



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF
PETER M.F. MBITHI DURING THE ORIENTATION
WEEK FOR FRESHERS OF CHSS AND CEES,
2017/2018 ACADEMIC YEAR ON THURSDAY,
JANUARY 12, 2017 AT 2.30 P.M. AT THE GREAT
COURT**

The Deputy Vice Chancellors

The College Principals

Deans and Directors

Student Leaders

Dear Freshmen/Women

Members of staff

Ladies and gentlemen

Our distinguished freshmen, Ladies and gentlemen, you have been admitted to the University of Nairobi, the leading University in Eastern and Central Africa and one of the best universities in Africa. It is the beginning of a journey towards the attainment of your dreams. *Kindly arise and join me in giving ourselves a thunderous round of applause.*

Welcome to the University of Nairobi, the University with a rich history and exemplary tradition of excellence.

I am aware that for the last 4 days, you have been busy registering and familiarizing yourselves with the teaching, research and other facilities available to you. I hope that you also spared some time to sample the serene and diverse environment that this University offers.

As you all know, the typical story of a University student in Kenya is a story of success against many odds, a sort of a hero's journey. From the humble backgrounds, many of you have managed to secure university admission in an increasingly competitive environment. You are spoken of like the legendary characters, which will somehow save their kins from all the maladies of this world.

Majority of you share a common story; the story of humble beginnings; being born and bred in resource challenged regions of this nation. Some have studied by candlelight at night and by sunlight in the day.

They have sought shelter under trees and transformed open fields into classrooms. They have travelled many kilometres to access electricity or water. Some of you are lucky to be the only children to have accessed reasonable

education and by default, bear on your shoulders the heavy responsibility of transforming the lives of our siblings and families.

Some had no hope. Only a select few are children of fortune. Today your stars are beginning to shine.

For many of you, the University is the first real experience of real freedom; freedom of intellect, freedom of expression and all manner of other

attendant freedoms. I urge you to exercise this freedom responsibly.

The University - and indeed our university is based right inside the Kenya's capital city. It has different sub- cultures and values. Unlike high school, you will be free to leave your lecture theatre at will.

You will be free to skip a few morning classes after a night of one too many. You will be free to

associate with every Tom, Dick and Harry as your judgement will lead you.

There are indeed those who, for want of a better word, may choose to experience the sweet romance of campus life. But whatever you choose to do let me advise you that indeed choices have consequences.

If you choose to skip classes, I can certainly warn you that you will experience difficulties in passing your exams.

If you choose to irresponsibly sleep around, you will discover that the vagaries of HIV/AIDS and other STDs have no respect for any one.

If you must do it, I beseech you, please *use protection!* Choose not to study and you will discover that the fountain of knowledge was

never watered by effort spared and sweat not shed.

I therefore urge you to work hard and work smart! A world of endless opportunities will unfold before your very own eyes.

You can be the somebody you want to be and you can choose to be a social derelict.

You have the chance to dream big and reap big here at the University of Nairobi.

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

Ultimately, the choices you pick will make or break you. Choose today which masters you want to serve.

It will not be an easy ride here but if you faithfully stay the course and keep your eyes on the price, then 4, 5 or 6 years down the line, we shall present you to the world; men and women who will render distinguished service to society.

From experience, I am aware that a few of you will fall off; that is sad indeed but I want to believe many of you will make it. Forget about your stellar grades in your secondary schools;

allow yourselves to be a nobody for a while, not to be the star of the show.

You must also be ready to learn valuable lessons in humility. True education makes us humble. Humility and good character will open many doors for you and take you where brilliance cannot.

Your life is precious! Don't waste it on toxic relationships. Invest your time in worthy causes and give your life a 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 your faculty help you build it.

Always consult when in doubt, talk to us when in need of assistance, 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.

Outside the lecture halls, 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 freshers, you have joined a University that is conscious of the environment and has a policy that clearly demonstrates our firm commitment to respect, for and protection of the environment as an integral part of good

corporate values. Remember this University is the home of the legendary Wangari Maathai.

As a University, we are providing leadership in this respect 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 will continue to be apolitical.

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

**We commit to serve the Government of the day
loyally as by law established, with respect,
humility and diligence.**

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

**Do not 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 to the University.**

I wish thee well. May God bless you all!

Thank you.

PETER M.F. MBITHI, PhD, EBS

VICE CHANCELLOR

AND

PROFESSOR OF VETERINARY SURGERY