Speech by Principal during the Orientation for Freshers 2015/2016 Academic Year on Thursday 10th September 2015 at the Auditorium

Deputy Principals, other Principal Officers of the University College, Deans and Directors, Chairmen and Heads of Departments, staff, student leaders, students, ladies and gentlemen.

I wish to welcome you to Kibabii University College, one among the youngest higher education institutions at just three and a half years of age. The mandate of this young College is to generate new knowledge through research and direct it to the transformation of society. This is in tandem with our mantra: Education for development. We take pride in imparting functional knowledge that can ignite positive change and transform personal life as well as the society in economic, social, cultural, spiritual and intellectual dimensions. Education has profound effect on dismantling impediments to social equality. You are all here as equals and partners thanks to what you possess between your ears. Kibabii is therefore a place not for the chosen but those who have chosen it as an arena to mould their future.

You spent the whole of last week walking in and out of one session or room for briefing. The purpose of all that was to help you settle in. In other words to help you feel at home in this new environment. Let me join those who came ahead of me at this early opportunity to congratulate you on many achievements. First, for having cleared the many exams at various levels of your education. More importantly, I wish to congratulate you for excelling in your KCSE, a feat which qualified you to join this institution. Today marks the first sojourn of your very special journey which ordinarily takes four years. Others take longer but there are some however who never complete. You are the fifth group that is going through this ritual. At a number of 1500 you are five times more than the pioneer group of 300 who are awaiting their graduation having covered their programmes in less than the four mandatory years. It is gratifying to share the good news that a number of them have either secured employment or created self employment and will confidently meet the cost of their forthcoming graduation from their own savings.

The accomplishment of such a feat is on the account of a combination of a number of factors. One is the qualification and commitment of the staff of Kibabii University College. Sitting in front of you are competent staff of high academic calibre who have acquitted themselves and competed very favorably with the rest in the world. Two is the high quality and discipline of students we admit. The third factor is the enviable serene environment conducive to learning. Fourthly, the endeavour of Management to always put students first has also helped minimize interruptions in our academic programmes. Last but not least, the infrastructure and facilities you see coming up is a manifestation of exemplary stewardship of this institution by Council. The additional lecture rooms and 20 ultramodern laboratories is just what we require for robust teaching and learning.

It is our expectation that you will take advantage of this environment to religiously strive not just to complete your programmes but to excel in your academic work. There are various opportunities in professional clubs, games and sports, drama, music and community service where you can prove your worth and developed yourself holistically and wholesomely. As may be evident already, Kibabii is a place where you can bond and create lifelong relationships. Make as many genuine friends as you can as you may never have such a golden opportunity. In the

words of Mark Twain the renowned author of Tom Sawyer: “Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do”.

As you settle down in your studies, you will find a number of new experiences. In your previous life you had parents, teachers, guardians and even prefects to nudge you into action and take up your tasks. But there will be nothing like that going forward. When I was walking around to assess progress of admission in the afternoon of the first day you reported, I noticed a few emotional moments when some of you shed tears as you were bidding farewell to members of your family who had escorted you. From that day onwards you are on your own. Once again, there is no parent, sibling or teacher to remind or to push you to take up your tasks. It is your personal drive and resilience.

A number of challenges including, failed relationships, loneliness, heavy work load, strict timelines and long reading lists await you. With all these things to cope with, at times life can be overwhelming. Nevertheless, the fact that you are at university means you are made of material to overcome and turn things into your favour**.** Theodore Roosevelt said: “Do what you can, with what you have, where you are”. In addition you will need to be a master or mistress of utilizing time. Thanks to advice by Prof. Godrey Muriuki on the magical four dimensional M: Make time, Manufacture time, Manage time and Maximize time.

One thing I must do is to caution you against excessive indulgence in vices such as clubbing, bashing, partying and “salting”. Learn to do things in moderation.

Student life at the university will accord you excessive freedom. This freedom comes along with many risks lurking around its corners. In the same way I have cautioned above, keep away from harmful activities including casual sex, alcoholism, drugs, activism, gangsterism, hooliganism and crime. The other things you should keep at arm’s length are political and tribal groupings as well as engagement in cults.

In the recent past there have been many discussions on issues related to terrorism and radicalism. By now you should be aware of the fact that universities and university students and staff are soft options for these groups of people with heinous intentions. I urge you to be vigilant and always on the lookout.

Kibabii University College is an academic environment. You ought to reap maximum results from this. Take every opportunity to indulge in rigorous intellectual activity. By the time you officially exit, we expect you to be sufficiently baked to look at issues critically and creatively. We at Kibabii University College subscribe to Martin Luther King Jr, (1929-1968) Civil Rights leader’s belief that: “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. To achieve this however, you must roll up your shirt sleeves and immerse yourself into serious academic work. Nothing comes by sitting on one’s laurels. One has to take risks and venture into the unfamiliar ready to use their brains to solve the numerous problems afflicting mankind.

And now as I approach the end of my speech, I wish to point out to you that the one ingredient that will guarantee you well being and success in all you do here is character. In simple terms

this is your reputation in terms of values, patriotism, virtues, behaviour, manner of dressing and trustworthiness. This like you will see from two quotations below is something only you can create. Abraham Lincoln aptly captured this in the words: “Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right path, the final forming of a person’s character lies in their own hands”. Then Henry David Thoreau wrapped it up thus: “You cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one”.

I conclude by reemphasising that this orientation ritual serves as formal induction into the University Community of intellectuals. The University College has the resources at your disposal for you to nurture your future life. Like it was amplified by Prof. Bwisa in this same auditorium on the occasion of the speech by Nigerian High Commissioner to Kenya but attributed to Bill Gates: It is not you mistake to be born poor but it will be your mistake to die poor.

I wish you a remarkable and fulfilling experience at this place as you join the KIBUCO grand march towards being a world class institution of higher learning.

THANK YOU.