

The College of The Bahamas

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Notes for Remarks: University of Johannesburg Partnership Press Conference

Good morning,

I am very pleased to welcome you here today to launch the partnership agreement signed between The College of The Bahamas and The University of Johannesburg. I am joined this morning by The Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Johannesburg, Dr. Ihron Rensberg, and his colleagues Professor John Luiz, Executive Dean, Faculty of Management and Andre Mynhardt, Executive Director, School of Tourism and Hospitality.

In December 2006, The College accompanied Minister of Education Alfred Sears as part of a delegation to the Meeting of The Commonwealth Minister of Education. We wanted to use that opportunity to explore the possibility of partnerships with universities in South Africa as part of our overall university transition agenda. In this, we were also building on the Memorandum of Understanding which had been signed between our two countries, an agreement which emphasized collaboration in education. We thought that this was a good omen under which we began our own independent search for partners at the university level.

It has been. Only a week ago, we had the opportunity of meeting again with Minister Naledi Pandor who was here in The Bahamas who confirmed her country's interest in building links between South Africa and The Bahamas. This country to country agreement provides an important backbone to the collaborative academic relationship we are striving to build with this leading institution in South Africa.

The Bahamas and South Africa are both post-colonial nations in a modern global economy. While one is very large and one is quite small, we seek answers to some of the same questions of sustainable human development and finding our place in a competitive global world.

The partnership with the University of Johannesburg allows us to forge links in areas of mutual strength; namely hospitality and tourism, business and education. These connections extend to linking our partners in major industries including financial services, e-commerce and tourism in both countries. This mutually beneficial partnership will create unique opportunities to foster excellence in our programs, to provide opportunities for cross-learning and cross-cultural experience, to enhance the learning and research opportunities we provide to students and faculty.

International partnerships such as the partnership with the University of Johannesburg are also critical an integral part of our university transition agenda.

As a national, publicly-supported university, The University of The Bahamas will not be seeking the accreditation credentials of other countries. We will be depending on the national mechanisms which are being out into place. We will, however be seeking to build our reputation in the international network of universities. Just as independent nations sign accords with other countries to the benefit and advantage of their citizens, universities integrate within an academic network, to enhance knowledge creation and sharing. Academic conferences, exchanges, research collaboration and virtual learning with other communities are just a few of the vehicles universities use to build institutional strength and to ensure that their teaching and research always meets international standards of excellence

Universities also form relationships with partner institutions as a means of benchmarking. When our best students study abroad for a semester, we want to know that they continue to excel in their new context and can adapt to differences in culture and approach of different universities.

We know our students do well and we saw this time and again with our Associate Degree graduates who went on to complete the Bachelor Degrees abroad through articulation agreements. But we are now moving away from articulation agreements while still wanting our students to perform at international levels of excellence. Exchanges allow us to monitor this. With more than a ten-year history of offering our own baccalaureate degrees, we want to ensure that we retain our students to the completion of their degrees and provide them with the fullest university experience possible – at home. Study abroad will be a large part of this strategy. Facilitating study abroad programmes will expose other institutions not only to our high calibre students, but to what we can offer to their students as well.

We can then build confidence and assure to our citizens that what we do at home is not only as good as but sometimes better than what you can get abroad.

We will not reach full capacity in research without international relationships and agreements. Some of the best research in the world today is conducted in teams. At any university of recognition, research teams compose membership from a number of institutions across the globe. We are entering an arena where we will sit at the table with larger, institutions of longer histories, and we will contribute on equal footing due to unique competitive advantages that we can present in areas like tourism and hospitality, marine sciences, financial services and cultural studies. Universities are centres not only of learning and education but also of research, knowledge creation and innovation. In collaboration with our partner universities, we will breed innovation into answering national development needs while also making contributions to the wider world.

It is for these reasons, that The College is strategically seeking a select group of international partners.

The agreement we signed in December 2006 with the University of Johannesburg is a partnership of institutions each seeking to enrich what it can offer to its own faculty, staff and students. Our MOU is one that will facilitate student, faculty and staff exchanges, research collaboration and learning pod integration.

Our exchange agreement will mean that College of The Bahamas students will study at The University of Johannesburg, for a semester paying tuition and residence fees at home, while taking courses and learning in new environment and then returning to The College to complete their degrees. Similarly, we will host students from the University of Johannesburg who will pay their tuition and residence fees at home and will come o The Bahamas to take their courses at The College with full transfer of credits when they return to complete their studies.

Our faculty and staff will benefit from similar arrangements and we have a number of faculty and students already interested in taking advantage of this opportunity.

We are elated to have Dr. Rensburg and his colleagues visiting our campus to meet with our faculty and students. We appreciate that The University of Johannesburg recognised our desire and need to partner with great universities such as theirs and by signing with us have contributed to the development of our university and The Bahamas.

Let me give you now a brief overview of The University of Johannesburg as gleaned from public information available on its web site which I invite you to consult. <http://www.uj.ac.za/> The University of Johannesburg was launched officially at the beginning of 2005. The University of Johannesburg was founded on the proud academic traditions of the former Rand Afrikaans University, Technikon Witwatersrand and two campuses of Vista University. The UJ has approximately 46 000 students, who attend classes on its five campuses, spread over the industrial landscape of Johannesburg. The UJ is focused on maintaining high academic standards, while boldly embracing change and empowering its students to contribute knowledge and skills to [the city of Johannesburg and to South Africa].

Its Vision and Mission are described as follows:

“A premier, embracing, African city university offering a mix of vocational and academic programmes that advances freedom, democracy, equality and human dignity as high ideals of humanity through distinguished scholarship, excellence in teaching, reputable research and innovation, and through putting intellectual capital to work.

We are committed to:

Partnerships with our communities;

Supporting access to a wide spectrum of academic and technological teaching, learning and research; Leading, challenging, creating and exploring knowledge

We value:

Academic distinction;

Integrity and respect for diversity and human dignity; Academic freedom and accountability; Individuality and collective effort; Innovation”

It is indeed a pleasure now to introduce welcome the University of Johannesburg delegation and to introduce its Vice Chancellor and Principal Ihron Rensburg.

Dr. Rensburg holds a PhD in International Development Education from Stanford University. He is the former Chief Executive of Strategic Corporate Services at the South African Broadcasting Corporation. He was Deputy Director General at The National Department of Education where he spearheaded post-apartheid education policy and legislation. He was an anti-apartheid activist, during which time he was imprisoned without trial and as an activist he organised teacher and student movements.

Janyne M. Hodder
President, The College of the Bahamas
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