

**SPEECH BY PROF. DANIEL MUGENDI, VICE-CHANCELLOR,
UNIVERSITY OF EMBU TO FIRST YEAR STUDENTS DURING THE
ONLINE ORIENTATION FOR FRESHMEN AND WOMEN HELD ON
THURSDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 9.30 A.M. VIA THE UNIVERSITY
WEB CONFERENCING PLATFORM**

- ✓ The Chancellor of the University of Embu, Prof. Paul Wambua Musili
- ✓ The Deputy Vice-Chancellors
- ✓ University Management Board Members,
- ✓ University Senate Members,
- ✓ University staff and students following this live event online,
- ✓ Student Leaders,
- ✓ Our New First Year Students,

GOOD MORNING

First, I wish to extend a warm hand of welcome to our new first year students. (WAVE TO CAMERA).

Welcome to the University of Embu family!

We thank God for keeping you healthy and safe and for enabling you to attend this online orientation event.

Thank you for choosing the University of Embu to be your partner as you continue to shape your dreams and aspirations in life.

Secondly, I congratulate all of you for your good performance in the 2019 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations and for earning yourself an admission to this great institution of higher learning.

You will be happy to know that out of the **697,222** candidates who sat the 2019 KCSE, only **122,831** candidates scored C+ and above and thereby earned an automatic admission into different universities to pursue various degree courses. This represents only **17.6%** of 2019 candidates.

It shows just how successful and blessed you are for being among the top academic giants in Kenya.

We are very proud of you!

And for this reason;

- I request the staff with me here to clap for you
- I also request you to clap for yourself and your fellow students for this far you have come
- We must also acknowledge and clap for your parents; guardians and all those who supported you along the journey

I believe that without their support, you may not have managed to reach where you are today.

You are the 9th group of students joining the University of Embu since it opened doors to its pioneer students in 2013.

This year, we have admitted a total of **2,475** new students. Among these, **1430** are male while **1045** are female.

This brings the total number of students in the University during the 2020/2021 Academic Year to **8,435** students up from **7,352** in the 2019/2020 Academic year. The students are enrolled for various programmes in **6** schools.

It is also worth noting that, this year is a historic one for the University of Embu. This is because, 2020 students' intake represents the highest number of first year students since the pioneer group of 123 students reported in April 2013. This is an indication that our programmes continue to be attractive and popular among prospective students.

Dear Students,

Let me now take this opportunity to extend my personal best wishes to you and your families for continued good health and safety in these difficult times. I would also like to express my profound gratitude to the University staff for working tirelessly and selflessly during these difficult times to make this virtual orientation of first year students a reality.

We sincerely appreciate your parents and guardians for facilitating you to participate in the online proceedings through a computer, laptop, smartphone or other media that you are using.

As you are all aware, humanity is facing one of its darkest periods in living memory. Covid-19 has adversely affected our socio-economic activities and led to the loss of many lives; and the measures needed to fight it have turned our world upside down and adversely affected families and economies. I would like to commend you all for following the government regulations on containment of the COVID-19 disease and staying safe.

Since the situation still remains uncertain, the University decided to hold this orientation ceremony online in order to protect you and your loved ones from exposure to the disease.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Even in the midst of the crisis affecting humanity, we are proud to welcome our 2020 intake students from all parts of the country. You bring to the University a **diversity** of talents and ideas.

It is my hope that the diversity you bring to the University of Embu will help us in;

1. Embracing new ways of looking at things,
2. Inculcating a positive and intellectually stimulating attitude for personal and professional growth.
3. Fostering peaceful and harmonious co-existence in society
4. Creating in us a renewed sense of patriotism and nationalism

By joining the University of Embu, you have just made a big stride in your life. You have joined the community of intellectuals and professionals who are leading scholars, researchers, innovators and world leaders. I am confident that your time at the University will be one of the most exciting phases of your life. It will be an opportunity for you to re-discover yourself and your passion, nurture your talents and realize your full potential.

Due to the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on public gatherings and suspension of learning in all

institutions, the University is unable to hold face-to-face or physical teaching and learning sessions at the moment. As we continue to prioritize the safety and well-being of the University community, we must also come up with new ways of supporting our students as they strive to achieve their goals during this difficult time.

In this regard, the University has adopted a blended learning approach that will utilize online teaching and learning methods using different digital media tools for delivery of lectures and learning materials.

I would like to inform you that this First Semester of your University life will be conducted through our online learning portal. You will be required to follow your lessons through the e-learning mode, until the Covid-19 situation improves. I am also pleased to inform you that, we have already made necessary arrangements to equip you with the knowledge and skills that you require for e-learning. The schedule for the training on the use of Moodle learning platform has already been communicated to all the students.

Dear Students

As I conclude, let me now share with you some information on the challenges that you are likely to encounter as you navigate through online teaching and learning. I will also suggest to you the interventions that you will have to put in place to emerge successful.

1. Adapting to new ways

For some of you, switching from traditional lecture room and face to face learning to online-based learning in a virtual classroom, will be an entirely new and different experience. Hence you will need to make extra effort to adapt quickly to the new learning mode. It will be prudent for you to free yourself from the “traditional mindset” which makes it difficult for you to adapt to new changes. You need to receive the new normal and the reality of the new learning approach with an open mind and heart. I urge you to participate fully so as to benefit from the learning. It is also worth noting that this will form part of your examinations and final grading.

2. Technological Issues

As Kenyans, we all know that many of our people are not endowed with access to such resources such as computers, laptops, smartphones, or tablets. Some may even have difficulties in getting bundles, bandwidth or even an internet connection which is a requirement for online learning. This may turn out to be frustrating because one may find it challenging to catch up with his/her classes or fellow classmates.

If you encounter this sort of challenge, you will need to talk to your parents, guardians or sponsors and find a quick solution. In some instances, you may need to move to a neighborhood with internet connection or put up with family or relatives with good internet connectivity. You may also organize yourselves in your neighborhoods to have common access points where you can meet with your classmates who live in your area and follow your lectures online. Also, take advantage of the educational bundles on offer by various service providers in the telecommunications industry.

3. Computer Literacy

Although the current generation of students are generally tech savvy and are very conversant with computers, software and phone applications, lack of computer literacy may be a major challenge to some students. You will need some basics on how to navigate through the internet and packages such as Microsoft among others which will help you handle your academic work and assignments. In other words, proficiency in the use of computers and applications is a must for you to be able to follow online courses.

4. Time Management

Time management can be a big challenge under online learning. Managing your personal time schedule requires a lot of personal sacrifice and discipline. You may find that some commitments at home or at workplace, for those who may be working, may interfere with your online learning schedule. Please have a regular schedule or timetable to help you follow your classes and assignments effectively. You could even set reminders on your phone to beep you when you have online lectures, assignments, deadlines or when learning materials have been posted. Synchronize your schedule with the University online teaching timetable that will be shared with you through the University website.

5. Self-Motivation and Dedication

Online learning is rigorous and requires a lot of dedication. Self-motivation and personal discipline are essential skills that you will need to cultivate. In addition, having a positive attitude will help you overcome perceived or real challenges in your academic work. You will require a significant amount of willpower and self-discipline. Sometimes you will feel discouraged, therefore you will need to find ways of encouraging yourself to keep going.

During this period, understanding what ‘**self-directed learning**’ means will be very important because you will need to personally go out of your way and continue learning and growing.

Specifically, you will need to;

1. Use your own initiative, even without the assistance of others
2. Identify your study needs and implement appropriate study strategies, and
3. Evaluate yourself constantly to see how you are faring and where you need to improve.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

At this point, I wish to end my speech on a positive note that, although there are a number of challenges that confront new students in the University; you will be surprised to know that it is fun to be in the University. Everyone who has been to a University will tell you the same. It is a wonderful place to be in. It may probably be the most memorable stage of your life if you are smart, organized, self-disciplined and hard working.

I look forward to meeting you physically when you eventually come to the University for face-to-face lectures, when the Covid-19 containment measures are lifted.

When you finally report to the University, we will organize other sessions where you will be given more information about the University; its achievements and plans for the future, social and academic life at the University and what is expected of every student joining the University of Embu.

Dear Students,

With those remarks, it is now my great pleasure to **officially welcome you**, to the University of Embu and begin your journey of intellectual exploration and lifelong association with the University.

Thank you and God bless you

Prof. Daniel Mugendi
Vice-Chancellor
University of Embu