MATRICULATION CEREMONY 1968

You have now made your ~~vows~~ declaration of allegiance to the College and to scholarship, and thus completed the exercise of your admission to the College and the University.

Behind the ceremony, lie the importance and significance of your new status. You have today taken one more step in your life's journey. You have now entered a new community, a community made up of masters and scholars, of senior members and junior members, all of us in the pursuit of truth.

This ceremony you have gone through is what remains of an initiation ceremony into the University. It is a gesture of commitment - a binding of the student to the heritage of the past and a binding to the discipline of scholarship.

Matriculation is this process of entering into a new society. It comes from the Latin word "matricula", a list. By signing your name in the Register of the College and by making your declaration, you have now become members of a new ~~society~~ family, you now have a new mother, your alma mater, University College, Nairobi. And, as in every society, there are rules and regulations which must

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be followed, and there is a code of behaviour which it is expected that you will honour.

Entering the University marks a transition from adolescence to adulthood. The University of Paris, for example, in the Middle Ages, granted its first degrees only to those of the age of twenty and above. This means that, as adults, you must take full responsibilities for your own actions. The discipline of the University is a discipline of consequences: what you sow is what you will reap. At enormous cost and at great sacrifice, you have been given this ~~chance~~ opportunity. We all trust and hope that you will make the best of it.

But entering the University marks a transition that is more crucial than the frontiers of class or age. It is a call to dedication, to an unrelenting pursuit of all that is true and good and beautiful; not to be content with anything less than the best and, above all, to strive always for the highest excellence. We shall expect from you all that is implied in the honour and the excellence of your new status.

Many are called, but few are chosen. You are among the chosen. Only a minority in any country has this opportunity of

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serving as bridges between the generations, to receive from the past and transmit to the future. You are part of this minority.

You are also, in another sense, bridges - bridges not only between the past and the future, but bridges of understanding between the different peoples which make up our great country. You have come from different schools, from different areas, from different cultural traditions. You should use this opportunity to know one another and develop a new synthesis out of the diversity so that you will emerge as truly Kenyan, dedicated to the betterment and progress of the entire country.

But because you are a privileged group and a minority does not mean that you must be arrogant and conceited, and forget the duties you owe to all those whose taxes have made it possible for you to have this opportunity. Humility is a mark of true greatness. We implore you to use your time here wisely and well. Never forget that you are preparing yourself for the great challenges that life will present you.

Today there is a lot of student unrest and dissatisfaction in the world. Many of these are due to lack of communication between the generations and an uneasiness about ~~the~~ current ~~leadership~~ Society. Here we are making every effort, within our resources, to establish a

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machinery for contact between staff and students, between the administration and the rest of the College. If you have any problems, bring them to us; we may not be able to solve them, but we shall try.

We, the senior members, are engaged in the same search for truth and for knowledge as yourselves. We are, admittedly, further up the road than you, but a number of you will overtake us and become greater and better scholars than some of us. For now, our wider knowledge is at your disposal. We are all here to help you make your stay here intellectually profitable as well as joyous and exciting.

Entering the University is the invitation to become another man, a new person. This is the claim that the great universities of the world have always made as the real reason for their existence. Almost twenty five hundred years ago Aleibiades said of his master, Socrates, "He made me feel as though I could hardly endure the life which I am now living". And Apollodorus, in the opening lines of the Symposium shows how well that master had communicated the spiritual side of philosophy to his disciples. Since having known Socrates, he said, "Whenever either I am talking about any instruction or I hear others doing so, I receive the very greatest pleasure in addition to the sense of having good done to me." This also is the testament of that noble Roman Seneca, addressed to Lucullus: "I understand", he wrote, "that I am not only being improved but that I am being transformed".

I hope that all of you who have matriculated today, will feel the same about your University and your University experience, and that you will leave here at the end of your apprenticeship as masters of your discipline but, equally important, as men and women who have learnt the lesson of service.

On behalf of all of us at the College I congratulate you on this important day in your life and wish you every success as you enter into our community and your academic studies.

The staff and I will be greatly honoured if you will join us for coffee in the Refectory.