



## **UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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**SPEECH READ BY PROFESSOR GEORGE A.O.  
MAGOHA, VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF  
NAIROBI, DURING THE ORIENTATION OF 1<sup>st</sup>  
YEAR STUDENTS ON 31<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER, 2005 IN  
TAIFA HALL AT 9.00 A.M.**

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**1<sup>st</sup> Year Students of the University of Nairobi**

**Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)**

**Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration &  
Finance)**

**Principals of Colleges**

**Deans and Directors**

**Chairmen and Heads of Departments**

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

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**I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all to the University of Nairobi. On my behalf and that of the entire University of Nairobi Community, I would like to congratulate you for qualifying to come to this University despite the stiff competition for admission. I know that it was no easy task, and you therefore deserve our congratulations.**

**You have joined the oldest, the largest, most diverse, the most complex, the most dynamic, and the most advanced University in this region.**

**We trust that you will find your level quickly, where the lowest level, or the minimum expectation, is hard work, and to be the best that you can be.**

**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 the entire Kenyan population. It is only you as individuals, who will determine the end result of your stay in the University. The choices you make will therefore**

**be very important right from today, because they will greatly impact on your future. In this respect, I would like to urge each student to establish his/her goals and interests, which must be consistent with the objectives of the University.**

**As students of this University, you must uphold certain basic values. Some of these will include: respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others; honesty and integrity in all dealings; commitment to the pursuit of**

**excellence in your Academic work; and  
accountability for your actions and for your  
conduct.**

**I wish to caution you of inappropriate behaviour.  
Any student found guilty of disrupting the  
normal academic business of the University will  
face dire consequences. Again any student who  
breaks the laws of the land will be treated like  
any other Kenyan and will be handed over to the  
police.**

**Apart from academic programmes, the University also has other activities, which you can indulge in alongside your academic pursuit. These include sports, drama and other cultural activities.**

**Due to the decentralized structure of the University of Nairobi, which consists of six colleges in seven campuses, students in each college have distinct interests. As such, each college has student organizations, which serve as forums where student academic and welfare**

**matters are addressed.**

**In the course of this 1<sup>st</sup> Semester you will be introduced to your respective College based organizations and professional associations and I would like all of you to develop an interest in the activities of these organizations and make them affective forums of representation. As will be evident in the student handbook, that you have received today, there are mechanisms for sending your representatives to the highest academic and administrative organs of the**

**University as provided for in the statutes. These are the University Senate and the University Council where this are ably represented by your union SONU. I would like to at this juncture take this singular opportunity to thank most sincerely the current leadership of SONU for the most mature manner in which they have represented you their constituents.**

**The University of Nairobi believes in maximum dialogue to ensure that we have a conducive environment for academic debate, creativity and**

**stability. In addition to maximizing dialogue, 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 and Junior Common Room, clubs, retreats, field excursions and Church services. There are clubs that provide theatre, drama, games, music and we expect you to join the clubs of your choice in due course.**

**Let me at this juncture, indicate to you the revitalized vision of the University of Nairobi which is "to be a leading centre of excellence in the pursuit, development, dissemination and preservation of knowledge inspired and guided by African values, and committed to the virtues of quality and relevance; and to contribute to the dynamic and socio-economic and cultural development of Kenya, Eastern Africa and the world at large".**

**In the furtherance of this vision, we, for**

**example, utilize efficiently and effectively all the resources at our disposal, including time, space, facilities, equipment, and the like. We develop problem-solving and practical leadership skills that would stand you in good stead once you leave the University. We promote values of commitment to quality, integrity and service to the society, values which will eventually make you good and dependable citizens.**

**University of Nairobi aspires to provide education of the highest quality, to advance the**

**frontiers of knowledge and to prepare you for life, for work and for leadership. Achieving these aims, depends on the efforts of all of us, staff and students, across the University. It will also depend on the support given by our Government, our friends, your parents or guardians, our benefactors, and so forth.**

**You have joined the University of Nairobi at a time when it is carrying out major reforms. The aim of these reforms is to revitalize the University and turn it into a world-class**

**University, as outlined in our vision and mission statement. Chief among these reforms is the restructuring of the University. Departments, Faculties, Institutes or schools have either been collapsed, merged, created or otherwise transformed to enable the efficient delivery of services. Duplication of activities has thus been rooted out and hence management of University programmes will definitely be made easier.**

**Introduction of staff appraisal system is another reform that the University of Nairobi has adopted. For the first time this year, all**

**Members of Staff within the University were appraised on their performance you will form part of this appraisal system. The aim of this exercise is to identify those staff who are not committed to the service of the University. Once identified, the said staff will be either re-trained to make them effective, or they will be retrenched.**

**The University is currently also training its academic staff on teaching skills. Our desire is to employ the current and modern teaching**

**methodologies in our classes to ensure the effective delivery of Lectures. We want to ensure that students get value for their money, but more important, is to ensure that students are sufficiently equipped to enable them meet the demands of the job market when they finally graduate.**

**The University is also currently carrying out major management reforms. We have adopted the idea of inculcation of best practice in management. For instance, in a departure from**

**the past, the University has now adopted the system of appointing its Chief Officers through a competitive process. So far, the office of the Vice-Chancellor, of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration and Finance), and that of Principal College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences have been filled in this manner. This ensures that only the best person for the job is appointed. Further to the forgoing, the University is also currently training its top officers on management. Equipped with these managerial skills, the said staff will be able to**

**better perform on their jobs and thus meet the needs of the University. We are also developing a Service Charter that will ensure that service to students, staff and to the general public and other stakeholders is delivered on time and that it is of high quality. Students, and indeed all Kenyans, will receive quality service at all times.**

**The University continues, and will continue, to update and revise its academic programmes to be in line with current world trends. This forms a core part of the reforms within the University.**

**New courses will continue to be introduced, while old ones will be re-structured and re-packaged to conform with world trends. The market will guide us as to the type and content of the programmes that the University will roll out.**

**Therefore as the University carries out these reforms, you as students are also expected to play your part. You are expected to maintain discipline to enable the mounting and running of these programmes. Through your student bodies**

**you are also expected to embrace these reforms, and to alert the University Management on the changes that you also desire.**

**We tend to maintain a fast pace in the University and those who will be distracted from their academic work will find it very difficult to catch up. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to urge you to avoid situations that will compromise or put your academic work in jeopardy. Nothing should come in your way as you strive to achieve your precious goal, which**

**should be to pass all examinations, get the best grades and finally graduate in the stipulated time.**

**As you begin your various academic programmes you must realize that there are some social problems which as students, you must avoid at all costs. Some of thee include, over-indulgence in social excesses such as irresponsible drinking of alcohol, drug and substance abuse and involvement in unproductive and antisocial activities. Cases of pregnancies have continued**

**to cause major problems among students. This has inevitably interrupted studies and has sometimes led to failure.**

**Today, the most devastating health and social problem confronting our community of students and staff is the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has continued to afflict many in our country. The University has not been spared either and we have had students like you, who had so much potential and a bright future, lose their lives to the pandemic.**

**Despite commendable progress in research, of which scholars in this University are playing the most significant role, AIDs still has no cure. In this regard, I would like to strongly urge you to face matters related to this menace openly and with dignity and respect to yourselves, your friend and your associates.**

**The only sure way of protecting yourself is abstinence. If, however, you must do it, get realistic and practice safe and protected sex.**

**Further, you are strongly advised to establish your HIV status through getting tested. If you are HIV-negative, zealously protect your status. Otherwise, if you are HIV-positive, get into a health care regime. There are many Voluntary Counselling and testing (VCT) centres in Nairobi, including our own University Health Services. Take advantage of them. The University of Nairobi has also developed a HIV/AIDS policy, which include a Board of Common Undergraduate Course on the same for 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate students, a policy which will be formally rolled**

**out soon.**

**It is important at this early time in your studentship in this University that I repeat what I generally said earlier and underscore to you the need for good behaviour and the need for respect of other students and staff and indeed members of the public. You have read, signed and sworn a statement that you will abide by rules and regulations that govern the organizations, conduct and discipline of students of the University of Nairobi. We have also circulated to**

**all of you a Student Information Handbook that contains information on the University, including its history, its governance, academic matters, welfare services and extra-curriculum activities that are available. It is important that you familiarise yourself with all these documents and the matters therein because they set and explain the life at the University and our expectation of you as students of this University.**

**We expect you, both within and outside the University, to conduct yourselves responsibly**

**and with maturity and in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, personal discipline and morality. You are further expected to refrain from acts of indiscipline, to refrain from acts of thuggery, hooliganism, disorderly behaviour and violence; desist from misuse, malicious or wilful damage of University property; and avoid disturbing or assaulting or injuring other students, staff and members of the public. Commission of any acts of indiscipline will lead not only to disciplinary action by the University, but also involvement of the police**

**and the legal system of the land.**

**And finally, on behalf of us all at the University, I  
once again congratulate you for being selected to  
join us at the University of Nairobi and wish you  
every success in your just beginning university  
career.**

**Thank you and God bless you all.**