ladies and gentlemen, this year marks a momentous occasion for us at MUT as we celebrate our 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This milestone is not only a celebration of our rich history but also a reflection of our forward-looking vision as we continue to build on the strong foundation, laid by those who came before us, striving for even greater accomplishments in the years ahead. From its humble beginnings with just 15 male students in 1979, MUT has grown to an institution serving over 14,000 students and boasting nearly 50,000 alumni. I wish to pay tribute and express profound respect to the late Umntwana wakwaPhindangene, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the visionary

founder of MUT. Siyabonga Shenge! Your name will forever be engraved in the hearts of generations to come.

### **My vision for the Mangosuthu University of Technology**

My vision for MUT is to transform it into a leading institution of higher learning, recognized for its academic excellence, innovation, and positive social impact. I see MUT as a university that fosters an inclusive and dynamic learning environment, where both staff and students are empowered to reach their highest potential. While I acknowledge that there is still room for growth and improvement, particularly in our operations, I firmly believe that through collaboration, we can transform our institution for the better.

However, this vision cannot be realized without your support. Each of you play a vital role in bringing stability to our university and striving for excellence across all areas of our operations. Together, as one community, we hold the power to shape a brighter future for MUT—one defined by innovation, resilience, and shared purpose. With your commitment, I am confident that we can achieve greatness and transform our university into a beacon of excellence.

### **Leadership and Governance**

During my presentation for the Vice-Chancellor and Principal position, I emphasized my belief in transformational leadership, and I stand by that today. We must begin to ask ourselves critical questions: What type of leadership is needed to make MUT the university of choice? What makes us unique? And how can we, as management, work collectively towards a shared vision? The appointment of the Administrator has brought much-needed stability to our university, and I am pleased that we are now in the process of establishing the University Council, the highest decision-making body at MUT.

My hope is that the incoming Council will prioritize good governance and offer robust, effective insight of the university's functions. By fostering accountability, transparency, and strategic vision, we can ensure that our university not only meets but exceeds the standards of excellence we set for ourselves. With the Council's support, I am

confident we will build a strong foundation for lasting success and growth. Their support of the Executive Management is crucial, and by eliminating unnecessary tensions, we can create an environment that fosters the success of our institution.

Additionally, we must cultivate a space where student leaders feel empowered to express their views on issues impacting our students. Collaborating with the Students Representative Council, Clubs, Societies, and Convocation is essential to achieving strong leadership and good governance.

I therefore, urge everyone to commit to working together effectively. My aspiration is that under my leadership, I will be remembered as a visionary leader who not only transformed MUT, but also positively impacted the lives of our staff and students.

### **Repositioning the Mangosuthu University of Technology**

Chancellor, esteemed colleagues, and distinguished guests, it is my firm belief that we all share a collective responsibility to reposition MUT for future success. To do so, we must embrace a shift in our approach—adopting what I like to call "business unusual." We cannot rely on traditional methods if we are to elevate this institution to new heights.

As many of you know, our current strategic plan is set to conclude in 2025. We have already initiated the development of a new roadmap that will guide MUT through to 2030. This forthcoming strategy will be instrumental in aligning our efforts with the long-term vision and mission of the university. It will serve not only as a blueprint for our progress but also as a tool to continuously monitor our goals, celebrate our successes, and identify areas where improvement is needed.

By 2030, I have no doubt that MUT will stand as a transformed institution—one that is more innovative, inclusive, and aligned with the evolving demands of both academia and the broader world. The new strategy will be a beacon guiding us toward this transformation, ensuring we remain committed to excellence and growth. Together, we have the power to shape a new future for MUT, and I am confident that we are on the right path to achieving it.

## **Academic Growth and Development at Mangosuthu University of Technology**

Fellow colleagues and distinguished guests, it is universally understood that the primary role of any university is to promote and advance its academic mission. As an institution dedicated to fostering innovation and technical expertise, MUT must focus on reinforcing this mission. However, to truly establish ourselves as a leading university of technology, we need to start considering and implementing forward-thinking strategies that will drive the growth and sustainability of our institution. Our current academic landscape presents both opportunities and challenges, and to address these effectively, a number of strategic initiatives must be put in place. Among the key areas we need to focus on are:

### **1. Expanding Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programmes**

At present, MUT offers a limited number of undergraduate programmes. This narrow scope restricts the university's potential to attract a larger pool of students. Introducing new, diverse undergraduate and postgraduate programmes is not merely an option—it is a necessity. By expanding our academic offerings, we will be able to:

- Respond more effectively to evolving academic, technological, and industrial demands.
- Equip students with the latest knowledge and skills that are highly sought after in the job market.
- Position MUT as a hub for research, innovation, and advanced learning in various fields, broadening our appeal to prospective students and industry partners alike.

These new programmes will ensure that MUT stays relevant in an ever-changing global landscape, where interdisciplinary and specialized skills are in high demand. I am delighted to announce an exciting development in our commitment to enhancing and expanding our academic offerings. In our ongoing efforts to grow and innovate, we have officially rebranded one of our faculties, now known as the Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences. This rebranding is not merely a change in name; it reflects our dedication to aligning our educational programmes with the evolving needs of society, particularly in the vital area of health sciences.

## **2. Enhancing Academic Staff Qualifications**

Another critical factor that will shape our academic future is the qualification levels of our academic staff. To maintain a standard of excellence, we must ensure that our lecturers and researchers possess advanced qualifications that are aligned with the university's long-term goals. As I mentioned during my presentation as a candidate for the Vice-Chancellor position, it is now a formal requirement for all lecturers to hold at least a Master's degree. To support this:

- We are putting systems in place to assist those staff members who are yet to complete their postgraduate qualifications, offering them the necessary resources and support to do so in a timely manner.
- We aim to protect and strengthen the integrity of our academic projects by ensuring that all faculty members are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and qualifications required to deliver high-quality education and contribute to impactful research.

## **Research Innovation and Community Engagement**

Chancellor, Distinguished Guests, I am proud to share that the MUT has made significant strides in cultivating a culture of research, innovation, and community engagement. Our mandate is clear: we are committed to enhancing our research outputs and increasing our visibility on both national and international platforms. It is essential that we empower both our staff and students to be creative and innovative, ensuring that their work directly contributes to improving the lives and livelihoods of our communities. As a university situated in a township, we bear a profound responsibility to address the societal challenges faced by the residents of Umlazi. It is our duty to leverage our academic resources and expertise to make a tangible difference in the lives of those around us.

## **My Vision for Research, Innovation, and Community Engagement at MUT:**

### **1. Establishing a Centre for Entrepreneurship:**

While MUT has achieved considerable success in fostering entrepreneurial spirit among our students, we can do even more. As one of the Vice-Chancellors recognized by the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) for our support of

entrepreneurship programmes, I am committed to solidifying this recognition. By establishing a dedicated **Centre for Entrepreneurship**, we will empower our students to develop innovative solutions that address the urgent issue of unemployment in our community. This centre will serve as a hub for training, mentorship, and resource sharing, enabling our students to turn their ideas into viable businesses.

## **2. Introducing a Research Capacity Building Programme for Staff Members:**

To bolster our research capabilities, we must invest in our faculty. Implementing a **Research Capacity Building Programme** will equip our staff with the necessary skills and resources to enhance their research efforts. This initiative will provide training, workshops, and collaborative opportunities, fostering a vibrant research culture within our institution.

## **3. Offering Master's and Doctoral Programmes:**

Expanding our graduate offerings is crucial for improving our research output. By introducing more Master's and Doctoral programmes, we will not only attract top talent but also create a robust pipeline of researchers who can contribute to meaningful advancements in their fields. This will enhance our reputation as a leading research institution.

## **4. Rebranding the Research Directorate:**

To better reflect our commitment to supporting advanced studies, we will be rebranding the Research Directorate to Research and Postgraduate Support. This new focus will emphasize our dedication to providing comprehensive assistance to our postgraduate students, ensuring they have the resources and guidance needed to succeed in their research endeavours.

## **5. Aligning Community Engagement Initiatives with Our Strategic Plan:**

Our community engagement initiatives must align seamlessly with the strategic goals of the university. By integrating these efforts into our overall strategic plan, we will ensure that our outreach is impactful and sustainable, addressing the specific needs of the uMlazi community while enhancing the educational experience of our students.



## **6. Fostering Partnerships with External Stakeholders:**

Collaboration is key to our success. We will actively seek to foster partnerships with external stakeholders, including industries and international organizations. These collaborations will provide our students and staff with invaluable opportunities for research, internships, and real-world applications of their academic work, ultimately enhancing our impact on society.

### **Cultivating Holistic Student Support and Success**

Holistic student support is essential for preparing students to be competitive in today's dynamic job market. To achieve this, we must make a substantial investment in the development of all our students, particularly those in leadership roles. Ensuring student success goes beyond academics; it involves a comprehensive approach that nurtures various aspects of their personal and professional growth. By creating a supportive environment, we empower students to excel not only in their studies but also in their overall well-being and future careers.

### **Fostering of institutional culture**

Chancellor, I am convinced that it is essential to cultivate a strong institutional culture within our university, laying the foundation for new systems that will transform the way we operate as the MUT community. To achieve this transformation, we must encourage both our staff and students to embody our core values, committing themselves to their responsibilities with unwavering excellence and diligence.

The conduct of our staff and students is not only a reflection of who we are as an institution but also plays a significant role in positioning our university on the global stage. By fostering a deep sense of shared accountability and responsibility, we can unify our efforts and pursue greatness together. This collective approach will shape the future we envision for our university, defining our trajectory in the years to come.

A strong institutional culture will also empower our community to act ethically, upholding our values to safeguard the university's reputation and integrity. Such a culture is crucial in preventing corruption and discouraging any actions that may tarnish the university's name. Now is the time for us to build an institution characterized

by transparency and ethical standards, one that prioritizes the long-term sustainability and success of the university. Together, we can create an environment that is free from corruption and aligned with our vision for a prosperous future.

As we move forward at MUT, I urge each stakeholder of MUT to commit and recommit to the university's shared purpose of transforming lives and shaping the future of our students, staff, and the greater community of South Africa.

In this installation, I pledge to lead with a deep commitment to the University's values of:

- Accountability
- Integrity
- Respect, and
- Excellence.

I will work with the entire university community to write the next five-year chapter of MUT. Please join me in introducing a new word I have coined for our success as MUT, and every day whenever each MUT stakeholder wakes up, please ask yourselves, what is my EXCEL today? Please join me in embracing a new mantra for our success at MUT, "The EXCEL," which I am coining and will soon be cascaded down to staff together with the MUT Strategy 2030. The EXCEL mantra is drawn from my vision of academic excellence, financial sustainability, and socio-economic development and thus represents:

EXCEL:

- E: Elevating academic excellence
- X: X-factor innovation
- C: Community development and E: engagement
- L: Leadership for a Better Future

Why is this EXCEL so meaningful for me and every MUT stakeholder? When I opened my speech, I started with my positionality: being an African woman who grew up in the dusty streets of Umlazi Township. This disparity is represented by the four schools which I attended (Tholisu Primary School, Sawela Primary School, Velabahleke Senior

Primary School, and Vukuzakhe High School). These schools represent each stage of my life. That is my positionality, but through resilience imparted at each stage of my school life, I was frequently reminded of the need to EXCEL. Today, as I present this EXCEL mantra, I challenge everyone to create their own EXCEL so we can make a difference in the lives of others and remember that our work is a calling to better the lives of others, just as we stand on the shoulders of the benefactors of MUT, in particular, the MUT Founder, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi

It would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to all MUT staff and students for their support. I wish to thank the Administrator, Professor Lourens van Staden and his Technical Team, the MUT Executive Management Committee and Senate. Kudos to the Registrar's Office and Marketing and Communications Directorate for all the sterling work done and support from when my appointment was announced.

Honourable Minister, Programme Director, Ladies, and Gentlemen I THANK YOU.  
NGIYABONGA.