

**SPEECH BY PROF. DANIEL MUGENDI, VICE-CHANCELLOR,  
UNIVERSITY OF EMBU, DURING THE SWEARING IN CEREMONY FOR  
THE 4<sup>TH</sup> STUDENTS' COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 12<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST,  
2020 AT 5.00 P.M. IN THE UNIVERSITY SENATE BOARDROOM**

- Members of the University Management and Senate present
- The University Lawyer
- UESA Electoral Commission Chairperson and members
- The Outgoing Student Leaders
- The Incoming Student Leaders
- Election contestants
- All Staff & Students following this ceremony online

Good Evening

Today, we are gathered to inaugurate the 4<sup>th</sup> Students' Council of the University of Embu. This Ceremony is being held against the backdrop of a global pandemic known as COVID-19 which has completely changed our ways of doing things.

We are currently living in an uncertain world filled with uncertainties. For us at the University of Embu, we decided to conduct the Students' Council elections using the online platform so that we avoid a situation where we have a leadership vacuum.

During today's ceremony, we have made sure that we observe the COVID-19 protocols and guidelines set by the Ministry of Health for infection prevention. In this regard, this Swearing-in Ceremony is being transmitted on **YouTube live**. So please send your comrades a message asking them to join us as we celebrate the completion of yet another successful election.

The 2020 University of Embu Students Association (UESA) elections for various positions were held on Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> August 2020 on the University's online elections platform.

This year's election was unique and unprecedented. Unlike previous UESA elections, we have had the following major changes this year;

1. The nomination of candidates for the Departmental Delegates positions were done online. Interested candidates were able to apply for the vacant positions using an online form and equally get endorsed by their fellow students electronically.
2. For the first time, briefing of the successful candidates for both Departmental delegates and Student Council positions was done through a virtual conference meeting. The UESA Elections Code of Conduct that must be signed by all the successful candidates was also signed electronically.
3. Campaigns by the candidates were done online, through the University website, unlike previously, where noticeboards and posters were used.
4. The development of an in-house electronic voting system that allowed the students to vote from the comfort of their phones all over the country is a major milestone for the University of Embu. The electronic voting system allows for the synchronous and simultaneous two-tier voting. As such, a nominated delegate votes twice (for him/herself and for the preferred student council candidates) at the same time.
5. Using the electronic voting system, vote tallying is done in real time and relayed on the University Website for the students to see. As such, at the close of voting all the winners are known.

I greatly appreciate the ICT team for this innovative online Student Elections Platform, and for ensuring that it works without any hitch. Thank you and congratulations for pulling this, first of a kind, through. (*Clap for them*).

I also extend my sincere appreciation to the University of Embu Electoral Commission, under its able Chairman, Dr. Joanne Ogunah, for a job well done. I thank you for making this possible and for being impartial, transparent and open throughout the process.

For the next one year, the newly elected leaders will lead and represent the student body in the context of a challenging global crisis that has brought about great uncertainty and disruption to our normal lives. This may turn out to be quite a challenging task, but my message to you all is that **you are not alone**; as we continue navigating this uncharted territory, I think it is important to remember that we are all in this together, and with the support of our students, staff, and the University administration, we will continue moving forward together, hand in hand, until the situation returns to normal or we come up with the new normal.

The incoming Student leaders have the challenging task of helping their peers to navigate this new life dominated by COVID-19. Even as the pandemic casts a shadow on the work that student leaders need to do when there is no face-to-face teaching and learning, the new leaders must firmly focus on supporting fellow students as they continue their studies through various online modes of delivery.

The University of Embu will continue to actively monitor the rapidly evolving coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, and provide regular updates to the UoEm community as the situation evolves.

I congratulate the winners and welcome you officially to the frontline in the leadership of this great University.

I also appreciate all the candidates who participated in the elections, thus creating the right environment for competition, which made it possible for the leaders we are swearing in today to win; without fellow contestants, an election would not have been held because there would have been no competition.

I also commend the candidates who have graciously accepted defeat with honour and humility. This is the true spirit of mature and great leaders. In life, there is always a next time. I encourage you to work together with the elected leaders to serve the students.

I thank all the students who turned up to vote online. Thank you for exercising your democratic right to elect your Student Council officials.

To the outgoing student leaders led by **Ms. Caroline Chepkemai** – (Acting Chairperson), **Mr. Maiyo Kipkemei Abraham** – (Vice-Chairperson), **Ms. Caroline Kathure** – (Secretary General) and **Mr. Sumba Jerry Ogutu** – (Treasurer) – Receive our immeasurable appreciation for a job well done following the unfortunate disturbances witnessed in the University in 2019. We congratulate and applaud you. Thank you for accepting to take the leadership mantle under very difficult circumstances; and for the commitment you exemplified during your tenure, which in a significant way, contributed greatly to the restoration of calm and continuity of academic operations of the University.

We are very proud of you, and on behalf of the University Management and the entire family of the University of Embu, and indeed on my own

behalf, I thank you and wish you well as you pursue your life aspirations. I urge you to assist the newly elected leaders to settle in their new roles and fit into the new shoes they have acquired.

To the new Student leaders, as you take up your new assignments, my advice to you is to do so with humility and dedication. Please remember that even in the midst of all the efforts that you will put to represent and articulate the issues affecting the students, let me remind you that your core business in this University is to seek knowledge, academic excellence, professional growth and personal development.

As leaders, you must always remember that you are students first and foremost. Ensure that you do not neglect your academic work. We have witnessed some instances in the past, where elected leaders have deteriorated in their academic performance to the point of dropping out and almost failing to graduate, yet they were elected to office with very good grades. I pray that none of you finds themselves in this sort of predicament.

There are four (4) things that I would like you all to bear in mind during this challenging period of the pandemic.

### **1. Expect the unexpected**

No matter how much planning you do or pledges that you made to the voters that you need to fulfil, there are still going to be events or things that you cannot control. The only thing you can do is to do your very best under the circumstances you find yourself in.

### **2. Integrity**

Some of the attributes of an effective leader when facing adaptive challenges have been previously described by many academicians and authors. They include, but are not limited to integrity, accountability, trustworthiness and rising up to the occasion when needed. I encourage all of you to be forthright and uphold integrity as you serve the students.

### **3. Shared leadership**

Teamwork is very critical if you are going to succeed. Leadership is not personal; It is about being focused and motivating others to do their best to achieve the team's goals. Do not carry all the burdens of the student body on your back. Share with other leaders in your team by delegating appropriately, and consulting appropriately with Management following laid out administrative structures; starting with the Dean of Students.

### **4. Communicate clearly and honestly**

Create an environment where openness and honesty in all aspects of communication are encouraged. Give everyone a chance to be heard, and listen to feedback from your stakeholders. Most of all, ensure your team members - that is the leaders - communicate reliable and factual information to fellow students.

**In conclusion**, please remember that the University exists for all of us. Therefore, strive to do what is good for all of us so that at the end of the day we are able to achieve the vision and mission of the University of Embu.

On the part of management, I promise that we will work with the elected leaders to address the issues that will be of concern to our students in order to make the University of Embu the best place to be and the best University that we all want to see.

**Ladies and gentlemen;**

With those few remarks - it is now my privilege and honour to officially commission the new 4<sup>th</sup> University of Embu Students' Council so that they can begin their work with immediate effect, and hit the ground running. The work has just started.

Thank you God Bless you.

**Prof Daniel Mugendi,VC**