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Mr J Schoeman
PO Box 111
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Dear Mr Schoeman

Firstly, thank you to so many of you (almost 8 000 in fact) who responded to UCT News by sending in current contact details and in many cases an updated CV. This year's magazine should see a record number of entries in the news of alumni section, and that is particularly pleasing as one of my goals as the head of this great university is to build the UCT community.

The purpose of this letter is to update you on happenings at UCT and an update on the Chancellor's Challenge. Looking at UCT first, we have made three key appointments: Professor Kathy Driver and Professor Marian Jacobs are the new Deans of Science and Health Sciences, respectively, and Professor Bongani Mayosi has been appointed chief specialist and head of the Department of Medicine at Groote Schuur Hospital.

This is the first time in UCT's history that we have appointed women to the high-profile dean's positions. It is also the first time in history that a black person has been appointed to head up the Department of Medicine. These are significant advances as we endeavour to transform our university.

On the student front, the parent orientation days, introduced in 1999, continue to be well received and this year the Jameson Hall echoed with the excited exchanges of the 2 500 visitors. Our first-year enrolment figure remains the same as last year, 3 500, of whom 20% come from outside South Africa. The Knowledge Commons in the Library, standing as it does on 10km of books in shelves, is once again a hive of activity with 60% of library material now in electronic form.

The first sod was turned on the land between Baxter Hall and Woolback Drive, and a 398-bed women's residence, which will be named after Chancellor Graça Machel, will open its doors in 2007. Plans are being discussed for the move of the Faculty of Commerce to middle campus, creating debate around opportunities to design classroom space on the lines of best practice and on the inclusion of common spaces to enhance student and staff interaction.

Other highlights are the community-based education centres established in the wider Cape community that will be used by medical students and SHAWCO volunteers, the Centre for Popular Memory (Department of Historical Studies) and the research conducted there on deconstructing and reconstructing our history. Development is an area of study and practice that is growing at UCT in our response to national development needs, seen in the reach and depth of the data emerging from units such as the Centre for Social Science Research and in mathematical modelling programmes.

The appointment of a new Chair in Intellectual Property Law, the Sasol Advanced Fuel Labs and the South African Large Telescope in Sutherland are just three examples of how UCT is involved in the country's pivotal intellectual and scientific endeavours.

This brings me to the Chancellor's Challenge, launched in 2004. Chancellor Graça Machel set the goal of raising R175-million by 2009, with half of each rand going to bursaries, so that UCT can tap the widest pool of talent possible, and the other half going into endowment, so that UCT can maintain and build on its infrastructure.

Thanks to the generosity of staff, friends and alumni in South Africa, individual giving has almost doubled from 6% in 2004 to 11% at the end of 2005. We are especially grateful to alumnus and benefactor Raymond Ackerman's vision and contribution towards the formation of the Raymond Ackerman Academy for Entrepreneurial Development at the Graduate School of Business. Aimed at school leavers, this academy will develop business and life skills among young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Chancellor's Challenge was extended to our UK alumni in January and we plan to visit the US in September. In November we will be writing to all our alumni in what will become an annual appeal.

A major thrust in terms of our alumni affairs has been to locate the alumni function within each faculty. The very successful 'medics' reunions and the strong relationship that the Faculty of Law has built with its graduates have reinforced the fact that alumni relate in the first instance to 'their' department and to the particular professors who were most formative in their lives.

We still have a central co-ordinating alumni office and you will still continue receiving UCT News annually, but more frequent newsletters from the specific faculties or disciplines will become a regular feature during the year, as will invitations to visit campus for lectures, reunions and open days. We hope, too, that this will encourage you to make contact with us, whether to volunteer as mentors, or with offers of vac work or to explore the feasibility of joint enterprises.

One of the most interesting statistics that I have come across recently is that 60% of the graduates for whom we have current addresses live in Cape Town! In 2005 we launched the successful Alumni Leadership Forums, featuring alumni who are making their mark in the world. We plan to continue these and to invite you to the various open lectures hosted at UCT, also featuring newsmakers in various fields.

I do hope you will accept these invitations and look forward to seeing many of you back on campus. We are also arranging smaller alumni functions to coincide with senior academics visiting various cities and centres, so I can guarantee there will be opportunities to meet outside the Mother City.

I was privileged, as your representative, to be in a working group of the 24 top universities attending the recent Economic Forum in Davos. Thank you for the part you played in establishing that reputation. My hope is that you will stay in contact and continue to play your part in enhancing UCT's standing.

With best wishes



Professor Njabulo S Ndebele
Principal and Vice-Chancellor