

## ***“So, what are you doing these days?”***

One often hears this question when one encounters a long-lost friend. You have to “report” on your life. Of course you want to say something that makes you look important!

This is probably the reason why many students can’t wait to earn money or for the hours in front of the books to be over – and to be able to give an impressive answer to the *So, what are you doing these days?* question.

Some months ago I was chatting to some ex-Matie friends on Red Square / *Rooplein* about this very same thing. Many of them left years ago and live dispersed all over the world. With nostalgia we recalled how we philosophised in *De Akker* until well past midnight about how we were going to change the world and what a difference we were going to make in this country of ours.

Yes, perhaps we were naive, but we believed that obtaining a degree and a job should not be one’s only aims in life.

“So, what are we doing now to make this a better place?” one wondered aloud. “Well, I’m the *CEO* of a company and I’m using my contacts to donate bursaries to students,” one said. “I’m the editor of a magazine but I’m also mentoring final-year students” another one added. “I have my own company and I’m trying to create jobs.” “I’m in politics and I’m doing all I can to address corruption”. “I still speak Afrikaans, but in Soweto now, and I’m doing my best to reduce stereotypes”. “I’m managing one of the country’s strongest NGOs and I’m encouraging other alumni to become involved at community level”.

And what are you doing Heidi? I answer: “I’m facilitating discussions like this worldwide!”

I enjoy this incredible challenge because my work not only entails bringing alumni from all over the world together to improve their networks, but also finding ways to cooperate to “make this a better place”.

Therefore my question remains – is it enough to obtain a degree from this university? Shouldn’t we be accounting out there for the degrees we obtained HERE...for what we are *actually* doing? Because obtaining a degree does not necessarily mean that you are using the knowledge to benefit others and yourself. Shouldn’t we, as MatiesAlumni, distinguish ourselves from others in this respect?

I glance at the quotation on my desk: “*a graduate is*”:

1. *Someone who has successfully completed a course.*
2. *Someone who has gained a superior level of knowledge*
3. *Someone who is prepared to use the knowledge gained to have a positive impact on his/her own life and the world in which we live.*

So a graduate is supposed to make a difference! Isn’t that so? Of course each of us can do this in our own environment, but at and through the University

there are many opportunities to do so. I therefore urge you to contact me or look at the Alumni webpage ([www.matiesalumni.net](http://www.matiesalumni.net)) to see how you can make a difference.

I look forward to meeting you at one of our upcoming events and continue talking to you about this.

Greetings

Heidi (Co-ordinator: Alumni Relations)

*(lees Afrikaanse weergawe op [www.matiesalumni.net](http://www.matiesalumni.net))*