

University of Nairobi challenged to lead in Innovation.

The much awaited Nairobi Innovation Week kicked off today with presentations from innovation gurus who challenged the University of Nairobi to take the lead role in championing innovation in the country.

Speaking during the event, Mr. Langdon Morris and Mr. Saul Singer, the Israeli innovation guru and author of *Start-up Nation* challenged the University to emulate Ivy League universities like Stanford that championed the creation of Silicon Valley which up to date employs close to 3 million people and has earned close to USD 2.7 trillion.

Silicon Valley was created by Professors who urged their students to create companies. They were courageous and were willing to fail. "Failure should not be punished. Failure should be encouraged. Many business start-ups fail. It is only persistent hard work, determination and teamwork that will enable innovations to see the light of day", said Mr. Morris. He urged the Professors of the University to work hand in hand with their students to create companies.

The inaugural Nairobi innovation week, has enabled many start-ups to showcase their innovations. It also presented an opportunity for professors and those in academia to present their journals and gave the business community an opportunity to interact and network.

The government was urged to provide incentives to the start-ups businesses. Such incentives include capital, removal of taxes and restrictive legislations and funding.

According to Saul Singer, the innovation ecosystem will involve innovation peers, professors, students, ideas from innovators, big companies ready to scale start-ups, small companies, support services, facilities, ongoing investment by venture capitalists and access to capital.

Also present during the Innovation week included: Dr. Fred Matian'gi, the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Industrialist Dr. Manu Chandaria, CEO Barclays Bank of Kenya, Mr. Jeremy Awori, University of Nairobi Chancellor Dr. Vijoo Rattansi, Chairman of Council, Dr. Idle Farah, University Management Board, Senate members, the business community and the students.