

UoN remains among the top in the region

ON JANUARY 5 THIS YEAR, I marked five years since my appointment as Vice-Chancellor of this prestigious University. On my first appointment, I was tasked, with my colleagues the responsibility of rebuilding the University in all aspects. This was a difficult challenge because at the time, the University was operating on a low ebb in the perception of the public.

The infrastructure at the UoN was dilapidated, student indiscipline was alarming and staff morale was quite low. This state of affairs had impacted negatively on the Institution's objectives making it difficult to achieve its goals. My job then, as the CEO of the largest institution in East and Central Africa was clear cut: how to confront these challenges was the next big headache. For a start, our options were narrowed by the Chancellor, Dr. Joseph Wanjui when on the day he announced my appointment said that the status quo was not an option under his governance. Our starting point therefore was to craft a strategic plan, the first ever for the University of Nairobi, the plan initially provided a road map up to 2010, and has since been reviewed to run up to 2013.

Our key successes in the implementation of the strategic plan have been recorded in finance where deficits have been reduced, cost cutting measures adopted and revenues increased. Indeed, at the close of the last financial year, we were among the very few public institutions that had audited accounts.

Finance is a key resource, its improved management therefore has spurred positive results in our core objectives. One area that has benefited is the acquisition of assets and the completion of stalled capital projects of the 1980s which were an eyesore campus wide. We have spent more than Kshs. One billion on capital projects including, the acquisition of property in Kisumu worth Kshs 45 million,



Vice-Chancellor, Prof. George A.O. Magoha.

and Mombasa worth kshs 225 million, to house our core activities of teaching, research, consultancy and community outreach.

Staff and student welfare issues have also been addressed. Apart from representation in unions, training has been provided for staff to keep them in tandem with the challenging modern work environment. Students, on the other hand, now appreciate the value of an uninterrupted academic life that has come as a result of strict observance of rules and regulations. It is our pride that, the University of Nairobi has not been closed down for the last five years. The end product of this environment has been completion of studies on time and an improved corporate name.

Our student enrolment has gone up to 45,000 with an increased postgraduate enrolment of about 10,000. This has led to the opening of learning centres outside Nairobi and the introduction of a new teaching module (Module III) that is tapping on the benefits of IT and extending opportunities to those who are un-

able to study on a full time basis.

Another area in which we have experienced changes in the last five years is ICT. All our campuses are now networked; we have increased the number of PC's available, while wireless internet connectivity is now available in designated places within the University. Our goal is to increase connectivity so that students can learn from anywhere in our campuses free of charge.

Our focus now is to enhance the quality, and ensure the relevance of our academic programmes. This, ultimately should help the nation in achieving the millennium development goals and the Vision 2030.

Our efforts have not gone unnoticed. The University Calendar and the Website won prizes from the Association of Commonwealth Universities. We remain the best local public university as per the international rankings and our reputation has greatly improved. I am confident that over the next five years, the UoN will emerge among the finest universities in the world.