

ICT Cabinet Secretary lauds MKU for effective use of internet technologies

The Cabinet Secretary for ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs Joe Mucheru, is urging more Kenyans to use the internet to drive the nation's socio-economic development.



Joe Mucheru, Cabinet Secretary for ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs

He notes that the Government has invested heavily in ICT infrastructure to expand connectivity across the country to ensure inclusivity in the access to internet.

Mr Mucheru, the chief guest at Mount Kenya University's (MKU's) 18th Graduation Ceremony held virtually, says the Covid-19 crisis has taught the nation that technology is a critical enabler of societal resilience, stating: "During the Covid-19 lockdown, ICT enabled people to productively work from the safety of their homes."

He notes that the number of internet users in Kenya rose to 22.86 million in January 2020, an increase of 3.2 million from the preceding year.

In July 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, President Uhuru Kenyatta virtually tested the Loon internet balloons which came as a follow-up to Telkom Kenya's partnership with Google parent firm Alphabet.

Mr Mucheru notes that the Covid-19 disruption has pushed institutions of higher learning to innovate and adopt new ways of teaching, delivering content and administering examinations by leveraging on use of diverse technologies.

He lauds MKU for using multiple platforms to ensure total success in transitioning to a fully online university as reflected in the theme of its

18th Graduation Ceremony: *'Embracing Innovative Digital Technologies in Higher Education: Excelling Amidst Emerging Challenges'*

"For a university with a high student population, setting up the various platforms to support learning requires immense resources as well as technical expertise," notes the CS.

He applauds the MKU management for the dedicated effort in ensuring education is accessible through an elaborate e-Learning platform and a high-end mix of different technologies, including television, video-conferencing and collaborative systems.

Mr Mucheru observes that

"For a university with a high student population, setting up the various platforms to support learning requires immense resources as well as technical expertise,"

Joe Mucheru, Cabinet Secretary for ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs

MKU has gone almost fully digital in teaching, conducting examinations, research and community outreach, and in all its operations, including hosting a virtual graduation ceremony.

He recognises MKU's collaboration with German-based partners and local stakeholders to institutionalise a youth empowerment programme under the coordination of the Kenya National Commission for Unseco. The programme, referred to as the Student Training for Entrepreneurial Promotion (STEP), was offered online at the height of the Covid-19 crisis to 130 youths in Nairobi and Kajiado counties.

MKU Chancellor

Pandemic fails to halt varsity's progress



Prof. John Struthers, MKU Chancellor

During the last six months, with the country in the grip of the Covid-19 pandemic, Mount Kenya University (MKU) has remained resilient. It has forged key partnerships and secured major grants, as the Chancellor, Prof John Struthers, reveals.

Prof Struthers, who is officiating MKU's 18th Graduation Ceremony today from his home nation, Scotland, is delighted with what the university has achieved even with the challenges posed by the pandemic.

MKU partnered with key national and international ICT service providers to ensure digital connectivity and capacity building.

Prof Struthers reports that Safaricom entered into a contract with MKU to provide a cost-reduced online connectivity to students and staff. This has greatly helped in facilitating the online teaching and examining of students.

MKU and TV47 have strategically worked together to offer a joint service to students during the Covid-19 crisis - a partnership that has been instrumental in the university's successful transition to the online mode of teaching.

During the same period, MKU's partnership with Microsoft was fully operationalised. The university used the Microsoft Teams application successfully for online meetings, teaching and conducting examinations.

The Chancellor is also delighted that MKU secured a DAAD grant from Germany, on a five-year, fully sponsored partnership project called African Centre for Career Enhancement and Skills Support (ACCESS).

MKU partnered with the Lapid Leaders Africa (LLA), a non-profit organisation that develops the next generation of African leaders by equipping them with soft skills to ease their transition from university to the marketplace. A team of 15 students and alumni were competitively selected for a fully donor-sponsored training, which commenced in March. The online training is ongoing.

Since last year, VMware global digital service providers established a training academy at MKU through a Memorandum of Understanding, namely, the VMware Academy. To date, the VMware Academy at MKU has trained 15 members of staff to be VMware trainers, and they have in turn trained 20 students, all under a full sponsorship of VMware. This training was online and continued during the Covid-19 lockdown.

MKU's fast response during Covid-19 demonstrates power of foresight

Mount Kenya University (MKU) Founder and Chairman, Prof Simon Gicharu, says heavy investments over time have enabled the institution to graduate students virtually.



Prof Simon N. Gicharu, Chairman Board of Directors and Founder, MKU

Prof Gicharu says the 18th Graduation Ceremony, hosted virtually today, is unique in the university's history, and would not have happened were investments in ICT not made years ago.

"Our years of investments in ICT have enabled the university to support our students during the pandemic. The Board of Directors, is committed to mobilising more resources in ICT to ensure that our students continue to learn even as the country weathers this storm," says Prof Gicharu.

MKU also committed considerable amount of resources to ensure compliance with all the Covid-19 containment guidelines by the ministries of health and education.

MKU was among the first

universities to move all teaching to its online platform following the Government's directive that suspended physical teaching in all learning institutions.

"While this decision necessitated huge expenditures, it was necessary to ensure continuity of learning," says the MKU Chairman about online classes.

Prof Gicharu is happy to note that even during the darker days of the Covid-19 crisis, the university continued to shine. For example,

MKU was awarded the University Innovative Civic Engagement Award by the Talloires Network, including Sh2 million, in recognition of its community outreach activities in Kenya together with Partners for Care, a non-governmental organisation. The interventions aim to reduce waterborne illnesses and preventable diseases. In light of Covid-19, the two partners are focusing on setting up hand washing stations to curb the spread of the virus.

Talloires Network of En-

gaged Universities is a coalition of university committed to community service.

Prof Gicharu congratulates MKU ICT staffer Geoffrey Omani for winning the Talloires Network of Engaged Universities logo competition and receiving a cash award of Sh250,000.

The university's innovators were at the forefront in producing innovations to manage Covid-19. Some of the innovations include a locally assembled ventilator, a contact tracing app, among others. "We celebrate the students and members of staff involved in these initiatives," says Prof Gicharu.



Geoffrey Omani, MKU ICT staffer won the Talloires Network of Engaged Universities logo competition

Join the graduation ceremony live @ TV47ke, www.tv47.co.ke and Facebook (Mount Kenya University) at 9.20am.



ICT prof explains why PPPs the way to go in digitising higher learning in Africa

A South African information and communication technology (ICT) don is urging governments and private investors to collaborate in digitalising higher education.

Prof Phillip Machanick says for higher education in Africa to survive adversities such as the Covid-19 pandemic, “Governments and sponsors of higher education must together invest in the adoption of online teaching and learning.”

The University of Rhodes don, the guest speaker during Mount Kenya University’s (MKU’s) virtual graduation ceremony today, says embracing digital technologies “will lead to a wholesale change in the way we conduct our business at the universities.”

Addressing MKU’s 18th graduation theme, *‘Enhancing innovative digital technologies in higher education’*, he notes that digitalisation is an expensive undertaking that requires collaborative investments by stakeholders to succeed.

The don advises sponsors of private universities and governments to work together. The two education partners should agree on the modalities of the governments cushioning the institutions against the impact of Covid.

Calling for effective public-private partnerships (PPPs), Prof Machanick suggests that governments should offer tax rebates, increase capitation to public universities and provide special funding to private ones.

JICA funds MKU and Osaka University to jointly fight malaria

Dr Jesse Gitaka



Mount Kenya University (MKU) is involved in a project to tame malaria in the country, jointly with Japan’s Osaka University. Mid this year, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) awarded the two universities a joint grant of Sh450 million to conduct malaria research in Homa Bay County and also undertake training of the necessary human resource.

MKU’s Dr Jesse Gitaka, the project’s principal investigator, says Covid-19 delayed the implementation of the project because some activities stalled, but some ground work has already been done.

“Ground preparations in Homa Bay County have started,” says Dr Gitaka, adding that designs of the laboratories to be established as part of the project have been completed, Kenyan PhD students who will participate in the project have been identified and all the paper work done.

MKU will use part of the grant to establish a Centre for Malaria Elimination, including a state-of-the-art research laboratory to support cutting-edge research in malaria. The centre will be housed at the university’s main campus in Thika.

The grant was provided through Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development (SATREPS). This is a Japanese government programme that promotes and funds joint research, mostly in developing countries.

Dr Gitaka says the initiative complements the government’s effort to eliminate malaria, a leading cause of death in Kenya. Homa Bay County, he observes, has a high rate of asymptomatic malaria. Infected people who do not show malaria symptoms serve as reservoirs of the infective agent in the community.

Dr. Gitaka said their research will focus on developing integrated strategies to eliminate malaria in Homa Bay County. The research findings will thereafter be replicated in other counties.

MKU shows resilience, continues to strengthen its systems

The unprecedented Covid-19 crisis has confirmed Mount Kenya University’s (MKU’s) resilience, as the institution did not lay off staff.

The MKU University Council has instead been busy developing policies and guidelines that benefit staff and students.

This is according to the Council Chairman, Prof David Serem, who says the raft of new policies seek to address the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The university developed teaching staff appointment and promotion guidelines.

It also undertook a human resource review to realign the existing jobs to the key institutional functions. The review recommended several proposals for the re-alignment and grading of jobs within the university as well as the terms of service for each job.



Prof David Serem, MKU Council Chairman

To enable postgraduate students to present their work virtually where face-to-face presentation is not possible, MKU approved guidelines on postgraduate presentations via web tech-

nologies.

Earlier, the University Council approved amendments to examinations irregularities on 23 November, 2018.

Says Prof Serem: “As the university administer online learning assessment and examinations, it has considered regulation of specific examination malpractices that may emerge.”

He adds that, to address the current Covid-19 situation and future situations where physical gatherings may not be feasible, the University Council approved virtual graduation to be included in the Schedule.

Prof Serem says this is what has made possible MKU’s inaugural virtual graduation, set for today.

The University Council has also a

To make provisions for online learning assessment and examination, the Council has approved the relevant guidelines.

The Council also approved the revision of three academ-

ic programmes to enhance their relevance to the industry and stakeholders’ needs. These programmes are: Bachelor of Public Health; Bachelor of Commerce and Master of Laws.

Due to Covid-19 challenges, the university devised new platforms for the delivery of lectures to students.

Additionally, the University Council approved revised programme minimum class sizes to ensure sustainability of the academic programmes.

It also approved the MKU website policy to provide a framework for management of the University Websites to ensure accuracy, consistency and integrity of the content and identity of the University website.

“I wish to affirm that the University will continue embracing digital technologies to stay afloat and promote both staff and student welfare and ensure that there is continual improvement in service delivery,” says Prof Serem.

Preparedness that enabled MKU to remain operational during Covid-19 lockdown

During the Covid-19 crisis that led to suspension of face-to-face teaching, Mount Kenya University (MKU) ensured its students continued to learn.

MKU Vice-Chancellor Prof Stanley Waudu says the university smoothly transitioned from the face-to-face to online mode of teaching, ensuring continuity of learning during the Covid-19 lockdown.

“The use of TV47 televised lectures in this transition was a great advantage. I wish to thank the entire team for the well-coordinated joint effort,” says Prof Waudu.

Prof Waudu says MKU quickly instituted Covid-19 prevention measures in line with the Ministry of Health protocols. Consequently, the Ministry of Education granted MKU the permission to recall final year medical as well as community oral health students to undertake clinical rotations and sit for examinations.

The university has devel-

“The use of TV47 televised lectures in this transition was a great advantage. I wish to thank the entire team for the well-coordinated joint effort,”

Joe Mucheru, Cabinet Secretary for ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs

oped guidelines for administration and management of online examinations.

The VC says MKU is also effectively implementing its other two mandates, research and community-engagement, in spite of Covid-19 related challenges.

He also reveals that the university’s faculty is developing funding proposals, implementing existing funded projects and operationalising new ones.

MKU is implementing projects funded by the Scottish Funding Council-Global Challenges Research Fund (SFC-GCRF) through the University of Edinburgh internal grants. Other projects are



MKU’s Vice Chancellor Prof. Stanley Waudu washing hands to create Covid-19 awareness

funded by the Grand Challenges Research Fund (GCRF of UK); Erasmus+; Osaka University of Japan through the Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development (SATREPS); Future Leaders African Independent Research (FLAIR); National Research Fund; DAAD; and Talloires Network of Engaged

Universities, among others. Prof Waudu says MKU awarded 31 students the Chancellor’s Scholarship during the Covid-19 period.

Also, the Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA) inspected MKU for accreditation as a qualifications awarding institution.

Regional body declares MKU Medical School the healthiest in Kenya

Students who graduate from the Mount Kenya University (MKU) Medical School qualify to be employed in any East African country.

This is because the school emerged the best during the 3rd Joint inspection of Medical and Dental Schools and Teaching Hospitals in the Republic of Kenya.

The exercise was carried out by a joint team of technical health experts from the East African Community Partner States National Medical and Dental Practitioners Regulatory Councils, from 2 to 6 March 2020.

The inspection found the school to be compliant with the provisions of the Regional Guidelines for Inspection and Recognition of Medical Schools in East African Community (EAC) Partner States.

On graduating, the MKU medical students receive reciprocal recognition in all the East African partner states and can practise globally upon meeting requisite requirements or passing additional examinations as may be required in various countries.

This is according to a report compiled by the inspecting committee.

The MKU Medical School registered an impressive 82 percent to top the rest.

The first students of medicine at MKU are due to graduate next year. By then, they will have spent an intense six-year journey of training, mentorship and exposure.

The students are exposed to practical lessons in state-of-the-art laboratories and at Thika Level 5 Hospital, through a public-private partnership with Kiambu County Government. MKU established a Ksh300 million funeral home cum-anatomy laboratory at the hospital.

As finalists, the medical students were among the lot that the Ministry of Education recently advised to return to campus to complete their studies after the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted on-campus learning.

Four of them share their experiences so far:

Lynn Kioko: "Our train-



MKU Medical Students in a laboratory

ing is intense, but with the support from my colleagues and lecturers, it's manageable. My training here over the last five years has had such a great impact on me socially, personally and career-wise."

Mitchelle Kagotho: "Nothing can really prepare you for the rollercoaster that is medical school. I have painstakingly learnt how to strike a balance between

my academic and social life. This is quite critical."

Salim Getogoro: "My MKU journey has been nothing short of satisfactory. Since beginning of the training in First Year, I have managed to learn a lot in terms of theoretical knowledge, research and practical skills that are essential in enabling me to provide quality health service in the society."

Yunis Abdi: "The journey

has had ups and downs, but at MKU, the teaching and the curriculum is taken seriously. Also, our learning is not affected by strikes. The other advantage is that we are literally next to our teaching and referral hospital, Thika Level 5 Hospital. This is advantageous in the clinical years. You can spend the night, weekends and any other time in the hospital."

MKU shines in graduate employability survey

Mount Kenya University (MKU) graduates are among the most employable from Kenyan universities, according to an independent survey on graduate employability.

With an index score of about 17 percent, MKU ranks fourth overall among universities in Kenya with the most continuing students who were employed. The survey was conducted by CPS Research International. Titled 'State of Graduate Employability in Kenya' and released mid this year, the survey ranks MKU top among private universities with the highest number of students working while studying.

The study sought to know from university students, universities and graduate employers how employable Kenyan graduates were.

CPS defines 'employability' as the ability of an individual to obtain and maintain employment as a result of not only acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, but also personal values and social networks.

MKU ranked fourth in the number of graduates that universities release into the job market annually, accounting for 6 percent.

The research firm conducted the study at both public and private universities, from November 2019 to January 2020.

MKU's Alumni Plaza



In their own words: PhD graduands testify

Munyiri Nyaga Ignatius

"It has been a difficult journey, but through the grace of God, I have made it. The university supported me greatly by assigning to me informed and caring supervisors who guided me well throughout the study."

Nickson Lumwangi Augusioma

"My PhD training at Mount Kenya MKU demanded sacrifice and determination. Determined, committed lecturers and supervisors who are up to the task made my success possible."

Tom Ongesa

"I recognise the support of the MKU fraternity, especially the School of Business and Economics, as well as the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies, for their tireless coordination and informative role. I look forward to using my new knowledge for the betterment of our nation."

Stanley Adika Kevogo

"My time at MKU stimulated abundant intellectual and personal growth for me. I worked with distinguished academics and highly motivated peers who valued professionalism and cared about my growth and success. The enthusiasm of working on cutting-edge research projects and publishing my work in peer reviewed journals has been enormously rewarding."



PhD Graduands

Alex Umbima Kevogo

"My experience with the PhD programme at MKU is generally illuminating. I have acquired invaluable knowledge, skills and expertise through the thorough and rigorous process. I am happy to have enrolled for my PhD at MKU, where I enjoyed full support from the university management and faculty towards achieving my academic aspirations."

Aldo Ajou Deng Akuey

"I was motivated to apply for further studies at MKU in September 2014, aged 69. I informed a Kenyan friend that I wanted to study for a PhD. My friend suggested: 'Why don't you do that at Mount Kenya University? It's a good university.' I have totally changed intellectually and now possess world knowledge and the leg-

acy of late age study. I shall remain with the MKU Alumni and participate effectively, promoting this esteemed African university."

Issak Maalim Adow

"The experiences I have encountered have immensely benefitted me. It has been a long journey with lots of assignments to undertake, which require a lot of man-hours and deep commitment at all times. I have had enough support from the School of Education and overall university management in the pursuit of my PhD."

Rosemary Wairimu Munene

"I started my PhD studies in April 2013. Due to the positive student-supervisor relationship with my two supervisors, who would not let me slack, I am now set to graduate. My

PhD journey in MKU has taught me to share and consult freely. I sincerely appreciate the MKU management and particularly the office of the Dean, School of Education, for being there for us all the time."

Bundi Marete Jacob

"My PhD studies have not been easy sailing, but my expert supervisors travelled with me throughout the journey. I will be forever grateful to them. Hard work and resilience pays. My experience in management has been deepened by my PhD in leadership and management. Thank you MKU for unrivalled information technology, which aids research. Thank you everybody at MKU who has touched students' academic lives positively."