

**GRADUATION OF DEGREE AND PROFESSIONAL COURSE  
STUDENTS - 26 AUGUST 2005**

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**Address by the Vice-Chancellor**

The Monsignor, Dr. Albert Pampillon, the Chancellor – Delegate-Strathmore University, all honourable guests, faculty, staff and students:

1. Today we have gathered together to witness the conferring of degrees on 168 students of the pioneer undergraduate classes of Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Business Information Technology, who completed their course in December 2004. We also recognize the achievements of the 603 students of the School of Accountancy, the Information Technology Centre and the School of Administration and Management who have completed their professional courses.
  
2. On behalf of the entire Strathmore University community, I congratulate all of you who are graduating today. This is your commencement day! You are truly our guests of honour. We have come to be with you and to share your joy and fulfilment. The presence of a large number of dignitaries gracing this occasion is a clear testimony to the importance and significance of the achievement and accomplishments we are celebrating together.

3. This is also a fitting occasion to recognize your personal effort, the financial and moral support provided by your parents and sponsors, and the contribution made by your lecturers and friends towards the realisation of this auspicious occasion. We join you, the graduands, and your families in giving glory to God for He has worked wonders. Tomorrow a Thanksgiving Mass will be celebrated by the University Chaplain at this same venue to give thanks to God and to beseech him to bless all your future endeavours.
  
4. Strathmore's contribution, to cultural, social and economic development, will be judged on the basis of the contribution that you, our graduands, make to society. If you display qualities of personal integrity, professional competence and diligence, you will earn the respect of your fellow colleagues and, indeed, make a truly valuable contribution to the world.
  
5. Monsignor, Dr. Pampillon, the Chancellor Delegate, of the graduating class of 99 Bcom and 69 BBIT graduates, more than two-thirds have already secured employment, others are working in internships with such organizations as the United Nations and the Kenya Parliament, and others still are pursuing, or planning to pursue, further studies.

6. Earlier this month, on the 6<sup>th</sup> August, we celebrated the third anniversary of receiving the Letter of Interim Authority from the Commission for Higher Education. This period of three years has been time of planning and progress in physical facilities, academic structure, co-curricular activities and enhanced governance.
7. Our new Library, Auditorium and Women's Residence were officially opened by H.E. Vice-President Moody Awori in October 2004 and are fully in use. In April 2005 we launched the Strathmore Business School (SBS). The School has been designated a member of the Global Business Schools Network which is sponsored by the International Finance Corporation (IFC). We expect to begin Executive Education and MBA programmes in the year 2006.
8. In addition to the MBA programme, the University has developed several innovative graduate programmes, namely: Master of Commerce, Master of Information Technology, Master of Computer Based Information Systems, and a postgraduate Diploma in Education Management. The Commission for Higher Education is in the final stages of evaluating these programmes, which we hope to begin in the very near future, as soon as we receive consent from the Commission.
9. In all of this we have been guided by our own vision and development strategy and by the guidelines provided by the Commission for Higher Education. We have tried to respond

diligently and promptly to all the regulatory indications of the Commission. We look forward confidently to the day - in the very near future - when we will receive our University Charter and take our place among the more established universities in Kenya.

10. Strathmore, as a University with an entrepreneurial spirit, has identified several principles as essential pre-conditions to attain our strategic goals. I would like to elaborate ten of these principles for you:

- A commitment to fostering excellence in teaching, learning and research (teaching and research support)
- A commitment to respond to student needs through flexibility in the design of courses and services (Regular reviews of curriculum and QMS).
- The implementation of appropriate technologies in order to 1) create more cost effective learning and teaching approaches (e-learning, cases) and 2) to improve university services (Library, SUMMS).
- A concerted effort to admit a highly diverse student body with full gender parity. (Scholarships for needy students)

- A commitment to encouraging the professional development of all staff (Certificate in Lectureship etc).
- Recognition of the need to ensure a comparative cost advantage (reasonable tuition fees, reasonable salaries).
- A commitment to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the local community (COP, TEP, Prisons project).
- Continuous and strategic institutional data gathering to monitor trends and performance. (ISO, GDS, Performance appraisal, Quality monitoring)
- Participatory decision making, in the context of delegated, collegial governance.
- Academic freedom guided by the principle of unity of faith and reason in teaching, research and innovation.

11. The University places great emphasis on sports and co-curricula activities, as expressed in our mission of providing an all round education to our students.

- a. In December 2005 Strathmore participated in the Inter-University Games for the first time. Some 35 universities from the East African region took part. All our teams made it to the quarter finals, with the rugby team distinguishing itself by taking 3<sup>rd</sup> place and a bronze medal. Strathmore University is affiliated to such sports federations and bodies as the Kenya Basketball Federation (KBF), Nairobi Basketball Association (NBA), Kenya Rugby Football Union (RFU), Karate Do Association and Kenya Hockey Union.
- b. Our football team took part in the Kenya University Sports Association (KUSA) organised event earlier in February, and brought home the runners-up trophy.
- c. The University has introduced a sports scholarship scheme for needy students of outstanding academic ability and sporting talent. These scholarships give young sportsmen and women a chance to get a good university education and at the same time participate competitively in sports.
- d. Our University Choir, which we have all listened to today, won top awards in several categories in the recently concluded National Music Festival: first position in two categories, second position in two categories and third position in one category.

12.As an aspiring centre of excellence, Strathmore, like any young university, is faced with many challenges. These challenges relate to:

- a. Being accountable to society for what we do
- b. Balancing global standards and local needs
- c. Competing internationally for high quality academic staff
- d. Constantly increasing accessibility for prospective students
- e. Establishing and maintaining up-to-date facilities and services: library, offices, classrooms, health care, computers.

Strathmore University has embraced an entrepreneurial response to such challenges, which we seek to convert into opportunities.

13.One possible response, not just by Strathmore, but by other Kenyan universities as well, to some of these challenges would be through the establishment of endowment funds. An endowment constitutes funds whose principal is invested, whether in financial markets or property or in other ways, thereby generating extra income, in addition to the usual tuition fees. This extra income can be used to enhance academic and other institutional programmes such as:

- Scholarships for needy students, to increase access, equity and student quality.
- Endowment for academic chairs, to enhance quality of faculty.
- Strengthening teaching and research capabilities.
- Support for research and publication of research fundings, and attendance at major conferences.

14. One might hope that major foundations and industries operating in Kenya could help to establish endowments in selected national flagship universities and put in place the operational procedures to sustain these endowments. Endowing Kenyan universities would, for sure, have an enduring impact on the country's higher education development.

15. Organising a major international conference to study how best to endow Kenyan Universities would be an important step towards popularising and creating an awareness of the "endowment" concept. Such a conference would need to bring together major development partners, such as agencies, foundations, NGO's, major Kenya-based multi-national corporations, private businesses, and representatives of diaspora communities. A venture of this magnitude would need to start with a big bang to attract attention, nationally, regionally and internationally. And for it to succeed, enabling tax policies would have to be in place. Can CHE take the initiative?

16. Our experience with endowment funds at SU is positive. With the help of a grant from the EU we have established a scholarship endowment fund. EABL and other donors have also provided scholarships to needy students. Since becoming a university, we have disbursed KShs. 28.9 million worth of scholarships to needy students.

17. Another specific response to the challenges I have mentioned is through academic partnerships and collaboration with the industry. Such partnerships provide numerous opportunities for collaboration in academic and other institutional programmes, such as: 1) exchange of academic staff, 2) industry fellowships for postgraduate research, 3) the sharing of information, learning and teaching resources, 4) contract research supported by industry, 5) scholarships for needy students supported by social responsibility programmes of large corporations, and 6) training opportunities for staff.

18. Strathmore has benefited greatly from our partnerships with such organizations as:

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (computer training)
- University of Navarre (visiting professors, computing technology)
- IESE Business School (visiting professors, teaching technology transfer, curriculum development).

- School of Banking and Finance in Rwanda (training accountants for Rwanda)
- EABL (scholarships)
- Swiss Contact (curriculum development support)
- Association of Micro-finance Institutions (AMFI)
- World Council of Credit Unions (funding for staff training).
- Wharton Business School (training opportunities for academic staff)
- Harvard Business School (visiting faculty).

I would like to acknowledge here in a special way our partnership with Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology through which we initiated the degree programmes in the University. That collaboration has been very beneficial to the university and we are very grateful.

We gratefully acknowledge the support we have received over the years from all our collaborators and development partners, students, parents, sponsors and lecturers. We express our special gratitude to the European Union, East African Breweries, Fomento Foundation, and the University of Navarre, and all the individual benefactors with whom we have worked closely to achieve the growth we are celebrating today.

In concluding my remarks I want to leave our graduating students with a parting message: Whatever professional endeavours you undertake, strive to serve your fellow men and women with

professional competence, diligence, integrity, honesty and accountability. At all times be the bearers of the values the university has striven to impart to you during your time here.

I wish you all a successful professional career, marked with a culture of continuous improvement, and a bright future throughout your life.

**Thank you!**