



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF PETER M.F.
MBITHI DURING THE ORIENTATION WEEK FOR FRESHERS
2016/2017 ACADEMIC YEAR ON THURSDAY SEPTEMBER
17, 2015 AT 2.30 P.M. AT THE GREAT COURT**

The Deputy Vice Chancellors

The College Principals

Deans and Directors

Student Leaders

First year students

Members of staff

Ladies and gentlemen

Ladies and gentlemen, you have finally made it to one of the finest universities in the continent. You are the very apex of the crème-de-la-crème. Please arise and join me in giving ourselves a thunderous round of applause.

Welcome to the University of Nairobi where we perspire to inspire!

I am aware you have been busy registering and familiarizing yourselves with the teaching and research facilities available to you. I hope that you also spared some time to revel in the lively atmosphere this University offers.

The typical story of a University student is a story of success against many odds, a sort of a hero's journey. Our people back in the villages speak ever so reverently of us and our respective journeys from weakness to strength. We all are spoken of like the legendary characters, who somehow save the world.

Most of us share a common story; the story of humble beginnings being born and bred in resource challenged areas of this nation. We have studied by candlelight at night and by sunlight in the day.

We have sought shelter under trees and made classrooms under the open skies. We have travelled miles to access electricity or water. Some of us are lucky to be the only children to have accessed education and by default bear on our shoulders the heavy promise of better days for our siblings and families.

We had no hope. Only a select few are children of fortune. Today our stars are well aligned and we are here on the strength of merit.

For most of us, University is the first real experience of freedom; freedom of intellect, freedom of expression and all manner of other attendant freedoms. I urge you to exercise this freedom responsibly.

The University has a different set of cultures and values. Unlike high school, you will be free to leave your lecture theatre if you are not interested. You will be free to skip a few morning classes after a night of a few too many for the road. You will be free to associate with all as your judgement will lead you.

You may, for the want of a better word, choose to sleep your way through University. Whatever you choose to do let me advise you that indeed choices have consequences.

Choose to irresponsibly sleep around and you will discover that the vagaries of HIV/AIDS and other STDs are like none you have read about.

If you must do it, I beseech thee...please *condomize!* Choose not to study and you will discover that the fountain of knowledge was never watered by effort spared and sweat not shed. Choose to

work hard and smart and a world of endless opportunities will unfold before thine eyes.

You can be anything you want to be, anything!

You can make of yourself the stuff of beautiful dreams.

You will have opportunities for leadership of the very highest calibre but you will also have opportunities that lead to damnation.

Ultimately the choices you elect will make or break you. Choose today which masters you shall serve.

It will not be an easy ride here but if you faithfully stay the course and keep your eye on the prize then 4, 5 or 6 years hence we will present you to the world; men and women who will render faithful service to the world.

A few of you will fall off, that is normal but I want to believe many of you will make it. Forget your stellar grades from the Secondary Schools; allow yourselves to be nobody for a while, not to be the star of the show.

You will learn valuable lessons in humility. True education makes us humble. Humility and character will open many doors for you and take you where brilliance cannot sustain you.

Your life is precious. Don't waste it on toxic relationships. Invest it for good cause and give your life meaning.

Set yourself free and free thy spirit; embrace the poetry of music, experience the wind of change, be swept away by the floods of love, be inspired by the imagination of a new world and let our faculty help you build it.

Consult us when in doubt, talk to us when in need of assurance, renew your spirituality through prayer and supplication, keep in good health and refresh your bodies by engaging in sports and your minds by visiting the library.

Equip yourselves with the soft skills of life by joining a club. Watch what you wear. The University has not prescribed a dress code for students but I urge you to be guided by the tenets of modesty and decency.

It is said that a well-dressed man, like a well-dressed thought, always appears to great advantage. Steer clear of bad company for bad company destroys good character.

My dear students, you have joined a University that is conscious of the environment and has a policy that clearly demonstrates our firm commitment to the protection of the environment as an integral part of good institutional practice. As a University, we are providing leadership in this aspect locally as well as internationally.

As incoming members of the University community, you have an important role to play in the continued realization of our environmental goals and objectives. We shall therefore expect you to contribute in transforming the University to green and sustainable campuses.

For avoidance of any doubt the University is and forever will be a political.

We shall sustain the true noble spirit of the academy. Play no party no partisan or tribal politics.

We seek to serve the Government of the day loyally, with commitment, respect, humility and diligence by law established.

My dear students as you leave this respected Great Court, my great commission to you is to follow your dreams.

Do not choose to chase other people's dreams, make choices that will make you happy, choose to tear the script, chart your own course and discover new shores.

Do not settle for less for you are neither sons nor daughters of a lesser God.

So then, welcome a board.

I wish thee well. May God bless you all!

Thank you.

PETER M.F. MBITHI, PhD, EBS
VICE CHANCELLOR
AND
PROFESSOR OF VETERINARY SURGERY

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