SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF PETER M.F. MBITHI DURING THE ORIENTATION WEEK FOR FRESHERS 2018/2019 ACADEMIC YEAR ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 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 2017 freshmen 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.

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.

The University of Nairobi 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 and 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 through hard work and discipline.

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.
The University - and ours in Kenya’s capital city - has different sets of sub-cultures. Unlike high school, you will be free to leave your lecture theatre if you want.

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 and work smart, 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 and reap big here at the University of Nairobi.

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.

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 our faculty help you build it.

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. 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 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.
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.

We shall serve the Government of the day loyally and committedly 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 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 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