USIU-Africa partners with Kenyan conglomerate to launch graduate training program

By Ernest Anguru

On Thursday, June 7 USIU-Africa in partnership with Devki Steel Mills Limited launched the Narendra Raval – Guru Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation (ESI) Program, targeting recent graduates from both public and private universities in Kenya. This is a first of its kind Outcome-Driven Entrepreneurship (ODE) program to be offered in an institution of higher learning, which seeks to equip participants with a 21st century mindset, skills, frameworks, tools and processes, that will help them transition from entrepreneurial intentions and aspirations, to reality through a more predictable Evidence-Based Innovation Process and Strategy (EBIPS).

The six month program, which will be hosted and administered by the School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension, is mainly designed to solve the problems of business failure, by enabling participants to incubate their great ideas and receive guidance on how to manage and overcome business challenges.

Participants will be taken through a human-centered interactive systematic process to create their own businesses, through which they will be offered practical, hands-on insight and battle-tested solutions to the failures by startups.

“The ESI program is based on a methodology which helps participants avoid the frustration of hit-and-miss innovation endeavors, because it makes innovation more predictable, leading to high-growth enterprises,” said Prof. Amos Njuguna, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension.

He noted that is the program is geared towards generating more jobs through market creation rather than market disruption which causes displacement.

“We aim to provide an environment that will lead to innovative ideas and solutions that will solve our own problems and those of the continent,” he added.

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Speaking at the launch of the program, The Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza underscored the university’s desire to prepare graduates who are ready for the workplace they are headed, “This commitment is necessary to ensure that Kenya continues being the economic powerhouse in the region, as it has extensive human skills, ideas and capacity to generate relevant solutions,” he noted.

On his part, Devki Group Chairman Narendra Raval spoke of this partnership as a step in the right direction, noting that their experience was informed by the continuous disruption they had observed in the marketplace. “We knew we needed to change the direction in which the industry was headed,” he added.

He also added that Devki will donate a considerable amount towards tuition fees for the first batch of 50 students once the program commences in July at the Incubation and Innovation Center. Upon completion, Devki Group will place successful graduates from the program in their subsidiary companies: Devki Energy Company Limited; Devki Steel Mills Limited; Maisha Mabati Mills Limited; Maisha Packaging Company Limited; National Cement Company Limited; and Northwood Aviation.

“Our partnership with USIU-Africa is based on the fact that we want to socially invest our funds and expertise with an institution that is widely recognized as a center of academic excellence with state-of-the-art teaching facilities.”

Hollywood producer offers insights to film majors

By Diana Meso

Executive Film Director/Producer Ms. Wanjiru Njendu, was on campus on Wednesday, May 30, to speak to the Summer 2018 Fundamentals of Photography and Cinematography (FLA1010) class.

Ms. Njendu, who holds a Master’s Degree in Visual Media and Arts from Emerson College, has had a storied career spanning projects connected with global film giants such as Universal Studios, Bloomberg LP and Illumination Entertainment. She was invited by Assistant Professor of Film Dr. Rachael Diang’a to share insights into her profession, with the inaugural class of the Film Production & Directing.

From her base in Los Angeles as Director/Producer at Magic Works Production, she has been involved in the production of international blockbusters such as The Fast and Furious franchise, Paranormal Activity, and the widely successful animation franchise Despicable Me. Locally, she has produced and directed films like Safari Ya Jamhuri- A Journey to Freedom, Look Again, Samantha Who, Super Temps and Mostly Evil.

In her lecture, Ms. Njendu spoke of her journey as a filmmaker, recalling how her undying love for film was nurtured by her parents, and sustained by passion, hard work, consistency and sacrifice.

Ms. Njendu pointed out that it is essential for aspiring film producers, directors and writers to research on film projects produced by their peers, in order to boost their knowledge. She emphasized the need for aspiring film makers to be well versed with the basics of film production such as script writing, editing, directing, production equipment and cinematography. In addition, she underlined the importance of budgeting and simplicity in film production.

The Film Production and Directing program in the new School of Communication, Creative and Cinematic Arts, was launched in the Summer 2018 semester. It features four concentrations: Production, Directing, Cinematography and Script Writing.
Four faculty members and a graduate student in the School of Communication, Cinematics and Creative Arts have presented research papers at the world’s biggest conference in the field of communication - International Communication Association (ICA) Conference - held in Prague, Czech Republic from May 24 to May 28, 2018.

Dr. Joseph Nyanoti (Assistant Professor of Journalism) presented a paper in Popular Communication division titled “Ideology and Representation of Women Political Aspirants in the 2017 General Election Primaries Campaign Posters in Nairobi County: A Cultural Studies Approach”.

He examined the role of patriarchal ideology in subjugating women in their quest for political leadership. Findings show that although female contestants in Nairobi designed posters that were aimed at marketing them to their prospective voters as the best candidates to take various elective positions (Women Representatives, Senator and Members of County Assembly), the messages they projected only helped promote male superiority. Instead of selling their political ideologies and leadership qualities, the women candidates identified themselves as mothers – for example – “Miss Maendeleo” (Miss Development).

Presenting in the Health Communication division, Assistant Professor of Journalism Dr. Stephen Kimotho explored the nature of stigma communication associated with mental illness, beliefs and stereotypes underpinning mental illness stigma. His paper was titled “Silenced Voices: Understanding Stigmatizing Beliefs, Stereotypes and Stigma Communication Associated with Mental Illness in Africa”.

His findings indicate the nature of mental illness stigma communication is an intersection of stigma messages, cultural beliefs, and stereotypes associated with mental illness. Cultural beliefs associated with mental illness are inextricably intertwined with the perceived cause of mental illness (which include curses, witchcraft, cultural misdemeanour, and possession by spirits or demons).

In the Mass Communication division, Associate Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication Dr. Kioko Ireri’s presentation focused on how Al-Jazeera and BBC news sites visually framed the 2011 Libyan Revolution. His paper was titled “Images from Battlefields: How Al-Jazeera and BBC News Sites Visually Framed Libyan Revolution”.

Using 250 news images embedded in the news links of the two sites, the study investigated the prevalence of six visual frames: people, weaponry type, weaponry ownership, destruction, casualties, and other. The findings indicate that the people visual frame was the most-prevalent, and was dominated by images of the rebel fighters. While guns dominated the weaponry type frame, casualty and destruction images were rare.

Four aspects of the visual frame coverage of the conflict came out strongly: the reportage of the Libyan conflict encapsulates support for the UN military intervention, Al-Jazeera offered more visual coverage than BBC, and the conflict was presented as a “Libyan affair” and “bloodless”.

Graduate student Jimmy Ochieng (MA in Communication Studies) presented a joint paper with Dr. Ireri in the Political Communication division. The paper was titled “Politicians in Newspaper News: Who Attracts Coverage in Kenyan Politics”. The research examined characteristics of the most visible Kenyan politicians in a four-year newspaper coverage period (2013-2017). It also investigated the variables that predicted the coverage of 349 MPs.

In the same vein, the predictors of politicians’ mention in news was further analyzed by gender. The study also examined whether senior MPs and those holding leadership positions received more coverage than others. Findings show that the most-covered MPs are male, belong to the five Kenyan dominant ethnic groups, affiliated with Kenya’s four major political parties, first time legislators, and hold no committee or party leadership position.

On predictors of news visibility, negative coverage was found to be the strongest determinant of their coverage. By gender, the strongest predictor for male politicians was negative coverage, while commenting on corruption topic determined female MPs mentions in news. Senior MPs and those holding leadership positions enjoyed more coverage than other colleagues. The data-collection for the research was funded through USIU-Africa internal research grants for 2015-2016 academic year.

Assistant Professor of Journalism Dr. Dorothy Njoroge’s paper was titled “Media Representation of Celebrity Activists and Other Key Actors in the Make Poverty History Campaign”. Using the critical discourse approach, the research examined how the Western press represented the major actors during the campaign organized for Africa in 2005 by music stars Bono and Geldof. The paper was presented in the Activism, Communication & Social Justice division.
Faculty receive full internal research grants
By Dr. Kioko Ireri

Proposals from thirteen USIU-Africa faculty members received KES 7.9 million worth of internal research grants from the School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension for the academic year 2017-2018.

A total of 21 proposals were submitted for funding consideration but only 13 qualified following a rigorous review process spearheaded by the Academic and Research Committee (ARC).

Speaking recently at a Faculty Council meeting, ARC Chair Dr. Kioko Ireri explained that all the submitted proposals went through a blind review of three reviewers per proposal. The first reviewer was drawn from the applicant’s School, while the second came from another School within USIU-Africa. The third reviewer was external, but an expert in the area of applicant’s research topic. The final score for each proposal was determined by calculating a mean from the three reviewers’ scores. According to USIU-Africa internal research grants policy, only proposals with a minimum score of 70% qualify for funding.

Of the 13 proposals that qualified for funding, seven (54%) were from the faculty in the Chandaria School of Business. The other six were split evenly between the School of Communication, Cinematics & Creative Arts; School of Pharmacy & Health Sciences; and the School of Humanities & Social Sciences.

The seven principal investigators in the Chandaria School of Business are: Ms. Marion Mbogo (KES 494,500); Dr. Paul Wachana (KES 998,300); Mr. Samuel Wainaina (KES 500,000), Professor Francis Wambalaba (KES 499,900), Dr. Timothy Okech (KES 700,000), Dr. Juliana Namada (KES 500,000), and Dr. Scott Bellows (KES 179,575). Those from the School of Communication, Cinematics & Creative Arts are Dr. Stephen Kimotho and Dr. Kioko Ireri each receiving KES 529,220, and KES 500,000 respectively. Dr. Lincoln Were (KES 994,640), and Dr. Edith Amuhaya (KES 1,000,486) are the principal investigators from the School of Pharmacy & Health Sciences. Those from the School of Humanities & Social Sciences are Dr. Naomi Nyarigoti (KES 499,450) and Dr. Michelle Karume (KES 497,380).

All the grants recipients attended an orientation workshop overseen by the Dean School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension Professor Amos Njuguna. During the workshop, Professor Njuguna took the recipients through the guidelines and expectations regarding utilization of the research funds, assuring the recipients of his support during their research project period. The next cycle of internal research grants applications will open in Fall 2018.

Pharmacy students hold health-drive
By Antonio Longangi

Members of the Pharmacy Club, held their first health drive behind the cafeteria, on Thursday, May 31 to raise awareness of individual health. Students of the Bachelor of Pharmacy program, conducted a series of tests focusing on visual acuity, color blindness, blood pressure and body mass index (BMI).

The Pharmacy club was launched in Spring 2017, with the objective of promoting skill acquisition among pharmacy students outside of classrooms. Through practical activities, exchange of experience, forums, lectures, and other activities, students are exposed to the local realities and international trends in the pharmaceutical sector.

“We want to encourage individuals in our community to know the basic state of their health, so they can adopt healthy habits,” commented Ms. Sandra Gitau (Pharmacy Junior). She also added that such activities “…helps us practically interact with what we are taught in class.”

The Bachelor of Pharmacy program focuses on the development, application and effective management of pharmaceutical technology as a fundamental tool of modern healthcare. Members of the club expect that the core Pharmacy program outcomes of pharmaceutical management and research, are supported by activities evolving around human health, and therefore the Club will be holding similar activities on and off campus.
International Relations majors win Strathmore debate

By Hudson Amenya

International Relations majors Ms Eunice Njeri (Freshman) and Ms. Lucy Irungu (Sophomore) trounced two Strathmore University teams, to be declared winners of a debate held at Strathmore University on Friday, May 25. The debate brought together four universities in a discussion centered on analyzing Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta’s development plan, and which opportunities it presents for young people.

The plan, popularly referred to as the ‘Big Four Agenda’, is built on four key pillars: raising the manufacturing sector’s contribution to Kenya’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 9 to 15 percent by 2022; expanding food production and supply; providing universal health coverage for all Kenyan homes; and building 500,000 affordable houses.

Each of the four USIU-Africa teams comprising two students each, sailed through the first round elimination competitions to qualify for the semifinals, with only one of the four qualifying for the final. The winners were commended for exhibiting wide knowledge of the subject matter, as well as effectively utilizing verifiable facts and statistical data, with admirable confidence.

Ms. Njeri, who was recognized as the best female speaker was thankful for having received an opportunity to express herself, while her colleague Ms. Irungu, testified to their rigorous preparation despite their unfamiliarity with the British Parliamentary Debate format.

The four teams are already preparing to participate in Amnesty International's Annual Inter-Varsity Human Rights Debate, whose structure conforms to the Mjadala Kenya Debate format.
USIU-Africa teams playing in various competitions and tournaments had a rough June 1-3 weekend as they conceded defeats in basketball, hockey, soccer and rugby.

The ladies’ basketball team lost 32 – 40 to Equity Bank in the on-going Kenya Basketball Federation (KBF) Premier League, while their male counterparts playing on campus in the same league, lost 31 – 45 against KCA University, and 49 – 52 against Umoja, on June 1 and 2 respectively.

The men’s hockey team lost to Butali Warriors in the semi-finals of the MCHA men’s indoor hockey festival, held in Mombasa.

In the Universities and Colleges Football League, the men’s soccer team was defeated 1 – 2 by the National Youth Service (NYS) in a game played at NYS on Saturday, June 2.

Defending champions USIU-Africa men’s rugby team maintained their fourth position in the Kenya Universities Sports Association Kings of Rugby 7s series, despite being defeated by Mount Kenya University (Thika) 7 – 24 during the Dedan Kimathi University leg of the series, played in the highlands county of Nyeri.

In upcoming games scheduled for June 9 and 16, USIU-Africa-Africa’s basketball teams will take on the men’s Lakeside and ladies KPA team in the first leg of the 2018/19 KBF season.

The men’s hockey team will be playing against Green Shark in the first leg of the Kenya Hockey Union Premier League, on June 9, while on June 10 they will be playing against Kenya Police hockey team.

This weekend, the Soccer and handball teams will be participating in the St. Paul’s University Open Tournament, while the men’s rugby team will be playing in the Kings of Rugby 7s series from June 16 and 17 to be held at the Technical University of Mombasa.