

Prestigious Awards Speech October 2019

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be in the company of CPUT's brightest academic minds. I am especially pleased that the Vice-Chancellor's Prestigious Achiever Award has increased ten-fold from last year and will now extend the gift of learning to 10 individuals in 2020.

It would seem obvious that students who achieved Dean and VC medallist status during their undergraduate studies would seamlessly assimilate into post-doctoral studies upon graduation. But we were finding that in many cases these students, who were primed to be our next generation of academics, were instead leaving for the corporate world or family financial pressures were pushing them out of university prematurely.

Last year's recipient, Zamavangeli Mdletshe, was well on her way to leaving CPUT and work. **((Zamavangeli please raise your hand if you are in the room tonight))**.

In fact it took the intervention of her supervisor Dr Velaphi Msomi who, after she graduated Cum Laude, encouraged her mother to allow her talented daughter to continue on to her Doctoral studies. At this event last year, Dr Velaphi explained how he had to personally encourage Zamavangeli's mother to give her another three years at Varsity.

Luckily she agreed and the talented young woman is still within the CPUT family, and she will remain a recipient of this award until her Doctorate is completed.

I am told that since then she has secured over half a million rand in NRF funding to build her proposed desalination device and she is currently securing the components of the device with its build due to start soon.

I suspect at the end of the 3 years we may need to ask the mother for another extension so that we do not lose Zamavangeli's talents to industry!

So you can see then that the VC Prestigious Achiever Award is not a replication of existing interventions. Rather it is a way of ensuring that these academically gifted individuals remain connected to CPUT and come back to complete their Masters and Doctorates with us, later becoming Professors.

So a message to the future Professors in the room.

You have been chosen because you represent the best of what CPUT has to offer, you have displayed the graduate attributes of resilience, superior problem-solving abilities and most importantly ethical capabilities. You already have the recipe for success, or you would not be with us in this room. I look forward to sharing your own individual stories of success when we attend this event next year.



And finally, to the gracious and generous benefactors, The Yach family. You do so much more than just write a cheque. Your family is dedicated to the future of South Africa and the next generation of leaders and we appreciate your time and resources, given so selflessly throughout the years, to making CPUT a stronger institution of higher education.

Thank You

