



**SRC Investiture 2022**

**09:00 5 April 2022**

**Conference Centre, North Campus**

Professor Sibongile Muthwa  
*Vice-Chancellor, Nelson Mandela University*

President and Members of the SRC

Student leaders from societies and formations

Deputy Vice-Chancellors and executive management

The Dean of Students

Executive Deans of Faculty

Staff and students

It is my privilege and is indeed a pleasure to address this important gathering today. I am humbled as I stand here in the presence of our student leadership collective. I would like to congratulate the SRC of 2022.

I would also wish to greet all students who are participating on the virtual platform. This is an excellent innovation to enable the members of the student body who elected this SRC leadership collective into office, to

witness the taking of the oath as a public commitment to the responsibilities of office and how these must be performed with accountability and integrity.

Today marks a particularly important annual event in the calendar of our university governance. To us as Mandela university, whilst the SRC is a creature of the statute, it is in fact, the most important roleplayer that assists to shape the university transformation by grounding and anchoring this through student experiences. Our commitment to being an African student centric university is embedded with the notion of social justice. This is a necessarily ambitious intention, and achieving and living this on a daily basis calls for courageous leadership and on-going engagement with the broader university and societal transformation agenda.

Serving as an SRC member is a leadership mantle. Credible and authentic leadership requires being the embodiment of the student centric university we must be. As an SRC leader, it is incumbent upon you to “walk the talk” at each step of the way. In performing your leadership role you need to be mindful that an SRC is an embodiment of excellence and ubuntu, which is displayed through humility and respect for each other and for humankind. Leadership is a dynamic contrast: if it is not authentically guided, it has a tendency of collapsing the fundamental principles of any developmental trajectory.

Leadership authenticity thrives in complexities. The prevailing Higher Education landscape remains constantly complex, with some formidable challenges. Leading within this type of environment requires sharp minds, to develop and pursue sustainable solutions. Our framing blue-print here at Mandela is Vision 2030 of Mandela University, which students have

played a key role in shaping. Its successful implementation requires our collective, robust and fruitful engagement to build a great institution that reflects the ethos of Tata Madiba.

The role of leadership is contradictory. Authentic leaders must be ready to make sacrifices in pursuit the freedom of the beloved society<sup>1</sup>. We have concrete demonstrations of this across the history of the African continent, including the life journey of Nelson Mandela himself. In this regard, his lived experience shows that it is a characteristic of growth that we should learn from both pleasant and unpleasant experiences<sup>2</sup>. Leaders are stronger and more able to lead within contextual contradictions if their leadership is embedded within a value system.

The student leadership of the university must epitomise the institutional culture that the university seeks to champion. This institutional culture needs to be driven by the values of the university, founded on ensuring that we inculcate transformative leadership at all levels and layers. In order to build the desired values-driven institutional culture, the posture of the SRC needs to embrace social cohesion, and espouse the principles of democracy and inclusion of all students regardless of their circumstances and backgrounds. In this regard, democratic principle dictates that the SRC must serve as a collective that embraces ideas that are at the cutting edge of delivering the essence of the Mandela University Vision 2030. Amilcar Cabral guides us that across society, when leading, no matter how complex or hard the struggle is against any perceived oppressive system, the most difficult struggle is the struggle against our own weaknesses<sup>3</sup>. It is therefore fundamental that collective leadership

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson Mandela 1998

<sup>2</sup> Nelson Mandela 1997

<sup>3</sup> Amilcar Cabral

must necessarily recognise and engage with a diversity of ideas, as a panacea for the attainment of a developmental and institution-building agenda. Our narrative of Mandela university is guided by the philosophical principle that we inspire leadership that is good. In this regard, good leaders are those who rise beyond any differences, and lead based on principles and guided by values.

I call out the University values, one by one, so that we can all take a moment to reflect on these and remind ourselves of their importance as a motif, and insignia of sorts, of what this University stands for. Our values are:

- Diversity
- Excellence
- Ubuntu
- Social justice and equality
- Integrity
- Environmental stewardship

As the SRC, you are the custodian and champion of the university's six distinctive values. Mr President, I trust that you have ensured that each SRC member knows these values by heart. But more importantly, I am looking forward to hearing your plans and programme of action to ensure that these values come alive during the SRC's term of office, in active and vibrant ways.

The investiture of the SRC is an extremely significant ceremony, as it confers upon each member of the SRC the formal responsibilities of serving in this leadership capacity. Through your election, you now have

placed on your shoulders a daunting and yet exciting responsibility of selfless service to students, the university and our communities.

In addition to adhering to the values of our university, as democratically elected student representatives, I urge you to carry your mandate with courage, authenticity, discipline and in ways that make Mandela move forward – make progress. All of this is possible, Mr President, if we are all committed to engagement in active pursuit of a shared social compact.

As I conclude, leadership is not always easy. It is complex. It is multi-dimensional. It must be principled. It requires of us to think and act beyond ourselves. It serves greater good. It must stand the test of time. Your leadership is your legacy, and it is how you will be known, both now and as you move into your life beyond the university after you graduate.

As student leaders, you shoulder a great responsibility to bear the name of Nelson Mandela, who stands as the person chosen by the global community to put a human face to our collective aspirations for a more socially just world.

Congratulations on your election to office. I wish you a successful and productive term.