



VICE CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS DURING THE VIRTUAL 63RD GRADUATION CEREMONY ON FRIDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 8.00AM.

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Prof. Geroge Magoha,
The Chancellor of the University of n Nairobi, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi,
Chair of Council, Prof. Julia Ojiambo,
The Chairman of Alumni Association, Mr. Isaac Awuondo.
The graduating class of 2020 and their families,
Members of the University community,
The Media,
Our online audience,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be part of this august convocation which is actually the first one during my tenure as the Vice Chancellor and also the first one to be done virtually in the history of the University of Nairobi.

Allow me from the onset to congratulate all graduands of class 2020 for this wonderful accomplishment.

You the graduands and the staff have displayed the indomitable spirit of the university of Nairobi. The spirit of resilience and the commitment in pursuit of excellence. Even in the midst of ravaging effects of the

ongoing Covid-19 pandemic you did not falter. You remained steadfast until the mission has been accomplished. I salute you!

We thank your parents, your guardians, sponsors and lecturers for guiding and supporting you in your quest for knowledge, your pursuit of a fulfilling career and your dreams for a better life in future.

Some of you had to go through virtual classes and virtual exams to complete their programs. The use of online platforms has become an integral part of our work culture and moving into the future we shall use the blended approach in delivery of programs.

Madam Chancellor,

We are very pleased to graduate 2,851 graduands, comprising of 54 candidates who have qualified to be awarded PhDs, 370 Master degree awards, 15 post graduate Diploma, 2,045 Bachelor degree and 367 Diploma awards. 63% are male and 47% are female.

Even as we release these graduates to the market, the issues of unemployment and limited career opportunities for graduates continue to be a big concern for all the stakeholders. Our graduates have been equipped with relevant skills and we believe they are competent and globally competitive. I urge the graduands to look for opportunities beyond their discipline and comfort. Be innovative and adventurous. Seize every opportunity that comes your way. Tackle the challenges that you encounter and try to solve people's problems -for there-in lies the opportunity for innovation and success.

I want to urge our staff and students to move away from their comfort zones. The University is a disruptive system and a place for restless people. It is the restless people who can find solutions for our problems today and in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since I took over the office, I have devoted my time in designing the reform path. The University needs to be sustainable financially in order to be impactful. Like other public Universities, we are currently experiencing acute budgetary deficits and cash flow challenges due to low capitation.

The perennial under-capitation of public universities arises from the failure of the current funding model, Differentiated Unit Cost (DUC), to address the unique needs of individual universities. This is a matter that we have brought to the attention of the government.

We will continue to petition the government through the Ministry of Education to review the DUC model because it is based on wrong assumptions.

Public Universities like the University of Nairobi are public goods that heavily rely on capitation from the exchequer to deliver their mandate. We have a moral duty to support the government and the people of

Kenya like we have recently worked well with the government during Covid-19 and in the control of desert locusts.

I believe that with proper consultations and engagement, even other difficult issues like the just concluded revenue sharing formula could have been managed better without allowing it to be protracted and divisive.

Madam Chancellor,

We have started implementing the 5 point reform agenda that is consistent with our vision for **"A vibrant and Sustainable University"**

A University benefiting society,

A University providing highest quality learning and teaching for students;

A University leading in research and innovation,

A University with high concentration of talent: attracting, growing, supporting and recognizing talent among students and staff.

My first task has been to open the University space for discourses and allow staff to think critically and express themselves freely. We shall not stifle alternative voices so long as they are constructive.

The University is the place where people should think radically, feel restless and yearn for change. We shall open new grounds for change and find ways of carrying everybody along.

The expected outcomes of my reform agenda is to make the University of Nairobi:

- The destination of choice for outstanding local and international students, scholars, innovators and industry,
- The preferred knowledge partner for governments on ideas, solutions, critique and policy directions,
- The trusted resource in thought leadership, public engagement with research and teaching, and impact on the society culturally, socially and economically.

In pursuit of the reform agenda, we shall be guided by the following principles:

- Alignment to the core mandate of the University
- Efficiency and accountability
- Impact
- Sustainability
- Value for money

Madam Chancellor,

You recall that in 2016, you constituted a visitation panel of eminent persons who rightly identified that some of the key constraints impeding institutional planning and efficient management of the University were lack of a responsive governance structure and the limited use of data in management and decision making.

To address the foregoing; my agenda number 1 is to invest in setting up comprehensive and integrated data management system to revolutionize how decisions are made, optimize deployment of resources and improve overall systemic outputs.

We have started to leverage on verifiable data to lower decision turnaround time, to seize time-sensitive opportunities, to make better predictions and to improve planning and implementation of projects and programs.

I will continue to reengineer our business processes and adopt the use of technology in:

- Curriculum content delivery
- Human resource management
- Financial and research grants management
- Student management including the administration of exams and time tabling .

On Governance

We all agree that University has over the years grown in size and complexity. To stay in step with the needs of the university, I believe that there is a compelling need to refresh our management, administrative, oversight and governance structures. This will entail:

- Identification and elimination of redundant and overlapping systems, processes, structures and reporting centers.
 - Creating an In-built effective flow of power, resources, responsibility and accountability to the lowest levels
 - Institutionalization of efficient decision making, policy formulation and implementation at every level

On curricula reforms -

We have embarked on the review of all the courses offered at the University; We have begun to assess the cost of their implementation and to evaluate their relevance to the needs of the industry, positioning and aligning programs to the market trends, impacts on society and their sustainability.

We are going to systematically weed out redundant and overlapping courses and programs. We are considering the review of fees structure to be in tandem with the cost of program delivery. The last time we reviewed our fee structure was along time ago in the year 1998 and the current fees charged are not realistic and are under priced.

Additionally, we will interrogate the depth of content coverage in the delivery of curricula, and inculcate appropriate practical skills

We shall integrate industry in the teaching and research at the University.

We intend to review our research exploits to encourage vertical progression in pursuit of new knowledge, standardize and laterally integrate the curricula with entrepreneurial spirit and culture.

We are going to recalibrate our metrics of world class-talent and make deliberate efforts in growing the internationalization of the University. Towards this end the Senate has approved policies for double degree and joint degree programs at the University of Nairobi.

Madam Chancellor,

The university has been operating under a huge financial deficit arising from insufficient capitation and hemorrhage of revenue occasioned by weak internal controls.

Weak internal systems and processes continue to cause a huge drain to the resources and it is prudent to reduce or eliminate identified 'leakages' and general wastage of financial resources.

It is important for you to know that I have inherited a whopping Ksh.9 billion debt in form of pending bills. A huge portion of it constitute of unremitted statutory deductions owed to government agencies and staff welfare organizations.

I can imagine many of you will not admire to be in my shoes.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have already set in motion the financial reforms geared towards institutionalizing prudent financial management and controls to put the University back on to a positive financial health and path to sustainability.

Specifically, the financial reform agenda will ensure:

1. Participatory budget formulation and management mechanisms
2. Efficient fiscal and budgetary discipline
3. Enhanced financial prudence
4. Re-engineered grants management to effectively support research
5. Commercialization of intangible assets

The financial reforms though very painful at the moment, they have started to bear fruits in the short term and I believe in the long term we shall be back on our feet.

We have already witnessed improved discipline in planning, budget implementation and financial controls which have given us quick wins with desirable impacts:

We have closed over 70 bank accounts that are going to save the University approximately Kshs 180 Million per year from bank charges for running and maintaining these bank accounts.

We have also consolidated our collection accounts to only two (Module 1 and Module 1), and Closed all overlapping accounts and retained only 1 Disbursement Account per college.

In addition, we are in the process of replacing cash transactions with online transactions .We have introduced VISA Card payments for research Grants and petty cash disbursements and streamlined MPESA Services.

The University has also closed a number of loss making Income Generation Accounts (IGAs) which have outlived their usefulness and turned into loss making activities, draining our meager resources. Overall, we target to close down 229 IGAs and those spared must remain financially viable and sound.

Madam Chancellor,

There is need to align staffing to workloads to enhance productivity.

There is widespread disparity in workload distribution with regard to teaching, administrative responsibility; research and community outreach such that in some units, staff are overloaded while others are under loaded often with overlapping responsibilities.

Secondly, there are teaching units where staff may teach only self-sponsored students, draw a salary and also claim Direct Service Provider (DSP) payment leading to Double Payments.

My administration will ensure that teaching workloads are distributed equitably and rationalized regardless of the module to ensure every staff attains adequate and equitable loading.

To motivate staff through fair, objective and timely promotions , we have developed and approved guidelines for employment and promotion of academic staff.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The University has two (2) Satellite Campuses and twelve (12) extramural centres-which have overlapping functions and substantial infrastructural and staff costs. These costs are in form of rents and rates, travel and subsistence.

\We have terminated leases and exited all extra-mural centres. We have also suspended travel of lecturers to satellite campuses, in favour of common online teaching of the courses with express permission from the Vice Chancellor for those who must travel.

We shall review payment of allowances and confine payment of respective allowances to deserving staff only in accordance with the registered Collective Bargain Agreements and SRC approved rates. We are also going to reform the procurement system to make it accountable and efficient.

My Agenda number 5- is on People.

The people include University students, faculty, staff and stakeholders. The people are the foundation of success of the University. The university is proactively taking deliberate steps to brand it self and to add value to its staff and students.

This reform agenda aims to:

- Identify and celebrate talents and achievements,
- Exploit intangible assets through commercialization and to promote research and technology transfer ecosystem,
- Ensure the University attracts, recruits, supports and retains outstanding staff and students
- Provide a diverse, inclusive, fair and open work environment where people give their best to their work and feel valued.

This University of Nairobi has some of the best brains but sometimes knowingly or unknowingly , we have extinguished their hopes by expelling them. We have reflected deeply on this matter and decided to support and give hope to our students. We want give them a fresh start and support them to overcome their weaknesses.

In this regard, we have developed the student progression policy to help us in monitoring academic performance of students. We have also developed the policy on pardon to help us in reforming and reintegrating wayward students in line with our corporate value of **CARE** and the need to get the best out of our talented students.

My administration has started developing policies and creation of an environment where people feel appreciated and are motivated.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The University is celebrating 50 years since its inception in 1 July 1970. We have achieved a lot and made significant contributions in Industry, public service and in the community. Even as we celebrate our achievements, we must also reflect on our shortcomings and build on the lessons learned for a better future. The Climax of UoN at 50 celebrations will be during our December graduation.

Let me take the opportunity to invite all stakeholders and the Alumni to join us in the commemoration the 50th anniversary. There will be many activities and events lined up between now and next year June 2021 to create awareness about the UoN brand and to evoke nostalgic experiences about the University of Nairobi and its partners.

Finally,

Let me thank all the stakeholders and partners who have made it possible for us to broadcast this virtual graduation ceremony to our audience wherever they are in all parts of the world. My appreciation goes to the standard media group and other Media houses , the Microsoft for sponsoring us with Microsoft Teams Live Platform and the University of Nairobi graduation team headed by Professor Ogeng'o. Thank you and God bless you.

