



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

September 2020

# VarsityFocus

*A magazine of the University of Nairobi*



## UoN's 8<sup>th</sup> Vice-Chancellor



## UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

### **Our Vision**

A world-class university committed to scholarly excellence

### **Our Mission**

To provide quality university education and training and to embody the aspirations of the Kenyan people and the global community through creation, preservation, integration, transmission and utilization of knowledge.

### **Our Core Values**

- Freedom of thought and expression
- Excellence
- Care
- Good governance
- Innovativeness and creativity
- Partnership and teamwork



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UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

## VarsityFocus

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# The new virtual reality in university education

The education sector is reeling from the devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. All educational programmes have been affected due to the closure of educational institutions at all levels. The abrupt closure and indefinite suspension of on-campus teaching and learning by the government in March 2020 caught many universities and colleges flat-footed. Unable to adapt to the new environment where formal learning is only possible through technology, many institutions resigned themselves to their fate. However, institutions that had invested in developing their technological and human resource capacity, like the University of Nairobi, intensified the use of technology in order to continue with their programmes.

The shift to e-learning at UoN was quick but not without its fair share of challenges. The lack of internet coverage in some parts of the country and the cost of data for students were some of the problems that slowed down the transition to virtual learning. The University found a solution through engaging internet service providers like Telkom Kenya and Safaricom to provide reliable and affordable data for learning. The partnerships with Google, Cisco, and Microsoft in the provision of platforms for online learning and virtual meetings also helped the University to overcome the teething challenges.

At the beginning of August 2020, UoN had already conducted 10,467

online lectures and examinations and was poised to hold a virtual graduation ceremony on 25 September 2020. The University had also conducted a virtual inauguration of the new Vice-Chancellor in addition to holding many corporate events and webinars online. These are commendable milestones.

On the flip side, the transition to online education needs to take into consideration the plight of students from poor backgrounds and those living with disability to ensure that they are not marginalised. Education

huge investment involved in developing an academic to the level of a professor or a member of the non-teaching staff to top administrator level.

As the government directs more resources towards the fight against Covid-19, due consideration should be given to the ongoing research in our universities targeting the discovery of vaccines against infection by the coronavirus, drugs for treatment, and other long-term solutions to the pandemic. A budget boost for university research will

encourage innovation. A stimulus package, granted to universities to support their mission of knowledge development, will ultimately help the society to recover and emerge stronger in the post-Covid-19 period. This is what has been done in Australia and the United States to acknowledge the

value of research.

Going forward, the University of Nairobi Senate is very emphatic that the blended mode of delivery, involving online and face-to-face components, is the way to go. Virtual learning will no longer be a choice but an integral form of teaching and learning.

The *Varsity Focus* team is proud of the exemplary leadership provided by the University of Nairobi by adopting the use of technology to overcome the bottlenecks brought about by the closure of on-campus learning. Keep it up UoN.

**JOHN A.O.ORINDI, mCIPR  
EDITOR**

**“Going forward, the University of Nairobi Senate is very emphatic that the blended mode of delivery, involving online and face-to-face components, is the way to go”**

**- JOHN A.O.ORINDI, mCIPR -  
EDITOR**

is a tool for empowerment and for promoting equality and at no time should it contribute to the marginalisation of some members of the community.

Universities are also staring at massive losses in the wake of the pandemic. It is costly to keep idle staff on the payroll. The slowdown in international research and collaboration activities has also impacted negatively on research-related incomes. On a sad note, coronavirus infections have claimed the lives of renowned academics and some members of the non-teaching staff at the University. The departed colleagues will not be easy to replace given their experience as well as the



Prof. Stephen Gitahi Kiama,  
Vice-Chancellor

**E**ngraved on the University of Nairobi logo are the Latin words, '*Unitate et Labore*'. This means 'unite in labour'. As a community, we are bound to this call. During my installation as Vice-Chancellor on June 5, 2020, I appealed to all staff and students to make every effort to recalibrate our collective culture and attitudes towards teamwork, while upholding discipline and integrity; commitment to duty and scholarship; and efficiency and excellence.

Indeed, with your support and dedication of time and energies in honest service to our university, we are set to reach the promised land in building an enduring legacy of academic excellence. In faith, we will reclaim our glory and build an academic edifice that inspires fresh hope as we push the frontiers of university education locally, regionally, and internationally.

In my inaugural speech as Vice-Chancellor, I shared with you my considered thoughts on the path we need to embark on to advance the

## *Unitate et Labore!* **Unite in Labour for a better future**

University of Nairobi towards a trajectory of excellence.

Firstly, we will need to invest our energies and resources in setting up a comprehensive integrated data management system. This will entail re-engineering our business processes and embedding the use of technology in curriculum content delivery; human resource management; financial management; student management, including the administration of exams; research grants management; and timetabling among others.

Secondly, we will need to refresh our management, administrative, oversight, and governance structures. This will entail the elimination of redundant and overlapping systems, processes, structures, and reporting centres. It will also entail encouraging the flow of power, resources, responsibility, and accountability to the lowest levels. We will also need to institutionalise efficient decision and policy making and implementation at every level.

Thirdly, we will need to embark on the path of fit-for-purpose training. We shall relook at our university course offerings and assess the level to which they respond to market, industry, societal, and government needs as we also weed out redundant and overlapping courses and programmes.

The three proposed interventions will go hand in hand with financial reforms geared towards institutionalising prudent financial management and controls, efficient and participatory budget formulation mechanisms, and fiscal and budgetary discipline. It is my expectation that the proposed

financial reforms will lead to efficient payment and receipts management to check revenue leakage while enhancing the optimal utilisation of resources, reduction of wastage, and review of the financial viability of income generating units. These reforms will also cover the procurement functions so as to maximise efficiency, increase transparency and accountability, and deliver value for money. An efficient and optimal internal financial ecosystem will allow the university to move with confidence when mobilising for external resources because of the assurance that every cent received will, at the very least, render 100 percent of its value.

The net effect of these measures is an increased university value proposition, making us the destination of choice for both local and international students, scholars, innovators, and industry. We are also aiming at becoming the preferred knowledge partner for government as regards ideas, solutions, consultants, and policy direction.

I am confident that with the implementation of these measures, we will be true to our mission, 'To provide quality university education and training and to embody the aspirations of the Kenyan people and the global community through creation, preservation, integration, transmission and utilisation of knowledge'.

**STEPHEN GITAH KIAMA, Ph.D.**

**VICE-CHANCELLOR**





**From left:** Former vice-chancellors Prof. Crispus Kiamba, Prof. Francis Gichaga, and Prof. Peter Mbithi robe the new Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama, in readiness for installation.

## Prof. Stephen Kiama installed as UoN's 8<sup>th</sup> Vice-Chancellor

**P**rof. Stephen Gitahi Kiama was officially installed as the 8<sup>th</sup> Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nairobi at a colourful ceremony held in Taifa Hall, Main Campus, on June 5, 2020.

Prof. Kiama took over the mantle from Prof. Peter Mbithi, whose term ended in 2019.

In his inaugural speech, the new Vice-Chancellor promised to institute reforms and 'steer the ship through the turbulent waters'.

'The University of Nairobi faces tough times and we must act decisively. We

need to institute reforms. We need to institute financial reforms and governance reforms even as we make key decisions based on data. We need to re-engineer our business processes', he said.

The Vice-Chancellor promised to eradicate the internal wastage of resources. 'We shall trim our coat according to our size, even as we negotiate with the government to increase funding to the University', he added.

On internationalisation, the widely published professor of Veterinary

Medicine pledged to attract the best students from abroad as well as the best minds in academia. He promised to enhance staff and student exchange programmes with the best universities in the world. The VC further pledged to promote an environment that fosters intellectual curiosity and one that accommodates divergent views in a university that nurtures knowledge creation.

Commenting on the global coronavirus pandemic that has rendered brick and mortar classroom learning impossible, the Vice-

Chancellor challenged staff and students to embrace the 'new normal'. 'Online teaching and learning is here with us, forced by COVID-19; let us embrace it. We cannot sit and wait for the virus to disappear in order to resume normal learning. We may wait forever', he warned.

The Vice-Chancellor urged staff to embrace teamwork. 'I am not a magician; I cannot play God. I will lend a listening ear to you. I will make decisions grounded on the rule of law. With your support, we are set to reach the promised land. Together we can seize the tide and secure our ventures. Let us retreat to our stations of work and embrace teamwork: *Unitate et labore*', he stated.

Prof. Kiama, who is a family man, paid tribute to his wife and children. He also hailed his parents who, he said, 'persevered greatly' to see him through school.

Education Cabinet Secretary, Prof. George Magoha, congratulated the new Vice-Chancellor on his appointment. He said Prof. Kiama has a good track record in fundraising and building wonderful infrastructure. He cited the success of the Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies as an example of the remarkable accomplishments by Prof. Kiama during his tenure as the Institute's director. The CS urged the Vice-Chancellor to take good care of the teaching faculty.

'Ensure the professor is happy and working. If you take good care of the professor, he will take good care of the students and you shall succeed. Leadership requires teamwork and team spirit. Always empower your teammates to work for you', said Prof. Magoha.

The University of Nairobi Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi, challenged Prof. Kiama to build a university 'of the people, by the people, for the people', while borrowing from Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy. Despite the daunting challenges that the University was experiencing, the Chancellor encouraged Prof. Kiama to be a dealer in hope.

'A leader is a dealer in hope. Do not forget that you carry the great sunshine of hope for many. May you inspire your team to do the impossible', she said.

Chairperson of the University of Nairobi Council, Prof. Julia Ojiambo, appealed to the new Vice-Chancellor to embrace teamwork. She also challenged him to re-engineer the university systems and processes.

'The task at hand is daunting: the burden of expectation is heavy. Please rally the troops and deliver the desired change', she counselled. She pledged to support the Vice-Chancellor in his endeavours.

Prof. Kiama's installation was also witnessed by three former vice-chancellors, Prof. Francis Gichaga, Prof. Crispus Kiamba, and Prof. Peter Mbithi. [VF](#)





# A Chat with the new Vice-Chancellor

Prof. Stephen Kiama was installed as the University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2020.

Varsity Focus spoke with him about his vision for the University.

## What is at the top of your agenda for the University of Nairobi as you take up the mantle as the 8<sup>th</sup> Vice-Chancellor?

My priority for the University is to propel it to a trajectory of excellence by steering reforms in the data management system and also in governance.

We should invest our energies and resources towards setting up a comprehensive and integrated data management system. This will entail re-engineering our business processes and embedding the use of technology in the delivery of curriculum content,

human resource management, financial management, student affairs management, research grants management, and timetabling, among other aspects. The effective use of data will change how decisions are made, optimise the deployment of resources, and improve the systemic output.

Secondly, the University has over the years grown in size and complexity. To stay in step with the needs of the university, there is a compelling need to refresh our management, administrative, oversight, and governance structures. This will entail the elimination of redundant and overlapping systems, processes,

structures and reporting centres. It will also mean directing the flow of power, resources, responsibility, and accountability to the lowest levels and the institutionalisation of efficient decision and policy making and implementation at every level.

## The World Health Organization has warned that Covid-19 will be with us for some time. How will you ensure the continuity of teaching and learning at the University despite the challenges posed by the pandemic?

The teaching and learning environment has definitely changed and there is need to respond to the changes the University is facing. Covid-19 has brought about the urgent need to embrace online teaching, learning, and assessment.

Immediately after the Cabinet Secretary for Education ordered the closure of institutions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the University of Nairobi drew up a plan of how to ensure the continuity of learning.

The University has put measures in place to ensure there is continued teaching via the online platforms and will continue adapting to the changes brought about by the pandemic. We have made great strides with more postgraduate and undergraduate students embracing the new norm.

Some of the measures taken to address the challenges raised about online teaching and learning include providing data bundles for both students and lecturers and training



them on the new mode of learning. We have also trained the non-teaching staff on the platforms to use in order to work online.

What is of the essence now is for all students to embrace change, appreciate the efforts the University is making and adapt to the changes. This is the only way to survive and mitigate the effects of this pandemic and ensure business continuity.

**There is a skills-gap challenge among the graduates being released to the industry, many of who do not seem to meet the industry needs. What is the university doing to address this challenge?**

The University is following a path of fit-for-purpose training. We will relook at our course offerings and assess the level to which they respond to market, industry, societal, and government needs. We will weed out any redundant and overlapping courses and programmes.

Additionally, we shall interrogate the depth of our substance coverage in terms of the delivery of curricula, inculcation of practical skills, and integration of industry needs in our teaching and research. We shall also review our research exploits to encourage vertical progression in the pursuit of new knowledge, and integrate the entrepreneurial spirit and culture throughout our programmes.

**The University has been experiencing a cash crunch over the years with only 25 percent budgetary support from the government and problems like the delayed submission of**

**statutory deductions for staff. How will you address this cash crisis?**

In 2017, the government introduced the Differentiated Unit Cost model to guide the funding of universities. This model calculates the level of support to be given to a university based on the number of government-sponsored undergraduate students (Module I). The implementation of this model has reduced the amount of government capitation to the university and this has created a big cash crisis.

It had been anticipated that with the increased number of Module II students the University would bridge the financial gap in the budget, but unfortunately the number of Module II students has reduced.

To address this challenge, I am planning to re-engineer the financial and support systems by introducing reforms that will lead to the reduction of financial utility and ensure that we get value for the money we spend. I plan to also spearhead the investment of intangible university assets for revenue growth.

As we pursue all alternative measures to improve the financial situation of the University, I implore the government to consider reviewing the funding model for universities to augment the financial needs of each university as per the actual need on the ground.

**UoN has been ranked seventh among the top ten Universities in Africa by the African Exponent and number 801 by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2020. How will you ensure there is continued improvement in the performance?**

The University has performed very well in its rankings over the years but there is always room for improvement.

I commend all the staff who have played a critical role in ensuring that the University stays at the top of the rankings. Together with my team, I will give priority to aligning all our resources as per the mandate of the University to achieve better performance.

**How do you unwind after a hectic working schedule?**

I love listening to country and Lingala music. My favourite musicians include Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton and Koffi Olomide. I also enjoy reading books by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. Taking nature walks is also my favourite hobby to invigorate and refresh my mind and body.

**Your concluding remarks**

As I roll up my sleeves and get down to work, I am conscious of the huge burden of responsibility weighing heavily on my shoulders. I am neither a miracle worker nor someone that possesses the monopoly of knowledge; I am neither a magician nor someone that can play God. I am just the leader of the band! I promise to serve with honesty, diligence, and humility. I promise to be firm and fair, to lend a listening ear to the concerns that will be raised before me and to, as much as is humanly possible, make decisions that are grounded in law.

In faith, we will reclaim our glory and build an academic edifice that will inspire fresh hope and push the frontiers of university education locally, regionally, and internationally. VF

# A sterling record of academic and administrative accomplishments

**P**rofessor Stephen Kiama Gitahi holds an earned doctorate degree in Structural Biology from University of Bern in Switzerland. He is an accomplished scholar with a proven track record in formulating and managing academic programmes. He has over 16 years' experience in management and leadership positions at the University of Nairobi. Prof. Kiama was employed by the University of Nairobi in 1990 as

Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Veterinary Anatomy. Since then he has risen through the ranks to the positions of Lecturer (1995), Senior Lecturer (2002), Associate Professor (2012), and Professor (2016). Before being appointed as VC, he was Deputy Vice-Chancellor Human Resource and Administration and also Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Finance, Planning and Development. Prof. Kiama also served as Principal, College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences from 2016 to 2019. He was the Director of Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies from 2010 to 2016, Chairman of the Department of

Veterinary Anatomy and Physiology from 2005-2010 and Acting Dean, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in 2014 where he had served previously as Associate Dean from 2003-2010.

Prof. Kiama played a key role in conceptualising and actualising the Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies during his tenure as Director, and also during his time as Associate Dean as well as Chairman of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy and Physiology. In order to hone his strategic and transformative leadership skills, he registered and successfully completed a course in the Strategic Leadership and Development Programme at the Kenya School of Government in August 2014 (SLDP No. 82/2014). Prof. Kiama has also undertaken other relevant training such as the university leadership retreat under the theme "Personal Effectiveness for University Managers", Mombasa, Kenya, (2004); an in-house training programme on financial management and human resource management for deans of faculty of the University of Nairobi, Kisumu (2005), and Workshop on Training of Chief Internal Examiners, University of Nairobi (2006). Prof. Kiama is an accomplished scholar whose experience includes



*President Uhuru Kenyatta with Prof. Stephen Kiama admires the model of the Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies. The President laid the foundation stone of the building housing the Institute.*





supervising and mentoring postgraduate students. He has successfully supervised and mentored 12 Ph.D. students and 14 master's students to completion. He has been a member of the University of Nairobi Senate since 2003.

Prof Kiama's exemplary academic and research career is also demonstrated via his publications appearing in peer reviewed journals. He has co-authored over 149 journal and conference publications. Some of his papers have been published in prestigious and high-impact factor journals such as *Nature*; *Nature Communications*; *Journal of Leukocyte Biology*, *Immunology*, and *Cell Biology*; *American Journal of*

*Pathology*; *American Journal of Respiratory, Cell, and Molecular Biology*; and *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*.

Besides authoring numerous publications and attending national and international scientific conferences, Prof. Kiama has a cumulative 29 years of research and teaching experience at various institutions including University of Nairobi; St. Andrews University in Scotland; Free University of Berlin, Germany; University of Bern, Switzerland; University of Witwatersrand, South Africa; and University of Ghana.

The Vice-Chancellor has a unique experience of maintaining a vibrant

research career marked by high quality publications and success in grant awards. He has an excellent record of visionary leadership marked by success in the various positions that he has held at the University, coupled with a strong commitment to mentorship of undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as the faculty staff that he works with. Prof. Kiama's skills in attracting and maintaining networks within and between local and international universities and non-academic institutions have allowed the cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences and in the process catalysed growth in the institutions he has led. VF

# UoN Leads Fight Against Coronavirus

The University of Nairobi is at the forefront in providing multi-sectoral solutions, including innovative pedagogical approaches, amid the Covid-19 crisis that hit the globe early in the year and altered people's way of life.

The dreaded scourge, which was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 12, 2020, has brought virtually the whole world to a standstill.

The University has played a key role in the concerted global initiatives to find a vaccine against Covid-19 and also spearheaded local efforts to ensure the continuity of day-to-day teaching, examinations and research activities by capitalising on its well-established virtual technology.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama, has confirmed that many UoN staff are working with the government and leading global agencies by giving advice and educating the public about the pandemic through various media platforms.

Faculty and postgraduate students from the UoN's College of Health Sciences are providing support at the Kenyatta National Hospital and other health institutions across the country.

Staff from the School of Law together with the Kenya Law Reform Commission and the Office of the Attorney General have been involved in drafting the Covid-19 Bill, while some of the University's researchers have developed proposals for research

grants for containing the scourge.

As the pandemic continues, Prof. Kiama has urged the University community to adopt the innovative solutions proposed by the UoN's ICT centre in order to continue discharging the University's core mandate of teaching and learning. He emphasised e-learning and the utilisation of digital content sharing platforms to foster the continuity of programmes as well as facilitate the completion of studies.

"Necessity is the mother of invention. ICT and ODeL departments have been training all staff and students on how to use the online learning platform that is about to be rolled out," said the VC.

The University is also working with Safaricom, Telecom Kenya, and other service providers to provide data bundles for learning.

In an online meeting of the University Senate held on Tuesday, March 31, 2020, it was resolved that all faculties, institutes and schools should launch online learning for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. The Senate approved further procedures and protocols for the online examination of postgraduate theses, projects, and dissertations.

Following this approval, the University of Nairobi became the first Kenyan learning institution to conduct the country's first ever online end of semester examinations in order to provide students with the options to completing their studies in time despite

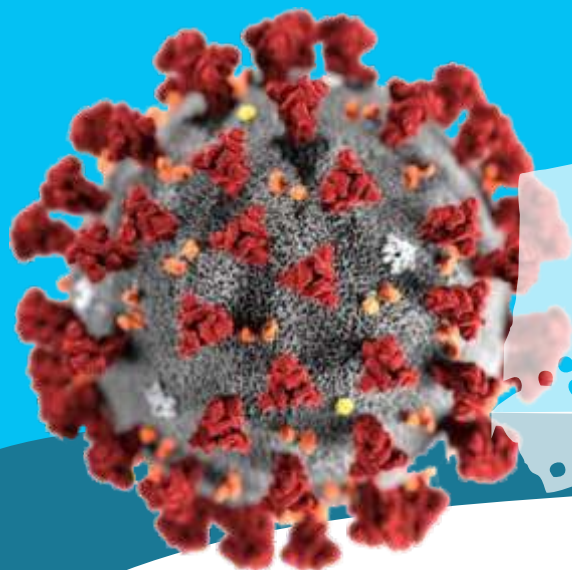
the Covid-19 pandemic's disruption of the traditional mode of learning.

The Vice-Chancellor emphasised that the guidelines and procedures for online exams had been benchmarked against global best practices and hence their quality and integrity would not to be compromised.

The admission of new students using the online platform is ongoing. Researchers have also been facilitated to access their research grants in order to continue their activities. Further, online library resources have been made available to students and faculty in their remote locations. The Vice-Chancellor has pledged support and a commitment of hope to Kenyans amid the gloom that has engulfed the world.

At the continental level, the African Union (AU) has appointed three University of Nairobi researchers to its Science Technology and Innovations (STI) advisory board for Covid-19 intervention. The board will be advising the African Scientific, Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC) on the Covid-19 pandemic.

Finally, at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), Research Fellow, John Njoka, participated in the Civil Society Forum to end Violence against Children (CSO Forum) through the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to develop a statement for the Africa Union Committee of Experts on Covid-19. He contributed on the need to request the AU to seek solutions that are specific to Africa since the crisis has affected the continent differently. **VF**



COVID-19

## UoN dons join African Union Advisory Board on Covid-19

**T**he African Union (AU) has appointed three University of Nairobi researchers to its Science, Technology and Innovations (STI) advisory board on Covid-19 interventions.

The board will be advising the African Scientific, Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC) on the Covid-19 pandemic. The scholars appointed are Prof. Francis Mulaa, Prof. Ratemo Michieka, and Prof. Dimbson Bulimo.

During a virtual address to the University community on April 9, 2020, the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen G. Kiama, congratulated the three dons. He said the appointments reflected recognition of the contribution that the University of Nairobi is making in science and research.

ASRIC is a specialised technical advisory body on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) to the African Union. The African Union Scientific, Technical and Research Commission (AU-STRC) is its secretariat. ASRIC promotes scientific research and innovation in order to address the challenges of Africa's socio-economic development.

It also mobilises African research excellence and provides

a platform for dialogue among African scientists. The advisory body serves as a voice of the scientific community in building and sustaining continental research and innovation nexus. Launching the ASRIC during its Congress in November 2018 was a landmark in the Science, Technology and Innovation impact on Africa's future and prosperity.

The ASRIC Congress is composed of African scientists from all the African National Science Academies; National Research Councils; top Science, Technology and Innovations (STI) Institutes in Africa; diaspora scientists, and partners. The Congress decides on the implementation of key science and technology programmes and projects.

In the wake of the unprecedented emergence of Covid-19, ASRIC bears great responsibility to respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic in Africa. The African Union Network of Sciences has over 16,000 professionals and experts in its database of members.

The ASRIC Advisory Board Members on STI Intervention for Covid-19 is composed of eminent scientists drawn from the pool of its members to advise/guide on how best ASRIC can respond to the Covid-19 pandemic utilising STI while building on existing African resources. **VF**



# The UON team on African Union Advisory Board



**Francis J. Mulaa** is the Director, Intellectual Property Management Office at the University of Nairobi. He also serves on the Vice-Chancellor's Projects Advisory Committee. Prof. Mulaa obtained his M.Sc. in Chemistry, specialising in Biochemistry from Donetsk State University (USSR). He joined the University of Nairobi in 1986 where he taught Biochemistry before proceeding for his Ph.D. studies in biochemistry at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. After his postdoctoral training in molecular biology at University College London, and German Centre for Biotechnology (GBF), Braunschweig, Germany, Prof. Mulaa turned his attention to malaria and pioneered the development of the gametocyte cell cycle of the malaria parasite, *Plasmodium falciparum*, which revolutionised malaria biology. He was the founding principal of Garissa University. He was founding Management Committee member of the European Malaria International Ph.D. programme and European Union Malaria Graduate School.

In 2006, he set up the Centre for Biotechnology & Bioinformatics (CEBIB) at UoN. Prof. Mulaa's expertise and experience have seen him serve on numerous national and international committees and advisory boards including the African Scientific, Research and Innovation Council Advisory Board on the African Union STI Intervention for Covid-19. He is a tech entrepreneur with more than three patents and startup companies. He has supervised over 20 Ph.D. students and published 90 scientific papers and books in industrial and environmental enzyme technology, bioinformatics, malaria biology, and engineering.



**Prof. Ratemo Michieka** has specialised in Agriculture (Weed Science) and Environmental Sciences. He obtained his B.Sc., M.A., and Ph.D. in Weed Science and Environment from Rutgers University, USA. He went for postdoctoral training at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) prior to his appointment at the University of Nairobi as a lecturer in 1980. He later became the Founding Vice-Chancellor of the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology where he served for 13 years. Prof. Michieka was the Director General of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) where he articulated the dangers of environmental pollution and natural resources degradation. He was responsible for the production of Kenya's first report on the State of our Environment. Prof. Michieka has done extensive research in weed science, with special emphasis on appropriate management systems, water conservation and food security. His studies in the testing of herbicides assisted in the recommendations of various weed control methods to farmers in East Africa and beyond. He is a strong proponent of using safe pest control management systems to avoid environmental pollution. Prof. Michieka is a member of

several national and international organisations and has received many awards locally and internationally.



**Prof. Dimbson Bulimo** is an Associate Professor of Biochemistry at the Department of Biochemistry, School of Medicine. He has supervised more than 15 M.Sc. and seven Ph.D. students and is currently supervising five PhD students in the field of molecular virology and molecular sciences in general. He is a molecular virologist whose research work is based at the National Influenza Centre, Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) working in collaboration with the Global Emerging Infections Surveillance (GEIS) programme, U.S Army Medical Research Unit, Kenya (USAMRU-Kenya), on influenza and other respiratory pathogens surveillance in Kenya.



# ASK THE EXPERT!

## Experts speak on Covid-19 pandemic

University of Nairobi experts in virology, infectious diseases, medical anthropology, public health and economics took the time to shed light on the coronavirus and its consequences.

In a livestream broadcast that reached over 22,000 people, the UoN experts demystified the myths surrounding the coronavirus, which was declared a pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO) on March 12, 2020.

Dr. Moses Masika, the session moderator, gave a brief introduction of the virus and explained that the name 'coronavirus' was derived from its resemblance with a crown. Dr. Masika is from the Department of Medical Microbiology, School of Medicine.

Prof. Omu Anzala, a virologist and immunologist also from the Department of Medical Microbiology, described the features of the coronavirus and what researchers knew about it. He noted that bats were the carriers of the virus which has spilled over to other animals and then to humans.

'Coronavirus is the second most

common virus that causes the common cold, after rhinovirus. The first spillover from an animal to humans occurred in 2003 in China. Research conducted in 2019 revealed that 10 percent of bats in Kenya have the coronavirus', said Prof. Anzala.

Dr. Pamela Godia, from the School of Public Health, provided the health sector response in the wake of the coronavirus invasion. She noted that Kenya has received testing kits from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and WHO. She urged the country to maintain a high surveillance system at all points of entry.

'Fever, cough, and difficulty in breathing by an individual who has recently travelled from a country with coronavirus infections should be tested. The elderly and those that are already sick are more susceptible to infection with coronavirus', said Dr. Godia.

Salome Bukachi, Associate Professor in Anthropology at the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, said educating the public is very important but this has not been done sufficiently on the coronavirus

pandemic.

'We have a lot of false information going around that causes panic and this leads to blaming each other, stereotyping and harassment. Outbreaks and epidemics hinge on human behaviour. We need to understand how people perceive this disease in light of the prevailing culture and context', she said.

Dr. Marybeth Maritim, infectious disease physician from the Department of Clinical Medicine and Therapeutics, School of Medicine, explained to the public the preventive measures that should be taken at all times, including hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and social distancing. She also demystified face masks by explaining how to use them and their importance.

While addressing members of the public during the same panel, Dr. Joy Kiiru, Senior Lecturer from the School of Economics, explained how the pandemic was affecting the already affected Kenyan economy. She noted, 'The economy is already sneezing and we are sneezing too. The global economy is very interdependent'.

VF

learning supported by over 400 tutors spread across the country.

The University has responded to the current crisis by tapping into its existing investment in ODeL. Immediately the closure took effect, the University embarked on a programme of training its staff and students to enable them move their teaching and learning to online platforms. The activities that have been undertaken to support this transition are:

### **1. Capacity building for faculty in the use of eLearning tools**

The University has trained the teaching staff in the use of both synchronous and asynchronous learning tools to connect with students during this period. The synchronous tools that faculty staff have been trained in include Google Meet which is aimed at enabling interaction with the learners in real time for limited tutorial sessions and/or supervision of postgraduate students. The asynchronous tools such as Google Classroom and Moodle LMS will enable faculty staff to interact with learners at different times especially to access courseware and coursework.

### **2. Enhancing students skills in the use of eLearning tools**

Students were trained in accessing and navigating the Learning Management System as well as interacting with the content and the tutors. The students were also introduced to the available synchronous and asynchronous learning tools such as Google Meet

and Google Classroom and Moodle LMS. Recorded video clips developed and delivered by ODeL and staff from the ICT department of the University were made available to the students with sessions on introduction to Google Meet, Google Classroom, and how to download and upload assignments on Google Classroom.

### **3. Tutorials and learner support**

Tutorial and learner support services for students are provided online by lecturers, administrative, and technical staff. Learning centre coordinators located in Kisumu, Mombasa, Nairobi, Nyeri, Kisii, Meru, Eldoret, Bungoma, Kitale, Machakos, and Isiolo have continued to support students from their regions with information, training in the use of the online learning platforms, access to library resources and project supervision. Students in the courses that were ongoing before the lockdown have formed and operationalised WhatsApp groups to facilitate tutor-learner and learner-learner interactions. These virtual groups have proved to be very effective in sharing information, class notes, recorded videos, presentations, links to join online classes and training sessions as well as receiving feedback from students.

Where links are shared through this medium, the members join through their smart phones or computers on time. The issues raised from the feedback are addressed immediately as the technical and administrative support team is also part of the group. To ensure effectiveness, the ODeL

Campus and the ICT Centre worked together to train the tutors, administrative and technical support teams in the use of online platforms for videoconference teaching and meetings.

### **4. Courseware development and production**

The ODeL Campus has continued to support faculty to complete courseware development. The courseware for selected programmes is available on the LMS while the faculty staff are being supported by ODeL instructional designers to develop more content for the LMS. A schedule for the training of lecturers has been developed to ensure that the modules that were in progress continue and new writers join the programme as per the annual plan. This schedule covers all the six colleges of the University. The instructional designers from ODeL continuously undertake pedagogical reviews of the completed modules and use online meetings to give feedback to the writers.

### **5. Thesis and project supervision**

The University Senate approved a procedure for examining theses online. This will ensure that candidates are not delayed for graduation. The online supervision of students is continuing through email and video conferencing platforms. Recently, three students from Bungoma and two in Nairobi presented their research proposals via Zoom. <sup>VF</sup>



# Virtual learning at UoN during lockdown

**T**he coronavirus pandemic is a global phenomenon that has affected all sectors in every country in the world. In Kenya, universities and colleges were forced to close abruptly and the teaching of various courses abandoned midstream. The burden for managers of universities and colleges with thousands of stranded students was how to fill the gap and at the very least maintain some semblance of normality.

The University of Nairobi had to quickly find ways and means of adjusting by implementing its strategy of open, distance, and e-learning. The University has a long history of distance learning dating back to the 1960s. The long experience and the adoption of new teaching and learning technologies over time has

helped the University to transition to online learning. The University used its existing learning management system (LMS) and the multimedia portal where digital content is hosted. The lecturers were also quick in maintaining contact with their students through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and to teach using web conferencing tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, Hangouts, and Classroom.

The open, distance, and e-learning (ODEL) function of the University was revamped and re-launched in 2017. Its role was expanded and strengthened through Statute XXXVI, hence anchoring it via a structure that gave it the mandate to sensitise and create awareness in all programmes of the university, build capacity in courseware development and

production, facilitate programme delivery and learner support, and carry out research and evaluation of ODeL programmes and services. As a result of implementing this initiative, the teaching staff were trained to write study materials which have been converted and uploaded onto the University LMS. They have also produced videos of their lectures which are available in the LMS. During this period of the COVID-19 crisis, students that were enrolled in ODeL programmes have continued learning through use of the multimedia approach. It is expected that those students will sit their exams as scheduled and thereafter continue with the subsequent semesters. Open, distance and e-learning allows learning and teaching to continue even under difficult and special circumstances that conventional classroom based learning cannot allow. Over 10,000 students spread across over 25 programmes in the University have been going on with



# Don advises on online teaching as momentum rises

For many years now, Dr. Collins Odote has been using digital technologies to teach and supervise his postgraduate students. Dr. Odote is an expert in Environmental Law. He is also Director, Centre for Advanced Studies in Environmental Law and Policy (CASELAP). He has students spread across the world. "Just recently I supervised a Ph.D. student from Sweden and another one from Uganda via Skype. Without these technologies, it would be difficult to reach my students abroad or even those within the country who can't make it physically to class because of other commitments," the don told *Varsity Focus*.

For Dr. Odote, news of universities shutting down across the world amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and immediately resolving to teach online did not come as a surprise. Rather, it was a great opportunity for universities to invest in online teaching and learning because this is the future of higher education.

'Online teaching has a lot of advantages over traditional teaching in terms of flexibility in working hours, opportunity to reach more students, easy communication tools and reusable online resources', he observed.

The don gave five tips that lecturers can apply for effective virtual teaching.

## Design short lessons

Long lectures for ordinary classes can be daunting for students and are even more ineffective in online settings. Dr. Odote quotes Marjorie Vai, an e-learning consultant and professor at the New School in New York who says, 'The student should be engaged; so no long pages of text or an hour-long video'. She recommends presenting information in 10-minute chunks with varying formats.

## Focus on active learning

To engage students who are not in the room during a lesson, a course should be a mix of discussions, collaboration, video and audio clips, and hands-on exercises with text and possibly brief video lectures.

## Do not rely on live video

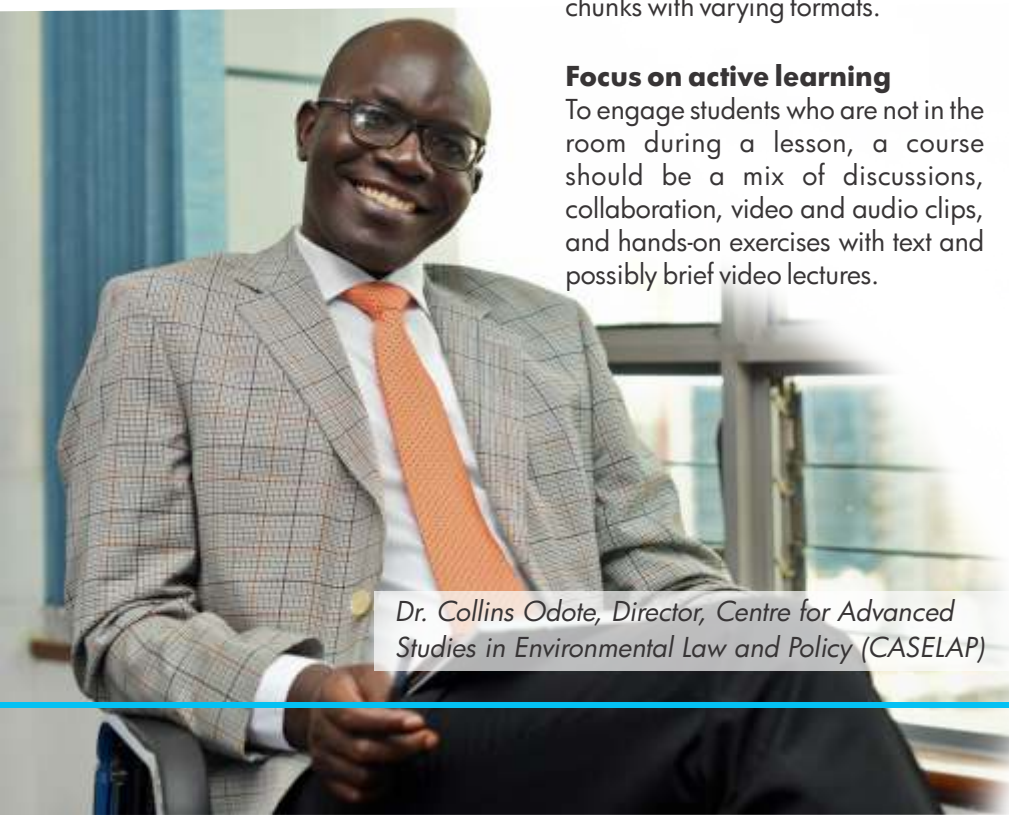
One should not use live conferencing in every facet of the course because the quality of feeds cannot be guaranteed. Recently, for instance, there have been concerns about privacy and security issues regarding Zoom, the popular remote conferencing application.

## Keep small groups

It is easier for students to coordinate their time well if they are kept in small groups. Groups of not more than ten can be useful for the purposes of discussions, collaborations, and peer critiques, among other group activities.

## Support struggling students

In their study published in 2018 with the title, 'Online course-taking and student outcomes in California community colleges', Hart and other researchers observed that almost every student experiences some type of performance penalty where they earn lower grades than they might have or they fail to complete the course when they switch to remote learning. In order to identify such students, lecturers can simply ask the students if they have devices and access to internet or just their opinion about transitioning to online studies. The most successful virtual teachers conduct frequent assessments and check in on students via phone calls, emails and texts, especially those who are struggling to catch up. [VF](#)



Dr. Collins Odote, Director, Centre for Advanced Studies in Environmental Law and Policy (CASELAP)

# Over 8,000 graduate in 62<sup>nd</sup> graduation ceremony

A record 8,428 graduands were conferred degrees and awarded diplomas during the 62<sup>nd</sup> graduation ceremony of the University of Nairobi.

At the fete, presided over by Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi, Prof. Patricia Kameri-Mbote went down in the history of the University of Nairobi as the first woman to receive the Degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D).

During the ceremony, 737 graduands were awarded diplomas, 5,413 received bachelor's degrees, and 54 obtained postgraduate diplomas. The number of those who received master's degrees was 2,130, while 27 obtained fellowship awards and 56 were conferred with Doctor of Philosophy degrees. One Higher Doctorate degree was awarded at the ceremony.

The University of Nairobi Chancellor congratulated the graduands and appealed to them to show humility especially through respecting those who had supported them towards the achievement being celebrated.

'To all who are graduating, we are gathered here in your honour. I am very proud of you and your monumental achievement. Many began this journey with you but a number fell by the wayside. By sheer effort, unwavering support of your

families, God's abundant grace and alignment of many factors, you have made it to this day', she said.

The Chairperson of University of Nairobi Council, Prof. Julia Ojiambo, also congratulated the graduands and appealed to them to live by the standards expected of the University of Nairobi alumni.

'To our graduates of the day, we wish you well. We hope that we spared no effort in giving you the best that we could. We hope that we contributed to making you a better version of yourself. We hope that armed with the skills and competencies you have acquired, you will conduct yourselves with dedication and that our mark of quality will be manifested through your selfless and unblemished service to both God and man', she said.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Isaac Mbeche, paid tribute to everyone who had contributed to the successful completion of the study programmes of the graduating class and also congratulated the graduands.

'Congratulations for a job well done. We are proud of you. We extend our appreciation to the people who made it possible for you to complete your studies. Your lecturers and the stakeholders whose contribution through provision of scholarships, mentorship, and internship


opportunities enabled the University to continue producing market-ready graduates', said Prof. Mbeche. He added that the University of Nairobi was ahead of the other institutions in terms of employability index, which reflects preferences by employers.

The Chairman of the University of Nairobi Alumni Association, Mr. Isaac Awuondo, called on the graduating students to join the association and give back to their alma mater.

'The association eagerly looks forward to your connection with your alma mater in order to willingly give-back to the community which nurtured you. You can do this initially by registering with the association whose membership categories range from annual to life membership', he said.

The valedictorian, Bridget Neema, from the School of Medicine, had an inspiring message for her fellow graduates.

'Do not fear failure but please be terrified of regret. Outside the cocoon of the university, the consequences will be greater, the stakes will be higher. When we walk out of these gates today into what we call "real adulting" we will receive a lot of shut doors, a lot of rejected applications; way more no than yes', she said

Varsity Focus congratulates class of 2019! 







Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama (seated 3<sup>rd</sup> from the left), with officials of the University of Nairobi Alumni Association (UONAA) and beneficiaries of the association's scholarships during the award ceremony on March 13, 2020.

# Alumni Association targets 1000 students for scholarships

It was a dream come true for 52 bright but needy students from the University of Nairobi when they received scholarships from the University of Nairobi Alumni Association (UONAA).

Speaking during the event held on March 13, 2020 at the Vice-Chancellor's Parlour, UONAA Chairman, Mr. Isaac Awuondo, observed that about 4000 students have benefited from the yearly scholarships since the Alumni Association was established in 2005. He said UONAA would support the scholarship beneficiaries to access internships, jobs, work study programmes, and mentorship. The scholarship opportunities are only open to first-

year students, but overwhelming applications were received from continuing students, signalling the need to expand the list of beneficiaries.

Mr. Awuondo decried the low number of female students applying for the scholarships. "There were only 23 percent of female applicants compared with 77 percent male applicants. We need more sensitisation to ensure that more female students benefit. We need a 50-50 representation of the beneficiaries," he said.

'Today, 50 students get Sh2,040,000 each, from six colleges and 16 schools. I want to thank the office of Dean of Students, for providing two scholarship

opportunities bringing the number to 52', he said. He observed that the Alumni Association would organise get-together events where well-established and prominent alumni will network and support up to 1000 bright but needy students.

The University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama, challenged the UONAA to play a leading role in branding the university, supporting public lectures, and linking up with the Office of Career Services for the identification of opportunities for internship and mentorship. The VC further challenged UONAA to support student attachments and work-study programmes. The alumni were also tasked to come up with a data driven management system that will enable the University to track and trace the alumni whose number is more than 250,000. "We need to know how many of our alumni are CEOs, how many are in parastatals, government, industry, and Parliament among others," he said. <sup>VF</sup>

# West Indies don recalls the horrors of slavery



*Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama, with Pro. Eudine Barriteau, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of West Indies, Barbados when she delivered a speech on the painful history of slavery in her country.*

**P**rofessor Eudine Barriteau, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of West Indies, Barbados, recalled the tribulations that women underwent during the slave trade, including low pay, rape, and separation from their families. The scholar was speaking on the gender issues in migration in a talk delivered on January 10, 2020 at the University of Nairobi.

'The Caribbean was born out of plunder, pillage, occupation, and enslavement. It is an amalgamation of arrivals and departures; by force or willingly. The Caribbeans are perpetually on the move just in case work comes. Immigration officers come calling among other reasons that may necessitate moving', she said.

Prof. Barriteau highlighted how

gender issues can be supported or squashed by state power. She pointed out that unlike the Obama administration in US which was lenient and allowed gender identities, the same cannot be said about the Trump administration.

'Gender is not interchangeable with women or sex', she explained to the audience. She stated that most Caribbeans have transnational families that hold family meetings via Skype since they do not have a home. 'The concept of home is foreign to the Caribbeans', she said.

After the abolition of slave trade in 1834, one hundred years later between 1940 and 1965, some slaves migrated to Europe, and more so the United Kingdom, mainly because the Britons encouraged migration and slaves had British

passports.

Prof. Barriteau paid a courtesy call on the University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama during which they discussed staff and student exchange programmes and collaborations. She said the University of West Indies was keen on collaborating in the areas of medical sciences, online executive MBA for health professionals, infectious diseases, biosecurity studies, culture, and performing arts.

Prof. Kiama agreed to support the staff and student exchange programmes, noting that the University of Nairobi is strong in collaborations with the universities in the East and the West. The Vice-Chancellor observed that online and distance e-Learning are the next frontiers of growth. **VF**

## UoN ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in Africa 2020

**T**he University of Nairobi has been ranked at position seven among the top ten universities in Africa in 2020 by *The African Exponent*.

*The African Exponent* ranked universities based on licenses, accreditation by the relevant bodies in each country, mode of delivery of the courses, teaching and learning, and four-year undergraduate degree and postgraduate programmes

offered.

The University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town, and University of Witwatersrand took the first three positions respectively. University of Lagos, University of Nairobi and Cairo University are the only universities outside South Africa to appear among the top ten positions in the ranking.

According to *The Africa Exponent* on their website, the aim of the ranking is

'To provide a non-academic League Table of the top universities in Africa based on valid, unbiased and non-influencable web metrics provided by independent web intelligence sources rather than data submitted by the universities themselves'.

The publication also indicates that the ranking is based on 'academic prestige, scholarly excellence, and intellectual horsepower'. [VF](#)

1. University of Pretoria
2. University of Cape Town
3. University of Witwatersrand
4. University of Johannesburg
5. University of KwaZulu-Natal
6. Stellenbosch University
7. **University of Nairobi**
8. University of Lagos
9. North-West University
10. Cairo University

“This ranking is based on academic prestige, scholarly excellence, and intellectual horsepower.”





# Pictorial



1. University of Nairobi Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi chats with Prof. Margaret Kobia, Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Public Service and Gender ahead of the launch of the University of Nairobi Council strategic Plan 2018-2023.
2. Prof. Julia Ojiambo, Chairperson of University Council with student leader, Anne Mvurya during the student leaders' mentorship programme.
3. University of Nairobi Executive Board, led by the Vice-Chancellor, sing the National Anthem ahead of the Nation Leadership Forum.



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4. Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Public Service and Gender, Prof. Margaret Kobia, presiding over , during the launch of the University of Nairobi Council Strategic Plan 2018-2023 early in the year.
5. University of Nairobi staff participate in the Annual Sports Day.
6. University staff led by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Affairs Prof. Julius Ogeng'o (second right) and students try out new benches donated by Qwetu Residences, a real estate company and partner of the University of Nairobi.



# Gujarat University woos Kenyan students



University of Nairobi Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi (**centre**) with Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama and a delegation from India at the Graduate Research Library which was renovated using a donation from the Indian government. The Indian delegation was led by H.E. Rahul Chhabra, Indian High Commissioner to Kenya, and Dave Vibhavari Vijay, Honourable Minister of State for Women and Child Welfare, Education (Primary and Higher) and Pilgrimage (**extreme left**)

**T**he Gujarat University hosted a fair in Nairobi to unveil higher education opportunities and scholarships in India.

The Indian university aims to attract more than 1,000 students to study in 16 universities in India through a programme called 'Linking up with Universities'. The initiative was spearheaded by the university's Vice-Chancellor Prof. H.A Pandya.

Gujarat University, which was established in 1949 under the Gujarat University Act, is the largest and oldest university in the State of Gujarat. It boasts of well-equipped facilities and also offers a firm foundation aimed at producing holistic graduates that are expected to make an outstanding contribution to the world economy.

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, Prof. Stephen Kiama, hailed

the programme by the visiting university and congratulated the Indian government for the idea, which he further noted, will help to bridge the gap in postgraduate studies locally arising from financial challenges.

'In addition, it will help reduce youth unemployment through production of competent graduates capable of creating self-employment opportunities in our fast growing economy', the VC added.

Cabinet Secretary for Education Prof. George Magoha stated that India and Kenya are great partners in education and applauded the Indian government for the over 400 scholarships given to Kenyan students annually.

'The Indian government has also given to the Kenya government a credit of \$30 million to revive the

Rivatex Company in Eldoret and recently sponsored the renovation of the Mahatma Gandhi Graduate Library at the University of Nairobi at a cost of \$1 million', said Prof Magoha in a speech read on his behalf by Mr. Darius Mogaka Ogutu, the Director of University Education at the Ministry of Education.

Indian High Commissioner to Kenya, H.E. Rahul Chhabra, urged the youth to take advantage of the opportunity to study at Gujarat University.

India's Minister of State for Women and Child Welfare, Education (Primary and Higher) and Pilgrimage, Vibhavari Dave, said the country initiated the 'Study in Gujarat programme' to offer affordable education. She said Gujarat is one of the fastest growing and progressive states in India offering high-value education. **VF**



# 40-year link with University of Manitoba celebrated

**T**he University of Nairobi and University of Manitoba (UM) early this year marked the fortieth anniversary of a research collaboration that has produced life-changing discoveries on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

The celebration was hosted by the University of Nairobi STD/HIV/SRH Collaborative Research Group at the Hotel Mayfair, Nairobi, on January 27, 2020.

The UM/UoN collaboration began in 1980, when Dr. Herbert Nzanze, who was head of the Department of Medical Microbiology, invited Dr. Allan Ronald, a University of Manitoba research pioneer in the field of infectious diseases (now a distinguished professor emeritus), to Nairobi to study sexually transmitted chancroid infections.

In appreciation of the longevity of the research partnership, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research Innovation and Enterprise, Prof. Madara Ogot, said, 'I was only fifteen when this collaboration began and I can't pick any of my friends who have been in close contact for that long. This is indeed a flagship project that has impacted lives'.

The profound engagement between the two universities has led to important discoveries, including the revelations that HIV can spread from mother to child through breastfeeding and that sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia and gonorrhea increase one's susceptibility to HIV infection.

'Immense results have been obtained from this collaboration', said the University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor Prof. Stephen Kiama.

In 1986, when it was believed that HIV only affected gay men, University of Manitoba researchers tested women sex workers in Nairobi for the virus. They found that 60 percent were infected with HIV, showing that women could, in fact, acquire the virus.

'This partnership has contributed to the creation of new institutions within the University of Nairobi such as Kenya AIDS Vaccine Initiative (KAVI) and University of Nairobi Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (UNITID)', Professor Kiama said.

The UM/UoN partnership has received millions of dollars in funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It has also received global recognition as a best-practice example of North-South research collaboration.

Currently, the collaboration includes several other universities, such as the University of Washington, University of Ghent, University of Toronto, McMaster University, and University of California. [VF](#)



*UoN Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama (centre) with Prof. Madara Ogot, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Innovation and Enterprise (left) and Prof. David Barnard, President of the University of Manitoba (right) during celebrations to mark 40 years of collaboration between the two institutions.*

## UoN launches International Public Relations Programme

The University of Nairobi officially launched the international Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) programme. As one of the three accredited centres in Africa, the UoN will make a great contribution to shaping the communication industry and strengthening the PR practice.

The globally recognised course, which targets professionals in the communication sector, requires 48 hours of classroom experience spread over six months. The CIPR

classes began on March 7, 2020.

Speaking during the launch of the programme, Vice-Chancellor Professor Stephen Kiama applauded the University for the leadership in promoting change and growth in the PR sector in Eastern and Central Africa.

The UoN's course leader in the new programme, Dr. Anne Gichuhi, elaborated that the CIPR certificate course covers digital communication strategy, thought leadership, and monitoring and evaluation. She

urged the attendees to sign up for the course because it will change their perception of the public relations practice. The CIPR alumni who spoke during the launch echoed a similar call and described the course as a worthy investment. [VF](#)



*Prof. Stephen Kiama leads the launching of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations programme. He is flanked by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Affairs Prof. Julius Ogeng'o (right) and Dr. Anne Gichuhi of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.*

# UoN participates in Israeli agricultural fair

The University of Nairobi participated in the 29<sup>th</sup> Arava Open Day 2020 held at the Yair Research and Development Center in the Arava region, Israel. Professor John Kimenju from the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences and Ms Naomi Nyaboga from the Office of Career Services represented the University at the event held on February 12-13, 2020. The open day was a large agricultural

show that brought together farmers from the entire Arava region to showcase their agricultural services and products. Over the years, this agricultural exhibition has earned a reputation as an outstanding professional event that attracts visitors from across Israel. Visitors to the event this year interacted with over 200 business companies displaying the latest innovations in agriculture and selling their products.

The agricultural fair presented an opportunity to tour the different farm sites that were hosting UoN students on attachment and get a feel of the hands-on farming experience that they were receiving. The University sent 18 students to Israel for the third cohort in August 2019 for eleven months of training.

The University, through the Office of Career Services, has been partnering with the Arava International Centre for Agricultural Training (AICAT) to offer hands-on agricultural training to the College of Agriculture students. This partnership is in line with the Big 4 Agenda on the promotion of agriculture and food security.

Michael Mathenge, one of the 2019/2020 AICAT trainees, showcased his innovation of a motor-powered soil mixer, which is designed to save farmers many hours of sorting compost and soil before planting seedlings. Michael looks forward to turning his innovation into a product that can be sold to Kenyan farmers.

The Kenya Government was represented at the fair by Shali Ngali and Abigael Magumba from the Embassy of Kenya in Israel. The Managing Director of the Agricultural Finance Corporation, Mr. Lucas Meso, was also in attendance. He promised to work with the Ministry of Agriculture on the possibility of providing financial support to the Kenyan exchange students with innovative ideas upon their return home. He said he would request the government to set aside land for them to put into practice the mechanised agricultural skills learnt in Israel. [VF](#)



*Gideon Kirui, UoN agriculture student on attachment in Israel.*



# Experts demystify locust invasion myths



Prof. John Nderitu

Dr. George O. Otieno

**T**he Entomological Society of Kenya, under the coordination of UoN don Dr. George Ong'amo Otieno, has been monitoring the state of locust invasion in Kenya. Dr. Ong'amo revealed that the invasion is not necessarily confined to the arid and semi-arid areas but is spread across the country. The expert attributed the spread of the locusts to cyclones, young age of the insects, and a fast rate of breeding.

'It was assumed that the locusts would be here for a short time. However, the rate at which they are breeding is alarming. The change in climate patterns has also aggravated the situation', he explained.

Professor of Agriculture, John Nderitu, stated that the chemical aerial spray being used to combat the locusts was not effective. He recommended the adoption of an integrated pest management approach instead, which includes biological, mechanical and chemical

control methods. Prof. Nderitu further urged the government to send teams with nets attached to aircrafts to capture the locusts for use in manufacturing animal feed. The experts said that the locusts came from Yemen through Ethiopia then down to Kenya following the heavy rainfall that the country experienced late last year.

Dr. Ong'amo described the characteristics of the locusts during different stages of the lifecycle. 'Yellow colour is an indication of maturity but not a dying locust', he said adding that 'At a later age when the yellow colour of the insects becomes brighter, they start mating and laying eggs and at this stage we can say that they are dying'.

According to the scientist, it is only possible to determine the point at which egg laying begins if one has been following the life cycle of a swarm from the immature stage up to maturity. 'The duration of the maturity period depends on how well

the immature stage insects feed and the weather conditions', he said. He also explained that 'The maturity stage lasts 2-4 weeks after which mating sets in and the females lay eggs three times at intervals of 7-10 days. Therefore, depending on weather conditions, the lifespan of the mature stage is 35-50 days'.

On the behaviour of the insects towards the end of their life cycle, Dr. Ong'amo stated that there was a drastic reduction in the feeding behaviour. 'Mature stage is not a feeding stage. They (insects) just move from one location to another to assess suitable breeding ground with little feeding for survival but not to accumulate energy. Therefore, they are not voracious like the immature ones and they do not cause much harm to vegetation', he added. At the mature stage, a swarm does not move together but splits into several swarmlets; flying to different locations. [VF](#)

## School of Law joins Global Campus of Human Rights

**T**he University of Nairobi's School of Law has joined the prestigious Global Campus of Human Rights.

The Global Campus of Human Rights is a European Union-funded network of universities based on cooperation between the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation (EIUC) and seven regional programmes.

With a composition of one hundred research intensive universities, it is the largest university network in the world specialising in human rights and democracy. The staff of EIUC consists of world renowned personalities for their leading role in education, research, and advocacy in human rights and democratisation.

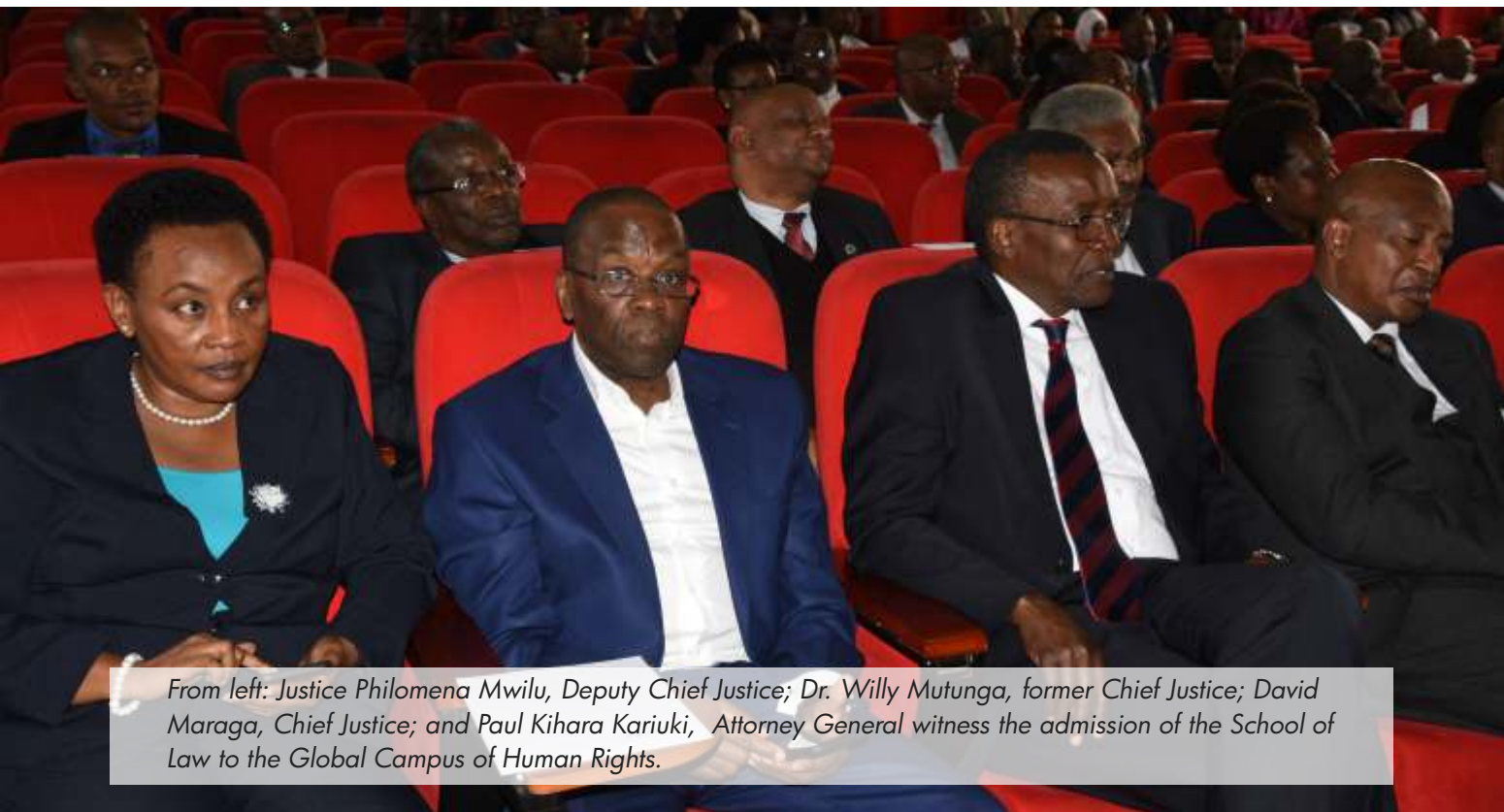
Commenting on this major step by the School of Law, the dean, Prof. Kiarie Mwaura, had this to say: 'Acceding to the Global Campus of Human Rights, which is currently leading the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, gives us a unique opportunity for cooperation in a myriad of areas'.

The dean identified the following as potential areas for cooperation: student and staff exchanges; teaching and curriculum development; online teaching collaborations; moot court competitions; and professional development for staff. He also outlined the exchange of knowledge and information through reports, publications and training; resource

sharing; collaborative research grants, projects, and conferences; joint supervisions and publications; and offering joint degree programmes.

Prof. Mwaura further observed that the global inter-university cooperation also provides an opportunity to reflect on humanity and appreciate that by sharing interconnectedness and vulnerability the country shall discover its strength in the post Covid-19 world.

'As we go through this time of global health emergency, legal scholars and practitioners will be required to support the government's Big 4 Agenda for economic development as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals', he said. <sup>VF</sup>



From left: Justice Philomena Mwilu, Deputy Chief Justice; Dr. Willy Mutunga, former Chief Justice; David Maraga, Chief Justice; and Paul Kihara Kariuki, Attorney General witness the admission of the School of Law to the Global Campus of Human Rights.

# Budding engineers to get boost from Israel



*Israel Deputy Ambassador to Kenya, H.E. Eyal David, speaks to engineering students during the Engineering Students Symposium.*

**E**ngineering students have been challenged to come up with solutions to climate change and to exchange ideas with leading innovators in the world.

Speaking during the Inter-university Engineering Students Symposium, Israel Deputy Ambassador to Kenya, H.E. Eyal David, said his country is ready to support students' innovations. 'Israel is very strong in innovation. We are ready to share our technology, our experiences and our expertise with you', he said during the symposium whose theme was 'Going Green'.

The engineering students were encouraged to embrace farming and develop technologies for improving farm yields and tackling climate change. They were also encouraged to visit Israel under the 'Mashav' programme based in Arava, Telaviv. Over the last five years, more than 100 Kenyan students have travelled to Israel

under an ongoing eleven-month internship programme. During this period, the students learn about some of the agribusiness techniques that have enabled Israel to become the 'bloom in the desert'. The aim of the programme is to offer experiential learning and help the students to gain skills that they can practise once they are back in the country. The Ambassador challenged more students to enrol for the yearly programme after completing their studies.

The University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama, challenged the students to also become active in the areas of affordable housing and manufacturing, which are some of the pillars of the Big Four Agenda of the government's development priorities. 'Manufacturing can be a game changer for our country. We need your

creativity to grow the economy. Microsoft and Apple were started by young people like you', said Prof. Kiama in a speech which was read on his behalf by Prof. Enos Njeru, Principal of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (now acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Human Resource and Administration). The two-day conference brought together participants from academia, industry, and government. It was an opportunity for students to forge new frontiers with the industry players and to share knowledge. The other local universities represented during the conference were Kenyatta University, Baraton University of East Africa, and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. Participants from Makerere University and Kyambogo University of Uganda also attended the fair. **VF**



# Scholars share ideas on global value chains

**W**orld Bank Group's Chief Economist, Professor Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg made a presentation at the University of Nairobi on the *World Development Report 2020* released by the World Bank. The title of the report is 'Trading for Development in the Age of Global Value Chains'.

Professor Goldberg explained the benefits of global value chains and suitable environments for their implementation as the developing countries try to find their place in the international trade arena.

'A global value chain breaks up the production process across countries. Firms specialise in a specific task and do not produce the whole product. GVCs can continue to boost growth, create better jobs, and reduce poverty provided that developing countries undertake deeper reforms and industrial countries pursue open, predictable policies', said Prof. Goldberg during the public lecture held on January 20, 2020. She stated

that GVCs powered the surge of international trade after 1990 and now account for almost half of all trade.

According to the renowned economist, who is also known for her expertise on issues facing the developing world, GVCs at one point resulted in an unprecedented economic convergence where poor countries grew rapidly and began to close the gap with richer countries. She indicated that the slump in trade arising from the 2008 global financial crisis had a negative impact on the expansion of GVCs. Other factors such as new technologies and conflicts among large countries also had a bearing on the future performance of GVCs.

Bringing the discussion home, Prof. Goldberg explained the Kenyan situation in relation to GVCs. 'Kenya's GVC participation is subdued. Between 1990 and 2015, Kenya transitioned from a commodity-based GVC participation to limited manufacturing; mainly agribusiness and apparel. Kenya's GVC participation grew by

about 10 percentage points in the past 25 years yet GVC linkages are still weaker than the global average'.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Affairs, Prof. Julius Ogeng'o contributed to the discussion using examples of the situation in Kenya. 'In Kenya, some organisations like Twiga Foods and

Victory Fish are leveraging technologies like Blockchain to streamline value chains, enable the farmers to gain from their produce and provide financing. These unique inclusivity solutions are partly the reason why poverty in Kenya declined from 46.8 percent in 2006 to 36.1 percent in 2016', he said.

Prof. Ogeng'o indicated that it would be important for the University of Nairobi to pursue further the debate on global value chains as a strategy for enhancing Kenya's international trade and reducing poverty especially within the framework of devolved governance structures.

'As a university interested in research for development, I welcome research and greater discourse in value chains as a strategy to grow our exports to regions such as the Middle East or at least improve the local distribution of food from areas of surplus to areas of deficit so as to discourage unnecessary importations', he said.

While looking at the potential of global value chains for poverty reduction, Prof. Karuti Kanyinga, Director, Institute for Development Studies, emphasised the need for policy continuity and policy stability to promote growth in developing countries. A panel discussion moderated by Prof. Bitange Ndemo from the School of Business brought out important issues in the evolving trade environment. The panellists were Prof. Goldberg; Dr. Anastasia Nyalita of Kenya Healthcare Federation; Prof. Murang'a Njihia, Dean, School of Business; and Dr. Paul Kamau from the Institute for Development Studies.

*Editor's Note: Professor Pinelopi Goldberg left the World Bank Group and is now the Elihu Professor of Economics at Yale University.* [VF](#)



World Bank Group's Chief Economist, Professor Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg delivering a speech on global value chains at Chandaria Auditorium for Performing Arts.

# Elimika empowering the youth



Makueni Senator, Mutula Kilonzo Junior (**left**) with other leaders during the Elimika Wajibika forum in Makueni. The Elimika programme aims at empowering the youth to address their challenges.

**Y**oung people were challenged to improve their soft skills such as emotional intelligence and personal development as they seek opportunities in the marketplace. Makueni Senator, Mutula Kilonzo Junior, posed this challenge to the youth during a workshop hosted by the University of Nairobi Elimika Initiative at the Acacia Resort in Makueni.

The workshop, which took place on January 22, 2020, was sponsored by the Ford Foundation in partnership with the Elimika Initiative and the Makueni County Government. Youth leaders from across the country shared experiences on leadership.

The Makueni Senator recalled his years as a young advocate in his father's law firm and the lessons passed down to him by one of Kenya's greatest legal minds. "Do something well or don't touch it at all", my father would tell me', he said. The Senator's father also taught him the importance of capturing his aspirations clearly in a

notebook and aiming for the highest standards of integrity, hard work, and attention to detail.

The senator stressed the importance of mentorship where experts in their fields of trade coach young people to become the best they can be. He encouraged the youth to make use of the 30 percent worth of government procurement tenders reserved for women, the youth, and persons living with disability. According to the senator, young people were not aggressive in pursuing these tenders. He challenged the government about the absence of young people in the cabinet despite the provision for the same in the law.

'Young people must begin to talk and take part in the development of our economy', observed Senator Kilonzo Junior who pointed out that this was happening in other parts of the world. 'I went to Japan and found young people busy manning the equipment

that monitors social media and cyber security. I went to Germany and found young people fixing Bosch engines', he said.

Quoting Martin Luther King Jr. and Winston Churchill, the senator urged young people to remain optimistic even when faced with difficult situations because the future was not necessarily bleak.

Elimika Initiative is a programme that has been running since 2013 and has covered all the 47 counties in Kenya to discuss with young people how they can improve their economic activities, create wealth, improve security, and generally handle the challenges facing the youth. The programme is funded by the Ford Foundation and is run by Prof. Judith Bahemuka of the Department of Sociology and Chairperson of UNESCO/UNITWIN Chair on Women, Education, Health and Sustainable Development. **VF**



## UoN in talks for GIS Laboratory

**T**he University of Nairobi, in conjunction with the Environmental Systems Research Institute, Esri Eastern Africa, is set to establish a geographic information system (GIS) laboratory at the Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies. GIS offers a powerful decision-making toolkit that can be used in educational administration, policy, and teaching. Students and researchers can make use of GIS to understand content in a variety of disciplines.

'Esri is keen on having a GIS laboratory in every campus. We are particularly keen in an area of excellence for GIS at the University of Nairobi,' said Mr. Judah arap Bett, the Managing Director, Esri Eastern Africa, when he paid a courtesy call on the University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor Prof. Stephen Kiama. Esri Eastern Africa is the regional office of the global Environmental Systems Research Institute that deals in geographic information systems and related products.

Mr. Bett said that apart from geography, GIS can also be used in a variety of disciplines, including history, mathematics, language, arts, environmental studies, chemistry, biology, civics, security, and medicine. Prof. Kiama also highlighted the role of GIS in the application of data and its importance to research and teaching. 'This initiative is important for us as an institution of higher learning. GIS technologies will not only equip our students and researchers with skills but also expose them to new possibilities in their various field', he said. **VF**



Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama, with Mr. Judah arap Bett, Managing Director, Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri Eastern Africa)



# PwC hunts for UoN graduates



A team of recruiters from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) conducted a graduate recruitment drive at the University of Nairobi's School of Business at Lower Kabete targeting students from the School of Business, School of Mathematics, and School of Economics. The PwC team comprised officers from various departments, including Insurance, Tax, Advisory, and Internal Firms Services.

Dr. Githii Wainaina, Associate Dean at the School of Business, encouraged the students to take advantage of the opportunity and apply for the graduate trainee programmes offered by PwC.

Mr. Benson Okundi, Partner and Director at PricewaterhouseCoopers, said the main purpose of the firm is to build trust in society and solve important problems. He said PwC has over 250,000 employees in 158

countries. 'This, therefore, provides a global network and exposure especially for young graduates to learn, grow, and develop into the accomplished professionals that they aspire to become', he said.

The 2020 PwC graduate recruitment programme, whose theme is 'Be part of something special', offers students a great global working experience to make a difference, build lasting relationships for personal growth, and be recognised for outstanding contributions. The sensitisation session was attended by the Director, Office of Careers Services, Mr. Johnson Kinyua. He encouraged the students to not only apply for the graduate trainee programme but also take the advice given by the employer and use it to make a difference in their academic and professional lives.

The team from PwC welcomed graduates from all disciplines to

apply for the programme. The selected students will go through tailored training, learning, and development programmes that are aimed at building strong foundational skills in the different lines of services offered by PwC.

The UoN alumni at PwC shared their experiences. Paul Mwit, a Bachelor of Economics graduate in 2019 said the firm offers highly streamlined services and is very supportive of its employees on personal matters. Other alumni who shared their experiences include Rosemary Mundia, Victoria Kibugi, Eliud Ian, and Joshua Kaunda who are Bachelor of Commerce graduates with specialisation in Finance; and Edwin Kago, a graduate of Economics and Statistics. PwC was targeting graduates of the 2019 class as well as those who completed their coursework and were expected to graduate by September 2020. VF

## UoN hosts induction of Ajira Digital interns

The University of Nairobi hosted the induction of 250 Ajira Digital programme interns from January 27 to 31, 2020. The induction involved training the interns with the aim of imparting knowledge and skills to enable them work and earn a decent income online. The training also covered the operations of government structures. The interns were urged to uphold the high values and principles of public service such as accountability, efficiency, and transparency as they discharge their duties.

The induction programme was graced by top government officials from the Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs including Cabinet Secretary, Mr. Joe Mucheru; Principal Secretary, State Department for ICT & Innovation, Mr. Jerome Ochieng; Principal Secretary, State Department of Broadcasting and Telecommunications, Ms. Esther Koimett; Chief Administrative Secretary, ICT, Broadcasting and Telecommunication, Ms Maureen Mbaka; and Chief Administrative Secretary, State Department of Innovation and Youth

Affairs, Ms Nadia Abdalla. Also present was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Affairs, University of Nairobi, Prof. Julius Ogeng'o among other key partners.

Mr. Ochieng noted that the formal employment sector has not been growing proportionately with the demand for jobs. It is in view of this that the government established a broad range of interventions to deal with the growing rate of unemployment with specific attention to the youth.

The Ajira Digital Programme is one of the measures taken to provide solutions to unemployment. The aim of the programme is to introduce young people to online work and provide them with the necessary tools, training, and mentorship to pursue online opportunities.

Prof. Julius Ogeng'o said the Ajira initiative would empower millions of young people to access digital and digitally-enabled job opportunities and position Kenya as a labour destination for multinational companies. He observed that the programme would also encourage local companies and


the public sector to create digital work.

Dr. Catherine Getao, the ICT Authority Chief Executive Officer, said the Ministry of ICT had various programmes aimed at building capacity among the youth to enable them secure opportunities in the job market.

All the 250 interns will be posted to different county information offices nationwide. They were urged to support the implementation of the Ajira Digital Programme and offer technical support while also sharing their innovativeness to help the government deliver the digital economy promise and transform individuals, families, and the country.

The one-year internship programme will offer mentorship, networking opportunities, and experience to the youth to enable them develop professionally and become employable in the private and public sectors.

The key players who contributed to the success of the Ajira Digital programme include the Ministry of ICT, Huawei, and Mastercard Foundation. **VF**



*University of Nairobi students being trained in Ajira Digital Skills, a programme by the State Department for ICT & Innovation.*



## UoN signs agreements with Indian universities

**T**he University of Nairobi signed five collaborative agreements with Indian universities to strengthen the partnership between the University and India, which goes back many years.

The deal was struck when a delegation led by Dave Vibhavari Vijay, Honourable Minister of State for Women and Child Welfare, Education (Primary and Higher) and Pilgrimage paid a courtesy call on the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama.

Speaking during the event on February 14, 2020, Minister Vijay said there is need for deeper collaboration and programme exchange between the University of Nairobi and Indian universities' staff and students. 'We have a vibrant education, technology, and innovation system in India where students' technology and innovation ideas are funded. We have excellent

opportunities for staff and students to explore', she said. Minister Vijay noted that the university system of education yearns for knowledge, growth and development. She observed that Kenya and India enjoyed strong bonds.

Prof. Himanshu Pandya, Vice-Chancellor, Gujarat University, highlighted the high number of patents registered by his university. 'We have registered 500 patents in the last two years. Patent fees and copyright are fully funded by the government. We are seeking staff and student research collaboration with the University of Nairobi', he said.

Dr. Vijoo Rattansi, Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, highlighted the long-standing relations between Kenya and India dating back to 1900 when labourers from India arrived in the country to build the Kenya/Uganda Railway.

The Chancellor highlighted the contribution of the Indian community to the University of Nairobi, including the construction of Mahatma Gandhi building and Mahatma Gandhi Graduate Library.

Prof. Kiama supported the collaborations, saying that the University will be interested in exploring the enormous opportunities for staff and students. The potential areas of collaboration include agriculture, medicine, education, health sciences, oil and gas, engineering, innovation, humanities, and social sciences.

The University of Nairobi signed MoUs with Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University, Niram University, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad University, and RK University. The delegation also inspected the development projects in the University funded by the Indian Government. **VF**



*Prof. Stephen Kiama, University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor, after signing an MoU with Prof. Himanshu Pandya, Vice-Chancellor, Gujarat University, India. Looking on is Dave Vibhavari Vijay, Honourable Minister of State for Women and Child Welfare, Education (Primary and Higher) and Pilgrimage (centre) and University of Nairobi Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi (right)*



# Researchers challenged on Intellectual Property

University of Nairobi researchers have been challenged to innovate and invent products, patent these products, and pursue the benefits accruing from their intellectual property rights which can be worth billions of shillings.

The appeal was made at a two-day workshop, organised by the Intellectual Property Management Office (IPMO) conducted on February 5-6, 2020 at the University of Nairobi Towers.

Renowned businessman and Chief Executive Officer of Transwood, Mr. Navin Chandra, took the researchers through the steps to becoming an entrepreneur. 'A businessman needs a goal. Though he fails, he keeps moving knowing very well that his goal is success. He needs to be dedicated in honing his skills to be the best he can be', he said. The businessman also pointed out that success in business requires accountability, vigilance, and adapting to the market trends.

Mr. Chandra stated that products for commercialisation should be unique with quality packaging. Such products should also be patented with the Kenya Industrial Property Institute (KIPI) and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). He also said that those in business ought to develop trust with suppliers, employees and consumers in order to gain an edge in the market. During



*Mr. Navin Chandra, Chief Executive Officer, Transwood, discussing the commercialisation of Intellectual Property at the University of Nairobi on February 5, 2020.*

the workshop, Mr Robert Yawe, a financial literacy coach, challenged researchers to concentrate on

**“The University community was also encouraged to seek copyright protection for materials”**

**- Mr. Navin Chandra -**  
Chief Executive Officer of Transwood

innovation and invention and license the products to businessmen. 'Siri was a university research product licensed to Apple Computers', he said.

On the aspect of dwindling university

revenues, Mr Yawe challenged the University of Nairobi to raise the student numbers by offering online learning modules through its 3G and 4G networks with the enhanced 5G network also set to be introduced. He observed that since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in China, the online mode of learning in Chinese universities had risen exponentially.

The University community was also encouraged to seek copyright protection for materials such as novels, poems, plays, films, music, and other artistic works such as drawings, paintings, photographs, sculptures, and architectural designs. VF

# VC promises to reform student services

University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Gitahi Kiama, has cautioned first year students against wasting their time while in campus. The VC was speaking at Taifa Hall, while addressing the students from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences on 23 January 2020.

'Use your time wisely to get the best of this university. The University of Nairobi made us who we are today. We are the best university in the region. We are ready to offer services to make your stay here memorable', he said. The Vice-Chancellor outlined some of the services offered by the University as security, counselling, career services, transport, sports, and games.

The Vice-Chancellor spelt out a wide range of reforms that the University of Nairobi will be undertaking to ensure students enjoy experiential learning at the University. He observed that data management will be a priority in his regime to ensure issues like missing marks do not arise. There will also be financial reforms to ensure that money is channelled into University core functions of teaching and learning, research, and consultancy.

'There will be reforms in the governance structures. The University continues to rely on old governance structures, which we will relook into', he said.

On physical facilities, the Vice-Chancellor, said optimal use will be necessary to ensure all facilities are

used for teaching and learning. He also pointed out that human resources will be aligned properly and virtually everything will be online for easy access.

Regarding the University core values of freedom of thought and expression, the Vice-Chancellor urged students to exercise their

within the law', he said. The Vice-Chancellor said that the University needs ideas from students in order to grow.

Students with special needs were informed that a Special Needs Centre will be created to cater for their needs. The centre will also help students get internships and enrol in work-study programmes. This will help students gain experience as they earn some money.

On student discipline, suspension and expulsion, the Vice-Chancellor pointed out that the era of expelling students is long gone. 'There will be no suspensions or expulsions of students without following the due process and according students fair administrative justice. Don't engage in lawlessness; confine yourselves within the law. We need to

nurture your talents and not to chase you away', he remarked.

*Varsity Focus welcomes the new students to the University of Nairobi.* VF

"Don't keep quiet when lecturers don't come to class. Don't be conditioned into fear of speaking out. Nothing will be done to you for expressing yourself within the law."

freedom of speech.

'Don't keep quiet when lecturers don't come to class. Don't be conditioned into fear of speaking out. Nothing will be done to you for expressing yourself



*Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama bonds with first year students admitted to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences during their orientation on January 23, 2020.*

# Students urged to go for professional certificates

**F**emale students pursuing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) have been challenged to pursue professional certification to increase their opportunities for employment.

The appeal was made on March 13, 2020 during a mentorship programme by women techies from various technology companies for University of Nairobi female students. Some of the companies represented were Huawei and Safaricom PLC. Catherine Mumbi, who works with Sidian Bank as a Chief Information Officer shared her experience of receiving an impressive twofold salary raise soon after acquiring a Microsoft certification.

The students engaged with top women in the technology field to tap from their experiences. The students were encouraged to identify mentors


to guide them. Ms Mumbi encouraged the students to accept any kind of job that comes along and not to despise humble beginnings. 'I urge you to develop your soft skills; such as communication skills, presentation skills, and networking skills. By joining professional groups you will have a chance to grow', she said. She indicated that she had been able to develop her public speaking skills over the years.

Barbara Okello, Data Scientist from Safaricom, shared her professional progression with the students including the numerous obstacles she had to overcome. She observed that reaching the pinnacle of excellence arose from sheer hard work and embracing opportunities. Ms Okello began as a Customer Care agent at Safaricom before joining the Social Media team that answers customer queries. She eventually joined the

Data Science team which uses clients' data and insights to solve problems via Twitter and Facebook.

'Share your vision with your supervisors and embrace every opportunity that comes your way. When an opportunity came up to join the Digital team and Data Science, and having shared my vision with my supervisor, she allowed me to join the newly created departments', she said.

The students were told to gear up for the fourth industrial revolution which is expected to create millions of jobs. Such technologies as artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, robotics, machine learning, and data science will create millions of jobs in the coming years. They were also challenged to position themselves for these opportunities by acquiring the relevant skills through studying via online platforms like YouTube, Udemy, Coursera and others.

The female students' mentorship programme by the Women in Technology was organised by the Office of Career Services, University of Nairobi. 

*A section of students and staff during a mentorship session for female students pursuing STEM courses.*





# Students tipped on Huawei certifications



*Women leaders in technology share nuggets of wisdom with UoN female students pursuing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses.*

**T**he University of Nairobi Office of Career Services, in partnership with Huawei Technologies Ltd, hosted a sensitisation session on the Huawei ICT certification targeting students of the School of Computing and Informatics.

Su Shuqi, the Training and Certification Manager for Huawei's Enterprise Business Department and Michael Kamau also from the same department gave an overview of Huawei's key projects and the programmes being offered to students. The programmes include Routing and Switching, Networking, Security Certification, SG Certification, Internet of Things,

Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, and Big Data.

Over 200 students have benefited from the Huawei certification training since the University of Nairobi rolled it out in 2016. In 2018, twelve UoN students were successful in joining the Huawei Management Trainee Programme while two more top students from the HCIA class at the School of Engineering joined the internship programme. In 2019, two students secured internship positions with the company.

The Office of Career Services is working with Huawei in the following programmes:

- Huawei Certified ICT Associate

Certification

- Huawei ICT Skills Competition
- Huawei Management Trainee Programme
- Huawei DigiTalent Career Fair
- Huawei Ajira Interns Induction Programme
- Huawei Industrial Visit

Mr. Johnson Kinyua, who made a presentation on behalf of the Office of Career Services, said the goal of the office is to produce holistic graduates for the job market who are empowered, competitive, employable, enterprising, and innovative. **VF**

# Students and police seek harmony

**T**he National Police Service and students of the University of Nairobi held historic talks on conflict, insecurity, and law enforcement within and outside the university.

The meeting, which was initiated by Amnesty International and UoN, was held at Taifa Hall on February 28, 2020. The discussions reflected a mutual understanding of the security situation, fears, and anxieties that exist from the viewpoints of the law enforcement agency and students.

The spokesman of the Kenya Police Service, Mr. Charles Owino, said the police service was a very important unit of the society, which thrived on collaboration. 'We want the best relationship possible with the students so that we can effectively address safety and insecurity issues within the university', he said.

'The University of Nairobi, is a very important institution for us and we are really interested in forging a harmonious working relationship through such discussions, so that

when we encounter difficult situations at one point we are able to understand each other as we search for the truth amidst suspicion, conflict, and doubt', he added.

National Police Service Director of Reforms, Mr. Charles Ombati, noted that the Kenya Police Service had made tremendous improvement in its operational capacity and preparedness in all policing aspects. 'We have regulated the use of force and firearms. We are training our officers on human rights and conflict management as well as addressing their psychosocial welfare, including mental health', he said.

He elaborated that effectiveness of the transformational leadership approach being introduced within the police service would depend on closer working ties with others.

The students commended the National Police Service for the opportunity to dialogue with them. 'We believe this is a new beginning in the relationship between police and students', said Mark Makori, a

Political Science student.

'We can foresee a situation where students are trustable partners with law enforcement agencies in the fight against crime. A situation where students are treated with respect and in a humane way during demonstrations or other conflict situations', he added.

Amnesty International Kenya Executive Director Mr. Houghton Irungu enlightened the students on their rights and called upon the police to practise professionalism and accountability while discharging their duties.

University of Nairobi Director of Corporate Affairs, Mr. John Orindi, appreciated the students for expressing their concerns with the police and providing suggestions for improvement. 'The police service should continue to dialogue with students so that we can have better working relationships and a safe environment for studies and work,' he said. VF

*Kenya Police Service spokesman, Mr. Charles Owino during discussions with UoN student leaders on insecurity and law enforcement at Taifa Hall on February 28, 2020.*



# Project on Diaspora Humanitarianism launched



**T**he University of Nairobi, the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), the Rift Valley Institute (RVI), and Rako Research and Communication Centre based in Hargeisa, Somaliland, launched a collaborative research project on Diaspora Humanitarianism in Complex Crises (D-Hum).

The Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, will implement the research project in partnership with the three institutions. IDS will also train three Ph.D. students selected to join the project through a competitive process. The students will be trained at the University of Nairobi and the University of Copenhagen in Denmark in the next four years.

The D-Hum research project was

launched at a workshop held on February 28, 2020 at the University of Nairobi Towers. The project focuses on Somalia and aims to analyse the mobilisation, channelling, delivery, and effects of diaspora humanitarianism with reference to Somali diaspora.

Based on fieldwork in Somalia, Kenya, and Europe, the project will examine the movement of goods, people, and ideas from crisis-affected areas; hubs for humanitarian agencies; and diaspora activities in settlement countries.

The overall research question for the project is: What kinds of assistance do Somali diaspora groups mobilise, channel, and deliver to Somalia during complex crises; and which social, material, and technological

infrastructures do they use or create in the process of doing so?

The project was launched during the D-HUM workshop, which took place at the Lake Naivasha Simba Lodge from 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020. IDS was represented by Prof. Karuti Kanyinga, IDS Director and Dr George Michuki, IDS Research Fellow. Dr. Nauja Kleist and Dr. Peter Albrecht represented the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS). Dr. Mohamed Adam represented the Rako Centre while Dr. Mark Bradbury represented the Rift Valley Institute (RVI).

D-Hum is funded by the Consultative Research Committee for Development Research (FFU) under Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Danida). It is coordinated by Dr. Nauja Kleist, DIIS. [VF](#)



## UoN discusses collaboration with Rwandan university

Rwanda's University of Tourism, Technology and Business Studies (UTB) and the University of Nairobi will establish student and staff exchange programmes to enhance joint research in various disciplines.

Speaking during a courtesy call on UoN Vice-Chancellor Professor Stephen Kiama, the Vice-Chancellor of the Rwandese University, Dr. Kabera Callixte, said his institution would like to work with UoN to offer opportunities for students to experience cultural exchange, internships, industrial relations, and learning in a different country.

In addition to Kenya, the intended collaboration will also cover Burundi, Germany, Rwanda, Singapore, and Uganda and will be implemented

courtesy of Volkswagen. The aim of the programme is to advance social enterprise among students in developing countries.

Prof. Kiama supported the idea, noting that experiential learning is the way to go. He said a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be signed to provide for a structured process of collaboration that will see staff and students benefit from the exchange programmes. The ten-day learning programme will expose students and staff to techniques of data collection, coding, and analysis.

Prof. X. N. Iraki, from the School of Business (SOB) said the programme will teach new ways of doing research. He added that students will visit several entrepreneurial

innovations and business start-ups as they immerse themselves in diverse cultural experiences as part of reviving the East African spirit.

Prof. Mary Kinoti, also from the School of Business, said the school is committed to the promotion of innovative ideas. "We came up with the Summer School idea. We keep innovating new products and services with the help of a team from Volkswagen," she said.

During the occasion on March 9, 2020, Dr. Callixte also requested the School of Business to champion the development of master's degree programmes for the University of Tourism, Technology and Business Studies to enable the working class in Rwanda enhance their education locally instead of travelling abroad. [VF](#)



University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama (right) with Dr. Kabera Callixte, Vice-Chancellor, Rwanda University of Tourism, Technology and Business Studies (UTB ) when the latter paid him a courtesy call.

# University of Nairobi Conference Services



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