

Mount Kenya University



SPEECH

BY

**PROF. SIMON N. GICHARU, CBS
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

DURING

**11TH GRADUATION CEREMONY
OF MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY
ON**

FRIDAY, 9TH DECEMBER, 2016

AT

MKU HAPPY VALLEY GROUNDS, THIKA

Salutation

- Guest Speaker Professor George Magoha, EBS, MBS, Chairman, Medical Practitioners and Dentists Board and Chairman, Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC),
- Prof. Victoria Wulsin, Chancellor, Mount Kenya University,
- Madam Jane Nyutu, Co-Founder of Mount Kenya University,
- Members of the University Board of Directors,
- Prof. Grace N. Njoroge, Chairman and Members of the University Council,
- Honorable Cabinet Secretaries present,
- Honorable Principal Secretaries present,
- Honorable Members of Parliament present,
- Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners present,
- Honorable National and County Government leaders present,

- Members of Management Board and Senate,
- Members of the Staff,
- Graduands and Students,
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome note

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is yet another graduation ceremony at MKU; a day that we as the Board of Directors (BOD) consider a vital point in time for some reflection. This is because graduation ceremonies always take us down the memory lane that stretches back to 20 years. These have been 20 years of continuous improvement and of University's growth from strength to strength. We thus do not take anyone who is here today for granted for this is what is required to make the MKU history.

Mandate of the Board of Directors of the University

Ladies and gentlemen;

One mandate of the University Board of Directors is to raise funds for the benefit of the University. The unwavering commitment of the University Board of Directors to execute its mandate has continuously been confirmed since the establishment of Mount Kenya University on 30th May, 2008. Evidence to this is in the reports of statutory inspections and audits of the University academic resources and quality management systems by the relevant regulatory bodies including the Commission for University Education, CUE. For example, as some of you are aware, the Commission granted full accreditation status to Nairobi, Kitale, Kakamega, Eldoret, Kisii and Lodwar campuses last year, 2015. Mombasa, MKU Towers (Nairobi), Nakuru campuses were granted accreditation by the former Commission for Higher Education (CHE) in 2010.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to share with you the findings in the exit report on the Institutional quality audit that was conducted by the Commission for University ⁴

Education (CUE) at Thika Campus between 15th and 17th November, 2016;

According to the Commission for University Education (CUE) Exit report:

- “The University is chartered, and supplements government efforts to provide education and equip learners with competence to play a significant nation building role.
- The University has provided conducive environment and resources to enable student(s) acquire desired academic goals.
- The University graduates have been enrolled in professional bodies successfully, an example being pharmacy graduates that have been registered with Kenya Pharmacy and Poisons Board.
- The University graduates secure jobs competitively in various sectors.

- The University carries out tracer studies on the employability of its graduates.
- The University offers opportunities of employment to their Alumni, an indicator of confidence in the training the University offers.
- The University engages in Community Outreach activities such as tree planting, job creation to the local community and town clean-up activities.
- The University developed a ten-year strategic plan in 2008 which has been reviewed at intervals and adjusted appropriately to accommodate emergent development ideas.
- The University has a functional financial management operating system in place.
- There is diversity of academic programmes on offer at the University, geared towards realization of Kenya vision 2030. Each programme has a qualified Programme Leader.
- The University has maximized on utilization of land by opting for high rise buildings for teaching,

administration and hostels. Newer and upcoming buildings cater for persons with physical disabilities as they are fitted with lifts. The buildings are well lit and ventilated. There is an attractive landscaping at the Main Campus. The University visibility is prominent due to legible signage along the road and atop the towers visible from afar. The internal signage for directions are distinctly placed.

- Physical facilities have been upgraded from the time the University obtained the charter.
- The Directorate of Research, Grants and Endowment has developed policies and guidelines governing research in the University.
- The University has undertaken collaborative newborn support project in Bungoma, and Lake Victoria Islands MalSchistoHel, a health research project to the community.
- The University has adequate land for future expansion.
- The University has an excellent anatomy laboratory. 7

- There are gazebos (study villas) around the compound with Wi-Fi for use by the students/student groups.
- Access to the University is controlled, with security checks at the entrances. In addition, the University has armed security stationed at the entry points. Sensitive installations like computer laboratories, library and the Chancellor's Tower are equipped with CCTV surveillance. There are multiple exits from the University compound, convenient during any possible emergencies. The University community has a footbridge linking two compounds separated by General Kago Road.
- The University has adequate water storage facilities with a total capacity of about 180,000 litres and adequate, assorted firefighting resources at different vantage locations, in addition to MoU with County Government for support in case of an emergency.
- The University has adequate outdoor recreational facilities such as football pitches, rugby and

basketball courts, swimming pool, and indoor facilities such as gymnasium.

- Students have functional students' council body with a governing council of 9 (nine) members and
- The University has qualified competent administrative staff.”

Ladies and gentlemen, the aforesaid achievements contained in the CUE Exit Report would not have been possible without teamwork. To this end, the Board of Directors is indebted to the University Council, Senate, Management Board, staff and students for working as a team. The Board of Directors also appreciates the support of our partners for making it possible to create synergy necessary for effective implementation of the University mission. The Board is grateful to parents and guardians who serve as sponsors of our students because without their financial support, it would not have been possible to attain the aforementioned achievements.

MKU's Partnerships-oriented Development Model

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we mark the 20 years of our journey as a university, we note one reality; that we have greatly relied on partners every step of this journey. These partners are very useful to us for they provide vital feedback in our journey. We therefore appreciate all accreditation and regulatory bodies including the Commission for University Education and especially those who have been with us since the inception for in indeed their continuous inspections do assist in strengthening our programmes and systems to be more and more dependable. To this end, on behalf of the BOD, I wish to promise that we shall continue to do all that is possible to make MKU the preferred university of choice for all.

Allow me to appreciate the recent recognition and honour bestowed upon me by the International University of Management of Namibia in September this year who awarded me with an Honorary Professorship.

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As I mentioned during the awarding ceremony in Namibia, I dedicated my award to all students in private universities in Africa.

As MKU grows, we as the members of the BOD also want to see our alumni grow. We want to see them in the best professional associations, the best political circles, running the best businesses in the region and being at the centre of everything that is best. How are we going to make this possible? In addition to the qualified staff that we have attracted, as well as our state-of-the-art facilities and teaching and research equipment, we are working with various partners to enhance MKU's Graduate Enterprise Academy where today, we are challenging all students of MKU to exercise their best creativity and innovative spirit. We want to see more and more students and alumni moving from one investor to another displaying their innovations for commercialization rather than carrying their Curriculum Vitae(CVs) seeking for jobs. To achieve

this, we have engaged strategic partners both at university and individual levels. These include Dr. Lukas Njenga who is here with us today, as well as the University of West of Scotland, represented here today by a delegation of three members of the top management including their Vice Chancellor, Prof. Craig Mahoney.

No shortcut to wealth creation

We have set up graduate enterprise academy, a step towards realizing self-sufficiency. This is the direction the country needs to take. It is the panacea to joblessness. I want to challenge the graduands to think of creating jobs as opposed to the current situation where they all yearn for white-collar jobs. Relying on salary amounts to a life of challenges.

A professor friend of mine once told me that the poorest group of people are salary earners. That time I was

employed. His argument was that such fellows live a vicious cycle of poverty where a slight delay in the pay breeds untold anxiety and suffering. He challenged me to have a secondary source of income and while he may not be alive today, I can say this is the kind of advice we need. He said salary is the medicine of managing poverty but not its cure. If you are employed, treat that salary as capital seed.

Perhaps one of the trendiest terms today is *tenderpreneurship* given the government's deliberate move to set aside 30% of tenders for the youth and women. While I find no fault with this mode of earning a living, I caution against overreliance on it. The reality is such opportunities are few and I also want to discourage the youth from the allure of making quick money. I advise you to think long-term. Moreover, people should focus more on buying and selling.

The society is crying for more industries driven by the consumables. We need to encourage such industries to set base in Kenya or better still have our homegrown factories to set the pace. I say this because I know we are a country of immense possibilities.

Sh1 billion for engineering school

The management of MKU is in the process of setting up a premier school of engineering in the region. Towards this, we are committing at least Sh1 billion in the next 5 years starting next month.

A fully-fledged University in Kigali

I'm also delighted to announce that our Kigali campus in Rwanda is soon becoming an autonomous outfit. The objective is to have it develop its own culture and mobilise its own resources.

Towards a lean establishment

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As an institution, we have made significant strides in physical expansion. We are now undertaking consolidation of our programs with more attention to areas such as virtual education. We are keen to achieve a lean establishment that focuses more on research and quality training.

Finally, I want to commend the efforts of education CS Dr Fred Matiang'i and KNEC fraternity in rooting out cheating in national exams. The Cabinet Secretary has injected fresh energy and incomparable zeal that promises to bring about needed reforms.

Cheating in exams has far-reaching ramifications. For instance, universities are unable to know for sure whether they have been admitting qualified students into various programmes.

Universities have been accused of churning out half-baked

graduates yet they inherit learners who're already compromised by the virtue of grades they got, the multiplier effect of cheating in the various aspects of economy is enormous. Such people later become doctors, teachers, engineers, business people among others, people who are products of dishonesty. Can you expect them to be virtuous?

About a week ago, we saw the CS break away from the tradition and release KCPE results on the 1st day of December, something we have never seen in the history of this country. Dr Matiang'i has shown us the way. We can all be Matiang'is in our small way to reclaim the credibility of the academia.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the graduands, their parents, and sponsors for choosing to join MKU. As you graduands move out and join the world of work, I urge you all to be our good ambassadors.

Remember you will always be identified with your Alma Mater and therefore it is wise to take advantage of the opportunities that MKU continues to extend to you as our alumni. These include joining the alumni association as well as sharing your business ideas with our Graduate Enterprise Academy for nurturing.

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year full of prosperity. THANK YOU