

Graduate Students Assured of Improved Learning Environment as Makerere Transforms into being Research-led

Graduate students at Makerere University have been assured that the university management is committed and has taken a deliberate decision to improve the graduate environment as the university transforms into research – led.

The students have also been assured that the University is committed to doubling graduate enrollment to improve its research profile and ranking on global scene.

The assurance was made by the Deputy Director in charge of Administration and Graduate Training Prof. Julius Kikooma while representing the Director DGRT during the 2023 Graduate orientation ceremony organized by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences in Yusuf Lule Auditorium on Friday 25th August 2023.

Kikooma reported that Makerere University and the Government of Uganda have been in negotiations with a donor who offered to build a five-storeyed Graduate School Complex.

The Directorate of Graduate Research and Training (DGRT) according to Kikooma discussed and approved the structural plan for the complex at the site of Afri-Child Centre near Lumumba Hall.

Kikooma welcomed CHUSS Graduate students and thanked them for choosing Makerere as the university of their second degree despite the over 50 universities in Uganda and the region.

“I give you confidence that you actually made the right choice. Makerere has made the deliberate choice that after making 100 years, it is going to put its resources together to become the choice of graduate training in the region. We have done so well in research and impacted society through a range of things.

Kikooma told students that they have come at time when the university has made a commitment and building the foundation to become the University of choice for graduate training.

“Makerere is aiming to be ranked the number one university in the continent-the commitment management has. We are confident that we are going to take that number one position in a not so far future and that number one position is going to almost singularly come from what we do with graduate training”

Prof. Kikooma shared the kind of visions that the university has about the future with the DGRT as drivers and graduate students as the foundation.

One of the curious things about DGRT mandate According to Kikooma is to provide the home for graduate students. Much attention Makerere has had in the last 100 years, according to Kikooma had been on undergraduate training where units had spent more time and developed more infrastructure and support.

The graduate students Kikooma reported, form the minority students and hovers between 12 to 15%, and the commitment of management is to double enrolment of graduate students who are going to be the foundation for the aspirations of Makerere in terms of research.

In terms of the policy provisions, Kikooma said it has been made clear that student's research must be visible not to stay in the library as dissertations and theses, but easily accessible to communities outside .

One of the policy provisions is that for PhD students to start with, they must atleast publish two papers before they graduate as a basis for uptake by the communities that need this information.

“Now that the university has said we want to pay attention specifically to you. Take that advantage. You will definitely reap a number of benefits. We are committed as a directorate to provide that hope.

Kikooma reported that the University is working with government and other partners to put up a structure specifically for housing graduate students, a commitment to handling graduate matters.

Kikooma also briefed students on cardinal university policies they should familiarize with to help them succeed in their academic journey. These include the Graduate Handbook 2013, the Guild Student Statute 2022 and the Students Guild constitution 2022.

The Principal CHUSS represented by Dr. Pamela Khanakwa congratulated the Graduate freshers for successfully being admitted to Makerere University Graduate School.

“We welcome you to the college and we are super excited that you chose not only Makerere University, but the College of Humanities and Social Sciences,” Your choice is of course, where the academic journey began for some of us. And where,

of course, it also begins for you in Graduate School. And I'm very confident that from CHUSS, you can go anywhere in the world," she said.

Speaking from her experience when she joined in 1996 for an MA in History, Dr. Khanakwa said, she has moved on expressing hope that they too can be able to make the best use of all the resources in CHUSS and the university at large to accomplish their academic dreams.

"At CHUSS, we don't just think, we think critically, we produce knowledge but we also have fun. So, as you begin your academic journey, here I argue you to concentrate on your academics, but also remember that there is life outside being in the library, writing the course works, writing exams, and of course eventually when you do your research and rate your dissertations." Khanakwa advised.

Dr. Khanakwa assured students that they are in safe hands on reason that the staff at CHUSS are committed to do their best to support them to have the most rewarding academic experience.

"I want to assure you that we work as a team. We are here for you. We are here because of you. We are ready to support you in whatever possible way. We want you to be confident. We want you to be happy. So, if you encounter any issues that you need clarification, please do not hesitate to approach anyone of us and seek guidance", she implored.

The orientation ceremony was graced by CHUSS members of management, school registrars, graduate coordinators, administrative staff and the student's leadership as well as members from the university support units of Senate, DGRT among others.

Students were inducted on several academic matters including admission, fees payment and registration, the University academic calendar and change of program, as well as social issues including personal security, managing stress and relationships.

The college registrar Vincent Abigaba underscored the role of registration that begins with enrolment especially in first year adding that they must be ready to interface with ICT and register onto the ACMIS system.

"To enroll you are simply informing university management that you are ready on campus to perform your academic duties."

The Principal Register in the DGRT Prossy Nakayiki re-emphasized registration as key and urged students to maintain their application credentials and whoever has issues to visit the admission office.

Nakayiki advised students to visit the respective school registrars with original transcripts for verification and registration saying the subsequent registration for continuing students should be done online.

“Make sure you create a person file where you keep all your correspondences. You are not a student unless you are registered. Registration is done in the first six weeks of the semester” She said

Nakayiki guided students on matters of deferment, withdrawal from the program, refund of tuition fees and general challenges faced by graduate students and sexual harassment as a real vice.

Dr. Roscoe Kasujja from the CHUSS Mental Health department advised students on the need to manage their mental health. He said every human being is a candidate of getting psychological disorder when unstable.

“If you do not manage problems, mental health swings in. Humans are social beings, the people closest to us, cause us distress. You made a decision to come. You have to manage those relationships”.

Dr. Kasujja observed that most graduate students struggle with problems which have solutions.

“You have classmates, registrars, lectures etc. Until you have exhausted all options, do not be dramatic, eliminate that stress.

Master the art of managing 24 hours and don't make your issue an emergency for others. For every one, the clock is ticking, as you are managing your time, know that others are struggling within the 24 hours”.

Kasujja observed that at times graduate students take themselves too serious advising that, they must know what is required of them to pass examinations, He advised them to find time to relax, not miss out on happiness, for they have chosen the best college.

“At the end of the day, let's get personal. There is so much that will influence your life. Be responsible for your own life. Every being is human, don't overwhelm

them. They may need you to part them at their back. Master the art of listening and understand what others are going through,”

Speaking on ICT support services and graduate training at Makerere University, Dr. Mike Barongo urged students to activate their portals and in case of challenges seek support at the Directorate of ICT.

He re-emphasized the importance of enrolment and registration every semester and to be active on the system as the senate will use the data on the system to learn them for graduation, generate certificate and transcripts.

By

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