



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

ALUMNI SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. BETTY M. GIKONYO,
CHAIRPERSON, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 45TH GRADUATION CEREMONY OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI HELD ON FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 9,
2011

The Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Dr. Joseph Barage Wanjui

The Minister for Higher Education, Prof. Margaret Kamar, MP

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education

Chairman, Commission of Higher Education

Chancellors of Sister Universities

The Chairman of the University of Nairobi Council, Mr. John Simba

Members of the University of Nairobi Council

Vice-Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Prof. George A. O. Magoha

Vice-Chancellors of Sister Universities

Deputy Vice-Chancellors

Principals of Colleges

Deans of Faculties/Schools and Directors of Institutes

Lecturers and Staff

Fellow Alumni

Graduands

Parents and Guardians

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am greatly honored to be part of this 45th graduation ceremony on this 9th day of September, 2011.

Today, we celebrate with the 4,447 graduands who we will see conferred and awarded Degrees and Diplomas, marking the end of hours and years spent studying.

On behalf of the University of Nairobi Alumni Association (UONAA), I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Graduating class of 2011 who have had a remarkable performance and excelled in their different areas of study. You have done well, now sit back and enjoy today.

This graduation is as a consequence of prudent investment put in by various stakeholders in this educational institution.

I recall my sense of relief and achievement when I was in your position over 30 years ago, and yes, I still do remember! As a young medical graduate I was excited at the opportunities that the future held for me. I am sure that this is the same feeling you are experiencing irrespective of the field that you are in.

Ladies and Gentlemen today marks the commencement of the rest of your lives. That must sound heavy. Do not fret. You are the custodian of your future. We have given you the power to read, the power to write and all that pertains to the degree conferred upon you. The choice of how to leverage this power depends entirely on you.

In this next part of your journey, whether you choose employment, or to continue with your education, you must not go it alone. We are now living in the era of collaborations. Institutions and individuals are choosing to work with each other to complement their outcomes. Do not fear. You have a home prepared through which you will meet people of equal mind from where your deliberations can begin. This will be your new home away from home.

You may wonder where I am going with this; and no, I am not welcoming you to my private ward at The Karen Hospital.... I am speaking of the very home made by minds that went through this very Institution...The University Of Nairobi Alumni Association.

By virtue of graduating today, you are members of the Association, but for only one year. Kindly renew your membership after this, in order to remain informed of our events and to assist the association in the implementation of its activities.

To date, the association has achieved a number of milestones that include:-

1. Recruiting 20,000 alumni as life and annual members
2. The Launch of 6 discipline based chapters
3. Bursary Fund of KES 7 Million that assists needy students
4. Prize Awards of KES 10,000 to six of the best overall students in each of the colleges in recognition of their academic excellence and to motivate them to excel.
5. Participation in outreach activities
6. Branding of concrete benches that have dotted the open grounds around the university

You would be pleased to know that the UONAA is in the process of setting up a mentorship charter to support this cause. Through mentorship, we will ensure that all alumni have impacted relevant skills to prepare tomorrow's workforce. Unless we do this, we cannot enhance the UON brand or even retain longevity of UON.

Seated in this graduation square are Council members who hold leadership positions in various sectors of our economy. I implore you today to take a chance and mentor our graduands.

Graduands, you must surely know that mentorship cannot be a one-way street. You must move out of your comfort zones to seek mentors, and I assure you, there are such mentors amongst us today. If approached, please, let us stand together in spirit to build our comrades.

Graduands, you must continue to work hard, as there is no such thing as getting lucky. Luck is when opportunity meets preparedness, nothing else! You must be ready to put in the extra hours and do your home work. Seeking God at all times, I guarantee that you will have a bountiful harvest.

Being the avid readers that you are, I believe that you have heard of 'the 7 habits of Highly Effective People'. If you haven't, I urge you to find out what these habits are about and what this means for you.

I particularly like Stephen Covey's second habit, '**begin with the end in mind**'. He bases this on the principle that all things are created twice; first there is a mental image (first creation), and a physical or actual creation (second creation).

Take the example of constructing a home, as we are with the alumni centre. We already have the end in mind - a home where teams of alumni will congregate, either for recreation or serious deliberations as we forge to build a better economy, and fulfill the vision 2030.

The basis of beginning with the end in mind cannot be emphasized enough. Amongst us, I wonder how many saw this day, your important graduation day on the first day you arrived on campus. Would your having this day on your mind each day have improved your grades? Only you can answer this.

I choose to have the Alumni Centre on my mind each day as this will guide my activities towards actualizing it. I will be delighted to invite each of you to the grand ceremony when we open our doors. With the land already available, this dream is already coming true.

The University Of Nairobi Alumni Association (UONAA) has the desire and the enthusiasm to build an Alumni Centre and has appealed for support from its alumni, well wishers and friends. Since the inception of the association we have championed the plight of the alumni and we will be proud to witness the attainment of the monumental milestone of establishing the Alumni Centre.

The Centre will provide the much needed focus, where the alumni can actualize their potential as they socialize. In the Month of May this year, the Association hosted a successful Breakfast meeting at The Intercontinental Hotel, Nairobi to seek stakeholders' consensus on the project.

In addition, a successful Regional Alumni Dinner was held in Kisumu, with others planned for the near future. Our aim was to sensitize our alumni and friends on the noble project - the focus of UONAA's activities.

A Business Case on the project was developed, and found viable. The estimated cost is Ksh.600 million and the period of construction will be two (2) years.

The University of Nairobi is fully committed to ensuring that this dream of our Alma mater is realized and the Council has facilitated this by ensuring that the alumni has two representatives in Council.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, allow me to thank the University Council for donating a 1.5 acre piece of land at Aboretum Drive to put up our Alumni Centre. This is a clear demonstration of the University commitment to see the Association stand on its feet. On our part, we shall reciprocate this kind gesture by implementing our Business Case in the shortest time possible.

We believe that there is enough good will from within and without to complete the construction of our Alma Mater's Home "The Alumni Centre". My appeal goes out to the business community, donors and friends of the University of Nairobi to partner with us by supporting this venture.

I know that there is no sector in this country that has not benefited from the man power nurtured and realized by the University of Nairobi. Claim your stake at the Alumni Centre through generous contributions in form of cash, donating a brick/stone/block, professional expertise and more and help us realize this dream.

In conclusion, your alma mater has empowered you to do all that appertains to your respective degrees and Diplomas. In line with this, be the light to the world as a people with positive impact for role modeling, and assist the University realizes her vision of being a World Class University Committed to Scholarly Excellence.

Thank you and God bless you all.