



KARATINA UNIVERSITY

SPEECH BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. MUCAI MUCHIRI, DURING THE 10TH GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON FRIDAY, 9TH DECEMBER, 2022 AT THE GRADUATION SQUARE

Chancellor and the Chairperson of Council, Prof. Francis Gichaga,

Cabinet Secretary represented by Dr. Esther Thaara Muoria, PS State
Department for Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Members of the University Council,

Other Chairpersons and Council Members present;

Colleague Vice Chancellors Present;

Representatives of the National Government and County Government;

Members of the Clergy;

Distinguished Invited Guests;

Graduands;

Parents and guardians;

Staff members;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

I take this opportunity to welcome you all to Karatina University to celebrate with us during this 10th graduation ceremony for the conferment of degrees and diplomas. The ceremony is unique in the sense that the previous two ceremonies were virtual with only a handful of students appearing physically.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

We present 1,121 under graduate and post graduate students whom Senate has tested and found qualified for conferment of various undergraduate and post graduate degrees. Given the rigorous processes they have gone through from classroom teaching to practical and field work attachments, I am confident that they have what it takes to move to the next level of their careers. We have been receiving testimonials of what our alumni are doing in society and we are indeed very proud.

Beginning last year, we have been showcasing the achievements of these alumni on our social media platforms and I encourage you to look at the success stories. Our alumni are doing very well.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

This graduation ceremony is significant and nostalgic to me given that it is my last ceremony that I will participate in as Vice Chancellor. I will therefore take a few minutes to reflect on the achievements we have made over the last ten years.

Even as I do that, I acknowledge the great support I have received from my colleague staff, the members of Council, the community and the government. I particularly acknowledge the founding Council, led by its Chairman, the Late Prof. Charles Okidi for guiding policy development and implementation that led to the firm foundation of the institution at the initial stages.

On a personal level, I pay special tribute to Prof. Okidi for leading the Council at the time to foster a conducive working environment that resulted tremendous growth of the University.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

Karatina university has recorded significant growth in student numbers moving from 23 admitted in the year 2007 through 4,911 at the time of Charter in 2013 to 7,518 in 2022.

Over the same period, we have graduated more than 11,000 students beginning with 331 in our inaugural graduation held in 2013. The total number of postgraduate students who have been conferred PhDs and Masters stand at 165 to date.

The number of programmes has equally increased to 07 up from 68 accredited by Commission for University Education (CUE) in 2013. I am particularly proud of the success the University has made in establishing programmes in Health Sciences given the rigours of the accreditation process.

The university has a well-established and functional anatomy laboratory and have made reasonable progress in equipping the medical physiology laboratory. I urge Senate to maintain the momentum with a view of having a fully-fledged School of Health Sciences in the next two years.

The School of Pure and Applied Sciences has developed unique programmes such as BSc. In Electronics with informatics as well as specialized Masters in Physics, Chemistry and Biochemistry. These are currently before CUE.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

To support the increased number of students, the university has been recruiting qualified academic and administrative staff. This has been supplemented with a staff development programme that has seen a majority of Tutorial Fellows pursue PhDs with the support of the university. Currently, the university has 106 staff members with earned PhD.

Equally, we have developed physical and other resources to support service delivery. One such resource is the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software. So far, the system has seven fully developed modules, key among them being the academic management module. Through this module, lecturers are able to manage and monitor students' performance while students on the other hand can access important information including their academic reports and fee statements.

Prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the University acquired and installed a Learning Management System through which online classes have been offered. Recently, a recording studio was developed to enhance preparation of audio and visual lessons. It is expected that the University will now be in a position to recruit long distance and part-time students.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The University has equally done well in the field of research and community outreach. Academic staff have been involved in high level research. The most recent which is by no means the only one is the involvement of the Coordinator, Centre for Mountain Studies and Climate Change in the 20th Technical review of Biennial Update reports submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change (UNFCCC). The Tea Institute has also developed purple tea products that have since been commercialized. This is in addition to having their trademarks registered.

On community engagement, the University has in conjunction with various hospitals organized numerous medical camps that have targeted the vulnerable members of the society in immediate neighborhood and beyond. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the University donated both masks and foodstuffs to these same group.

While I am proud of these achievements, I am fully aware that more need to be done to generate finances for research and outreach. Academic faculty have been thoroughly sensitized on this endeavor.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The University started off with facilities inherited from KTDA. During the last ten years, we have built additional infrastructure such as the Multi-Purpose Resource Centre, a tuition block, 920 and 360-bed capacity hostels and a number of semi-permanent laboratories. The University has also procured high-end laboratory equipment and computing gadgets to enhance learning.

Currently, the University is constructing a 3000 situating capacity University library which is expected to be complete in early 2023. It is my hope that in the next financial year, the university will give priority to a Science and Innovation Building whose concept is already developed and submitted to the Ministry.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The place of financial resources in the growth of the University cannot be over emphasized. The major source of funding has been the government which finances both recurrent and development budgets. There has been a marginal increase in recurrent grants required to finance the University activities. On the other hand, internally generated funds in respect to tuition fees has been declining over time owing to severe decline in self sponsored students.

To address this, the University developed and has been implementing the Resource Mobilization Policy. A major effort in this direction has been an increased focus on fundable proposals writing. Several of the proposals have already been funded.

Further, the University has rationalized its expenditures so as to ensure financial sustainability. Cumulatively, the asset base has grown to over Kshs. 2.4B. Over the years, we have put in place measures to ensure the resources are applied prudently with no wastage. As I stand before you, I am proud that we have been reviewed positively by the Office of the Auditor General for prudent management of financial and other resources. I will be handing over an institution that does not owe any statutory or other monthly deductions. I pray that this culture continues.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

Over the time of our existence as a University, we have made deliberate effort to work with several partners. These include academic and industry players. A few of those that have been very active include Zhangzhou College of Science and Technology in China and the Tea Directorate on tea training, Humboldt University in the field of research and co-teaching, Saarland University for assisting the University entrench the Entrepreneurial Concept and running innovation start-ups, Huawei ICT Academic on training and certification of staff.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

As I conclude, I would like once again, on behalf of the University Senate and the University Community, to sincerely congratulate our graduands. I would like to thank you all for the truly humbling resilience and diligence that you have displayed in facing the challenges associated with online learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Your courage and proactivity demonstrates a mature understanding of the demands on 21st Century especially on the role of ICT.

We have done our part as a University to prepare you for the future ahead. It is our hope that you will remain good ambassadors of the University and trust that you will serve the country with dedication. I also encourage you to join the alumni association as this will give you a platform for continued engagement with the University and your former comrades.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The Book of Ecclesiastics in the Bible reminds us that to ‘everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven... a time for being born and a time to die, a time to laugh and a time to cry’. For me the time is almost here to hand over. This has been a very wonderful opportunity to have, with the help of the Almighty God, served as the founding Vice Chancellor of Karatina University. I have cherished my time at Karatina University and I am grateful to have joined this inspiring community. And

although in June, 2023 I will exit the Vice Chancellor's office, I will always be a part of this community and a champion for our University. There is much I will miss – the wonderful students, faculty, staff, alumni, Council member, donors. Friends and supporters who have been by my side along the way.

I am also fully aware that in our interactions, some of you may have been offended by actions that I took in the interest of the University. I indulge you to free yourselves from any hard feelings you may have developed.

Finally, I wish to thank all stakeholders who have supported us greatly and without whom our work would be impossible. We thank the Ministry of Education, The National Treasury, parents and guardians of the graduands before us today. I also wish to thank various philanthropists and bursary committees who have assisted needy students. Finally, may I reiterate our appreciation to all of you that joined us today for this auspicious occasion.

May God Bless you all. God Bless Karatina University, God Bless Kenya.

Prof. Mucai Muchiri
Vice Chancellor
Karatina University
P.O Box 1957-10101
Karatina, Kenya.
Email: vc@karu.ac.ke
Website: www.karu.ac.ke
Tel: +254 20 2176713
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