

VICE CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH

**DURING THE 65TH VIRTUAL GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON 24TH
SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 10.00 AM**

Dr. Vijoo Rattansi, Chancellor, University of Nairobi,

**Mumina Bonaya, Chief Administrative Secretary, Representing
the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Prof. George Magoha,**

Members of the UoN council

All members of the Senate

Mr. Isaac Awuondo, Chairman, UoN Alumni Association,

**Mr. Twalib Mbarak, CEO of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption
Commission,**

Members of the Convocation,

Invited Guests,

Parents and relatives,

All our members of staff

Graduands,

All stakeholders present physically and online.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Madam Chancellor, we present to you today for the award of diplomas and conferment of degree a total of 4,205 graduands for the 65th graduation ceremony distributed as follows.

1 Higher Doctorate degree,

79 Ph.D. Degrees,

378 Masters,

17 postgraduate diplomas,

3,459 Bachelors

271 Diplomas.

36.7 % Females and 63.3% Males.

Let me start by conveying my hearty Congratulations to the graduating class of 2021. We are very proud of all of you. Today marks a great milestone for you, your families, and the University of Nairobi Community. You have completed this important phase of your career development and now you are ready to embark on a new journey of fulfillment- to practice and apply the knowledge that you have acquired.

Special recognition to one of you, Hon. Simeon Saimanga Lesirma for graduating with a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Environmental Governance at the age of 75 years! That is the true spirit of the University of Nairobi.

I want to sincerely thank the lecturers and other staff who have worked hard, sometimes beyond their call of duty, to prepare you up to this stage where you can now graduate. I thank the University community for the resilience and adaptability. When Covid-19 struck and disrupted learning, we managed to adapt fast to the use of technology.

The trends for the delivery of teaching and learning in higher education institutions will continue to shift towards the use of technology.

You all recall that at the beginning we faced a lot of resistance. The doomsayers in their usual fashion discouraged the students and staff arguing that virtual learning is of lower quality. I want to thank the Senate for their wisdom and steadfast commitment in offering leadership for the adoption of technology in teaching and learning. The Senate moved fast to create an enabling policy environment for virtual learning. The rich experience of interacting with technology at UON will particularly during the last two years will come in handy in preparing you for the evolving workplace and the new concept of working from home

As a University, we have made a firm decision to invest more resources in technology to support learning. We have embarked on preparing lecturers and students for asynchronous learning. Asynchronous learning will expand access to education and accord flexible schedules to busy people who want to continue with education amidst other competing activities

Recently the university signed a collaborative agreement with the Center for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) to give Members of Parliament an opportunity to attend courses as they continue to serve Kenyans, from the far-flung areas of the country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The University on its march to relevance, vibrancy, and sustainability has put in place various interventions. For example, in financial management, we have rationalized our accounts and moved 100% to e-banking. We have eliminated all cheques and cash transactions.

We have also reorganized our human resources with our core mandate. We have suspended the hiring of staff except in critical areas. Those who retire and would like to continue can only do so as Emeritus Professors. This has helped us to progressively manage our costs.

In order to improve service delivery and quality in teaching and learning, the University has refocused its operations in the 11 faculties. This has eliminated duplications and enhanced efficiency in the delivery of services and reduced turnaround time.

Between 1970 to 1985, deans as heads of Faculties were in charge of all teaching and learning activities. The deans were supported by the registrar administration who provided all the support services.

However, from 1985 onwards, there has been a proliferation of administrators who now overshadowed the Deans. The Dean had to weave through several layers to get anything done. Those layers received preferential treatment on resource allocation. We have now started a march to return the University to the Faculty.

On Curricular reforms, we have identified 78 flagship programs among the 326 programs that were retained from the initial 597 programs. We will invest in retained programs and ensure that we contribute to the transformation of our communities

Establishing partnerships and collaboration with strategic partners has remained one of our priorities. Our researchers across all disciplines have performed exemplary well despite the challenges brought about by Covid 19 pandemic. Let me just mention a few recent projects and strategic partnerships that will have great impacts in the community.

1. Afya ya Jamii Project - On Community Health interventions on HIV/AIDS, led Prof. C.F.Otieno and Dr. Jared Mecha.
2. The Centre for Epidemiological modelling and Analysis- A multi-disciplinary regional data Centre that supports the control, elimination, and eradication of infectious diseases in Eastern and central Africa. Led by Dr. Loise Ombajo and Prof. Thumbi Mwangi. This centre continues to support the Kenya Government on COVID Data Modelling.
3. The Animal Health Innovation Laboratory Project-A multi-million, multi–agency project funded by USAID to develop animal vaccines and medicine for the control of tropical animal diseases and to build the capacity of future scientists and researchers. Led by Prof. Thumbi Mwangi and Prof. George Gitau .
4. Strategic global partnership with the University of Helsinki –that will play part in solving pressing global problems of our times including climate Change, loss of biodiversity, current and future pandemics.
5. Strategic Partnership between the University of Nairobi and the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa-to support the conceptualization and operationalization of the UoN disability Support Centre. Led by Prof. Collins Odote and Anne Assey.

6. The NOHED II Project-The Women's Children and Nature Rights in Environmental Governance Project. The project focuses on natural resource and environmental governance as processes that shape social, economic, and political priorities, the rules of collective action, and how conflicts between different actors, norms, and interests are resolved Led by Prof. Patricia Kamari Mbote and Prof. Collins Odote.

I want to congratulate these researchers and all the others that I did not mention for their dedication to the cause of the University of Nairobi.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Alumni occupy a special place in the University. We appreciate their valued engagement with the University through mentorships of students, provision of scholarships and internships. We recently signed a partnership agreement with the University of Nairobi Alumni Association whose goal is to help us work together better for the benefit of the University.

I want to appeal to our Alumni and all members of the convocation to come back and support their University, Your Alma mater, the Nurturing Mother.

And on that note allow me to recognize and appreciate Hon. Patrick Musimba, MP for Kibwezi who has offered to support the University in renovating his former hostel in Lower Kabete Campus. I have also received a commitment from a team of faculty of Arts Alumni who have promised to renovate one of the Halls in Lower State House Road.

I ask the dean of students and the Director of Advancement to take advantage of our strong convocations to mobilize resources for the support of our teaching facilities and research

Ladies and gentlemen,

You will agree with me that the University is about people. In the context of people reforms, students are very important stakeholders. There is a need to ensure comprehensive integration of students to own the University and make contributions towards the attainment of its objectives. To achieve this, the University has developed a work-study program policy that will accord needy students the opportunity to earn

as they learn. Consequently, all temporary jobs at the University of Nairobi will henceforth be reserved for students. Whether in research, teaching areas, or support services. The Dean of students shall work closely with the Office of the Chief Operations Officer to place students on Work-study programs within the University.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The University of Nairobi under my leadership has been keen on implementing measures to promote the realization of National Cohesion and National Values. Everybody irrespective of his /her background should consider the University of as his /her home. We shall accord everybody the opportunity to grow and thrive at the university without discrimination. We shall continue to promote diversity

During this difficult period of Covid-19 and the coming years, our values and systems will continue to be challenged. It is times like this that we all need to support one another, to strengthen our bonds. We can easily lose focus and destroy our great institution when we peddle falsehoods. The Academy should always thrive on truth. As scholars we shall always have a different perspective on every issue which is healthy however, we

should always place the University of Nairobi above individual interests.
Let us also dialogue! And therein we shall find the truth.

The University of Nairobi belongs to all of us! Once again congratulations
to the graduating class of 2021/2022.

Thank you and God bless you.

PROF.STEPHEN KIAMA GITAHI, PhD
VICE-CHANCELLOR.