Calls for focus on research reverberate during 39th Commencement Ceremony

By Jackline Chirchir

1385 graduands from 18 programs at undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels, at the 39th Commencement Ceremony held on Saturday, September 9. The ceremony was presided over by the Chancellor Dr. Manu Chandaria, assisted by the Vice Chancellor Professor Paul Zeleza.

Three programs presented candidates for the very first time in the university's forty-eight year existence - three candidates for the Master of Arts in Communication Studies, two candidates for the Doctor of Psychology, PSy.D, Clinical Psychology and a single candidate for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations.

A total of 891 undergraduates, 471 graduates and 23 doctoral students were awarded their various degrees. With a cumulative GPA of 3.937 Information Systems and Technology major Mr. Akash Patel delivered the valedictory, in which he paid tribute to the excellent resources available to the graduating class during their academic sojourn at the university.

In his annual report, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Paul Zeleza reflected on the various projects that the university has undertaken at various levels emphasizing the increase in the research budget by 20 percent, and the singularly spectacular rise of USIU-Africa Institutional Repository to the third place in national rankings.

He also highlighted the university’s two new schools; the School of Communication, Cinematic and Creative Arts and the School of Graduate Studies, Research & Extensions that will see the university play an increasingly more relevant role in providing sustainable development solutions for Kenya and the global community.

While delivering the keynote address, the Guest of Honor Professor Mwenda Ntarangwi (Chief Executive Officer, Commission for University Education) applauded the Vice Chancellor for spearheading a culture of research that will lead to high standards of excellence.

Professor Ntarangwi also highlighted that research is an interactive activity that when done well leads to outcomes that help us expand our knowledge of ourselves and the world we inhabit. “Research can help us change thinking and link knowledge gained and the problems facing the world through collaborations between institutions like USIU-Africa.” He concluded.

Nine undergraduate students received top honors for graduating with a cumulative GPA of 3.7 and above, while eight graduate students with a cumulative GPA of 3.8 and above also receive top honors, including Mr. Prescott Muhonza’s perfect MBA cumulative GPA of 4.000.

Members of the graduating class Ms. Ruth Soi and Mr. Stephen Ndege, were recognized for outstanding service to the community, while Assistant Professor of Journalism Dr. Dorothy Njoroge, is the recipient of this year’s Faculty of the Year Award, for her various achievements in the past year.
Prof. Mwenda Ntarangwi adorns Dr. Habil Olaka with his new Doctor of Business Administration regalia as Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza (second right), and his supervisors; Dean - Chandaria School of Business Prof. Peter Lewa (right), and Dr. Stephen Nyambega (left) look on.

Prof. Mwenda Ntarangwi adorns Dr. Mercy Kaburu with her new Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations regalia as Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza looks on.

Business Applications Manager Mr. Allan Mwangi receives his MBA from the Guest of Honor Prof. Mwenda Ntarangwi, as Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza looks on.

Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic and Student Affairs Amb. Prof. Ruthie Rono (left) and Dr. Oscar Githua (Assistant Professor of Psychology share a moment of mirth during the 39th Commencement Ceremony held on Saturday, September 9.

Undergraduate students pose for a photo prior to joining the procession at the beginning of the 39th Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, September 9.

Assistant Professor of Management Dr. Scott Bellows leads the procession, followed by Staff Council Chairman Mr. Ernest Andugo during the 39th Commencement Ceremony held on Saturday, September 9.

Ugandan Mrs. Juliet Kariisa is congratulated by husband, media mogul & GEMBA ’12 alumnus Dr. Kin Kariisa when she received her Global Executive MBA on Saturday, September 9.

The top member of the undergraduate class of 2017 Mr. Akash Patel, delivers the Valedictory during the 39th Commencement Ceremony held on Saturday, September 9.

Nairobi County Women’s Representative to the National Assembly Hon. Esther M. Passaris soon after receiving her International Business Administration degree during the 39th Commencement Ceremony held on Saturday September 9.

Photo credits: Victor Ouma
In early August, the Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza presented a keynote address on “The University and Classification of Higher Education Institutions” and a plenary session on “Curriculum Development: Global Perspectives” at the First National Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions organized by the National Council for Higher Education of Malawi.

During his visit to the country, the Vice Chancellor also met with several Cabinet ministers, the country’s Vice President, Dr. Saulos Chilima, and President His Excellency Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika. The VC and the President, a Charles Nagel Professor of International & Comparative Law Emeritus at Washington University, where he taught for 39 years before returning home to Malawi, have known each other from the days they both taught in the USA.

In early August, the Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza receives a report titled “Towards an inclusive environment and quality provisions for Persons with Disabilities and other Special Needs.” from the Chairperson of the Committee set up to investigate and make recommendations on the university’s policy on persons with disabilities and other special needs, Associate Deputy Vice Chancellor - Student Affairs Dr. Josephine Arasa. Looking on are other members of the committee and the university’s Management Board. An updated policy is expected to be launched later this semester.

L-R: Principal Counselor Mrs. Lucy Kung’u, Lecturer of Economics Mr. David Nerubucha, Mr. Kelvin Muneene, Dr. Josephine Arasa, Prof. Paul Zeleza, Ms. Regina Mugure, Facilities Manager Ms. Leah Gichuki, Psy.D Student Ms. Joyce Ngugi, Director of University Advancement Mr. James Ogolla and Director of Legal Services /Company Secretary Ms. Helen Ambasa.

VC holds meetings with senior Malawian officials

In early August, the Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza (left) and his wife Prof. Cassandra Veney (Professor of International Relations poses for a photo with the Malawian President H.E. Prof. Peter Mutharika (center) during a meeting at the Kamuzu Palace in Lilongwe, Malawi in August 2017.
HR inducts new employees

By Yusuf Saleh

The Department of Human Resources organised one-day induction session for all new employees who joined the university this semester, on Thursday, September 14, at the auditorium’s seminar room.

A total of forty employees were taken through the session by presenters drawn from across the university among them Vice Chancellor Prof. Zeleza, who shared the university strategic plan and his vision for the university, with the new employees.

He invited his audience to become the university’s brand ambassadors, while emphasising the need to have high performance culture within an agreed framework of planned goals, standards and behaviours.

Chief Admissions Officer Dr. George Lumbasi presented and overview of USIU-Africa’s history, mission and vision statement, while Ms. Helen Ambasa (Director of Legal Services & Company Secretary) described the University’s governance structure.

Dr. Tom Onditi (Dean School of Humanities and Social Sciences) offered an overview of the four schools and twenty-three programs offered, Senior Insurance Officer Mr. Samson Atandi presented on corporate insurance.

Senior Human Resources Officer Ms. Irene Ogutu presented the Training and Development Policy, while Security Manager Mr. Peter Kuta wrapped up with a presentation on safety and the environment.

Managers trained on performance management

By Yusuf Saleh & Dan Muchai

A one-day performance management system workshop was organized for all managers by the Department of Human Resources, to equip managers with the tools to properly manage the university’s performance management.

The training held on Wednesday, September 13 in the Freida Brown Student Center, is expected to ensure supervisors new to the roles and/or the university, are able to handle their performance management roles effectively, through setting and evaluating performance targets, appropriately.

Director Administration Mr. Jared Raburu, was the lead facilitator of the workshop assisted by Human Resources Manager Mr. Yusuf Saleh, and Senior Human Resources Officers Irene Ogutu and Brian Sande.

A similar session involving all employees will be held in the month of October 2017.
Annual community service day to be held this Friday

By Antonio Longangi

The University will be observing the Freida Brown Day this Friday September 22, from 9 am to 2 pm at Kiwanja Primary and Secondary School in Kasarani.

Themed “Each one reach one, let’s make the world a better place”, Freida Brown Day will purpose to impact lives of 320 students of the host community located in the Kasarani sub-county, and create a sense of togetherness and unity among students, staff, faculty and friends of the university.

The objectives for the day will be fulfilled through a set of activities that will engage the university’s community in cleaning, tree planting, games with children, various presentations and entertainment from both pupils of Kiwanja, as well as students from USIU-Africa.

Community Service and Development (CS & D) is one of the outcomes of USIU-Africa’s mission statement and which Freida Brown Day and USIU-Africa community service program actualizes.

The University strives to foster a sense of caring and commitment as part of its education of students with the hope that they will incorporate Community Service and Development in their professional and personal lives.

Graduation ball celebrates Class of 2017

By Antonio Longangi

The Student Affairs Council hosted a graduation ball for the graduating Class of 2017 at Villa Rosa Kempinski on Thursday, September 7.

Themed Golden Safaris, New Adventures, the dinner brought together 270 graduands and alumni, as well as 50 members of faculty and staff, and representatives from media houses.

Dr. Josephine Arasa, Associate DVC - Student Affairs, opened the event with welcome remarks, followed by congratulations extended to the Class of 2017 by the Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza. Alumna and recording artist Ms. Muthoni Ndonga (Also known as Muthoni Drama Queen - MDQ) delivered a motivational keynote address that dwelt on the confidence resulting from the process of self-discovery. She urged graduands present at the ball to trust the foundation laid by the university in their lives and perceive the future as an adventure for which they are ready.

DVC (Academic and Student Affairs) Ambassador Prof. Ruthie Rono, led the toast to the graduating class before members of the 2015-16 SAC Senate were presented with a token of appreciation by the current members of the SAC Senate.
College is undoubtedly one of the most interesting seasons of a young person’s life. The new found freedom, access to more finances, a robust social life; it is truly an exciting time. However, it is also one of the most unappreciated opportunities to career development.

In 2013, a Human Resource Manager working for a FMCG company requested resumes of students in their final year with good communication skills and a good Grade Point Average (GPA). Career Services went ahead to advertise the same and got close to sixty resumes. Before we could send her the applications, she called and apologized for having forgotten a critical shortlisting criteria; active involvement in clubs or other extra-curricular activities. At this point, we had to sift through all the CVs again, searching for students who fit the bill. We only ended up with a final list of about twenty CVs, some of which barely made the cut.

Since then, Career Services have intentionally emphasized the need for students to take advantage of on-campus opportunities to not only build skills that are transferable to the work place, but to also help them develop positive attitudes. Clubs are a great place to start because in USIU-Africa, there are twenty-seven clubs and at least one that relates to a course taught on campus. This provides a perfect platform for students to practice what they’re learning.

Project-related activities such as organizing event committees also offer great opportunities for students to take up roles that are not necessarily in line with what they’re studying, but that offer a great platform for the development or sharpening of skills. At a higher level, experiential learning opportunities such as internships and job shadowing offer students a real view into the professional world and provide clarity of career decisions.

Our students need to be constantly reminded to view their academic journey as an equipping for the world of work, whether self-employed or otherwise. They also need to be reminded that what they learn in the classroom, should find a platform for expression or testing, outside that classroom. As a result, USIU-Africa students will have an upper hand when competing for entry-level positions as they will have a value proposition that cannot be ignored.

For more on how to link your college experience with your career, talk to us at the Freida Brown Students Center, First Floor (Middle Wing). You can also call 0730116778/779/796 or email careeroffice@usiu.ac.ke and we will be more than glad to assist.
Members of the Student Affairs Council (SAC) attended the 8th Edition of the University Scholars Leadership Symposium (USL) organized from August 2017 1-7 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Accompanied by the Dean of Students Mr. Robert Onsarigo and the Principal University Counselor Mrs. Lucy Kung’u, members of SAC Senate represented students and the university at this event that falls under the UN Global Leadership Program.

The Symposium was held under the theme “Building Life, Giving Hope” and focused on developing young leaders to bring social change in their respective communities.

Activities were spread on different days and the highlight for the first day featured keynote speeches from Mrs. Deirdre Boyd (UNDP Resident Representative for Thailand), and Mr. Simerjeet Singh, a renowned motivational speaker from India.

Mrs. Boyd walked the audience through the operational protocols followed by the UNDP, and explained the impetus for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the hallmark of the UNDP’s current mandate.

Mr. Singh on the other hand, added a fresh approach to proceedings in his motivational talk on self-discovery.

The second day offered a lot more material made even more memorable by the inputs of physical exertion, the service day was one akin to that of selfless humanitarians. The delegates were, after all the speeches and the highlight for the second day was the Refugee Song, during the 8th Edition of the University Scholars Leadership Symposium (USL) organized from August 2017 1-7 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Activities related to five SDGs were the highlight - bike riding, carpentry, planting mangroves, teaching minors, as well as kayaking, were undertaken by the delegates.

Altruism was high on the day’s agenda; considering impacting lives was the focus of the community service, the mood was one akin to that of selfless humanitarians. Though tired and demanding a great deal of physical exertion, the service day was made even more memorable by the inputs of the emissaries and the infectious joy of those they helped. Places visited on this day include the Dinosaur Planet, Youth Aid Center in Maharat, Thammasat University, and the Bang Pu Education Center.

The fifth and final day of the symposium, a marquee event on the Humanitarian Affairs calendar was to most in attendance, a reminder to do more good in the world. The Head of the UN Humanitarian Affairs in Asia, Kim Solomon, urged all the delegates present to consolidate the knowledge acquired from the conference, experiential or otherwise for the betterment of others.

The delegates were, after all the speeches from Derek Schwartz, Rahila Haidary, and Mr. Doe treated to a rousing performance, an homage to the plight of the refugees in the world, the refugee song. The performers included USIU-Africa’s very own, Lochemem Bruno Michael, Louisiana State University of Alexandria’s Cody Hamilton, and University of Cape Town’s Sam Gqomo.

The 8th Edition of the University Scholars’ Leadership Symposium was concluded on that note enabling participants to not only share their various viewpoints on humanitarian phenomena during the near-innumerable networking sessions but also make a mark in Thailand with the experiential learning.

Since the inception of the 1st USLS in 2010, Humanitarian Affairs has partnered more than 500 of the World’s leading Universities, many are listed by The Times Higher Education World University Rankings or QS World University Rankings.
The Student Affairs Council hosted representatives of the Strathmore University Student Council for a working lunch on Thursday, September 14, in the cafeteria. The two councils discussed issues of mutual concern, especially regarding the direction of student governance in private universities in Kenya.

They noted the need for student leaders to engage both the administration and student population of their respective universities, in honest, constructive dialogue, in order to nurture future national leaders from among student government officials.

The Chairman of the USIU-Africa Student Affairs Council Mr. Chad Naggi decried the rise in divisive political activism by a section of student leaders from certain universities, emphasizing the importance of tackling the real challenges facing the modern campus student such as rising incidences of drug abuse.

Both Mr. Naggi and Mr. Alex Ndegwa (Chairperson - Strathmore University Student Council) pledged to hold a further meeting to come up with modalities for conducting joint campaigns to tackle shared social ills.

The annual charity beauty pageant Mr. & Miss USIU-Africa, hosted by the Student Affairs Council, will be held this Fall semester 2017. The pageant’s organizing committee aims to raise KES 1.4 million to build two classrooms at the Al Tawoon Education Center, thus enabling the Center to become eligible for receiving government support.

The institution located in Korogocho - one of Nairobi’s sprawling informal settlements - is the result of a local youth group’s desire to create a space where children of this underprivileged community can receive a basic education.

Currently with have a population of four hundred and fifty pupils and a staff contingent of twenty six teaching and non-teaching members, the pageant’s committe has agreed to marshall additional resources to uplift the school’s educational standards.

Next on the pageant calendar is the Model and Charity Introduction on October 4, with the Finals slated on Thursday, November 16.

### Student leaders from USIU-Africa and Strathmore in quest for constructive engagement

*By Dan Muchai*

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### Beauty pageant contestants take part in community service at education center

*By Antonio Longangi*

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