

# NELSON MANDELA

## UNIVERSITY

**VIRTUAL MESSAGE**  
**Celebrating Excellence**  
**VC's Student Excellence Awards**  
Professor Sibongile Muthwa  
*Vice-Chancellor, Nelson Mandela University*  
September 2021

Dear colleagues

I warmly greet each one of you attending the event virtually, in these most difficult of times.

I wish to acknowledge:

- My colleagues, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors – Professor Cheryl Foxcroft, Dr Thandi Mgwebi, Professor Andre Keet and Mr Lebogang Hashatse
- Executive Deans of Faculty
- Dean of Students
- Our Senate
- Executive and Senior Management
- All academics and all Mandela staff

We *all* join in celebrating not only the achievements of our students, but also the affirmation of our own work as teaching and support staff.

My warm wishes are equally extended to:

- Our student recipients of awards - who are being honoured for their efforts and achievements today. It is time to celebrate your sweet success!

- Our current students; those who have completed their studies; and those whom we hope will be inspired to join Nelson Mandela University.

A special word of appreciation goes to parents, significant others, special guests, family and friends – all of whom have contributed in some way to the successes that are being acknowledged this evening. As we know, success is rarely an individual effort and we want to acknowledge the many whose support have helped in bringing our students to this highpoint in their lives.

You are all most welcome to what remains a very special awards event on our university calendar, as we “celebrate excellence” albeit at these challenging times brought about by the pandemic.

### **Celebrating Excellence**

Awards ceremonies such as these are often characterized by words of wisdom and experience, aimed at affirming those who have walked the path on the one hand, and inspiring those who are still walking it, on the other.

While the pandemic has changed the way in which we live and work those factors and habits which eventuate in excellence remain the same.

Success is often achieved one step at a time. Excellence requires sustained focus and commitment. Sustained excellence requires consistency and rising continually, to meet the inevitable challenges that confront us. Success *with excellence* demands patience, tenacity and dedication.

Excellence is the ability to take a long-range view. It takes one’s commitment to look to the future, understanding that today may not bring immediate success and gratification. In a way, success and excellence cannot be realized without capacity for discernment, ambition for sacrifice, imagination and belief in a future that is better than the present.

Former US President Barak Obama said in one of his many valedictory addresses [that]: “There is a moment in the life of every generation when that spirit of hopefulness has to come through if we are to make our mark in history.” For our awardees, I suggest that in this time of the pandemic and of great need in our own country, you are that generation, and this is that moment.

It was Aristotle who said: “Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice

of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny.” These words remain true today.

Our award recipients have earned their accolades. They have been intentional in striving to do their best and to be the best in their field – and we could not be prouder of you.

Nelson Mandela University’s foundational values include our commitment to excellence, together with values of integrity, ubuntu, respect for diversity, social justice and equality, and environmental stewardship. It is a proud moment for us, that through your exceptional achievement you have brought one of these values to life.

### **Congratulations**

So, thank you to our 2021 achievers and awardees for making excellence a habit. Your hard work, your sacrifices, positive attitude and commitment to an end goal have borne fruit. While you have done us proud with your excellent academic achievements, we also know that you will be exemplary Nelson Mandela graduates, alumni and ambassadors, as you make your way in the world as caring, well-rounded, responsible and civic-minded citizens.

### **Thanks**

As I conclude, I also want to say thank you to all our staff and students. I am deeply humbled by your sacrifices and the sacrifices of those who support you, to have reached this stage in our academic year.

Thank you for giving of your time, talents and hard work to make it all happen.

*Thank you, baie dankie, enkosi.*