



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH FOR 71ST GRADUATION CEREMONY TO BE HELD ON 20TH SEPTEMBER 2024.

The Chancellor, University of Nairobi; Professor Patrick Verkooijen

The Cabinet Secretary for Education; Hon. Julius Migosi Ogamba

Chancellors of Sister Universities present

The Chairman of University of Nairobi Council; Prof. Amukowa Anangwe

Ag. Vice-Chancellor, University of Nairobi; Prof. Margaret Jesang' Hutchinson

Principal of Koitalel Samoei University College; Prof. Winston J Akala

Vice-Chancellors of Sister Universities present

Ag. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Affairs; Prof. Ayub Gitau

Ag. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Innovation & Enterprise; Prof. Francis Mulaa

Ag. Chief Operations Officer; Mr. Brian Ouma

Deans of Faculties

Members of University Senate

Fellow Alumni

Graduands

Distinguished Ladies & Gentlemen,

Good morning

It is my greatest pleasure to be with you this important day in the University of Nairobi Calendar. As an Alumnus of this great University, who was part of the 1980 Convocation, I am honoured to be among the guests here to witness the 71st graduation ceremony of the University of Nairobi.

Congratulations, Class of 2024. The Journey has been long. It's now time for you to celebrate. But remember, you will need to buckle up as you handle the challenges which arise in your journey of life, post-graduation. The lessons learnt, skills acquired, networks and all shared experiences from this University will be of value in your journey into the future.

On behalf of the University of Nairobi Alumni Association, which I have the honour to Chair we celebrate your success. Your graduation today enables you as part of this Convocation, to be able to be part of the UONAA and it is my hope each and every one of you will be able to join the Alumni Association. I believe that UONAA will provide you with the opportunity to maintain linkage with your alma mater, wherever you end up in the world.

The theme of this graduation is "***Empowering the World with Adaptive and Innovative Graduates.***" This resonates well with what the world expects of our University graduates in the current global environment where Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a critical part. On this note, I would like to thank the entire University of Nairobi ecosystem for the sterling work you have done, leading to today's celebration of the graduands.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, I believe that the Class of 2024 before us here today have passed through able hands and have been equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and values to enable them serve our country's organisations and any other global organisations. ~~Our society need graduates who can provide solutions to the myriad problems we face, especially in the area of health, education, food, environment, safety, peace and conflicts, and other challenges facing our society, using tools and exposure gained from spending their time at the University of Nairobi.~~

~~Mr. Chancellor, I am confident that the University management is up to the task of making the University a globally competitive institution which can participate in transforming society.~~ To the graduands, I wish to share some key lessons with you; not as someone who has it all figured out, but as someone who just like you, came to this University as a fresher, was able to graduate in 1980 with a quality and internationally recognized degree which allowed me at the time to access international employment and using that experience, eventually return to Kenya in 1985 to contribute to the development of my country, especially through my roles in the Banking industry.

1. Embrace Change and Uncertainty

Life after graduation is going to be full of ups and downs twists and turns. Some might already have a clear path ahead whether starting a job, continuing your education, or pursuing a project you are passionate about while others may be unsure of the next steps. Regardless of these, please keep in mind that the plans you make today will continuously evolve. The career you thought you'd have might shift. Opportunities that you may not have expected may come your way. The world is changing faster than you will ever be prepared for and adaptability is one of the most valuable skills you can cultivate.

You will need to have and adopt a high degree of adaptability in your search of the ideal vocation which will enable you to be a net contributor to our dynamic society.

2. Build Networks & Relationships

We often hear the phrase “networking” and are encouraged to build professional contacts. While networking is important, I encourage you to think about it differently: Don't just collect business cards; build real meaningful relationships and connections with people who challenge, inspire and support you, in both your social and professional lives.

I still keep in touch with many of the people I met at the University of Nairobi more than 47 years ago and over the years, these relationships have been a source of encouragement, inspiration, and collaboration. You never know where a simple conversation or shared experience might lead, so nurture those connections.

3. Foster Collaboration and Adaptability

In a world as interconnected as ours, the challenges we face are rarely isolated. They span across industries, borders and cultures, requiring a collaborative and adaptive approach. As graduates, you are stepping into a diverse global landscape where collaboration will be key. Surround yourself with people who challenge you, who bring different perspectives and who push you to think beyond your comfort zone.

4. Empower Others through Innovation

Empowerment is not a solo journey. As you find success in your endeavors, remember the power you have to uplift others. Use your skills, knowledge, experience and resources to create environments where others can also lean on you and grow.

5. Get involved in giving back activities

Create time to support activities in your society and in the environment you work or live in. There is satisfaction in volunteering and community service.

Conclusion

As you leave the gates of this Great institution today, remember that you are not just graduates who will serve in Kenya but you are global graduates. You have the power to shape your future and create an impact. The road ahead will be filled with challenges, but it will also be filled with endless possibilities. So go out there, be bold, be adaptive, and be the innovative force that this world so desperately needs.

Finally, I want to encourage you to give back to your Alma mater. As you move forward in your journey, remember the community that helped you get here. Whether it was a mentor, a professor, a family member, or a friend; someone believed in you, supported you, and invested in your success. One of the most fulfilling things you can do is to pay that forward.

This doesn't just mean giving back financially, though that's important too. It can also mean giving your time, sharing your knowledge or offering a helping hand to someone just starting out. Success is not just about personal achievement; it's about lifting others up along the way. The Association thrives on the support of its members to carry out its essential work and we invite you to become a part of this growing network. With 17 active chapters spanning various disciplines, regions, faculties, and interest groups, there's a place for everyone.

By joining today, you'll not only stay connected with your alma mater but also be part of exciting, innovative initiatives aimed at resource mobilisation and fundraising to strengthen our impact. These efforts ensure that we can continue supporting the University in meaningful ways. Take the next step and become a member today – together, we'll shape the future of our community.

Visit the Alumni tent and get more details on how to join.

Isaac Awuondo

Chairman
University of Nairobi Alumni Association