



The University of Pretoria welcomes its new Vice-Chancellor and Principal

Prof Cheryl de la Rey was appointed as the University's new Vice-Chancellor and Principal, following the resignation of Prof Calie Pistorius, who took up the position of Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hull in the United Kingdom in September 2009.

Prof De la Rey has also been appointed as a professor in the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities. She has an outstanding record of scholarly achievement and leadership in the tertiary education environment.

Prior to her appointment as Chief Executive Officer of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in May 2008, she served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor and professor of Psychology at the University of Cape Town for a term of six years. She also served as the Executive Director: Research Promotion on secondment to the National Research Foundation (NRF) from 2000 to 2002.

As a result of these senior management positions, she has excellent in-depth knowledge and a strategic understanding of the higher education environment, including the challenges facing universities and the operational environment in which universities function. She is also recognised by her peers as a professional, hard-working person of integrity who builds sound human relations.

Prof De la Rey states that creating the future of the University of Pretoria is an exciting leadership opportunity. "Using any number of criteria, the University of Pretoria is undoubtedly one of South Africa's top universities. With visionary and strong leadership, accompanied by effective strategies and good management, it can be South Africa's leading university with a strong international reputation for quality in teaching, research and community engagement," she says.

According to Prof De la Rey, this can be achieved by pursuing a strategy that draws on existing strengths to enhance academic depth and scholarly impact, to grow diversity and to enable creativity and innovation.

Furthermore, it is important to strengthen the quality of student life through an academic plan that links teaching, research and community engagement, and to create conditions that will facilitate the attraction and retention of a diverse body of high-quality academic, administrative, technical and professional staff. She is committed to fulfilling the University's public mandate by contributing to community development, and raising the international impact of its scholarship.

Prof De la Rey sees her role as Vice-Chancellor and Principal as that of providing strategic leadership and inspiring staff, students and stakeholders to pursue and support the new vision and goals of the University, while affirming its existing achievements.

A key challenge, in her opinion, will be the implementation of this vision, while ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the University. "This will require astute financial planning, which must include an ambitious fundraising strategy to increase student financial support and research funding," she says. She feels that success in this endeavour requires clear positioning of the unique strengths and potential of the University, accompanied by effective external representation and communication.

Prof De la Rey recognises the fact that the University of Pretoria is a large university, encompassing a wide range of academic programmes, a strong community engagement focus, a vibrant student life, high research output, a strong reputation for innovation and a diverse array of activities in sport, arts and culture. Furthermore, she recognises that it is in good financial shape, the infrastructure is evidently very good and administration and operational systems are efficient.



→ Prof Cheryl de la Rey, the University's new Vice-Chancellor and Principal.

"There is also strategic advantage in the University's location in the business, government and diplomatic hub of the country," she says.

Prof De la Rey believes that there is a sound base from which an exciting future can be built to realise a vision to be South Africa's leading academic institution, renowned for the quality of its teaching and student life, outstanding research, diversity, innovation and public engagement.

As the keynote speaker at the University of Pretoria's Exceptional Academic Achiever Awards last year, she recognised the importance of innovation in an academic context.

"With the increasing importance of knowledge and innovation as determinants of economic growth and

national competitiveness," she said, "governments across the world have shown an interest in investing more funds in higher education systems to

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increase participation rates, this being necessary for meeting human capital development needs in an increasingly competitive global economy.

The international trend is that as public investment in higher

education increases, there is greater demand from government and the public in general regarding return on investment. At the same time, there has been an expansion of the expectations of universities.

"In some countries, like Canada, along with increased public investment there is a suggestion that innovation should be added as a fourth leg of responsibility in addition to teaching, research and community service," she concluded. ➔