

SPEECH BY PROF. PAUL MUSILI WAMBUA, CHANCELLOR,
UNIVERSITY OF EMBU, DURING THE CHANCELLOR'S FIRST *STATE OF
THE UNIVERSITY* ADDRESS HELD ON 12TH JANUARY, 2018

- ✓ H.E. Governor Embu County, Hon. Martin Nyaga Wambora,
- ✓ Chairman of Council, Dr. Margaret Gikuhi,
- ✓ Members of Council,
- ✓ Acting Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Daniel Mugendi,
- ✓ University Management Board,
- ✓ Members of the University Senate,
- ✓ Staff and students,
- ✓ Our Stakeholders,
- ✓ Distinguished Guests,
- ✓ Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

Happy New Year to you all.

Thank you Professor Mugendi for the generous introduction.

I am happy to see each one of you at the beginning of this New Year, 2018. I hope you had a wonderful festive season and that you ushered the New Year well. I also note that the 2nd Semester 2017/2018 commenced last week and I am sure that the students and members of academic staff are now settled and continuing with the academic work and programmes smoothly.

I thank God for keeping you well and bringing you back to the University safely to continue with our journey of academic excellence.

It has been a pleasure and honour for me to meet and work with you all during my first year as the Chancellor of this great institution. I am glad that we have already achieved so much together in our shared aspirations for the University of Embu since we received the Charter.

First let me take this early opportunity to thank the Chairperson of the University Council, Dr. Margaret Gikuhi and the members of Council for the wonderful work you have done to steer this University from its humble beginnings to the point where it is today.

Secondly, I thank the acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Daniel Mugendi and the University Management for your commitment and focus in growing the University from a small institution of 123 students to the current population of over 5000 students. It takes both personal and team effort to achieve this sort of feat in just under 5 years of existence. Congratulations for a job well done.

Next, I must say that I am proud of our students, faculty, and staff. We have shown the world that despite the challenges that we may have faced along the way, it is possible to pioneer and build a University from Scratch through working together, listening to, and learning from one another and focusing on the objectives that bind us together.

I thank you all for that.

Many thanks to all our stakeholders for your willingness to help the University of Embu grow. Specifically, I want to thank the National Government through the Ministry of Education, for putting its trust in us to lead this institution and for continuing to support the University through annual financial capitation. I also thank our parents, guardians and sponsors for the sacrifices they endure to have our students on campus.

I also want to express our appreciation to the Embu County Governor, His Excellency, Hon. Martin Nyaga Wambora for his steadfast commitment in supporting the University cause. It is through the Governor's focus and vision for Embu County that we have been able to grow and develop the University to where it is today.

I cannot forget to record my appreciation to the political leadership in the County, the Senator, Members of Parliament, MCAs, the County Administration led by the County Commissioner, and the Embu County Community as a whole, for your unwavering support to the University in many ways, such as hosting our students and staff, providing teaching practice and attachment opportunities, providing housing and social amenities for our University Community like transport, housing, schools

for the children of our staff and promoting security and safety of our students and staff, among others.

As we all know, support from the county Leadership and the community is very crucial for the smooth operation of the University. We have witnessed other areas in this Country where political interference threatens the continued peaceful operation of some universities.

The University also continues to be a major economic stimulant for the County through provision of employment opportunities, training of manpower, and direct injection of huge capital to the County economy, among others.

I would also like to thank the local Community for their spirited efforts to have the University established in Kirimari Ward of Manyatta Constituency. This is the perfect place for the University since it is close to most of the social amenities that are needed by our students and staff and also for the benefit of the population as it is easily accessible by all.

We benefit from being hosted in a County that is the *Land of Opportunities*. We are indeed in the middle of everywhere and everything – geographically. I cannot think of a better location for a University to be than in Embu County. The weather is perfect, the environment is pleasant and friendly, the people are warm and welcoming, food is plentiful, water is clean and adequate and electric power rarely interrupted. We should never take this for granted.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am immensely proud of this institution, its mission and vision, its core values, its community, and most importantly, its impact on our Country's socio-economic development. I would like you all to know that each and every day I consider serving as the Chancellor of this great institution a great opportunity, a wonderful challenge, and an assignment that I cherish with great pride. I must admit, it is hard to believe that since my installation as Chancellor on 26th November 2016, about 14 months have now passed.

I had the opportunity to officiate at the first Graduation Ceremony as the Chancellor on 15th September, 2017, where I conferred 278 graduates with various degrees and awarded certificates and diplomas. This to me is a great milestone in the history of this University.

I look forward to our continued growth to even greater heights of success. It is the reason that I requested to have this dialogue with you all today.

This is the First University of Embu - *State of the University Address* - where we meet to talk about our University, the enhanced opportunities which lie ahead for us and also discuss how we can enhance our efforts more collaboratively for the betterment of the University. We will work together to make this event an annual activity in the University calendar so that we can take stock of our achievements and chart the way forward.

Today, I certainly have much to cover with you. Our road map for the discussion will include:

1. Re-affirming our mission and purpose;
2. Reviewing our current status and achievements;
3. Surveying the external landscape and the Challenges we face; and
4. Focusing with precision on our mission as we forge ahead into the next 5 years of service.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Higher education has never been more needed for career success and to better understand and improve the human and natural environmental condition than it is today.

The University of Embu is one of the fastest growing institutions of higher learning in Kenya. It was awarded the Charter for fully-fledged University status just over a year ago, on 7th October, 2016 by His Excellency the President, Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta. The University is founded on a rich legacy of an agricultural institution inherited from its predecessor – the Embu Agricultural Staff Training Institute (EAST College). Its Mission is to generate, advance and disseminate knowledge through training, research and innovation for the development of Humanity.

When the University was established, we started with courses in Agriculture, Pure and Applied Sciences, but today we have grown the menu to include programmes in;

- Education and Social Sciences
- Business and Economics

- Nursing
- Computer Science

The University has since developed and implemented new Academic and other Programmes to enhance its competitiveness. These include collaborations and linkages with local, national and international partners, community outreach and youth empowerment programmes, among others.

The University now offers a wide spectrum of areas of study, research, creativity and innovation as well as discovery as a research-intensive public university.

As a result, the University has contributed immensely to the National Development Agenda through training of highly qualified graduates that easily fit into the job market in various fields. Our graduates are also equipped with entrepreneurship skills for self-employment and are in great demand.

To achieve its mission, the University works in collaboration with stakeholders to;

- 1) Provide affordable and accessible education for all;
- 2) Conduct cutting-edge and applied research in areas that matter to the public; and
- 3) Improve the quality of life and economic well-being through Extension services and many other programmes and services.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The last four years have been filled with many achievements for our institution. Allow me now to highlight some of the major achievements that have been recorded by the University.

- Upon establishment, the University inherited buildings and other infrastructure that were dilapidated, run-down and inadequate for University-level operations. The University then embarked on major renovations and refurbishment efforts to upgrade the facilities. The renovation and refurbishment work covered hostels, tuition facilities, science and computer laboratories, students and

staff welfare amenities and offices. This phase has since been completed leading to increased enrolment in student numbers and attraction of highly competent and qualified staff. It has also provided employment opportunities to many skilled and non-skilled workforce and contractors from the region engaged in the construction works.

- We have continued to significantly invest in our physical infrastructure to meet current demands as well as planned growth. This past year saw a record number of infrastructure projects come to completion with more planned for the years ahead. Some of the major infrastructural developments are:
 - ✓ Construction of two major facilities that are deemed to change the image of this University, these are the Administration Building and the phase one of the New Library.
 - ✓ New academic facilities such as the library, science laboratories and computer labs.
 - ✓ New students' welfare facilities such as playgrounds, hostels, recreation centre and shopping centre.
- Our student population rose to 5,459 in September 2017 when we received a record 1500 new students from Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS). It is worth noting that more and more students are now selecting UoEm as their first Choice University.
- Recruitment of highly qualified and experienced staff currently totaling to 323.
- Our faculty and students continued to productively publish their works in the leading publications across multiple disciplines with creative activity contributed in some of the most prestigious conferences and seminars around the world. As a result, the University ranking among global Universities has gradually improved, although much more needs to be done.
- On the research front, the University has continued to do very well. Our staff are engaged in major research initiatives which have

attracted research and equipment grants. During the Financial Year 2016/2017, the University received Ksh. 63,525,403 from the National Research Fund (NRF) and research funding worth 38, 288 US Dollars from other partners for various research projects to be undertaken by our staff. On behalf of the University community, I thank the National Research Fund and all our partners for the research grants that they have awarded to the University.

- Establishment of Chancellor's Award and Postgraduate Scholarships and Graduate Assistantship positions for the best students every year. Currently, over 20 graduates have benefitted from this programme.
- The University has continued to excel in Performance Contracting by recording major achievements and favorable performance rankings. We have managed to attain the EXCELLENT score in performance contracting for the last three years.
- The University has also continued to uphold its commitment to its Quality Management System - ISO 9001:2008. Currently, we are in the process of transitioning to ISO 9001:2015 and implementing the ISO 27001:2013 Information Security Management System (ISMS). Of great interest, is that various institutions, regional and international, have been visiting the University on benchmarking missions due to the high level of implementation of Quality Management System.
- The University ensures that its operations and programmes adhere to all regulatory and University standards for quality assurance. For instance, in February 2017, the Commission for University Education (CUE) carried out a Quality Audit of all Universities in the Country and declared the University of Embu as one of the few Universities that was fully compliant with the University Regulations and Quality Standards.
- Reliable internet connection with a bandwidth of 120 mbps in the University and high quality Library resources comprising of e-resources and online public access resources. University of Embu boasts of over 1 million e-books and e-resources.

- Successful completion by two cohorts of students since establishment culminating in two Graduation Ceremonies in 2016 and 2017. Our pioneer students who enrolled in April, 2013 (2 semesters behind their peers), were accelerated and graduated during the 1st Graduation Ceremony on 30th September, together or slightly ahead of some of their peers who enrolled in September, 2012. 123 graduates were conferred with various degrees and awarded certificates and Diplomas. 278 graduated in 2017 with various Degrees and Diplomas as I stated earlier.
- Increase in courses offered from 8 offered at inception in 2013 to 78 programmes offered currently in various disciplines.
- The University has established numerous collaborations and partnerships with major local organisations including Rianjagi Farmers' Co-operative Society, national institutions such as Sasini Ltd, the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), Kenya Union of Post-Primary Education Teachers (KUPPET) and Embu Level 5 Hospital among others; and international institutions like Kirkhouse Trust, University of Toronto Canada, and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences to name a few. I am reliably informed of the partnership with Njukiri/Nthambo Irrigation CBO that is almost being concluded (*Chairman and Committee members are in attendance*) for the mutual benefit of the Community and the University.
- The University has continued to use available resources prudently; honour its financial obligations; and maintained full compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. For instance, KRA, NHIF, NSSF and HELB have issued the University with Compliance Certificates every year. Tendering Process is very transparent and above board. The University has no pending bills or outstanding liabilities, and Financial Statements are submitted to the Auditor General within stipulated period. In addition, the University's Staff salaries and payment to part-timers and suppliers are made promptly. I am reliably informed that indeed customers are pleasantly supplied when called to collect their payment, or to advise on banking details. Thus the University's financial health is sound.
- University of Embu staff have participated in many prestigious conferences such as the *First East African Commission Conference*,

held in Kampala, Uganda, The *World Statistics Conference* in Morocco, the *Dedan Kimathi University of Technology International Conference on Science, Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship* and the *Strathmore International Mathematics Conference* have over 436 publications in peer reviewed and other journals within the short period of the University's existence.

- Well established student government and an all-inclusive, dialogue-based mechanism for customer satisfaction and complaints resolution mechanism.
- Harmonious working relationship between students, staff, management & community through communication, dialogue and good relations with Unions.

Ladies and gentlemen;

Achievements of this level will require us to innovate in a number of ways, including increasing levels of financial revenue, maximizing the capacity of our academic and University infrastructure, expanding our academic Programmes and investing in our staff to meet the anticipated growth. I am happy the University Council and Management are currently engaged in addressing these concerns.

We must also continue to expand and invest in elevating and supporting student progression and timely completion rates. We must work to achieve progression rates above 90% for all our programmes. We must continue to invest in and elevate our academic support systems, including more personalized academic support and advising for our students. Each student should strive to have a personal academic accountability plan that will help in monitoring progress with the help of departmental and school advisors.

Ladies and gentlemen;

From the achievements we have enumerated and many more that we are silent about, it is justifiable for me to say that the state of our University in delivering on its mission is solid, committed and passionate, and I want to express to our Council, Management, Senate, Staff, Students and all stakeholders my hearty congratulations and my unwavering commitment to support your efforts for an exceptional future of accomplishment and impact to society.

Today, I would ask each one of you to think with me about the years that we have ahead for UoEM. While we have experienced a tremendous amount of momentum in the past several years, we do have some significant challenges in maintaining that momentum and accelerating ahead into the future.

I appeal to all our leaders for more partnerships and support especially in the area of infrastructural development in the University to accommodate more staff and students – these include construction of more hostels, more classrooms and academic facilities, internal road network, sewerage and drainage works, street lighting and even allocating the University more land for future expansion. It is our dream that one day, the University of Embu will be the largest contributor to the Embu County economy when it finally becomes a University City like Cambridge or Oxford.

Already, plans are underway to establish the School of Medicine and other Health Sciences-related programmes in collaboration with the Embu Level 5 Teaching and Referral Hospital. Plans are also at an advanced stage for the establishment of the School of Law, and immediately thereafter, the School of Hospitality.

I also appeal for support in resource mobilization. We are soon launching the University's Endowment and we will be happy if you all participate in this endeavor when the time comes.

Challenges

As we move forward in every milestone, the external environment around us presents both opportunities and major challenges. As you know we live in turbulent times and realistically, however hardworking we are, we cannot miss several challenges in our environment:

Some of the challenges we face include:

1. Constrained financial resources and limited government capitation;
2. Highly charged and divisive general political environment;
3. More challenging economic conditions for our students;
4. Inadequate facilities for academic, welfare and research;

5. Inadequate internal road infrastructure, drainage and lighting;
and
6. Attracting and retaining qualified staff.

As we move forward into our next phase, and in light of these important challenges, there is no doubt that we need to work extremely hard as we surge forward into our next era of development. Some of the key areas of focus shall include:

1. Resource mobilization and sustainability;
2. Infrastructure Development;
3. Increase in students enrollment;
4. Recruitment of more staff;
5. Enhancing the research portfolio; and
6. Introduction of more market-driven programmes.

I am happy to note that the University is revising the current Strategic Plan 2014-2018 to Strategic Plan 2018-2028. The focus of the Plan will be to address the challenges that we are facing and to drive the development trajectory for the next decade. The Plan will address the following, among other issues:-

1. Expansion of teaching and research facilities;
2. Diversification of Energy sources;
3. Establishment of a mixed-use Business Centre including conferencing facilities;
4. Expansion and improvement of University road network; and
5. Expansion of student and staff accommodation facilities.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen;

We can attain our goals if we are bound together by our common values and aspirations.

I ask each one of you to join me on this journey as we elevate the University of Embu to a world leader in research and education.

Some people measure excellence in terms of rankings and the finances at their disposal. These are indeed important measures of excellence, but the ultimate measure of success for our University is preparing leaders, transforming society, and creating a better world.

We are limited only by the scope of our vision and the size of our ambitions.

We are uniquely positioned by the blessings of a good environment, good people, quality leadership, quality staff and students, our undying spirit to drive change and accelerate the pace of human development and the beckoning of a brighter future for our University.

When we invest in our people, when we break down barriers and overcome challenges that draw us back, when we pursue knowledge, and when we invigorate our culture with a shared purpose, we will chart a bold path and legacy of achievement that exceeds our dreams and imaginations.

We are indeed privileged to be in the position we are in, in the history of our Nation. I want to thank you all for the strong commitment you've made to this University. I am honored to work with you.

As we move into the future, I want to encourage you to see all the good things that happen in this University every day:

- Things that may not be covered by the media or other public information forums but still make an impact in society;
- Students who walk into a class and discover a lifetime passion;
- Graduates who make us proud for their achievements in society; and
- Staff whose research projects have transformed and made and continue to make an impact in the world and help people thrive by ensuring timely completion of the academic calendar.

Let us continue working together, through a commitment to scholarship and discovery, to solve the challenges, and to reach new heights, and to change the world, as we strive to build a World-Class University on the slopes of Mt. Kenya, at Embu, the Land of Opportunities.

Thank you for your attention.

Long live Kenya, Long Live the University of Embu

Chancellor