



## GRADUATION SPEECH

Distinguished guests, graduates, parents, ladies and gentlemen.

Today, we are celebrating the results of hard work, commitment, sacrifice, and tenacity. It has been an immense privilege for the University of the Free State to be part of your lives for the past few years, and we are extremely proud of what you have achieved – culminating in this well-deserved moment of recognition.

Today, we will witness the capping of bachelor's degrees, honours degrees, and master's degrees in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. Students who – together with their families and loved ones – invested time, money, and hard work to accomplish this milestone.

Dear graduates, you are here today because you chose the path of self-empowerment and growth to find your calling and purpose in life. Nelson Mandela is famous for saying: *“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”* And today you are taking a vital step towards making this a reality.

You have emerged from different challenging situations, more resilient and empowered to pursue your purpose. This purpose is greater than just the qualifications you have achieved, and more valuable than any salary or

physical reward. Your purpose in life is what will drive you, energise you, inspire you, and give meaning to what you do.

We wish you all the very best as you now prepare for a new phase in your lives – whether it be in the form of further studies or committing yourselves towards ploughing back what you have learnt into society.

To the parents, guardians, and families of the graduates: Congratulations to you as well. Your support on this journey can never be overestimated. And we thank you and acknowledge you for the valuable role you have played.

The University of the Free State is a place that inspires academic excellence, innovation, and inclusivity, instigating diversity, human reconciliation, and transformation of lives. Your university qualification should give each of you the confidence to make a positive difference in your chosen field of study and empower you to think innovatively. It should also give you the insight to never be afraid to learn, unlearn, and relearn.

We live in a time of unprecedented and rapid change in the world of work. As new technologies develop, new opportunities open up and new fields of study and research are revealed. It is up to creative, critical thinkers, dedicated researchers, people with vision and the drive and compassion to make a difference in this world, to make the most of these opportunities.

In short: It's up to people like *you*.

But remember, graduation is not just an end, but a new beginning – a launching pad for your future endeavours and aspirations. Whether you choose to pursue further studies, embark on a career in research, industry, or

entrepreneurship, or devote yourself to making a difference in your community, know that the world is ripe with possibilities waiting to be explored.

The time has now come for many of you to start giving back. To use your knowledge and skills to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people around you. To start making your unique contribution towards building better communities, a better country, and ultimately, a better world.

We wish you all the best for your journey from this point onward;

May you have the *courage* to embrace challenges;

The *creativity* to find innovative solutions;

And the *confidence* and *perseverance* to implement them.

Above all, may you *find* your purpose and *take* your place in shaping a better world.

-END-