

**SPEECH**  
**BY**  
**PROF. DICKSON M. NYARIKI**  
**VICE CHANCELLOR**  
**4<sup>TH</sup> GRADUATION CEREMONY**  
**MURANG'A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**  
**FRIDAY, 18<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2020**

- The Chancellor, Murang'a University of Technology—Prof. Justin Irina,
- The Ministry of Education Representative
- The Chairman, Murang'a University of Technology Council—Prof. Joachim Osur,
- Members of Murang'a University Council,
- Members of the University Management Board and Senate,
- Members of the Students' Council and Alumni Representative,
- Invited guests,
- University staff, students, parents, guardians, sponsors and families watching virtually,
- Graduands present and those watching virtually,

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am delighted to welcome you to this auspicious occasion that marks the fourth graduation of Murang'a University of Technology. This year is very unique to us since we are holding a virtual graduation ceremony instead of the traditional, face-to-face one. The Graduation Ceremony is being streamed live via our University YouTube, Facebook and Instagram accounts. I, therefore, wish to express my sincere gratitude to all our guests, students, parents, guardians and sponsors who have spared their time to be with us remotely today.

**Mr. Chancellor Sir,**

Today, a total of 901 graduands will be presented for graduation in various disciplines. Out of these, four are graduating with

master's degrees, 821 with bachelor's degrees, 74 with diplomas and 2 with certificates. This marks good progress compared to last year's graduation when we graduated 618 students.

I take this opportunity to congratulate our graduands who are set to get their respective degrees, diplomas and certificates. The success we are celebrating today is a result of sheer hard work on the part of our graduands as well as dedication by the faculty and other University staff. I thank all those who have played a role in the realisation of this success. They have sacrificed to ensure that the graduands complete this important phase of their education.

I also wish to congratulate our new University Council members who have recently been appointed or re-appointed to serve for a

three-year term. I would like to assure the Council members of our full support from the Management, Senate, staff and students, as they carry out their oversight role at this University.

**Mr. Chancellor Sir,**

As we are all aware, following the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Government directed that all learning institutions in Kenya be closed. Murang'a University of Technology Senate ordered the closure of the institution for students while staff were required to work from home. At the point of closure, the University was on the 10th week of the semester. It was decided that we continue teaching through online platforms.

To successfully mount online teaching, we've enhanced our ICT Infrastructure. We've increased our internet bandwidth capacity to 200Mb/s in order to make virtual teaching and learning seamless.

The University has also invested in a Learning Management System to facilitate a student-centred online learning environment. The system has been integrated with our mainstream Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System. With the approval of the University Senate, our enhanced IT infrastructure enabled us to conduct online examinations. We put a system in place to safeguard the integrity of the online examinations. The graduands receiving their qualifications today were able to successfully sit their final examinations through the University online platform in September, this year. In this regard, I wish to express our gratitude to the various partners, who include the Kenya Education Network (KENET), for providing eLearning support at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to enable universities continue with teaching and learning.

As a sustainability measure for online teaching and learning, the University plans to establish an online Lecturer Resource Centre. The centre will provide easy access to a variety of learning materials, including recording lectures for students. The centre will also enable the University to offer blended learning that provides both face-to-face and online teaching. Blended learning will ensure that the University conforms to the Ministry of Health protocols regarding COVID-19.

**Mr. Chancellor Sir,**

As most of us may recall, the Ministry of Education allowed for phased reopening of universities and tertiary institutions from September, 2020. Following this directive, the University Senate approved the physical sitting of end of January-April, 2020 semester examinations for new and continuing students. The new

first year students, who began receiving online instruction in September and later in October, transitioned to face-to-face sessions, and have just finished this week their end of first semester examinations. Further to this, the University Senate has approved a new staggered re-opening of the University starting 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2021.

To facilitate staggered re-opening, the University has complied with all the Ministry of Health protocols. These include hand-washing, sanitizing, use of face masks and application of thermoguns among other measures. To ensure compliance of use of face masks, the University is providing washable face masks to all students and staff.

Further measures we've put in place include the following:



- i) Provision of library e-resources to students, to facilitate the decongesting of the library, by reducing the need for students to visit the library.
- ii) Rearrangement of student cafeteria sitting area to enable adequate spacing, and extension of opening hours to cater for all the students.
- iii) Equipping of health staff with the necessary PPEs while dealing with suspected cases of COVID-19 infection, and provision of an isolation space with beds, where suspected cases can be isolated. However, arrangements have been made with the Murang'a County Referral Hospital to receive these cases as soon as they are detected within the University.
- iv) Lastly, a University Reopening Committee headed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs) was

established, and tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that all the measures required for the safety of staff and students against COVID-19 were being implemented.

**Mr. Chancellor Sir,**

Let me assure you and the rest of the guests who have joined us today virtually and physically that our graduates have been competently prepared and are ready to apply the knowledge and skills acquired at this University in order to respond to market-based demands. We remain alive to the reality that the making of any great University is dependent on its commitment to scholarly excellence. Murang'a University of Technology is committed to achieving its vision of being a Leading University in Technological Innovation, Research, and Training. To this end, the University is ensuring that academic programmes are tailored towards

producing well-trained graduates with hands-on skills and competencies.

As a young institution, we are immensely proud of the strides we have made since our elevation to a full-fledged university four years ago. We mainly continue to provide market-driven academic programmes and to engage in cutting edge research undertakings. Our faculty continues to respond to research grant calls both at the local and international levels. Furthermore, our students and staff have developed several new innovations. These include two non-contact dispensers for both hand-washing and sanitizing, with one being solar powered. The third innovation is an online teaching platform, the fourth innovation is a water purification system, and the fifth one is a multi-storey garden with solar powered automated irrigation. All these innovations are

geared towards mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic; and are being processed for patenting.

Further to this, with funding from the National Research Fund (NRF), the University has bought research equipment worth over 46 million Kenya Shillings for the establishment of an Analytical and Imaging Laboratory. This equipment will be installed in January, 2021 when our Science Complex block is complete. We are confident that the commissioning of the Analytical and Imaging Laboratory will open a new window for scientific innovations and consultancies. This will mainly be in the areas of soil and water analysis, mineralogy, agricultural chemical analysis and food analysis.

**Mr. Chancellor Sir,**

All these achievements have improved our University visibility and recognition. For instance, in the last two years, the webometric ranking has consistently placed our University among the top 10 of the seventy-four Kenyan universities. This achievement is due to concerted efforts by the students, faculty and administrative staff.

At the same time, we have continued to work with the top County leadership of Murang'a to ensure that our University benefits our immediate community. Our partnership with the County Government has made us realize infrastructural developments such as street lighting and tarmacked roads around the University. Early this year, for example, the University signed an MOU with the County Government for the use of Level 4 Hospital by medical students. This has enabled the University to launch degree courses in Medical Laboratory Science, Community

Health and Environmental Health. Plans are at an advanced stage to also launch a degree in nursing in the next one year.

Further, the County Government is in the process of transferring 50 acres of the land at Mariira Farm to the University. This will see the University establish a strategic agricultural campus in Murang'a County which will help us strengthen programmes in Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences. We are highly appreciative, therefore, of the support the University has received and continues to receive from the County Government of Murang'a, led by H.E. Hon. Mwangi wa Iria, the Governor.

**Mr. Chancellor Sir,**

The University has participated in a number of community outreach programmes; for example, training of youth and women in entrepreneurship related courses and environmental

conservation. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the University made 10,000 face masks and donated them to the local community without charge.

At the National level, most of our University staff participated in contributing, through voluntary salary cuts, to the COVID-19 pandemic mitigation for emergency response to the tune of KSh. 3,835,750, paid to the Kenyan COVID-19 Fund at the National Treasury and Planning. We commend the staff who made this contribution for their gesture towards the more vulnerable among us.

**Mr. Chancellor Sir,**

As I conclude, I wish to sincerely thank the University Council for guiding and providing strategic direction to the Senate and Management. My gratitude also goes to the Ministry of Education for the support we have continued to receive.

And now dear Graduands, we have endeavoured to take you through a journey of experiences which we believe have helped you to grow and transform. The University is proud of your achievements and we celebrate with you. There is, however, much more to do, and today just marks a new beginning. I call on each of you to go out from here with confidence, with our blessings and best wishes, and work actively towards making something significant out of you.

**Thank you and God bless.**



*It is now my pleasure to invite the Chairman of the University Council, Prof. Joachim Osur, to make his remarks.*

**Prof. Dickson Nyariki, PhD**  
**Vice-Chancellor**