Black History Month examines impact of conflict on African youth

By Antonio Longangi and Dan Muchai

Thursday, February 1 marked the official launch of this year’s Black History Month celebration at a ceremony attended by former Minister in the South Sudanese government Hon. Mabior Garang’ de Mabior, former Somali Minister of Finance and Treasury Mr. Hussein Abdi Halane, and their host Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza.

The Black History Month is an international observance that started in the United States of America, with the aim of promoting self-actualization in African-American communities and share with the world the rich cultural background and achievements of black people.

At USIU-Africa, the Black History Month offers an opportunity for students, members of faculty, staff and community partners to gather and discuss the achievements and challenges affecting African communities on the continent and in the diaspora. This celebration is observed every year during the month of February.

This year’s theme: The Impact of War on the African Youth, will engage the university community in exploration of past and current conflicts in Africa and their impact on the younger generations that now make up a majority of the population.

In his introductory remarks, the Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza discussed the origins of Black History Month in the United States and its spread to other parts of the world including Europe, with large African diaspora communities. He highlighted the significant contribution of the historic diaspora to the development of the Pan-Africanist movement that incubated the territorial nationalisms that led to decolonization across the continent. He also noted the significant contribution of the new diasporas to African economies through remittances that surpassed $67 billion in 2017, thus making the diaspora Africa’s biggest donor. He concluded by underscoring the importance of peace and the role of the youth in cultivating integrated, innovative, democratic and developmental states and societies, noting that the continent needs to ensure that the current youth bulge is turned into a demographic dividend rather than a demographic disaster, by providing the youth with high quality education and employability skills.

Current Black History Month Organizing Committee President Mr. Tut Marial (IBA Senior) believes the theme is relevant in Africa, “Conflict will always be an element of human civilization, and understanding its mechanism can mitigate the negative impact”, a fact underlined by the existential crisis facing Africa’s youngest country – South Sudan.

Hon. Mabior’s keynote address dwelt on the complex evolution of the civil war currently engulfing his country, emphasizing that, “There is no military solution to the conflict”. In his view, “The only way to end the war is for the people of South Sudan to have an honest and mature dialogue about the future of their country.” Hon. Mabior concluded by encouraging South Sudanese youth to arm themselves with knowledge as “knowledge is power!”

Mr Halane’s brief remarks expounded on the role played by education in empowering the youth in Somalia, and the hopes invested in the young population.

Other events in the Black History Month calendar include a Discussion Panel on February 7, and the Closing Ceremony on the last day of February. Student campus organizations have also been invited to collaborate with Black History Month’s Organizing committee to host additional events on different dates throughout February.
USIU-Africa and Microsoft partner in IT skill-building program

By Diana Meso

Information Systems and Technology (IST) and Applied Computer Technology (APT) seniors and recent graduates from USIU-Africa and other universities around Africa, will soon have an opportunity to join a 6-month skill development program. The program - dubbed AppFactory - is a collaboration between the School of Science and Technology (SST) and Microsoft Skills4Afrika, and will be officially launched this coming Wednesday, February 7 at the Incubation and Innovation Center.

The AppFactory is designed to be an engine for development of skilled talents, capable of responding industry needs and effectively contributing to the regional entrepreneurship ecosystem. The program is also expected to serve as a research and development lab for developing innovative ICT projects, and forming part of the digital transformation program for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The Skills4Afrika Initiative is Microsoft’s business and market development engine in Africa launched in 2013, which aims to unlock and accelerate Africa’s potential as well as create technology not only for the continent, but for the world. The initiative focuses on world-class skills, access and innovation to empower people to turn great ideas into a reality, enhance livelihoods and accelerate Africa’s digital transformation.

The School of Science and Technology intends to use the program to further prepare for, and link its Information Systems and Technology (IST) and Applied Computer Technology students with industry, as well as increase their employability, by giving them the skills to break down business problems and design solutions for industry partners using cutting edge technology.

Re-affirmation of re-accreditation a step closer following review

By Dan Muchai

As part of the process of re-affirming the accreditation of the University, our accrediting body – WASC Senior College and University Commission – conducted an Off Site Review via teleconference, on Wednesday, January 31. The review is part of a three-stage process that began in 2016, which is expected to conclude this year. In brief, the re-affirmation of re-accreditation, is a formal process of confirming - every ten years - the accreditation status enjoyed by a university.

For the first step, USIU-Africa send to WSCUC, an institutional self-study report, which now triggered the off-site review – where various university units and stakeholders were represented. The outcome of the review will inform the final step in the process; the on-campus visit expected during this year’s Fall Semester.

Accreditation is a testament to the academic quality and educational effectiveness of higher learning institutions, giving confidence to both graduates and employers, of the quality of education offered by a particular institution. USIU-Africa is the only university in East and Central Africa to enjoy dual accreditation; in Kenya by the Commission for University Education (CUE) and in the United States by WSCUC. CUE re-accredited the University in 2016, and WSCUC is expected to re-affirm our accreditation at the end of this process.

Above: Senior university officials await the commencement of a WSCUC Off Site Review teleconference on Wednesday, January 31.

Photo: Dan Muchai
As part of USIU-Africa’s move to become paperless, as well as seek innovative solutions that will enhance efficiency and effectiveness, the Division of Information Communication and Technology, Legal Services and Finance divisions, together with Coseke Ltd trained members of staff on how to use the new Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) on Friday, January 26.

EDMS is a software system that provides a comprehensive solution for managing the creation, capture, indexing, storage, retrieval, and disposition of records and information assets of an organization. The EDMS system which will be up and running from March 1, 2018, seeks to streamline, improve and simplify the University’s procurement process by placing it onto an online platform, where users will be able get email alerts once the procurement process is initiated, when digital signatures are appended at various approval stages, and LPO reference links are updated, to inform the client, that the vendor is already working to deliver the goods or services.

In addition, the system will also digitalize the contract renewal and policy management processes, in which client departments will receive alerts when a contract or a policy is due to expire, or at the beginning of the contract or policy renewal process, digital signatures appended at various approval stages and downloadable reports on the status of the contract or the policy.

Focusing on the first-level agenda-setting, the study investigates whether two national daily newspapers (Daily Nation and The Standard) influenced public opinion on six issues of national importance: corruption, devolution, economic crisis, insecurity, poverty, and unemployment. Moreover, the study examined whether the newspapers’ agendas were related in connection to the coverage of the six issues.

Findings indicated that the two newspapers had little influence on the opinion of the Kenyan public regarding the six issues. This was based on a low correlation of +.30 between the two newspapers’ agendas and the public agenda. However, the agendas of the two publications were strikingly similar—yielding a perfect correlation of +1. This means in their news coverage, the newspapers gave similar weight to the six issues, which however didn’t resonate with Kenyans’ opinions.

An earlier version of the paper was presented at the third East African Multidisciplinary Annual Research Conference (EAMARC) held in USIU-Africa, from November 18-20, 2016.

Members of the Educate Your Own (EYO) student initiative, are inviting applications for the award of three scholarship grants each worth KES 25,000, for the Spring 2018 Semester, to students who meet the selection criteria. Those who wish to be considered for the award are advised to apply through the Office of Financial Aid by Friday, February 9.

The student-led initiative is seeking to reduce the number of student who fail to complete their education at USIU-Africa due to financial difficulty. The latest round of scholarship grants, will raise the total number of beneficiaries from the scholarship fund since its inception in 2016 to 17.

Meanwhile, EYO’s Project Finje has commenced collecting micro donations as part of their semester-long fundraising activities. The project, which derives its name from the ‘sheng’ word for KES 50 successfully mobilized significant funds during the 2016-17 financial year.
School of Pharmacy & Health Sciences operationalizes agreement with Malawian university

Following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in December 2017 between the School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and the University of Malawi’s College of Medicine & Research’s Africa Centre of Excellence for Public Health & Herbal Medicine, a road map towards the realization of excellence in research and academia by both USIU – Africa staff and students and their colleagues at the University of Malawi. The USIU-Africa team led by Dr. Apollo Maima (Assistant Professor of Pharmacy), Dr. Betty Mbatia (Program Director, Bachelor of Pharmacy), Dr. Jonathan Mwangi (Assistant Professor of Medical Biochemistry), Dr. Were L. Munyendo (Assistant Professor Pharmaceutics), Dr. Edith Amuhaya (Assistant Professor of Organic Synthesis), Dr. Timothy Okech (Associate Professor of Economics) and Mr. Cyprian Nyaribo (Lecturer, Human Anatomy) worked together with Prof. Adamson Muula and Dr. Fanuel Limpiao of University of Malawi to develop the Year 1 Collaboration Implementation Plan. During the two-day session, time periods were pegged strategically to realize among others: Joint Grant Application (starting Quarter I of 2018); Conducting Joint Research and Publication (Quarter 4 of 2018 onwards); Exchange of Faculty/Staff/Students (Quarter 3 of 2018 onwards); Joint Conferences and Symposia (Quarter 4 of 2018 onwards) and Exchange of information of teaching resources, equipment and research space (Quarter 1 of 2018 onwards). The schedule was designed to ensure substantial gains were realized in the development of new curriculum and mounting of programs at both universities and possibly even the establishment of a Thomas Reuters indexed Journal at USIU-Africa’s School of Pharmacy & Health Sciences.
Alumni Relations organizes forum for alumni executives

By Beatrice Munyiva

Twenty-five members of our alumni community were invited by the Office of Alumni Relations to attend a forum held at the IBM Innovation Center, and organized by the Africa Process and Performance Institute (APPI).

The event aimed at empowering executives to measure their business processes and monitor their performance to assist in achieving consistency, effectiveness and sustainability.

In his welcome remarks, the Dean of the Chandaria School of Business Prof. Peter Lewa, underlined the importance of the partnership between APPI and USIU-Africa, that will position the School to equip its students with cutting-edge skills and knowledge in Business Process Management (BPM) and Performance Analytics, to make better decisions and achieve stated goals.

CIO - East Africa Editor Mr. Humphrey Odhiambo, led discussions on how participants can identify gaps between their strategies and execution, as well as come up with ways of bridging them.

IBM Innovation Center Leader Mr. Silas Macharia, reiterated that design and process thinking (a proven and repeatable problem-solving protocol that any business can employ to achieve extraordinary results), is very vital for any business.

On his part, APPI Managing Director Mr. Emeka Okonkwo, urged the audience to embrace Consistent, Responsive, Efficient, Profitable, Effective and Sustainable (CREPES) thinking, to improve on service delivery.

The Africa Process and Performance Institute's Certified Process & Performance Professional (CPPP) program, was introduced to certify a participant’s knowledge and validate their ability to implement business process and performance global best practices, in the context of Africa’s cultural, social, political, economic, and business environment.

Launched in 2016, the program graduated its first cohort in February 2017.

Preparations for annual cultural fest begin

By Leah Ngechu

The dates for USIU-Africa Culture Week 2018 have been announced. The annual culture fest, which will run from Tuesday, March 13 to Thursday March 15, gathers diverse student nationalities represented within USIU-Africa, to celebrate, showcase, entertain and represent their cultures, in food, dress, artifacts, language and dance. This is also in line with one of our university mission outcomes to “Awareness, knowledge and appreciation of both the diversity and commonality of cultures”.

Through this year’s theme - ‘A glimpse of the world in our own backyard’ – Culture Week will seek to feature the 74 nationalities represented within USIU-Africa, in a two-day Culture Village exhibition, where attire, music, dance, drama, food, competitive games and an academic research paper will be exhibited.

At the close of the final day, participating communities will good-naturedly compete in highlighting aspects of their culture at a Culture Night concert to be hosted in a dome tent.

In the meantime, various communities have been showcasing (and selling) their national and cultural dishes at the cafeteria every Thursday during the lunch hour, to provide ample opportunity for patrons to taste food from different parts of the world.

So far, students from the following cultural or national groupings, have indicated their interest in participating in the fete: Angola, Arab region, Burundi, Central Africa, China, Eritrea, Ethiopia, France, India, Japan, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Rwanda, Somalia, South Korea, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and the USA. Other interested communities may register their participation at the Student Affairs Council offices on the ground floor of the Freida Brown Student Center.
USIU–Africa and Korean embassy deliberate setting up of cultural institute on campus

By Joanne Alividza

On Wednesday, January 24, Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza led a USIU-Africa delegation to a meeting with H.E. Mr. Kwon Young Dae, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Kenya, at the Korean embassy in Nairobi, to explore a partnership between USIU-Africa and the embassy given its potential to effect positive change in society.

The agenda of the meeting was to create and foster strong collaborations with the embassy in the following areas: Faculty Development; Faculty and Student Exchanges; Development of STEM Disciplines; Student Recruitment; Establishment of a Research Park; Resources for Equipment and Infrastructure; and Unrestricted Funding for Development.

While both parties are poised to be enriched with knowledge on language and culture as a result of collaboration, USIU-Africa students would benefit by receiving scholarships, internships and placements based on linkages with the embassy, while our faculty would gain access to training programs offered by Korean agencies, and finally both parties would benefit from the language institute as well as research collaborations.

Accompanying Prof. Zeleza were Amb. Prof. Ruthie Rono (DVC - Academic & Student Affairs), Mr. James Ogolla (Director of University Advancement), Dr. Paul Okanda (Director of ICT), Prof. Munyae Mulinge (Associate DVC – Academic Affairs), Prof. Njeri Wamae (Dean - School of Pharmacy & Health Sciences), Dr. Michael Kihara (Ag. Associate Dean ¬ School of Humanities & Social Sciences), Dr. Elijah Munyi (Assistant Professor of International Relations), Dr. Naom Nyarigoti (Assistant Professor of Pharmacy), Ms. Carren Jumba and Ms. Joanne Alividza of the Office of Fundraising.

One immediate benefit accruing from the meeting was the visit on Wednesday, January 31, by Handong Global University (HGU), which was facilitated by the Korean embassy.

IR students prepare for Harvard with visit to Norwegian embassy

By Antonio Longangi

International Relations students from the School of Humanities & Social Sciences paid a visit to the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kenya on Friday, January 26. Their purpose was to gain an understanding of Norway’s foreign policy and their key interests in Kenya and Africa, preparation for the group’s participation in the Sixty-Fourth Session of the Harvard National Model United Nations.

While making a presentation to the delegation led by Mr. Ahmed Kadid Adan (School of Humanities and Social Sciences Representative at the Student Affairs Council) on Norwegian foreign and UN policy, Mr. David C. Jourdan (Political Counselor, Royal Norwegian Embassy), underlined the necessity of a well-functioning global legal order, “It is crucial that relations between states are regulated by a network of binding rules and regulations.”

The delegation will represent the Kingdom of Norway, among other countries, at the annual United Nations simulation exercise to be held in American city of Boston from February 15 - 18.
LIBRARY FEATURE: Do you need support in your research and publishing?

By Azenath Ateka

Researchers in many middle and lower income countries, face the same pressure to publish as their colleagues in developed countries but often, they don’t have access to the resources, information, training and support networks that are common in high-income countries.

AuthorAID is a global network supporting researchers in lower and middle income countries to publish and communicate their work. This is accomplished through; free online training in research and proposal writing; Mentoring; Networking and collaboration; Funding for workshops and travel; Embedding research and proposal writing within institutions; Addressing gender inequalities in academic institutions; and Online Training.

AuthorAID also offers free 6-week open online courses in research and proposal writing, hosted on the free open source learning platform - Moodle. They are interactive and moderated in peer review exercises and discussion forums. The training covers: Literature Review; Publishing Ethics; Writing your Papers & How to Write a Grant Proposal. Mentoring and Collaboration

AuthorAID aims to support early researchers to find mentors who can help them progress in their career. The mentoring system pairs experienced mentors with researchers who need help at any stage of their writing. The mentoring relationship can be short or long term. The mentoring portal is used to find fellow researchers interested in collaborating on a research project.

Capacity Building: Embedding Research Writing

AuthorAID aims to embed research writing and proposal writing skills in institutions so as to develop a sustainable institutional writing program and support network. Key elements include: Capacity development; Training local trainers; Developing and implementing successful writing clubs; Creating institutional mentoring support; Online course coordination and facilitation skills to aid distance learning; Creating a plan for long-term sustainability; and Grants and Resources

AuthorAID offers small grants twice yearly to researchers in lower and middle income countries, which include travel grants (provide early career researchers a chance to present their research at international conferences and network with other researchers), and workshop grants (which provide opportunities for experienced researchers to hold training in research writing in their own institutions).

Supporting Women Researchers

AuthorAID focuses on supporting women in research to address gender inequalities in academia such as balancing of individual career goals with traditional gender roles at home; challenges of managing safety on campus; and breaking through the glass ceiling of promotion.

Gender grants are provided to support researchers in attending a conference on the topic of gender or hosting a gender workshop in their country. Other free training materials, resources and further information are available at www.authoraid.info.

Career Services Feature: Exploring Careers – Information Technology

By Minah Kaburu

In this day and age almost nothing in our day to day activities is untouched by technology. Most communication in business is rarely done face to face in relation to virtual communication for instance: customer communication with banks, household bill payments or retail markets giving options for payment to consumers via mobile phone or cards. A large number of our current students have grown up alongside technology if not having actively interacted with screens from primary school.

Technological disruption in various industries has demanded the uptake or incultation of technology into the way people do business whether it is for communication purposes, distribution or operations, as well as expecting the consumer to take a hands-on approach in how they partake in services from providers for instance, the airline ticketing process. Considering most, if not all of us, use technology from the time we wake up to when we get back to bed, we are aware that it is here to stay.

The potential for growth in the industry can also be seen through the Government of Kenya’s investment as reflected in the 2017/2018 budget, where close to KES 15.6 billion is allocated to the ICT sector. In addition, according to the 2017 Economic Outlook by Deloitte, Kenya’s internet connectivity has increased by 25% in the last 3 years, with fibre optic connectivity accounting for nearly 97% of underground internet connections, therefore boosting connectivity in Kenya and the world. Cloud computing and broader IT services markets have also benefitted from the modernization of the public and private sectors.

The quick espousal of technology from home, to cars, to class, to office and business, gives a good indication of the importance of a career in the IT industry. So as an APT and IST major student, what skills can give one an edge over others in this fast-growing field?

Skills required of successful IT professionals:

Analytical skills: This is essential in problem-solving which is a major part of a career in IT, where one is required to look at problems from various angles, analyze them and provide/recommend the best solutions available.

Interpersonal skills: This goes against the stereotype that technology professionals are unsociable people who like to work alone or with technology only. Technology is now a big part of how business is done through various departments, and therefore professional in this field need to know how to comfortably listen, speak and explain solutions to their others in organizations.

Focus: IT professionals who can concentrate on a task or work on solutions to problems without getting distracted will be more valuable than those who are not.

Multitasking: While we spoke of being focused on a task, it is also important as an IT professional to multitask. In most roles, IT professionals will be asked to troubleshoot or help out with an issue internal or external to the organization. Even if one is working on a specific project, various other requests may come up that would need to get addressed.

Proactivity: Technology can be viewed as both a good thing and a bad thing in organizations. It can help save time when used effectively, but also slow things down if people don’t know how to use its tools or if it’s not working well. A functioning help desk can solve a lot of these issues and contribute to the output of the organization.
Mixed results for sports teams in weekend action

Compiled by Diana Meso

In the sports world, the men’s rugby team flogged Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) 25-5 in the ongoing Kenya Rugby Union (KRU) Championship League on Sunday, January 28. The team will travel to Ukunda this weekend to battle out with South Coast Pirates. The ladies hockey team beat both Sliders and Mt. Kenya University 1-0 in the ongoing Kenya Hockey Union (KHU) Women’s Premier League. However, the men’s hockey team recorded a goalless match against Kenyatta University (Ruiri).

This coming weekend, the ladies hockey team are set to meet Strathmore University and Mombasa Sport Club (MSC) in the KHU Women Premier League, as the men compete with Mt. Kenya University at JKUAT and Western Jaguars at City Park in KUSA League and the KHU Men’s Premier League respectively.

The basketball men’s basketball team recorded mixed reaction after beating Kenyatta University (Ruiri Campus) 58-39 but lost to Kenyatta University (Main Campus) 61-39 in the Kenya Universities Sports Association (KUSA) League at USIU-Africa basketball pitch.

Their female counterparts lost two matches to Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) in the Kenya Basketball Federation (KBF) at Strathmore University on Saturday, January 27 and Sunday, January 28.

The men’s basketball team will meet JKUAT and St. Paul’s University in JKUAT while the ladies meet KPA this coming weekend in the KUSA League and KBF Women’s Premier League respectively.

Both the ladies volleyball and soccer teams lost to Kenya College of Accounting (KCA) and Kenyatta University 1-3 and 0-1 respectively, in the ongoing KUSA League. This weekend the ladies volleyball team will meet JKUAT, while the ladies’ soccer team encounter Greta University on the same campus.

The ladies karate team clinched 3rd position, while their male counterparts secured the 4th position after Mt. Kenya University, Kenyatta University and St. Paul’s University in the karate kata competition. The ladies team further emerged 2nd, as the men clinched the 3rd position in karate kumite competitions respectively in the ongoing KUSA Nairobi Karate Conference.

In tae-kwon-do, the men’s team won 4 gold, 1 silver and 2 bronze medals to place them in the 1st position, while the ladies team emerged 2nd with 2 silver medals. Thus USIU-Africa-Africa emerged first runners-up in the KUSA Nairobi Tae-kwon-do Conference.

Media Mentions

Compiled by Diana Meso

February 1: USIU-Africa was mentioned by the People Daily in an article titled “Butali maintain spot.”
http://www.usiu.ac.ke/on-campus/news/media-mentions/1334-people-daily-butali-maintain-spot

February 1: The Star newspaper mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Tough times ahead for Nasa.”
http://www.usiu.ac.ke/on-campus/news/media-mentions/1333-the-star-tough-times-ahead-for-nasa

January 29: USIU-Africa was mentioned by The Star in an article titled “Menengai keep top spot in KRU show.”

January 29: The Star newspaper mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Do Cabinet nominees all share Uhuru’s vision and agenda?”

January 28: USIU-Africa was mentioned by the Standard Digital in an article titled “Rejuvenation of Jubilee Party ideals on the cards.”

January 28: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Telkom and the perfection of the art of winning.”

January 27: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Why we must not allow another day of gambling.”
http://www.usiu.ac.ke/on-campus/news/media-mentions/1328-daily-nation-why-we-must-not-allow-another-day-of-gambling

January 27: USIU-Africa was mentioned by the Daily Nation in an article titled “Oilers confront Moi in KRU championship.”

January 24: USIU-Africa was mentioned by the Standard Digital in an article titled “PURPLE DRANK: Cough Syrup craze slaying ‘rich’ varsity students.”