



## College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science - Wonder Women in Science Campaign

Greetings Ladies and Gentlemen

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science - Professor Albert Modi  
Distinguished Guests

In the interests of time let me observe all protocols.

I am delighted to be part of this occasion in the history of UKZN and also in the Wonder Women in Science Campaign.

On an occasion such as this, you might expect me to sing the praises of our University, but today, I would like to take a slightly different approach—that is, to express my gratitude for the network of relationships which have made this impressive occasion possible, and for the scientific expertise, professional dedication and abundant goodwill which have combined here in the name of human betterment.

And while we gratefully acknowledge the considerable achievements of the individuals who we are celebrating today, it would be remiss of me not to note the significance of the timing: the coincidence in August of National Science Week, and National Women's Month.

So I am particularly pleased by this University's "Wonder Women in Science" campaign—not only because it showcases what some of our outstanding scholars have achieved, but also because we recognise that, even now, the ablest and most accomplished women (particularly from disadvantaged communities) have/ and are struggling against all manner of bias, stereotypes, subtle forms of undermining and entrenched forms of structural resistance in the work and professional spaces. So their individual triumphs are also part of a larger, paradigm-shifting movement toward a world in which all talents must be nurtured to come to their fullest expression. In time, we hope, the wonder will be entirely focused on their intellectual accomplishments, and none on how they managed with the odds so frequently stacked against them.

At the University level, we feel that this is vitally important - something the world needs to see and appreciate, and continue to support the march towards gender equity.

And for the young people with us today - the young women in particular - I hope that some of you will be inspired to undertake careers in science, technology, engineering and medicine. There has never been a better time to study science; and the need for our brightest and ablest young minds to devote their professional lives could scarcely be greater.

On a more optimistic note, things are changing—and the University of KwaZulu-Natal is determined to be at the forefront of that change. More widely, I am greatly encouraged by the growing number of girls and young women excelling in science and entering the science, technology, engineering and medical professions at the University.

So please allow me to express my gratitude to all of our female scientists—and this year's "Wonder Women" in particular—not only for your sterling work, but also for the example you have set to the young women newly empowered to regard a career in science not as an impossible dream, but their calling.

Thank you,

Professor Nana Poku

Vice-Chancellor and Principal