



# Varsity Focus

*News Flash*

A bi-weekly news letter from  
The Vice-Chancellor's Office

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University of Nairobi

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## Professor Mbithi Now Heads the Public Service

Professor Philip M. Mbithi, who was until recently Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, has been appointed Permanent Secretary in the Office of the President, Head of the Public Service and Secretary to the Cabinet.

Prof. Mbithi, 49, a solid scholar, holds a B.Sc. in Agriculture from the University of East Africa, M.Sc. in Rural Sociology, Agricultural Economics and Farm management and a Ph.D. in Sociology of Development, both degrees obtained from Cornell University.

The new head of the Public Service joined University service as a Tutorial Fellow at Makerere University in 1967. He joined the University of Nairobi as a Lecturer in 1970 and rose through the ranks to full Professor of Sociology in 1978. He was a long serving Chairman of the Department of Sociology and taught what was probably the most popular course in the Department - Rural Sociology.

From 1981 to 1983, Prof. Mbithi served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (A) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (A&F) from 1984-1985. He was appointed Vice-Chancellor in February 1985. During his tenure as Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mbithi adopted an open-door policy to solve the many problems that confronted the University ranging from a soiled public image to strained relationship between University administration and the student community. Upon his appointment as Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mbithi promised to take a realistic approach in tackling problems at the University and put to an end a culture of student hooliganism and lack of meaningful communication between the student and the authorities.

Subsequently, he employed a hands-on policy in running the University. He was always present to solve problems and was always at hand to advise. It is during his tenure as Vice-Chancellor that the most significant expansion of the University of Nairobi took place making it one of the

largest university in East and Central Africa.

As fate would have it, Prof. Mbithi's appointment as Head of the Public Service has taken him back to where he began. Shortly after being awarded a B.Sc. in Agriculture, he was appointed an Agricultural Officer in Kitui District. But although he has spent most of his working life in an academic institution, Prof. Mbithi is not a stranger to the civil service. He sat in numerous public service committees and management boards.

Last year, he chaired the Civil Service Salaries Review Committee.

Undoubtedly, his appointment to the top office in the public service is a singular honour not only to himself but also to the institution he served so diligently for over twenty years.

*Varsity Focus* wishes to congratulate him most sincerely for his appointment and wish him every success in his new duties.

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## V.C. Praises Kenya Society for the Blind

The University of Nairobi recently received the keys to an eye unit which was renovated by Kenya Society for the Blind (KSB) in liaison with the Sight Savers of the United Kingdom. The unit will be used by the newly established Department of Ophthalmology in the Faculty of Medicine, College of Health Sciences.

In his vote of thanks, the then Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Philip Mbithi, thanked the KSB for financing the renovation of the unit. The Vice-Chancellor's speech was read on his behalf by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (A&F), Prof. S.O. Wandiga.

The Vice-Chancellor noted with

appreciation that the total cost of refurbishing the unit was well over ksh. 5 million. This, he said, was an indication of the high premium the KSB attaches to prevention of eye diseases that cause blindness. He also praised KSB for their willingness to continue providing teaching equipments to the Department of Ophthalmology, saying that this would be a step towards winning the war against blindness.

Prof. Mbithi called upon Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the private sector to participate in financing the academic programmes so that the University could train more doctors to satisfy the health needs of the people. The Vice-Chancellor announced

that with effect from the forth-coming academic year, the Faculty of Medicine will offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree programme. This new programme, he said, will go along way in strengthening the nursing profession in the country.

Among those present during the handing over ceremony were, the Chairman of KSB, Mr. M.A. Dunford, Director of KSB, Mr. S.K. Tororei, Director of Kenyatta National Hospital, Dr. A. Agata, Principal, College of Health Sciences, Prof. S. Sinei, Chairman, Prevention of Blindness Committee, Dr. Kimathi and the then Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Prof. G.B.A. Okelo.



## Prof. Gichaga Appointed Ag. V.C.

Prof. F.J. Gichaga, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (A) has been appointed Ag. Vice-Chancellor, following the appointment of Prof. Mbithi as Permanent Secretary, Office of the President, Head of the Public Service and Secretary to the Cabinet.

In a letter to all staff in which he signed as Ag. Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Gichaga appealed to staff to continue discharging their duties with the usual commitment. Prof. Gichaga has in the past served as Chairman of the Department of Civil Engineering, Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Principal of the College of Architecture and Engineering.

In a related development, Mr. P.M. Mitiambo, Deputy Finance Officer, has been granted a two year leave of absence to take up an assignment with Eastern and Southern Africa Management Institute (ESAMI), Arusha, Tanzania, as Head of Finance Division. Mr. Mitiambo, a Chartered Public Accountant by profession, holds an M.B.A. from Bradford University and B.Com. from University of Nairobi.

*Varsity Focus* wishes him well in his new assignment.

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## Maintenance Committee Appointed

The University Management Board has appointed a University Maintenance Committee to co-ordinate university-wide maintenance activities. The Committee, which is chaired by Prof. F.N. Onyango, Principal of the College of Biological and Physical Sciences, will identify maintenance needs and prioritize them and supervise their execution.

During the meeting, the Management Board expressed concern over the poor workmanship of maintenance work such as repair of leaking roofs, rehabilitation of boilers, kitchens and teaching facilities.

The Committee, whose composition consists of College representatives, will visit all the Colleges with a view to assessing their maintenance needs.

## Former Dean Now DMS

Prof. G.B.A. Okelo, former Dean Faculty of Medicine has been appointed the Director of Medical Services in the Ministry of Health. Prof. Okelo, whose appointment was made on October 27th takes over from Prof. Joseph Oliech. Before his appointment, Prof. Okelo had just been elected Dean of the Faculty of Medicine unopposed. Prior to his election to Deanship, he was Chairman of the Department of Medicine and Member of Nairobi University Press Editorial Committee.

*Varsity Focus* congratulates Prof. Okelo on his appointment and wishes him every success in his new and challenging appointment.

In a related development, Prof. David N. Ndeti has been appointed Acting Dean in the Faculty of Medicine, while Prof. L.S. Otieno is the new Chairman of the Department of Medicine.

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## Librarian in U.K. Conference

Mrs. Mary E. Kimani, the University Librarian, was recently invited to attend a conference on Textbook Provision and Library Development in Africa, held in Manchester, U.K.

The participants to the conference were Ministers from over 30 countries in Africa as well as delegates from international donors and aid agencies such as the World Bank and the Overseas Development Agency.

The conference discussed among other things, ways and means of putting to an end the current book famine and improve the standard of education in African countries.

Mrs. Kimani presented a paper titled "Special Problems of Higher Education Libraries". She also led a discussion on Book Banks, Collective Catalogue and Document Exchange.

Meanwhile, Mr. J.M. Mulwa has been appointed Deputy Librarian (Technical). He holds B.Ed. degree obtained from the University of East Africa, Diploma in Librarianship and an M.A. in Librarianship.

Prior to his appointment, Mr. Mulwa was Acting Deputy Librarian. He has also served as a College Librarian at the College of Biological and Physical Sciences.

## Integrated Research Workshop Held

A three-day workshop attended by staff from the Faculties of Arts and Medicine was recently held to chart out an integrated approach in research activities. The workshop, which was funded by Carnegie Corporation, was co-ordinated by Mrs. Violet Kimani from the Department of Community Health who has just returned from a 9-month sabbatical leave at Harvard Medical School.

The workshop is part of a series of activities between Harvard Medical School and University of Nairobi aimed at developing a multi-disciplinary approach to research in medical problems. Every year, two members of staff from the University of Nairobi take up one-year fellowships tenable at Harvard Medical School. This year's fellowships were awarded to Prof. S. Meme of the Department of Pediatrics and Dr. H. Njeru of the Department of Sociology.

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## NOTICE TO OUR READERS

*Members of the University community are hereby informed that due to increasing costs of printing, we are experimenting with different ways of communicating important University developments. If you have any suggestions, please contact the Vice-Chancellor's Office*

### EDITORIAL TEAM

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