

MAKERERE



UNIVERSITY

**SPEECH BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. BARNABAS
NAWANGWE AT THE 3RD SESSION OF THE 74TH
GRADUATION CEREMONY
ON WEDNESDAY 31ST JANUARY 2024**

- **Hon. Ministers;**
- **Members of the Judicature;**
- **Members of the Diplomatic Corp;**
- **Hon. Members of Parliament;**
- **The Chairperson of Makerere University Council;**
- **The Vice Chairperson of Council;**
- **The Chairperson of the Appointments Board;**
- **Members of Council;**
- **The Deputy Vice Chancellors, Principals and Members of Management;**
- **Members of Senate;**
- **Members of Staff of Makerere University;**
- **The Chairperson of Convocation;**
- **Your Excellency the President of the Students Guild;**
- **Graduands;**
- **Parents, Guardians and Sponsors;**
- **The Media;**
- **Invited Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen!**

1. Welcome Remarks

Welcome to the 3rd session of the 74th Graduation Ceremony of Makerere University that started on Monday and will continue up to Friday 2nd February 2024.

In a special way, I welcome and congratulate the graduands and their parents and guardians, as well as our hardworking staff upon the successful completion of yet another academic milestone.

I applaud the Government of Uganda, our dear parents, guardians, sponsors, development partners and friends for the enormous financial and moral support that you have provided to ensure that our dear graduands reach this special day. May the good Lord continue to bless you for all the sacrifices that you have made to contribute to the success of our students.

2. Chancellor

Following the expiry of the tenure of Prof. Ezra Suruma as Chancellor of Makerere University, the University Council commenced the search for his successor. That process is still on-going. At this graduation ceremony therefore, I will execute the role of Chancellor as provided for in the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act.

Prof. Suruma has had a long and illustrious career at Makerere University, having joined Makerere University service as lecturer in 1973, and then moving on to serve the Government of Uganda in various capacities including Minister of Finance, before returning to serve as Chancellor of Makerere University in 2016. His service has been exemplary and he has challenged each and every one of us to lead by conviction. I congratulate Prof. Suruma upon his distinguished service to Makerere University and wish him success in his continued service to our dear nation.

3. Graduation Statistics

During the course of the 74th graduation ceremony, a total of **12,913** graduands will receive degrees and diplomas of Makerere University. Of these, a total of **132** graduands will graduate with PhDs, **1585** with Masters degrees, **11,016** with Bachelor's degrees, **156** with postgraduate diplomas, and **24** with undergraduate diplomas.

53% of the graduands are female and **47%** are male. In the category of PhD graduands, **46** are female and **86** are male. In the category of students graduating with

Master's degrees, **699** are female and **886** are male. Our goal is to graduate at least 200 PhDs per year in response to the World Bank call of at least 100,000 PhDs for Africa over the next 10 years, in order to pull our continent out of poverty.

It is our tradition at every graduation to recognize the best performing undergraduate students in the humanities and the sciences. At this graduation ceremony, the best performing undergraduate students in the humanities are Tsubira Silas Wamala with a Bachelor of Chinese and Asian Studies and Atukunda Kevin with a Bachelor of International Business, who tied with a CGPA of 4.84 out of 5.0. The best performing undergraduate student in the sciences is Ruhweza Charles Godfrey, who obtained a CGPA of 4.8 out of 5.0 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. These students will receive awards from convocation.

Members of staff, children, spouses and student leaders graduating

I congratulate the Members of staff of Makerere University who are graduating today. In addition, to your service to Makerere University, thank you for taking the right step to attain additional academic qualifications.

In the same vein, I congratulate members of staff whose spouses and children are graduating during the 74th graduation ceremony.

To the graduands who have served as student leaders under Makerere University Students' Guild, at the College and School levels, Class Representatives, to mention, but a few, I commend you for balancing leadership with studies. May the Good Lord, who called you to be leaders open up more opportunities for you, as you leave the gates of Makerere.

4. Highlighting Colleges Presenting Students for graduation

I congratulate the following academic units that are presenting graduates today, namely: The College of Business and Management Sciences, the College of Computing and Information Sciences, and the College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Bio-security.



These Colleges have registered breakthroughs in teaching and learning, research and innovations that are significantly solving societal problems.

I am therefore pleased to highlight some of the achievements in these colleges.

1. College of Business and Management Sciences

The College, in partnership with the UNDP Uganda drafted the proposed Parish Development Model (PDM) implementation strategy. The draft strategy is under review by the Office of the Prime Minister. The Strategy will go a long way in improving Parish Development Model (PDM) implementation. While officiating at the inaugural Convocation luncheon on Monday, Chief Justice Alfonse Owiny Dollo decried the lack of awareness in the community about the intentions of the Parish Development Model. Uganda is investing heavily in this initiative with the hope that it will pull our people out of poverty. It is our responsibility as the top institution of higher learning in this Country to support this initiative. The Chief Justice encouraged the fresh graduates to go to the communities and sensitise our people about the potential of the Parish Development Model to get them out of poverty if they invest the money provided by Government wisely. If this initiative fails, we will all have failed, and I encourage everybody to keep politics out of this initiative. We have more than 200,000 students in all universities in Uganda and only 60,800 parishes. Theoretically there are three students for each parish. If we all, Government and universities think out of the box, we can go to every parish and make the difference that is so badly needed.

Innovation and Product development through the entrepreneurship center

The College of Business and Management Sciences continues to foster innovation and product development through the Entrepreneurship and Innovations Center, where business ideas and innovations are birthed. In the past year alone, the Center birthed over **100** business ideas, some of which shall be transferred to the Makerere University Innovation hub for scaling up and commercialization. The Center recently hosted the first entrepreneurship congress in November 2024 which gave students an

opportunity to network and learn from practitioners. I am confident that as many of these students graduate, they have the necessary skills and knowledge to be job creators and not job seekers.

Recognition of best students from the College of Business and Management Sciences

The college is proud to have built partnerships with organizations which have led to the development of the institution as well as individual careers of students.

Today, **Lwamasaka Prosper**, who is graduating with a **Bachelor of Commerce** and a **CGPA of 4.62** will be awarded by ACCA for his outstanding performance.

Mr Jude Sebuliba, graduating with a **Masters of Economics**, will today receive the Economic Policy Research Center Young Professionals Program 2024, from EPRC.

Five (5) students of Bachelor of Actuarial Sciences will today be awarded by Prudential Assurance Uganda Limited at the Convocation Luncheon at the end of this ceremony. The awardees will receive one-year apprenticeship at Prudential, USD 500 each and sponsorship for professional Actuarial Certification.

The students are: Muhumuza Mark with a CGPA of 4.44, Kobugabe Michelle Audrey with a CGPA of 4.22, Uwera Ruth Michelle with a CGPA of 4.20, Bunjo Stephen Hugh with a CGPA of 4.18 and Namuddu Anneliz with a CGPA of 4.18. I congratulate all the students upon this great achievement.

The School of Business obtained accreditation by ACCA global and got full exemptions for its Bachelor of Commerce Accounting Degree programme. This means that students graduating on the programme now have 9 exemptions out of the 13 modules required for the full ACCA qualification. This is the maximum number of exemptions that that can be obtained.

The School of Economics entered a new partnership with Oxford University and jointly hosted the 2023 workshop on Economic Development in Africa. The four-day workshop brought together scholars across Africa, Europe, and North America. The partnership is being leveraged to support PhD level training and capacity building for staff and graduate students in the areas of structural transformation and randomised

control trials. It will also offer mentoring for young faculty and graduate students who are keen to climb the research radar, in addition to offering demand-driven policy advice to Government of Uganda.

The School of Statistics and Planning also cohosted an international conference on *“Ageing and Health of Older Persons in Sub-Saharan Africa”* in February 2023. The workshop aimed to increase the scientific and political attention paid to the vulnerability of older persons in Sub-Saharan Africa and to foster comparative and multi-disciplinary research across Sub-Saharan African countries.

2. College of Computing and Information Sciences (CoCIS)

In May 2019 I attended a UNESCO conference on Artificial Intelligence and education in Beijing, China. At that conference, a question was asked by the UNESCO Coordinator of the conference: WILL AFRICA BE LEFT BEHIND AGAIN? That question has haunted me all this time, especially the word AGAIN. Artificial intelligence holds the future for higher education.

We have such huge potential in this country, particularly at Makerere University, in IT. We must be angry at that question and do something about it. Indeed, at Makerere we have said that we cannot sit down any more as the rest of the world moves on. We are doing everything within our means to make a difference for Africa.

Usage of artificial intelligence to enhance the diagnosis of malaria, TB and Cervical Cancer

Makerere University through the College of Computing and Information Sciences in collaboration with the School of Public Health received a grant funding worth **US\$1,500,000 (5.5bn/=)** from Google to support its Ocular project that is undertaking research on usage of Artificial Intelligence to enhance the diagnosis process of Malaria, Tuberculosis and Cervical Cancer in Uganda.

Launched on 13th September 2023, the project team led by Dr. Rose Nakasi benched on the rampant challenges faced by the laboratory experts while undertaking diagnosis procedures. Health centres in Uganda are not only strained with the escalating number of patients seeking for laboratory screening tests - the country has few trained laboratory technicians to support the diagnosis process using the microscope. The research team took advantage of the existing technologies such as the smartphone and the availability of at least a microscope in every health centre across the country to develop a 3D printable adaptor that was attached to an eye piece of the microscope. The 3D adapter was also slotted in the smartphone to capture images.

With the capabilities of Artificial intelligence through computer vision, images can be processed and this directs the experts where the pathogens are. This technology shortens the diagnosis process making it more accurate, quicker and easier to diagnose health conditions and potentially reducing screening time by over 80%.

In addition, researchers led by a second-year PhD student Paddy Junior Asimwe designed a device to monitor elderly people with dementia and cognitive impairment in rural Uganda. The device, wearable by the elderly will monitor the patients' movement and location and then signal the caretaker and the hospital in case of emergencies. The technology funded by Government of Uganda through Mak-RIF was disclosed on 13th October, 2023. It monitors elderly people remotely using GPS technology which defines a safe zone around a user and a PDR system to monitor the position of the user within the safe zone. This technology is cheap, and better than the systems existing on market, and is best recommended for more resource constrained environments. The system operates independent of the user mostly in rural areas who cannot read and write. It does not require electricity and runs on batteries, charged once a week and can run for 30 days.

The AirQo Project, in collaboration with various partners launched the CLEAN-Air Africa Network on 5th April 2023 bringing together communities of practice from over fifteen cities in Africa, with a focus on utilising low-cost sensors for air quality management in Africa.

Held under the theme: Championing Liveable Urban Environments through African Networks for Air, the workshop served as a launchpad for Africa-led collaborations and multi-regional partnerships for sustained interventions to achieve cleaner air across the Continent.

3. College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Bio-security (COVAB)

The most urgent problem we must solve in the face of the high population growth in Uganda and Africa is the problem of food security. While Africa holds 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land, we are the only continent with persistent outbreaks of hunger. And we cannot blame the poor peasants for this dire situation. As universities, we are challenged to find solutions to the problem of food security through research and training of highly skilled graduates who must be patriotic and understand their mission in the world. The college of Veterinary Medicine Animal resources and Biosecurity is indeed making its contribution to the achievement of food security.

Research activities at the College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Bio-security (CoVAB)

The Anti-tick Vaccine

Trials of this vaccine are on-going in several districts with very promising results. We have entered into a memorandum of understanding with a private company to produce

the vaccine commercially. However, I have been informed that there are attempts to frustrate this Presidential initiative. I will investigate this matter further and inform the appropriate authority accordingly.

The College has continued to excel in research and community outreach. The college is involved on several Biomedical and Applied research projects with support from the Government of Uganda, through the Science, Technology, and Innovation secretariat, Office of the President, the college has been supported to establish a Biomarker discovery and translation research laboratory at COVAB. Under this initiative, Government has procured **over twenty-eight (28)** pieces of equipment to support the development of point of care diagnostic kits for infectious and non-communicable diseases including cancer. The goal is to translate identified biomarkers into point-of-care diagnostics for both human and veterinary medicine. In addition, the platform supports drug target discovery and elucidation of drug action mechanisms.

Furthermore, the College staff are involved in investigating the **genetic markers for tolerance of the tsetse fly transmitted “Nagana” disease** by some indigenous cattle, in order to inform programs to raise cattle breeds that can survive and remain productive in tsetse infested areas. This is complemented by an EU funded “COMBAT” project that aims to evaluate the socioeconomic burden of Nagana, identify and type the circulating trypanosome parasites, as well as determining biochemical and immunological markers for disease tolerance, towards progressive control and elimination of this animal disease as a major constraint to animal productivity and economic prosperity.

The Science, Technology and Innovations-Office of the President (STI-OP) has invested immensely in laboratory infrastructure and technical capacity improvement at COVAB. Consequently, a Central Laboratory Animal Research Facility to support pre-clinical studies in animal models for vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics has

been set up. This is alongside refurbished laboratories at Biosafety Levels 2 and 3 (BSL2, BSL3), fitted with state-of-the-art equipment to execute cutting edge basic and applied research.

Using COVID-19 as a model, the college is in advanced stages of development and production of 1 vaccine and 1 diagnostic, while ably supporting similar endeavors by other partners such as UVRI. Noteworthy is that the established infrastructure and research platforms can be applied to all diseases. This strategically places COVAB and Makerere at large in position to confront major animal and even human health challenges as significant proportions of emerging and reemerging infectious diseases are of animal origin (Zoonotic).

Electronic Rabies Surveillance using a One Health Approach

The College (COVAB) has been supported by the Swiss Government in championing the elimination of Rabies in Uganda and the Region through the use of electronic surveillance. Rabies is a global challenge being a zoonotic disease affecting the entire world more so here in Africa where there is close interaction between the wild animals and the human population. Using a one health approach, the college with partners that include the University of Zurich is working with graduate fellows and other stakeholders drawn from Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, and Uganda Wild life authority among many others.

The Norbrook Veterinary Academic Excellence Award 2024

Makerere University takes pride in a number of our partners who collaborate with us on the core mandate of the University - Teaching and Learning. Such organizations include Norbrook (U) Ltd, who since 2021 continue to prize the best performing Veterinary students with cash prizes of over **Fifteen Million (15) Shillings**. We are gratified to note that these Veterinary excellence awards that were launched as part of the golden jubilee celebration of veterinary education in Uganda since the opening of the faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Uganda in 1971, are still on and running. I

wish to join Norbrook (U) Ltd, the University Management and CoVAB management to congratulate the beneficiaries of this award during this 74th Graduation ceremony namely; Kawuma Denis who scored a CGPA of 4.36, Kyomukama Baker Raymond who scored a CGPA of 4.25, and Atutambire Jonathan who scored a CGPA of 4.17. Congratulations.

5. Vice Chancellor's Research Excellence Awards 2023

I am happy to report that as a result of the various partnerships forged over time, our research output in terms of innovations and publications is on the increase. It is in this spirit that I am announcing the inaugural Makerere University Vice Chancellor's Research Excellence Awards, in recognition of outstanding performers in research and publication. Based on the highest number of publications between the year 2017 and 2023 according to the Scopus database, on Monday I announced Professor Moses Robert Kamyá and Professor Rhoda Wanyenze as the Best Overall Male and Female Researchers respectively. Prof. Moses Robert Kamyá has **271** publications and Prof. Rhoda Wanyenze has **153** publications in the aforementioned period.

I equally congratulate the **five** researchers from each of the ten (10) colleges and Makerere University Library, who have been recognized as the best researchers. The detailed list of the best researchers has been published in the Graduation Booklet and the Mak News Magazine. I urge all our staff to continue conducting research on national development priorities as well as matters of global interest and publishing their work in high-impact journals so as contribute to our drive to become a research-led university. Needless to say, the research should lead to patents, copyrights and trademarks, and tangible innovations in the form of products, policy briefs, manuals and others

6. Appreciation of Government Support

It would not be possible for Makerere University to realise all these achievements had it not been for the unwavering support of our Visitor, our Minister, Parliament and

the entire Government. I wish to convey to H.E. The President and the entire Government for the continued support to Makerere University, especially the support to staff welfare and the Research and Innovation Fund. We once again pledge our commitment to serving our Country with maximum dedication through training of highly skilled human resource, research for development and support to Government programmes including the Parish Development Model and measures aimed at achieving the Sustained Development Goals.

7. Launch of the Makerere University @100 book

Yesterday we launched the book titled **Makerere's Century of Service to East Africa and Beyond: 1922-2022** which tells our unique story as a university serving Uganda, East Africa and the world. As we consolidate our place on the knowledge generation stage, we are proud to share this publication with you. I am delighted to report that this book has been published by our very own Makerere University Press. The Publisher will announce when copies of this important book will be available for purchase.

8. Makerere University Transcripts and Certificates

I am happy to report that with the support of the University Council and Senate, the Department of the Academic Registrar, the Directorate of ICT Support Services, and the leadership at the Colleges, the academic transcripts for students graduating during the 74th graduation ceremony were printed before graduation. The academic transcripts are ready and they are due for issuance to graduands who have satisfied the academic and financial obligations. I therefore urge all our graduands to pick their transcripts from their respective colleges at the end of this graduation ceremony.

9. A Word to the Graduands

I wish to repeat what I told graduands at yesterday's ceremony. Graduation day is the



most important and most memorable day in the life of any scholar. It is the only licence for which a person spends three to six years in the field before qualifying for it. Indeed, it is **not only** a licence to succeed in life, it is a licence and a privilege to serve humanity. You have worked hard to get a degree or diploma from one of the best universities in the World. This is a license for you to succeed in whatever you choose to do in your life career. But always remember that success will only come with discipline and hard work, while honoring your parents and fearing God. Shortly you will become an alumnus of this great institution. Cherish the knowledge and experiences you have collected while here, but remember that learning never ends. Our gates remain open for you if you wish to pursue higher degrees.

With a degree from one of the best universities in the World, you have no reason not to succeed in life. Indeed, the World is yours to conquer. If jobs are not forthcoming, create them, for we have empowered you not only to be employable, but also to be entrepreneurs. Be the light that others will follow. We are proud that we have been a part of your life, that we have given you the knowledge and courage to face life in this ever-changing World.

Go out to the World and make it a better place. Thank you very much for your attention, AS WE BUILD FOR THE FUTURE!

Signed: **Date:** 31st January, 2024
VICE CHANCELLOR

