

SPEECH FOR CENTENARY CELEBRATION EVENT: FACULTY OF VETERINARY SCIENCE

7 FEBRUARY 2020

VIP LIST (mention by name)

Prof Themba Mosia	Vice-Principal: Student Affairs
Prof Vinny Naidoo	Dean: Faculty of Veterinary Science
Prof Nthabiseng Ogude	Dean: Mamelodi Campus
Prof Gerry Swan	Previous Dean, Faculty of Veterinary Science (UP)
Prof Morkel Terblanche	Previous Dean, Faculty of Veterinary Science (Medunsa)
Mr Naeem Moolla	Director: Finance
Ms Lindiwe Soyizwapi	Director: Library Services
Dr Alfred Kgasi	President: South African Veterinary Council
Ms Lynette Havinga	Registrar: South African Veterinary Council
Sr Jana Stander	President: Veterinary Nurses Association SA

**** To be acknowledged:** Other Faculty and UP staff members, representatives of the veterinary pharmaceutical industry and the MC for the event, Prof Neil Duncan

On a particular day in 1918 when the decision makers of the time decided to support Sir Arnold Theiler's proposal to create a faculty of veterinary science at Onderstepoort, the foundation was laid of something very special that would change the animal welfare, food production, disease prevention and veterinary public health landscape in South Africa forever.

Theiler had a **vision** and his vision did not have anything to do with the way you look in a crystal ball to try and determine the future. Among other things, he realised that foreign graduates did not understand the diseases of the country well enough to adequately assist the local agricultural industry.

His vision was a pragmatic exercise, a practical action and the key to empowerment. It was neither without problems, nor challenges. Lorens J. Peter has said: *"If you don't know where you are going you will end up somewhere else."* I am quite sure that even Sir Theiler himself at times wondered if what he has envisioned would become a reality.

And, yet, ladies and gentlemen, here we are together today in a historic and proud year for the South African veterinary profession and this Faculty. How did we arrive here and where are we a 100 years later?

It will never be easy to describe a 100 years of veterinary education in a few sentences but let me mention a few historic highlights:

- In 1927 the first female veterinarian was admitted to the Faculty
- In 1930 the Faculty was incorporated into the University of Pretoria
- The Faculty was afforded land and buildings to establish its own campus
- In 1992 the Faculty's new, state-of-the-art veterinary hospital was opened
- The new and current Faculty of Veterinary Science resulted when the old UP faculty of veterinary science and that of MEDUNSA amalgamated in 1999

Lest we forget that the Faculty's Jotello F Soga library was named after the first South African veterinarian of colour who graduated abroad. Dr Soga also founded the country's veterinary association which is the current South African Veterinary Association (SAVA).

Since 1920 when Theiler enrolled his first 8 students, veterinary education has been at the forefront of animal production, health and welfare. The Faculty has grown into a world-class facility with nearly 1500 undergraduate and postgraduate students, 101 academic staff members and close to 300 support staff.

Over time the Faculty introduced specialist training in 22 fields of veterinary medicine, the Master of Science and the PHD research degree and a nursing diploma. Most recently the Faculty transitioned into a new nursing degree and a postgraduate diploma. The Faculty also has one of the most comprehensive veterinary hospitals on the continent that can manage any species under hospitalised conditions from a pet lizard to a rhino.

Furthermore:

- It is the only Faculty of Veterinary Science in South Africa
- A top 50 veterinary school
- Trained over 5000 veterinarians in the last 100 years
- A pass rate of 97%
- Pioneers in the chemical immobilisation of wildlife

Through the hard work and dedication of many staff members over the years this Faculty has made great progress on so many levels, including - but not limited to - training, research, community engagement and transformation. The University of Pretoria is proud to be associated with this Faculty. It has become an institution that is increasingly making strides in being internationally recognised for its achievements and innovation in support of the University's research-intensive notion.

However, as part of its mission it also remains locally preeminent and relevant to the needs of the country and its population. The challenge to improve production for local consumption and for exportation will always remain with vets striving to attain these goals.

In conclusion:

Today, we are also looking towards the future because, as Pete Buttigieg once said: "greatness will come by looking forward – untethered from the politics of the past and anchored by our shared values – and by changing our nation's future."

Honoured guests, what can be the most rewarding thing to me and to all of you?

To see a great institution becoming greater...to see staff and students come in here and flourish...to see us attract outstanding veterinary science and veterinary nursing students...and allow them to fulfil their own visions. In other words, **institutional ascendancy and quality**. This can be our own personal reward. Working together to achieve this and doing this because we want this faculty to succeed rather than because we want ourselves to succeed.

Congratulations on a centenary of veterinary education. Here's to the next 100 years!

Prof Tawana Kupe

Vice-Chancellor and Principal