

Harness your IP Assets, UoN Staff told.

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The University of Nairobi is sitting on a goldmine and should take advantage of the abundant potential of Intellectual Property within the institution. The IP assets when harnessed could earn the university billions of shillings in revenue. That was the message during the Intellectual Property Audit Validation and IP commercialization workshop at Main Campus, Taifa Hall, on July 23, 2018.

Speaking during the event, University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbithi urged members of the academia to harness IP assets that could be commercialized. “In the process of doing your research endeavours, you could be looking for doctorate degrees and forgetting the IP assets, I urge you to increase commercialization of IP assets in the University,” he said. He observed that , harnessing of IP assets is the foundation of great universities and as a world class university, the University of Nairobi has no option but to venture in that domain. “Considerable investment is required and success is mandatory,” he said. He took the opportunity to thank World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and Kenya Industrial Property Institute (KIPI) for supporting the University in its IP Audit journey.

Prof. Mbithi noted that the 21st Century economies knowledge based. When properly harnessed and protected, the Intellectual Property could generate more revenue than all the natural resources we have in the University and in the country.

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Silvance Sange, the Managing Director, KIPI challenged the University to set up several incubation labs that will help students incubate their business ideas and scale their startup businesses.

Joyce Banya, from WIPO congratulated the University of Nairobi for its quest in harnessing the IP assets. "This is a first from an African University. No African university has approached us to help them in harnessing the IP assets. We are happy the University of Nairobi came and asked for our assistance," she said. She noted that the University has so much research going on, " you can commercialize your research potential even as you explore your IP assets", she said. She challenged the researchers to come up with great ideas that will solve the societal problems. World Intellectual Property Organization works with over 250 government and non-governmental organizations around the world in protecting intellectual property. They have an IP Academy that has over 200 graduates and is proud to produce home grown IP experts that work with several universities around the region.

Prof. Tom Ogara urged the University Management to fast track IP awareness and training by introducing IP course as a common unit at undergraduate level. This will ensure that the IP awareness levels improves across the University. IP awareness levels remain low across the staff members at 20% and 15% among the researchers, it is even lower at 5% among undergraduate students. According to the research findings, the University has an IP potential of 144 unlike the current 14 registered IP patents. He urged the University to embark on screening of dissertations and thesis for IP assets before putting them into the library.

Going forward, it was suggested that colleges should have a branch of the IP Office and IP Champions. Marketing of the IP Office should as well be strengthened.

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