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I've had wonderful moments that felt like rays of sunshine in my first 100 days – UCT VC

Newly installed University of Cape Town (UCT) Vice-Chancellor Professor Mosa Moshabela has had some “wonderful moments that felt like rays of sunshine” despite some of the challenges in his first 100 days in office.

Professor Moshabela reflected on the milestone phase of his tenure as part of his address at his installation ceremony held at the Sarah Baartman Hall on Monday, 25 November 2024.

“Not that this milestone carries much significance in the leadership of academic institutions as it does in government and industry, but it does offer me an opportunity to reflect on the journey so far...

“I always wish for a soft landing when taking on a new job. I wished for some time to settle in and adjust to the weather in Cape Town, but my new home, UCT, had a different plan for me, and my soft-landing dream evaporated into thin air on my very first day in office.

“I am going to spare you the details of that very first day in office, safe to say it's a day that set the tone for my first 100 days in office. ‘Tough’ became the normal way I would characterise my days, and the job as a whole.”

- [Read the preceding media release: Newly installed UCT VC to position university as a catalyst for change in Africa, while embracing African values.](#)
- [Watch the address by Professor Moshabela.](#)
- [Download a selection of images and text version of the address.](#)
- [Visit the 11th UCT Vice-Chancellor's Installation Ceremony feature page.](#)

However, Professor Moshabela has also experienced more “wonderful moments that felt like rays of sunshine”, enough to make him look forward to the next day.

“The brightest of days were the ones on which I hosted inaugural lectures – this is when those academics who have been promoted to the rank of full professor got to tell their

stories of success and breakthroughs, and hardships, often spanning decades, in front of their families, friends, colleagues and students.

“On these days, I got to see the breadth and depth of the science that make UCT the prestigious institution that it is. These lectures are open to the public, and I encourage you to attend them whenever you get a chance.”

Since he took office on 1 August 2024, UCT has hosted no less than 14 inaugural lectures. The university also hosted seven graduation ceremonies, with over 2 079 students being capped, in September 2024.

“The graduation ceremonies also gave me plenty of joy, reminding me why we do what we do every day in the life of the university, that it matters to our students, their parents and families in the audience of this very four walls, and their educators in the academic procession.”

Professor Moshabela has had 97 engagements with various stakeholders on campus.

“Rays of sunshine came when I engaged with students living in our residences, during their year-end academic, leadership and sports excellence awards dinners, when we hosted distinguished and related teachers’ awards, when we enjoyed music at the Baxter Theatre, when we celebrated long service awards and celebrated with those who retire at the end of 2024.

“Some of the retirees have given more than 40 years of their lives to UCT, and in one instance, 47 years of service to the university. I have barely given four months of service to UCT. Our people have stories to tell. I have been listening, and will keep listening.”

“As for me, I have no grey hair as yet. I plucked out one or two strands that suddenly appeared in my beard the past couple of months. Honoured guests, I am sure you’ll support me as I dedicate every future strand of grey hair to my new home, UCT.”

Despite the challenging nature of his job, Professor Moshabela said he has been warmly welcomed and very well-received at UCT.

“The amount of goodwill and kindness I have so far received at UCT makes it so much easier to show up for work every day, and it all contributes to the growth of my faith in this institution, its community and its future.”

Professor Moshabela remarked that to appreciate the future, one must often go back to the past.

“For this reason, I have been having a number of conversations with former leaders of this august institution, such as Dr Mamphela Ramphele, Professor Njabulo Ndebele, Dr Max Price, Professor Daya Reddy, and I am looking forward to connect with Professor

Mamokgethi Phakeng, who is also amongst us today (at the installation ceremony on Monday).”

One of the ideals Professor Moshabela will pursue is continuing the earnest effort to make UCT more accessible. Using a profound analogy of what happens when the university makes an effort to be socially engaged and accessible to the local people, Professor Moshabela referred to a quote by former Dean of Humanities at UCT, Professor Sakhela Buhlungu, who was asked in a conversation with UCT historian Howard Phillips how the university was perceived in the community. ‘Before it was seen as the university on top of the mountain, and now the people see it as the university at the bottom of the hill’. The university at the ‘bottom of the hill’ is one that is easily accessible by all.

Professor Moshabela elicited laughter out of the packed hall when he said in jest: “As I stand before you now, I have been in this role for 16 weeks and four days today, since 1 August 2024. Yes, I’ve been counting. After today, I hope to stop counting.”

He jokingly mentioned how he had put himself on probation in the first few months. “But now I have a bit of a problem: my self-imposed probation has now come to an end, right this moment... I have just been installed.”

ENDS

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