

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

Chancellors Address at Installation at Nelson Mandela University

Chancellor Dr Naledi Pandor

8 April 2026

Chairperson of Council, Judge Dambuza,

Deputy Chairperson,

All members of Council in attendance,

Vice Chancellor, Professor Muthwa,

Deputy Vice Chancellors,

Executive Deans,

Registrar,

The Professoriate, members of the Academy, and university staff members,

President and members of the Student Representative Council

President of the Alumni Association, and Alumni,

University Partners and stakeholders from government

The faith sector, civil society, communities, business

And most importantly students of our university

Good afternoon, Molweni, Dumelang, Asalmualaikum, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the entire university community for the esteemed honour you have given my family and I by selecting me to serve as Chancellor of Nelson Mandela University following in the footsteps of the excellent leadership given by our former Chancellor Dr Fraser Moleketi.

It is a welcome pleasure to return to the academy sector and to have the opportunity to once more immerse myself in the sane cooling embrace of intellectual rigour.

This university which has become one of our largest and most successful comprehensive universities, came into being when I served as Minister of Education in the period 2004 to 2009.

All the reports on the university performance point to a university committed to academic excellence, high quality research performance, genuine responsiveness to community engagement and service, to well crafted international partnerships, and to genuine and effective collaboration with universities throughout the African Continent.

The university bears the name of our iconic yet humble President Nelson Mandela. The first democratically elected President of South Africa. President Mandela is renowned for being a leader who called on all people to make every effort to be people who make good trouble. He was referring to us utilising our active conscience to make good trouble by contributing to changing the negative conditions of millions across the world. He believed the condition of harm experienced by many should persuade us to make good trouble for change. It was this commitment to making good trouble that caused so many across the world to actively contribute to international solidarity by joining our struggle against apartheid. People acted not because it benefitted them but due to their concern for humanity and for the innocent who suffer harm from autocratic states that seek to oppress and dominate other nations or communities.

Mandela would surely have agreed with all of us that we are living in a deeply troubled geopolitical environment full of confused leaders who seek to make bad trouble and to impose malevolent unipolarity on a weakened global community.

The ideological dominance of might is right illustrated primarily by the United States is a worrying and significant threat to us in higher education. All of you are aware that in the genocide against Gaza, all universities in Gaza were bombed, in the current Israel America war against Iran, universities are being bombed, in addition in an America that seeks to erase equity, efforts at gender equality and initiatives to respond to the legacies of slavery and race discrimination, universities are denied research funding, are told what to teach, and who they may admit.

This increasingly worrying threat to academic freedom and free expression is a development that should cause us as Nelson Mandela University to set out our perspectives on these fast evolving developments and to assert our abiding commitment to freedom, justice, and the development of new knowledge through untrammelled scientific inquiry.

One of the most worrying observations of the polycrises of the current period is the near silence and invisibility of the South, and of Africa in particular. This seeming absence of the South in articulating a progressive, humane, global agenda, must encourage our university to

increase efforts at achieving Africa wide academic excellence and enhanced African investment in leadership in research and innovation. Efforts should also be directed at creating a prosperous Africa based on our mineral resources our agricultural excellence, increased food security, science and innovation excellence, and robust and productive industrial capacity. We must also steer the creation of sustained and well-planned African collaboration in trade and business development.

Our university has a stated commitment to Africa and this needs to be pursued beyond rhetoric through real actions in support of Africa's Agenda 2063. We should not be complacent about Africa lagging behind. The talent we nurture in these walls is going to be wasted if we fail to develop our continent into an effective participant in all international affairs.

Our commitment must also include sustainably nurturing an institution in which all enjoy respect and dignity, a university in which our Bill of Rights is rehearsed in practice through respect for women and girls, for every worker and respect for the dignity of all.

Freedom and democracy were never mere slogans for Mandela, they were ideals to strive for, I assume this significant chair of Chancellor with the hope and trust that you will honour the privilege of his name by living the legacy he bequeathed to all of us.

We owe a legacy to all the founders of our democracy to express our gratitude by being hard working quality students, quality academics, quality administrators, quality university leaders and quality leaders of society. I am certain that this is what I will see and experience in this increasingly great institution as I serve you as Chancellor.

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