

Minister Pandor's address at the official opening of buildings at the Bloemfontein campus of the Central University of Technology

Student Support Centre, Bloemfontein campus

20 September 2018

Thank you Programme Director and a very warm welcome to Premier Ntombela, Free State Premier, Mr Tate Makgoe, MEC for Education in the Free State, Professor Henk de Jager, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, CUT , Madam Justice Molemela, CUT Chancellor, Mr Boysie Phehlukwayo, Chairperson of Council

It gives me great pleasure to open the Central University of Technology's new buildings and rename some of its old ones.

Good infrastructure plays a key role at universities. The provision of accessible, decent, and safe buildings makes studying stimulating and enjoyable for all students.

In 2007 the DHET introduced an Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant to provide funding for infrastructure development at our universities.

Since then government has invested R20 billion in infrastructure development at universities.

A substantial share, R1.3 billion, of the R20 billion has found its way to the two universities in the Free State province.

Government support to CUT has resulted in the construction of state-of-the-art buildings at the Bloemfontein and Welkom campuses.

Today we officially open newly completed facilities - a residence, a student support centre and Engineering, Humanities, Health and Environmental Sciences, and Teachers Education buildings.

As the primary funder of infrastructure at public universities and colleges, government needs to ensure

that infrastructure is properly maintained and managed. The maintenance of higher educational facilities is crucial.

We all know that the buildings needed to be maintained properly. Due to deferred maintenance of facilities, maintenance costs have escalated beyond what universities and government can afford.

Consequently, facilities are prematurely reaching the end of their useful lives.

It's important that when new facilities are built, life cycle costs are taken into account. Equally, CUT must ensure that their infrastructure is regularly maintained.

The appropriate management of facilities is a catalyst to well-functioning buildings with a prolonged life expectancy that can positively impact on the overall student learning experience.

“Education is the engine of personal development”, President Nelson Mandela once said: “It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that a son of a mine worker can become the head of a mine, and that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation”.

Education is important not only for the individual but also for South Africa’s development and global competitiveness.

We have increased access to higher education, but specifically we are working to encourage those from working-class family backgrounds to pursue tertiary education.

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme has played a huge role in this regard and will continue to play a huge role in the future.

Realising the challenges that South Africa faces in higher education and in other spheres, government departments

work together towards attaining a particular sets of outcomes - specifically the scarce skills needed in the digital revolution.

With the unprecedented growth in many tech sectors – in particular robotics and artificial intelligence – there has been a boom in incubators and startups.

South Africa has more incubators than any other country in Africa.

Incubators are where entrepreneurs are made. Every year, many, many entrepreneurs and their ventures fail. However, the successful entrepreneur sees failure as a learning experience. There is no shame in second, third or fourth tries. Entrepreneurs do not give up – not on their ideas, not on their teams and not on themselves.

Start-ups are the heartbeat of our economy.

I am inspired by the success of new entrepreneurs and innovators who have taken advantage of the booming

mobile industry, the growing market in renewable energy, and the evolving market in the cultural and creative industries.

It is our local innovators and entrepreneurs who will ultimately create the millions of jobs that we need to grow an inclusive economy.

The human-capital initiatives government supports are aimed at increasing the number and equity profile of postgraduate students, supporting emerging researchers and academics, and encouraging emerging entrepreneurs.

Our dedicated research support for women and young researchers is intended to improve the equity profile of the research and academic workforce.

Universities of technology need to develop their research profiles and research capacities while at the same time producing quality researchers and innovators and entrepreneurs.

Government is committed to providing increased support to industry-university partnerships. Government is committed to meeting employer organisations to explore funded-research opportunities.

Perhaps there are some here who have heard about the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Programme, which we launched last year, aimed at coordinating the development of an [entrepreneurship platform](#) within the university education sector in South Africa.

We have provided a further R17.9 million to strengthen the programme over the period 2017/18 to 2019/21.

The EDHE has three goals: the development of student entrepreneurship; entrepreneurship in academia; and entrepreneurial universities.

The EDHE Programme is collaborative in nature. Strategic relationships with key stakeholders in the

private and non-profit sector have been established and developed, particularly in relation to funding and entrepreneurship development support at national and local university levels.

In conclusion, we need to be prudent and efficient in the use and management of our existing infrastructure. More importantly, universities must lead the way in the provision of infrastructure and facilities that are environmentally sustainable, accessible for the disabled, and durable.

I wish you well in your efforts to offer quality academic and research programmes and services to our students.

I thank you!