

VC Inauguration
USIU- Africa
7 April 2016

Our Guest of Honor, Dr. Fred Matiangi, Cabinet Secretary for the Department of Education, Chief Justice Willie Mutunga, Chancellor, Dr. Manu Chandaria, Board Members, Council Members, Faculty, Staff, Students and Distinguished Guests, it is a pleasure for me to be back on campus for the inauguration of Prof. Paul Zeleza as the second Vice Chancellor of United States International University-Africa.

In the late 1960's, Dr. William Rust then President of California Western University, had a vision of international education that would see students and faculty share and embrace knowledge around the world. Among his target countries was one of the newly independent nations in Africa. After traveling to Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, he chose Kenya as the Africa Campus of United States International University.

In 1970, he signed a MOU with the government of Kenya that allowed him to offer business programs and any other degree programs not being offered by the public universities. Clearly a bit of protectionism going on even back then. Nevertheless, there were opportunities in Africa, a renaissance was underway with hopes and dreams for the newly emerging nations and their people.

Rust's journey was not an easy one. There were many challenges to his vision including convincing the Kenyan government that an American education was just as good as a British one. He also had to convince the US accrediting body of the viability of an international multi-campus system. There was no internet in 1970 and faculty did travel as well as students. Campuses were established and closed over the years and yet the legacy of international education that he began 46 years ago continues to thrive at USIU-Africa today.

There were numerous Directors over the next 14 years but in 1984 Dr. Lillian Beam became the director that would devote ten years of her life to USIU-Africa. Her vision was to stabilize and expand the University. Her goal that she often shared was to have 2000 students by the year 2000. Although no longer director, that goal was realized.

Obstacles plagued her journey as well. One was the newly passed Universities Act of 1986 and the rules and regulations that followed in 1989. All private universities had to comply with the new quality

assurance standards. So she began the arduous task of obtaining Kenyan accreditation. Among those requirements was 50 acres of land. After several attempts to buy property, she was able to stabilize the campus by purchasing the initial 20 acres and began an aggressive building campaign. She had to build quickly because the hotel that housed the University had been sold. Most of the buildings you see on the old campus were under her initiative. Many were to be temporary.

Interestingly, by expanding the campus in the early 1990's she was also able to take advantage of a looming opportunity. The year long strike in the public university sector attracted students looking to complete their education. The student population grew from 250 to 800. She also attracted highly qualified faculty who needed employment. However, most were not willing to commit to full time employment in such a fledgling institution but many stayed on as adjuncts. Dr. Beam's dedication to the university set the foundation for it to become the institution it is today.

In 1994, Dr. Garry Hays, then President of USIU-San Diego, asked if I would consider being the Executive Director of the Nairobi Campus, Dr. Beam was retiring. He told me that there were problems on the campus. They had done an audit and the outstanding construction bill was \$1.5 million with the contractor charging 36% interest. Buildings needed to be completed, there were problems in the finance office, there were no faculty and no Charter. He didn't know if the campus would last another year.

But I was a product of the 60's and 70's, we had a sense of black pride instilled in us. I had lived in Botswana, I had been the coordinator of international campuses in San Diego, I had taught students at USIU-Africa in 1990 and knew of their enthusiasm to learn. I was akin to the people of this continent. I liked a challenge. Sounded like a great job to me.

I envisioned USIU-Africa as a quality institution with a global perspective, which is reflected in the current vision statement. As with Rust and Beam, there were many opportunities and challenges over the past 21 years. The first challenge was to get out of debt otherwise San Diego would close us down. I negotiated an interest free payment plan with the contractor, within two years we were debt free. Where did the money come from? Tight budgeting, great auditors, and a bit of housekeeping in the finance office. There were not many funding options for construction in the 90's.

Bank loans were not an option. Although interest rates in Kenya have reduced since 1994, they have never gone below 13% with a variable rate. I learned from my Kenyan staff, save and build. All of the new buildings used University funds mostly through investments resulting from those same high interest rates offered by the government and banks. Private universities had neither access to government guaranteed loans nor low interest rate loans. This is changing with the introduction of the University Funding Board in the Universities Act of 2012. An opportunity to explore; especially, since my first Head of F&A is chairing that Board.

In the 90's donor money was not readily available for private universities and very few donors provided funding for buildings. Those that did frankly told us there were other more needy public institutions. It would be some ten years later that the American Schools and Hospitals Abroad Program of USAID would grant us \$2 million toward the construction of the library.

Alumni giving was also a challenge. Prior to the 90's the average graduating class size was about 50 or less so the alumni base was very small. In comparison, over the last 10 years the average size is about 1000. I trust that this base will be a generous one to advance future projects of the University and grow our endowment fund.

Having the requisite number of qualified faculty was a challenge in 1994 and remains a challenge today. The number of full-time faculty has grown from 10 to 119. However, with the proliferation of universities and satellite campuses, human resources are stretched. Recruiting, nourishing and supporting faculty remains critical to strengthening the vision of academic excellence and quality.

Five years after the gazettment of the Rules and Regulations for the Universities Act of 1989, Dr. Beam was yet to obtain a Charter. We needed the Charter to continue operating in the country. The two contentious issues were land and governance. Although Dr. Beam had acquired 20 acres of land the Rules and Regulations of 1989 stipulated 50 acres were needed in order to be Chartered. That requirement was met in 1998 with the purchase of 60 acres in Garden Estates. Presently, the university has 160 acres of land that will accommodate its growing student population and programs both curricular and co-curricular.

Governance structure was also an issue in 1994. The then CHE wanted a local Board with little to no involvement of the San Diego campus. This became a battle that transcended 10 years as we tried to resolve the demands of the Kenyan and US accrediting bodies. Dual accreditation was not a popular concept in 1994 but some battles are worth fighting. Consequently in 1999, USIU-Africa received its Charter from former President Daniel Torotich arap Moi and I became its first Vice Chancellor. Today USIU-Africa is the only dually accredited university in Kenya; others are clamoring for this distinction. It will be up to the University to maintain this dual status that attests to the quality of education provided to our students.

The new Universities Act of 2012 has resurfaced some of the same issues with governance. As the University works through the nuances of the new Act be mindful of the requirements of this dual accreditation.

I have only mentioned a few of my challenges and opportunities as I strove to achieve my vision of a quality institution with a global perspective. But I did not do this alone, I needed a strong team. Over the years I have worked with some dedicated managers, faculty, and staff who have had the same vision and acted to realize this vision. Administrators who helped develop policies and procedures, staff who implemented those policies be it through good customer service or by keeping the compound clean, excellent faculty who have been the engine of the University and the committed Board members that approved policies, advised and the gave me the latitude to do what I felt was best for the University. All must work together for the good of the University with a centrality of purpose, and all must be treated with respect and dignity.

Professor Zeleza, I cannot stress how important it is to have a strong support system outside the University. Your colleagues are an essential part of that system. Ford Foundation funded a grant to USIU in 2003 for a conference that focused on the Role of Private Universities in Higher Education in Africa. As a result, VC's of private universities began to meet and visit each other's campuses; this led to the formation of the Kenya Association of Private Universities(KAPU). I chaired KAPU for 10 years and many of the changes in the Universities Bill of 2012 that improved the conditions for the private sector were a result of the then 12 institutions that met and drafted numerous position papers, went to countless stakeholder meetings, responded to various drafts on financing higher education and the strategic plan for Higher Education in Kenya, and went to numerous parliamentary hearings. It is through this

collective whole that private universities have had a voice. It has also provided a opportunity to learn that we all have similar experiences and can support each other. Keep them close.

Finally, have at least one external person who helps to remind you why you are here. For me it was my mother; her constant rejoinder to my threats to quit and come home was: "Remember you are here to provide a good education for the students." The students of USIU will indeed be your biggest source of strength and motivation when your energy is drained and you wonder is it worth it. As you walk among them, you know that you are helping to make a difference in their lives and the nations they will serve. It is really not about you but them. They will give you the courageous to fight the difficult battles, assess the criticisms, and accept the good advice that will allow you to further develop USIU-Africa into a premier institution of academic excellence with a global perspective.

Professor Zeleza I did it my way and now you will need to move the university toward your vision your way. Wishing you much success in this great job.