

**SPEECH BY PROF. FRANCIS N. WACHIRA, PHD, AG. VICE CHANCELLOR,  
SOUTH EASTERN KENYA UNIVERSITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
MATRICULATION OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS ON WEDNESDAY, 30<sup>TH</sup>  
AUGUST 2023**

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (ARI),  
Academic Registrar,  
Deans and Directors,  
Chairs of Departments,  
Teaching and Administrative staff,  
Members of the Students' Governing Council,  
Freshmen and women  
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Council, the Senate, Management, Staff and Students of South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU), and on my own behalf, I convey our hearty congratulations to our freshmen and women, who have successfully gained admission into various programmes at our University.

This is a momentous achievement considering that not all your colleagues were able to secure a placement for university education. This gives you reason to rejoice and thank 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 stay 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 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. The fresh men and women thus vow to be 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 fulfill their dreams which are embedded in yours. I wish, therefore, to engage you in specific issues that will be of great importance you as you seek to make you stay here meaningful and fruitful.

As you start the next stage of your educational career today, you will find tremendous opportunities, experiences and challenges that will define your university experience and set you on the path of personal development. To navigate through these opportunities and challenges, you will be duty-bound to cultivate a sense of responsibility, discipline, commitment and focus, and remain true to these important tenets of good scholarly habits.

The University is governed by rules and regulations, with procedures for engaging in various activities. I therefore urge all new students to carefully read the regulations, which will be made available to you, and follow them diligently.

As you will find out, this University has some values and ethos that we hold 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. Such a holistic approach to education will set you apart and put you above the rest as you live here and upon leaving this institution.

Academic discipline among both staff and students is paramount. We have built a reputation of high academic standards and we shall remain steadfast in this. The biggest transgression you can commit in this University is to cheat in examinations. If you are caught cheating, you will be expelled. I urge you not bring shame to yourself and your family by engaging in this vice. I need to mention to you that every year a number of students are expelled because of exam cheating. Do not be part of that dubious statistic.

Apart from examination cheating, there are still several other acts that constitute misconduct 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 hostels or anywhere else within the University is prohibited. 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 lecture rooms prudently. Reading or sitting along the corridors of lecture rooms 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.

You need to know that from now on there will be no bells ringing to tell you where to go. But this should not deceive you to believe that there will be no demands on you. Instead the demands are now greater as you are called upon to manage your time without any prompting. 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. Focus on how to spend your time constructively without straying into activities that will derail you from your key objective, your academic success. Choose your company wisely. Be clear about what 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 that help students to deal with these issues. I urge those with problems to seek guidance from these offices.

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

However, while SEKU is steadily rising to claim its position as a world class centre of excellence in education, research and innovation, it does not mean that there are no challenges here. You will face challenges in various areas. But we believe in solving our problems through dialogue and consultation. We have a vibrant student representation system through which we address 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.

Thank you.

Prof. Francis Wachira  
Ag. Vice Chancellor