



MMUST NEWS *Post*

A Digital Publication of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

Vol. 5 Issue 8: 13th June – 21st July 2021

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Plant Molecular Biolaboratory
Workshop

UPCOMING



EVENTS

❖ **STEMEIC 2021**
(17TH- 19TH) November, 2021



Editor's Pen

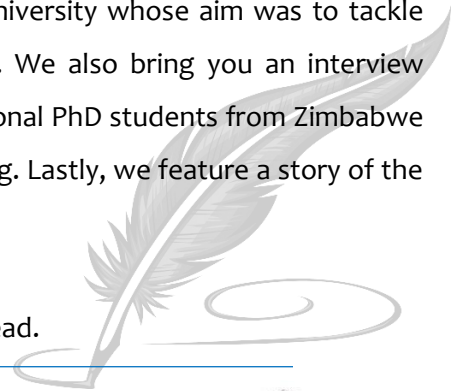
Dear MMUST Community,

Welcome to this edition of the NewsPost.

We bring you details of the upcoming STEMEIC 2021 set to be held in November 2021. MMUST Annual Tamasha Festival is also here with us! We highlight the eventful cultural celebrations in this issue. The Ag. VC's visit to Navakholo's legislator and attendance of Equity Holdings 'Wings To Fly' Commissioning ceremony is also highlighted.

Read about the Plant Molecular Biolaboratory Training Workshop held at the University whose aim was to tackle food insecurity in Africa. We also bring you an interview with one of the international PhD students from Zimbabwe who attended the training. Lastly, we feature a story of the MMUST Ajira Digital Club.

We hope you enjoy the read.



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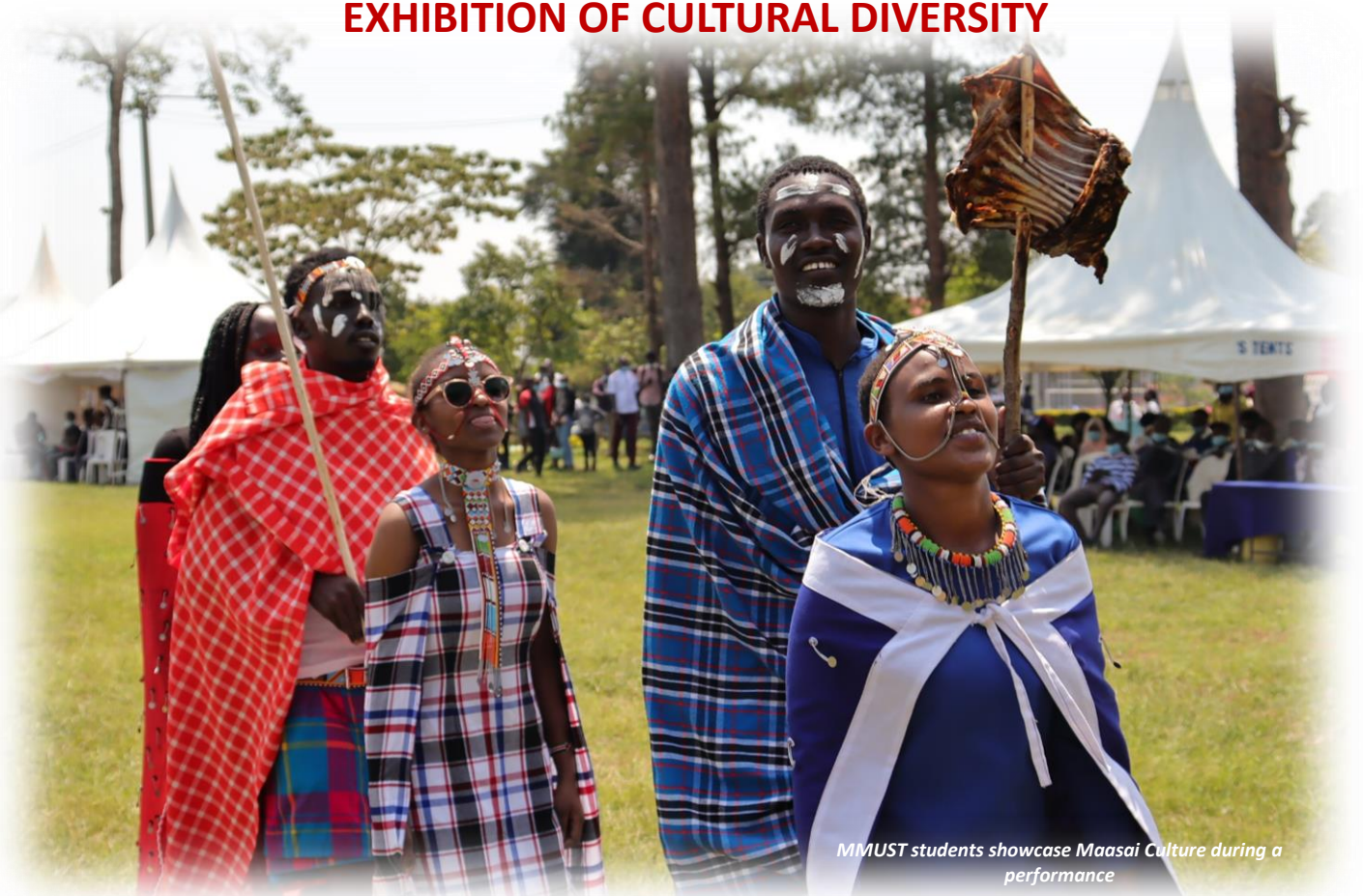


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MMUST TAMASHA FESTIVAL 2021 COMMENCES WITH POWERFUL EXHIBITION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY



MMUST students showcase Maasai Culture during a performance

By Awuor Sandra Dorcas [sdorcas@mmust.ac.ke]

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology's annual Tamasha Cultural Festivals 2021-Phase1, kicked off on a high note with a culturally diverse and decorated official opening ceremony at the University's graduation square on Wednesday 21st July 2021. This year's Tamasha Festivals, whose theme is **“Leveraging Our Cultural Diversity and Resilience in COVID-19”** is a celebration and appreciation of Cultural diversity, National and International Cohesion.

The Acting Vice Chancellor, Prof.Solomon Shibairo, while giving his keynote address, encouraged MMUST Staff and students to embrace their cultural diversity by appreciating one another's cultures.

“Through this Tamasha Festival, we work towards national cohesion by fostering nationalism,” said Prof.Shibairo.

Prof.Shibairo added that the celebrations come at a time when the nation is coping with the implications of COVID-19, however, there is a lot to look forward to. The Acting Vice Chancellor took the opportunity to affirm the University's positive reforms such as employing more teaching staff and tackle pertinent issues in most institutions of higher learning in the country such as ‘missing marks’.



Ag. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Solomon Shibauro visits one of the cultural exhibition tents

He said that the University Council is in support of the celebrations, adding that the festival is important in promoting positive values.

The Dean of Students, Dr. Bernadette Abwao, said that MMUST Tamasha Festival is the most popular activity by students, which brings different cultures together. She emphasized on the importance of such festivals, adding that they create opportunities for students regionally and internationally through the beauty pageants. Dr. Abwao thanked the University Management Board for supporting the celebrations and the Ag. Vice Chancellor Prof. Shibauro for appointing a patron for this year's Tamasha Festival, Prof. Edwin Wamukoya.

The DVC in charge of Academics and Finance, Prof. Charles Mutai and DVC in charge of Planning, Research and Innovation, Prof. J.S.K Achoka encouraged the embracing of different cultures.

“Let us continue to celebrate who we are,” said Prof. Achoka.

MMUST DVC in charge of Academic and Students' Affairs Prof. Peter Odera, encouraged co-existence, especially in a diversified environment like MMUST.

“Our different cultures give us identity,” said Prof. Odera.

The celebrations were heightened by a wide range of cultural exhibitions by students belonging to Maasai, Kamba, Luhya, Luo, Coast, Maa, Meru, Kalenjin among other communities. The students showcased different foods and artefacts identified with their different communities.

The festival will run up to Saturday 24th July 2021 with an array of activities such as Miss Jumbo, Mr. Flex, Miss & Mr. MMUST, Tamasha Dinner and Inter-Faith Service.

Tamasha Festival Phase 2, is set to take place in October.



Ag. Vice Chancellor Prof. Solomon Shibairo crowns Mr. Flex 2021/2022, Mr. Kevin Onyango(Obwogo)

“LET THE BEAUTY YOU HAVE MATCH LIFE VIRTUES,” ADVISES MMUST VC

By Daudi Kioko [dkioko@mmust.ac.ke]

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Acting Vice Chancellor, Prof. Solomon Shibairo, has urged this year’s beauty contestants to uphold life virtues in their day today activities.

Speaking at the University Graduation Square during the second day of the MMUST Tamasha Festivals, Prof. Shibairo thanked the young scholars for believing in themselves and participating in this year’s Mr. and Miss MMUST, Mr. Flex and Miss Jumbo Competition adding that it is a sign of thanking God for creating them wonderfully.

‘I am thanking God for the handsome men and beautiful ladies who have done a marvelous job. Beauty is not only outside but also inside, emotional and spiritual. Keep it that way,’ said Prof. Shibairo.

While thanking the organizers for putting up the several strategies to ensure the success of the event, the university CEO said there is need to thank God for the smooth running of the institution, COVID-19 pandemic challenges notwithstanding.

Anne Awino, a Third Year Journalism and Mass Communication student emerged the best in Miss MMUST 2020/2021 competition category. She was followed by Grace Oluoch and Vivian Monica who scooped 1st and 2nd runners up respectively.

The School of Natural Sciences student Davis Omae was crowned this year's Mr. MMUST after beating 4 others in the same category.

Miss Jumbo's winner for the event went to Annete Gondi while Kevin Onyango won this year's Mr. Flex competition beating two other contestants who participated in the same category.

Also in attendance during the event were the Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Students Affairs), Prof Peter Odera, Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor (Planning, Research and Innovation), Prof. JSK Achoka, Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration and Finance), Prof Charles Mutai, and MMUST Tamasha Patron Prof. Edwin Wamukoya among other members of staff.

Prof. Peter Odera thanked the judges for the objective results witnessed in the competition.

The event was graced by X-ray from the Boondocks Gang Music Group who was the guest artist.



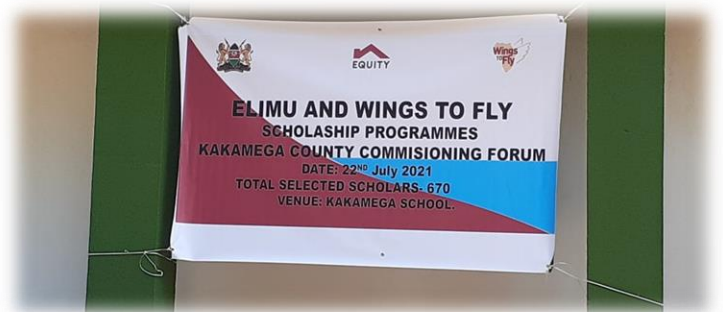
Mr&Miss MMUST 2021/2022 pose for a photo after being crowned

ACTING VC JOINS EQUITY GROUP HOLDINGS CEO DURING WINGS TO FLY COMMISSIONING

The Acting Vice Chancellor, Prof. Solomon Shibairo, joined Dr. James Mwangi, the Chief Executive Officer of Equity Group Holdings during the commissioning of the Kakamega County Elimu and Wings to Fly Scholarships Programme. The event was held at the Kakamega School on Thursday, 22nd July 2021.

Also in attendance were the Kakamega County Deputy Governor, Prof. Phillip Kutima, the Kakamega County Commissioner, Pauline Dola and several clergies from Kakamega County led by the Rt. Revd. Bishop Simon Oketch of the Anglican Church of Kenya, Maseno North. There were also representatives from the Ministry of Education, several Sub-County Directors of Education within Kakamega County, parents and the beneficiaries.

Kakamega County was the second largest County after Nairobi County with six hundred and seventy (670) beneficiaries of the scholarship.



STEMEIC 2021 TO PROVIDE PLATFORM FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION IN THE FIELD OF STEM EDUCATION



By Nashilluh Brendah Kabindio [bnashilluh@mmust.ac.ke]

The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, Education International Conference (STEMEIC) is an annual virtual conference. The **STEMEIC 2021** Theme is *"STEM Education in Africa and Beyond During and Post COVID-19 Pandemic: Ensuring Quality, Equity and Inclusivity"*. The Sub-themes include:

- New Insights into STEM Education Research
- STEM Education in Informal Contexts
- Integrated Stem Education
- Innovative Pedagogies in STEM Education during and post-COVID-19 Pandemic
- From STEM to STEAM to STREAM: Implications on Performance
- Enhancing STEM Education through online Pedagogy
- Gender Responsive STEM Education
- Language, Culture and STEM
- STEM Education and Emerging Socio-cultural Issues
- STEM Education and Competency Based Curriculum
- Inclusive Education and STEM
- The Complexities of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

The aim of STEMEIC 2021 is to gather researchers, scientists, engineers, practitioners and policy makers from all over the world to present advances in the STEM education. The Conference is certain to be one of the most important gatherings for providing thought leadership within the STEM education community. It will also help in fostering collaborations in STEM education between government, industry, and the academia.

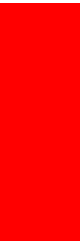
Being in an era in which there is a paradigm shift in education since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, STEMEIC 2021 will provide a forum to exchange information, present innovative pedagogies, new technologies and developments, and discuss the future direction, strategies and priorities in the field of education. STEMEIC2021, without doubt, brings together top influencers and leaders to discuss and debate the most pressing issues and provide timely information on a variety of sectors and best practices.

This STEMEIC 2021 comes at the backdrop of a successful virtual hosting of the STEMEIC 2020 at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). Presided over by the Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Prof. George Magoha, the Conference had four (4) keynote speakers, nineteen (19) guest speakers and panelists and forty-six (46) paper presentations. The countries represented were Kenya, Rwanda, Nigeria, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, USA, Russia, Malaysia and the Phillipines. The Conference also



attracted collaborating institutions who jointly planned the Conference. These included Kibabii University, Kaimosi Friends University College, Chuka University, Centre for Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTE), Diversity Education Institute, Texas, USA, and Sam Houston State University, Texas, USA.

The STEMEIC 2021 is planned for November, 17th to 19th to be hosted virtually by Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya.





MMUST HOSTS ATYPICAL PLANT MOLECULAR BIOLABORATORY TRAINING WORKSHOP IN BID TO TACKLE FOOD INSECURITY IN AFRICA

By Awuor Sandra Dorcas [sdorcas@mmust.ac.ke]

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) in partnership with the University of Cambridge, has joined the 'Reach and Teach Science in Africa' in fostering Research and Innovation through capacity building for young African researchers. This is through a rare one-week Plant Molecular Biology Lab training that began on Monday July 22nd, 2021 at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology's Biotechnology Laboratory.

The Workshop drew up to thirty (30) young scholars in the field of Agriculture from a range of Universities and Research Institutes across Sub-Saharan Africa. They converged to get hands-on training and knowledge in order to solve African problems especially in the area of Food Security.

The opening ceremony was graced by the DVC in charge of Planning, Research and Innovation, Prof. J.S.K Achoka, who represented the Acting Vice Chancellor, Prof. Solomon Shibairo.

Prof. Achoka welcomed the workshop participants from as far as Malawi, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya. She challenged fellow researchers to join in the spirited campaign to uphold food security in order to achieve inclusive agricultural growth, nutrition and food security in the country and beyond. Prof. Achoka added that the discourse of the Workshop is in line with the Government of Kenya's Big Four Agenda pillar on Food Security and Nutrition. In her closing remarks, she noted that the University has risen steadily and is honored to have been identified by JR BioTek Foundation to host the one-of-a-kind Workshop.

"We must relook our policies and gear our strategies towards achieving a food secure Africa," read the Acting Vice Chancellor's speech.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, Prof. Jacob Wakhungu, the Dean of the School of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences and Technology (SAVET) expressed his desire to see scientists challenge themselves into inventing street lights using natural light from animals such as fireflies, as a way to utilize molecular biology to solve issues in the society. He added that the Workshop provided an opportunity for participants to learn together and connect with other researchers to come up with meaningful collaborations and innovations.

Prof. Hassan Were, a Molecular Virologist and the lead facilitator of the Plant Molecular Biotechnology Training Workshop, said that the Workshop initiative was borne out of need to reinforce agricultural capacity of African researchers to do research that puts out content and products. He added that local farmers can benefit by increasing their yields through the output of the laboratory work during the training.

"We have, in time past, outsourced experts when we have highly trained specialists here," said Prof. Hassan Were.

He expressed his gratitude to the University Management for their tremendous support towards planning and organization of the Workshop, urging cohesiveness with the partners in order to make MMUST one of the centres of knowledge for Biotechnology.

Prof. of Horticulture/Agriculture (Plant Nutrition) at MMUST, Prof. Leonard Wamocho, said that the Workshop will go a long way in developing capacity of Agricultural Scientists adding that utilization of Molecular aspects in Agriculture is the direction to go. Prof. Wamocho urged the researchers to interact beyond their countries in order to harness more information.

The President of JR BioTek Foundation, Dr. Carol Ibe, said that the organization is committed to building Agricultural research capacity to effectively tackle food and nutrition security in Africa. In addition, she commended MMUST for taking up the mantle of hosting the Workshop and providing an opportunity for new professional relationships and collaborations in a bid to solve problems in Africa.

“There are over 220 million hungry people. We can make a difference by ending hunger in Africa,” she said.

The Workshop presented an eventful week that included an outdoor visit by the participants to Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization (KALRO), Kakamega. The main purpose of the field visit was to enable the young scientists to physically see the manifestations of crop diseases in their stages. The team in KALRO and the workshop participants also engaged through an interactive plenary session at the Institution. Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology’s well equipped Biotechnology Laboratory was the main training hub for the workshop, with daily laboratory practical sessions on DNA and RNA extractions among others. The participants extracted DNA from plant samples in order to detect viruses as part of diagnosis of plants.



Workshop participants and their facilitators pose for a photo at KALRO, Kakamega during a field visit .



Ag. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Solomon Shibairo addresses workshop participants at MMUST during one of the lab sessions

The lab sessions were punctuated by lecture sessions by experts from University of Cambridge. The first lecture was from Gregory Reeves, PhD, Department of Plant Sciences who introduced the participants to the fundamental principles, techniques and applications of Molecular Biology in Agricultural Research while the second lecture was by Dr. Leonie Luginbuehl who took the participants through Beneficial Plant – Microbe Interactions.

The team of facilitators from MMUST included Mr. Anthony Mabele, a PhD student in MMUST, Mr. Nicholas Kazungula who led the lab training sessions and Ms. Miriam Were, a PhD candidate who also coordinated the workshop.

Other Kenyan Public Universities represented at the workshop included Pwani University, Kenyatta University, University of Eldoret, Egerton University, University of Kabianga, Kibabii University and University of Nairobi among others.



A YOUNG AGRICULTURAL SCIENTIST'S QUEST TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By Victor Mukoshi [victoralberts5@gmail.com]

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology was honored to host the Plant Biomolecular Training Workshop from Monday July 5 to Friday July 9, 2021. The workshop aimed at instilling molecular techniques that the trainees can use in Plant Biomolecular Science to improve crops and the food situation in Africa. Courtesy of the JR Biotek Foundation, a Non-Governmental Organization whose agenda is to teach science in Africa, young scientists were granted the opportunity to polish their science boots for they will be needed on the ground to combat food insecurity in Africa.

To anyone who understood the purpose of the workshop, the conference room on the morning of July 5th, 2021 where young scientists sat looked like a battalion of curious science soldiers. You could behold the wealth of scientific academia in the room as they confidently introduced themselves. Most of them are PhD students while others are already walking in the glory that comes with a Doctorate in Philosophy.

In life, we are accustomed to associate the highest level of education with people who look very senior. Seeing these young faces profess high academic pursuits and accolades is nothing short of a sweet shock especially to the upcoming generation. We are living in days where Mark Zuckerberg is being used as the benchmark of success just because he and a handful of other hotshots have broken the financial glass ceiling without academic papers. Realizing that there are young men and women who still endeavor to work out their brains so that they may fit the graduation cap despite the aforementioned fallacies, is inspiring.

Establishing your interests and working to perfect them is like finding a purpose-giving tree in the middle of the jungle. The jungle, is the complexities of life, and the purpose-giving tree for the two dozen young scholars from various Universities and Research Institutions in Eastern Africa, is nothing but Biomolecular Science.



Tinovanga Gonhi (right) interacting with lab equipment in the Biotechnology laboratory.

One Tinovanga Gonhi, a Zimbabwean, is a PhD student at Makerere University in Uganda at only 27 years old. With his friendly personality, he is enthusiastic to share a few nuggets about what it means to be a high-flying young scholar as he pursues his PhD in Plant Breeding and Biotechnology. Tino, as he likes to be called by his peers, says that nowadays it is not all about getting your degree. It is about how you manage the resources at your disposal and learning to be

independent.

“Our reasoning will eventually change from seeing a degree as just a paper to seeing the degree as a catapult that stretches the limits of your mind”, he said.

Young people are tempted to think that getting money is all there is to life. The young PhD student challenges that by saying although money is important, it cannot replace the role of academics. The role of academics is to change you intellectually and psychologically.

“I know the youth are focusing their attention on business, and that is a very good thing. I would however like to pose a challenge to them. Take some time and look at business people who are educated and those who are not. You cannot possibly compare the two. Knowledge will forever be power.”

Science, for him, is the purpose-giving tree. He is giving up himself not just to mine for academic knowledge, but also be part of a course that is bigger than him. He believes that is what higher learning helps us to do. Real change in the world is done through academic force.

The young scientists from Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Malawi and Tanzania made use of the workshop to network and share ideas. You could see the coherence in how they interacted from their lab sessions and even when they dined together. Science filled their conversations implying that we are a sum total of our interactions. Being a young PhD scientist is not enough. Discipline that entails self-drive, carefully picking your interactions, self-discovery, a positive spirit and the wise use of resources sets you apart as a successful young scientist.

“Don’t do a PhD to get a paper. Do a PhD to see life from a higher and better level than everyone else. The paper is just a reward but the PhD is in your mind.”

-Tinovanga Gonhi

ACTING VC PAYS COURTESY VISIT TO NAVAKHOLO LEGISLATOR

On Friday, 16th July 2021, the Acting Vice Chancellor, Prof. Solomon Shibairo, paid a courtesy visit to Hon. Emmanuel Wangwe, MP, Navakholo and Majority Leader in the National Assembly at his CDF Office in Navakholo. Later, he visited the newly constructed Kenya Medical Training College (KMTTC), Navakholo Satellite Campus funded by the Navakholo CDF. Present during the visit were the CDF Manager and the area Senior Chief with several other members of the community.





MMUST AJIRA DIGITAL CLUB PARTICIPATES IN 2021 FURSA CHALLENGE

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) Ajira Digital Club is among the participants of the 2021 Fursa Challenge. The recently registered Club is among the institutional clubs that operate under the Ministry of ICT and Youth Affairs through the Ajira Digital Program. The Theme for the 2021 challenge is 'Fursa vs. Economic Recovery Challenge'. The program which is set to take place from 5th July- 12th August will see all the enrolled youth receive business support through the e-learning program on Whitebox.go.ke. During the six weeks, participants will not only take part in the learning and mentorship program but will also be participating in the competition where the winner will be unveiled on 12th of August by H.E Uhuru Kenyatta during the International Youth Day.

Fursa Challenge is a program being run by the Government of Kenya through the National Youth Council. Among the key objectives of the Fursa Challenge initiative include;

- Provide a competitive platform to drive skills development and growth.
- Drive entrepreneurial growth and regional entrepreneurs with a repeatable and scalable process.
- Facilitate the training and development of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial talent to systematically develop, validate and launch early-stage companies.
- Use available spaces and places to empower and train youth entrepreneurs.

This is an annual challenge for the youth innovators. It is, therefore, geared towards empowering the youths from all levels and different parts of the country. Participating youth develop, submit and pitch creative innovations which aims at contributing in the economic recovery of Kenya post COVID-19.

Through the MMUST Ajira Digital Club, MMUST is aiming towards having at least two hundred participants in the lucrative challenge. With the deadline of registration having been 11th July 2021, all students were encouraged to use the provided link for the same purpose <https://fursanyc.com/fursa-vs-economic-recovery/>.



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A Digital Publication of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

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