



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Office of the Vice Chancellor

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VC's Address to the University Community

Dear Colleagues,

Receive my salutations!

You are all aware that following the closure of the University on 16th March 2020 as a result of Covid-19 pandemic, the management has remained alive to the need to ensure continued teaching, learning, research and community service.

In doing so, we are guided by our core values namely:

Innovativeness: we shall be innovative in meeting our mission.

Care: We shall foster a leadership culture that cares, people-focused, that connects and responsive to the needs of internal and external customers, and that promotes stewardship over University resources.

Commitment: we are committed to the mission of the University and always act in the best interest of the University.

My reflections on this matter of Covid-19 is that we have a big role to play in helping the society overcome the challenges brought about by the effects of pandemic.

I have continued to receive messages of encouragement and appreciation from our partners across the globe on the good work our researchers, doctors and post-graduate medical students are playing in the fight against Covid-19.

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Quality Management System Excellence in University Education and Training

Our researchers, doctors and postgraduate students have continued to serve this with passion, moral responsibility and a strong sense of patriotism. The late Wangari Maathai once said "I will be the hummingbird. I will do the best I can". Like Wangari, I urge you to do the best you can.

Today, I am also happy to announce that the African Union in recognition of our good work has appointed Prof Ratemo Michieka, Prof. Francis Mulaa and Prof. Dimbson Wallace Bulimo to the African Union Advisory Board on Science, Technology and Innovation for covid-19 intervention. Congratulations to the three Professors.

Some of our partners have already indicated their willingness to work with us in agreed research areas. I shall continue to update you on this when agreements are concluded.

Internally, we have a moral obligation to help our students complete their studies on time.

Today is the 24th day since the university was closed. Our core mandate is 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 job is clearly cut out. The university cannot lose sight of this, for this is the very essence of our existence. Without teaching and learning we are no more. We cannot fold our hands and keep waiting for COVID-19 to go. This would be most irresponsible of us. We shall have abdicated our responsibility and core mandate.

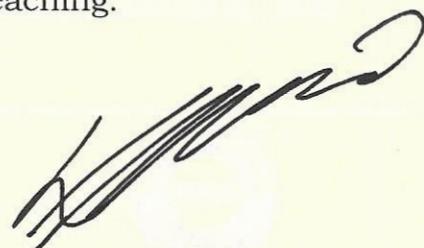
We have a huge intellectual resource to draw from.

We must be **innovative**, we must show **commitment**, and we must show our students and stakeholders that we **care**.

Training of Skills for Teaching & Learning

In the last three weeks we have undertaken trainings that targeted all academic staff and support staff. To date the University has trained over 92% of faculty and 95% of key support staff on the use of online teaching and learning tools. The University has also embarked on the process of training all students on how to use the online tools.

The ICT department will continue to train and fill the gaps that may arise in the course of the implementation of this method of teaching.

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Partnership with industry for online learning

We are greatly indebted to our partners who have assisted in kind by extending free usage period for their online collaborative platforms.

These partners include CISCO which has given the University 500 license for **WebEx** that facilitates video conferencing, online meeting, screens share and webinars.

Through KENET the University also has access to the **Big Blue Button video** conferencing solution designed for online learning.

The University's strong partnership with Google has also made it possible for the University to use the **Google Suite** which gives the University access to a host of collaborative tools and software. Among the applications available in Google suite are: corporate email for staff and students; document viewers and editors; Google drive which is a Cloud file sharing and storage solution; and Google class which allows faculty and student to share notes and assignments.

Partnership with Mobile Service Providers (MSP)

In recognition that one of the challenges that is hampering online learning is the cost of internet connectivity, the University has partnered with Telkom Kenya to ramp online teaching and learning using **Soma Na Telkom bundles**. The University staff and students will be on-boarded to the Telkom network once they receive Telkom SIM-cards from the Telco's robust outlets across the country. College principals have been instructed to alternatively use the **Safaricom data** where Telkom Kenya network is not available or in case of unique challenges. The University shall bear the cost of data bundles.

The connectivity that is sponsored by the University will enable teaching and learning to continue during this period of closure through the identified online platforms. Students and academic staff will be able to access the University ERP, Learning Management systems and other identified electronic resources and attend classes hosted via web video conferencing system.

What you need to do

The University of Nairobi's ICT Center has designed an online form that shall be circulated to all staff through emails. The form aims to collect information about your phone number(s) and your locality. The purpose of this is to inform the planned distribution of sponsored data bundles to members of staff. Members of staff are therefore encouraged to fill this form in the next three days.

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In order to facilitate the efficient issuance and distribution of Mobile bundles to students the ICT Centre has added an interface in SMIS portal which allows the students to update their current contact information. This will make it easier for the faculty to reach their students and notify them about scheduled lectures. Each active student is required to update the following information:-

- **Current mobile phone number**
- **Their University email** - Those who do not have, shall be expected to create the email using the link provided in the SMIS portal
- **Alternative mobile number** - This can be the secondary number for the student or guardian
- **Physical address** - This includes County, Sub-County and Constituency.
- **Nearest Telkom Outlets** - Select the nearest Telkom outlet for the purpose of disbursements of a Telkom line which shall be used to facilitate online learning.

I urge all students to login into the SMIS portal and provide the information needed to enable the University issue the students with the data bundles.

How the Data bundles shall be disbursed

The University sponsored data bundles shall be disbursed to the beneficiary who are either undertaking or teaching online through an arrangement which has already been worked out with the Mobile Service Provider (MSP). The University shall share the register of the beneficiaries with the Mobile Service Providers who shall intern organize to have the SIM cards delivered to the shop outlet preferred by the staff or student. At the point of collection Mobile Service Provider shall require the Staff or Student to identify themselves using a staff or student ID in addition to a National ID. The necessary registration and mapping of the student or staff mobile number will take place at the Mobile Service Provider outlets. The beneficiary shall be notified by the MSP when their SIM card are ready for collection at their preferred outlets.

Colleagues and all Students

I have no doubt that there are challenges in adopting the new method arising from lack of skills, constraints of infrastructure and inadequate data. However, I am happy to assure you that the University management will walk with you to the end to ensure you that are adequately prepared and supported to continue with the delivery of online lectures.

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This is not the time to despair! It is a time to do the extra-ordinary and show that we are a responsible community that provides leadership during crisis and a brand that cares for its customers.

It is indeed very gratifying to note that several faculties have already commenced their classes but I call upon those who have not started their classes, to do so at the very latest by 20th April 2020. Timetables for every faculty will be issued and posted on websites to indicate commencement and end dates. Since most faculties and institutes were only remaining with averagely 4 weeks to wrap up the semester, we still owe it to the students to deliver on our obligation.

Regarding assessments, I call upon the faculty to allow reasonable amounts of flexibility. Faculties /school/institutions are encouraged to propose what is best suited for their programs to the senate for approval. Further, continuous assessment will continue to be conducted online using best practice.

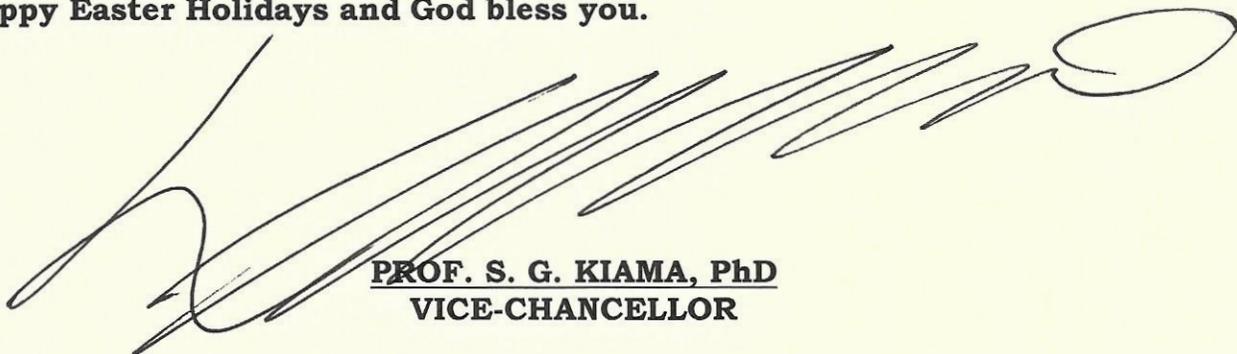
Ladies and gentlemen,

This is the time we have to follow an unbeaten path. This global misfortune has presented us with an opportunity to review how we conduct our business. I therefore call upon all of us to view this challenge as an opportunity to innovate.

There is no better opportunity for change like now. Let us try and together we shall succeed.

This being the holy week, I want to take this opportunity to wish you happy Easter Holidays. It is going to be an Easter like no other. Covid-19 has rudely and radically changed the way we celebrate Easter with our extended families and friends. I would like us to remember those who have lost their loved ones from this pandemic. Let us also pray for those who are in hospitals and those in quarantine. As day follows the night I am hopeful that this will come to pass.

Happy Easter Holidays and God bless you.

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PROF. S. G. KIAMA, PhD
VICE-CHANCELLOR