SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. FREIDA BROWN DURING THE LAUNCHING OF MOMBASA USIU ALUMNI CHAPTER
3rd November 2000

Your Excellency Mr. Johnie Carson, U.S. Ambassador to Kenya, Chairman of USIU Alumni Association, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Your Excellency, it gives me great joy on behalf of USIU to welcome you. We are greatly honoured that you could find time in your busy schedule to be with us here tonight.

Mombasa Alumni Chapter members, this is one of the greatest moments in my life. I have the joy of a parent watching their child grow up and now move out to establish a home of his own. I am proud of you. We have upcoming Alumni Chapters in Uganda and Tanzania, but do you know that you are the first Chapter to be officially launched? I think you need to clap for yourselves for that!

As I look at your faces, I am inspired by the anticipation and expectation they display. I salute the fullness of your hearts and your efforts. I am especially delighted that those of you who have benefited from USIU education are now intending to use their knowledge to transform not only their lives, but also those of their communities as well. Community service is something we have always encouraged diligently at USIU, and it gives me great joy to see it bearing fruit here. It shows that education is not an expenditure, but rather an investment. It is the spiritual nourishment of mankind.

I would like to recognize and sincerely thank the Mombasa business community for the support and goodwill you have shown us today. Your being here today shows that you care. That you are interested in making Mombasa a better place. I commend you for that and appeal to you to support this young group in its endeavors. What we are beginning today is the birth of a new dream for Mombasa. If you join hands with the USIU alumni, I am sure that together you will make a difference. I do not think you hold the key to all of Mombasa's problems, but like someone once said, it is better to light a candle, than forever curse the darkness.

There are still many challenges ahead in realizing and living this dream. For those of the alumni who will take office to lead this Chapter, you will face many challenges. One of the best ways to face them is through dialogue. First among yourselves, and with your neighbours like the business community represented here. The dialogue should enable you exchange ideas on strategies and actions relating to existing issues, anticipated problems and solutions, principles and virtues on which you want to build this Chapter. We hope this forum will initiate that dialogue.

One the other ways we want you to do USIU proud is through ethical leadership. Every academic program at USIU has a course on ethics. We, as an institution that teaches ethical behavior to our students must be a role model for them. For those who may not know, the university had adopted an Ethical Practices Policy which guides the way we
conducted our business both internally and externally. It says if you cannot talk about it in
public, it is probably unethical. We are living in an era where ‘transparency’ and
‘accountability’ are the catch lines! We believe that you will make us proud in the way
the Chapter is run and let people see the difference of USIU education through your
ethics.

And now, let's take time and reflect on the role of alumni in any institution? Some time
ago we went round and asked some alumni to tell us sincerely what they thought was
their role. Mr. Maina Ndirangu, whom some of you may know (he did his MBA in 1990
and is now the Managing Director of Consumer Insight) said

"it is the alumni who should help the university evolve and improve. They are the
ones who employ new graduates and are therefore the best placed to help in
designing curricula that is dynamic and relevant to the labour market.”

In other words, you here have a role to participate in the evolution of USIU. To tell us
whether the courses being taught are still relevant. Whether the graduates are employable.
Only when we keep in touch with alumni can we remain relevant and our graduates
competitive. Otherwise we may be teaching the obsolete.

Universities have been accused of being ivory towers far removed from real life and
teaching too much theory. Alumni could be that much needed bridge. By offering our
students internship in your firms, you will helping them see how what they are being
taught fits into the market.

I urge you to get interested in our curriculum. We are in the process of introducing an
advertising course within our Business Program and those of you in that line could help
us. We also now have a Career Centre at USIU. In addition to getting highly qualified
USIU graduates whenever your firm has an opening, you can also support us by
contributing as resource persons during Career Counseling seminars. Esther Ambeva
here, from Bamburi Cement, has valuable experience in Human Resource Management.
May be we could slot you in to de-mystify the subject for our students who would like to
pursue that line. Francis Mwakha of the Nation, we now have a journalism class, may be
you can share with our students the challenges of the profession to make them better
prepared.

You can also participate in other aspects of development of the university. USIU for
example spends over two million shillings every Quarter in providing Work Study
opportunities to supplement school fees for students with financial difficulties. Provision
of partial or full scholarships or urging your organizations to provide some, would greatly
assist in changing someone’s destiny. Needless to emphasize, only a very small
percentage of deserving students get even these partial scholarships. I was delighted to
see from your objectives that this will be one of your target areas. Indeed, everyone
deserves the quality education offered at USIU, not just the well-to-do, and that’s why
these efforts must be made.
Alumni also have responsibility to one another. To remain brothers and sisters and continue to meet in forums where they can share and learn from each other and support each other professionally, that each may continue to grow. Learning does not end in the classroom.

People can only know what an institution is, from its product. We are very proud of our Products in Mombasa. Carry the banner high for your university.

Congratulations and good luck!

It is now my pleasure to invite the Guest of Honour, the Ambassador of United States to Kenya, to address this gathering.

Ladies and gentlemen, H.E. Mr. Johnie Carson.