The Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza hosted university employees for the first ever Vice Chancellor's Convocation, focusing on the theme “Reflecting on our journey to Academic Excellence”, in a tented area next to the library on Friday, September 29. The convocation provided a platform for the Vice Chancellor to officially open the academic year, highlight achievements of faculty in the past year and expound on academic plans to be implemented in this academic year.

Last year's priority areas included strengthening academic programs, enhancing research culture and profile, promoting fundraising and advancement, improving institutional governance, morale, and performance, raising institutional visibility and strengthening business operations.

He mentioned that the university managed to hire senior academic leaders and faculty, establish a University Senate and introduce new programs.
(which are awaiting Commission for University Education-CUE approval) to realize the first key priority area which is to strengthen academic programs.

Prof. Zeleza pointed out that USIU-Africa digital repository jumped nine places to emerge third in Kenya and 25th in Africa in the latest rankings of the Webometrics Institutional Repository rankings. This he said, builds towards the second key priority area which aims at enhancing research culture and profile. In addition, the VC said that the university has been able to implement new policies, structures and reward systems, introduce flagship public lectures, promote a robust student research culture and strengthen research collaborations among others.

The VC also mentioned that the university received a number of grants and funds from donors that promoted the third key priority area which aims at promoting fundraising and advancement. He said that the number of individual donors increased from 500 in 2015/2016 to 906 in 2016/2017 as scholarships increased from KES 1.8 million in 2015/2016 to KES 4,020,147 in 2016/2017.

The VC further said that the implementation of the Job Evaluation, Salary and Organization Review Structure Skills aided in improving institutional governance, morale and performance and added that such reviews need to be carried out at periodic intervals for continuous improvement of the institutional operations.

This year’s academic priorities fall under the theme “Enhancing our Institutional Capital: Research, Recruitment, Resources, Reputation, and Responsibility” and they include; expanding academic programs and becoming a reputable research university, promoting student and employee recruitment, retention, support and success, strengthening sense of community, inclusion, and responsibility, enhancing and diversifying resources and preparing for a capital campaign and improving electronic and physical infrastructure: Building the new School of Humanities, Student Hostels, and Hospital.

The VC in conclusion pointed out that the success of the university depends on individual and team effort and encouraged staff and faculty to work together in order to thrive in the university’s remarkable journey.

The Vice Chancellor’s Convocation presents the first of a series of convocations, which will be hosted by the Deputy Vice Chancellor – Academic and Student Affairs Amb. Prof. Ruthie Rono, and the Deans of each School, to articulate each unit's plans in a way that will build a hared sense of mission among constituents.
Director of ICT Dr. Paul Okanda (center) shares a light moment with Associate Professor of Information Systems Dr. Sylvester Namuye (left), during the Vice Chancellor’s Convocation on Friday, September 29. Joining in is Director of Administration Mr. Jared Raburu (right).

The Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza (right) shakes hands with immediate former Principal Placement and Career Services Officer Ms. Lillian Bogonko (left) at the close of the first Vice Chancellor’s Convocation on Friday, September 29. Looking on is DVC- Academic & Student Affairs Amb. Prof. Ruthie Rono (center).
Dr. Desai elected new Chair of the Board of Trustees
By Helen Ambasa

Following elections held at a Special Board meeting on 6th September, 2017, Dr. Kevit Desai was elected as Chair of the Board of Trustees. He takes over from Mrs. Carole Wallace who was serving as Interim Chair following the resignation of Mr. Linus Gitahi early this year. Prof. Wayne Frederick was elected as Treasurer and Prof. Eileen Wilson-Oyelaran as Secretary. Their terms of service as Officers will be as enshrined in the bylaws of the USIU-Africa California Corporation and USIU-Africa Charter. The Board of Trustees has appointed Ms Carole Kariuki as a Trustee. Her appointment is effective from 6th September, 2017 and is for a period of 3 years.

University Council Appointments
The Board of Trustees has also appointed Ms Patricia Kiwanuka, Dr. Catherine Kyobutungi, Dr. Richard Munang and Mr. John Mudany as members of the University Council. The appointments are effective from 6th September, 2017 and are for a period of 3 years.

The 5 individuals bring a wealth of experience in varied areas ranging from Finance, Investment, Research, Medical, ICT, Public Private Partnerships, Fundraising and Communication and are a welcome addition to the USIU-Africa family.

These appointments were made at a Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees held on 6th September, 2017.

Career Services and Alumni Relations form alumni mentorship program
By Beatrice Munyiva & Cecilia Mweru

Alumni office in partnership with the Placement and Career Services department re-launched the USIU-Africa Alumni Mentorship Program on Saturday, 30th September 2017, at the USIU-Africa Library Bookshop. The mentorship program will take a holistic approach that will encompass academic, personal and social development of the individuals through a six months structured and formal mentorship program.

The first cohort of 11 alumni were trained to become mentors to current students with the aim of enhancing professional and personal development of their mentees. A subsequent training for mentees will also take place to be followed by a mentor-mentee pairing process for the mentorship relationship to commence.

An announcement for opportunities for mentorship will be made by the Career Services department shortly. Applications and enquiries can be directed to Alumni Relations Officer Beatrice Munyiva on 0730116617 or bmunyiva@usiu.ac.ke, or to the Career Services Officer Cecilia Mweru on 0730116778 / cwaihenya@usiu.ac.ke.
USIU-Africa successfully hosts Python conference

By Victor Mshindi

Software developers from all over East Africa converged on campus on Thursday, September 28 and Friday, September 29 to attend PyConKE 2017 - the first annual convention in Kenya that brought together software developers, techies, business people, startups, learning institutions and other institutions that have either an interest or a stake in the open source python programming language & related technologies in its ecosystem.

Over 250 participants attended 22 talks held within 8 parallel workshops. Addressing such topics as Data Science with Python, Development of Chatbots, Data Analysis with Python, Django Girls, Functional Programming, Natural Language Processing, Getting Financing for Tech Projects, Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence among others.

The PyConKE talks and workshops created awareness about technological advancements and how they are being used by developers in Kenya and around the world, to solve real-world problems. The conference provided USIU-Africa students with exposure to the Python and Django programming languages, as well as a conducive environment for sharing, connecting, innovating and finding answers.

Django Girls - a non-profit organization that aims to empower women and help them curate amazing first experiences with technology - hosted the Django Girls Workshop at the Innovation and Incubation Center, during the Conference. Django is an open source high python web framework that eases the process of web development by allowing rapid development and clean design.

The Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence Workshop focused on informing participants on the concepts and potential of machine learning and how to begin using it. Machine learning is a core subset of artificial intelligence that works on giving computers the ability to self-learn without being explicitly programmed. The basic idea behind machine learning is to build programs that receive input in the form of data and use algorithms to predict an output value within an acceptable range.

Artificial intelligence stems from the idea of humans being able to create “smart” machines that mimic or simulate human intelligence. This is achieved through the various process which are; learning, reasoning, and self-correction. Example of the use of artificial intelligence is seen in speech and image recognition applications.
School of Science and Technology has a new Dean

By Diana Meso
Professor Valerie Palapala Adema is the new Dean of the School of Science and Technology. Prof. Palapala takes over from Dr. Jimmy Macharia who has served as Dean of the School since January 2013.

Prof. Palapala holds a PhD in Applied Biosciences (Gene Science) from the University of Shobara in Japan, an MBA (Strategic Management) and a Master of Philosophy (Botany) from Moi University.

Prof. Palapala brings to the table a myriad of expertise she acquired from her extensive professional experience. Prior to joining USIU-Africa, she served as an Associate Professor, Professor, and Dean of the School of Science, Technology and Engineering at Rongo University.

She also served as a Lecturer and a Senior Lecturer at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. In addition, she worked as a Research Officer with the National Agricultural Research Laboratories and as a teacher and technical college tutor with the Teachers Service Commission Research Office.

Prof. Palapala has raised tens of millions of shillings in research grants from various international agencies, published three dozen research articles in renowned international journals, and has participated in numerous conference presentations.

She reports to the Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic and Student Affairs, Amb. Prof. Ruthie Rono.

Beauty pageant breaks fundraising record

By Leah Ngechu
Pupils from Altawoon Education Center were invited to interact contestants of the annual Mr & Miss USIU-Africa Beauty Pageant on Wednesday October 4. The school which has been identified as the charity for this year’s pageant, needs to construct basic educational infrastructure to qualify for registration as a national examination center.

Generous donations comprising money, books, stationery and clothes were given by the students at the donation tents, and during class rounds made over the course of the two-day event, set a fundraising record of KES50000.

Stacey Samoe, the committee chairlady, commented, “Having started off on a high note, we will are immensely motivated to hit our target of KES 4 million. We encourage the entire community to partner with us in ensuring the pupils of Altawoon have the means to achieve their dreams”.

The launch provided the campus community with an opportunity to meet and greet contestants, in line with the pageant’s aim to build character by engaging contestants in charity work and mentorship programs.

Training sessions are taking place thrice a week to prepare the contestants for the pre-judging on Thursday, November 2, where they will showcase their talents and skills in the auditorium.

Thereafter the pageant finale will take place on Thursday, November 23 at East Africa’s largest and newest shopping mall, Two Rivers Mall. All ticket proceeds will be form part of the eventual contribution towards Altawoon Education Center’s educational infrastructure needs.

Akaash Barot, a contestant for Mr. & Miss USIU-Africa receives a donation for the Altawoon Educational Center during a fundraising drive on Wednesday, October 4 in the Chandaria School of Business.

Photo: Victor Mshindi
HR department holds talks with professional body

By Brian Sande

On Wednesday, October 4, 2017, Mrs. Dorcas Wainanina, the Executive Director, Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM) accompanied by the Head of Corporate Communications Ms. Irene Kimacia paid a courtesy call on the Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza and members of the Human Resources department, to discuss areas potential collaboration and partnerships between USIU-Africa and IHRM, such as research, student mentorship, as well as capacity building and development.

Of specific interest was the setting up of an exam center for the Certified Human Resources Professionals (CHRP) qualification – a development that would be of immense benefit to the University, given that few such centers exist in Kenya, at the moment. An incubation program involving students pursuing a career in human resources, would assist our students build the level of professional networks, necessary to rapidly progress in their chosen career.

The visiting IHRM officials had been invited by the Department of Human Resources to link up the university with existing industry players. The Institute of Human Resource Management coordinates the activities and oversees interests of all qualified and registered human resource professionals in Kenya, in line with its Mandate from the Human Resource Management Professional Act No 52 of 2012.

In the first quarter of this financial year, the department of Human Resources has already facilitated the recruitment of over 20 employees, and organized for the training of over sixty senior university managers in the areas of performance management and interviewing. Collectively, this efforts will ensure the entrenchment of a high performance culture in line with the university’s strategic goal of improving human resource management using best practices.

CAREER SERVICES FEATURE:

HARD SKILLS VS. SOFT SKILLS

By Angela Kimani

It is no longer enough to be a functional expert. The work environment has become increasingly competitive and each company is searching for a different mix of skills depending on its core business. Thus, everyone is required to be in constant learning mode; no employee can afford to neglect the active development of new skills while keeping up with changing technology. To complement these unique core competencies, there are certain soft skills every company looks for in a potential hire or prospective promotion.

Hard skills are specific, teachable abilities that can be defined and measured, such as writing, math, reading and the ability to use software programs. Soft skills refer to a cluster of personal qualities, habits, attitudes and social graces that make one compatible with others. They are less tangible and harder to quantify, such as etiquette, interpersonal skills among many others.

Research suggests that many companies value soft skills which include; positive attitude, time management abilities, problem solving skills, collaboration, self-confidence, among others. These qualities can be just as important indicators of job performance as hard skills. Skills assessments such as online aptitude tests, skills inventories, and SWOT analyses, are useful in helping an individual identify their strengths.

Portland-based human resources expert Lori Kocen says "...business being done at an increasingly fast pace, employers also want people who are agile, adaptable and creative at solving problems." He advises all job candidates especially those who aspire for managerial positions to get in touch with their 'soft' and 'hard' sides since employers will be assessing both types of skills.

An in-depth discussion with your career advisor would also be able to reveal inherent abilities which would be transferable to a workplace. Career Advisors are available through the USIU-Africa Career Services, every weekday between 8am and 5pm. They can also be reached on 0730116778 or on email careeroffice@usiu.ac.ke.
SPORTS
By Diana Meso

The men’s soccer team recorded mixed reactions during the Universities and Colleges Football League (UCFL) and Kenya University Sport Association (KUSA) League that took place during the past weekend. The team beat Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC) 2-0 but lost to Gresta University 2-1.

Both the men’s and ladies’ basketball teams emerged victorious in various matches that took place on September 30 and October 1. The men’s team walked over Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology (JKUAT) Nairobi Campus and Lions Club by beating them 53-27 and 53-26 in the KUSA and the Kenya Basketball Federation (KBF) Men’s leagues respectively at JKUAT while their female counterparts beat Zetech University 51-36 and Eagle Wings 43-38 in the Women’s KBF Premier League match that took place at Strathmore University.

In other sports, the ladies’ volleyball team lost to JKUAT 3-2 while the men’s handball team lost to St. Paul’s University 51-10 in the KUSA league on Saturday, September 30 at Kenyatta University.

In Karate, USIU-Africa emerged second after Kenyatta University in the KUSA Nairobi Conference Karate Championship while the Taekwondo team clinched 4 Gold, 2 Silver and a Bronze to emerge first in the KUSA Nairobi Conference Taekwondo Championship.

MEDIA MENTIONS

5 October: USIU-Africa was mentioned by the Business Daily in an article titled “Kenya slaps tougher visa rules on foreign students.”

4 October: The Star newspaper mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “KPA falter in opener as Africa show gets underway.”

3 October: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Mixed luck for Kenyan teams in Kampala clubs’ contest”

29 September: USIU-Africa was mentioned by the Daily Nation in an article titled “Strathmore outwit Zetech in battle of university students.”

29 September: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Mombasa Sports Club host KU in hockey league.”

30 September: USIU-Africa was mentioned by the Daily Nation in an article titled “Your favorite YouTube stars.”
http://www.usiu.ac.ke/on-campus/news/media-mentions/1129-daily-nation-your-favorite-youtube-stars