

SHORT HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY

The idea of an institution for higher learning in Kenya goes back to 1947 when the Kenyan Government drew up a plan for the establishment of a Technical and Commercial Institute, in Nairobi. By 1949, this plan had grown into an East African concept, aimed at providing higher technical education for East Africa. In September 1951, this concept received a Royal Charter, under the name "Royal Technical College of East Africa" and the foundation-stone of the institution was laid in April 1952.

During that period the Asian Community in East Africa was also planning to build a College for Arts, Science and Commerce, as a living memorial to Mahatma Gandhi. To avoid duplication of effort, Gandhi Memorial Academy Society, agreed to merge interests with those of the East African Governments. Thus was incorporated into the Royal Technical College of East Africa in April 1954, the Gandhi Memorial Academy.

The Royal Technical College opened its doors to the first intake of students in April 1956. No sooner had this been done, than the need was felt for expert advice on the pattern of Higher Education in East Africa. This led to the appointment of a Working Party in July 1958. Among the chief recommendations of the Working Party, was that, through measures reconstruction and additions of appropriate facilities, the Royal Technical College should be transformed into the second Inter-Territorial University College in East Africa. The recommendation was accepted by the East African Governments, and on 25th June 1961, by

an Act of the East African High Commission, the Royal Technical College was transformed into the second University College in East Africa, under the name "Royal College Nairobi". On 20th May 1964, the Royal College Nairobi was renamed "University College of Nairobi". On the attainment of "University College" status, the institution was admitted into Special Relation with the University of London in February 1961, and prepared students in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Engineering Degree of the University of London. Students in the other faculties, namely the Faculty of Arts and Architecture and the Faculty of Special Professional Studies (which was later renamed the Faculty of Commerce) continued to work either for a College Diploma or for the qualifications of Professional bodies.

Further development in the academic field came in 1962, when the Faculty of Veterinary Science was transferred from Makerere University College to the Royal College Nairobi. In the following year Extra-Mural Studies which hitherto had been organized in Kenya by Makerere was also transferred to the college. At the same time the College of Social Studies, Kikuyu which had been in operation as an independent centre for residential adult education since 1961, was absorbed into the College. In 1965 the Institute for Development Studies was established with Social Science and Cultural Divisions. In 1970/71 academic year the latter Division was set up separately as the Institute of African Studies. In 1967 the Faculty of Medicine

admitted its first students. Based at Chiromo for its pre-clinical teaching, the Faculty's clinical work is carried out at the Kenyatta National Hospital. The University opened faculties of Agriculture at Kabete and Law on the main campus in July, 1970. In April 1970 the School of Journalism was opened. A Faculty of Education, based on the previous Department of Education was opened in September 1970.

In addition to these major units, further academic re-organisation took place through re-organisation and creation of new departments.

With the inauguration of the University of East Africa in June 1963, the students who joined the College in the following September enrolled for degree and diploma courses of the University of East Africa. The only exceptions to this were students in the Departments of Domestic Science and Land Development who continued to work for the University of Manchester and R.I.C.S. qualifications respectively. Students who had enrolled under the Special Relation Scheme continued to work for the degrees of the University of London, the last examinations for which were held in June 1966. The new enrolments studies for the University of East Africa degrees at the College with the exception of the Department of Domestic Science.

The University of East Africa was dissolved with effect from 1st July 1970, and the three East African countries set up their national Universities. This saw the birth of the University of Nairobi set up by an Act of Parliament.

In 1970 the Department of

Advanced Nursing was established. The Department of Pharmacy and Dental Surgery were established in 1974 while the Department of Biochemistry was amalgamated as service Department to all Science Faculties but based in the Faculty of Medicine for administrative purposes.

Another development was the establishment of the Institute of Population Studies and Research, the Department of Range Management in the Faculty of Agriculture, the transfer of the Faculty of Education to Kenyatta University College campus, the establishment of two independent departments namely, the Department of Philosophy and the Department of Religious Studies within the Faculty of Arts, out of the former single Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies; the transfer of the Department of Forestry to Moi University in September, 1983.

In September, 1988, the Faculty of Commerce was transferred from Main Campus to Lower Kabete Campus, on Lower Kabete Road, 12 km from the City Centre. The Faculty of Law was transferred from the Main Campus to Parklands Campus. In the same period the Faculty of Education, based at Kikuyu Campus was reintroduced.

One of the most significant development at the University of Nairobi was the establishment of Campus colleges under the 1985 University of Nairobi Act.

1. The College of Architecture and Engineering on Harry Thuku Road.

2. The College of Biological and Physical Sciences, at

Chiromo across Msonga Wai River, some 2 kms from the Central Campus off Riverside drive.

3. The College of Education and External Studies, at Kikuyu, some 21 kms from Nairobi.

4. The College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, at Kabete, some 13 kms,

northwest of the Central Campus.

5. The College of Health Sciences, some 3 kms from the Central Campus, off Ngong Road, and forms part of the Kenyatta National Hospital Complex.

6. The College of Humanities and Social Sciences, at the Central Campus.

