

Speech for the farewell event of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria, Prof Cheryl de la Rey on 19 November 2018 at the Faculty of Veterinary Science, Onderstepoort campus

Mr Chris van Blerk, Head: Communications, Marketing & Media, on behalf of the support staff of the Faculty of Veterinary Science

When I was asked to speak at this occasion I immediately thought about a quote that has always reminded me of you, Prof de la Rey. However, I had to go find it because I only remembered a part of it. In my search, though, I came across another which caught my eye but I had to completely forget that one within a **millisecond** because it stated: "She wears strength and darkness equally well, *the woman has always been half goddess, half hell...*"

ON A SERIOUS NOTE, I did find the quote which to me personifies the leader and role model that you are. It reads: "**Confidence is directness and courage in meeting challenges and the facts of life.**" **AND WE CAN ADD TO THAT:** Your own confidence and fortitude will determine your success.

*Organizational governance systems such as that of the University are like machines, and the only oil that actually makes these machines work is the **oil of confidence.***

AND THIS, PROF CHERYL, is how we came to know you. You exuded strength and true confidence in accepting and dealing with challenges. You have also weathered storms and steered the metaphorical University ship – *and the SHIP on the Hatfield Campus* - through stormy waters on many occasions. Most importantly, you specifically also had this Faculty's interests at heart.

As leader of our University you had the courage to make tough decisions but also the compassion to listen to the needs of others **because confident people** also help **others** to be confident and is someone who gives, not (only) takes. For me, it seemingly was an extension of the passion and commitment you felt to your cause at the University of Pretoria.

You have taught us that:

1. All **progress** takes place **outside** the **comfort zone** ----- (We all know that nothing grows when you are in that zone)
2. A transforming leader aims for the evolution of a **new level of awareness & understanding** among all members of an organisation
3. You reminded us to take **ownership** of our roles in a grand mission that is shared by all members of our institution

However, ladies and gentlemen, over the years we have also seen the good-humoured and fun-loving side of Prof Cheryl when interacting with staff and students of the Faculty -

EXAMPLES:

- In 2012 she officially opened our new residence. On her entrance the mischievously creative students surprised her with the song “De La Rey”, which Prof Cheryl found very amusing and **appreciated the humour of the situation.**
- At the annual UP Spring Day celebration in 2016, **she handed the soccer trophy** to the OP soccer team that was victorious at the event’s soccer league. She was happy to pose for photos, interact with and share in the team’s joy, much to the appreciation of the elated players.
- In 2014 I included Prof Cheryl as *one of the clues in the crossword puzzle featured in our own OP News*. It was indeed a first for us and I was quite sure that this was something no other University or magazine has ever done. Later, Prof Cheryl’s kind and appreciative reaction was **that it was a first for her too.**

4. In this regard, Professor, you also taught us that it costs nothing to treat someone with respect, dignity, friendliness and kindness

And now we have to greet you. It is never easy to say goodbye to someone, especially someone who has left a lasting imprint on the institutional and higher education sector in our country.

Having said that we know that you will not forget us. You are always welcome on this campus.

Earlier this year, we taught the Kiwis a lesson in rugby on their home ground. **Now, you can go and teach them how to manage Universities. You have our blessing...**

*On behalf of the support staff of the Faculty, I sincerely thank you for your invaluable contribution towards making this University a better institution and that you always had the interests of this Faculty at heart. **Go well. Be blessed. All of the best.***