SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

PROF. THOMAS K. CHERUIYOT

DURING

THE 12TH GRADUATION CEREMONY AND INSTALLATION

THURSDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER, 2023
Salutation!

The Chief of Staff and Head of Public Service, Mr. Felix K. Koskei

The Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Hon. Ezekiel Machogu,

The Principal Secretary, State Department for Higher Education and Research, Dr. Beatrice Muganda Inyangala,

Members of the University Council,

Chairmen of other universities present,

Vice-Chancellors of other universities present,
National and County Government leaders present,
Members of the University Community,
Distinguished Guests,
Graduands,
Ladies and Gentlemen.
Today marks an incredible milestone—a moment of immense gratitude, reflection, and forward-looking anticipation. As I stand before you, humbled and honored to assume the role of Vice-Chancellor, I am deeply moved to acknowledge the pivotal influences that have shaped my journey to this moment. My mission and motto of transformation, is a journey I have well walked beginning when I was nine years of age as that is when I officially started schooling. Mark you the school was 10km away from home and even the famous black mamba bicycle then equivalent to an uber or wasili now was but a rich man’s dream.
Ladies and gentlemen I had to walk, bare foot to and fro and that did not deter me because the allure of bringing home a good report card was sweeter. When I became a mature student enough to go for lunch I opted to carry it packed and given the number of people who would be in waiting to partake I would hide it in a specific thicket a few km from school and on lucky days I would find it and on others my love for nature understood when wild animals had their fair share of the same.
Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests, and beloved university community, if I were to list the number of mishaps, misadventures, and downright chaotic moments that paved the path to this esteemed position, we might be here until the next graduation day! My journey hasn't been a stroll through the rose garden; it's been more like an obstacle course in a hurricane and I got a Ph.D out of it! But you see, it's these delightful mishaps, these little stumbles and grand face-plants, that have taught me the most. They've been the catalysts for transformation, and the
reason behind my life's motto: "From Hardships to Heights: Embrace Transformation and Ignite Growth."

I cannot continue Ladies and gentlemen without expressing my heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency The President of The Republic of Kenya Hon. Dr. William Samoei Ruto. His dedication to education and commitment to fostering a thriving academic environment resonate deeply with our shared vision. Your gracious support not only honors this institution but also symbolizes the significance of collaborative efforts between
academia and leadership and serves as a guiding light, inspiring us to continue our pursuit of excellence in education and innovation. Thank you for your continuous encouragement and belief in the transformative power of education for our nation's future.

I extend my gratitude to the government of Kenya through the ministry of education led by the Cabinet secretary Hon. Ezekiel Machogu, the Principal Secretary Dr. Beatrice Muganda and the Head of Public Service Hon. Felix Kosgei for their support in
funding the university and its programmes, I kindly request the continued support in order to transform and reposition our institution as a Center of Excellence.

I am also profoundly grateful to the esteemed members of the University Council for their steadfast support and unwavering trust bestowed upon me. Your guidance and collective wisdom have been instrumental in shaping the trajectory of this institution, laying the foundation for academic excellence and innovation. I am honored to stand before you today as we
embark on this journey together, united in our dedication to empowering minds and shaping futures. Today is not just about assuming a new role; it's about embracing transformation and I pay homage to the legacy of visionary leaders who have steered this institution with unwavering dedication, paving the path for our academic excellence and societal impact. Allow me to express my deep personal connection to the ethos and values that define this institution. From the first moment I walked through these gates,
I was captivated by the spirit of inquiry, the culture of collaboration, and the unwavering commitment to knowledge that permeates every corner. We stand at the crossroads of a rapidly evolving educational landscape, one where digital technology becomes not just an accessory but an indispensable tool for transformational learning. The world around us has changed, and so must our approach to education.

Embracing digital technology isn't just a goal; it's an imperative. It's about creating an educational ecosystem that transcends
physical boundaries, democratizes access, and cultivates a culture of innovation. Technology isn't a substitute; it's an enabler, enhancing the learning experience and preparing our students for a world where adaptability and digital fluency are essential.

Yet, amidst this technological revolution, we must not forget the essence of education—its human element. Our journey towards digital transformation must prioritize empathy, individualized
attention, and a deep-rooted commitment to nurturing not just knowledgeable minds, but compassionate hearts.

As Vice Chancellor, my vision is not merely confined within the walls of our institution but extends to fostering a community that thrives on inclusivity, diversity, and collaboration. It's about empowering every student to realize their potential, irrespective of background or circumstance. I stand here today imploring you to embrace transformation not as a mere concept but as our guiding beacon. Transformation is not simply change for the
sake of change; it is a deliberate, strategic evolution that propels us towards a future where our institution remains not just relevant but indispensable.

Our repositioning and transformative journey will be multifaceted, encompassing various dimensions that redefine the very essence of our institution:

**Academic Excellence:** We intend to elevate academic standards, infusing our curriculum with interdisciplinary approaches, digital technology, experiential learning, and cutting-edge
research opportunities. Our commitment to academic rigor will remain unwavering. We will in the process establish **Centers of Excellence**; in the field of Agriculture, Engineering and technology, Blue economy and Fisheries; In Environment, natural resource and climate change, in Business, in Medicine and in Data science.

**Infrastructure Development:** We intend to work on priority projects such as Completion of the Amphitheatre, completion of our perimeter wall, Equipping of our School of Economics, and internal projects such as bus-park and other major infrastructural renovations. We intend to invest in modern facilities including state-of-the-art sports facility, science facility,
research labs, and recreational spaces, to create an environment conducive to learning and collaboration.

**Focus on Sustainability:** It is our plan to incorporate sustainability initiatives across campus operations, culture, research, and curriculum. We shall focus on Greening of the university aligning it with global efforts to mitigate climate change and conserve natural resources. We intend to implement energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction strategies, sensitizing staff and students on best green practices.

**Modernization of Farm & Agribusiness:** We endeavour to modernize our university farm to include value addition
practices such as agribusiness which will address critical national challenges like food security, sustainable agriculture, and environmental conservation. Modernization of our farm and engaging in agribusiness will contribute innovative solutions to these pressing issues while contributing to research and education to promote sustainable agricultural practices; fostering innovation, and supporting agricultural industries and small-scale farmers in our region.

**Innovation and Research:** We intend to foster an environment that nurtures innovation, encouraging bold ideas and interdisciplinary collaborations that address complex global
challenges. We plan to invest in research that transcends boundaries, creating solutions with real-world impact.

**Diversity and Inclusivity:** Our commitment to diversity will not be a mere slogan but a lived reality. We endeavour to cultivate an inclusive environment where every voice is heard, every perspective is valued, and where diversity becomes our greatest strength.

**Student Empowerment:** The heart of our institution beats within our students. We plan to empower them with not just knowledge but the skills, resilience, and adaptability needed to navigate a rapidly changing world.
Community Engagement: We intend to strengthen our bonds with the community, collaborations and partnerships becoming not just an academic institution but an active partner in societal progress. Our impact will extend beyond the boundaries of our campus, making a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve.

None of this can be achieved in isolation. It is only through collaboration— with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and our broader community—that we will realize our transformative goals. Together, we must harness the power of digital
technology and innovation while preserving the essence of traditional values that define academic excellence. This is a pivotal moment, an opportunity to shape the future of education, not just for our institution but for generations to come.

Let us embark on this transformative journey, hand in hand, with an unwavering commitment to our shared mission. Let us build bridges, not barriers, and forge a path that embraces digital transformation and innovations in academia.
In closing, I would like to thank my family; behind my humble action-packed upbringing was my mother, the maestro of resilience and the unsung hero of my adventures. Her wisdom, even in her absence, echoes in my every step, guiding me through the labyrinth of challenges. So, here's to the unwavering support of mothers, whose influence transcends time and space, turning our mishaps into masterpieces. In extension the support, love, and understanding from the rest of my family members, my immediate family who have been the bedrock upon which I stand today. Their sacrifices and encouragement
have propelled me forward, guiding every step of my professional and personal growth.

To my dear friends, mentors, and colleagues—your wisdom, guidance, and unwavering belief in my capabilities have been a source of immense strength. Your influence has been transformative, shaping my vision and pushing me beyond perceived boundaries. I am forever indebted to your belief in me.

I also thank each one of you for entrusting me with this responsibility. I am committed to serving with integrity,
empathy, inclusivity, respect for diversity and a relentless pursuit of excellence. Let us stand united as we embark on this transformative chapter together.

Yours Faithfully,

Prof: Thomas K. Cheruiyot (Ph.D)
Vice-Chancellor