

Heidi October

Reflecting on 2005



Calgary



Namibia



Vancouver



New York



San Francisco



Los Angeles



Toronto

The last graduation ceremony has taken place and my colleagues at the data office are adding a few more thousand alumni to our database. This has me wondering: what new ideas and experiences will these new partners add to our relationship? What are their expectations? How can I inspire them to stay in touch with us?

I'm filled with excitement because my interaction with you has been incredibly invigorating. Every time I return to Stellenbosch after another alumni event I find myself bursting with energy and even more critical about my own environment than ever before. Why? Because you, my partners, expect that.

Over the years Stellenbosch has built on its involvement with its alumni by drawing on the range of experiences of its diverse community. And I'm thinking: How can we use this variety to further enrich our lives? How can our alumni gain from interacting from each other and the University?

During our visit to the USA and Canada, I referred to "the sense of belonging", that feeling I experience when I meet all of you across the world and you refer to your time at Stellenbosch. I've also noted that I do not believe Stellenbosch evoke the same *Heimat* to all of you. It is indeed possible to experience different senses of belonging when thinking about your time at Stellenbosch.

If we are serious about quality relationships we need to stimulate each other's thoughts. We need to challenge the obvious and not be afraid of new depths of interaction, especially when we might not agree on all issues that might challenge our relationship. As partner and facilitator of this relationship, this is what I want to accomplish.

Judging by the hundreds of e-mails we receive from you, it is clear that you do expect us to be "your knowledge partner". Right? But, as your partner we need your support. How? By familiarising yourself with our vision, by questioning your role in realising our goals and by volunteering your support where possible. On this point I would like to draw your attention to the virtual platform at www.matiesalumni.net where you can engage in discussions with each other. Have your say!

On the local front we've had a busy year with a packed schedule of the Maties Off-Road group and Golf Clubs. We've also organised events in Durban, Upington, two in Port Elizabeth and in Namibia. We've hosted two faculty reunions for dedicated groups of alumni (Engineers who graduated in 1948 and Military Academy alumni who graduated in 1955).

Overseas we've hosted events in the USA and Canada where we've met amongst others, engineers from Exxon Mobil in Louisiana and Houston, a cattle farmer and researcher from NASA in Los Angeles, a large number of Deloitte employees in San Francisco, medical doctors in Vancouver and Calgary, researchers in Toronto and lawyers and accountants in New York.

Our alumni are truly becoming international role players but they still feel very connected to us. All of them had one thing in common, they were proud to be alumni of Stellenbosch and not only interested in the latest developments on campus, but willing to give their support where needed.

Thank you for your loyal support, for your critical input and may our relationship grow even stronger in 2006!

Contact Heidi October at (021) 808-2948 or email her at hOctober@sun.ac.za

