



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**SPEECH BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF PETER M.F.  
MBITHI DURING THE ORIENTATION WEEK FOR FRESHERS  
2015/2016 ACADEMIC YEAR ON THURSDAY JANUARY 8, 2015  
AT 2.30 P.M. AT TAIFA HALL**

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**The Deputy Vice Chancellors**

**The College Principals**

**Deans and Directors**

**Student Leaders**

**First year students**

**Members of staff**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

**On behalf of the University of Nairobi community, I wish to welcome you to the University of Nairobi, a Premiere University in Kenya mandated to provide quality and holistic higher education and training. This week, you have been busy registering, and familiarizing yourselves with the facilities and amenities available to you in the University. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your excellent performance in the KCSE examinations which has enabled you to join this great University.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, this is the first, first years' group I am addressing as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nairobi after my appointment which commenced on January 6, 2015. Indeed, I am delighted to stand in front of you today, as a proud product of this great University. In 1978, I reported as a first year student in the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences to pursue a degree in Veterinary Medicine. In 1985, I**

**pursued a Masters degree in Clinical Studies and ten years later I graduated with my PhD still at this University. So from a former student perspective, I take this opportunity to most sincerely welcome you to the University of Nairobi. Today marks the first of your long sojourn with us, and we look forward to you graduating successfully on completion of your studies.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, the University of Nairobi has trained over 173,000 graduates who are employed in different professions and are serving the world in all sectors. Given its staff complement of 5,525 and 79,000 students, the University of Nairobi is a leading African university with a commendable status in the rest of the world. We are currently ranked number one in the region and number nine in Africa out of 1307 universities and a worldwide rank of 907 out of over 22,000 universities. Thus our contribution to capacity building**

**for realizing development needs worldwide can be felt through this number of high quality professionals. You will be tutored and mentored by a highly qualified staff comprising of 154 Professors, 276 Associate Professors among over 1700 highly qualified Academic staff. These staff have been responsible for teaching research and dissemination of their academic work.**

**This strong positioning is based on our commitment to admitting quality students and the quality of learning and teaching resources. The University of Nairobi has a strong asset base of over 102 billion that supports teaching and research. Indeed, the University is increasing this portfolio with the construction of the state of the art University Towers worth over KES 2.5 billion and other facilities University wide to boost our capacity to offer more academic services. It is my belief therefore, that in pursuit of your academic goals, you will**

**play your role in uplifting the standards of this great University and that you will find your niche and settle down.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, we expect that as you undertake your studies, to be exemplary achievers, world champions, and trend setters. This includes participating actively in club activities and professional associations, which should provide you with the opportunity to acquire leadership and personal skills, which you cannot get in a formal class or lesson. Your time at the University is important in specific and personal ways for each one of you, but overall, you should experience a growth in intellectual knowledge, personality, cultural enrichment, building personal friendships and career planning.**

**Indeed going forward, the University is planning to construct hostels through public private partnership to accommodate over 5,000 students. Once this project is complete, staggered**

**academic activities will be a thing of the past, as the University will have adequate facilities to accommodate all of you.**

**As you settle down into a new phase in your lives, I would like to remind you that you have a major challenge ahead of you. This challenge is to excel and live up to the expectations of your parents/guardians and Kenya at large.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, the University is an academic environment, and we expect you to attend classes, undertake tutorials, practicals, assignments and examinations as directed by your lecturers. If you fail to meet our academic expectations, expect stiff penalties. The lecturers are ready and committed to teaching you and empowering you with new skills, and in turn, you must consult them whenever you have any academic problems.**

**In addition, two offices - the Dean of Students and the Special Students' Advisor are open to deal with other problems that you might have. We also provide other services geared towards making your academic life in this University meaningful and fruitful. These include medical services with in-patient facilities at the students' sick bay, students' centre, common rooms, clubs, field excursions and church services. I encourage you to make good use of the resources availed to you to successfully complete your studies.**

**At this point, I would like to sound a caution; be conscious of the environment around you. For instance, the University of Nairobi is a very safe environment however, its location in the CBD, predisposes it to certain security risks. The Chief Security Officer has alerted you of the dark spots, but I want to specifically state that you must avoid certain places at night especially when you are unaccompanied. The areas around the**

**Uhuru Highway Tunnel, Museum gate, the Serena Bus Stop among others, should be avoided at all costs, after 7.00 p.m. At night, do not venture into town unaccompanied. It is your duty rather than that of security personnel, to ensure your safety. Report any suspicious looking persons to the security officers so that appropriate action can be taken immediately.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, I encourage you to enjoy your time and experience in campus, interact with people from different parts of the world, do not be cocooned in your discipline because university education is a holistic experience. John Dewey noted that “Education is a social process; education is growth; education is not preparation for life but it is life itself”. This implies that you must not only take in but rather, you must truly prepare yourself and others for another life. Self-discipline here is key. I urge you to read, understand and abide by the rules and regulations that govern student conduct, at**

**the end of the day, you will only have yourselves to blame if you do not achieve what you came to do in this University.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, university student life will accord you a lot of freedom, and with it comes some social risks. I urge you to keep away from activities that do not contribute positively to your future. Such activities include: use of drugs, destructive habit and, bad association, among others. The choice of who to associate with is yours; the sort of company you keep will determine not only how empowered you will be but also lower your opportunities.**

**I also urge you to be alert to political groupings that will be wooing you, be discerning because identifying with the wrong groups can cause you to lower your opportunities. At the University of Nairobi, we have not, do not and shall not get involved in partisan politics. We are loyal to the state of Kenya**

**and Government of the day by law established. We shall therefore, not tolerate partisan politics by students within the precincts of the University.**

**The HIV/AIDS pandemic is claiming many lives in the country and I urge all of you to lead responsible lives and avoid risky behavior, let abstinence be the norm and if you cannot, please use protection which is available in our clinics. We also have voluntary counseling and testing services.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, the University of Nairobi does not have a prescribed formal dress code for students, save at the College of Health Sciences. It is the responsibility of students and members of staff to observe standards of dress and manner that subscribe to modesty and decency. In doing so, you will be respecting yourself and those around you and above all as a point of reference or a mentor who will influence others.**

**As I close my remarks, I want to remind you that today, we induct you formally into the University community, with other orientation activities until you start your classes next week. The orientation week ushers in the most unforgettable and rewarding experiences in your life as you build your career at the University of Nairobi.**

**Finally a quote from someone I admire – Mother Teresa**

- **Life is an opportunity, benefit from it.**
- **Life is beauty, admire it.**
- **Life is a dream, realize it.**
- **Life is a challenge, meet it.**
- **Life is a duty, complete it.**

**I wish you the most fulfilling and rewarding experience at this great University.**

**Thank you.**