

Message from Dr Max Price (Vice-Chancellor 2008 – 2018)

To the family, to our UCT community, to the SA health community, to his students past and present, to his patients, and to the world of cardiology research –

I will remember Professor Mayosi, first and foremost, as a wonderful human being – his broad infectious smile, his warm embrace, his humility, his engaging style, his caring manner, his approachability.

I will remember him as the man who transformed the lives of many individuals and through them, the institution. The many new black leaders in the Department of Medicine are testimony to his extensive efforts to recruit budding stars, particularly young black academics and to nurture, mentor and advance their careers.

I will remember him for his great intellect – I observed his admiring researchers in his research laboratory, and I witnessed his performance at conferences such as the annual *Cardiology at the Limits* conference hosted jointly by UCT and UCL, and I saw in these fora how his peers revered him. He clearly had the magnetism to assemble a top team of colleagues, students and post-docs, and I was inspired by his infectious enthusiasm when talking about the particular research results – both the impact they would have on the lives of thousands, and the excitement of discovering something new just for curiosity even when its impact was not yet known.

His students have reminisced fondly about his bedside teaching, and registrars will remember how he prepared them for College exams.

No doubt thousands of patients can testify to his having saved their lives, or improved their quality of life, and having solved the very difficult diagnostic cases when all others were stumped.

I have worked with Prof Mayosi since long before coming to UCT. On the Medical and Dental Professions Board and its committees, I was always impressed at his mastery of the details of the rules, the individual cases that we were considering, and the amount of time he put in to this extramural work – a sort of professional national service – visiting and accrediting post-graduate training across the length and breadth of the country, and designing new policies to better serve the needs of the public sector patients. Such activities he knew would not advance his career – in fact they were often distractions. But he took them on willingly because of his commitment to fixing the broader health system knowing the impact it would have on society. He could see that he could have an impact often where others would not have the same authority, and he stepped up to the plate to serve.

I observed his passion for developing a cohort of clinician scientists – pursued through motivating funds from foundations, designing new training programmes, recruiting doctors and students and spending days on selection panels. He was committed to science, to fostering the next generation of researchers and to the individuals who showed a talent for combining clinical work and basic research, as he had done.

As a head of department, everyone admired his calm quiet authority, built on his expertise, his international networks, his research accomplishments, and his humane, approachable leadership style.

As Vice-Chancellor, I often sought his counsel. I respected his wisdom and thoughtfulness. He offered insights into worlds I was not familiar with, drew on experience in networks that I did not

have, and gave advice in the most constructive and gentle way, even when he did not agree with an approach I was taking.

He was appointed dean 18 months before taking up the post, and in that time, not only prepared himself with management training abroad, and familiarised himself with developments in health science education internationally; he also developed a plan for transformation at faculty level. He came into office committed to putting students first.

He was unlucky to have stepped into the deanship a few weeks before the most serious and disruptive protests at UCT began, in September 2016. As a dean committed to the project of transformation, he cared deeply about his students and took the issues raised by the protestors very seriously. But during the disruptions in his faculty, he encountered aggression and hostility directed at him that shocked, and undermined, him. In a different time or context, he would have shone as dean, as he did in his other leadership positions. He did think of resigning, but on reflection and in discussion with me and other colleagues, he decided to continue, because he knew that many people, students and staff alike, were looking to him to lead, to promote their causes, to protect them, and fight for them. And he did.

Rest in peace, Bongani. You have been taken from us far too soon. But you achieved more in your 51 years, and touched more people, made more impact, inspired more students and junior staff, reached more colleagues – than most people do in several lifetimes. We celebrate your life and thank you. We will miss you intensely.

Dr Max Price

Previous Vice-Chancellor (2008 – 2018)