



**THE KENYA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

**SPEECH BY**

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**ON THE OCCASION OF THE GRADUATION CEREMONY**

**16<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

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- The Chancellor of University of Nairobi, Dr. Joseph B. Wanjui;
- The Chairman of the Kenya Polytechnic University College Council, Prof. Francis J. Gichaga;
- The Chairman of University of Nairobi Council, Mr. John Simba;
- The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, Prof. George Magoha;

- The Representative of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Mme. Agnes Sila;
- Members of the Kenya Polytechnic University College Council;
- Members of the University of Nairobi Management Board;
- Staff of the Kenya Polytechnic University College;
- Students of the Kenya Polytechnic University College;
- Graduands;
- Parents, Guardians, and Sponsors of Students;
- Distinguished guests;
- Ladies and gentlemen!

**Mr. Chancellor, Sir!**

First of all, on my own behalf and that of the entire fraternity of the Kenya Polytechnic University College I would like to thank you for finding time to preside over this inaugural graduation ceremony of the Kenya Polytechnic University College. We are indeed most excited about this, least of all, from the fact that this is the first time a graduation ceremony is being presided over at this great national institution by a Chancellor. We want especially to record our appreciation for the fact that when we approached you a few weeks ago together with the Vice-Chancellor to come and officiate at this function you not only immediately granted us audience, but you also promptly gave us a date when you would be available to be preside over this function.

**Mr. Chancellor, Sir!**

The Kenya Polytechnic traces its roots to the early 1960's when it was established by the then colonial government to train technicians and technologists. The training at the Polytechnic was aimed at producing those with special strength in hands-on abilities and who were ready to join the world of work without need for much further training. Over the years the institution was seen as the premiere institution in Kenya for the training of technicians and technologists and in this, acquired a highly respected reputation among employers and the general public. Today the array of subjects covered by the institution range from engineering and architecture to business studies, applied and health sciences to international relations and librarianship, computer and information technologies to printing and design.

The elevation of the Kenya Polytechnic to the status of a university college is a major milestone in the life of this institution. The university status has given the institution the powers to grant degrees, albeit currently under the University of Nairobi. Traditionally, university education tends to

be significantly different from that at the Polytechnic. While the Polytechnic education will typically put more focus on practical training with the aim to impart immediately applicable skills, university education on the other hand must put great emphasis on theoretical, conceptual, and philosophical training. With the elevation of the Polytechnic to university status, the big question in the minds of those who have been associated with the Polytechnic is, whether the institution will remain the Polytechnic that most have known it to be or whether it will embrace fully the character of a university at the expense of its well established polytechnic character.

A careful look at the Legal Order that established the Kenya Polytechnic University College will reveal that the institution has been established to function both as a polytechnic and a university at the same time. The Kenya Polytechnic University College has been established with the clear mandate that it shall continue with its previous programmes aimed at training the technician at the Diploma level while at the same time expanding into the degree programmes. The consequence of this is that the institution will in the main be expected to maintain and even strengthen its

traditional Diploma programmes on one hand, while on the other hand it shall introduce degree programmes in most of the areas of study offered at the institution. The meaning of all this is that the degree programmes are to be built on the current tradition of Diploma programmes. The model to offer both degrees and traditional technician Diplomas is going to be a unique characteristic of the Polytechnic in this country.

A unique characteristic of the degrees to be offered by the Polytechnic is that they shall be expected to be heavily geared towards producing graduates with strong practical and hands-on skills and who are ready to hit the ground running on joining the world of work. However, as a university, the institution shall also offer degree programmes which are aimed at producing graduates with capability for academic depth as to facilitate advanced scientific enquiry. The basic education and training shall be organised to cover three levels. First, there will be the training of technicians, which shall generally be concluded with a Diploma in Technology or an equivalent qualification. Secondly, the college will train technologists, who will typically graduate with the Bachelor of Technology.

Then there will be scientifically oriented programmes of the type of Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Architecture, or Bachelor of Science. Each of these levels will be aimed at producing personnel to cover for a particular cadre of professionals in our economy.

Besides offering programmes at both the Diploma and the degree levels, another unique feature of the programmes to be offered by the Polytechnic shall be the provision for prior education and training to be recognised. For instance, those with the qualification of Diploma in Technology can join the Bachelor of Technology programme in the third year of study, thereby being able to graduate with the degree just after two years of study. Further, those who already possess the Bachelor of Technology degree can join the Bachelor of Engineering programme (or an equivalent degree) in the third year of study, thereby needing just three years to complete the engineering degree. This structure of upgrading of previous qualifications shall be open to all those who possess the requisite qualifications obtained not just from the Polytechnic, but also from other institutions recognised by the Polytechnic and the University of Nairobi.

Since its upgrading to university college status, the Polytechnic already started on its degree programmes. In January this year, the first batch of degree students joined the institution to study for the degree of Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical and Electronic Engineering on one hand and the Bachelor of Technology in Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technology on the other hand. All the Bachelor of Engineering students were those admitted through the Joint Admissions Board from the KCSE 2005 cohort while the Bachelor of Technology students were admitted from those who had qualified with the Diploma of Technology last year. The second batch of the Bachelor of Engineering students who were admitted through the Joint Admissions Board from the 2006 KCSE cohort have just joined the college this September. The other admissions are planned for May 2010 in respect of 2007 KCSE cohort, January 2011 for 2008 KCSE class, and September 2011 for 2009 KCSE class. Parallel with the KCSE candidates, the college shall continue to regularly admit those with the Diploma qualifications into its degree programmes.

**Mr. Chancellor, Sir!**

By the Legal Order establishing the institution, the Kenya Polytechnic is required to have its curricula approved by the University of Nairobi Senate. I am pleased to report that the University Senate has recently approved the first set of programmes presented to it by the institution. The University Senate recently approved curricula for the Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical and Electronic Engineering, the Bachelor of Technology in Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technology, and the Diploma in Technology in Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technology. Several other curricula are currently being developed and shall soon be presented to the University Senate for consideration. In this regard I should like to point out that in the preparation of our curricula considerable effort is being placed in ensuring that our students are given sufficient practical training consistent with the tradition of the Polytechnic. Further, every effort shall be made to ensure that the curricula are recognised by the relevant professional bodies.

**Mr. Chancellor, Sir!**

Today the Polytechnic is one of the largest institutions of higher learning in this country. We have currently enrolled in this institution some --- students distributed as ---- full-time students and ----

part time students. Today we are graduating some 2,344 of our students distributed by programme of study as follows:

Applied Science and Technology – 403

Architecture and the Built Environment – 90

The Arts and Media Technology – 180

Business and Legal Studies – 518

Computing and Information Technologies – 46

Engineering Science and Technology – 487

Health Sciences and Technology – 203

Hospitality and Tourism Management – 143

Liberal and Technology Studies – 262

Centre for Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Technology Transfer - 16

From this we get a glimpse of the diversity of the areas of study at this institution. The management of the institution is committed to keeping with the strong tradition of practical training that has been so well established at this institution over the years, even as we embrace the more abstract

concepts of a university education. The Kenya Polytechnic University College shall continue to work closely with industry to ensure that her students continue to acquire practical experience during their time here in campus. All programmes offered in this institution shall have a session of industrial attachment during which a student shall be exposed to the real world of work while still in college.

**Mr. Chancellor, Sir**

I have been at this institution now as Principal for just a little under one year. I wish take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the Minister for Higher education, Science and Technology for appointing me to this position. It has been an exciting and also quite a challenging eleven months. While the college previously ran smoothly as a Polytechnic I was coming in with the express assignment to create out of the former institution an institution of university status. Among

the challenges we faced right at the beginning were: (i) there were some 128 students who took their KCSE in 2005 and who had been admitted to take their degree programmes in engineering at the institution and were yet to start their studies, (ii) there were the Diploma in Technology graduates who expected to be admitted into the degree programme, (iii) there were the staff who were deeply anxious about their future with the change of status of the institution, and (iv) for the planned degree programmes new curricula needed to be developed and staff to teach the courses needed to be sourced urgently.

I would like to report that when I joined this institution I found a dedicated cadre of staff who have given me full support as I moved on to try to get the institution running under its new status. The staff took on quite well the transformation of the institution to a university college and gave full support to the various changes we needed to make to get the institution running. In that period we have been able to accomplish quite a few tasks that were necessary to implement the objectives of the new institution at this stage of its development. I would like to report that the staff and students

of this institution have shown much enthusiasm and interest in the institution as a university college.

The students in particular have demonstrated their support for the new situation through great cooperation by the student leadership. The students have exhibited a high level of maturity and have consistently opted for the route of dialogue in tackling issues. They have demonstrated exemplary understanding even when the college was not able to find solutions to their problems immediately. As a demonstration of the students' corporate social responsibility, the students of this institution have a fund set a side from their Student Union contributions which they use to support their colleagues who may be financially disadvantaged to pay fees through a bursary. Over and above this, the students fund most of their social activities from their own Union contributions.

**Mr. Chancellor, Sir!**

The institution however clearly needs a lot of support if it is going to realise the objectives for which it has been set up. There will be a need for massive input of resources to provide for learning facilities, not only because of the newly introduced degree programmes, but even just to offer the traditional Polytechnic programmes at the expected high levels. Over the years the learning facilities at the institution deteriorated without much as a replacement of obsolete facilities and equipment. Thus although the Polytechnic has sustained relatively good reputation with employers and the society in general, it must be pointed out that in many respects our learning facilities are way below expected standards. Our classrooms and laboratories are already stretched to the limit, especially if it is considered that in this small space of just 8.1 acres of land we have to carry a total of roughly 10,000 students daily and 700 employees.

We would like to take this opportunity, to extend our cry to the Government to give this institution special consideration in her financing programmes if indeed we are to play a realistic role in the Vision 2030 programmes of this country. We have no doubt that with good support this institution has the potential to play a pivotal role in the technological development of this country. The ingredients of a great technological institution are there, but as a people we must be prepared to put in something in the institution if we want to get the best out of it. We have adopted for ourselves the vision “To be a top rated university of technology”. We believe that with appropriate support, this is a realistic vision to aim at.

**Mr. Chancellor, Sir!**

I would like to thank the College Council under the Chairmanship of Prof. Francis Gichaga. The College Council was in fact only inaugurated in May this year, but in the short period that they have been in existence they have been able to demonstrate considerable seriousness in their guidance of this institution. The Council has been able to facilitate, with much smoothness, the conversion of the staff to the employment of the University College from the employment of the Teachers Service Commission on one hand and from the Board of Governors on the other hand. They are currently in the process of considering a number of policy documents meant to facilitate the smooth beginning of this institution as a university college.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the University of Nairobi lead by Vice-Chancellor Prof George Magoha for the support they have given us. As a young institution on the university road, we have had to turn to the University of Nairobi as our mother university for support in logistics and staffing. At the time of my reporting here the Vice-Chancellor was gracious enough to extend to us, on secondment a number of administrative staff, and for this we are most grateful. Our degree programmes in engineering would be stranded in many respects if it were not for the

support we have received from a number of University of Nairobi lecturers who have been teaching for us on part-time basis. Further, a number of the curricula that we are developing continue to have strong input from University of Nairobi lecturers, who have generously given their time to assist us in this respect. Most importantly however, Prof. George Magoha, as Vice-Chancellor has given us considerable freedom to define the destiny of this institution without undue interference; we appreciate this with much gratitude.

To our graduands today, on my own behalf and that of the entire fraternity of the Kenya Polytechnic University College, I would like to extend to you our congratulations. This certainly is a major milestone in your lives. You have just qualified as experts in your various chosen areas of expertise and you deserve our fullest congratulations. As has been indicated, we are starting a number of exciting degree programmes and we would like to invite you to consider coming back to advance on your studies. We are setting out our programmes with the inbuilt facility to recognise previous learning and to grant credits to this effect. We trust that many of you will find this exciting and will make plans to come back one day to continue with your studies.

**Mr. Chancellor, Sir!**

Finally, I would like also to take this opportunity to thank so many organisations who have been in partnership with us in the realisation of the objectives of this institution. I would like to appreciate in particular the many organisations who over the years have consistently supported us by offering our students places for industrial attachment. Without these organisations, the practical, hands-on, experience that the Polytechnic graduates are so famed for would not have been possible. Secondly I would like to thank the many organisations who have supported us with scholarships and bursaries to students. In this respect I would like to mention in particular the Rattansi Trust, who over the years have consistently offered scholarships to our deserving students.

**Mr. Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen!**

Thank you!