The Chancellor Dr. Manu Chandaria was the keynote speaker at the opening ceremony of the Black History Month 2017 celebrations held at the auditorium on Wednesday, February 8.

Based on the celebration theme: “African Education: The Walk to Development” Dr. Chandaria urged his audience to develop Africa through having a positive mindset, and take charge of their destiny, without compromising on their values.

At USIU-Africa, Black History Month is celebrated every February through a series of events designed to offer opportunities for students, staff and faculty to discuss challenges affecting black communities on the continent and in the diaspora.

On Thursday, February 9, alumnus Abdi Dahir Latif presented “Diamond in The Rough” a documentary he produced and directed, about education in Somalia. The screening was held at the Lecture Theater I.

A Pan-African Symposium on Tuesday, February 14 will feature a panel of four education experts, who will discuss the current state of education systems across Africa, at 11am in the auditorium.
USIU-Africa hosts first Harvard alumni reception on campus

USIU-Africa hosted several alumni of Harvard University on Wednesday, February 8 at the Freida Brown Student Center.

Speaking during the event, the Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza hailed the growing relationship between USIU-Africa and one of the world’s most prestigious universities, pointing out the various joint initiatives that both universities are currently undertaking.

Prof. Emmanuel Akyeampong (Professor of History and African Studies & Oppenheimer Faculty Director of the Harvard Center of African Studies) urged Harvard alumni to identify and assist in addressing key issues affecting Africa.

Also present at the reception were Mr. James Ogolla (University Advancement Director) and Ms. Obenewa Amponsah (Harvard Center for Africa Studies – South Africa Office Executive Director).

High school students invited for Open Day

High school students from more than 20 schools in and around Nairobi have been invited for the Admissions Open Day to be held on Saturday, February 18 in the auditorium.

Attendees are addressed by various university officials on unique services and programs offered by the university, as well as a tour of campus buildings and facilities.

Student delegation to attend annual Harvard National Model United Nations Conference

Twenty one students representing three schools and five undergraduate majors will be attending the sixty-third annual session of the Harvard National Model United Nations, which will be held at the Boston Park Plaza from Thursday, February 16, through Sunday, February 19, 2017.

Harvard National Model United Nations (HNMUN) is the “largest, oldest, and most prestigious conference of its kind”, bringing together over 3,000 students and faculty together from colleges and universities around the world to simulate the activities of the United Nations.

The conference, which is run by Harvard College undergraduates, is designed to provide insight into the workings of the United Nations by providing delegates with the opportunity to actively participate in the resolution of important global issues, through the simulation of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, regional bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations.

Dr. David Mwambiri (Assistant Professor of International Relations), Dr. Oscar Githua (Assistant Professor of Psychology) and Dr. Fatma Ali (Associate Professor of International Relations and International Relations Program Director) will accompany the delegation.

The students will also visit the Harvard Center for African Studies – the umbrella organization for all things Africa-related at Harvard University. It connects students, faculty, and members of the wider Africanist community with shared interests, through seminars, workshops and conferences throughout the academic year.

USIU-Africa will be hosting the third Africa Model United Nations Conference from March 6-10, at the United Nations Office at Nairobi in Gigiri.

Human Resources announces eight vacancies

In furtherance of the university’s goal of recruiting highly skilled talent, the Director of Administration has announced three vacancies in the Finance Division, one of which is for the Director of Finance.

The Legal Services Division is looking to fill the newly-created position of Senior Insurance Officer, while the Library is looking for a Book Binder and a Library Assistant. The ICT division also has a vacancy for an ICT Officer II.

All applications for these positions must be delivered to the Administration Director on or before Friday, February 24. More information can be obtained from http://www.usiu.ac.ke/jobs
Long-serving university officials say goodbye

The University has announced the retirement of long-serving Deputy Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management Mrs. Ritah Asunda. Mrs. Asunda has been in charge of the former Student Affairs division comprising of five departments (Admissions, Counseling Services, Placement & Career Services, Office of the Registrar, and Office of the Dean of Students) for the last twenty years. Previously she was the Dean of Student Students from 1996 to 2001.

The Vice Chancellor also announced the departure of the Finance Director Ms. Isabel Juma following sixteen years of service to the university. Ms. Juma's oversaw unprecedented remarkable growth and stability in university revenue growth, including the setting up of the university endowment fund.

APPI holds first graduation ceremony

The African Process and Performance Institute (APPI) first graduation ceremony took place last Saturday, February 4 at the Freida Brown Student Center.

The 25 USIU-Africa staff, students and alumni, went through an intensive course tailored to prepare and empower organizations across Africa with cutting-edge skills and knowledge in Business Process Management (BPM) and Performance Analytics that will yield better goal-oriented decisions.

The Ceremony was officiated by Hamani Maiga, Airtel Africa Vice President (IT Governance) assisted by Dr. Jimmy Macharia Dean – School of Science and Technology.

BOTTOM LEFT: USIU-Africa Chief Manager-Marketing & Communication Mrs. Jane Muriithi Thomas is awarded a certificate of completion by the Dean of School of Science and Technology Dr. Jimmy Macharia during the APPI Graduation Cocktail on Saturday, February 4, in the Freida Brown Student Center. Looking on Emeka Okwonko (CEO – African Process & Performance Institute)

BOTTOM CENTER: Alumni Association Chair Ms. Dorothy Sagwe-Onyoni receives her certificate of completion from the Dean of School of Science and Technology Dr. Jimmy Macharia during the APPI Graduation Cocktail on Saturday, February 4, in the Freida Brown Student Center. Looking on Emeka Okwonko (CEO – African Process & Performance Institute)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Paul Bombo (Applied Computer Technology Junior) receives his certificate of completion from the Dean of School of Science and Technology Dr. Jimmy Macharia and Hamani Maiga, Airtel Africa Vice President (IT Governance) during the APPI Graduation Cocktail on Saturday, February 4, in the Freida Brown Student Center.
Faculty receive KES 28M in research grants

Faculty have received grants worth KES 28 million to raise USIU-Africa’s research profile and boost its portfolio by increasing faculty research output in high impact peer-reviewed journals. Additionally, faculty are expected to develop partnerships and collaborations with leading research, development and funding agencies, as well as improve the quality of their academic supervision.

Five faculty from the Chandaria School of Business, six from the School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and seven each from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and the School of Science and Technology, were awarded a total of KES 10 million of internal grants.

Amplify Change – a collaborative initiative of several European governments and foundations – funded Ms. Robi Koki, Dr. Dorothy Njoroge, Ms. Nadezda Okello and Mr. Philip Machoka received 100,000 euros for their project: “Building the Capacity of Community Based Organizations to Advocate on Gender-based Violence Issues”.

Both Dr. Njoroge and Ms. Koki also received KES 7 million from the U.S Agency for International Development (USAID) – DAI to prepare a Strategic Communications Plan for Countering Violent Extremism. Since 2011, the USAID has run programs to raise the importance of identifying and addressing the root causes of extremism, such as the deep lying issues that foment extremist violence and fragility.

Sports update

Kenya University Sports Association (KUSA) University League games

The men’s basketball team’s had a mixed weekend outing against Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), with a massive win their main campus 50-13, and a narrow loss to their Nairobi campus 27-31.

This weekend, they will host Kenyatta University and Mount Kenya University on Saturday, February 11 and Sunday, February 12 respectively.

Their female counterparts will also host Mount Kenya University and Kenyatta University on Saturday, February 11 and Sunday, February 12 respectively, after thrashing Daystar University 37-11 during last weekend’s match.

The men’s soccer team also reported mixed results when they beat Pan African Christian University by a solitary goal, and lost by the same margin to Zetech University and JKUAT.

They will pitch camp at Kenyatta University this weekend for matches against their hosts Kenyatta University and fellow guests Daystar University on Saturday, February 11. A game against Kenyatta University’s Ruiru campus will be played on Sunday, February 12.

It was a goalless draw for the ladies soccer team against Daystar University, and further loss to JKUAT (2-3) on Saturday, February 4.

The men’s hockey team will next meet Mount Kenya University at Kenyatta University this Saturday, February 11, after drawing with JKUAT in last weekend’s match.

The ladies volleyball team will seek to avenge their defeat to JKUAT last weekend, when they travel to Kenyatta University this Saturday, February 11.

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Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google (now Alphabet Inc.), or “FANG” as they are referred to in stock market parlance after their stocks outperformed markets in 2016, thrive as the biggest internet firms in the world. The four firms hold a combined market capitalization of around KES 100 trillion. The valuation places FANG amongst the top 15 world economies based on a market capitalization to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) comparison.

The FANG companies all utilize the internet as their main medium, thus leveraging it to build their business models around the network effect that their users have on their products. Put simply, the network effect is a phenomenon in which a good or service becomes more valuable the more people use it. This means that the more people are on the platform, the more valuable it becomes even if the firm has yet to generate a profit.

Unquestionably, Facebook holds the largest number of users on any social network in the world with a record of 1.4 billion monthly active users. Facebook’s users are enough to rival the most populated countries on earth. Google follows suite with just over 1 billion users across six of its best performing products. Amazon comes third with 244 million users worldwide and Netflix enjoys 95 million subscribers. As expected, the number of users on the platforms makes them more valuable and, it serves as no surprise that the biggest platforms have advertising revenues as the highest earners commensurate with the more people spend time on the platforms, the more money the firms earn.

Will the recently installed new US President have a negative effect on the FANG companies? Analysts believe that President Donald Trump’s policies will be bad for the internet in general indicating that one of his first casualties will be the net neutrality laws governing internet service providers and internet regulatory bodies. The net neutrality laws established in 2015 preserve the right to communicate freely through the internet. Most countries follow a similar model. Net neutrality not only allows open sharing of knowledge but also enables a level playing field for business owners and entrepreneurs who rely on the internet to reach their customers and distribute products. President Trump’s pick to head the US Federal Communications Commission, the equivalent to the Communication Authority of Kenya, has consistently opposed pro-consumer regulations in the support a free market.

Net neutrality simply means that all internet content must be treated alike and must move at the same speed over the internet. In the absence of such laws, internet service providers would be able to favor one type of traffic over the other and charge a premium depending on the type of content viewed. Big websites like FANG are in favor of net neutrality not only because their models are built on it but also because an open internet offers greater opportunities for everyone. Whereas big service providers such as Comcast and AT&T, or in Kenya Safaricom, Zuku, or AccessKenya, would profit exponentially from their gatekeeper role are opposed to it.

Despite all the doom and gloom around the new American administration and the net neutrality debate, there is still plenty to be excited about with the FANG companies in 2017.

Facebook is pushing for a more connected world through research into high altitude, long endurance planes, drones, lasers and satellites in the aims of providing affordable internet access in hard to reach areas around the world. Unfortunately, some of the biggest opposition who expanded coverage for low income rural users are African governments who prefer to control access to and prices of connecting to the internet.

Facebook is also moving into virtual and augmented reality technology that alters your perception by immersing you in computer simulated environments. This has potential in adding new dimensions to entertainment as well as changing approaches to science and medicine. They are also advancing in artificial intelligence (AI) on their platforms thanks to their Facebook AI Researchers (FAIR) who are pushing the envelope in AI vision, natural language processing, AI reasoning and AI planning.

Google also has made significant advancements in AI. Using an AI system called RankBrain, Google developed it to processes and derive more meaningful insights into the vast amounts of search queries they receive every second. Google’s work in AI is large and includes the use of advanced deep neural networks, hardware and software that can analyze a vast amount of digital data and learn from it. This year we expect a lot more AI to be integrated more into products like the gsuite, their set of intelligent cloud apps among which includes Gmail and Google Docs. Other technologies such as Google Assistant available via Allo, Duo, and smart devices such as android wearables 2.0 and Google Home will also take advantage of this AI technology. Another focus area for Google in 2017 is mobile virtual reality with their Google Daydream headset which uses a mobile phone attached to a headset to take users on a virtual journey. This has already begun gathering traction with CNN, BBC, Netflix and Hulu actively developing content for it.

Amazon, the top online retailer in the world, in 2017 is looking to enhance their product lines to increase users with subscription services like Amazon Prime and Amazon Web Services. They also look to expand into devices such as Amazon Echo, which is a device trained around your voice to give you feedback on queries such as the weather, news, traffic details and useful information. This year Amazon promises to do more with less, expanding of their customer fulfillment network, introducing a drone delivery system, Prime Air, whose promise is to deliver packages in 30 minutes or less. Other tricks up their proverbial sleeve include a one click home dash button which makes the reordering of frequently used household items as easy as a push of a button.

Yet the most anticipated product from Amazon in 2017 is Amazon Go, which is a chain of grocery stores with no checkout processes. Shopping with the use of your phone you are able to post your items to your Amazon account and walk out of the store. Could we imagine that reaching Nakumatt or Uchumi here in Kenya? The system uses Just Walk Out Technology, which is a combination of computer vision and deep learning algorithms brought together by sensor technology. They are set to open beta stores around the US in 2017.

Netflix, an instant video streaming platform with a wide selection of popular content and original programming, in 2017 promises more original programming and exclusive content delivered in unorthodox ways. This will provide users access to complete content at the touch of a button, and with 95 million subscribers worldwide on its platform, its steady growth strategy and mix of original and popular licensed content will definitely be the one to withstand competitive pressure from the likes of Amazon Prime and other content providers.

FANG companies made their most valuable products in their ecosystem and then made them easily accessible by consumers through their respective homepages, given that the internet made distribution free. Furthermore, over time, FANG companies have each used their customer relationship to expand their offerings and integrate into components of their own eco-systems combining them into a larger platform and allowing them to aggregate their users, making them the most dominant in their respective markets, based on the aggregation theory by Ben Thompson. In the long run, all variables held constant, we can expect more value from the FANG companies in 2017 and beyond.
MEDIA MENTIONS

February 9: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “WOMAN OF PASSION: I finally found my calling in cooking.”
http://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/women/1950830-3805810-m4vunk/index.html

February 7: USIU-Africa was mentioned by AllAfrica website in an article titled “Kenya: Behind the Conflict in Central Kenya That’s Costing Lives and Hitting Tourism.”
http://allafrica.com/stories/201702090082.html

February 6: The People Daily mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Suburbs triumph in KRU Women’s 10s opener.”
http://www.mediamaxnetwork.co.ke/people-daily/297078/suburbs-triumph-kru-womens-10s-opener/

February 4: USIU-Africa’s Professor of History and International Relations Macharia Munene was mentioned by The Daily Nation newspaper in an article titled “Kalonzo’s thinning options to remain relevant.”

February 3: USIU-Africa was mentioned by The Daily Nation newspaper in an article titled “Chancellors’ proposal for varsity reforms a prescription for sharing out mediocrity.”
http://www.nation.co.ke/oped/Opinion/proposal-university-reforms-prescription-sharing-mediocrity/440808-3799054-cgyp0dz/

UPCOMING EVENTS

USIU-AFRICA ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Annual General Meeting
Monday, February 13
@Auditorium

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2017

Tuesday, February 14
Pan African Symposium
11am | Auditorium

Thursday, February 16
Black History Month Coffee Chat
3.30pm | Behind the Cafeteria

Friday, February 17
Prescreening of “Hidden Figures”
3.30pm | IMAX Garden City

SPORTS

Saturday, February 11
Basketball
USIU-Africa Men vs Kenyatta University @USIU-Africa
USIU-Africa Ladies vs Mount Kenya University @USIU-Africa

Volleyball
USIU-Africa ladies vs Kenyatta University @Kenyatta University

Soccer
USIU-Africa men vs Daystar University @Kenyatta University
USIU-Africa men vs Kenyatta University @Kenyatta University

Hockey
USIU-Africa Men vs Mount Kenya University @Kenyatta University

Sunday, February 12
Basketball
USIU-Africa Men vs Mount Kenya University @USIU-Africa
USIU-Africa Ladies vs Kenyatta University @USIU-Africa

Soccer
USIU-Africa men vs Kenyatta University (Ruiru) @Kenyatta University