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Faculty of Accounting
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Chancellor, Judge Vuka Tshabalala
Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor A C Bawa
Deputy Vice-Chancellor's
Executive Dean of the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics,
Professor T Nepal
Executive Deans of the OTHER faculties
And Most Importantly to you beautiful graduates sitting here, our next future, our economy of our nation, and your proud family members!!

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With all protocols observed, it gives me great pleasure to address you here today

Today marks a significant milestone in your life journey. A ritual transition from years of being prepared for a socially productive, self-reliant life - to being defined as now ready to go and live it.

There is a sense of "delivery" and "deliverance" in a graduation ceremony that gives it its deeper meaning. For as you exit this remarkable institution, focused on landing and making the best possible career opportunities and achieving success in all your aspirations for further study, work, home, love and leisure, know too that as university graduating young people, you are a bridge that links past and future; that you embody society's reproduction and renewal of itself; a fresh injection into the body of our society.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You will all agree that education should be a lifelong journey, and I believe you all have a lot of work ahead of you *One of my first message to address you today, is for you to look after yourself. AS much as our nation needs all of you to support its growth, and that includes the demands imposed on your own success, my biggest fear is that your own health will remain a challenging compromise to the pursuit of success and hardships that awaits in front of you. In mark of your our future growth, a healthy living and a balanced mindset will help you achieve the desired success.*

This long journey requires that you ask yourselves: what does your own health really mean to you? Apart from finding pictures of infectious diseases exciting and scary, reading of the usual deadly pandemic like HIV and TB in newspaper articles on daily basis or bogged down with the same messages of Healthy life styles, nutrition, diet and exercise for routine diseases like Diabetes and Hypertension, how much does it really mean it to improve your own health and also the health of the people that are or will be associated to you. It really means to act as voices for the interests of people, of everyone around us, to make their lives a little easier, happier, and healthier. You are our nation's the next managers, leaders, where you will be faced with your employees & colleagues battling similar challenges, where It will require for you to speak up for those who are silent and help those who are in their most vulnerable moments in life. Your real success will be judged by people's conditions in your local, national and international communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Prevention and equity are traditional pursuits for any healthy living. But since the start of this century, the route to both has become far more complex at a time when the need for both has increased.

All around the world, health is being shaped by the same powerful forces, like demographic ageing, rapid unplanned urbanization, and the globalization of unhealthy lifestyles. Policy spheres are no longer distinct. More and more, the causes of ill health arise in other sectors, or from policies in the international systems that govern finance, economies, commerce, trade, and foreign affairs.

More and more, the true upstream causes of ill health lie beyond the direct control of public health. More and more, health is on the receiving end of bad policies made in other sectors.

Let me be specific. I am talking about policies that caused food prices to soar. Policies responsible for climate change. Policies that have industrialized food production and globalized the marketing of unhealthy lifestyles. And policies that have undercut the market for agricultural products in developing countries, where agriculture remains the backbone of most national economies.

Last year, South African Archbishop and Nobel laureate Desmond Tutu answered ten questions for Time Magazine. When asked what Africa needs most to make progress, his answer was succinct. Fair trade, he said. A fair international economic system.

Global trends also threaten equity in unprecedented ways. What makes events, such as the global financial crisis, so broadly damaging is the fact that they come at a time of radically increased interdependence.

These days, the consequences of a crisis in one part of the world quickly ricochet throughout the international systems that bind us all so closely together. Though highly contagious, the consequences are not evenly felt. In fact, they are profoundly unfair. Developing countries have the greatest vulnerability and the least resilience. They are hit the hardest and take the longest to recover.

Already now, the differences, within and between countries, in income levels, in opportunities, in health status, life-expectancy, and access to care are greater than at any time in recent history. Already now, nearly one billion people live on the margins of survival. It does not take much to push them over the brink

Ladies and Gentlemen

As the children of the 1990s, an age of progressive shifts in HIV and AIDS mitigation, you represent our hope for a renewal of society that may lead, in twenty years time as UNAIDS proclaims, to Zero new HIV and TB infections; Zero discrimination; and Zero deaths from HIV and TB.

South Africa's current five-year *National Strategic Plan for HIV, STIs and TB* (NSP) identifies some key populations as most likely to be exposed to or transmit HIV and/or TB. One of these is young women between the ages of 15 and 24 years, a demographic that in significant part is located within the higher education sector.

But when we talk of young women as a key population at risk of HIV, that is not without direct relevance to young men! Indeed the vulnerability of young women to HIV is directly related to the oppressive attitudes and relationships that men have with women and that must be addressed in any effective response to HIV.

But while young people may be considered drivers of the epidemic, they also represent the most viable opportunity to halt the spread of AIDS and to prevent new infections. Countries that have reported down-turns in the HIV epidemic have attributed this to behaviour change among young people. Indeed the first declines in HIV incidence in South Africa have been reported among young people aged 15 - 19 years.

Part of your exposure at this institution has been to an established HIV mitigation programme that has promoted behaviour change, which we have hope that you will sustain as part of the renewal of society that you represent.

That behaviour change includes the non-abuse of alcohol and drugs, because people who use illegal substances are at higher risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV, and heavy drinking is associated with decreased condom use and an increase in multiple and concurrent sexual partners.

One of the innovative higher education interventions you have been exposed to is the First Things First HIV Counseling and Testing campaign. We have hope that you will carry forward too the regular testing for HIV in the renewal of society that you represent, and so spread the rejection of HIV stigma. To know one's HIV status is the basis for caring for oneself, one's loved ones, and the broader community. An objective of the National Strategic Plan is to maximise opportunities for testing for HIV, to ensure that everyone in South Africa is tested for HIV at least annually. In the tens of thousands of young people who volunteer every year to be tested through the First Things First campaign, this objective is being contributed to in the most profound of ways.

So as you take your leave of Durban University of Technology to establish the best possible career opportunities and achieve success in further study, work, home, love and leisure, know too that you embody society's reproduction and renewal of itself. We have hope therefore that you will make a contribution to not only the national HIV/AIDS response in your communities and future career fields but to also to all the other challenges: health and environmental that will face us in future.

Thank you and God Bless!!!