

It's a New Dawn at University of Eldoret

The 1st University Town Hall session between the the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Thomas Cheruiyot, University Management team and the members of staff was held on Monday 18th December, 2023 at the Kerio Hall. After the opening prayer with Unions were welcomed to make their presentations.

Mr. Martin Oyugi from KUDHEIHA thanked the V.C. for the guiding steps and listening to the unions and said the University colleagues were looking forward to benefiting from his wise counsel and vision. He touched on issues of promotion and the health clinic services to the KUDHEIHA members. Mr. Robinson Kibet from KUSU focused on the positive impact that the Vice-Chancellor had made in terms of staff welfare which included opening of Gate B, creating confidence in the staff and having salary's paid by the 28th of the month. However, he requested the V.C. to look into the issues pertaining to arrears, the medical card, promotions, acting positions and arbitrary transfers that had been experienced previously. Mr. Joel Nakola from UASU appreciated the V.C. for the changes in the work environment that the staff members had experienced and G.A.'s & T.F.'s having their contracts renewed on time. He touched on the issue of promotions and asked the V.C. to cure the staff injustices, enhance the eye & dental allowances, align the University programmes to current market and industry trends, consider the commuter allowances & staff recognition.

Prof. Donald Otieno, (Ag. Deputy Vice-Chancellor, PRE), focused on the areas of transformation and repositioning in the division through the Income Generating Units and the other avenue of creating revenue streams within the University. Prof. Beatrice Were (Ag. Deputy Vice-Chancellor, A&SA) advised the colleagues that in order for transformation and repositioning of the University to take place they would need to change their approach to doing things. She said staff would need to consider personal development for improved performance and noted teamwork and self-discipline brought out the best outcomes. Prof. Wilson Ng'etich (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, AF) said that repositioning would eventually lead to the University being ranked highly amongst Universities in Africa and the world. He noted that the government is keen on productivity and the call for transformation and repositioning of the University would deliver the desired outcomes.

Starting with expressing his gratitude to all the colleagues for attending the meeting and the warm welcome that was extended to him when he arrived on campus, Prof. Thomas Cheruiyot told the staff that they needed to be proud that they were members of one of the oldest institutions in Kenya, having started as a Farmers Training Centre back in 1946. He stressed that the University has infinite potential, the resources - land and staff who possess the ideas and the innovations necessary to take the institution to be ranked number 1. He posed that among the reasons that the University was lowly ranked was that there were many great, creative and innovative activities going on in the University but were not being shared on the University website. "The University has great potential as an institution that can be made an epicentre of innovation and knowledge and if we put our act together we can achieve great things." said Prof. Cheruiyot.

Challenges noted

- Inadequate funding for universities which has made the University not fully implement the CBA's;
- The IGU's are not performing very well;
- Student enrollment has been a challenge and he thanked the colleagues for going out and posting the various courses that are available in the University to encourage student enrollment. For the 2024 / 2025 academic year the University has declared a capacity of 9,000 students based on the historical statistics and facilities available;
- HR Audit brought out the issue that there are staff members who are qualified or over-qualified within their respective areas;
- 75% of the staff have never been promoted in the University;
- A number of staff are demoralized;
- Our main clients, the students are not being treated with fairness and respectfully;

Prof. Cheruiyot in this area said, *"I believe all of us have our respective roles and God has given us the opportunity, time will come when people will be positioned correctly but before then we would need to rekindle the flame of responsibility where we ensure that this university succeeds."*

Initiatives undertaken so far

- Reopening of Gate B;
- Restoration of courses that had been dis-harmonized increasing the programmes from 30 to 53;
- Review of exam policy to ensure that students can do supplementary and special examinations. This enabled an additional 1,500 students graduate during the 12th Graduation Ceremony;
- Timely disbursement of salaries, though subject to funds availability;
- Historical injustices being rectified;
- Farm - milk being sold to staff members;
- KUDHEIHA - uniforms will be provided for colleagues by the time they report back in January 2024;
- The Vice-Chancellor's Working Party to look into the Transformation and Repositioning of the University;
 - i. Noted that majority of the programmes were inherited from Moi University.
 - ii. Departments to develop new marketable programs that would reposition the University.
- The HR and Competence Analysis done to know the staff competence;
- Working on the Strategic Plan - 2024-2028. The V.C.'s Working Party to assist in collecting information for the new Strategic Plan and its implementation;
- The University Statutes to be reviewed as the process had stagnated and ensure all the stakeholders are incorporated;
- The reconstitution of the various committees to have more University team members getting involved;

- The reporting structure of the University to be reviewed as the current organogram is not very efficient;
- Re-engineering process as a means to reduce costs and increase efficiency. The Budget Implementation team Chaired by the DVC (AF) has the duty of monitoring the University expenses / budget;
- A draft business plan currently being done for the modernization of the University Farm to ensure it becomes a model farm;
- UoE Enterprise Limited, a team has been formed to look into the operations to create efficiency;
- Develop Student Centred policies that will assist to in unlocking the students who have not yet graduated;
- The Town Campus to become a short-course centre to facilitate generation of additional revenue;
- The Nairobi Liaison Office to become a learning centre for post-graduate students, some offices to be collapsed to facilitate this move;
- The welfare of staff to be placed first to become the centre of the activities of the University;
- Promotions are important because it is about the future of the University forming the succession plan in the campus having progression. The V.C. mentioned that he was a beneficiary of an efficient promotion system. He said, *"If we do not do what we are supposed to do then we will not get where we want."*;
- Staff to be correctly placed after considering academic papers as well as the competence of the individuals;
- The CBA's, road map available to dispense of issues that can be handled rapidly.

Things to be done

- Schools tasked to embark on curriculum review;
- Schools and departments to come up with new programmes that are competitive and best for students to join the University;
- Infusing in the curriculum interdisciplinary programmes to have a component of digital technology & experiential learning, having a hands on approach so that students fit seamlessly into the job market;
- Creation of the following Centres of Excellence;
 - ✓ Centre of Excellence in Agribusiness
 - ✓ Centre of Excellence in Science, Engineering and Technology
 - ✓ Centre of Excellence in Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change
 - ✓ Centre of Excellence in Specialist Medical Programmes
- Greening the University
 - ✓ Switch off lights, turn off running water, water harvesting
 - ✓ Come up with a Green Policy for the University
- Endowment Fund
 - ✓ To be strengthened and staff were asked to contribute funds through the check-off system

To achieve all this what is our role as the staff?

- ✓ Collective effort and play individual respective roles efficiently & effectively. To do the best of your ability;

- ✓ Be student-centered. Treat the students with respect and mentor accordingly;
- ✓ Each colleague should bring out the best in themselves and utilize the expertise, experience skills and initiatives given in mind that teamwork is critical;
- ✓ Be loyal to the University and treat it as your own as it feeds your children, educates them and clothes the family.

In closing he assured the team that his door is opened and he would welcome ideas and concerns that would navigate the steps to improve the status of the University. He requested colleagues to pray for him as he embarked on the leading the University team in the journey to transforming and repositioning of the University. Finally he wished all colleagues and their families a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year 2024.

Prof. Thomas Cheruiyot's had two (2) parting shots to the University team and colleagues;

1. Ask yourself, *"not what UoE can do for me but I can do for University of Eldoret to transform and reposition it."*
2. There is a new transformation agenda at University of Eldoret