



# Meet Kenya's top Captain of higher education



Prof. Peter Mulwa Felix Mbithi  
Vice-Chancellor, University of Nairobi

plant, which is powered by a very high voltage power supply. Having the highest concentration of top academia, the university must have just the right captain as a vice chancellor. Yes, a real captain indeed, like Professor Peter Mulwa Felix

Mbithi, who battled it out with other academic giants in a spirited competitive recruitment exercise in which he emerged the first among equals. Prof. Mbithi therefore took the mantle at the helm of the University of Nairobi since its inception.

He was formally installed to office on January 14, 2015 in a colorful ceremony, the first of its kind donned with the biggest ever witnessed academic procession in the history of the university.

He becomes the first Vice Chancellor to be formally installed in the country. The installation was presided over by the Chancellor of the University and witnessed by top government officials led by the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

The Vice Chancellor is the academic and administrative head of the University. He is the Chief Executive Officer of the University and in that capacity, has the overall responsibility for the direction, organization and administration of all functions and programmes of the University.

#### ROYAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE

The University of Nairobi is the largest and oldest institution of higher learning in Kenya. Having been started as the Royal Technical College of East Africa in 1956, the College later morphed to Royal College Nairobi in 1961 and University College of Nairobi in 1964. The University became fully fledged in 1970 with a student population of 2,136 which has multiplied to the current 85,000 serviced by close to 2000 academic members of staff, among them 500 professors. The students are registered into the various disciplines among over 300 academic programmes spread over thirty seven (37) faculties/schools/institutes.

Talk about 'university', one is likely to elicit the next question; 'which university; Yes in deed, which university, a question that undoubtedly has a number of answers given the number of public as well as private universities in the country. But what makes the difference? Brand. Mention "The University" and take a deliberate pause, and more often than not, the other party in the conversation will complete the statement

'Nairobi'. Reason?

The University of Nairobi is a brand, a brand that has been a pace setter for the higher education agenda in the region for close to sixty (60) years since the 1950's. It would therefore suffice to mention, without any prejudice that almost all the other public universities can trace their roots to 'the' university.

The University of Nairobi brand is like a huge heavy commercial production

It is therefore worth noting that within two months of Prof. Mbithi's stewardship, the University's ranking by webometrics world ranking of universities rose from position 9 to 7 in Africa.



President Uhuru Kenyatta signs the visitors' book in the Vice Chancellor's office during a recent visit to the University. Looking on is the Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi and Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter M.F. Mbithi.

#### JOURNEY TO THE VICE CHANCELLORY

Prof. Mbithi joined the University in 1983 and rose through the academic and administrative ranks and served in various key university organs, in the process rising to the position of Chairman of Department of Clinical Studies, Dean, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Principal, College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences and Deputy Vice Chancellor, Administration and Finance, from where he clinched the top position of Vice Chancellor.

Prof. Mbithi at the helm of the University is particularly keen to have the University pursue and be guided by its

core values of freedom of thought and expression; good governance and integrity; team spirit and teamwork; professionalism; quality customer service; responsible citizenship and national cohesion and inclusiveness. The Vice Chancellor is also proud of the University's contribution towards the implementation of the Kenya Constitution (2010) and realization of the Country's Vision 2030.

The Vice Chancellor's stated Vision for the University of Nairobi is to have it be a top ranked sustainable World Class University with enduring and valuable scholarly excellence. To realize the vision, the Vice Chancellor has undertaken



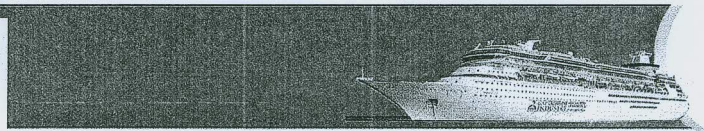
The University of Nairobi foyer.



**CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY**

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UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

the following: to jointly stand for excellence because high standards will deliver results; to create systems that ensure persistence and endurance; to practice good corporate governance with honesty being the backbone of the University culture; to foster management and a work culture characterized by teamwork and partnership with both internal and external stakeholders; to promote innovativeness and creativity as the hallmarks of University practice; to apply global knowledge, diverse perspectives and national values to catalyze growth; and foster a leadership and management culture that cares and is people focused. It is therefore worth noting that within two months of Prof. Mbithi's stewardship, the University's ranking by webometrics world ranking of universities rose from position 9 to 7 in Africa.

**HALLMARKS OF ACHIEVEMENTS**

In the period Prof. Mbithi has served as a member of the University's top management, he is identified with the following hallmarks of achievement: steering the institution to ISO certification; coordinating performance contracting; driving the rapid results initiatives; development of service charters and coordinating corporate strategic planning. Since becoming the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Mbithi has implemented some new initiatives, inter alia: starting a centre for training in pedagogy and andragogy, operationalization of the Centre for Self-Sponsored Programmes, (CESSP) and research and innovation that has resulted in the launching of an incubation policy. In this regard, the University has scheduled a week long innovation week in the month of August, an event that would provide a platform for scientists from the University of Nairobi and beyond to showcase their innovative research projects and products.

The University of Nairobi under Prof. Mbithi's administration is particularly committed to the triple bottom line i.e. people, profit and planet.

**SUCCESSION PLANNING**

He has a vision to develop leadership at all basic operating levels for realization of the transformative agenda of the University through talents search, proper succession planning and leadership development programmes among others. As a first initiative of Prof. Mbithi, the University established the Directorate of University Advancement to focus on resources mobilization, investment and endowment of resources for future sustainability of the

University. In addition, the University will focus on scaling up the community impact to the society through innovation and research breakthroughs and also engaging its students, faculty and alumni in community service programs.

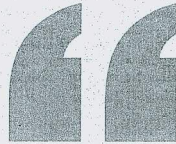
Over the last 10 years (2005-2015) as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in charge of Administration and Finance, Prof. Mbithi steered the Performance Contracting and ISO certification to very high levels, culminating in the University being awarded position one (1) consistently in three years at the category of Excellence, a position that has been maintained to date. This was achieved through formation and management of small teams committed to excellence, vision on the goal, training and capacity building and ownership of the process. Prof. Mbithi directed and steered the process of developing and documenting of procedures at functional levels, which ultimately form the Quality Management Systems. Guided by the principle of people involvement, Prof. Mbithi wishes to strengthen systems that will help all staff irrespective of their rank. In the recent Webometrics rankings, the University was rated No. 7 in Africa and 887 globally and the vision is to move the University to the tops in Africa and top 100 in the world. In its current strategic plan (2013 - 2018) we have set very clear goals and are very confident that together, we shall achieve these goals.

The University of Nairobi has adopted a new strategic agenda of change management in order to align itself with the changing environment and to play its rightful role of being a think tank for government, private sector and international world as well as produce holistic graduates suited for the market. The creation of the Directorate of University Advancement is one among the vehicles intended to drive this transformative change agenda through re-branding, culture change, customer centric, risk taking and innovation. The Directorate will work with a team of UON Eminent Persons as strategic advisors, faculty members, alumni and students to drive this change. The transformative change will inspire people to think big, act big and deliver big and will not benchmark locally but globally.

The University of Nairobi has set up an Innovation and Incubation Centre, the Computing for Development (C4D) Lab where all the ICT software innovations are nurtured. The University has also set up the FabLab (Fabrication Laboratory) for



Prof. Peter Mulwa Felix Mbithi, the VC, at the installation ceremony



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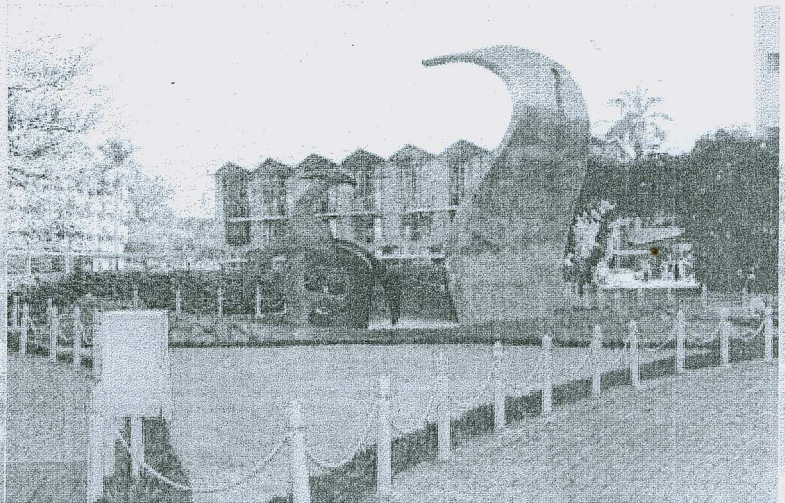
hardware innovations. Last year (2014), UON FabLab won the Standard Media Group Transform Award as first position and overall the University has a Science Park that incubates all the innovations from health, agriculture, medicine, geology and biosystems among other areas.

Among the fastest growing areas of innovation is the ICT sector and the University of Nairobi is gearing up for Nairobi Innovation Week scheduled for 5th - 7th August 2015 at Chancellor's Court of the University of Nairobi. The objective of this forum will be to provide an ecosystem for nurturing and showcasing innovations in order to strengthen academia, industry and government linkages for improved economic growth. This conference will bring together members of the university from the six colleges, innovators from the industries,

research institutions, practitioners, entrepreneurs and the government and other strategic partners both locally and internationally.

Prof. Mbithi's stated legacy in University of Nairobi will be to be the Vice-Chancellor who has expanded space for students to access higher education through scholarships, awards and bursaries, infrastructural development through partnerships with donors, private sector and government, research impact by engaging our faculty in impact research and University sustainability through endowment funds.

He has also committed to enrich students experience on campus for them to become responsible citizens by implementing student mentorship programme, recruiting more counselors and developing new student hostels using the



The Fountain of Knowledge at University of Nairobi.