UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SPEECH BY THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI CHANCELLOR
DR. VIJOO RATTANSI DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE
CHANCELLOR’S VISITATION PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY,
MARCH 15, 2016 IN TAIFA HALL, AT 2.00 P.M.
Chairman University of Nairobi Council,
The Vice Chancellor,
The University Management Team,
Academic and non-academic staff,
The Student fraternity,
Invited guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
I feel honoured and privileged this afternoon by your presence in this great hall, for you have created time from your busy schedules to join us as we set yet another example of a leading university in the region. Every time I come to the University, I am awed by the high concentration of academicians and so much brain power and brilliance. The concentration is palpable in this hall.

From the professors to the students, each one of you is gifted and trained in certain fields. This gives me hope amidst so much negative news in the media that all is not lost for with this concentration of brain power we, in this university, can provide a solution to the challenges afflicting our society. That is our calling.
Promoting the brand

I am sure we are here today because we jointly believe in the University of Nairobi. The University is a strong brand in the region built painstakingly over time. We are proud of the brand and are on the move to claim our space in the international scene as reflected in the current ranking in Africa.

Our brand has been validated over and over again by the strong performance and visits by prominent personalities. Our brand is similarly validated by the growing demand of our academic programmes and absorption of our graduates in the labour market.
Today we know that anybody seeking academic excellence thinks about the University of Nairobi. We have a reason to be excited.

It is the urgency to find and claim our space in the international arena and sustain the level of excitement created by current rankings that has led to the appointment of the Visitation Panel that we are launching today. As the Vice Chancellor has said, we have made tremendous progress towards excellence as stated in our strategy documents.

The works I see from the University and the confidence of our students attest to our character. We have achieved
much, but can achieve more if we work more closely together and cut out sibling fighting among ourselves.

**Protecting the image**

As we endeavour to become more competitive, there is a need for each one of us to be the carrier of the image of the University. The branding of the institution should as much as possible be reflected in ourselves irrespective of position and role in the University. The ways in which we carry ourselves and conduct our business determine the number of friends and well wishers that we attract and/or lose.
At this point in the development of the University we need an increasing number of people of goodwill on our side to help us grow the endowment fund and put up more facilities to improve the quality of our training and academic programmes, and ultimately deliver quality products to the economy.

The attraction of people of goodwill depends on the image we project. It is therefore the responsibility of each one of us to work for an attractive image for the sustenance of our brand.
Stable environment
I want to thank the University community for peace and tranquility that have been witnessed. This has enabled us to cover a significant distance in the implementation of our projects, and enjoy an uninterrupted learning cycle. This has earned us respect by the community. We should be proud of this achievement, and restrain ourselves from activities that disrupt stability and serenity that we have enjoyed.

Ethical values for excellence
As the Vice Chancellor has said, *Greatness is largely a matter of conscious choice, and discipline.* We are in the University by choice. We have achieved progress and a significant level of academic excellence because of the
choices made at critical points. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as quoted by Killerman (2004) in his book “Bad Leadership” reminds us that “we have an extraordinary capacity for good... and a remarkable capacity for evil”. It is therefore not lost to us that the choices we make on a day-to-day basis have potential for good or bad for the University and the society.

Such choices are informed by our ethical values and the sense of right and wrong. Repeated choices crystallize into culture which carries the DNA for success or failure. We all want success for the University because we have a stake in its survival and development. We share the same vision. This should not be dampened by the conflicts that we have
experienced in the recent past. The conflicts show that we are normal. We shall recover fully and come out stronger. The only thing to watch out for is the possibility of disconnect between socially acceptable goals and the means for their achievement within the university community.

If you are seated next to a Sociologist, ask them quietly to tell you what their father, Emile Durkheim, says about such disconnect. They have a story that might even explain the cause of the depressing news that have dominated the media in the last four months or so. We do not want to go that route.
The repertoire of strategic documents and reports show where we have been, where we want to go and how we shall move as a team. We have vowed to ourselves that we shall uphold:

- Freedom of thought;
- Innovativeness and creativity;
- Good governance and integrity;
- Team spirit and team work;
- Professionalism;
- Quality customer service;
- Responsible citizenship; and
- National cohesion.
These values are as important to the students as they are to us in teaching positions, those in leadership as well as those in management. Interestingly, they are part of what we teach. We have an opportunity to practice what we teach for mutual benefits.

**Proceeding as a team**

While the strategies that we have painstakingly worked out provide the road map to success, the sum of the values is the vehicle to success. We should consistently ask ourselves whether we are in the vehicle or watching the vehicle drive away. I am persuaded we are in this vehicle as a team. In the team we support each other as in the army.
To illustrate how a team works, allow me to borrow from the speech of George Smith Parton Jnr., Commander of the Third American Army on the eve of D-day invasion of Normandy:

"An army is a team. It lives, eats, sleeps, and fights as a team....And we have the best team—we have the finest food and equipment, the best spirit and the best men in the world. Why, by God, I actually pity these poor bastards we're going up against. All the real heroes are not storybook combat fighters. Every single man in the army plays a vital role. So don't ever let up. Don't ever think that your job is unimportant. What if every truck driver decided that he didn't like the whine of the shells and turned yellow and jumped headlong
into a ditch? That cowardly bastard could say to himself, 'Hell, they won't miss me, just one man in thousands.' What if every man said that? Where in the hell would we be then? No, thank God, Americans don't say that. Every man does his job. Every man is important. The ordnance men are needed to supply the guns, the quartermaster is needed to bring up the food and clothes for us because where we are going there isn't a hell of a lot to steal. Every last damn man in the mess hall, even the one who boils the water to keep us from getting the GI shits, has a job to do. Each man must think not only of himself, but think of his buddy fighting alongside him. We don't want yellow cowards in the army”
There we are. Each one of us is important to the mission for positioning the University of Nairobi as a world-class university. This will be reflected in our performance. There are indicators that we have governance challenges that threaten the realization of the performance that we are capable of delivering.

We need to work on the challenges for the purpose of strengthening the brand and securing the future. It for this reason that the visitation team has been invited to enable us identify challenges on our journey more clearly and construct bridges to take us over safely. At the end of the visitation we shall be one happy team destined for great achievements.
To the visitation team, the University has great confidence in you. In this regard you are free to consult and visit university premises without restrictions. Any information needed for the success of your assignment shall be provided by the management team and other resourceful members of the university community. As you make history for the first university visitation in Kenya, I wish you well and good health. We believe in you.
With those many words, it is now my humble duty to launch the Visitation Panel.

God bless,
God bless University of Nairobi,
God bless Kenya

DR. VIJOO RATTANSI
CHANCELLOR