

**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

*(insert: COAT OF ARMS)*

**COURT OF APPEAL**

SPEECH DELIVERED BY **HON. JUSTICE PAUL KIHARA KARIUKI**, PRESIDENT,  
COURT OF APPEAL AT THE 26<sup>TH</sup> GRADUATION CEREMONY OF ST. PAUL'S  
UNIVERSITY (SPU) ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2017

The University Chancellor Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia,

The Chairman of the University Council, His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Jackson Ole  
Sapit,

The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Joseph Galgalo,

Members of the Governing Council, Board of Trustees and the Management Board,

Invited guests,

Faculty members,

Staff, parents, guardians and families,

Distinguished Graduands,

Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Greetings and please accept my appreciation for the honour to be your Chief Guest at your **26<sup>th</sup> Graduation ceremony**. I gladly join you at this momentous occasion in congratulating and indeed celebrating with you the success of over 3000 of you who are graduating here today.

To the graduands for whom this day marks the end of a journey and the beginning of another; I congratulate you on your great achievement—well done! May I ask you all to put your hands together to applaud these great men and women on which we are about to confer degrees or award certificate and diplomas.

Graduation is a testimony to much personal sacrifice, hard work and a deserved realization of a good dream.

Many others must have had a hand in contributing to your well-deserved success. Allow me to appreciate and recognize your:

- **Sponsors, parents and guardians:** Without whose enormous sacrifice and support you probably would not have completed your studies.
- **Lecturers and Professors:** for their hard work in guiding you through your studies, research and for providing necessary mentorship.

We recognize the great role St. Paul's University plays in delivering quality higher education in this country. Your motto, 'servants of God and humanity' is inspiring. It speaks volumes of the holistic training that goes on here. I am told, 12,000 students have graduated from this institution since you got chartered some ten years ago in 2007. Your emphasis on holistic education is commendable, not least for visible fruits that we see through your graduates who are making high impact in the society.

Your commitment to providing adequate physical facilities and creating conducive learning and research environment is greatly impressive, but I am more so impressed by your commitment to the nurture of the whole person. I particularly take note of your emphasis on lifelong learning, development of leadership skills, a positive and sustained engagement with your context in order to stay relevant, and a deep commitment to your Christian spiritual heritage. I am convinced that, graduates from St. Paul's University armed with ethical, holistic training, and well steeped in a culture that appreciates academic excellence and thrives on Christian values, can be the answer to a world that has largely lost taste for ethical leadership, honest service and the common good. As graduands from a Christian institution – we look up to you, society expects you to make a difference; do not let us down!

May I now, ladies and gentlemen, draw your attention to the theme of this occasion. The theme this year is: “*Unlocking Human Potential through Creativity and Innovation*”

Every human being is well endowed with countless, amazing gifts. Life is exciting when we see the whole of life as endless opportunities for learning new skills, new knowledge, new ways of doing things, solving challenges or exploring our potential in order to learn, to create or innovate. I hope your education here has been a rewarding journey of discovery – especially the discovery of your talents and creative ways of applying the knowledge and skills you have acquired over your time here, in order to maximize your potential in life. The best gift a parent, teacher, education institution or the society can ever give is the provision of the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that can help you unwrap your potential. All of you who are graduating today, must have received such opportunity. It will be a tragedy if you sat around and asked what the society or any benefactor would do for you. The onus is now on you to apply your knowledge and learning to making yourself useful by unleashing that potential. Unfortunately, we have fallen into a culture – and a bad culture where graduates think that their task was to simply earn a degree, and that once they hold those “papers” in their hands, others owe them jobs or employment. Papers aside, can you do something with the knowledge you have acquired, besides just expecting others to do something for you?

A story is told of a professor who went to his class with an empty glass jar. He filled the jar with golf balls. He then asked the class whether the jar was full or not. Of course his students answered in the affirmative because the balls were stacked well to the rim of the jar. The professor then added some pebbles into the glass jar. The pebbles being smaller than the golf balls, filled the spaces between the balls. He asked whether it was full now, and the answer, once again, was in the affirmative. The professor went ahead and added some sand into the same jar. The sand filled in the spaces between the pebbles. He then posed the same question. The students still answered in the affirmative, and were confident that the professor will not be able to add anything more now. The professor then added water into the jar. He intended to prove the point that creativity makes it possible to introduce as many elements into the jar. He thereby proved that creativity can make possible what may seem impossible. The jar did not have space for anything, but had sufficient space for something. Could you be looking at a space that in your eyes is already, but which with some creativity, may accommodate much more than you can imagine?

This is the question that creative, innovators always ask. What else can you do beside what already has been done? The tragedy of lack of creativity is miss to see an opportunity even when the opportunity comes knocking or is right there, in front of our eyes. The sin of seeing the “jar as already full” even when, surely, much more could be added to the jar. I challenge the universities too, do not just produce learned graduates, but also creative innovators, who we can proudly identify as our own Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Jack Ma, for their revolutionary contribution to the world.

Universities are supposedly centres of excellence. This is where knowledge is created and life changing research results are generated. We rightly expect universities to make this world a better place through imparting knowledge, transforming lives, shaping attitudes, empowering individuals and adding value to humanity. Is there anything that you can do to make our country and the world at large, a better place than it is today?

Ladies and gentlemen, creativity and innovation refers to both the product of human mind and the process involved in the development of a product. The two – process and product, work hand in hand. There are three important things that must be in place for creativity to nurture the process and give birth to a useful result or product.

1. **There has to be expertise** – Dear graduands, your teachers and mentors have passed on something of their expertise to you. In your own rights, you now have sufficient expertise in the various disciplines that you are graduating in. This should inspire you to confidence as you aspire to create and innovate the best you can. Do not go and bury your hard earned expertise – make it count.
2. **Critical thinking skills** - innovative people constantly think, rethink and critically examine how things are done, and how they can be done more efficiently and effectively. Critical thinking points to alternatives that may exist out there. As you graduate and join the world out there, do not just conform and try and adapt what

others are already doing. Apply yourselves to critically think and do better where others have failed, or even better, break new ground where others have not tried.

3. **Motivation** – Whereas inspiration is divine, motivation and self-drive is the fuel that keeps humanity seeking in order to achieve more, learn more, and constantly improve lives. I encourage you to constantly seek divine intervention and keep alive your motivation to make the world a better place by not accepting false limits to what you can achieve. Constantly address yourselves to the basic questions of life such as: “Why am I doing what I am doing? Why can’t I discover a different and better way of doing things? The point I am making is this: If you are sufficiently motivated to achieve something great, there are no limitations that cannot be overcome. Do not just sit back and wish for some ‘tall relative’ to hold your hands and make miracles happen for you, rather, try and use your hands to make those miracles happen anyway.

Dear graduands, you are graduating at such an opportune but also equally challenging times in the history of our nation. Kenya is increasingly becoming a young population with the highest percentage of our population at the age of 35 or below. I see great opportunity in this – that young and energetic population portends huge potential to propel this nation, to heights of progress that have not been achieved before. There are encouraging developments in all spheres of life but especially so in the advancement of technology, business opportunities and enhanced access to education.

To the credit of Kenyans, we also celebrate an expanded democratic space that allow individuals and the society to grow in different ways. You young people, you must realize that you have great stake in determining the growth trajectory of this nation and actively participate in the shaping of our destiny as we pursue such national goals as vision 2030 and beyond.

The recently concluded general election have shown that young people did not only take the opportunity but also proved their capacity as they participated in elective politics and provided leadership in many areas. It is no longer justified to just point fingers at the older generation and blame them for impotent policies that do not address the aspirations of the youth; or simply continue blaming the government of the day for poor management of our country’s affairs. You have often heard the saying that ‘the youth are leaders of tomorrow.’ In case you have not realized, that ‘tomorrow’ has now dawned. Arise and take charge, and do better where your fathers and forefathers may have erred or failed. Bring also your gifts and talents on board and contribute to the economy of our nation in areas that you are good at – especially in the fields of art, music, film, innovative industries and technology.

The Kenyan judicial system is well equipped with the necessary laws and regulations to protect patents and any intellectual property that are part of your creative endeavours. It is important that what is creatively produced is legally protected to ensure that the innovators of good ideas benefit from their works.

Finally ladies and gentleman, I would like to conclude my speech by sharing a few ideas from Scott Berkun's '*Myths of Innovation.*' Berkun asserts that innovative and creative people must cultivate the following habits if they are to succeed.

1. **Persistence** - it is not enough to have great ideas. Innovative people must have faith. Vision must be seasoned with hard work, in order to keep focus on the end result, even in the face of roadblocks and challenges. Experience has shown that, "Invention is 1% inspiration, and 99% perspiration". What is the lesson here? – In life, there is no suitable alternative to hard work.
2. **Take risks and do not fear to make mistakes** – Common wisdom has taught us that nothing is ever completely free of risk. Part of the reason why many people are inhibited in their pursuits is because they are too afraid to take any risk. Fail if you must, but never be complacent. Always be up and trying.
3. **Remove self-limiting inhibitions** – Kenyans are generally such hard working people. Look at mama *mbogas* and the *matatu* businesses and village *chamas* or SACCOs who in their own way drive the economy of this country. It is not that they do not face huge hurdles on daily basis in their efforts to make ends meet. They do – but they have resolved to refuse to be bogged down by self-limiting inhibitions. Do not allow glass ceilings to cage you. There is always reward in hard working, even in the face of enormous challenges.
4. **Finally, you must embrace curiosity** - creative and innovative people are curious. They are inquisitive, and almost in a child-like way, constantly asking questions about what is being done and how it can be done differently. Ask, that your questions may lead you to creative answers and innovative solutions.

Finally, May I appeal to all of us present here that we love Kenya as much as we love ourselves. This means peaceful co-existence with all our neighbours, and creating peaceful communities. Without peace, our pursuance of our dreams and life goals for good life will be in vain. Our hope of realizing a coercive society lies greatly with the youth. If each young person says no to violence, we stand a great chance of building a just and progress society. Let us apply our creativity not only to businesses and innovations but also to all spheres of our lives – especially moral and ethical living.

Congratulations once again to the graduating class of 2017. To the entire community of St. Paul's University community, - the Board of Trustees, the University Council, Management, Faculty and other staff, students and our special guests, thank you for this happy occasion.

May God bless you, may God bless our Nation Kenya.

