

A WELCOME SPEECH BY PROFESSOR CHERYL DE LA REY,  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION STRATEGY  
GROUP (RISG) OF UNIVERSITIES SOUTH AFRICA, AT THE 2018  
RESEARCH & INNOVATION DIALOGUE – 31 MAY, 2018

I wish to extend a special welcome to:

Minister of Science and Technology, Honourable Kubayi-Ngubane

Vice-Chancellors

Deputy Vice-Chancellors

CEOs of Science Councils

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

International speakers and guests

Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen

This 2018 Research & Innovation Dialogue is a means to realise Universities South Africa's mandate to strengthen research and innovation in the higher education sector. This Dialogue is convened periodically to bring together a selected group of representatives from universities, government departments, industry and other agencies, to engage on a range of matters of individual and collective interest for research and innovation. We see this as a significant opportunity to facilitate learning and to deepen understanding on topics of high relevance within the university sector.

Each year the RISG identifies priorities that shape our work. The themes selected for this event reflect our priorities for the current year.

In the wake of the #FeesMustFall cry, the spotlight has been firmly on undergraduate students. Indeed the new student funding dispensation has seen considerable funds being mobilised for undergraduate education. At the same time, public funding for postgraduate education has declined. This is of serious concern to the university sector. Postgraduate education creates the pool from which we are likely to select the next generation of academics and the pool of highly skilled individuals who are expected to play a leading role in innovation – hence our theme of today’s proceedings.

Tomorrow’s programme places more emphasis on internationalisation and collaboration and partnerships – a cross-cutting theme integrated into both days. With pressures on supervisory and research capacity and funding, a key question is how we may forge collaboration and partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

Whilst these issues are not new – there have been many workshops and symposia on these themes – what differentiates this event is that our consideration of these issues takes note of wide-sweeping changes in the global science landscape. This morning we will hear from Dr Joanna Newman about the opportunities within the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Tomorrow Dr Heidi Hackmann will brief us on the launch of the International Council for Science coming up in the near future.

We anticipate that this Dialogue will provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, inspire new research and establish new contacts for closer cooperation and collaboration in order to strengthen our efforts to ramp up areas of postgraduate education and the production of the next generation of academics.

However, our intention extends beyond the exchange of ideas. As we anticipate a new White Paper on Science and Technology and a new decadal plan, we believe that this is an opportune time to work together more effectively for the growth of research and innovation capability in South Africa. USAf and particularly the RISG will be taking forward the ideas and proposals from our proceedings with the intention of translation into action.

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