

**SPEECH BY PROF. GEOFFREY M. MULUVI, PHD, VICE CHANCELLOR,
SOUTH EASTERN KENYA UNIVERSITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE
MATRICULATION OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS ON WEDNESDAY, 31ST
AUGUST 2016 AT THE GRADUATION SQUARE**

Deputy Vice-Chancellors,
Registrars,
Deans of Schools,
Chairs of Departments,
Teaching and administrative staff,
Members of the Students' Governing Council,
Freshmen and women
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this year's matriculation ceremony. On behalf of the Council, the Senate, Management, Staff and Students of South Eastern Kenya University, and on my own behalf, I have the joy to convey our hearty congratulations to our about 1800 freshmen and women, who have successfully gained admission into various programmes at our University from all the 47 counties in this republic.

This is a momentous achievement considering the stiff competition for limited chances in our universities today. As you are aware, a number of your colleagues who applied for university intake missed out because of lack of places. You are therefore those lucky few. This gives you reason to rejoice and thank the good Lord, your parents and guardians for seeing you this far in your academic pursuits. But this is just the beginning. I hope you will give your parents, guardians and well-wishers the fullness of joy by making a triumphant exit from this University at the end of your sojourn here.

Ladies and gentlemen, the matriculation ceremony is an important occasion not only because it marks the formal admission of students into the University, but also because it is the occasion during which new students pledge their allegiance to the authority of the University. It is the occasion during which they are enjoined, through the administration of the Matriculation Oath, to be obedient to the Charter and Statutes of the University and all other policies and regulations that govern it. In pledging to be of good behaviour, new students are committing themselves to avoid all the bad things that the University abhors. From now on, therefore, you become an integral part of the SEKU community, with its culture and values.

Today marks a major turning point in your academic journey. It is a moment full of great expectations and dreams not only on your part, but also on the part of all those who surround your lives – your parents, your lecturers, your community, your country and humanity at large. All these parties look up to you to fill their dreams which are embedded in yours. I wish, therefore, to engage you in specific issues that will be of great importance to you as you seek to make your stay here meaningful and fruitful.

Through your intellect, drive and perseverance you have gained admission to this promising premier university in Kenya.

Today, as you officially start the next stage of your educational career, you will find several tremendous opportunities, experiences and challenges that will last you a lifetime. They will define your university experience and set you on the path of professional and personal development. But this achievement so far will only be of benefit if you remain true to your senses of responsibility, discipline, commitment and focus.

Dear students, education comes with responsibility. You have an obligation to use your education for the benefit of society. I challenge each of you to be an active citizen of this community and every community that you will inhabit in the future. I encourage you to strive for excellence. I encourage you freshmen and women to take inspiration from those who have gone ahead of you and also work hard to attain good names for yourselves and for the University.

However, you cannot strive for excellence if you are not disciplined. We live in a civilized society and civility must reflect in all our actions. You are expected to remain civil in how you deal with your fellow students, the staff and the outside community. The University is governed by rules and regulations and there are procedures for engaging in various activities. I therefore urge all students to carefully read the regulations which will be made available to you both in hard copy and on the University's website and follow the procedures accordingly. I assure you that if you do this, your days in the University shall be happy and fruitful.

As you will find out, this University has some values and ethos that it holds dear. Discipline and integrity in everything we do are at the heart of these values. We not only seek to achieve academic excellence but also the moral uprightness of our students. We believe that such holistic approach in our

training will set us apart and put our products above the rest in the present job market that is becoming even more saturated.

This University holds dear the academic discipline among both staff and students. We have over the years built a reputation of high academic standards and we shall remain steadfast in this. The biggest sin you can commit in this University is to cheat in examinations. If you are caught cheating, you will be expelled. I urge you not to bring shame to yourself and your family by engaging in this vice. Here at SEKU, we believe that it is far better to fail honourably and repeat a course than to attempt to pass fraudulently and be disgraced out of the University.

I need to mention to you that every year a number of students are expelled because of exam cheating. To ensure zero tolerance for cheating, we shall soon install CCTV cameras in all lecture rooms so that exam cheats will have nowhere to hide.

The University does not allow tribal groupings and the same will not be allowed in the University. We need to promote National Cohesion and Integration.

You know that from now on there will be no bells ringing to tell you where to go. Neither will there be assembly or parade. But this should not deceive you to believe that there will be no order. Instead the demands are now greater as you will be called upon to manage your time without anybody prompting you. How you apportion your time to the many things that will call for your attention will obviously determine your success or failure as far as your academic endeavours are concerned.

SEKU is a vibrant community with a number of curricula and extra curricula activities such as sports, clubs and societies. I urge you to focus on how to spend your time constructively without straying into activities that will derail you from your key objective, which is your academic work. Choose your company wisely. Be clear on what activities you want to spend your time on and why.

Dear students, a university set up accords you a lot of freedom. But the most important aspect of this freedom is the freedom to think on your own. In it lies the need to think constructively and logically. It is not freedom to do whatever you want, as whatever you do has a consequence. It is freedom to

do the right thing. I wish to warn you of the several pitfalls that come with this freedom. Be careful not to engage in alcoholism, drug abuse and irresponsible sexual behaviour. Apart from interfering with your academic work, these vices will expose you to the risk of HIV/AIDS. Avoid being part of the statistics of promising university students whose lives have been ruined by alcohol and drugs, or those who have lost their lives to the AIDS scourge. The University has vibrant drugs and substance abuse and HIV/Aids control units to help students on how to deal with these issues. I urge those with problems to seek guidance from these offices.

Cases of unwanted pregnancies among female students are sometimes alarming. Take care of yourself and contact yourself with dignity. The University abhors all forms of violence. Severe punishment is meted to those who get involved.

Radicalization and terrorism have today become a major concern of global magnitude. Universities and other institutions of higher learning have become key targets for error groups working to recruit into their cells. I want to warn you not to fall prey to these groups. Be vigilant and work with the University Management and our security department to identify suspicious cases. Monitor your colleagues' movements and activities in the hostels and social places. In doing this you will be helping to forestall a terror attack within the University and saving your fellow students from radicalization. The University is working on modalities of implementing the Government's Nyumba Kumi initiative to ensure that we know what is going on around us.

Apart from the issues I have mentioned, there are still several acts that constitute misconducts on which the University will not make any compromises with transgressors. As you settle down, I urge you to study carefully all the rules and regulations. We shall expect you to utilize University facilities at your disposal in a prudent and responsible manner, being mindful of other users as well.

Theft in the hostel or anywhere else within the University is prohibited. Any student caught stealing University property or other students' belongings will be expelled. Also prohibited is cooking in the hostels. You are aware that the University has tried its best to accommodate all of you in the hostels; but this does not bar any of you who feel that they would like to stay outside, where they can cook in their rooms, to do so. Use the lecturer rooms prudently. Reading or sitting along the corridors of lecture halls is prohibited. Do not

remove chairs from the lecture rooms. Above all keep all the facilities clean. We have put benches under tree shades for students who wish to study outside. The rest of studying must be inside the lecture rooms.

We are proud that we have made major strides in the areas of infrastructure and learning facilities within the relatively short period of the University's existence. We have invested in science equipment, academic buildings, including lecture rooms, laboratories and offices, roads, ICT, and the library. Our laboratories and library are well equipped and I urge you to use them fully.

The University is in the process of implementing a cashless system through smart card. Paying for services including food in the messes will be carried out using the Smart Card. We have partnered with the National Bank to implement this service. We will therefore start using the cards very soon.

We also have wireless Internet in key areas around the University especially the Hostels. We have computer labs located in Tuition Block I and Tuition Block II. We have also ordered 100 computers to set up a bigger computer lab. Take advantage of these facilities to enhance your intellectual capability. We have fitted our computer labs with CCTV cameras to stem theft of computer parts.

The University boasts of well qualified teaching staff, a number of them PhD holders. We are also vigorously pursuing the upgrading of our staff at all levels. For this we have been able to rise in the rankings as we focus on research, innovation and service to community.

However, while SEKU is steadily rising to claim its position as world class centre of excellence in education, research and innovation, it does not mean that there are no challenges here. Water for example remains a major challenge. You will also face challenges in various other areas. But we believe in solving our problems through dialogue and consultation. We have a vibrant student representation system through which we deal with all the challenges as one united SEKU Family. We believe in all of us being part of the solution.

As I conclude, I would like to assure you that life in the University can be very exciting both intellectually and socially. All of us are here to offer assistance if required. Do make time to engage with your lecturers and make the best out of them. Take advantage of every facility available to develop

yourselves fully and to prepare for future opportunities and challenges. Education comes with responsibility and those of you who are fortunate enough to be here have an obligation to use your education for the benefit of others who are not so fortunate. Once again, welcome to South Eastern Kenya University.

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