Relationship Marketing and Customer Experience Management in the HEI context:

How to utilise graduation ceremonies to create a final positive impression on graduates/alumni

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advanced secure
T E C H N O L O G I E S

Association for Academic Administrators

A REALITY FOR ALL SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

- Globalization, advancement in new technologies and other tendencies like the current economic situation places a high burden on higher education institutions (HEIs) to remain competitive.
- This results in a bigger challenge to recruit and retain students that will be loyal to their HEI throughout and beyond their academic life cycle.

HOW ARE YOU INVOLVED?

In Prof Maharaj's opening address he referred to you as:

- Assets to your University
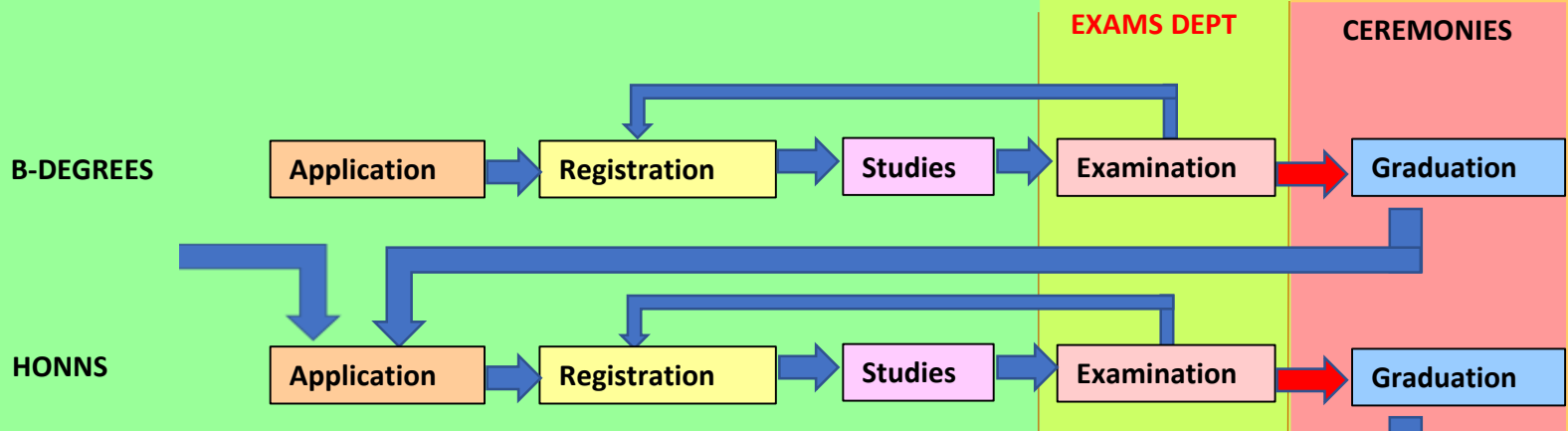
- Productive

- Efficient

- Capable to multi-task

You can't work much harder, but I would challenge you today to fine-tune your mindset towards an even more customer-oriented approach towards your students – to the benefit of all.
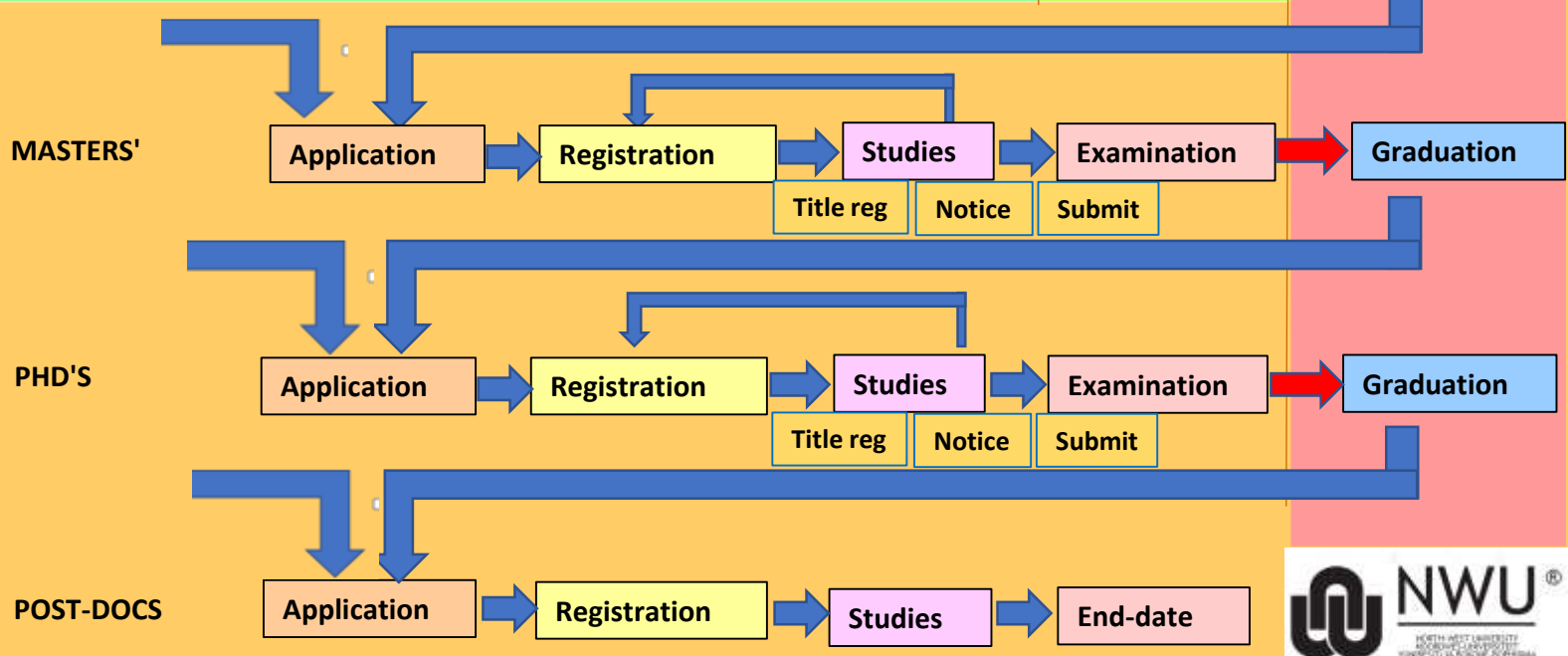
THIS PRESENTATION: A POSSIBLE SOLUTION?

In this presentation the concepts of Relationship Marketing, Customer Experience Management and other related terms will be highlighted in the HEI context, as well as the reason why graduation ceremonies are an ideal environment for HEI's to create a final positive impression on its graduates. This could lead to more customer advocates that will actively promote their HEI to prospective students.

THE STUDENT ACADEMIC LIFE CYCLE

UNDERGRADUATE ADMINISTRATION

HIGHER DEGREE ADMINISTRATION

EXAMS DEPT

CEREMONIES

B-DEGREES
Application → Registration → Studies → Examination → Graduation

HONNS
Application → Registration → Studies → Examination → Graduation

MASTERS'
Application → Registration → Studies → Examination → Graduation
Title reg | Notice | Submit

PHD'S
Application → Registration → Studies → Examination → Graduation
Title reg | Notice | Submit

POST-DOCS
Application → Registration → Studies → End-date

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THIS PRESENTATION: A POSSIBLE SOLUTION?

The potential risks related to fraudulent or fake degrees will also be emphasised and recommendations will be made how these risks can be mitigated and how a secure environment can be created at graduation ceremonies by using new, available technologies.

THIS PRESENTATION: A POSSIBLE SOLUTION?

The expectations of students/graduates with regards to their ceremonies will also be discussed, as well as a short literature review on the Significance of Degrees, Awards and Qualifications in the Analysis of Higher Education Systems

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ARE STUDENTS CUSTOMERS OF UNIVERSITIES?

- Students studying at universities in England have been defined as customers by the government since the introduction of student tuition fees. This approach has been rejected by many educators.

- The student as-consumer (SAC) approach has been consolidated with the inclusion of students and universities under the UK Consumer Rights Act (2015).

- This study found that a consumer orientation mediated traditional relationship between learner identity, grade goal and academic performance, and that a higher consumer orientation was associated with lower academic performance.
(Louise Bunce, Amy Baird & Siân E. Jones (2017) The student-as-consumer approach in higher education and its effects on academic performance, Studies in Higher Education, 42:11)

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ARE STUDENTS CUSTOMERS OF UNIVERSITIES?

- A SAC approach may foster a culture whereby students seek to 'have a degree' rather than 'be learners'. Students who identify as consumers may have little interest in what is actually being taught and show reduced responsibility for producing their own knowledge.

- "The SAC model is a tit-for-tat exchange; rather than actively participating in knowledge creation." In this tit-for-tat exchange, students may feel entitled to results (e.g. grades, diplomas) for their inputs (e.g. effort, time, tuition), regardless of whether they meet a university's educational requirements.

- Paying money in exchange for a service has also been shown to create feelings of entitlement among students, which are associated with higher levels of complaining

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ARE STUDENTS CUSTOMERS OF UNIVERSITIES? THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

- In the administrative/support environment, it might be a different ball game

- **Prospective/current students, their parents, alumni should be treated as customers in the administrative /support environment of an University**

- **Relationship Marketing** is "preached" at most Universities*, but not "practiced" enough
  *NWU Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences; School of Business Management

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Relationship Marketing

Your most valuable currency

The creation and preservation of

- **lasting/valuable relationships** *between*
- **service providers (Universities)** *and*
- **customers (students/graduates/alumni)**

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Partner

Advocate

Supporter

Customer

Prospect

WHY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT AND NOT CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM)?

- **CRM is a broad-based concept (narrow/broad & hard/soft)**
- **CRM can be confusing (practices, strategies, technologies, systems)**

- CEM is considered as a critical improvement to CRM
- CEM enables organisations to develop a 360° view of customers
- CEM is thus more pro-active and includes the customers' needs
- CEM is the management of the *touch zones* of customer/client/student interactions that takes place during the customer life cycle

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RELATED TERMINOLOGY

- **Service quality** is a shift from product quality /TQM to include quality of services

- **Student satisfaction** is a summative emotional reaction that varies in intensity and is formed by repeated/overlapping positive experiences on campus

- **Loyalty** is being faithful and committed, and is the result of customer satisfaction. It will lead to positive   word-of-mouth referrals

- **Customer retention** refers to the activities companies/organisations take to reduce the number of customer defections

- **<u>Customer delight</u>** is a positive emotional response to surprisingly high levels of performance. A high level of delight or approval will not just become a logical preference, but create an emotional attachment with the supplier. It can therefore be considered as the highest level of customer satisfaction and the ideal to strive for. A delighted customer will more likely make use of repeated and positive word-of-mouth referrals than a moderately satisfied customer.

- **Trust** is the belief that the other involved party will act in a dependable, sincere and truthful manner, keeping both parties' best interest in mind at all times. Trust is a part of one's trustworthiness (reputation for fairness and satisfaction with outcomes) and compassion (caring and sacrifice for one's partner).

- **Bonding** is the aspects of a   commercial relationship that lead to the involved   parties acting in an interrelated way towards   a mutually-beneficial goal

- **Brand identification** is the   sense of belonging to and identification with a university. Studies have identified academic and social experience as two key processes and memorable outcomes of attending a university.

- **<u>Shared values</u>** is the foundation of business relationships. It aims to create mutually-agreed value systems through positive experiences. This does not imply the provision of entertainment or being more creative, but adding real and lasting value to customers

- **<u>Customer lifetime value</u>** is the period of time that a company can reasonably expect someone to be a customer. This is achieved by strategies focusing on retaining targeted customers, and the acknowledgement that companies need to manage relationships with stakeholders

WHY @ GRADUATION?

- You have a captive audience

- You are in control of the situation:
    - The venue
    - Ceremony protocol, procedures and dress code (the "look & feel")
   - Degree certificate

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

There is a radical increase in fraudulent activities / fake degree certificates:

- Improved technology (scanning, printing and software capabilities)

- Increase in unemployment and shifts in the labour market, requiring more skilled workers and managers; as well as population growth

- The conferment of degrees has become a mass phenomenon.

- A moral degeneration (bad examples set by leaders; no consequences)

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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT AND GRADUATION

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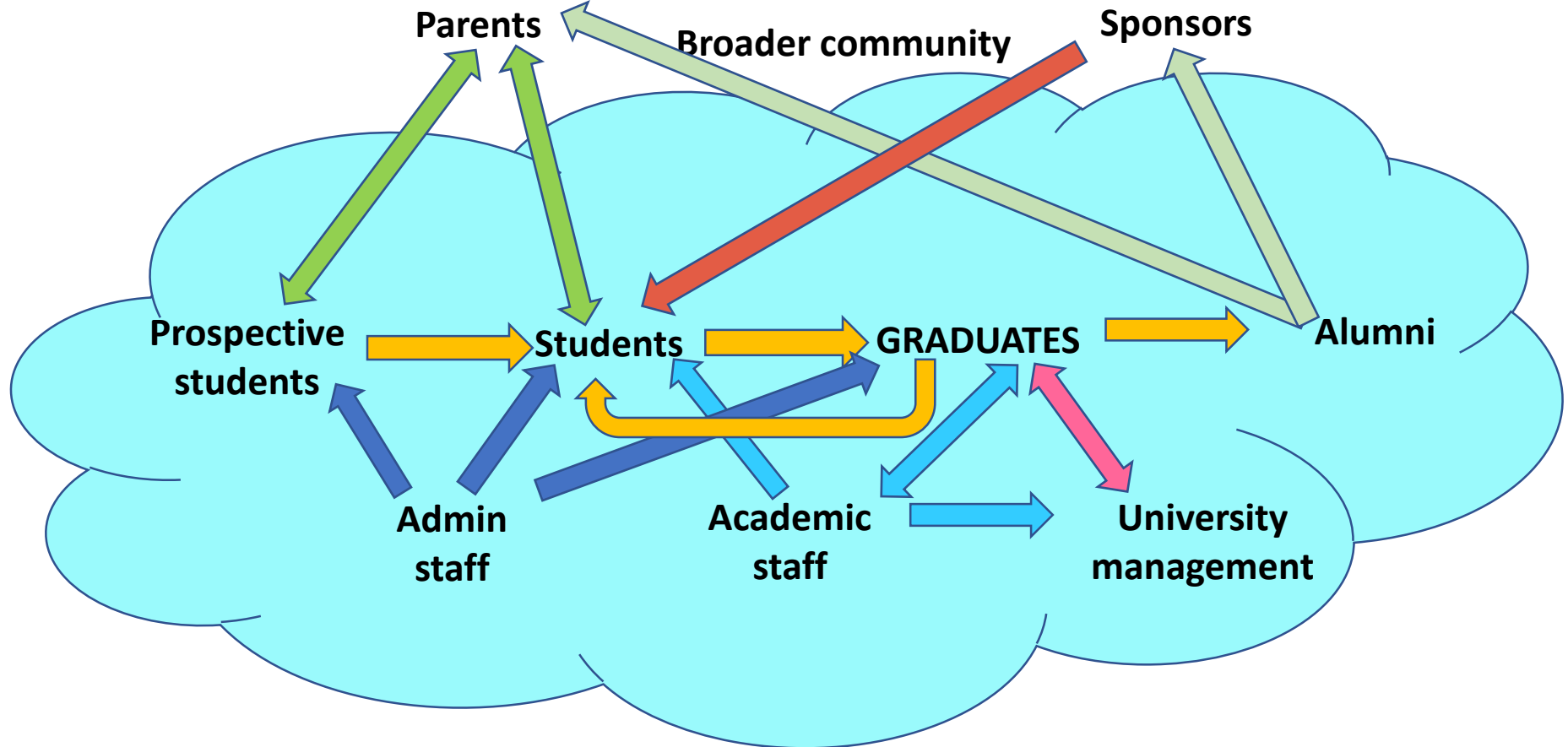
People are buying fake degrees now more than ever

Linda Ronnie and Suki Goodman

There are ways to spot people with fake qualifications, and SA is actually ahead of the rest of the world in some ways.

Fake credentials have become a global problem. The National Student Clearinghouse, a US NGO that offers a degree verification service, reports that falsified academic credentials are a serious, prevalent and ever-increasing problem. In 2015 the New York Times reported on a billion-dollar industry consisting of **3,300 "diploma mills"**. These were fake universities that sold certificates for all levels of degrees, worldwide.

This is made easier by the availability of sophisticated technology. Higher education is highly sought-after and provides a measure of status and improved job prospects. So some working professionals may not be able to resist the temptation of adding or altering a qualification on their CVs.

Fake credentials are becoming more common in South Africa. In 2018, the country saw a sharp increase in the number of fraudulent qualifications reported to regulatory bodies such as the South African Qualifications Authority. Higher Education Minister Naledi Pandor revealed that the number of reported cases spiked from just 37 in 2011/12 to 982 in the 2017/18 financial year.

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This only represents the number of fake credentials reported. The real number may be much higher. This poses a serious problem for universities and employers. It undermines their legitimacy and reputation and robs honest candidates of opportunities for further education or employment.

Implications

For universities, fake qualifications pose a **reputational risk** – within other academic institutions and in the workplace. If postgraduate students manage to gain entry on a falsified transcript, their performance will be below standard. Future applicants from that university may be disadvantaged by association.

This also poses a risk to university selection criteria data and policy, as it damages the validity of using prior academic records as a predictor of success.

For example, in 2012 it was discovered that Scott Thompson, the then CEO of Yahoo, had not earned the computer science degree he claimed. Instead, he had a degree in accounting. Herbalife's CEO, Gregory Probert, was forced to resign in 2008 after it emerged that he did not have the MBA he claimed to.

Linda Ronnie, Associate Professor, *University of Cape Town* and Suki Goodman, Associate professor, *University of Cape Town*

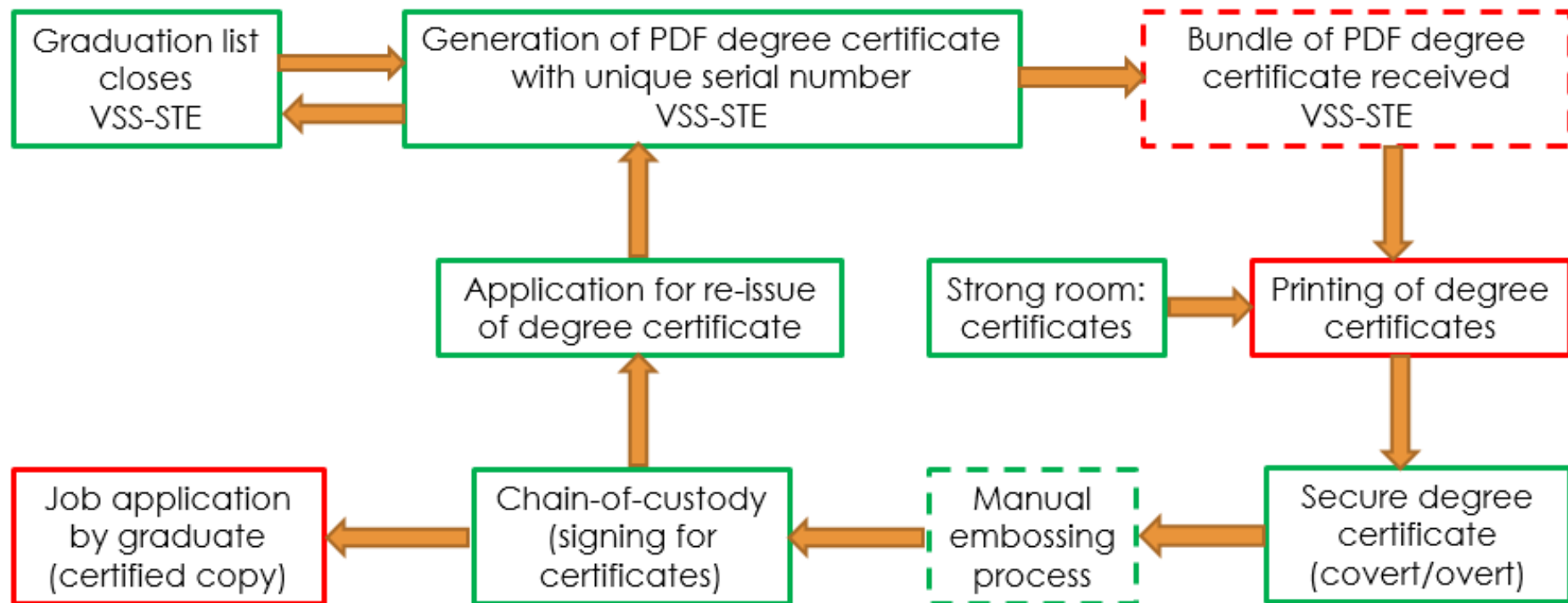# GRADUATION CEREMONIES – THE IDEAL OPPORTUNITY!
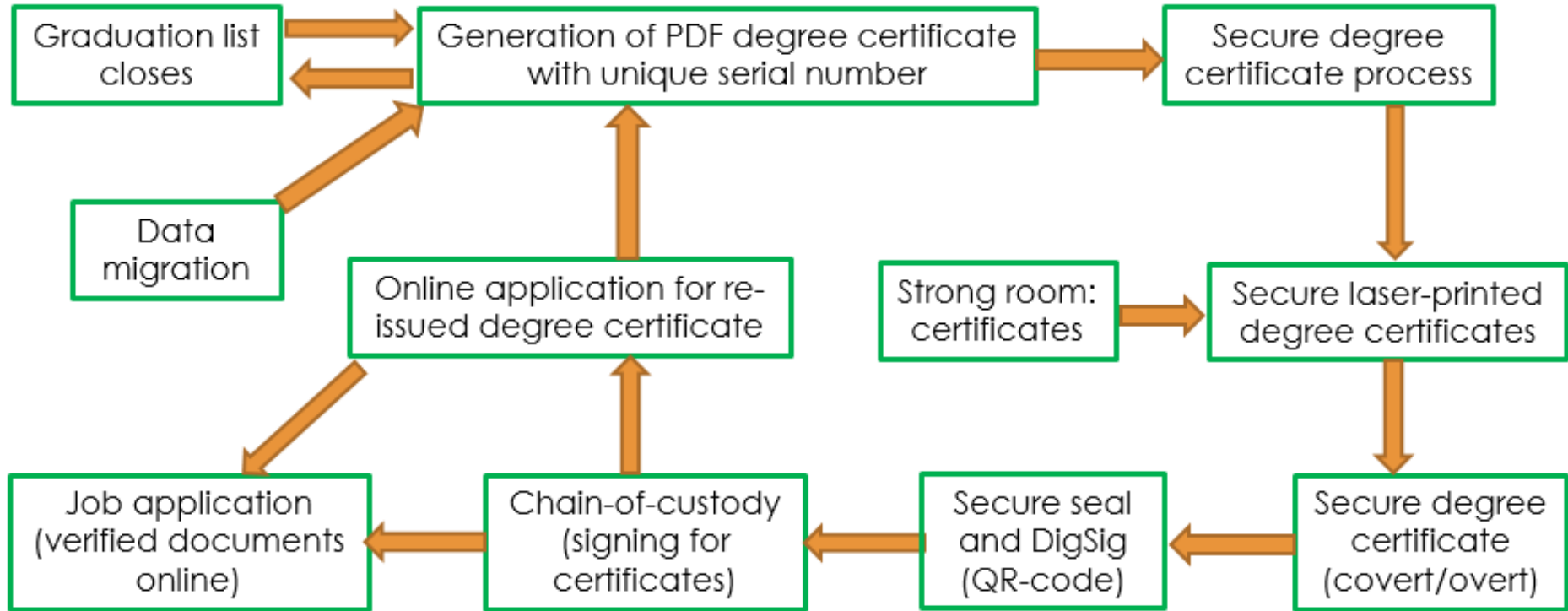
SOME FAKE DEGREE CERTIFICATES WE SPOTTED

SECURE DEGREE CERTIFICATION: THE PROBLEM

▶ Gap in secure printing life cycle

SECURE DEGREE CERTIFICATION: THE SOLUTION

Flow diagram:

- Graduation list closes → Generation of PDF degree certificate with unique serial number (bidirectional)
- Data migration → Generation of PDF degree certificate with unique serial number
- Generation of PDF degree certificate with unique serial number → Secure degree certificate process
- Secure degree certificate process → Secure laser-printed degree certificates
- Strong room: certificates → Secure laser-printed degree certificates
- Secure laser-printed degree certificates → Secure degree certificate (covert/overt)
- Secure degree certificate (covert/overt) → Secure seal and DigSig (QR-code)
- Secure seal and DigSig (QR-code) → Chain-of-custody (signing for certificates)
- Chain-of-custody (signing for certificates) → Job application (verified documents online)
- Chain-of-custody (signing for certificates) → Online application for re-issued degree certificate
- Online application for re-issued degree certificate → Generation of PDF degree certificate with unique serial number
- Online application for re-issued degree certificate → Job application (verified documents online)

WHAT DOES A GRADUATE EXPECT?

Graduation ceremonies must be:

- **Once-in-a-lifetime rewarding and significant experience**

- **Value-for-money / a good return on investment**

- **A motivational tool**
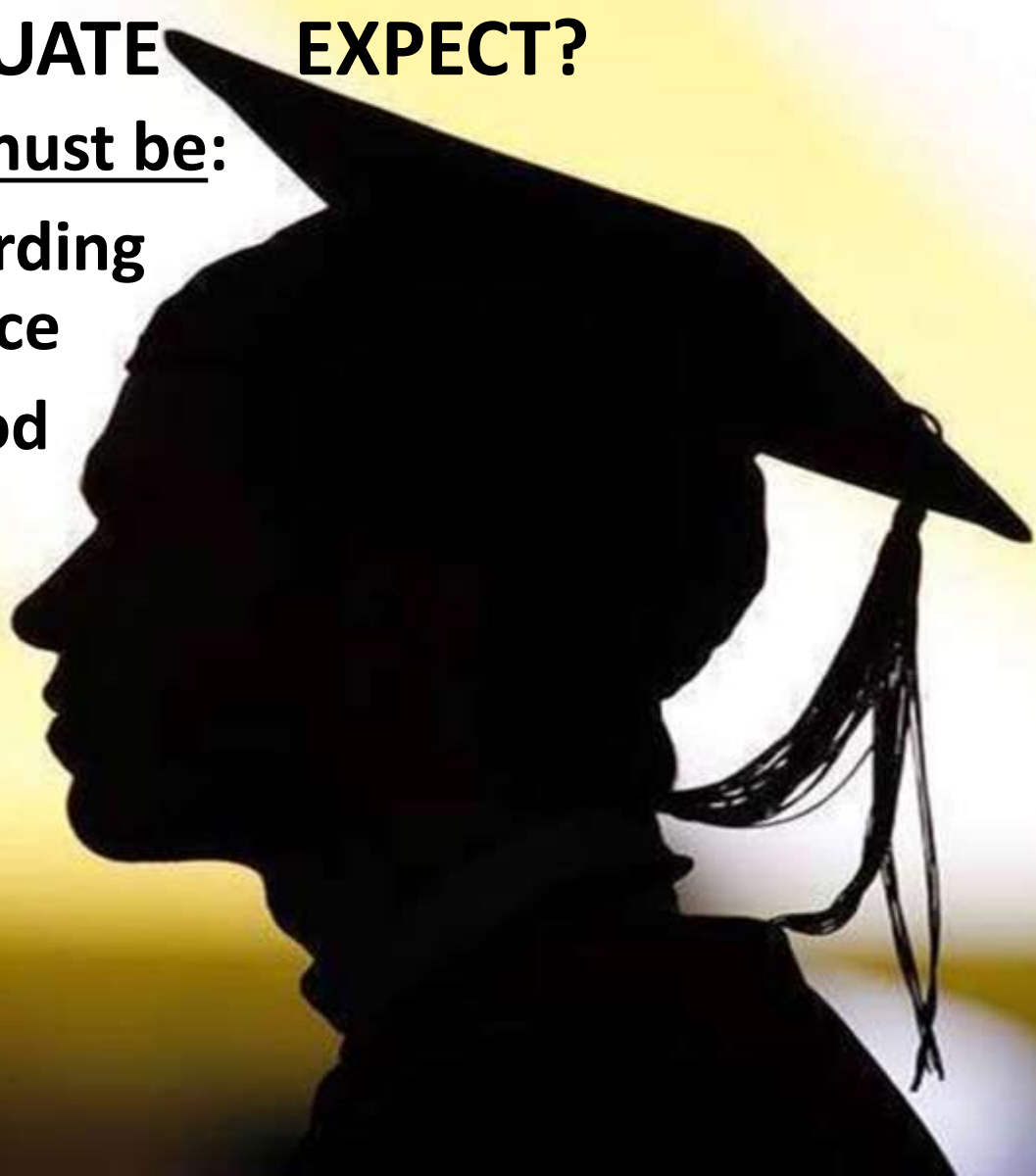
WHAT DOES A GRADUATE   EXPECT?

Degree certificates must have

- **Authenticity (fraud-proof)**
- **Quality/Professional look**
- **Clear brand identification**
- **Reputation confirmation**

Markers of 'Authentic Place'? The Significance of Degrees, Awards and Qualifications in the Analysis of Higher Education Systems (*Wright, PG*)

- **The long-established authority of universities to confer degrees** – at their discretion and on particular individuals – **is a striking phenomenon both because of its relatively unchallengeable status and its seeming 'naturalness'**. It is a process without obvious parallel elsewhere in developed societies: it results in a few organisations selectively allocating symbolic meanings which may entail major, lifelong consequences for the status and material circumstances of their recipients.

The Significance of Degrees, Awards and Qualifications in the Analysis of Higher Education Systems (*Wright, PG*)

- **Degree conferment results in large-scale, selective 'labelling' (or status allocation) which assumes great importance within a higher education system**; and, in consequence, provides a central component of the contribution of higher education to its wider social environment (Degree conferment naturally requires and depends on assessment).

- The **awards** themselves can serve as **rich and informative** (yet often coded) indicators of the relationship between Universities and graduates

The Significance of Degrees, Awards and Qualifications in the Analysis of Higher Education Systems (*Wright, PG*)

- It has become almost a truism to note that **HE qualifications govern the placement of individuals in the labour market, affect their chances of subsequent advancement and, in addition to influencing their direct financial rewards and working conditions, also condition their general career prospects**.

IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AT GRADUATION CEREMONIES

Preserving and maintaining the dignity and long-standing traditions/conventions of the ceremony

Create and improve aspects of the ceremony that will enhance the customer experience of graduates

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IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AT GRADUATION CEREMONIES

- **Academic attire/dress**
- **Protocol and procedures**
- **Names of degrees**

- **Better communications**
- **Enhanced services**
- **Improved security**

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CREATING A SECURE GRADUATION PROCESS

Secure degree certificates

- Use controlled secure paper
- Identify and implement covert and overt security features

  - Watermark
  - Audit numbering
  - Validate numbering
  - Wallpaper controlled hologram
  - Hologram overprint with logo

Chain-of-custody process

Secure certification process

- Secure storage (strong room)
- Secure digital printing with
  - Encrypted electronic secure signatures
  - Chip and pin card pin authorisation
  - Full audit report log of user's key activities

# CREATING A SECURE GRADUATION PROCESS

Secure degree certificates

- Secure graphics technique (micro-numismatic design/ "Toner Secure")
- Invisible Ultra-violet ink
- Thermochromic ink (heat reactive)
- Micro text
- Heat reactive spot
- Secure high-tech embossing

Chain-of-custody process

Secure certification process

- Issuing and courier of certificates
- Fool-proof verification process
  - Online (eModule)
  - For employment companies
  - QR-codes (SmartVerify)
- Secure/ user-friendly re-issuing of certificates

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advanced secure
TECHNOLOGIES

DIGITAL CERTIFICATE SYSTEM
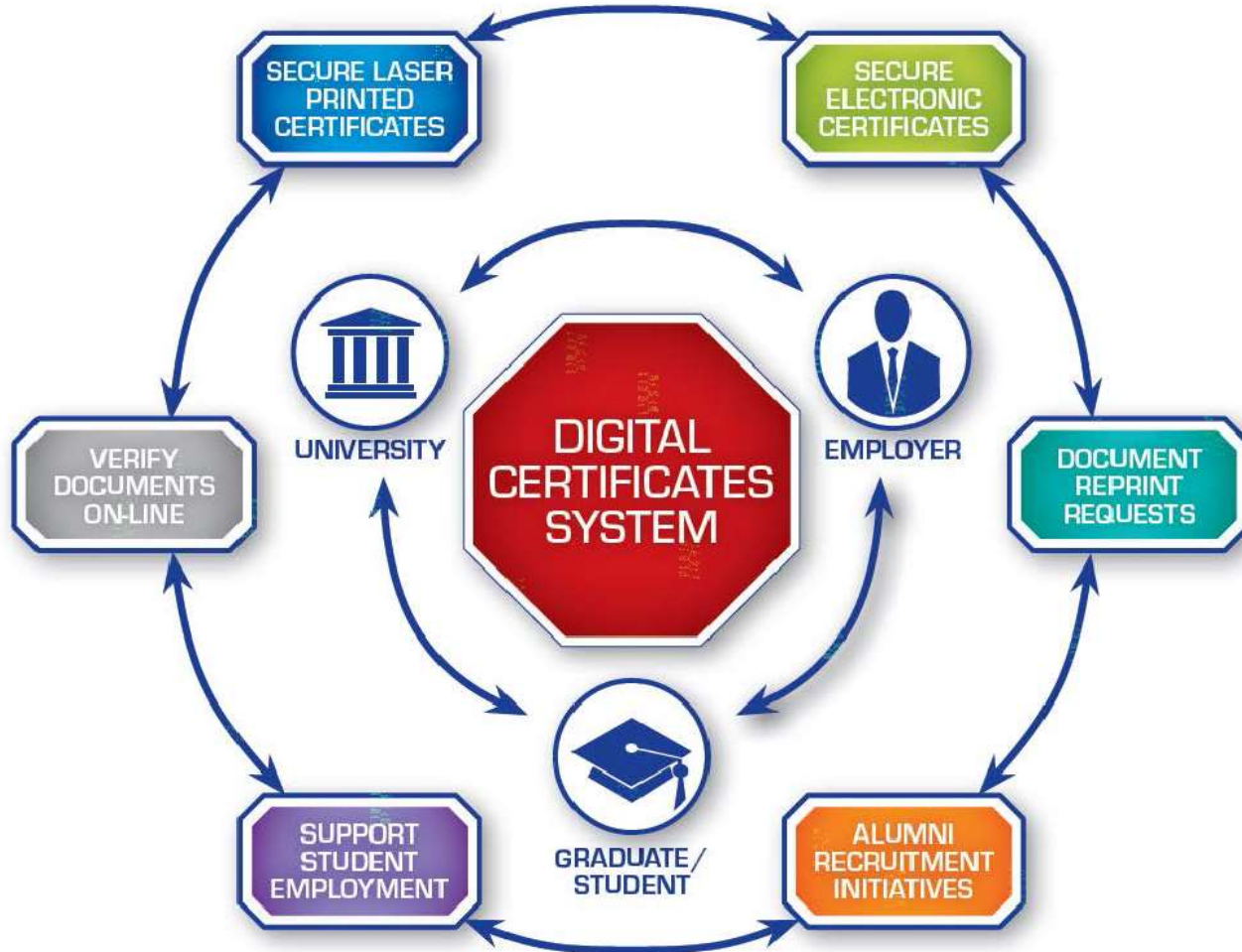
PROF GORDON ZIDE'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS

- Without administrative staff, Universities would collapse
  - ***With you, your Universities can grow and thrive***
- Promote professional standards
  - ***Treat students as customers and win them over***
- He challenged us to:
  - Be consistent and act with integrity
  - Be firm but fair
  - Listen to others
- Only you can make a difference!

PROPOSAL/WAY AHEAD?

That we establish a forum for all the departments at SA Universities responsible for the organising of graduations/ceremonies to:

- Share best practices in terms of
    - Security of degree certificates, transcripts and other documents
    - The appropriate use of technology
    - Protocols, academic attire and procedures

- Align/coordinate research project
  to determine the needs of
  graduates and other stakeholders

- Participate in the annual AAA conference
  and present more papers about this
  important part of our environment

Thank you