

Welcoming Address by the Vice-Chancellor of the Vaal University of Technology, Prof

Khehla Ndlovu

Rhino Week 2025

Venue: Isak Steyl Stadium, Vanderbijlpark

Good morning, young champions of the field and future leaders of our continent!

On behalf of the Vaal University of Technology (VUT), it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Rhino Week 2025, a celebration not only of sporting excellence but of the unbreakable spirit of youth, community, and transformation.

We are proud to host this prestigious series of tournaments, rugby, netball, and hockey, right here at the Isak Steyl Stadium, Vanderbijlpark. This is more than just sport. This is movement. This is momentum.

Youth and Values

To all the athletes gathered here: you represent speed, strategy, strength, but most importantly, *values*. Fair play. Discipline. Respect. Resilience. These are the very values that echo through our Strategy 2033+, our guiding map toward a future-ready VUT.

At VUT, we do not see youth as the leaders of tomorrow. You are leading today. Whether on the pitch or in the classroom, your generation is already reshaping how we learn, connect, compete, and rise.

Why Rhino Week Matters to VUT

Rhino Week resonates deeply with our institutional goals. It brings together excellence in action, teamwork under pressure, and diversity in unity. Hosting Rhino Week affirms our position not only as a place of academic achievement but as a hub for holistic development, community engagement, and national impact.

Rhino Week is not simply a tournament. It is an investment in our country's most treasured asset — the youth. This being the tenth edition, it carries with it a spirit of renewal.

For many of you, this is your very first opportunity to be seen, to be heard, and to perform on a national platform. Some will rise to provincial colours. Others may go on to represent South Africa. But all of you will walk away enriched, not only by what you achieve on the field, but by the friendships you form and the values you live out.



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Inspiring thought. Shaping talent.

We are especially proud that this tournament welcomes talent scouts from beyond our borders. That alone should affirm how serious this platform is. Each sprint, tackle, goal or pass is a declaration that you are ready. Ready not just to compete, but to grow, to lead, and to leave your mark.

This tournament reminds us that winning is not just about scoring goals or crossing the try line. It is about showing up, showing respect, and showing character, even when the odds are against you.

Our Strategy 2033+ calls on us to be innovative, inclusive, and inspirational. Rhino Week reflects these goals perfectly:

- *Innovative*, because we are hosting multiple sporting codes across formats like 7s Rugby and Fast 5 Netball, formats that demand agility, adaptability, and precision thinking.
- *Inclusive*, because we welcome players from across provinces and communities, creating space for diversity to flourish.
- *Inspirational*, because the courage and dedication you show on the field inspires those in the stands, in classrooms, and in our broader society.

A Message of Encouragement to the Youth

So to every young athlete, whether you're representing your school, your province, or simply yourself, know this: you are already part of something much bigger. You are writing your own story. And every tackle, sprint, and goal, is a line in that story.

Play hard. Play fair. Be proud of how far you've come, and fearless in pursuit of where you're going.

To the organisers, coaches, parents, volunteers, and our proud partner, Rhino, the official match ball supplier for Springbok Tests and domestic competitions, thank you for trusting VUT as your host. You honour us with your presence.

To the athletes, go out there and make memories. Compete with passion. And when the whistle blows, let the world know that the future of South African sport is alive and well, right here at Rhino Week 2025.

Welcome to VUT. Welcome to purpose. Welcome to greatness.

I thank you!