



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

22 July 2019

UCT VC honoured by UK varsity for “exceptional work” in mathematics education

Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng “has made a substantial contribution to the development of mathematics education in South Africa, where she has worked tirelessly to build mathematics education institutions and create opportunities for others to access and thrive in mathematics.”

This sentiment was expressed by the University of Bristol through an orator when Professor Phakeng was awarded a Doctor of Science honorary degree on Monday, 22 July 2019. The degree recognises her “exceptional, influential and inspirational work in mathematics education in post-apartheid South Africa”, which “has influence far beyond South Africa’s borders”.

“Professor Phakeng’s work in the field of mathematics education in South Africa is all the more remarkable given its time and place. In most of the roles Professor Phakeng has taken on, she has envisioned and effected a post-apartheid imagination for the mathematical learning of South Africa’s children, the repositioning of mathematics teachers and the role of research in the service of teaching and learning. She is a role model par excellence, who continues to inspire through her institutional work, and her personal interactions.”

Professor Phakeng said it was a great honour and privilege for her to accept the honorary doctoral degree.

“But to me, it is more than individual recognition. This is a recognition of the many people who made me, those I represent, the many young boys and girls all over the world, especially in my home continent of Africa, living in poverty and wondering if things will ever get better,” she said.

Recalling how she defied the odds – such as studying under a tree en route to reaping the fruits of her toil – Professor Phakeng added that she hoped the honorary doctorate would serve as an illustration that, with hard work and consistency, anything is possible.

“To succeed in the real world, you must be willing to start at the bottom. These days everyone wants to be an overnight success. But starting at the bottom makes you hungry and determined. It is also a great way to find out, hard as it may be, that you are not as smart as you think you are. Starting at the bottom is the best way to learn!”

As part of her other engagements at Bristol this week, Professor Phakeng will attend the launch of a Bristol–UCT collaborative degree programme on 23 July. She will also be hosted by the Bristol Doctoral College at a networking session where she will meet postgraduate researchers and give a short talk on “Developing a Career as a Socially Responsive Academic” on 23 July.

Notes to editors:

- A copy of Professor Phakeng’s full acceptance speech delivered at the graduation ceremony is available on request.
- Photographs and video footage from the ceremony will be made available on Tuesday, 23 July.
- A full version of the oration is also available on request.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Elijah Moholola

Senior Manager: Media Liaison and Social Media
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 5674
Cell: (083) 981 7770
Email: elijah.moholola@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za