



EGERTON

UNIVERSITY

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Egerton University Welcome Statement 2021

After a long wait due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we finally welcomed our first year students (2020 cohort) to campus on the 4th and 5th of January 2020. This was a great opportunity for the students to be fused into the Egerton community. The students were admitted, registered, underwent orientation, and were attending classes on the University e-learning online platform. These students finally have an opportunity for in person interactions with their faculty. I trust that they will find inspiration from the confines of a secure and safe campus teeming with abundant agricultural resources and amenities for their education.

Now we embark on the next phase of on-campus learning for all our students. I want to call on the spirit of resilience that has seen the University make significant progress in academics and research over the last five years as we reopen amidst an on-going global pandemic. Egerton University topped Kenyan Universities and ranked sixth in Africa in the Impact category in January 2020's Webometrics ranking. These achievements have been attained in spite of the financial challenges facing Kenyan Public Universities. For the last four years, the National Treasury decreased university capitation by an annual compounded rate of 26%. The reduction coincided with the precipitous drop in the number of self-sponsored students (SSP) that was a reliable revenue stream. In addition, Egerton University had a uniquely peculiar problem: the University was underfunded by KES 935.2 million in fiscal year 2018/2019. The amount represented non-allocation for 3,822 students under the government's Differentiated Unit Cost (DUC) funding model. The shortfall was almost a third of the university's annual budget. This occasioned a funding gap that has kept the University reeling with a myriad of financial challenges. I have been following up this issue with the Ministry of Education in consultation with the National Treasury, and hope for a favourable resolution soon.

The grave financial situation was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The University Management was forced to reduce staff pay when the University shut down. These decisions were painful to make but were the only options possible to management based on the available capitation and the incomes during the period. To this end, I urge all staff and students to take these challenges with sobriety and objectivity. Whereas staff frustrations are understandable given the inevitable financial challenges caused by reduced pay, the target of such frustrations is often the management whose hands are completely tied in these circumstances. I remain optimistic that the issue of university funding will be addressed effectively at the national level.

"Transforming Lives through Quality Education"

University education is critical for the country's future, so it must be in the nation's interest to effectively fund universities.

At Egerton University we have taken important steps to broaden our funding base, especially in the area of research. Over the last four years, the University has significantly expanded donor funded research, starting with the flagship World Bank funded Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Agriculture and Agribusiness Management (CESAAM). Total cumulative research funding over the period stands at over KES 2 billion, with 25 significant projects currently funded. These programs have been critical in maintaining Egerton University's continued drive to remain a world class university. An important aspect of the University's capacity to attract and retain funding has been the exemplary hard work of the faculty and the disciplined financial management of research funds. The University has also revived the almost 3000 acres Ngongogeri Farm together with ARC Hotel and Lord Egerton Castle, which are managed by Egerton University Investment Management Company (EUICO), finally turning the enterprises to profitability after years of crippling losses and inherited debt. These enterprises should generate significant income for the University going forward in addition to providing practical education to students.

As we embark on our 2021 calendar, I would like to assure students, academic, administrative and support staff that the University will continue, relentlessly, with its mandate as one of the leading higher learning institutions in this country. As noted, the financial challenges facing the University are not unique to our institution. My attention is drawn to recent adverse press coverage alleging that the University is in a financial crisis due to corruption and mismanagement. Nothing can be further from the truth. These allegations are based on unfounded distortion of the facts and unsubstantiated innuendos. The truth is patently transparent. With the funding deficit, and the scale of prior losses at EUICO in particular, it is a miracle that the University is stable and thriving.

The University successfully hosted the first virtual graduation in the country on July 31st 2020. In due course, we will make plans for the December 2020 graduation which was postponed due to the pandemic. In the meantime, we must focus on effecting in-person learning amidst the pandemic challenges. I wish to clarify that we did not miss the December 2020 Graduation due to the staff unrest. Our students will graduate this year, be it virtually or physically. Having pioneered virtual graduation in the country, we are ready to conduct a similar graduation if the need arises.

Finally, even as students report for learning and teaching activities, we **MUST** embrace the COVID-19 mitigation measures as defined by the Ministry of Health. No one is exempt from these measures otherwise we risk closing the University due to an unchecked outbreak.

Thank you.



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Vice-Chancellor

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