

**INSTALLATION ADDRESS BY DR MAX PRICE
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
AUGUST 19, 2008**

The Chancellor, Mrs Graça Machel
The Minister of Education, Ms Grace Naledi Pandor
The Minister of Finance, Mr Trevor Manuel
Members of the provincial cabinet
Her worship Helen Zille, The Mayor of Cape Town, the city whose life and times, and indeed whose very name, means so much to us all;
The Chair of Council, Archbishop Njongongkulu Ndungane and members of Council
Vice Chancellors of other universities
Deputy Vice-Chancellors of UCT and other universities
Members of Senate
Members of the Institutional Forum
The president of the SRC and UCT students
The president and members of Convocation,
The family of the late Professor Archie Mafeje
Archbishop Tutu and Rabbi Tatiana
Generous donors and alumni
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Thanks for attendance

I am deeply honoured by the incredible outpouring of support I have experienced since arriving 6 weeks ago, and reflected in the attendance at tonight's event. I especially want to acknowledge the many vice-chancellors and their nominees from universities across the country and indeed 2 from the continent; many friends from Johannesburg who have made the trip specially, and family from around the world. To the staff and students present – your attendance means a lot to me. Thank you all – I know that your presence here is primarily a tribute to this great university and its importance to the city, country and continent, but I will vicariously enjoy the honour your bestow.

Honouring predecessors

I want to start by paying tribute to my predecessors, two of whom, Dr Stuart Saunders and Dr Mamphela Ramphele are here tonight. Prof Ndebele is here in spirit, he sent greetings this morning.

- Stuart Saunders – Vice-Chancellor from 1981 to 1996 through the emergencies, the student protests, the challenges to apartheid and the achievement of democracy – shepherded the university most skilfully through the turbulent period and brought the university out at the other end intact and ready to play its role in the new South Africa; Mamphela Ramphele took the institution by the scruff of the neck, shook it up, restructured and reshaped it, and brought it into the 21st century;

- But given my recent arrival and my overlap with my immediate predecessor, I am most aware of the achievements of Prof Njablo Ndebele – a man of no great height but immense stature, into whose giant gentle slippers I step. After the turbulent 90s, he brought consolidation, stability, confidence, teamwork, trust, loyalty and pride – and, above all, thoughtfulness and integrity – what more can a University ask of its leaders. In the eight years of Professor Ndebele’s vice-chancellorship, the University achieved a growth from 16,000 students to 21,000; UCT has shown a steadily increasing research output with the highest number of A-rated scientists and the highest number of NRF research chairs. Its record of assertive efforts at transformation is producing results through the recruitment of black academic staff, though this, and particularly retaining such staff, needs renewed focus. The financial situation has been stabilised and is systematically managed. One of Professor Ndebele’s most significant legacies is the impressive number of partnership agreements and exchange programmes. And 20% of students are foreign, coming from over 104 countries, including many in Africa. There has also been a serious engagement with UCT’s social responsiveness.

I must, of course say a special welcome and thank you to two groups of people – not so much for being here tonight, but for putting *me* here tonight – they are the Council and Senate of the university – whose confidence in me I will do my utmost to reward. When I asked one of them how I, of all people, got the job, she reminded me of the farmyard fable which I’m sure many of you know, but please indulge my repeating it for those who don’t.

Once upon a time, the inhabitants of a farmyard decided to form a university. There were to be four faculties – swimming, running, flying and jumping. The animal most proficient in each subject would become dean of that faculty, and the one most proficient in all, would be vice-chancellor. Transformation was also an important consideration. The duck was the first to show his paces: he swam well and he did not fly too badly; but marks for running and jumping were poor. The pigeon flew excellently, scraped a pass for running, but failed miserably at swimming and jumping. The cat got distinction for running and excelled at jumping, but did not even achieve a dp certificate for flying. Being a black cat did, however, undoubtedly strengthen her candidacy. The rabbit (black and white, it should be mentioned) scored top marks in jumping, and respectable grades for running, but did the university no credit where flying and swimming were concerned. The senate and council had little problem identifying the deans of the four faculties, but clearly none qualified as VC. So they went outside the university and picked as VC a white male parrot who was not very good at any subject, but could talk as if he was.¹

I retell the fable not just because it may explain my selection with more veracity than you may believe, but also because it brings one down to earth amidst all this pomp and pageantry.

¹ Copied from the Inaugural lecture of R E Luyt, 1981.

Symbolism of an inauguration,

Carefully choreographed ceremonies like this one need lots of preparation. One element thereof was the fitting of the hat-thing on my head. It happened while my wife and secretary were both in my office, witnessing the fitting. Both burst into gales of laughter – it is, after all, a rather absurd-looking piece of fancy dress.

This was one of many instances, over the past few weeks, that made me think about the extent to which the rituals of this induction ceremony – like many others in the university – invoke a very distant, medieval past – a time when the university was still closely connected to the church and its idea of study and scholarship – hence the academic gowns we wear, in the hoods and caps – all reminiscent of priestly garb. Likewise, the mace – symbol of authority and tradition. Just a job. Vice-chancellors are just ordinary human beings – why is taking on this job invested with such ceremony? It's like a coronation or the inauguration of a president, or the installation of a bishop (no offence intended to any archbishops present (Tutu and Ndongani) – but at least you have God's glory and burden of global moral leadership to justify your robes and grand installations) – but what of Vice-Chancellors?

Why do we hang on to these rituals, these absurd-looking hats, the gowns and hoods? Why the ceremonial induction of a vice-chancellor – so many centuries later, in a world so different from the medieval one?

As I see it, these symbols of long-standing continuity in the history of the university do signal something quite profound: the fact that in some respects, the idea of the university – even its practice – has remained largely unchanged. Let us examine the idea of the university – the essence that established the continuity with those ancient times? There are four themes of continuity I wish to examine.

First is the essential structure and governance – so I address this especially to you, madam Chancellor. University: from Latin, Universitas: meaning a kind of universe – a self contained whole. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, by the late 14th century, the word 'universitas' had come to refer to the idea of a self-regulating community of scholars and students, whose corporate existence had been sanctioned by civil or ecclesiastical authority. It was the idea of the university's separateness, independence, autonomy and an entitlement to a special kind of freedom that is one of the enduring aspects of what we stand for, and what I am being inducted to advocate and defend. It is a principle that was sorely tested during Mafeje affair this week exactly 40 years ago, and the University was found wanting and has expressed its regret for that and many other similar episodes. Madam Chancellor, I undertake to defend the university's tradition and rights of autonomy, independence, and academic freedom.

The second theme, addresses especially you, ladies and gentlemen, members of the community. The rituals, the dress, the fact of an inauguration, reminds us profoundly of the modern university's ecclesiastical lineage – that we are the descendants of the Church and heirs to the figurative mantle of the role the church played in society. The university

today is regarded by society as the home for the pursuit of truth and independent thought; it is the oracle to which people turn for help in making sense of the natural and social world around us, for guidance on values, government, and the future. Like its ancestor, the Church, the university is expected to take on the role of moral loadstone. When I suggested to the deans a few months ago that we do away with all this expensive pretentious pageantry, they objected that both the internal and external communities expect a grand inauguration. On reflection I now understand this better - The robes and ceremony are demanded by society because society expects the university to play a leadership role within it, to be a counterpoint to the State and indeed to religious authorities for knowledge, analysis and ethical guidance, and that the university must take responsibility for playing that role and recognise the authority it has been granted to do so.

Ladies and gentlemen, and politicians (just in case they do not feel included in the former categories), I know I am not alone in fearing for the increasing fragility of our fledgling democracy. In my view, free speech, free press, judicial independence, and socio-economic rights are increasingly under threat. Debates on race and transformation are often the camouflage for these attacks. Universities have a critical role in defending democracy and UCT in particular, having a proud and long record in this regard during the pre-democratic era, needs to take up that responsibility. Universities can also promote democracy by educating their students in citizenship. That's what sets universities apart from training institutions – their commitment to education beyond vocation specific skills. The knowledge economy demands marketable skills. This has driven the proliferation of private tertiary education institutions which focus on the commercial, managerial, IT, and technical skills. Universities of Technology are oriented that way, not inappropriately, as are some foreign universities that have set up in SA. This is not necessarily bad, but it harbours a great danger that higher education will fail in its duty to develop an educated and thoughtful citizenry – a critical element of a successful democracy. UCT should ensure that it is resolutely committed to providing a highly skilled workforce to the South African and global economies, but one that is not just well-trained but more importantly, well-educated and mindful of the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. **This is the basis upon which UCT makes its most profound contribution to the development and transformation of our society.** It is also the basis for reproducing the profession of academia.

Moreover, universities have the unique opportunity of enormous influence over the future of our society through the fact that we educate and shape the future leaders of the country – both in business and government.

My standing here, in this garb, with this funny hat, alongside all these other colourfully frocked men and women is a tacit pledge to society, to you ladies and gentlemen, that the University of Cape Town will step up to the plate, will honour its responsibility to provide intellectual and moral leadership, will encourage its academic staff in their roles as public intellectuals, will welcome students in their questioning and challenging of the old and often corrupted ways of doing things, and will not be afraid to speak out when other leadership and governance institutions in our society are failing us.

The third theme of continuity defining the essence of a university, is addressed largely to the members of Senate, namely that it is still very much a space of focused intellectual inquiry, imaginative thought, experiment and analysis – a space of ideas, critique and the pursuit of truth (even if the meaning of that concept has been much contested over the centuries). While recognising that the Church of old did produce many great philosophers and thinkers, like Thomas Aquinas, more often than not the Church was traditional and conservative in the literal sense of resisting change and new ideas. The universities parted ways with the church and the two have continued in parallel partly because, with the rise of scientific rationalism, universities offered a space which encouraged new ideas, controversy, argument and challenges to orthodoxy. This is the primary purpose of a university, and it's success depends on a culture within the institution which is tolerant of heretical views (I use that term deliberately), which is *not* tolerant of attacks on people based on their background, what they believe in or who they are, but insists on the debate being about ideas and their evidence and their logic. It means that a university requires that people respect each other and give them the benefit of the doubt that all are equally committed to seeking truth. It means that one may not call someone a racist as a way of challenging their views since this closes down the space for constructive debate and the expression of different opinions. It means one may not label someone an affirmative action appointee since it communicates diminished respect for that individual and assumes their individual intellectual contribution and contribution to the institution to be less worthy without evaluating the substance of their views.

The Mafeje story reminds us that the greater offense against Professor Mafeje was committed by the university not as a result of apartheid controls, but in the 1990s, when the university failed to understand both the legacy of the apartheid culture within the institution and the need to address and redress it actively. That legacy still plagues UCT, and the University community has still inadequately tackled the need for attitude shifts, culture shifts, proactive redress, to ensure that black people and women feel at home here.

Transformation requires a recognition of the weight of the past and its implications for an agenda of redress, including measures to ensure equality of opportunity and access and efforts to change organisational cultures to become more inclusive and tolerant; and a capacity to change the way people think - about our heritage, culture, values and sense of self. Transformative leaders value diversity, build self-esteem, nurture talent, mentor, listen and respect, along with the leadership they provide.

Senators, in joining me here at this installation, in your traditional gowns, in the academic procession behind this sceptre, we are collectively committing ourselves to ensuring that UCT will be a tolerant and welcoming institution for all, so that it creates the conditions for a vibrant, argumentative university, committed to improving our understanding of the world.

The fourth theme of continuity is indeed a paradox, addressed primarily to the students. The paradox is that while rooted in the medieval Church, and in these continuities and

histories, the focus of the university is on the future rather than the past – in the form of advancing the frontiers of knowledge, inventing new technologies, new science, and the education of the next generation.

In this regard, it is not only what we study and research that changes, but how we study. The changing global milieu of higher education, and particularly the development of the internet in the last 15 years, has created new modes of connectedness, new opportunities and responsibilities to internationalise the pursuit of knowledge.

The globalisation of higher education has widespread ramifications. This means:

- Universities today are nodes in global networks of knowledge-creating institutions. The independence and self-sufficiency of universities has changed. A university which does not actively insert itself into those global networks in the areas of research, teaching and exchanges will rapidly slip into the second league.
- Our graduates will, and must, be internationally mobile. They will be employed by companies, most of them South African companies, who will expect them to work in DRC tomorrow, China next year and New York in 5 years time. The university has to adapt to these trends by preparing our students better for that future. This requires, inter alia: ensuring our students get an international education and global networks of colleagues.
- Students' sources of information are no longer confined to local lecturers and local libraries and have hardly any geographical restriction. Local, fee-paying middle class students are being solicited by public and private universities both locally and internationally. If UCT does not have something unique to offer, it will not attract local or international students – they will soon have the option of getting their Ivy league degrees through local franchised campuses and internet links.
- The quality of the university is fundamentally about the quality of its staff. The global market for top academics is such that it will be increasingly difficult to hold onto our stars unless we are considered by our own staff to be the preferred intellectual home of similar standing to the international competition.

In accepting this office today, I pledge to the students, their parents, and the members of this university, that this university will provide you with an education that is forward looking in content and method, that is internationalised and world class, in the tradition of the great universities of the world who not only dress up to install their vice-chancellors, but deliver their inauguration addresses in Latin. (I would have done so too, but felt concern for the journalists amongst us who have to report this tomorrow morning).

So the idea of the university is in some ways unchanged, going back a very long way. The induction of a Vice-Chancellor carries the weight of an impressively long history. It is appropriately honoured in the way we are doing this evening. But if we want to make sure that our children, and children's children will be willing to dress up and play charades at university inaugurations, we must take care of our responsibility to preserve the essence of a university – first, its independence in governance and academic freedom;

second, its role as an intellectual and moral compass for society; third its commitment to debate and tolerance of all opinions and to creating spaces which open rather than close down argument; and fourth, the commitment to discovering new knowledge, pursuing truth, and preparing the next generation to build a better future.

Madam Chancellor,

I would like to turn now to the particular niche I see UCT aspiring to fill, driven by a number of factors. These factors are: the threat to South African universities of the brain drain; the economic growth and political development of the African continent; need to have a unique niche area with a comparative advantage if a university wishes to step into the first league of global universities; and the opportunity to make help South African scholarship make its mark on world scholarship.

The first trend that must impact on UCT's strategic thinking is a continental one. In the last five years, we have witnessed a new scramble for Africa. Democracy is breaking out all over the continent, accompanied by unprecedented rates of economic growth, foreign investment and international trade, as well as the concomitant problems of corporate and public governance, bottlenecks in infrastructure, education, health, management capacity, etc. South African companies are the major business partners in Africa. Our graduates will work in those companies. We have not addressed how we should prepare them for those tasks nor what role we could be playing to equip people from all over the world who need to engage with the continent in public or private projects.

I have tried to capture this vision through the idea of UCT becoming an 'Afropolitan' university. The 'Afro' element connotes an open assertive engagement with the world from the standpoint of Africa. It describes a growth in African studies, particularly the economic sociologies of different African countries and regions. Businesses, governments, NGOs all over the world will know that if you want to understand Africa and how to operate there, you must go to UCT. 'Politan' suggests cosmopolitan and signals firstly, a sophisticated and future oriented approach to understanding Africa, as opposed to a sentimental, naïve, often 'rural peasant and wildlife' view of what an African perspective is. Secondly, UCT will be cosmopolitan in the sense of the mix of staff and students, from Africa, Latin America, Asia and from the North. UCT must replace SOAS in political studies, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford in African Government and post colonialism, Johns Hopkins in public health, Harvard's Kennedy School and Columbia in executive education and public administration as it is understood for Africa.

In practice this means:

- Developing meaningful partnerships with universities across the continent, with joint degree programmes, co-supervision of higher degree research, and exchange of academics
- Tapping into the growing demand from international students for Special study modules and full degrees, especially post graduates
- Attracting international faculty – permanent and visiting for sabbaticals and short term stays

- Attracting international post-doctoral students
- Developing course offerings in languages spoken on the continent
- Developing research programmes and then courses on the economics, sociologies, politics, health, ecology, geology, biodiversity, cities and cultures, conflicts of different African regions. No discipline is excluded. No discipline should fail to create for itself a niche as the experts in their field on the continent.
- Funding research that brings a contemporary African focus to international comparative studies.
- Creating exchange based opportunities for UCT students to study abroad and designing credit systems that recognise such study.
- Creating ICT-based global classrooms for post-graduate seminars.

In summary, what it means for UCT to be an African university is for UCT to become the centre in the South, competing on equal terms with the northern ivy league institutions but without trying to be a clone of those universities, rather bringing its own distinctive perspective and opportunities to relationships of intellectual partnership and engagement. If UCT is to retain its top staff, if it is to attract the best students and academics from around the world, it will not be through higher salaries or better scholarships. It will have to offer something unique that makes this southern point of the continent a preferred place to study and do research.

Academics and others from around the world will know, in 2012, that if you want to understand Africa, you must come to UCT. Because the substantive academic research, teaching and debate about Africa happens here, and because you will meet the rest of Africa in our seminar rooms and coffee shops. And you also will find Brazilian, Chinese and Malaysian scholars here, part of the hub of a global academic community. UCT has the potential to become that hub. There are thousands of African scholars here at UCT; a hundred languages spoken; some 4300 foreign students. UCT can be the north/south meeting point. *To be a Global University, UCT needs to be an African University.*

Finally, Madam Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, I want to turn to the question of the more specific contribution that I would like to see UCT making to our local communities and the country. I will not list the obvious – the thousands of professionals and graduates produced each year that are snapped up by public and private employers; the hundreds of millions of rands spent on applied research answering development questions from health, to environment to poverty alleviation to conflict resolution, to energy and greening, and to inspiring our souls through the creative and performing arts as so movingly demonstrated by the performance of *Don Giovanni*. One would have to be completely ignorant of the university's daily work on campus, in laboratories and in communities to dare suggest that we are not impacting extensively on the world around us.

Having said this, there are in my opinion, four critical threats to the very survival of South Africa – threats which if not addressed and overcome, will sink this beautiful country and we will become another failed state.

The first I have already addressed – that is the threat to our fragile democracy and constitutionalism. I will not repeat what I think the university has to do and our commitment to doing that.

The second is HIV/AIDS and TB. Friends, the greatest public health disaster of our time will be our undoing if we do not make it the top priority. In this regard I do believe that UCT is making a significant contribution, through fundamental and applied research, through training professionals, through curricula (though I commit us to doing more in the faculties that have not yet integrated this sufficiently), through outreach and caring in communities, through policy and advocacy. I am satisfied with and proud of UCT's efforts but to highlight the importance I attach to this and the commitment at leadership level to addressing this problem, we have linked to the installation programme the launch tomorrow of the "Fight Stigma" campaign which I will address on Jammie Steps on Thursday. I urge you all to attend and participate.

The third fatal threat is crime, particularly violent crime. Here I do not believe the university has been making a sufficient and coherent contribution. There are many fragmented efforts, but we have not begun to answer the question posed by President Mbeki "why is or society so violent?" We do not have a thorough answer to the policy question "should we have more jails?" We do not understand how to challenge the deeply ingrained views that violence is the way to resolve conflict – views inculcated in children from birth as they grow up witnessing domestic violence around them or bullying on the school playground. We don't seem to have a clue how to tackle the drugs problem? We have not asked those politically incorrect questions, considered heretical in polite liberal circles such as pertain at UCT, questions such as "Is our constitution too concerned about individual rights for this society?"

The job description for the post I applied for said the VC is supposed to provide academic leadership. It's not clear quite how that should be done and what form it takes. Most of the senior executive posts are largely administrative – they manage processes, rather than giving intellectual direction. I want to change that. I propose appointing pro-vice-chancellors to lead and coordinate some of the universities important intellectual projects, and the first of these will be Crime, Safety and Security. The pro-vice-chancellor will be responsible for being the interface between the university and all outside bodies concerned with these problems. She will be the conduit for raising the finances required to address the problems in a more sustained way. She will audit and coordinate the efforts of academics internally, and ensure that gaps are identified and filled, and that UCT brings all its intellectual resources to bear on the problem of violent crime and the threat it poses to our survival.

The fourth threat is the public school system which has failed the country and the universities. We cannot expand our intake of black students because of the paucity of school-leavers with the right subjects at the right level. The problems range from curriculum design to assessment, number and quality of school teachers, training and quality of principals, infrastructure, security, discipline, career paths, management

structures, resources, fee policies and much more. Previously we took the view that this was not our problem to fix. We can no longer ignore it for it will be our downfall. The University of Cape Town, and indeed all universities, should, in my opinion tackle this problem. We will do our share.

Colleagues, friends,

As you see, many thoughts can be triggered by being laughed at by your wife – I want to pay a special tribute to her for helping me become who I am, for her ideas and articulate style, and most of all for her love. Thank you Deborah. I love you.

I want to thank my daughter Jessica and son Ilan, mother and late father, and wonderful friends.

End thanks; To Gerda Kruger and the team at Communications and Marketing for everything – no detail left unattended to, professionalism, 24 hrs a day workload, clarity of vision. To the registrar's office for the structure and programming of the formal event and the honorary degree; to colleagues who have been so supportive had not badgered me about the 400 unread emails. And to all of you, once again for being here tonight and for showing your support to this wonderful institution that is UCT.