

**F.W. de Klerk; Jepson Leadership Forum 2010-11: Former president of South Africa discusses role of leadership in ending apartheid and managing change
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Kati Miller, '10, can point to the moment her introductory leadership studies class this semester came to life. She was sitting in Jepson Alumni Center listening to a lecture by F.W. de Klerk, who as president of South Africa freed Nelson Mandela and was instrumental in bringing apartheid to a peaceful end. The former South African president was on campus in February as part of [The Jepson Leadership Forum](#)'s 2010-11 season on global leadership and international challenges.

"I went home and immediately emailed my professor. It was a 'wait, this stuff is real!' moment," said Miller, who is now considering majoring in leadership studies. "Hearing a powerful, influential leader of one the largest governmental reforms of the past century discuss the very things that I have studied in class was eye-opening."

His lecture focused on the role of leadership during South Africa's transition, leading change and characteristics of leaders. He also touched on recent events in the Middle East.

"Leadership is a tough business," de Klerk told the packed room that included students, faculty, staff, alumni and members of the community, adding that the "challenges of tomorrow will require strong, decisive leaders of integrity."

Leaders must make value-based decisions, accept the need for real change and clearly communicate an attainable vision, said de Klerk, who shares the Nobel Peace Prize with Mandela.

"Resistance to change... is deeply ingrained in all of us. Its one thing to accept that you must change, but very often companies, countries and individuals who know they must change bluff themselves and pretend to change. They think of new ways to do the wrong thing better."

It is imperative that leaders accept the need to take calculated risks at times and have the courage to do so, he said. "In South Africa we realized that the greatest risk would be to do nothing at all."

He added that leaders must also have a good sense of timing, persevere, and accept that change is a "never-ending business."

"Leaders must accept that there is no end to change and must plan for their own departure. As soon as one has achieved one's transformation objective, one must start the process all over again. In a world in which change is accelerating, fundamental and unpredictable, there is no respite or time to rest on one's laurels."