By Dan Muchai

The Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza addressed the university at the annual Vice Chancellor’s convocation on Monday, September 17, where he highlighted the key initiatives, activities, achievements, and challenges from the previous academic year, and set out the 2018-19 Academic Year Priorities.

Addressing the formal university gathering, Prof. Zeleza expressed his pride at the improving financial stability of the university in spite of industry-wide declining enrollments and tighter state budgetary cuts for public universities. The number of enrolments have gone up by 169, while the (far more accurate) Full Time Equivalent number had also increased by 269 students. Indeed, as he noted, USIU-Africa is expanding its workforce, investing in new infrastructure and deepening its research funding.

2017-18 YEAR IN REVIEW

Priority 1: Expanding academic programs and becoming a reputable research university

The Vice Chancellor noted the five new academic programs and the establishment of the new School of Graduate Studies Research and Extension. The new School, the new research policy, as well as increased research activities, grants (KES 112 million) and hosting of major international conferences and lectures, marked a significant step towards the university’s priority of becoming a reputable research university.

The growth in partnerships 26 new academic and external partnerships, up from 15 in the previous year, and others such as the African Development Bank’s Coding for Employment Center of Excellence, and the Delivery of Life Skills Training for Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project were increasingly positioning USIU-Africa as the “leading university in the youth employability training space,” he said.

The restructuring process of the Academic Affairs sub-division which began with the hiring of new School Deans, and involved the coalescing of academic programs into departments, was now complete with the competitive recruitment of new Academic Departmental Chairs and the formation of four School committees (Academic; Appointments and Promotions; Research and Linkages; and Student Advising and Mentoring)

Priority 2: Promoting student and employee recruitment, retention, support and success.

Given the prevailing adverse industry conditions, the university sought to
act proactively to improve student and employee recruitment, retention, support and success. Such measures included a new comprehensive marketing plan, while the Admissions department organized open days for high school students, and participated in local and international student recruitment fairs.

According to the Vice Chancellor, student retention had been tackled through interventions to improve student mentoring, and strengthening of counseling and career development programs. He also indicated that the forthcoming recommendations of a taskforce on drug and alcohol abuse would be implemented in this academic year.

Other recommendations were derived from the 2016-2017 Employability Survey, have led to the up skilling of IT students and empowerment programs for local university graduates with work-ready skills and access to jobs.

Prof. Zeleza expressed his pleasure at the successful implementation of the new student leadership electoral system and reorganized organs as enshrined in the new Student Association constitution. This, he felt, demonstrated the university’s commitment to leadership development, through training opportunities, yet he also challenged his audience to become familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the University’s 10 governance bodies and offices, in order to have effective institutional governance and advancement.

While welcoming the 50 new employees to the university, the Vice Chancellor elaborated briefly on the challenges of recruiting qualified faculty given the stark shortage of academics with terminal degrees - an area he noted the university led with 71% of our faculty having doctoral degrees against a national average of 34%.

"Over the next several years, we will continue an aggressive faculty recruitment program earmarking at least 21 new faculty each year. This is part of our strategic drive to improve the full-time-part time faculty ratio, faculty-student ratio, and faculty workload which are so critical for excellence in teaching and learning and for research productivity."

He also noted the Management Board’s commitment to improving employee demographics, remuneration and benefits (in line with the Job Evaluation, Salary and Organization Review), as well as providing opportunities for skills development, and further education.

Part of the University’s determination to delivering higher value to students included enhancing employee productivity and performance by implementing a new performance management system in this academic year. The new system, he said will enable the university to “better focused, formative and summative evaluations and support an optimal performance culture and accountability."

Priority 3: Strengthening sense of community, inclusion, and responsibility

Explaining how policy development worked at USIU-Africa, the Vice Chancellor pointed out that development of any policy, was a multi-layered process involving the University’s governance bodies and offices. Major policies recently approve by the University Council included the Policy for the Differently Abled Persons (developed to strengthen the University’s commitment to diversity and inclusion, and in compliance to the Constitution and laws of Kenya); implementation of the approved Sexual Harassment Policy, Procurement & Disposal Policy and the Student Association Constitution. The new constitutions of the Faculty Senate and Staff Council are currently undergoing review, to align them with other changes of the governance structure.

The Vice Chancellor also noted that other policies under review or awaiting Management Board or University Council approval, such as policies on Admissions, Whistle Blowing, Fraud & Corruption Prevention, Data Protection, and Insurance Risk Management, as well as a Customer Service Charter, were expected to strengthen institutional integrity, operations, and service delivery on approval.

Prof. Zeleza also remarked on the notable enhancements made to enhance safety, security and health services, including the purchase of an ambulance, the expanded scope of pharmacy services, as well as additional medical camps and health education forums. The Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Board also upgraded our classification of our health facility to a Level 3 Health Center, upon inspection in March 2018.

Members of the university community listen keeley as the Vice Chancellor numerates the University’s priorities for this his academic year. PHOTO:ANTONIO LONGANGI
Priority 4: Enhancing and diversifying resources and preparing for a capital campaign

Using an illustration from the Africa Wealth Report 2017, which ranks Kenya as 4th in the number of High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs), the Vice Chancellor encouraged his audience to begin their charity at home by tapping into the significantly high number of HNWIs as, “some of these people are our own alumni, relatives, or from our hometowns and villages, religious organizations, and other circles of affiliation and affinity,” for institution building.

Priority 5: Improving electronic and physical infrastructure

In addition to the development of new systems in Human Resources, integration of existing systems such as the Enterprise Resource Planning system, upgrading of the data center, and automation of three workflows (Contracts, Procurement and Policy management) in a collaboration between the Legal and ICT Divisions.

The VC was categorical that the university was moving relentlessly towards paperless offices in a bid to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the day-to-day operational environment.

The VC also announced the completion of the building of a perimeter wall around all university land, thus securing university premises. Additionally, he launched a three-year energy saving plan that is intended to ensure the University become self-sufficient in energy.

Finally, a Master Planning Steering Committee was also appointed to plan for future development and ensure that the physical aspects of the University shall evolve in tandem with the academic needs for the next 50 years.

In line with this the University is going to construct a new five storey Humanities Building that will double as teaching and learning spaces on campus and provide state-of-the art classrooms, labs, offices, moot court, and eating places available on campus.

By DAN MUCHAI

In order to pursue ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE this academic year, the University will be establishing and strengthening of new programs in STEM, health sciences and communication, cinematic and creative arts. Five institutes and centers will also be established.

The university will also continue expanding short courses and programs, and enhancing student recruitment, retention, services, support and success. This will include the strengthening of the quality of teaching and learning, enhancing alignment of curricular and co-curricular programs.

Other measures will include the enhancement of research productivity, infrastructure, support and output, and expansion of e-learning infrastructure and training support.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE will be pursued through strengthening of fundraising and other income generation activities, as well as the construction of approved projects (new humanities building, student hostels and the hospital complex). Governance systems and communication will also be enhanced.

Finally, to further improve on service excellence, the university will continue strengthening of internal and external customer and client services, implementation of performance management system, improvement of medical services and a continue the review of policies and procedures.

In conclusion the Vice Chancellor noted that this academic year was the 50th Anniversary of founding of the university - a year that will surely be marked with various activities defining that milestone.

INSTITUTIONAL SCORECARD

At the conclusion of the convocation, Prof. Zeleza unveiled an institutional Scorecard that provides the community with a snapshot of University performance and achievements in core areas of our enterprise as a higher education institution.

The card has six categories each with its own indicators; student indicators (Enrollment, Retention and Graduate Rates); academic indicators (new programs, research productivity); financial indicators (Grants and Contracts, Fundraising, and Financial Growth); Employees and Skills Development); Institutional Progress (Strategic Plan Implementation); and Institutional Reputation (Brand Equity, website and social media insights).

The card will enable the university community to share an identical picture of institutional health, as well as utilize the data to set performance targets in a uniform, measurable way.
Assistant Professor of Spanish Dr. Jane Muasya and Principal Academic Advisor Ms. Lynnette Nzioki accompanied a group of seventeen students undertaking minors in Spanish, on an academic trip to Spain in August 2018.

During the eighteen days they spent in Spain, the team visited the Spanish capital Madrid where they visited the world renowned Museo Nacional Del Prado (Prado National Museum), the Palacio Real de Madrid (Royal Palace of Madrid) and La Almudena Cathedral. The group also paid a courtesy call at the Embassy of the Republic of Kenya in Spain, where they were received warmly by Embassy staff.

In the northwestern city of Valladolid, the students attended a two-week Spanish course at the Fundación de la Lengua Española, and before proceeding on an excursion to the ancient northwestern Spanish city of Salamanca, home to one of Europe’s oldest universities - Universidad de Salamanca, which was founded in 1134 and granted a Royal Charter in 1218.

In Segovia, the group also made time to visit one of the best-preserved Roman aqueducts - a water conveyance structure that crosses the entire city, and has stood for almost two millennia.
By Antonio Longangi

USIU-Africa in partnership with the Royal Thai Embassy hosted a Thai Cooking Workshop on Thursday, September 13 at the Training Kitchen in the Freida Brown Student Center. The event was held as part of “Thai Food to the World” - a government effort to promote Thailand’s rich culture beyond the country’s borders.

The workshop was conducted by Assistant Professor and Dean in the Faculty of Education at Kasetsart University, Dr. Surachai Jewcharoensakul.

Professional chefs from major restaurants and hotels in Nairobi, Sarova and Art Café among many, who were joined by students of the Hotel and Restaurant Management program at USIU-Africa.

Dr. Jewcharoensakul introduced participants to the two types of Thai cuisine; Thai Royal Cuisine and Folk Cuisine. “The difference lies in the ingredients used,” he said. “Royal Cuisine does not include raw ingredients, and has a high sense of aesthetic, while folk cuisine features fish and other types of meat in large spicy portions.”

Part of the demonstration included such, Thai dishes as Choo-Chee Curry (fish coated in coconut milk and chili paste paired with rice) was prepared and sampled by participants. Other dishes such as green curry with beef - seasoned with a combination of tropical spices, were prepared under the instruction of Dr. Jewcharoensakul.

Students who took part affirmed the sense of being part of global events and enjoyed the interaction with professionals in the industry they will be joining at completion of their degree requirements. The ultra-modern training kitchen was also a subject of praise by the various participants.

On Saturday, September 15, Mr. Daniel Joseph (Regional Leader, GYLF), Mr. Blanche Muco (GYLF Ambassador in Burundi), and IBA Freshman Prince Mwendwa (Head of Programs, Kenya) speak at the Global Youth Leaders’ Forum’s East African Regional Youth Congress in the auditorium. The event, themed, “Youth and Nation Building (A special focus on East Africa)” was attended by high school students from around the city. The Forum is responsible for training, inspiring and equipping youth all around the world to impact their world, and build lasting solutions to societal challenges. PHOTO: ANTONIO LONGANGI
USIU-Africa lost five and drew a single game on the weekend of September 15 and 16.

**Basketball**

According to Team Captain Ms. Cylia Atieno (Tourism Management Senior), a passive approach to the game was the main reason the ladies’ basketball team lost 34 - 51 against Sprite Storms in the Kenya Basketball Federation (KBF) Premier League, on Saturday, September 15. “The result was an eye opener as we were still getting our minds back into the game,” she added.

The men’s team was just as unimpressive as they fell to Blades 51 – 58 on Saturday, September 15 in the KBF Men’s Premier League.

They will join other sport teams for the Kenya Universities Sports Association, Nairobi Zone (NAKUSA) games beginning on Saturday, September 22 at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT).

Their junior counterparts playing in the Nairobi Basketball Association (NBA) Division 3, narrowly lost 43 – 47 against JKUAT on Saturday, September 15. The following day they fell to yet another defeat 34 – 54 against Nexus Basketball Club.

This weekend, they will attempt to buck their losing streak against Upper Hill School and Mount Kenya University (MKU), at Upper Hill basketball court on Saturday and Sunday, September 22 and 23 respectively.

**Soccer**

In the Universities and Colleges Football League (UCFL) the ladies’ soccer team was flogged 0 – 6 by Zetech University on Saturday, September 15.

The ladies will next face Technical University of Kenya (TUK) on Saturday, September 22, and the Thika School of Medical and Health Sciences (TSMHS) on Sunday, September 23 at the Kabete Community Field.

The men’s team will also face Technical University of Kenya (TUK) on Saturday, September 22, as well as participate in the NAKUSA games kicking off on same date at JKUAT.

**Hockey**

USIU-Africa drew 2 – 2 against Nakuru Men’s hockey team on Saturday, September 15, at the City Park Hockey Stadium in a Kenya Hockey Union (KHU) Premiere League match. The team, will also join their female counterparts, in the NAKUSA games starting on Saturday, September 22 at JKUAT.

**Rugby**

The men’s rugby team will participate in an invitational tournament marking Entebbe Mongers Rugby Club’s 20th anniversary from Saturday to Sunday, September 22 and 23 in Kampala, Uganda.

**Other games**

The Handball and Volleyball teams will be partaking in games of the NAKUSA league scheduled for Saturday, September 22 at JKUAT.
September 20: USIU-Africa was mentioned online in an article titled “Nairobi Diaries director Janet Mwaluda’s hubby laid to rest.”

September 19: USIU-Africa was mentioned by Pulse Live in an article titled “Nairobi Diaries director’s fiancé laid to rest.”

September 18: Citizen Digital mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Maina hails Equity for breaking jinx against KPA.”

September 18: USIU-Africa was mentioned by Mediamax in an article titled “Dockers maintain unbeaten run as Warriors keep title dream alive.”

September 18: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “KPA vow to retain title unbeaten.”

September 17: The Standard Digital mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Why most Americans disliked Kofi Annan.”

September 16: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in article titled “Champions KPA strike Thunder in league.”

September 16: USIU-Africa was mentioned by the Standard Digital in an article titled “BASKETBALL: Storms dim USIU-A Flames as Equity Bank overcome champions KPA.”

September 15: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Equity Hawks down KPA to end losing streak.”

September 15: The Standard Digital mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “KPA, Equity in tough duel: Blades will tackle Thunder today before meeting USIU-A Tigers tomorrow.”

September 14: USIU-Africa was mentioned online in an article titled “Nairobi Diaries Producer, Janet Mwaluda’s Fiance Passes On.”

September 14: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Showdown as KPA, Equity clash in basketball league.”

September 13: USIU-Africa was mentioned by Citizen Digital in an article titled “Zetech vow ‘good’ show against KPA.”

September 13: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Injuries derail USIU’s title challenge.”

September 11: USIU-Africa was mentioned by Standard Digital in an article titled “Hockey: Scorpions sting Spartans to consolidate second spot.”

September 11: Mediamax mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Warriors break poor record against Blades as playoff chase gathers pace.”

September 11: Citizen Digital mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Ulinzi chasing second spot as KPA keep unbeaten record.”

September 10: USIU-Africa was mentioned by the Daily Nation in an article titled “Butali humiliate Western Jaguars to go 12 points clear.”

Upcoming Events

- **GDG DevFest Nairobi**: Saturday, September 22 @9am, Auditorium
- **Pharmacy Walk**: Tuesday, September 5
- **Commencement 2018 Rehearsal**: Wednesday, September 26 1.30pm
- **2nd Devolution Conference on Sustainable Development**
- **Graduation Dinner 2018**: Thursday, September 27 @6pm, Radisson Blu
- **Commencement 2018 Rehearsal**: Friday, September 28 1.30pm
- **40th Commencement Ceremony**: Saturday, September 29