Humanities Center to double teaching and learning spaces

By Ernest Anguru

The School of Humanities and Social Sciences will get a new home after a ground breaking ceremony held at the University on Thursday, November 8. Upon completion the center will double teaching and learning spaces by providing state of the art classrooms, labs and offices. This occasion marked the University’s commitment in maintaining high standards of academic excellence, as one of our key priorities in refining the quality of education is improving physical infrastructure.

The Center will host a moot court, crime scene house (to provide a simulation of a real crime scene) and an interrogation room which will offer practical skills for the Criminal Justice and International relations students. The new School of Humanities and Social Sciences will also house a forensic lab which will offer tangible experience to our students towards resolving some of the world’s heinous crimes as well assist the country in fighting crime. The lab will also have facilities for processing materials during the investigation process such as gun powder residue, blood and saliva samples, spent gun cartridges, finger prints, and controlled substances.

Speaking during the ceremony Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza said the modern learning spaces will accommodate the changing face of teaching and learning. The guest of honor, Dr. Peter Munga mentioned that this was a transformative building that would provide a creative and inspiring learning space.

The center will have a language, psychology and ICT labs, 23 meeting rooms, conference pods and breakout rooms for small group discussions. The psychology lab will be fitted with a diagnosis assessment into the human mind and behavior facilities, the first of its kind locally, while the language lab will provide a unique study of the human voice and teach a variety of local, African and foreign languages.

The new School of Humanities and Social Science will enhance the engagement and critical thinking to our students through the unique set of facilities. The center is scheduled to be completed in Fall 2020.
The USIU-Africa Global Agribusiness Management and Entrepreneurship (GAME) Centre has been awarded a grant of KSH 56,886,900 by Cultivate Africa’s Future (CultiAF), a joint program of the International Development Research Center of Canada (IDRC) and the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) to implement a project entitled “The Effectiveness of the Metro Agri-Food Living Lab for Gender Inclusive Youth Entrepreneurship Development in Kenya.” The project will be implemented by USIU-Africa through GAME Centre and Busara Center of Behavioral Economics.

It is estimated that 60% of the project will target women in Agribusiness. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, young women agri-business entrepreneurs are less likely to have the resources, knowledge and skills required to start a business in agriculture compared to their male counterparts and thus hinders their productivity levels on a sustainable level. The youth in Kenya face challenges in accessing financing to operationalize their business ideas and this project seeks to mitigate this by working closely with financial institutions that will avail funding for successful projects.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Paul Zeleza lauded the project and emphasized that food security can only be achieved if we actively engage the youth in agri-business enterprises. He further encouraged institutions of higher learning to engage in partnerships that will foster action based research. “This project is as a result of the success we have achieved in the first phase and we will employ the same working relationship to ensure that we have an equally successful project and reach out to more youth and women in Kenya,” he said. In addition, he encouraged the government, private sector and development partners to invest in the youth and encourage them by providing opportunities that can lead to job creation and reduce unemployment.

The implementation of the project has a unique gender inclusion aspect that is part of ACIAR’s strategic objective. A gender expert will be attached to the participants to mainstream and effectively engage the gender aspect in all the activities of the project. Dr. Leah Ndungu, the Regional Manager at ACIAR said that the project will ensure that it leads to gender empowerment of women and young girls in agribusiness. The project will also focus on innovative solutions to improve food security in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The Metro-Agrifood Living Lab model brings together a unique set of activities and services that create the needed synergy to support not only learning, but also innovation, business development and the co-creation of new knowledge. Speaking during the launch, the Regional Director of the International Development Research Centre Dr. Kathryn Toure said that the youth participating in the program are expected to grow their sales, expand their businesses and improve their livelihoods.

The uniqueness of the Metro Agri-Food Living Lab is its integration of training, mentorship, and financing and action research to improve chances of success. The project will expose trainees to business concept evaluation and development, business planning, marketing and feasibility studies, linkages to finance and marketing channels, strategic advice and legal assistance, specialized technical assistance and development of a business plan to be presented to potential financiers. Successful applicants will be assigned business mentors.

The project will be recruiting trainees from the National and County governments’ agricultural officers and other stakeholders to identify potential agribusiness entrepreneurs that will be invited to apply for the program. Recruitment drives will be conducted in Nairobi, Machakos, Kajiado, Kiambu, Nyandarua, Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Muranga, Malindi, Kilifi, Tana River, Mombasa, Kakamega, Vihiga, Kisumu, Busia, Nakuru, Bomet, Kericho, Baringo, Bungoma, Uasin Gishu, Pokot, and Trans-Nzoia.

It is envisaged that the project will spur youth businesses, especially in the Agricultural sector whose participants are aging, the project will further lead to job creation for the youth, hence addressing the problem of chronic unemployment that has impoverished them and is negatively impacting on the country's social and economic welfare.
School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences holds colloquium on antimicrobial resistance

By Dr Caroline Kahiri, Dr. Betty Mbatia and Diana Meso

On Friday, November 2, 2018 the School of Pharmacy and Health Science (SPHHS) invited Dr. John Kiiru, Principal Researcher, Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and scientific leader of the Consortium for Pathogen Ecology, Epidemiology and Genomes to speak to staff, faculty and students during a colloquium on antimicrobial resistance at LT3 in the Science Center.

Antimicrobials are natural or manmade (synthetic) products that kill microorganisms, or keep them from multiplying or growing. Antimicrobial resistance is one of the biggest threats to global health which is endangering treatment of common infectious diseases like malaria, common cold, chickenpox, and cholera among others.

During his presentation, Dr Kiiru said that despite the increasing number of microbes with resistance to antibiotic, since 1993, no new class of antimicrobials has been discovered or developed and the number of companies developing antimicrobials drugs has dropped by 78%.

Dr. Kiiru enlightened participants on the main courses of antimicrobial resistance which include; under dosing and substitution of prescriptions for varied reasons, wrong prescription and lack of professionalism among pharmacists. He added that in rural and poor communities, under-use of antibiotics was the major factor that contributed to antimicrobial resistance while in urban and middle income areas, overuse of the microbial agents, mainly by self-prescription, hawking of antibiotics on the streets and willing pharmacists who are ready to issue drug dosage without valid doctor’s prescription was the key contributor to antimicrobial resistance.

He further highlighted that commercialization of drugs and excessive use of antibiotics in animals and plant to increase productivity which is transferable to man has also increased antimicrobial resistance.

“It is worrying to note that for every antibiotic developed, it takes an average of two years for resistance to be reported. The current and recent cholera outbreaks in Kenya is caused by highly resistant strains that are rarely reported worldwide and there is evidence that environmental contamination and pollution of abiotic surfaces with detergents and heavy metals may be indirectly accelerating emergence and spread of resistance,” he said.

In his final remarks, Dr. Kiiru said it is unfortunate that despite the growing antimicrobial resistance to available treatment regime, there are no ready solutions to replace antimicrobial therapy once potency is lost to major classes of antimicrobials, adding that loss of potency will lead to poor prognosis arising from simple infections and it will be difficult to do surgical procedures. However, he encouraged participants saying that all is not lost, if only we change our culture to correct use of antimicrobials, enforce the laws on pharmacy regulations and dispensing of medicines and encourage research and development of new antimicrobials.

USIU-Africa to hold panel discussion on mental health

By Diana Meso.

USIU-Africa in partnership with Blaze and DW Media will host a panel discussion dubbed “Bring Change to Mind: A discussion on mental health and depression” on Tuesday, November 13, from 11 am to 12.30 pm at the Auditorium. The discussions are aimed at changing the perceptions and tackling challenges of mental health in Kenya.

The panelists include Nastia Gustol, Co-Founder and Director of Yusudi and BYOB mentor, Pauline Kerre, Assistant Segment Manager, Consumer Marketing Safaricom, Kuki Magana, Muthoni Wangai and Joseph Kinyanjui Lecturer of Psychology, Patrick Obel, Senior Counsellor and Dr. Tasneem Yamani, Principal Medical Officer all from USIU-Africa.

Mental health continues to be a sting in the minds of many Kenyans with reports from the Health Ministry showing an exponential increase in mental illness in the past 25 years. The reports indicate that approximately 20-25 percent of outpatients seeking primary healthcare present symptoms of mental illness at any one time.

The reports further show that as at 2015, there were only 92 psychiatrists in the country instead of the 1,533 required and 327 psychiatrist nurses instead of 7,666 with the cost of mental illness ranging between KSh 50,000 to KSh100,000 before factoring in on the doctor’s consultation fee of Sh10,000.

The discussion is open to the entire USIU-Africa community.
USIU–Africa celebrates International Open Access week

By Mary Ngure

USIU-Africa through the Library and Information center joined the global community to celebrate the International Open Access Week from October 29 to November 2. Themed ‘Designing Equitable Foundations for Open Knowledge’ the event was attended by USIU-Africa faculty, students and staff. Participants were enlightened on various Open Access resources and encouraged to open ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) accounts which distinguishes researchers work. Additionally, participants were urged to have all their work deposited in the Institution’s Digital Repository for the benefit of the global audience.

The Open Access week culminated in an interactive session on Thursday, November 1, held at the Library Atrium featuring a talk by Dr. Elizabeth Marincola from the Africa Academy of Sciences. This talk together with other short speeches from Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza and the Ag. DVC, Academic Affairs, Prof. Munyae Mulinge who graced the event delved into the history of Open Access and its development in Africa and around the world. Prof. Mulinge defined open access as a movement that was initiated to lobby against pricing of knowledge and data to empower persons from all walks of life regardless of their financial status.

In his remarks, the Vice Chancellor touched on dynamism in knowledge management and dissemination noting that Universities when founded had three main roles; to produce knowledge through research, consume knowledge through intellectual discourses and disseminate knowledge through teaching. However, this has resulted in the growing commercialization and commodification of knowledge by publishing conglomerate giants. He also touched on the conundrum facing researchers who are forced to pay exorbitantly for the same content they provide freely to publishing houses. Among other challenges, he reiterated is the growing concern of predatory journals to the research community.

The guest speaker, Elizabeth Marincola, an expert in the field of open access by virtue of her thirty years of experience in open access publishing took over the reins from the Vice Chancellor highlighting the drawbacks of traditional or subscription publishing such as closed access publishing. She outlined long lead times, perception of prestige by researchers, no credit to peer reviewers involved in the publishing process, lack of validation of research in the field of science as the main challenges associated with closed access publishing. She further clarified that an Impact Factor impact factor is a tool used by librarians to analyze the cost-benefit relation of purchasing a journal for use and not a benchmarking tool for assessing quality of the actual research.” Marincola closed by urging all scholars to actively publish academic works in open access journals in order to reach larger audiences and thereby improve their ratings. She lauded governments and funding agencies for policies that require researchers (whom they fund) to only publish in open access platforms by virtue of the grants awarded.

The event was concluded by an award session where three faculty members who had recorded the largest number of publications published in open access platforms in the 2017/2018 academic year were recognized and appreciated. They included Dr. Scott Bellows, Associate Professor of Strategic Management, Dr. Paul Katuse, Associate Professor of Management, and Prof. Amos Njuguna, Dean, School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension.
Thai Ambassador speaks on Thai–Africa relations

H.E. Ambassador Cherdkiat Atthakor, the Royal Thai Ambassador to Kenya and 9 other countries as well as the Permanent Representative to the UN Habitat and UN Environment was a guest speaker to the International Relations Class (IRL 4040 A: Africa – Asia Relations), taught by IR Lecturer, Dan Odaba on Wednesday, 24th October, 2018. The Ambassador gave a Lecture titled; ‘The Role of Thailand in Africa’s Development Agenda’.

His presentation touched on Thailand and its relation with Africa and Thailand’s development experience of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). The Ambassador shared with the students and Faculty on Thailand’s Landscape of development cooperation in Africa and Thailand’s perspectives on South-South cooperation, Thailand’s development cooperation in Africa and challenges in pursuing development cooperation in Africa.

Annual youth summit vows to reduce their carbon footprint through sustainable environmental practices

Hoja Youth Summit held its annual summit from 24 to 26 October at the USIU-Africa auditorium. This year’s theme was “Focusing on the youth, as the Engineers of the Africa We Want.” The meeting had representation from across Africa including institutions like Malawi Polytechnic University, University of Zimbabwe and University of Nairobi.

The two-day event was officially opened by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Paul T. Zeleza, who reiterated that the future of this country and Africa belongs to the young people. “The Youth are the largest demographic in Africa, therefore, a large portion of continent-wide development and problem-solving lies with the youth.” He mentioned that such opportunities should be made available to the youth to ensure that they maximize on their potential.

The event organized theme-based plenary sessions that were of interest to the participants. Dr. Richard Munang, UNEP Africa Regional Climate Change Program Coordinator led the first session on Global Warming and Climate Change. He was joined by Mr. Julius Karanja, the Climate Change Work Coordinator at Kenya Youth Climate Network and Mr. Eddy Musoke, Coordinator of Hoja Youth Summit. The session discussed various policies that addressed climate change and the challenges in implementing those policies especially at the grassroots level. The meeting noted that Africa has been part of the continent-wide development and problem-solving lies with the youth. “The Youth are the largest demographic in Africa, therefore, a large portion of continent-wide development and problem-solving lies with the youth.” He mentioned that such opportunities should be made available to the youth to ensure that they maximize on their potential.

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The meeting noted that this treaties need to be communicated to various stakeholders so that they can understand their involvement and contribute towards a greener world. The session lauded efforts that have been introduced locally and successfully implemented such as the plastic ban across Kenya that came into effect in August 2017. Other countries were encouraged to learn from this success story as they introduce and implement similar regulations in their countries. The session also noted that young entrepreneurs should be encouraged to incorporate sustainable green business models that benefit the communities around them.

One of the other sessions that was primarily touching on the youth was peace building and conflict resolution. Dr. Simeon Sungi, Head of the Criminal Justice Department, Dr. George Wajackoyah, Law Scholar and Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, Mr. Dan Odaba, Lecturer at USIU-Africa and, Dr. Richard Munang formed the panelists that had a wealth of experience on this topic. The session discussed ongoing conflicts in Africa which are solely or partially based on natural resources such as, the war in Congo which is a fight for minerals between Multi-National Corporations and militia groups.
SPORTS UPDATES

By Antonio Longangi

Swimming
The USIU-Africa swim team (Dolphins) took part in the Silverfin Academy Championships held on November 3-4 at the GEMS Cambridge International School in Kampala, Uganda.

Mr. Billy Irakoze (IBA, Junior) broke the record in the 50 meters freestyle and the 100 meters freestyle by finishing in 24.08 seconds and 55.40 seconds respectively, earning his team two gold medals.

The team was able to improve on their speed and individual times by bagging 3 gold medals, 1 silver medal and 1 bronze medal.

Hockey
The ladies’ team showed resilience during the Nairobi Kenya Universities Sports Association (NAKUSA) League held on Saturday, November 3. The team were hosted by Kenyatta University and won by 2-0.

Their male counterparts playing in the Kenya Universities Sports Association (KUSA) League lost 0-1 against Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). However, they succeeded to take their revenge by thrashing Butali Warriors 2-0 in the NAKUSA games held at Kenyatta University.

The men’s team will meet Strathmore University while their female colleagues will battle JKUAT in the Kenya Hockey Union (KHU) league scheduled to take place on November 11 at the City Park Hockey Stadium.

Soccer
The men’s soccer team beat Daystar University 3-0 and Gretsa University 3-1 in the Conference phase of the NAKUSA league held at Kenyatta University.

In the same league, the ladies’ team lost 1 – 2 against Mt. Kenya University on Saturday, November 3 at Kenyatta University.

The men’s team meet KCA University and Parklands Football Club in the NAKUSA league at JKUAT held on November 10.

Basketball
The ladies’ team were first runners-up after losing 19–27 against Moi University, while their male counterparts were eliminated in the preliminary phase of the KUSA championship held in Eldoret.

Meanwhile in the Kenya Basketball Federation (KBF) National league, the men’s team lost 56–69 against Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) at Nyayo Stadium.

The ladies’ team will battle Equity Bank ladies’ basketball team in the KBF Play-offs at Nyayo Stadium, while the men will seek revenge against KPA in the KBF National league this weekend.

In the KUSA league, the men will confront Daystar University before meeting Pan-Africa Christian University at JKUAT on Sunday, November 11.

Handball
The USIU-Africa team will battle Gretsa University in the KUSA league on Saturday, November 10 at JKUAT.

November 9: USIU-Africa was mentioned by Citizen Digital in an article titled “Blades braced for KCA response in KBF playoffs.”

November 8: NTV featured USIU-Africa in NTV Tonight news segment titled “USIU - Africa unveils the school of humanity and social sciences.”

November 6: Citizen Digital mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “KPA, Flames assume play-offs advantage.”

November 6: USIU-Africa was mentioned by The Standard in an article titled “Thunder break into Equity Bank vault.”

November 6: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “Butali sweat to reclaim lead from Police.”

November 5: USIU-Africa was mentioned online in an article titled “Ebru TV Presenter Dana de Grazia Talks Jacque Maribe Visit, Playing Rugby, Nairobi Diaries, and More.”

November 5: USIU-Africa was mentioned by The Standard in an article titled “Champs KPA one step away from semifinals.”

November 4: The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled “KPA launch title defense in style.”

November 3: USIU-Africa was mentioned by Citizen Digital in an article titled “Hockey top dogs on the hunt.”