



23 March 2019

Phahama UP Alumni congratulates Professor Tawana Kupe on his appointment as the Vice Chancellor & Principal of the University of Pretoria.

On behalf of the Phahama UP Alumni Association, we would like to wish Prof Tawana Kupe a convivial welcome. Phahama (meaning “Rise”) is a registered interest group of the University of Pretoria (UP) alumni structures. To say we are thrilled to have you on board is an understatement. We received this news with an air of great excitement and enthusiasm. Congratulations on your appointment and thank you for the enthusiasm with which you embraced the invitation to become our Vice Chancellor & Principal. Your appointment engraves a declaration of our full support as a registered alumni association. True to our creed: “Each One Help One”.

Universities are unique institutions. They are places of transformation, places where lives are changed, where knowledge is acquired and where the future is forged. Universities are also places that are constantly being reshaped. Today we celebrate one remarkable chapter in our university’s history, and opening a new chapter. That new chapter begins on this day with the inauguration of our first black Vice Chancellor & Principal, who is a seasoned academic and administrator with impeccable credentials.

We believe that while significant and notable strides have been made by Professor Cheryl de la Rey as well as those who came before her to transform this university, there is still great urgency to ensure that the grounds that many of us walked many years ago, become spaces of inclusiveness and reflect what a truly African University should be. As graduates have grown up and new alumni have emerged, the market has naturally evolved. There is now a whole new generation of alumni to consider and what once worked well, may not now. In short, tactics may need updating and modifying for a new audience.

We were once students who entered this university from a position of extreme inequality in terms of schooling, race, class, financials and other factors. We entered into this institution from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds without the 'cultural capital' deemed necessary for success. But after years of travelling through treacherous terrains, with long winding roads and steep slopes with each other by our sides, we finally reached our destination. A great writer, a SA Feminist and UP Alumni, Phylis Ntantala, wrote an essay “The windows of the reserves”. Her essay still remains true and

relevant to us as the UP alumni because today many in the academic walls still face life alone. That is why we are here to take this journey with you.

Universities need to think of graduates' long term careers. The implications for the higher education sector are clear: create graduates who are more agile, with a solid understanding of how the workplace works and can see how their skills fit into it. The way employability is currently measured puts too much emphasis on universities' ability to get graduates into employment that matches their degree discipline, rather than on their readiness for a career. As Phahama, we think that a better interpretation of graduate career paths and the sharing of knowledge between universities and businesses would leave the higher education sector better placed to tackle the issue at hand.

While in celebration of the great strides that have been achieved to date, we are cognisant of the work that lies ahead. The mammoth task of transforming UP into a true African university starts by creating an environment which is supportive of all students as well as academic and support staff where each and every person can live out their dreams with proper and sufficient representation at all levels of governance structures of the university.

CONCLUSION

Proffessor Kupe, as Phahama UP Alumni Association, we share your passion for higher education and the value it brings to society and to the economy. We are aware of our role as Alumni which is crucial for the development of this university. We recognize the traction in the transformation agenda and we will lend a helping hand to ensure the achievement of this all-important task. As the University of Pretoria brand-ambassadors, we look forward to the academic activism and boldness that will ensure that UP continues to produces great academic and professional giants. We look forward to working closely with you in advancing and growing the University of Pretoria to be the cradle of future leaders for our country.

We wish you all the best in this journey as you continue with the long tradition of eminent Chancellors of this great University who between themselves, have conferred millions of degrees to many of us since the beginning of the institution 111 years ago.

MAY GOD BLESS THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA.

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Chairperson: Phahama UP Alumni

