SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF
PETER M.F. MBITHI DURING THE ORIENTATION
WEEK FOR FRESHERS 2017/2018 ACADEMIC
YEAR FOR CHSS ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22,
2017 AT 2.00 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
I am delighted this afternoon to welcome freshmen from the college of Humanities and Social Sciences to the University of Nairobi community. Let me start by congratulating you for the hard work that earned you a place to this prestigious university in Eastern and Central Africa. The University was recently ranked number 7 in Africa and number 1 in sub-Saharan Africa.
I know you have been going through an elaborate induction program that included familiarization with your colleagues, interaction with university staff and tour of facilities and infrastructure for academic and extra-curricular activities. You also need to learn and internalize our values. We extol the virtues of hard work and excellence collectively and individually.
This University is well endowed with sufficient resources both human and infrastructure that will enable us to empower and transform you to a completely different human being.

But it all depends on you and the path you choose to follow during your stay at this University.

Many of us in front here started where you are starting today. I believe we all have different
exciting stories that we can tell if time could allow.

We have travelled a long journey to reach where we are today but I believe you can do better than us because you are living in an age whose technology has simplified learning and made it easier for you. You only need to be smart and focussed.
The unique location of the University in the Central business district should be a motivation for you instead of being a destruction.

The University - and ours in Kenya’s capital city has different sets of sub-cultures. You should be cautious of bad influences from those sub-cultures.

For most of you, 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.

You will be free to skip a few morning classes after a night of one too many. 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 all the way-across-to Koinange Street. But whatever you choose to do let me advise you that choices have consequences.

If you choose to skip classes, I can certainly warn you that you will experience difficulties in passing your exams.
Let me warn you in advance that in this University, we punish those who engage in exam cheating or any form of academic fraud very severely.

Choose to be a criminal and the long arm of the law will catch up with you. You are not insulated from the full force of the law simply because you are a university student.
If you choose to irresponsibly sleep around, 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 you, 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.
If you choose to work hard, a world of endless opportunities will unfold before your very own eyes.

You can be somebody you want to be and you can choose to be, anything that you want.

The University is anxiously waiting for the next Nobel Prize Winner after Wangari Mathai. Who Knows? It could be you!
The University encourages you to develop a culture of creativity and innovation. Always strive to solve people’s problems instead of creating one and who knows? You might just be the next Jack Ma or Bill Gates!

You can dream big like Martin Luther King and reap big here at the University of Nairobi. Recently one of our students from the School of Arts and Design created a design that was bought
by Bata Shoe Company. Those are the kind of inspiring stories we want to hear from you.

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

Ultimately, your own actions will make or break you. Choose today which master to serve.
I can assure you, it will not be an easy ride here but if you faithfully stay the course and keep your eye on the price, then 4, 5 or 6 years down the line we will present you to the world; men and women who will render distinguished service to the world.

Unfortunately, a few of you will fall off, but I want to believe many of you will make it. Forget about 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 also 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 sustain you.

Your life is precious. Don't waste it on toxic relationships. Invest it for a good cause and give your life meaning.
Always consult when in doubt, talk to us when in need of assurance, renew your spirituality through prayer and supplication; we have a fully established chaplaincy under the Dean of Students to take care of your spiritual needs.

Keep in good health and refresh your bodies by engaging in sports and your minds by visiting the library.
Outside the lecture hall, equip yourselves with the soft skills of life by joining a club.

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. Keep your environment clean including your rooms.
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 politically neutral to engender freedom of thought, a culture of tolerance and appreciation of our national diversity and rich heritage.

We shall sustain the true noble spirit of the academy. Play no partisan or tribal politics. We shall forever remain, “The University”.
Watch out for any danger and keep your safe distance. The University does not condone extremism and dogmatism. In this era of extreme ideologies and terrorism, I urge you to be your brother’s keeper.

As you leave this hallowed Great Court, my great commission to you is to follow your dreams.

Do not 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.
With those few remarks, I officially initiate you to become bonafide members of the University of Nairobi fraternity.

Karibuni! I wish thee well. May God bless you all!

Thank you.

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