



MMUST NEWS

Post

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Agriculture is Paramount for the Survival of Kenya

Prof. Leonard Wamocho

UPCOMING

EVENTS



**Masinde Muliro Memorial
Lecture- 12th August, 2019**



Editor's Pen



Nashilluh Brendah Kabindio
**Ag. Public Relations Officer
/Chief Editor**

Dear MMUST Community,

In this edition, we interview Prof. Leonard Wamocho; a Professor of Horticulture and the founding Dean of the School of Agriculture, Veterinary Sciences and Technology (SAVET).

We also cover the 2019 CES-Kenya/Canada Day Run and its focus on giving back to the society. Read about other activities as well in and out of the University.

We wish you a productive new month of August 2019!



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Meet Prof. Leonard Wamocho

Professor of Horticulture

Prof. Leonard Samita Wamocho is a Professor of Horticulture and the founding Dean of the School of Agriculture, Veterinary Sciences and Technology (SAVET). We interview him to get a glimpse of his professional and academic life as well as get his views on various issues.

Interview by

Wangari Mary Wambugu and Nashilluh Brendah Kabindio

Q: Please tell us about yourself.

I was born on 25th April, 1949 at my maternal grandparents' home and was named *Samita* after my grandfather's Uncle who had just passed on shortly before my birth. Growing up, I looked after cattle and, because my father's salary was very little, I engaged in a lot of manual work like picking pyrethrum, cultivating and picking coffee as well as weeding maize to assist him.

I got married in 1978. I have one wife and we are blessed with two sons; one of them is a senior army officer in the USA, and two daughters, one daughter who is adopted.

Q: We are interested in knowing your academic journey up to where you are now.

I joined Standard One in 1955 at a school near my home and, in 1965, I sat for KCPE. I began secondary education at Mother of Apostles Seminary in 1966; I remember we were thirty one (31) students in Form One and by the end of four years, there were only eight (8) of us. After Form Four, I went to Egerton University as a Diploma student but since the course that I was interested in, that is Horticulture, was not being offered at the time, I was forced to do Agriculture in First Year. Luckily, in Second Year, the Ministry of Agriculture gave Egerton University a mandate to train technicians in Horticulture and ten of us were separated to study it.



I graduated in December, 1972 and in 1979, I was among the five people that were selected to go study for a degree programme at the University of Florida on an USAID scholarship. We were among the first black students to study in that University.

Thereafter, I went to Clemson University, South Carolina, for Masters, finished in 1983, came back to Kenya and became a lecturer in 1984 at Egerton University. I later on registered for PhD in Horticulture at JKUAT. I did my research work locally, then, for my lab and greenhouse, I went to Japan and in 1999, I graduated.

Q: Any administrative and/or professional positions you have held?

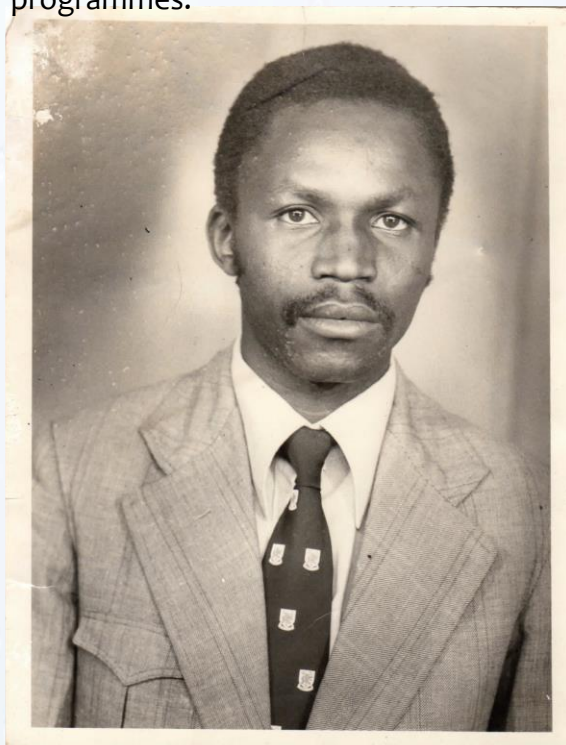
Yes. Just to mention but a few, I served as the Dean of Students at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Deputy Director at the African Institute for Capacity Development (AICAD), Director of Academic programmes at Meru University when it was still a constituent college of JKUAT, Assistant Horticultural Officer and Farm Manager in charge of development at the National Horticulture Research Station (NHRS) and Head of Department at JKUAT.

Q: How did you join MMUST?

In 2007, I came for a Conference at MMUST and realized that the University did not have Agriculture; it only had Sugar Technology, which was highly specialised. Therefore, this prompted me to come here and start Agriculture,

and it would be a School not a Faculty. At that time, MMUST had advertised for a professor on the website. I gladly applied and, in 2009, I joined the University.

I worked hard to get SAVET programmes, put documents together and presented them to the Senate. Council approved the establishment of the School in 2011. I was then appointed the founding Dean, School of Agriculture, Veterinary Sciences and Technology (SAVET). We started with very few students; the School was graduating like two or three students. Right now we have over two thousand (2000) students and about thirteen (13) programmes.



Courtesy Photo: Younger Wamocho during "his days"



Q: As the founding Dean of the School of Agriculture, Veterinary Sciences and Technology (SAVET), what can you say is the place of the School in making MMUST a sought after University?

Actually, in my vision, SAVET was to become the flagship of MMUST. Because this institution is based in the sugar belt area, we tried to identify programmes to strengthen sugar technology.

SAVET was the first School to hold an outreach activity in *Lurambi*. The activity was about green vegetables, especially the indigenous ones, orange fleshed sweet potatoes and fish. We worked with women groups who were interested in these areas and made them experts.

The School has also been involved with the County Government, under the Ministry of Agriculture, in various value chain addition activities including fish and dairy farming. Through the MMUST Agri-Expo, SAVET has imparted knowledge and technology to farmers.

Q: What advice would you give a young Kenyan citizen on taking Agriculture, and the fundamentals related to it, as a preferred course at MMUST?

I tell my students that Agriculture is very sustainable. You can start your own projects from the knowledge you get in class and make money from them.

Q: The University has, for a while now, been running a farm at *Milimani*. How can SAVET maximise the use of this farm to make it a third stream income for the University?

One thing that I would like to say is that,

that farm is a teaching and research unit in the University. Making it an intensive unit for income generation is possible but it should not be at the expense of learning. In fact, we have a programme known as Agricultural Economics and Resource Management. For the farm to generate money, resources must be put in. For example, we have some units which can easily be converted into pigsties and, if we bring in pigs, and we have money to feed them, we can make a lot of money. Same thing applies to poultry and dairy farming.

Q: Agriculture has, for a long time, been considered the backbone of many economies in the world. Is this still the case?

Agriculture is more than just a backbone; it is the survival of our economy. It is the one that builds up industries. We need to identify what can grow best in different regions. It is unfortunate that we have very few extension officers majority of them being old.

Q: Many youth in Kenya do not consider Agriculture as an attractive business or career of choice as opposed to formal employment. What is your comment on this?

This issue has really affected the agricultural sector. In my opinion, the youth lack exposure, mentorship and resources to venture into agriculture. However, I am very happy to see that they have started coming together to form agricultural societies and some of them are even earning more than I am.



Q: What are your current research interests?

At the moment, I have a collaborative research interest with Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST) on insects that can be used for food and feeds. The research is called *INSEFOODS*. It is a World Bank funded project and I am its investigator for MMUST. Aside from that, plant nutrition research has been my area of interest up to today. I apply it in many sectors of nutrition.

I am also supervising quite a number of postgraduate students who are doing research on horticulture. One of them is doing research in *managu* and another one is working on flowers.

Q: Academics have, on occasions, been accused of doing research for the sake of research. What are your views on this matter?

Doing research for the sake of research or for promotion is very wrong. Many people write to put articles in journals and as soon as they are promoted, that is it! I believe that good research must have impact. In fact, you are not a lecturer or a professor of any field unless the community feels what you have done for them. We have wrong policies that have emphasized on promotion at the expense of good research and one that can help communities. We need to change.

Q: Have you ever thought of or measured the impact of your work on society? If yes what is it?

Yes. Most of the flower farms in Naivasha are as a result of the students I have produced. Additionally, when I was in

JKUAT, I did some research on onions with people from Europe. Later, I went and planted some onions; also helped a farmer with the same. Right now, when you go to Bungoma, there are so many onions.

A while back, I started a Polytechnic in my village because I realized that there were so many jobless people there, and at the moment, it is a vocational training centre by Bungoma County.

Q: The Commission for University Education (CUE) has set an upper limit on the number of students, both at PhD and Masters, that a Professor or Lecturer can supervise at any given time. What are your views on this and why?

I totally agree with CUE's move but they better make it a good point because sometimes they go overboard. Just like on the issue of publications, people want to say that they have supervised and graduated so many. Look at what happened at JKUAT. One person graduating 16 PhDs! It is a joke.

It is not easy and possible to graduate postgraduate students en mass; students must do the work, the work must be of good quality, and that can only be done with a certain number of students.

Another thing that CUE must come up with is to give students the freedom to change supervisors when they feel that they are not being supervised well.

Q: We understand that you are concerned about protecting the environment. Tell us about it.

I took Environmental Studies while I was still at the University of Florida.



I am very passionate about doing the right things in order to conserve the environment; even when the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) started, I applied for a job but I was not taken and I was happy to be a scholar. I would have been sacked a long time ago because of my level headedness.

I have done research and also published with students on environment. Sometimes, I just do observation; for instance, there is this one time that the roof of the Vice Chancellor's Office and the Engineering workshop were with asbestos, which are very cancerous. I went and reported the issue to Senate

Q: What is that one thing that you can say you are yet to achieve?

I am very proud of what I have achieved so far although there are some things that I have not seen working the way I thought they would, but I am very

hopeful.

Q: Tell us one thing we do not know about you.

I believe in hard work and the Swahili saying, *tenda wema nenda zako*.

Have faith in your own abilities, work hard and there is nothing you cannot accomplish.

I am very humble; I believe that the more senior you become, the more humble you should be so that the small person out there can approach you.

People do not know what I can do in terms of mentorship.

I also go by the mantra 'PROFESSIONAL FOR HUMANITY'.

Q: Describe yourself in three words.

Humble. Hardworking. Realistic.

MMUST Outreach Helps Students make Informed Career Choices

By Wambugu Mary Wangari

M Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology is one of the institutions that was invited by Maseno School for the latter's Annual Career Day and school closing ceremony on Friday, 26th July, 2019. The purpose of the event was to guide students in making informed decisions while applying for courses to pursue in universities and/or colleges. It was evident that many secondary school students face challenges in choosing career paths due to lack of proper guidance.

Other organizations present were; Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS), Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC), Kenyatta University, Maseno University, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST), and Shipe Travels.

KUCCPS helped students on how to determine their cluster points and qualification for various courses offered in different universities in the country. KMTC, KU, JOOUST, MMUST and Maseno University showcased their programmes and products as they answered questions from students on the same.

Shipe Travels, a company that offers academic and business tours to Canada, Turkey and Japan, took the Maseno School students through the process of how to take part in their academic trips. According to Shipe Travels, these tours give students an opportunity to learn, explore and have first-hand experience with what it would be like to pursue higher education in top international universities. Their next trip will be to Canada, Ontario on Tuesday, 13th August, 2019.



Dr. Haroun Chemnjor from the School of Public Health, Biomedical Sciences and Technology (SPHBS&T) taking to the students



Dr. Treazer Okoth, the Director of Career Services, taking the Maseno School students through the programmes offered at the University.



2019 CES Kenya/Canada Day Run Focuses on Giving Back to Society

The Annual CES- Kenya/Canada Day Charity run 2019, coordinated by the Games and Sports Department at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) took place on Saturday 27th July 2019 at the Varsity grounds.

The Theme for this year's Canada Day Charity Run was "Kenyan youth running to support the community", drawing participation from over twenty five (25) secondary schools in the Western region and beyond. Students from secondary schools such as Kakamega Muslims, Lions High School-Kisumu, and St. Kalori Lwanga, among others, took part in the 5km run.

Community Education Services (CES) Canada Day run is meant to bring together beneficiaries of the CES Canada education program in Kenya to celebrate Canada Day and increase awareness on the plight of needy students in secondary schools. Led by the CES Kenya Alumni, CES team, students, principals of respective secondary schools and guests took part in a tree planting exercise after the run with over one hundred (100) trees planted in selected areas within the University.

Prior to the Charity run, the CES Kenya team, led by their President, Mr. Michael Frederiksen, paid a courtesy call to MMUST Ag. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Asenath Sigot, on Friday, 26th July 2019. Prof. Sigot said that such partnerships are highly appreciated.

"We can think of other ways of partnering and encourage more research," said Prof. Sigot.

Speaking during the closing and awards ceremony, the CES-Kenya/Canada President, Mr. Michael Frederiksen, said that MMUST has opened doors for many CES sponsored students who have excelled and continue to give back to the society. Mr. Frederiksen said that he has witnessed the growth of the University in terms of new programmes, buildings, facilities and student enrolment. He noted that every student in Canada earns forty (40) hours of volunteer work before they graduate from high school.

“Students should be encouraged to do more volunteer work as a way of giving back to the society,” he said.

Mr. Jacob Kitari, a part-time lecturer from the Department of Educational Planning and Management (EPM) at MMUST, encouraged the students to work hard for quality grades in order to access quality courses in good universities such as MMUST. Mr. Kitari said that CES Canada Education Initiative has helped many needy students in Kenya, adding that such support is rare to come by.

“Now that we are going towards Competence Based Curriculum (CBC), identify what you are good at and work on it,” he urged the students.

Juma Edwin Nyongesa, Chairperson, CES Alumni Association, said that he was humbled to be a beneficiary of the CES education program. He urged the students to take advantage of the support and work hard in order to join good universities.

Mr. Issah Kweyu, from the Department of Health Promotion and Sports Sciences, also encouraged students to try out for Talent Scholarships offered by MMUST and which cater for both

degree and diploma courses. He said that more than two hundred (200) students have gained from the scholarship since its inception.



CES Team takes a photo with representatives from schools and students awarded after the 2019 CES-Kenya/Canada Day Run.

Mr. Shisoka Akaka, from the Games and Sports Department, coordinated the awards ceremony. Trophies and medals were awarded to students who did well in the run and overall best schools. The CES Kenya/Canada President, Mr. Frederiksen was also awarded for his remarkable contributions to education of needy students in Kenyan secondary schools. Mr. Frederiksen said that the Canada Day Run was not a competition but a motivation exercise for the students.



CES-Kenya/Canada President, Mr. Michael Frederiksen plants a tree

Meet a First Year Student Making it in the Modelling Industry

By Wambugu Mary Wangari

Benard Wafula, also known as *Ben Wafula the Model*, is a self-proclaimed runway model who has participated in quite a number of pageants, including Mr Kakamega County and Mr Valentine's Bungoma County. The First Year student of Education Arts, majoring in English Literature, started modelling at the University when he took part in the first ever Mr and Miss MMUST Fresher's competition and became the first runners up. Aside from modelling, Benard is an actor, an event organizer and promoter, and dresses models and music artists from time to time. He attributes all his work to modelling which he believes opened doors for him.

Ben is one of the participant who worked with Team Environment Kenya (TEK) to organize Mr and Miss Environment Kenya, Kakamega County, which took place on 12th July, 2019. It is from this event that he was prompted to apply for a tender to promote the upcoming Miss Face of Devolution Kenya event which he is hopeful to win. He is currently working with Busuma Productions of Nyota TV to produce films. Modelling has enabled him to interact and make friends with people he never expected to meet. It has become a source of income for him as he can afford to pay his own school fees sometimes.

Wafula is also passionate about changing the society. He is one of the founding members of Family Kenya Association, an organization that tries to portray Kenya as one family in spite of cultural differences. The group occasionally puts together resources to help orphans and widows. Other than that, he has taken part in the country wide tree planting campaign organized by TEK in collaboration with Greening Schools Program.

In future, Benard intends to venture into script-writing, commercial modelling since his main desire is to become an international model.



Benard Wafula poses for a photo



Benard Wafula crowning Miss Environment, Kakamega



Furious MMUST Soccer wins the Football Kenya Federation National Division 2 Western zone title to earn a promotion to National division 1





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