

# EGERTON



# UNIVERSITY

## VICE – CHANCELLOR'S INFORMATION FACT SHEET

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### **Year-End Greetings from the Vice-Chancellor**

Dear Egerton University Community,

We have once again come to the end of the year, yet 2020 is a year unlike any in recent memory. An unrelenting world pandemic whose magnitude and full impact is yet to be ascertained has continued to ravage nations big and small. As the students finish their examinations and the academic year of 2020 draws to a close, I would like to take a pause to thank the students, faculty, and staff for their hard work, commitment, and devotion to the University. You have been incredibly resilient and have displayed an outstanding capacity to adapt to historically unprecedented changes due to the COVID-19 world pandemic.

The University closed in March in accordance with the government guidelines, with full reopening plans just now getting underway. In addition to the closure and attendant disruption to students' instructions and plans, the financial impact of the pandemic has been severe. After years of decreasing government capitation, the additional decrease in income from the pandemic induced university closures finally exposed the precarious financial conditions of Kenyan national universities. This forced the universities, including Egerton, to significantly reduce pay for senior staff and faculty. Hopefully this pandemic becomes the catalyst that finally forces all stakeholders to address the issue of university funding to ensure effective education and planning for our leaders of tomorrow.

The impact of the pandemic has also been particularly tragic and devastating to the University community: we lost Professor Abdul Faraj, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture; Professor S.T. Kariuki, Coordinator of the Botanical Garden; and Professor Samuel Wachanga from the Curriculum and Instruction Department. These were pillars of our community and the consequences of their untimely loss remain unfathomable. They were giants in their areas of expertise yet they carried themselves with elegant grace, and always gave unreservedly to the University community. These invaluable members of the Egerton University family will be sorely missed. We celebrate their lives and we wish peace and comfort to their loved ones.

Amidst the challenges in 2020, the spirit of resilience has remained the anchor to the University. We have found ways to forge a modified path starting with ensuring that our students continue to get the best education. Leveraging the pioneering work on distance learning by Professor Ezra Maritim and Professor Fred Keraro, the University has embraced virtual learning beginning with the training of academic staff on e-content development as well as online teaching and assessment methods. Under the leadership of Professor Alexander K. Kahi, DVC Academic Affairs, the university has incorporated e-learning as the

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foundation, migrating academic programmes onto an e-learning platform, effecting online registration and even performing online orientation of first year students. Working together with Professor Nzula Kitaka the Director of Graduate School, the academic division has introduced online defense of theses and proposals, ensuring that our graduate students do not fall behind. A critical milestone on the University's calendar is the graduation ceremony. Under the able leadership of Professor Kahi, the University hosted the first virtual graduation ceremony in the country on July 31, 2020, with the ceremony being graced by both the Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Education, Professor Magoha and the Permanent Secretary for University Education, Amb. Simon Nabukwesi, among other dignitaries.

We have continued the University's pioneering research and extension agenda ensuring programs such as the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Agriculture and Agribusiness Management (CESAAM) remain on course. Indeed, during the stakeholders review of donor funded programmes spanning other universities, the entrepreneurial emphasis of CESAAM was singled out for praise. I'd like to thank Professor George Owuor for his excellent leadership of CESAAM. The TAGDev program under the leadership of Professor Nancy Mungai has also created significant benefits to the University. In addition to the pioneering work of the program, it has also contributed to the university in infrastructure building including the renovation of student halls of residence. Dissemination of research knowledge through conferences is critical and here, again, the University had to be creative. Through the efforts and leadership of Professor Bockline Bebe, Ag. DVC Research and Extension, the university virtually hosted the 13<sup>th</sup> biennial Research Week and International Conference from November 24<sup>th</sup> through 26<sup>th</sup> 2020 with the theme of Innovation, Research and Transformation for Sustainable Development.

Another highlight is the revival of Ngongogeri Farm together with ARC Hotel and Lord Egerton Castle, which are managed by Egerton University Investment Management Company (EUICO), finally turning profitable after years of crippling losses. Through the excellent leadership of Professor Owuor and advisors drawn from the University faculties, a significant milestone has been achieved. The next challenge is to continue the transformation to showcase Egerton University's expertise in Agri-business.

As we focus on next year, we must emphasize pandemic safety and perfect COVID-19 mitigation measures in the staff work environment, and students' learning, living, and recreational spaces within the University. The goal will be to continue implementing planned University projects and programmes cognizant of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The year has been unpredictable. You rose to the occasion. Now take a moment to celebrate the holiday season with your family and loved ones, making sure to remain vigilant and restrained to ensure we can celebrate future holidays. Ring in the new year with gratitude for life. I look forward to welcoming you all back to campus in January 2021.

My sincere best wishes to the entire Egerton Community for a safe and joyous holiday season!



**Prof. Rose A. Mwonja**  
**Vice-Chancellor**

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