KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY H.E. PAUL KAGAME, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF RWANDA, AT THE USIU 40TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATIONS, NAIROBI, KENYA, 2ND FEBRUARY 2011.

Honourable Prof Hellen Sambili, Minister for the East African
Community and Acting Minister for Higher Education, Science and
Technology;

Professor Frieda Brown, Vice Chancellor, United States International
University;

Dr. Richard Leakey, Chair of the Board of Trustees;

Faculty, staff and students of USIU, as well as those from other
universities;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you Hon. Sambili for the kind introduction, and to the
leadership of USIU for inviting me to be part of this celebration
marking 40 years of educating young Africans to play an important
role in the societies they belong including those I see here today.

USIU could not have reached this important milestone without a
vision of education and leadership shared by its founders, staff and
faculty. Certainly, the high calibre of USIU graduates over the years
reflects the aspirations that this university began with.

It's an honour for me to be here today and contribute to the
conversation on how universities should position themselves to play
an increasing role in developing the next generation of African
leaders that will transform our continent.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

In the last two decades, we have witnessed a phenomenal expansion
of university education across our Continent. But today's Africa is
radically different from that of past generations, and therefore universities have to adapt and meet our ever changing demands, if we are to seize the opportunities of this new century.

For example, this generation has the potential to use new technologies, which have already made a huge difference to the lives of Africans. Indeed, it can shape the social and economic development of this continent. But to do this, it needs the skills in science and technology; in finance and business; in health and education, to mention but a few. And I trust that institutions such as USIU will produce quality leaders in these fields and more, to realise the dreams we all have for our continent.

Faculty and Students;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

For our universities to attain this shared vision, we need to invest more in quality higher education.

But this entails more than giving students a firm foundation of knowledge in their subject and increased autonomy and responsibilities.

It means giving today's graduates the practical skills to find innovative and practical solutions to the needs of their communities. Sadly, this is not always the case.

Today, Africa only has a handful of Research and Development institutions, and research in science, technology and biomedicine is nearly non-existent -for the continent that stands to benefit most from all this.

Similarly, we have under-invested in business leaders.

To give one stark example: despite the rapid expansion of MBA programmes in Europe (particularly in the UK) and Asia, there are
only about 60 MBA programmes in Africa, serving a continent of one billion people and some of these institutions are not even accredited.

In contrast, the United States, with roughly one third of Africa's population, has over 600 MBA programmes.

If Africa is to play its role on the world stage - it is imperative that we broaden the function of universities across Africa to fill this need. We need universities that can train students in practical as well as leadership skills that the future leaders of Africa should have in order to drive development effectively economists, lawyers, scientists, and others.

We need to seize the new investment opportunities in Africa by training entrepreneurs with a strong sense of responsibility, accountability and a commitment to service, for both the public and private sector.

For this shift to happen, four conditions will have to be fulfilled:

First, we should integrate university education into national policy, identifying gaps and providing courses that fill the needs across all sectors.

Second, the university will have to develop closer ties with the private sector and communities that their graduates will serve.

Third, they will have to make innovations in their curricula and teaching methodologies so that they offer tailor-made courses that impart skills for specific needs, and carry out research that their communities can access and benefit from.

Fourth, we will need to look at alternative sources of funding, apart from the traditional government support for public education institutions. Even private institutions rely heavily on foundation bodies and tuition fees, which is neither predictable nor sustainable.
The private sector, which is a growing consumer of university graduates, should become a more active partner in sharing the costs of their education.

These changes are within our reach, and universities like USIU, which are already delivering some of the courses I mentioned, should serve as an example of how these critical gaps we are facing can be filled.

Distinguished audience;

I have dwelt mainly on the role of the faculty and the policy makers in Governments in aligning our university education to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

But while all these are important, it is our students whom we must invest in the most.

This is the leader the new university has to produce: a person who holds themselves and others to the highest standards; who understands their context and can participate in solving Africa's complex challenges and creating prosperity.

Honourable ministers, faculty and students;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

We must, in our different roles, rise to the challenge of the 2151 century. Young people: you need to develop values of integrity, honesty, and a sense of duty because this builds character, and this is what will make you successful as individuals, but also transform our societies.

In your studies and daily work, there are no short cuts to achieving your goals -you have to put in your best effort every day, all the time.
Remember you have been given an opportunity that many do not get, and you have a responsibility to make it count, for yourselves, those around you and future generations.

It is the African way to see ourselves as a community—the advancement of one should benefit the whole. By seizing the opportunities before you today, and being mindful about how they can also positively impact others, our Continent will be able to keep pace with the rest of the world and confidently face the future.

I thank you for your kind attention and welcome your suggestions and comments.

Once again I want to congratulate USIU and wish them a happy anniversary. I wish you all the best and we will give you all the support to benefit to our young people.