

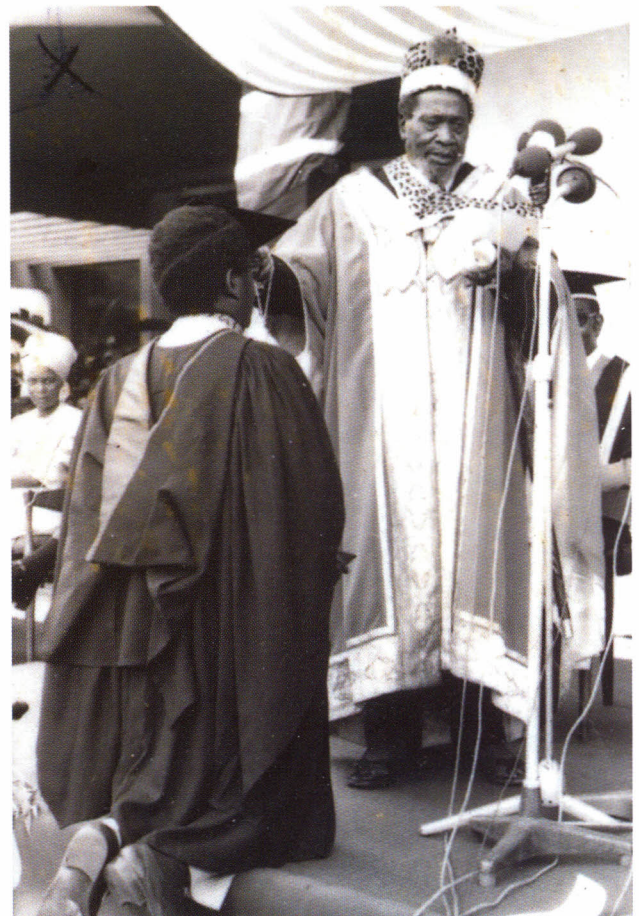
University of Nairobi's 50 Years of contributing **to Kenya's social economic growth**

In 2013, the nation celebrates 50 years of independence

The nation has taken gigantic strides in development, and it is believed that the architects behind the progress is the courageous, committed, dedicated and visionary leaders at the social, economic and political level. Even as the nation reflects on 50 years of nationhood, one cannot ignore the role played by the University of Nairobi in the development processes of this country.

The University was incepted in 1956 at a colourful ceremony attended by representatives from the Kenya Colony. The University then christened Royal College had an intake of about 400 students pursuing courses at certificate and diploma level. From such humble beginnings, the University has grown exponentially to virtually all courses at all levels with over 70,000 students serviced by 7,000 academic, technical and administrative staff.

From the Royal Technical College, the University evolved in response to the social, economic and political realities of the day. The realities were based on the fact that the University is essentially public property, established and funded with specific goals and objectives and therefore often called to render an account from time to time of tangible achievements which justify growing public investment. In 50 years then, the University has contributed to the social, economic and



First Chancellor, UoN, the late President Jomo Kenyatta confers PhD to a graduand.

political development of Kenya through achievements in academia, research and corporate social responsibility. The magnitude of the contribution has been summarized succinctly "It is not an exaggeration to say that if all the people that the University of Nairobi has educated and trained were to stop working today, Kenya would come to a standstill".

Many third world countries, Kenya included, look towards their higher institutions of learning for the type of knowledge and information that would protect and guarantee their national interests, objectives and ways of life. For mankind, this ensures security from ignorance, disease, hunger and exploitation. One of the major objectives of the University then has been to participate in the maintenance of scientific standards, provision of skilled manpower required by industry, government and other sectors of the economy and more fundamentally, the accumulation of knowledge and understanding. The University has transformed into a source of intellectual discourse becoming the choice destination for town hall type of meetings by international scholars seeking to engage Kenyans on development issues. In the past five years, the university has hosted senators, prime ministers, and more recently retired presidents.

At 50 years, the University of Nairobi is an active, fact finding, soul searching community. It debates issues and proposes solution for adoption by society. In collaboration with government and NGOs, staff and students have spearheaded initiatives to find solutions to problems such as

rapid population growth, poverty and disease. Research carried out at the University has been key in enhancing knowledge and properly accelerating socio-economic progress. Such research has made the nation of Kenya able to compete internationally in the struggle for scientific and technological progress. The University has been identified with research on low cost housing technologies; release of new bean, maize, peas and pigeon peas varieties', development of mala, yoghurt and uji; research on population planning', HIV/AIDS; alternative sources of energy including low cost windmills; development of bio-fix a legume inoculant , amongst others.

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The University has also been a reservoir of creative talent with students providing education and entertainment programs on mass media. The numerous plays, poems performed by student groups, University Choir, Free Travelling Theatre, receiving enthusiastic accolades and the birth of various artists is the pride not only of the University but the nation of Kenya. Artist John Sibi Okumu, Odingo Hawi, Mumbi Kaigwa, Billy Kaigwa, Njeri Luseno, ad nasuem.

The University of Nairobi boasts of 151,000 alumni, people who have received education and training in almost all known areas, fields and disciplines of study, research and training. The University has provided the nation with a large pool of highly educated and trained professional and technical experts in an extremely wide variety of disciplines and domains of human endeavor. It is these people who today occupy vital positions and play key roles in Kenya's economic, social and political life. In fact the University of Nairobi has midwived the entire higher education sector in the country by 'donating' academic staff and chief officers to firm up the foundation of these institutions. From Kenyatta University College in the 70s and 80s to currently Embu University College, the UoN has given birth to seven institutions of higher learning. It is these individuals who constitute the vast majority of middle and senior officers, professionals in government ministries, commissions, private

business, parastatals and NGOs.

The University of Nairobi can be judged by the number of kilometers the engineers it has produced plan and supervise in the country. It can be argued that there is probably no major road or infrastructural development in Kenya, since independence that has not been without the involvement and participation of UoN engineers, planners, designers, supervisors in one capacity or another. Similarly, the University can be judged by how the medical professions – doctors, nurses, technicians, pharmacists, public health officers - that it has produced are contributing to tackle the problems and enhancing the health of Kenyans'. The professionals, officers and technical experts who constitute the backbone of our agricultural, industrial, commercial, banking, public administration and education systems are graduates of the University. It is not in question that Kenya has benefited in economic, political and social aspects from the services of these people, who in many cases are the only ones available to the country.

The role of the University in creating knowledge is a charge to contribute to the total stock of understanding and technology of action available to Kenya. This activity has taken the responsibility of providing new and deeper insights into all aspects of our national realities and to nurture

new and better explanations, descriptions and tools for prediction, foresight and action that enable us to make better decision and managing our affairs more effectively and efficiently. This is enshrined succinctly in Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's words (1963) 'The University must be a center of objective criticism and thinking and on all research and teaching, the University has to be as objective as humanly possible. Recently then, the University of Nairobi became the first government agency to take up a leadership role in the implementation of the constitution when it launched a rapid results initiative to sensitise the university community on the provisions of the constitution. This 100 day journey opened vast and lasting opportunities for growth and prosperity of the wider university community.

The University of Nairobi joins the Kenya at 50 celebration with a clear, recorded contribution and it continues to make a crucially important, irreplaceable and indispensable contribution to the life and welfare of Kenyans and to the future social, economic and political development of the nation. We have vital lessons to learn "that the educated run educational programs in the country, that the best qualified people lead our institution of higher learning. They are better placed to find solutions to the problems which make it impossible for more Kenyans to live above the minimum wage line".



**Retired
President,
Daniel
Toroitich
Arap Moi
(right) B.M
Gecaga**