



COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF LAIKIPIA

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR



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**Speech by
H.E. Ndiritu Muriithi
Governor of Laikipia County
on 6th Graduation Ceremony,
Laikipia University,
Wednesday, 19th December 2018,
Graduation Square, Main campus, Laikipia University.**

**Prof. Chacha – Chief Guest
The Chairperson of the University Council,
University Council Members,
The Vice Chancellor,
Faculty Members,
University Staff,
Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, we give thanks to the Almighty God for his continued grace and blessings that have brought us this far.

Once again, I am extremely humbled to be invited to this auspicious occasion of the 6th Graduation ceremony of Laikipia University.

It is indeed a testimony that every year we continue on the path of nurturance and progress, as we present a new skill set to our society.

On behalf of myself, my family and my Government, I bring a message of goodwill and congratulations to the management, staff, students and most importantly the Graduands of this 6th commencement of the Laikipia University graduation. I wish to extend congratulations to Prof. Kibett Rotich as we all share the joy of his installation as the Vice Chancellor of Laikipia University.

Indeed, you the Graduands, are the real guests of today's ceremony.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Graduands of the day,

To the Graduands of this 6th commencement, receive my heartfelt congratulations.

I am sure it has been an inspiring journey of learning and education. To have come this far, I know you have had to go through multiple experiences. Some have been extremely enjoyable; others very informing and still others have been key challenges.

All in all, please consider this experience an important learning curve that has served your own formation both in character, orientation, outlook and deed.

We gather here today as testimony to your own resilience and fortitude in your education journey. Today indeed, marks a hallmark on your journey of life as it were.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Graduands of the day,

Today, let me dwell on three key things that I am convinced are central to the university as the pedestal of knowledge and higher learning.

One, if you take a look at all advanced, wealthy and high quality of life nations, you will discern a common denominator. Which is, at least 25% of their population has tertiary education. This is true of countries like Finland, Singapore, Canada or Australia.

Statistics from across Kenyan universities suggest that the number of Kenyans with at least a degree is slightly over 495,000. The University of Nairobi is obviously in the lead, with an alumni population of 165,000, followed by Kenyatta University with over 58,000.

As such, you can see to attain the 25% threshold is no mean feat. But as a county, we must train our eyes on this target for the compelling reasons that I alluded to earlier.

Here in Laikipia, we desire to be, “*the greatest county with the best quality of life to live in*”. Already, you will be delighted to know that national figures put us up as the healthiest county to live in with an average of 71 years compared to national averages. Whereas this is a good thing, my government believes that even such a good thing, can be made better.

It’s at this point that the critical role of education comes into play and specifically the role that the university has in realizing this.

Granted, my government has already established a collaborative partnership with this university. Our plan going forward is to strengthen the collaboration between the academia and government.

Towards the end, of June 2018, I led the top management of my government for a meeting with the full complement of the university council led by the chairperson to explore how to achieve this.

Subsequently, through our Rapid Improvement Plan in Education (RIPE), in July and August, we held a series of meetings, in your very own *Mandela Hall* with the heads of primary schools and secondary schools to critically look at the holistic assessment of the education reality in our county.

In the same period, we further held meetings with all members of schools Boards of Management (BOMs) across the county to look at the scope and ability to strengthen the management and governance of our schools so as to achieve better outcomes.

I am happy to announce that, the university in collaboration with the education department in my government, is also coming up with training programme for BOMs as part of a refresher course in strengthening governance in schools.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Graduands of the Day

You may ask yourselves, what this whole effort that I have enumerated is geared to.

The simple answer is that the data on education and literacy levels in our county paints quite a sobering picture.

Disparity and inequality as relate to literacy levels and access to education opportunities is a striking feature for our county. This is particularly adverse in Laikipia North. To illustrate this, Nyahururu has the highest level of literacy at over 70% compared to Sosian at a paltry 20%.

This disparity is a major challenge to the pursuit of the development outcomes that we seek, especially the effort towards having a healthier and wealthier population.

Just a few weeks back, as we conducted the phase 2 of the Universal Health Coverage drive, this striking reality was best manifested. Testimonials from citizens who cannot read and write. Citizens who feel cut off from the mainstream because they cannot transact and adapt to mobile technologies due their literacy challenges compounds the problem further.

The university, more so, with its towering subscription towards education, must of essence develop a framework where it can intercede in this space by developing special programmes, specially focused on accelerating the adult literacy levels in the county and in particular Laikipia North.

We need the university to be more deeply involved in adult literacy. More involved in mentorship programmes with our secondary schools and engaging the teachers in skills acquisition and development.

The focus to attain 25% tertiary education for our citizens across the whole realm of university, TIVET and VTCs presupposes that ideally, we are on the horizon of increasing our middle-class population. A sizeable and burgeoning middle class is an important cog in both the wheel of production and wealth creation. The larger the size translates to a larger economy and a more robust economic activity.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Graduands of the Day

My second point is on the space for university support for innovation.

In today's world, innovations have become one of the most characteristic features of a flourishing economy. As shown by both local and international experiences, innovations have contributed greatly to landmark turn around in the history of mankind.

Innovation continues to be the driving force for scaling new heights in the advancement of humanity across all life spheres.

In Laikipia, my government has rolled out an innovation development program that seeks to identify, establish and promote innovative products and ideas within the county.

In May, here in Nyahururu stadium, we held the inaugural innovation fair. My government scouted innovations and picked the best 50 from the 205 applications. To date, my government has been working towards upscaling the 50 innovations. The select innovations are from the following key thematic areas; agriculture, ICT, manufacturing and value addition, water, energy, health, commerce and creative economy.

Today, the bearer innovators are benefiting from trainings, funding through Laikipia enterprise fund, getting certifications from KEBS, KIPI, NTSA, copyright among others.

The innovators are also facilitated to various marketing platforms such as media, trade fairs, exhibitions, and social media. Laikipia innovation program intends to create a more robust job creation environment for Laikipians.

In the last graduation ceremony, in this same square, we paraded some of the innovators that we are supporting. For instance, the half a tonne, 4-wheelerTukTuk, made out of Nyahururu commonly called the “BJ 50” has scaled up production with about 20 orders in the pipeline.

My government seeks to institute a long-lasting market and financial linkages between the innovators and the relevant partners in the market. This is through hand holding them to navigate the complex process of certification, intellectual property ownership, design, financing and market absorption.

To drive our economy and make our country better, we must support innovations and provide the enabling environment for them to develop to full potential.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Graduands of the Day

Notably, our ability to innovate and scale new heights is often hindered directly by our own biases, presumptions, negative attitude, mindsets and fear.

Herein lies the space and a role that the university can play in a fundamental way.

The university as the site of constant research and development must of necessity be at the lead of supporting the innovation development programmes by providing requisite technical skills and capacities to advance these innovations from a basic and primary formation to more improved, refined and ready for market products.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Graduands of the Day

My third and last point is on the role and space for the university in the community.

Across the world, universities have a deep connection within the communities that they are domiciled in. Actually, in most places, towns thrive on the basis of the presence of a university. This is mainly because, the university employs most of the people who live in these towns, is a major consumer of the goods and services offered within the economy and as such it becomes a substantial contributor to the overall economy that it is located in.

Besides the economic value and attributes of hosting a university, universities play a major role in the local community through extension services and community engagement. Often times, these presences translate to a more robust and vibrant local community that is well aligned with an orientation towards a more refined intellectual capacity and world views.

I strongly feel that this university should and must play a bigger role within the local community. This is through coming up with innovative ideas of engagement and participation with the local community and its polity.

The local community should not just look at the university with awe and view it as a remote and detached ivory tower. The community needs to enjoy the proximity to the university by having a sense of ownership and association, borne of the ability for the university to continuously engage in and with matters that affect them directly.

For instance, with a large faculty in education why students shouldn't be linked with the neighbouring schools to provide active coaching and mentorship to pupils in primary schools and students in secondary school? Such community engagement would then translate to a gradable mark for the student.

In an agricultural community like the one around this university, why doesn't the university invest in providing agricultural and livestock extension services either as part of a work/grade exchange programme at highly subsidized rates?

With the location of the university at a God given, high altitude training area for athletics, why wouldn't the university foster athletics teams that incorporate locals with a consistent training programme that promotes exercise as part of health living for the community?

Where are the university working groups of students leading the community in environmental protection matters, cleaning rivers, protecting and reclaiming riparian landsand providing adult literacy classes in church halls every evening in turns?

In my own view, I am convinced that there is a big and huge opportunity for the university to integrate itself more with the local community and build formidable linkages with the local community.

All too often, our outlook is too programmatic in the sense of the resources needed to make things happen. Too often, the resources are defined in monetary terms and due to scarcity of resources, most good ideas never come to being.

Today I want to contest this position and make a case that, there are many ways using the university key resource of faculty and students that we can drive and imprint the connection between the university and the local community at near no cost.

It is this kind of innovative ideas, fresh outlook, changed mindset and new world views that I implore you the university community to embrace and on them build a strong foundation for community extension and presence.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Graduands of the Day

In my government, we believe and are committed to the fact that, even a good thing, can be made better. It is my earnest hope that our conversation today, sets us on the path of redoubling our efforts, renewing our faith and reevaluating our own positions and aspirations to stand convinced that we are the generation that will make things better for both ourselves, our children and our children's children.

Once again, I thank the management, staff and the students for the invitation to such a colourful occasion.

I join you all Graduands in your celebrations. Let us celebrate life.

God Bless you all!
God Bless Laikipia!
God Bless Kenya!
THANK YOU