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## UCT Vice-Chancellor inspires matric class of 2022



Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng speaking to students at Edgemoor High School.

Photo: Lerato Maduna/UCT

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University of Cape Town (UCT) Vice-Chancellor (VC) Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng recently helped the 2022 Grade 12 learners at Edgemoor High start their final year of secondary education off the right way with an inspirational address.

As one of the top achieving schools in both the Western Cape and South Africa, all students at Edgemoor High are encouraged to strive for personal achievement in the context of a supportive, empowering environment.

With the aim of enabling students to become productive citizens who appreciate the importance of service, leadership and traditional values in a changing world, the school produces many outstanding future changemakers and was a natural fit in terms of hosting the inspirational Phakeng.

Phakeng's speech centred around three keys to success: courage, greatness and responsibility. Speaking to courage, she championed the idea of facing one's fears in order to flourish.

"I could stand here and tell you that you can achieve anything you put your mind to," she said. "The truth is that you will not. However, if you have courage to go on regardless of the possibility – and the fear – of failure, you can get results."

Challenges, Phakeng noted, are an important component for learning and improving throughout one's life and should be valued by those facing them. "We make a great mistake thinking that we're supposed to be happy all the time; to think that an easy life is a good life.

"If everything comes to you with little or no struggle, you are never tested. You never get to see what you are made of. The truth is that most people who have done great things, who have changed the world, have suffered, struggled and overcome great obstacles."

The second key to success, according to Phakeng, is to understand that good is the enemy of great. Again, Phakeng encouraged the class of 2022 to challenge themselves in order to be great. "You need to ask yourself, 'What will make me stand out?' Then you need to challenge yourself to become great," she explained.

Finally, she implored the Grade 12 learners to think about the consequences of their actions and to take responsibility for the way in which they conduct themselves. "Be strong about what you believe in and firm about who you are. Take time to have a conversation with yourself and reflect on your ethics. And keep having this conversation throughout your life."

For Phakeng, it's important to get the learners' year off to a great start and to give them a chance to interact with her – both as the vice-chancellor of UCT and as a person.

"It's important that, as the matrics' final year of high school starts, we are able to kick it off on a positive note; a note that says, 'You can do this!' It's always great to talk to high school students because they have many questions about university, so I get to share with them what is out there. I'm also able to tell them a little bit of my story, to show them that it takes courage, determination and focus to achieve great things," she said.

Hearing Phakeng's story was certainly a highlight for both the learners and educators at Edgemoor High.

Head prefect, Akhile Yantolo, was inspired by the speech. "I liked that she told us about her background. She grew up in a difficult situation, but that a background of that nature doesn't matter if you consistently put in the hard work to build yourself up and become someone great," he said.

For senior deputy head prefect, Courtney Dumont, the biggest takeaway was Phakeng's keys to success. "What stood out for me most is where she spoke about having the courage to go out, reach for your dreams and not let anyone stand in your way," she said.

Lizanne Isaacs, Edgemoor High's social worker and a current UCT student, was particularly delighted to have Phakeng share some of her wisdom with the Grade 12 learners.

"It's such a phenomenal experience just to learn from the VC. Just her presence alone is very inspiring, and I am sure everyone will remember her coming to motivate the class of 2022. It really is a privilege to have the opportunity to meet the VC in person as she is an amazing and compassionate individual.

"Especially after two difficult years, we trust that this will give the learners the hope, courage and strength they need to get through the academic year as successfully as they can," she added.

[Watch the video of the Professor Phakeng's visit to Edgemoed High.](#)

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***Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department***

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