

FOUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE
History of the University of Nairobi,
1952-2020

From a Technical College to a World Class University

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Cover design: Prof. Madara Ogot

ISBN 978-9914-40-060-1

Anyange Press Ltd

P. O. Box 2034

Kisumu, Kenya

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FOUNDATION, 1952-1963

In 1943, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies appointed a Commission under Sir Cyril (later Lord Asquith),

“to consider the principles which should guide the promotion of higher education ... and the development of universities in the colonies.”

The Commission submitted its report in 1945 and its recommendations were adopted by the British Government to guide higher education policies in the colonial territories.¹

The Asquith Commission concluded that the higher education policy would best and most economically be advanced by the development of university institutions of high standard, which would offer their students education in the fullest sense and take their place as equal partners among the universities of the world. The Commission recommended the principle of providing academic tutelage to colonial colleges through a system of “Special Relationship” with the University of London.

To guide this development and advise the UK Secretary of State on the expenditure of public funds, the Commission recommended that a body representative of all British universities, aided by an expert financial committee, should be formed. The representative body known as the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas was insti-

¹*Asquith Commission Report*: British Government: Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies 1945, London, CMD-6647.

1. FOUNDATION, 1952-1963

tuted in 1946. Purely financial matters were referred to the Colonial University Grants Advisory Committee.

Several university colleges were founded during the pre-independence period under the auspices of the Inter-University Council. Known as the “Asquith Colleges”, they included University College Ibadan in Nigeria, University College of the Gold Coast in Legon, Ghana, and Makerere College in Uganda. A follow-up West African Commission chaired by Hon Walter Elliot published two reports, a majority report recommending the establishment of the two University Colleges (Ibadan and Gold Coast) and a minority report advocating for a single one at Ibadan for the whole of West Africa. The Gold Coast pushed for the majority report resulting in both colleges coming into being in 1948. University College of the Gold Coast became a full fledged University, renamed University of Ghana, in 1961. University College Ibadan became the full fledged University of Ibadan in 1963.² In 1956, the Royal Technical College in Nairobi joined the Asquith University League. These university colleges gave London University degrees and had their curricula and standards largely determined by the Metropolitan University.

The University of London agreed to accept overseas university colleges into special relationship under specific terms:

- a A university should encourage the pursuit of a regular and liberal course of education; promote research and the advancement of science and learning; organize, improve, and extend education of a university standard.
- b It should be ready to accept the responsibility of intellectual leadership in the community it serves and should endeavour to promote within that community a culture rooted in scholarship and knowledge. To this end, it should establish and maintain close relations with other forms of educational activities within its area.
- c It should seek to attract to its service, teachers of the highest quality who are able and prepared to contribute to the advancement of their respective subjects. To this end, it should offer appropriate conditions of service and remuneration. In particular, the members of staff

²“The University College of the Gold Coast” *Ghanaian Museum Online*, ghanaiian-museum.com; “History” *University of Ibadan website*, ui.edu.ng/history; both viewed February 3, 2021.



Source: University of Ghana website

Balme Library University of Ghana



Source: Rhodri Liscombe, "Modernism in Late Imperial British West Africa: The Work of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, 1946-56", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 65(2), 2006.

Administration Wing and Central Tower, University College, Ibadan, 1948



Source: Makerere University website, mak.ac.ug

Completed Main Administration Building, 1941

Figure 1.1 – Original Asquith University Colleges: Gold Coast (Ghana), Ibadan and Makerere

1. FOUNDATION, 1952-1963

should not be burdened with teaching duties that they have not adequate time to devote to research.

- d It should make provision for the encouragement of corporate and social life among its students.
- e It should provide equipment and laboratories and build up a university library adequate not only for the needs of its undergraduate students, but also for research needs of its teachers and senior students.
- f The constitution of its Governing Body and its Charter, Statutes, or other instruments of government, should be such as are appropriate to an autonomous university capable of controlling the development of its academic policy.

Also, it was understood that since the degrees were those of the University of London and were of the full London Standard, the University of London reserved the right of final decision on all examination requirements and on the granting of degrees. Furthermore, teachers of the university colleges were to benefit from a privilege granted by the University of London: they were permitted to register as internal students for PhD degrees, so that, although they worked at an institution that had no power to grant degrees, they could still obtain a recognised higher qualification.

While earlier education reports had stressed the need for vocational education and the need to charge fees, the Asquith Commission's recommendations reacted against "mass production of vocational machines", to focus instead upon educating a small minority of promising students for "leadership." Leadership qualities were to be instilled at high cost through a broad liberal education, intended to equip its beneficiaries with the values necessary to take their countries to self-government. Provision was to be high quality and free. As the anticipated demand was small, the sustainability of the system was given scant consideration. University research was recommended but was to be "fundamental" and "utilitarian", results were not expected.

The philosophy behind the Asquith idea of a university was derived from the English model formulated by John Henry Newman, an Oxford Professor, in his *Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education*, published in 1852. Cardinal Newman had made a plea for "Knowledge being its own end" and rejected Baconian utilitarianism.

His idea of a university stressed the development of the person and the training of the elite. Baconian utilitarianism, on the other hand, associated with Francis Bacon, asserted that “the end of man is action and the end of knowledge, utility.” In other words, “the purpose of knowledge is the relief of man’s estate, the comfort and convenience of human life.”³

The Asquith Commission was severely criticised for not giving much thought to local conditions. It simply transplanted, without much adaptation, British university needs and standards on African soil. Ashby, for instance, wrote:⁴

“The Asquith Report was Britain’s blueprint for the export of universities to her people overseas ... it has been elevated to the dignity of a doctrine ... The doctrine was a vivid expression of British cultural parochialism: its basic assumption was that a university system appropriate for Europeans brought up in London and Manchester and Hull was also appropriate for Africans brought up in Lagos, Kumasi and Kampala.”

He compared African Universities with their imported automobiles. He continued,⁵

“Those founded by the British displayed at independence, the three attributes of British Universities. In constitution, they were autonomous, deliberately detached from the state. In standards and curriculum, they emphasised the thin stream of excellence and narrow specialism. In social function, they regarded themselves as restricted to an elite.”

Ashby explained that what was more disturbing was that, on the whole, the Africans themselves welcomed this pattern of higher education. He wrote,⁶

“The African intellectual, educated in London or Cambridge or Manchester, would have been indignant at any softening of standards ... any cheapened version of higher education. The African

³Richard Westfall, *The Construction of Modern Science: Mechanisms and Mechanics* Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.118.

⁴Ashby, E *African Universities and Western Tradition*, Harvard University Press, 1964, p. 19.

⁵ibid. p.1

⁶Ashby, E *Universities: British, Indian, African*, Harvard University Press, 1966, p. 234.

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wanted a replica of the British University at its best; the expatriate had no other model to offer.”

As independence was achieved, the role expected of African universities changed significantly. The Ashby Commission of 1960, funded by the Carnegie Corporation, sought to redefine the missions of African universities and the contributions which they might make to national development. The Commission recommended that provision should be focused on “vocational” education. They introduced the manpower planning rationale, thereby also recommending large-scale expansion. For the first time, the “relevance” of education provision became an issue. The Commission recommended “an education system which could not be sustained without massive aid”, thereby creating the near inevitability of future difficulties when donor policies changed.⁷ No attempt was made to re-examine the “Ashby model” of higher education in Africa in terms of its cost and future viability, and the model was, therefore, perpetuated.⁸

Relevance and cost continued to be issues of debate, increasingly at odds with social demand. The 1962 Tananarive Conference, sponsored by UNESCO, extended the anticipated functions of universities in Africa, including the requirement “to ensure the unification of Africa,”⁹ a very broad social and cultural role, and a new entrenched economic role of human resource development. It also recommended reductions in the cost of university structures, a call which went unheeded in the economic optimism of the 1960s. At the 1972 Accra Workshop, organised by the Association of African Universities, which one of the authors, BA Ogot attended, leading academics reacted angrily to the criticism made at Tananarive and sought to justify the costs of universities. By doing so, they further extended the roles of African Universities in terms of community service and nation-building, thus making way for the “development university” ideal of the 1970s.¹⁰

In the eyes of the African governments, the main mission of the uni-

⁷ibid. p.269.

⁸Ashby, E, 1964, op. cit.

⁹UNESCO, *Tananarive Report*, 1963, p.19.

¹⁰T. M. Yesufu, (Ed.) *Creating the African University: Emerging Issues of the 1970s*, Oxford University Press, published for the Association of African Universities, 1973.

versities was development and nation-building. However, they soon inherited the four Western university traditions:

- a *Newman's formulation of the university* – The objective is to bring out, develop, and perfect the full potential of human personality.
- b *The German idea of a research university* – Associated with Wilhelm von Humboldt, stated that university study should concentrate on the cultivation of independent thinkers and on scientific research
- c *The French University model* – Conceived by Napoleon in 1806, epitomised a state-steered meritocratic society, where professionals with particular education were regarded as an exquisite elite, universities were part of the state, and professors were civil servants.
- d *The American Land-Grant Morrill Act* – Signed by US President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 and named after Vermont Congressman Justin Smill Morill, the Act was a major breakthrough for a new utilitarian conception of a university. It was later followed by the extension services which revolutionised agriculture in the US

African universities also inherited many non-essential items. For example, in the former British colonies, items such as gowns, the high tables, the grace before dinner in Latin and the naming of the terms as Michaelmas, Lent and Easter. In Francophone African countries until as late as 1968, university degrees were issued by the French Ministry of National Education.

THE ROYAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE, 1956-1961

This institution had its origins in plans for technical education in Nairobi, first mooted after the Second World War. In March 1949, a Committee under the chairmanship of GP Willoughby, submitted a report to the Government of Kenya recommending that a technical and commercial institute be established in Nairobi. The institute, which was to serve the whole of Kenya, was to provide at first, full-time and part-time instruction in practical trade skills. It would then offer courses leading to the Higher National Certificate and eventually would prepare matriculated students of all races for full-time study towards university degrees in engineering and technology, subjects which, at that time, Makerere University College in Kampala was not providing.¹¹

¹¹*Report of the Royal Technical College of East Africa for the Period September 7, 1951 to December 31, 1952*, Nairobi: Governing Council of the College.

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Although the Government of Kenya accepted the Willoughby Report in principle, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, after the advice from his technical advisers, considered that it would be more in the interests of East Africa as a whole, if the parochial Kenya scheme was expanded to become inter-territorial. Accordingly, he sent Dr FJ Harlow, his Assistant Educational Advisor for Technical Education, to East Africa to make proposals for such an expansion. In particular, he was to advise on the possibility that the institution, if established at Nairobi, might be made available to students from other East African territories. In his report, Dr Harlow suggested that the institution might serve two purposes: it would meet Kenya's needs for all forms of technical education and, during the earlier stages of development of technical education in East Africa, would provide higher level courses available to students from Tanganyika, Uganda, Zanzibar, and Kenya. These latter courses, it was foreseen, might lead to various professional qualifications.¹²

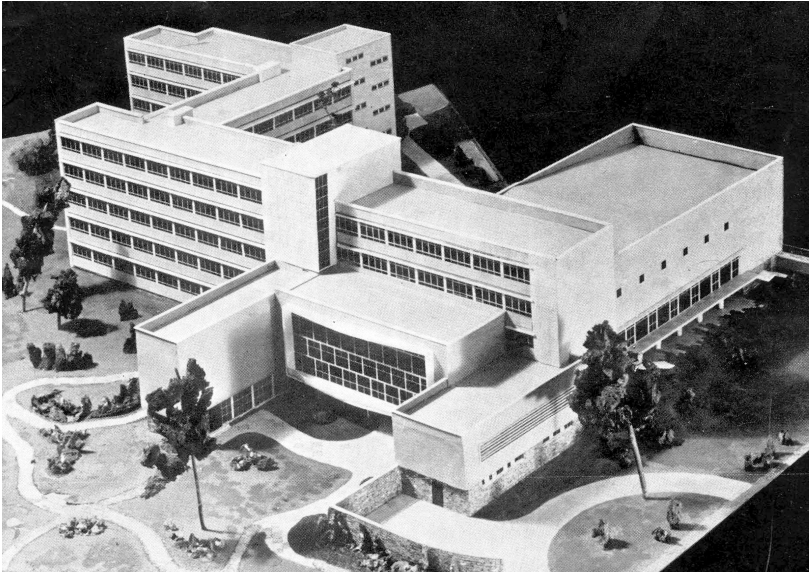
In February 1951, the Government of Kenya applied for Colonial Development and Welfare (CDW) assistance for the proposed technical college and at the same time invited the Governments of Tanganyika and Uganda to assist in the initial capital expenditure. In April 1951, the Secretary of State for the Colonies agreed to make a grant of £150 thousand on the understanding that the courses as required would be available on an inter-territorial basis and the technical college would be the apex of a broadly based system of instruction and education throughout East Africa. The initial capital to launch the scheme was arranged as follows: CDW Vote £150 thousand and the Governments of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika £160 thousand, £100 thousand, and £50 thousand, respectively.¹³

On September 7, 1951, the Governor of Kenya, Sir Philip Mitchell, signed a Charter at Government House, Nairobi, under which the Governing Council for the College was appointed and the College was brought into being and given (with the express approval of King George VI), the title of Royal Technical College of East Africa.¹⁴ The function of the

¹²ibid.

¹³"£370,000 in grants for new college" *East African Standard*, May 23, 1951.

¹⁴See Appendix B of the above Report of the College. op. cit.



Source: Royal Technical College *Endowment Fund Appeal*

Figure 1.2 – Model of the Royal Technical College of East Africa, 1951

College was described in the Charter as the provision of¹⁵

“facilities for vocational training in the main branches of engineering, in commerce and accountancy, in agricultural, medical and veterinary laboratory science, in industry, in domestic science, in arts and crafts, in sanitary science, in pharmacy, and in such other vocations as may be desirable [to meet the needs] of all East African Territories.”

The change planned in the status of the Royal Technical College was to make it truly an East African venture and placed the administration of the College under the East African High Commission (which was established in 1948), instead of under the Kenya Government. The Government was generous with the allocation of valuable land for use by the College: main tuition building, 5 acres; workshop and reserve, 5 acres; hostels for male students, 8 acres; principal’s house, 2.5 acres; and playing fields etc, 30 acres.

¹⁵Chanan Singh *Gandhi Memorial Society: A Short History*, 1965, p.3.

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Photo: Kenya Information Office

On the left is the Right Reverend Reginald Crabbe, Bishop of Mombasa, who concluded the ceremony with a prayer and blessing

Figure 1.3 – *Sir Phillip Mitchell, Governor of Kenya, lays the foundation stone for the Royal Technical College, 1952*

On April 25, 1952, the foundation of the first and main building of the Royal Technical College of East Africa was laid before a very representative gathering by Sir Philip Mitchell, Governor of Kenya and Chairman of East Africa High Commission. In his speech, the Governor said:¹⁶

“The Institution of which we are laying the foundation stone today aspires to become in future, the Royal College of Science and Technology for the whole of East Africa and I hope the day will come when it will qualify for the grant of a Royal Charter and so achieve the equivalent of University status. There is, however, a very long way to go from the foundation stone to that stage of achievement”

The Governor was being too pessimistic. It actually took less than

¹⁶Appendix A to the College Report, op. cit. also *East African Standard*, April 26, 1952.

ten years for the Royal Technical College, which was established in 1956, to be transformed into the second university college (the second “Asquith College”) in East Africa on June 25, 1961, under the name of Royal College Nairobi. It was also admitted into special relations with the University of London and began preparing students in the Faculties of Arts, Science, and Engineering for award of degrees of the University of London. In his speech, the Governor gave a brief historical background to the event. He said,

“The College which we are proposing to build on this site and on the adjacent land round about derives, as has been usual in the United Kingdom itself, from the establishment of the continuation classes by the enthusiasm of the City Council and particularly individual members of it, of its staff, and Alderman Tyson who have been the moving spirits, assisted by the Education Department as far as it could, and by the Government, with grants of money. In the United Kingdom, the great system of technical education that we know today, began in a modest form with the Mechanics Institutes ... the first of which was established at the Birkbeck College in London in 1824. The movement spread rapidly. By 1841, there were more than 200 of these institutes and by 1860, 750, mostly situated, as you would expect, in the industrial towns of the Midlands, Lancashire and Yorkshire. These Mechanics’ institutes were mainly designed to give evening classes, scientific and technological instruction to working men and they bear a very close resemblance to the origins of the College we are starting to build today.

I confess that when shortly after my arrival here as Governor, I considered the first report of the Development Committee and saw that a sum of £50 thousand was proposed for what was then called the Nairobi Technical Institute. I felt a certain amount of dismay because, having been closely associated with the reconstruction of Makerere in 1938, I knew only too well how sadly inadequate that figure was and I was afraid it might prove a serious stumbling block to what was required to be done. I do not know if anyone realised then, but I certainly did not, that other circumstances would arise which would compel us to bestir ourselves in this matter and to consider our ideas about the cost; these circumstances were in the main, the growing difficulty of securing places for our young people in institutions for technical and vocational education in the United Kingdom and

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the rapidly rising cost of such education overseas ... I doubt if there is any country in the world so wealthy that it can afford to rely wholly on institutions at a distance of thousands of miles for the whole of technical and higher education, even if such a course was not for other reasons open to objection.

The Mechanics' Institutes in the United Kingdom were the products of the Industrial Revolution rather than a development from the old craft guilds and their apprentice system; and here, although there is a certain amount of what I might call informal apprenticeship, and some more formal arrangements, for example, in the Railway and the Post Office, we are for all practical purposes, as far as higher technical education is concerned, starting from scratch. We shall have to start in a modest way and work our way upwards towards the standard and diversity we hope to achieve. We must in the process keep firmly before us, the important principle that technical education at all stages must be clearly linked with practice in the trades and professions and is either a prelude for further technical training or is associated with industrial training ...

The pressing need ... arising from the difficulty of obtaining places in the United Kingdom and the great cost, made it necessary to tackle the difficulty of the limited finance that had been provided. Accordingly, and as a lead and earnest of our determination, the sums voted by the Government had to be greatly increased and this was done from £50 thousand to £160 thousand. I then invited the Governors of Uganda and Tanganyika to participate in the College, and as you know, they have agreed to do so, Uganda with a substantial sum of £100 thousand and Tanganyika with £50 thousand.

... The College has been launched under a Charter, which we shall ask the Central Assembly to replace with an Act."

The Governor added that he had also received a generous grant of £150 thousand from the British Government under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act.

The Governing Council of the College, appointed Major-General Colin Bullard as the first Principal in March 1952. He assumed duty in early July of the same year. Early in 1952, the East African High Commission agreed that, in general, institutions of higher learning should be inter-territorial and specifically included the Royal Technical College as such an institution. A Bill to give effect to this decision was referred by

the Secretary of State to the Advisory Committee on Colonial Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology, for advice and was also reported to the Inter-University Council. In April 1954, the Bill passed into law as an Act of the East Africa High Commission and replaced the Charter granted to the College by the Governor of Kenya in September, 1951.¹⁷

The Act directed that the College shall be known as the Royal Technical College of East Africa and shall provide:

- a Facilities for higher technical training;
- b Facilities for professional training;
- c Facilities for research; and
- d Facilities for vocational training, either in conjunction with any other training or separately therefrom, in engineering, in sanitary science, in pharmacy, in domestic science, in industry, in commerce, in accountancy, in economics, in arts, and in art and artistic crafts, either directly or through the medium of connected schools or connected institutes.

During this time, a group of people in East Africa, largely of Asian origin, conceived the idea of establishing a college in East Africa as a memorial to Mahatma Gandhi. For that purpose, the Gandhi Memorial Committee was formed. Considerable sums of money were raised and promised to establish a college known as the Gandhi Memorial Academy, for intermediate, and in due course, higher education. In 1952, Dr Ramanlal Kanaiyalal Yajnik, one of India's most outstanding educational leaders, was released from his job as the Director of Education for Saurashtra in India, to lead the fund-raising effort. He was regarded as accomplished, scholarly, energetic, tactful, and not associated with East Africa politics. His fund raising efforts were carried out in East African and in India. It is estimated that at least forty thousand Asian families and almost two-hundred thousand individuals contributed. Significant contributions were also received from individuals and business firms in India.¹⁸

It soon became apparent that the functions of the proposed academy would overlap with those of Makerere College and of the proposed

¹⁷*The Royal Technical College of East Africa Act, 1954.*

¹⁸Robert Gregory, *The Rise and Fall of Philanthropy in East Africa: The Asian's Contribution*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992.

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Royal Technical College. The members of the Gandhi Memorial Academy Council and the generous donors for the proposed Academy came to the conclusion that the interest of intermediate and higher education in East Africa, the broad purpose for which the funds were raised, could best be served if the Gandhi Memorial Academy (GMA) project was merged with the Royal Technical College, and the GMA funds placed at the disposal of the Royal Technical College, particularly for utilisation in the three Faculties of Arts, Science, and Commerce. The Gandhi Memorial Academy Society, whose President was AB Patel, agreed to contribute £200 thousand towards the cost of initial buildings and gave an endowment of £100 thousand to the College. They also set up a Trust Fund, the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi Trust, of another £100 thousand, primarily for the benefit of the College. In return, the Gandhi Memorial Society was granted representation on the Governing Council of the College.

Additional generous support for the College came from the Foreign Operations Administration of the United States Government which contributed £147 thousand to the cost of the Department of Engineering to enable the College to advance its engineering training to professional levels. In connection with this grant, faculty members from Rutgers University, New Jersey, were availed to provide advice on the planning of the engineering buildings and the provision of the equipment needed to achieve the project.¹⁹ Earlier in January 1952, the East African High Commission had agreed to recommend that recurrent costs of the College should be met by block grants from the territories. Each territory was to contribute one third of the overhead costs and a share of the remaining costs proportionate to the number of students sent.

*** **

The Royal Technical College was opened to students in March 1956. The initial main courses offered were:²⁰

¹⁹"College Grants from United States", *East African Standard*, April 2, 1955.

²⁰*Royal Technical College Prospectus*, 1956.

- a Department of Architecture: courses for the intermediate and final examinations of the Royal Institute of British Architects, leading to College qualifications in applied Art.
- b Department of Arts: courses leading to intermediate BA in English, Geography, History, Mathematics, and French.
- c Department of Commerce: full-time courses for the External BSc (Economics) degree of the University of London, the intermediate examinations of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries and the Corporation of Secretaries, and the First Examination of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors; part-time courses in accountancy, banking, management, surveying, and transport administration.
- d Department of Domestic Science: courses for College Diploma in domestic subjects for intending teachers.
- e Department of Engineering: courses for College Diplomas in Civil, Mechanical and Electrical engineering. It was hoped that successful completion of the courses would enable students to sit for examinations of the professional institutions and degree courses.
- f Department of Science: courses preliminary to work of intermediate standard in physics, chemistry, biology, geology, and mathematics. More advanced courses were to be arranged.

It is worth noting that practically all courses offered in the College led to British qualifications in technical, commercial, and professional bodies and associations, even in the Department of Arts, irrespective of whether these qualifications were relevant in Africa. This tended to confirm Ashby's accusation that the education offered was "a vivid expression of British cultural parochialism."

The full name of the College was "The Royal Technical College of East Africa – Incorporating the Gandhi Memorial Academy." The following qualifications were accepted as providing suitable standards of entry: (a) Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (with suitable standards in the subjects appropriate to the course entered) or (b) Joint Common Preliminary Examination of the Engineering Institutions.

The General declaration of the College was that the facilities it had provided shall, subject to the provision of its Act, be available to all persons without distinction of race or creed; and they shall be governed and administered so as to: (a) ensure to all students freedom to worship ac-

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ording to their own religious beliefs and (b) foster and encourage the principles of good citizenship and to develop and improve the moral character and deportment of the students. Given that the Mau Mau war, which started in 1952, was still raging and that racial segregation in general, and in educational institutions in particular, was a fundamental policy in colonial Kenya, this declaration represented a major breakthrough towards the creation of an integrated society in Kenya.

*** **

The Governing Council in 1956, was chaired by GP Willoughby, OBE, who was appointed by the East Africa High Commission.²¹ This was a high-powered Governing Council. But as was characteristic with Colonial boards and councils, Africans were grossly under-represented, in this case by only one member, Kawaly-Kagwa from Uganda. Major policies and decisions on the future of technical and higher education in East Africa were now to be made by a Council whose membership was almost entirely non-African.

By this time, several buildings were complete and ready for occupation. These included the Gandhi Wing, built with funds from the CDW Fund and completed in 1955, with Messrs Taylor and Woodrow as contractors and Ministry of Works as architects; Men's Hall No. 1 (Mitchell Hall) and No. 2 (Radhakrishnan Hall), financed by CDW Fund, designed by Blackburn, Norburn and Partners, and built by Coronation Builders who completed the work in 1956; Women's Halls No. 1 and

²¹Other members of the inaugural Governing Council were Vice-Chairman - Hon. CD Newbold, QC and member of the Legislative Council who was appointed by the East Africa High Commission; Lady Sidney Farrar, MBE and Kirpal Singh Sagoo, appointed by the Kenya Government; Hon. JP Attenborough, CBE and Hon. F Hinds, MLC, appointed by the Government of Tanganyika; Dr JB Hutchinson, CMG, FRS and Hon. ME Kawalya-Kagwa, OBE, MLC, appointed by the Government of Uganda; Sir David Lindsay Keir, MA, LLD, represented the Advisory Committee on Colonial Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology; HR Bridger, CBE, represented The East African Association of Engineers; and JR Leslie, MC, represented the Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Eastern Africa; Alderman I Somen, MBE, represented the City of Nairobi; and Hon. AB Patel, CMG, MLC represented the Gandhi Memorial Academy Board. Major-General C. Bullard, was an Ex-officio member of the Council as Principal of the College.

No. 2, financed by the CDW Fund, with Blackburn and Norburn as architects, which were completed in 1956. The Engineering Workshops, also funded by the CDW with Ministry of Works and Campagnola as the contractors, was completed in April 1957. Later, the American Wing, housing Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Land Surveying, was financed by USAID, with Jackson and Hill as architects and Rahinsi and Company as contractors, was completed in 1959.²²

The establishment of the Royal Technical College marked the beginning of the end of the concept of a unitary university restricted to Makerere College. The supporters of the Royal Technical College argued that they were not duplicating facilities. On the contrary, they were providing facilities for technical and commercial studies and training that would be complimentary to, and not competitive with, those offered at Makerere. Also, the Royal Technical College and Makerere College were the beginning of what, in time, would develop into a University of East Africa.²³

The apparently uncontrolled developments at the Royal Technical College, however, were rapidly making nonsense of the concept of a unitary University of East Africa. To clear the confusion, the Colonial Office decided to appoint a Working Party on Higher Education in East Africa under the chairmanship of Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders who had been an influential member of the Asquith Commission. Other members of the Working Party included Sir David Lindsey Keir, Prof Giffen and Dr FJ Harlow. Their terms of reference were:

- a To bring under review, the existing provision for all post-secondary education in East Africa, taking note of the plans in view for the development of higher education institutions,
- b To bring under review the estimated requirements of higher education in East Africa for the next ten years, and
- c Having regard to the probable financial resources of the next decade, to make recommendations arising out of (a) and (b).

Members of the Working Party were in East Africa between July 16 and August 18, 1955. Their itinerary included the four East African ter-

²² *University College Nairobi Calendar*, 1964-1965

²³ East African Standard, April 27, 1952, Editorial.

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ritories: Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar. They held discussions with stakeholders and visited the institutions whose future they discussed in their report.

At that time, Makerere College was the only university institution in East Africa. Founded in 1921, Makerere had passed through all stages of a pioneering university institution in Tropical Africa. Starting as a trade and technical school, it later gave instruction in secondary school subjects up to School Certificate level. The first certificates were issued in 1935. In 1938, in accordance with the recommendations of the De La Warr Commission, the College proceeded to higher studies in Arts and Science that were about the level of intermediate studies in universities. In 1946, after a visit by a delegation of the Inter-University Council, preparations were made to achieve the status of a University College within the Asquith scheme. The College was accepted, as the University College of East Africa, into Special Relation with the University of London in November 1949. At the time, the College had 27 full-time (and 5 part-time) members of the academic staff, and 222 students (213 men and 9 women). There were Faculties of Arts, Science, Medicine, Agriculture and Veterinary Science. In the same year, the Faculty of Education was separated from the Faculty of Arts and an Extra-Mural Department established. Examinations for the degrees of Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BSc) were held in accordance with the University of London regulations for the first time in December 1953.²⁴

A Diploma in Arts was introduced in the School of Fine Art and in 1953 the Medical Diploma was recognised as a qualification to practice medicine in East Africa. The East African Research Institute of Social Science, which was attached to the College, was also set up in 1949. The College had applied for recognition of its Medical Diploma as a qualification registrable with the General Medical Council of Britain.²⁵

Makerere thus pioneered the development of all types of post-secondary education in East Africa: technical, teacher training, and university education. Through its many graduates in important positions in East Africa, it exerted an influence well beyond the expectations of its founders

²⁴Margaret Macpherson, *They Built for the Future* London: Cambridge University Press, 1965.

²⁵*ibid.*

and beyond the meagre resources that were availed to it. This story shows the debt which East Africa already owed Makerere. The unique understanding which existed amongst the countries of East Africa was due, in no small measure, to the fact that many of the leaders in different walks of life had Makerere as their *alma mater*.

The Working Party produced their report in 1956,²⁶ which, in effect, marked the official break with the doctrine of a unitary University of East Africa. Two arguments were advanced for abandoning this doctrine. First, the output of secondary schools were expected to rise sharply, thus making it difficult for Makerere to accommodate most of them. The Working Party, therefore, recommended that foundations of a further centre or centres of university education should be laid on condition that the provision of university education in East Africa should continue to be the concern of the three territories working together. Also, any funds needed for the beginning of university institutions elsewhere should not be obtained by directing to these new purposes, money needed to complete the development of Makerere.

The second important factor which influenced the deliberations of the Working Party was political. There was what it called “a growing territorial consciousness and consequential ambitions” to possess a university institution. Makerere College was increasingly being regarded both in Kenya and Tanganyika, as an institution belonging to another territory. Kenya had started the Royal Technical College which was now planning to award degrees. The Governor of Tanganyika had informed the Working Party that a sum of £700 thousand had been put aside towards the founding of a University College in Tanganyika in ten years’ time. The Working Party, therefore, concluded somewhat reluctantly, that territorial consciousness should be the main determinant of how many university colleges there should be in East Africa. It therefore recommended, first, that a new university college should be established in Nairobi. Secondly, that the university college to be founded in Tanganyika, be held back until development at Makerere was complete. Finally, that university planning should be at the inter-territorial level, so as to avoid unnecessary duplication between the new establishments and Makerere.

²⁶ *Report of the Working Party on Higher Education in East Africa, 1956.*

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By this time, the main building at the Royal Technical College, whose foundation was laid by Governor Mitchell in 1952, was ready for occupation. It was situated on a site of five acres near the centre of the City of Nairobi, next to the National Theatre. The building was a four-storied ferro-concrete structure of modern design. Hostels for the College had been built on the lower slopes of Hospital Hill. The College had room to grow on a total of 54 acres in the heart of Nairobi. In addition, an Endowment Fund had been launched. It was sponsored by the three British Governors in East Africa (Sir Evelyn Baring in Kenya, Sir Edward Twinning in Tanganyika, and Sir Andrew Cohen in Uganda), His Highness The Aga Khan, the East African Association of Engineers, the Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Eastern Africa, the Uganda Development Corporation Limited, and the Tanganyika Mining Association.

FORMAL OPENING OF THE ROYAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF EAST AFRICA, 1956

On October 24, 1956, Princess Margaret formally opened the Royal Technical College of East Africa in Nairobi. The Chairman of the Governing Council of the College gave a few introductory remarks before inviting the Princess to open the College. In his remarks, the Chairman gave a brief overview of the journey that had led to that day. He said,²⁷

“The College is the first institution in East Africa for higher technological education. These buildings bear witness to the united efforts of all communities, efforts which have been so generously supplemented by advice and funds from the Mother Country ...

It is nearly ten years ago that Sir Philip Mitchell, then the Governor of Kenya, entrusted a Committee under my Chairmanship, with the task of preparing a scheme for the development of technical education in Kenya. Using that Committee's report as a basis, the Secretary of State for the Colonies decided, with the concurrence of the Governments of the neighbouring Territories of Tanganyika and Uganda, that the proposed institution should serve the whole of East Africa.

His Majesty King George VI took a great interest in the project and the present title of the College, The Royal Technical College

²⁷Royal Technical College of East Africa, *Formal Opening and Commemorative Address*. October, 1957. p.3-4.

of East Africa, was personally chosen by him. The College is proud that this Royal interest is being continued by the presence here today of Your Royal Highness.

Active planning was commenced late in 1950 by a Siting and Buildings Committee, followed by an interim Governing Council, working under a Charter. This in turn gave place to the present Governing Council, legally constituted in 1954, by an Act of the Central Legislative Assembly.

... Building began in 1951 and the Foundation Stone of the College was laid in April, 1952, by the Chairman of the East Africa High Commission. It had been hoped that tuition could have begun in 1955, but this main building was only completed last month [September 1956]. Meanwhile the decision, reached after prolonged negotiation, to merge the Gandhi Memorial Academy with the College resulted in a very welcome addition to our resources. East Africa owes a debt of gratitude to the statesmanship and vision of the officers of the Society in relinquishing its earlier aim of a separate institution. The second floor of this building has been designated the Gandhi Memorial Academy. The College, however, functions in every way as one, without administrative or academic division. Already over £300 thousand has been contributed by the Society to College funds; and there can be no doubt that this joint institution will further the growth of understanding and co-operation between the various communities in East Africa.

In 1953, the Principal was appointed. Heads of Faculties followed early in 1955; and by the beginning of this month [October 1956] almost all the required staff appointments had been made. I think that the College has every reason to be proud of the calibre of those to whom has been entrusted the early development of the academic life of the College. It is a great challenge that they have accepted and a great opportunity that they have seized.

During the building of this first stage of the College, it was extremely difficult to gauge the numbers that would seek admission. The need for the product of a technical college in East Africa was self-evident; but there was no guide to the degree of interest that the youth of East Africa would take in technical subjects. In any event, the number applying for admission was most surprising and far exceeded the capacity of the College. The Governing Council took advantage of this to raise the stan-

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Photo: British Pathé

Figure 1.4 – *Princess Margaret officially opening the Royal Technical College, 1956*

dard of entry as being the most adequate and equitable means of reducing applications to manageable proportions."

When Princess Margaret took to the podium, she recalled that it was her father, King George VI, who gave the Royal Technical College its title. She added that the fine modern building was worth the inspiration and hard work which had been devoted to the College. She continued,²⁸

"In territories such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar, whose activities – whether agricultural, commercial or industrial are increasing so rapidly, it is easy to see the importance of a college of this nature, for it must be the training ground of your future leaders.

By this means of training your own professional men and women, you will be able to find the skill and knowledge needed for your country's development. A splendid start has been made here by providing these facilities in a college which, I have no doubt, in the years will steadily expand.

I would like here to say how much I hope that the Governing Council and the academic staff will ensure that the education which is offered to the students will be made as broad as possible,

²⁸ibid p.5; East African Standard, October 25, 1956.

and will avoid too close a concentration on purely technical subjects. As I see it, they have a two-fold task. It is, first, to provide men and women trained in specialised and extremely practical fields. Secondly, and I am sure that this is more important, it is to send out into the world, people with wide interests, who have by their association with their fellow students, been firmly set on the road leading to wise citizenship.

A great part in this is played by corporate college life – the working and playing together, and the sharing of many activities – all of which lay the foundation stones of life-long friendships and respect for the viewpoint of others. It is certain that the development of this country is going to need not only professional skill, but also good manners and the ability to live in harmony with one's fellow men."

The Princess added that there was already a happy augury for the future in the incorporation of the Gandhi Memorial Academy within the College. The vision and generous attitude which led to this step was, she considered, of even more significance than the gift of money which accompanied it. For it meant the rejection of "separation" and an endorsement of the growing unity of the different sections of the community. She then unveiled the plaque on the side of Gloucester Hall (today know as Taifa Hall) to mark the occasion.

*** **

On the occasion of the official opening of the College, a commemorative address was delivered in Gloucester Hall in the evening, by Sir David Lindsay-Keir (MA, LL.D), Master of Balliol College, Oxford, and Chairman of the Council for Overseas Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology. In his lecture, he stated that although the need for university education overseas was urgent, that for technical education was no less so. But in the case of technical education, there was no prescribed model to be followed. Therefore, a new type of technical college could be devised, differing from any in Britain. So the great task began, and during the past five years, there had been the reconstitution of Fourah Bay College, the establishment of Kumasi College in Ghana and the Nigeria College, and now the Royal Technical College of East

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Exhibit 1 – *The Royal Technical College Coat of Arms*

The image displays the Royal Technical College Coat of Arms with various parts labeled. The main coat of arms features a shield with a lion, three torches, and a compartment with crops. It is supported by a crane and a giraffe, topped with a crest of three hands holding a book. To the right, the original crest of King Edward III is shown, and below it are three colonial police badges.

CREST

WREATH

MANTLING

HELMET

SUPPORTERS

SHIELD

COMPARTMENT

MOTO

Original crest of King Edward III (Red signified military strength and magnanimity)

Colonial Police Badges showing each countries National Symbol that were captured in the Royal Technical College Coat of Arms

The Royal Technical College Coat of Arms was designed in the British heraldic tradition. Heraldry is the practice of devising, granting, displaying, describing, and recording coats of arms. The *shield*, *helmet*, *mantling* and *wreath* were based on the original Royal Crest introduced by King Edward III of England. The *charges* (objects on the shield) on the College Coat of Arm's *shield* retained one of the lions on the Royal Shield to represent Kenya whose colonial symbol was the lion. The three torches represented the colonies of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. In heraldic tradition, the green colour of the shield symbolised hope and joy. The *mantling* and *wreath* drew their colours of green and gold from the *shield*.

The *supporters*, the animals on either side of the *shield*, are the crested crane on the left (was the colonial national symbol for Uganda) and the giraffe on the right (the colonial national symbol for Tanganyika). The *supporters*, therefore, represented the support the College would provide Uganda and Tanganyika by training their citizens and the financial and governance support the two countries would provide to the College. The *crest* has three multi-racial clasped hands holding up an open book symbolising that learning at the College was open to all races (at that time classified into African, Asian and Caucasian). On the left of the *compartment* are sugarcane and flowering tea plants. Cotton plants are on the right. All three, at that time, were important East African cash crops – cotton appears on the compartments of both the current Uganda and Tanzania Coats of Arms.

Finally, the *motto*, written in latin, *Unitate et Labore* or "Unity and Work", sent the message that *all* races had to unite and work together to build a stronger nation. It is interesting that the motto was coined in the middle of the State of Emergency (1952-1960) declared to suppress the Mau Mau uprising against colonial rule. The motto, however, is still apt today in a country where divisions are now along ethnic lines.

– Understanding of Heraldry from *International Heraldry and Heralds*, internationalheraldy.com; "Royal arms of England", wikipedia.com; "Coat of arms of Uganda", wikipedia.com; (all viewed Jan 25, 2021).



Photo: Anon. & Madara Ogot

Figure 1.5 – Princess Margaret unveiling the Commemorative Plaque (1956) and the Plaque in 2021

Africa, the scheme for a Polytechnic in Singapore, and the prospects of another in the West Indies. Sir Lindsay-Keir then asked,²⁹

“What is the task of these foundations, and the others which are bound to follow in later years? They are primarily technical. They have to choose from the whole content of technical education, the kinds suitable to the needs of each territory; to the stage each has reached in other branches of education; its capacity to produce a supply of properly qualified students and the likelihood of their being absorbed in different sectors and the various levels of the employment market; and the financial resources on which technical education, like everything else, must ultimately depend ...

Technical Education has to satisfy multiple demands: for training in the crafts of the artisan, the mechanic and the cultivator; of the clerk, the book-keeper, the draughtsman; of the foreman, technician, supervisor, clerk of works and inspector; and for the professional education of the architect, the engineer, the surveyor, the accountant and the teacher of technical knowledge ... but technical education must meet the need at every level and the system should be devised as a whole. It should offer the opportunity of continuous progress from the trade and techni-

²⁹Royal Technical College of East Africa, op. cit, p.9-19.

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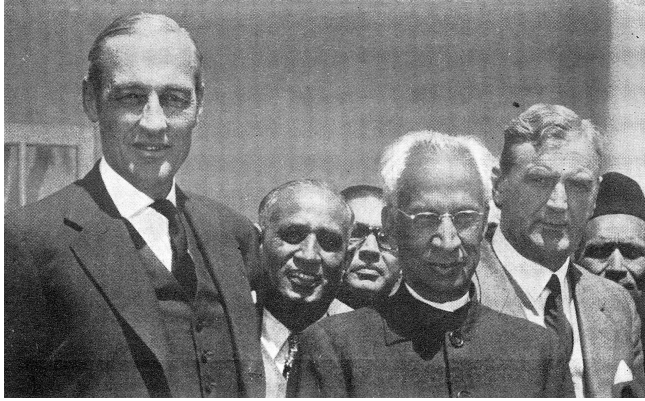
Source: RTC Annual Reports and Accounts

Figure 1.6 – *Royal Technical College Main Tuition Building, 1958*

cal schools to the technical institutes and on to the technical colleges; so that theory and practice are kept close together, individual talent discovered, developed and encouraged to its utmost, and adequate recruitment at every level of skill and responsibility ensured.”

He warned that the ill-defined relationships between the arts, science and technology, and the prejudices and conflicts of interest with whom they had in the past been connected in Britain, and the practical difficulties they created, should not be forgotten when the task of carrying British technical education overseas was being undertaken. They must be set aside, as being relevant only to the historical development of British education itself and

“irrelevant to the position in new countries where the paramount concern is to promote higher education of all three kinds. But it is not enough merely to set them aside. There must be a positive policy, aimed at bringing together, in the same system, all three traditions of which it might be made the heir ... Technical studies are their core and main purpose; but they do not stand in isolation from Science and the Arts. They have need of each other, in a type of college which values them all.”



Source: Royal Technical College Official Opening

Figure 1.7 – Governor of Kenya Sir Evelyn Baring, Chairman Gandhi Memorial Academy Society AB Patel, Vice-President of India Dr Radhakrishnan, Sir David Lindsay-Keir, 1956

The Royal Technical College, Sir Lindsay-Keir said, must therefore, combine humanistic, scientific and technical studies so as to emphasise their mutual significance. The College could not do without the chemist, the physicist, the biologist, the mathematician whose work technology translates into practical applications. Techniques get out of date. The sciences they are founded on constantly advance. He said that there was another witness which the Royal Technical College must affirm. It

“must constantly refer to the standards by which all human endeavour will in the end be judged: those set forth in the finest utterances of literature and philosophy, in the beauty of the poet’s or the artist’s vision, in the summing-up of human experience through the teachings of history ... Arts, Science and Technology can no longer afford to dwell apart.”

Looking to the future, he went on to say that

“The College must define and make known its place in the complex and ever-changing scene of East African life. No college, least of all, a college which is centred on technology, can live in a world of its own, unrelated to the activities that go on outside it. The essential task of any such college is to relate itself to commerce, industry, and the professions that lie outside the scope

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Source: Royal Technical College of East Africa, Alumni Network, rtcnairobi.org.

Figure 1.8 – *Royal Technical College, Mens Hall 2, 1959*

of university studies. It will be to this college that they will increasingly turn for recruitment, in professional, but also in the sub-professional, grades. The needs of every branch of industry and trade, and any professions, will have to be scrutinised, measured and met. Each branch will have to ensure that the College knows what it wants, in what number of what kinds ... Its education programmes can be realistically based only through a constant interchange of information ... And there is an inter-relation at deeper level still. The technologist, as distinct from the technician, deals not with skills and techniques, but with fundamental science applied to production. It is his task to keep practice in line with scientific knowledge, to be alert to see what can be more efficient, more economical, and what is no longer worth retaining. He is the essential link between the library, the laboratory, and the production plant.”

What he had said about productive industry, he concluded, could be extended to commerce and the professions.

*** **

At the end of the introductory term on July 12, 1956, the formal opening of the Gandhi Memorial Academy as part of the College and the

unveiling of a life-size bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi, was combined in a single ceremony presided over by the Vice-President of India, Dr S Radhakrishnan. Robert Gregory describes the scene thus,³⁰

“The grounds, filled with three thousand chairs and an imposing dais, were gaily decorated. The leaders sat at the dais and the favoured occupied the chairs, but thousands of others stood as [Chairman of the Gandhi Memorial Academy] Patel, [Governor] Baring, Yajnik, as well as [Vice-President] Radhakrishnan spoke.”

In his eloquent speech, Dr Radhakrishnan said that the creed of the College should be that technology is not enough, that it needs the liberal arts and the pure sciences to keep it company, at first as auxiliaries, but soon in their own right.³¹

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The first Principal of the Royal Technical College of East Africa was Major-General Colin Bullard, who was appointed in June 1953. He resigned in March 1957 and Herbert Philip Gale, then Dean of the College, assumed the duties of Acting Principal.³² Prof James Morton Hyslop was appointed on September 1, 1960, as Principal of the Royal Technical College of East Africa and Principal-designate of the University College Nairobi into which the Technical College was to be transformed. A brilliant mathematician at the time of his appointment, he was Professor of Mathematics at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. He was a native of Scotland who graduated from the University of Glasgow with First Class Honours in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, and was awarded the Cunningham Gold Medal for Mathematics and the David and Stuart Foutis Scholarship.

In 1932, he added to his MA degree of Glasgow, the BA degree of Cambridge University and PhD of the same University in 1935. In 1938, he obtained the higher doctorate, the DSc of Glasgow University. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1939. He was

³⁰Robert Gregory *The Rise and Fall of Philanthropy in East Africa: The Asian's Contribution*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992, p.143.

³¹ibid.

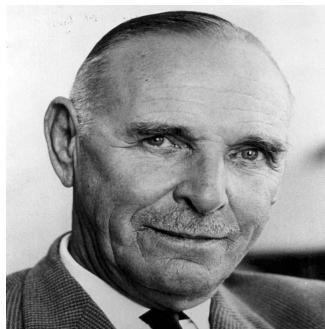
³²Royal Technical College of East Africa *Annual Report and Accounts for the year 1956-57*, November 1957.

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Photo: Anon.

Figure 1.9 – Vice-President of India, Dr Radharkrishnan, giving his speech during Gandhi Memorial Academy opening, 1956



Source: Anon.

Figure 1.10 – Prof James Morton Hyslop, 1961

Exhibit 2 – Mahatma Gandhi Statue



Photo: Anon

College Principal Prof JM Hyslop, Dr VS Jha (Director Commonwealth Liaison Unit) and Vice-Principal Dr HP Gale next to the Gandhi Statue on the second floor of the Gandhi Wing, 1960.



Photo: Wikimedia

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paying tribute and officially unveiling of Gandhi statue at its new location, looking on is Vice-Chancellor, Prof Peter Mbithi, 2016.

In 1955, as the funds drive by the Gandhi Memorial Academy Society was coming to a close, the Society made the decision to erect a bronze statue of Gandhi within the Academy building. The choice of material acknowledged that Gandhi was bronze in colour and that a metallic art object could last for a thousand years. A famous Bombay Sculptor, VK Karmakar, was commissioned for the job at an estimated cost of 30 thousand rupees. MP Shah (after whom MP Shah Hospital is named) agreed to meet the full cost. After a plastic model portraying Gandhi in late age, wearing a simple dhoti, and striding in his customary style with staff in hand was prepared in Bombay, officials from the Society travelled to India to review and give their approval. The Statue was then cast in Bronze, shipped to Kenya and placed on the second floor of the main building in the Gandhi Wing (image on the left).

The Statue was later moved to the Gandhi Memorial Library, where it remained until 2016, after which it was relocated to its current home at the entrance to the Gandhi Wing (image on the right). Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, officially unveiled the statue at its new location on July 11, 2016, after which he gave a public lecture in Taifa Hall.

– Developed from Robert Gregory, *The Rise and Fall of Philanthropy in East Africa: The Asian's Contribution*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992.

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a Lecturer in mathematics at the University of Glasgow between 1933 and 1946, except for a period of four years during the Second World War when he served in the Royal Air Force both in Britain and in the Middle East. He was the author of many text books and papers in Mathematics. The future of the College was now placed in the hands of a distinguished scholar. Until his arrival in Nairobi, Dr HP Gale, Vice-Principal of the Technical College and Vice-Principal-designate of the University College, acted as Principal.³³

Unfortunately, the Working Party which created the Royal Technical College, did not propose a structure to carry out institutional cooperation at the inter-territorial level. What was to be the relationship between Makerere College and the Royal Technical College? To answer this question, a second Working Party under the Chairmanship of Sir John Lockwood, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, came to East Africa in July 1958. Dame Lillian Penson and Sir David Lindsay-Keir were among the other members. The Working Party was charged with considering the need for additional institutions of higher education and the case for a Federal University of East Africa.

The Lockwood Commission accepted the argument in the Carr-Saunders Working Party Report that whatever the need for expansion in relation to school output might be, university colleges would be founded in both Kenya and Tanganyika, because they were symbols of territorial consciousness. The Commission, therefore, interpreted their task to be that of constructing a model of growth that would reconcile political demands with economic rationality. They accepted the idea of a third university in Tanganyika, although it was to be delayed until 1966, when a Federal University of East Africa was to come into being. Such a federal university, it was argued, was needed to harmonise developments.

In the meantime, the Royal Technical College, renamed in 1961 to the Royal College Nairobi, was to be transformed into a university college providing courses in technical and professional subjects to the highest level. It was also to enter into a special relationship with the University of London until a federal university was established with inter-territorial representation on its Council. It thus became the second "Asquith College" in East Africa after Makerere. When the federal uni-

³³"Technical College Principal," *East African Standard*, March 2, 1960.

Exhibit 3 – *Prayer for Mankind*

*A poem dedicated to the students of the Royal Technical College,
By Major-General Colin Bullard, Principal.*

We masks of men whose souls are dumb
Wherefore upon they come
The Legend in the void is scrolled
Beyond the stars, whose Light is cold.

We piteous mutes, devoid of parts
With glory imprisoned in our hearts
Beating utterances, soon may we
Cast off our fell heredity.

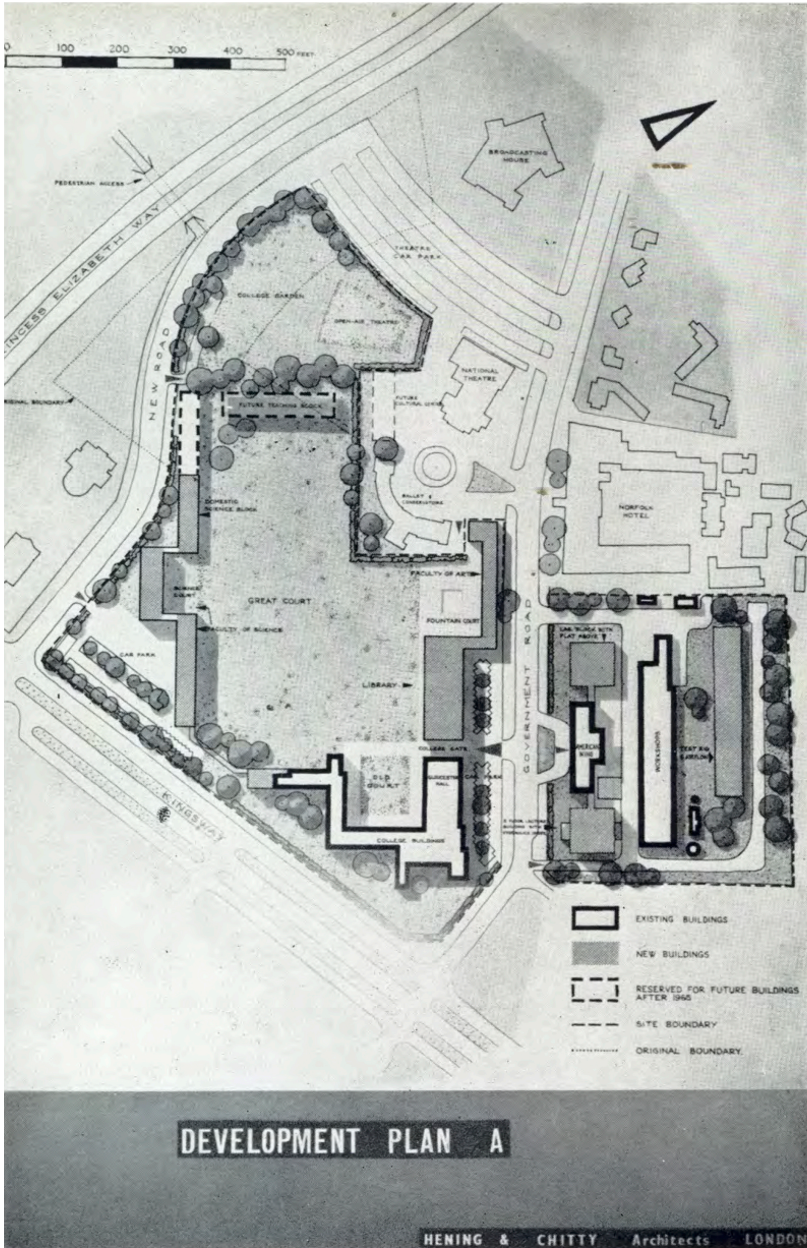
No longer pass, poor shuffling crowd
Inexorably cramped and bowed
In struggle drear from dark to dark
But find the truth's primeval spark.

With tampering dreams enkindled, see
The confines of eternity
And, with cessation of man's strife
Reveal the purposes of Life.

Be free of art and wisdom's store
Harbour the Loveliest evermore
Twist hear and soul a peace create
Lean upon Heaven's garden gate.

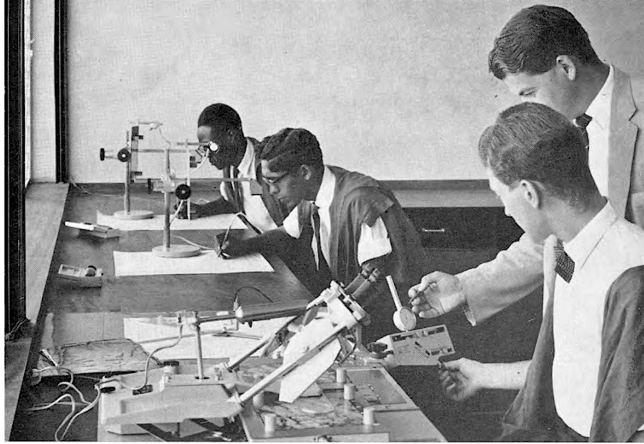
– *Varsity Focus*, 2005.

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Source: Royal Technical College of East Africa, Annual Reports and Accounts for the year 1959/60

Map 1 – Royal Technical College Development Plan, 1957



Source: Royal Technical College of East Africa, Ceremonial Opening of the American Wing, Official Programme, March 11, 1960.

Figure 1.11 – *Royal Technical College, engineering survey students in session, 1960*

versity was established, each College would provide basic courses in Arts and Science and the more expensive faculties such as Medicine and Engineering would be shared. The Lockwood Report was presented in November 1958. The Governments of East Africa announced in June 1959, that they had accepted it almost *in toto*. The University of East Africa was to come into being in 1966, as a temporary institution for ten to fifteen years.

THE ROYAL COLLEGE, 1961-1963

Through an Act of the East African Commission, the Royal Technical College Nairobi was transformed into the second University College in East Africa on June 25, 1961, under the name, Royal College Nairobi.³⁴ The institution was admitted into a special relationship with the University of London in February, 1961. It immediately began preparing students in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Engineering for the degrees of the University of London. However, students in the other faculties, especially the Faculty of Special Professional Studies (later renamed Faculty of Commerce) and the Faculty of Architecture, contin-

³⁴The Royal College Nairobi Act No. 4 of 1960, December 20, 1960.

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Source: Royal Technical College of East Africa, Alumni Network, rtcnairobi.org.

Figure 1.12 – Entrance from Government Road (now Harry Thuku Road) of the Royal College, 1962

ued to read for College Diplomas or for qualifications of professional bodies or institutions. Total enrolment of students at that time stood at 452.

Another significant development at this time was the transfer of Veterinary Science from Makerere University College to Royal College Nairobi in July 1962. It had been established in the late 1920s, as a Diploma School and had increased its course span gradually to four years. The Diplomas were, however, not recognised outside East Africa.

Following the transfer, the new Faculty of Veterinary Science began to offer a degree course based on the internationally accepted recommendations of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) with four years or 120-130 weeks of intense theoretical and practical instruction. From this small beginning, the Faculty grew rapidly, thanks to generous support from the US Government (through the United States Aid for International Development, USAID), Norway (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, NORAD), the United Kingdom (CDW) and the Rockefeller Foundation. USAID gave a grant of £75 thousand, out of which £40 thousand was used for the Clinical School at Kabete which



Source: Royal Technical College of East Africa, Ceremonial Opening of the American Wing, Official Programme, March 11, 1960.

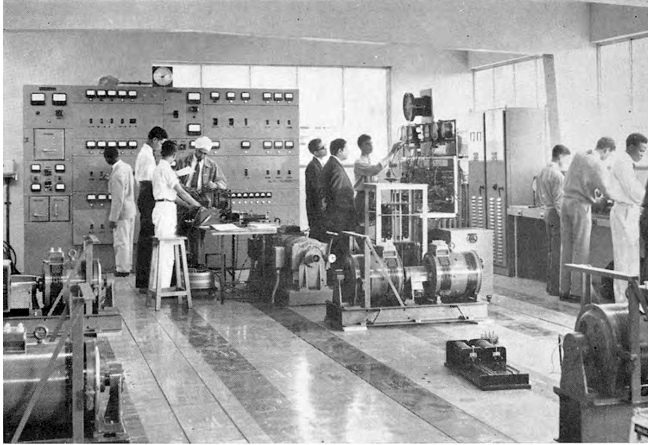
Figure 1.13 – *Royal Technical College, electrical engineering students in session, 1960*

was completed in May 1963.

In the same month, the Royal College received another grant of £265 thousand from the American Government. The agreements for the new grant were signed in Nairobi by the Acting USAID Representative in Kenya, RW Powers, and the Acting Chairman of the Royal College Council, Bethuel M Gecaga. From the new USAID grant, £90 thousand was reserved for the appointment of American Veterinary Scientists to the Royal College and about £175 thousand went towards building a new Pathology and Microbiology block to complete the Clinical School at Kabete.

In March 1964, while welcoming the Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta to the official opening of a the new Veterinary School at Chiromo, the College Chairman, BM Gecaga, announced that the Royal College would soon change its name to University College. Gecaga said that the College was dedicated to training leaders of the new nation in all fields. The new Pre-Clinical Veterinary School buildings had been constructed on land formerly owned by the McMillan family, who built Nairobi McMillan Library. It was the only school of its kind between Khartoum and South Africa. The estate at Chiromo had been developed

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Source: Royal Technical College of East Africa, Ceremonial Opening of the American Wing, Official Programme, March 11, 1960.

Figure 1.14 – *Royal Technical College, electrical machines laboratory, 1960*

and the school built with a donation from the Rockefeller Foundation. The Clinical School buildings at Kabete and the Pre-Clinical School at Chiromo thus provided accommodation for the best equipped Veterinary Faculty concentrating on tropical diseases in Africa.³⁵ Students were to study at the Chiromo Department of Veterinary Anatomy and Physiology before completing their degree qualifying courses at the Veterinary School in Kabete.

During the opening ceremony, Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta said,³⁶

“We already have in Nairobi, a more advanced and broad-based technological complex than most young capitals can boast, and many natural advantages. I look to the University College to exploit these opportunities to the full. We wish the College to develop as rapidly as resources allow, with the generous help that we confidently hope will come from overseas, and to play its part as the primary technical college of the University of East Africa.”

³⁵ *University of Nairobi Annual Report, 1963-1964.*

³⁶ *University College, Nairobi, Annual Report, 1963-1964*

In both Kenya and Tanganyika, pressures for the immediate establishment of their own university colleges were mounting. It was, therefore, becoming evident that the date for the establishment of the federal university had to be brought forward, if it was to come into being at all. Provisional arrangements for the University of East Africa operated from 1960 and the University College in Tanganyika was now to come into being in 1964. The main problem facing the proponents of the federal university idea was how to combine three colleges at different stages of development into a federal structure. By 1966, Makerere College would be mature enough to assume full university status. What was it to gain by entering into a federal arrangement with young, inexperienced colleges, unless they were going to be its constituent colleges?

The Lockwood Commission had foreseen this problem. It had suggested that, as a solution, the "Asquith" theory of a federal university, which stated that the university should "exist in its Colleges", should be adopted. The central organization would be small and the major decisions would be left to authorities of each college. Hence, the role of the central organisation of the federal university was to be confined to regulating and co-ordinating the diverse, and often conflicting, ambitions of the constituent colleges. It was not to have any power of veto on the colleges' programmes. Thus, the initiative for developing the university was to lie with the Colleges.

However, political developments in East Africa soon revealed the weaknesses of the federal structure. The Kenya Government wanted to open three faculties instead of one that had been agreed upon. In Tanganyika, the Tanganyika African National Union Government, led by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, decided to open the new university in 1961 instead of 1964. At the same time, African leaders in Uganda were pressing hard for university status for Makerere. The University had thus become an important symbol that each East African country wanted to acquire before attaining independence. It became evident that if the federal university was to formally come into being, it was necessary to reconcile the needs and priorities of the three colleges. A Committee on Needs and Priorities was appointed in September 1962, under the Chairmanship of Dr Davidsson Nicol, Principal of the University College of Sierra Leone. However, the Nicol Report failed to reconcile the

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needs and priorities of the Colleges.

*** **

The Royal College's motto of "Fountain of Knowledge" was symbolised by the beautiful Yajnik Memorial Fountain designed by Frank Foit, a Czech sculptor, who was also the contractor. It was financed by Gandhi Smarak Nidhi Trust and completed in June 1962. Several buildings, all financed by the Colonial Development and Welfare (CDW) funds were completed and ready for occupation in 1962. These included the Administration Block, designed by Henning and Chitty Architects, completed in April; the Library Block (Gandhi Library), designed by Henning and Chitty with M Notkin as contractor, completed in June; the Civil Engineering Block, designed by B Webb and built by RB Patel and Sons, ready for occupation in September; the Physical Science Block (Hyslop Building), designed by Graham McCullough with M Notkin as the contractor ready for occupation in September; extension to Gloucester Hall (today's Taifa Hall), with the Ministry of Works as Architects and Hem Singh Ltd carrying out the work; additional student Halls of Residence including Men's Halls No 3 (Roger's Hall), No 4 (Nyerere Hall), Women's Hall (Extensions), all designed by Norburn Browning and Pickering as architects and Equator Construction Company as builders, ready for occupation in June.³⁷

At the end of 1962, the Royal College's faculties, and teaching departments were:³⁸

- a Faculty of Art and Architecture with Departments of Architecture, Art, Quantity Surveying.
- b Faculty of Arts with Departments of Economics, English Literature, Geography, History and Mathematics.
- c Faculty of Engineering with Departments of Civil, Electrical, and Mechanical Engineering, and the Department of Land Surveying.
- d Faculty of Science with the Departments of Botany, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics and Zoology.

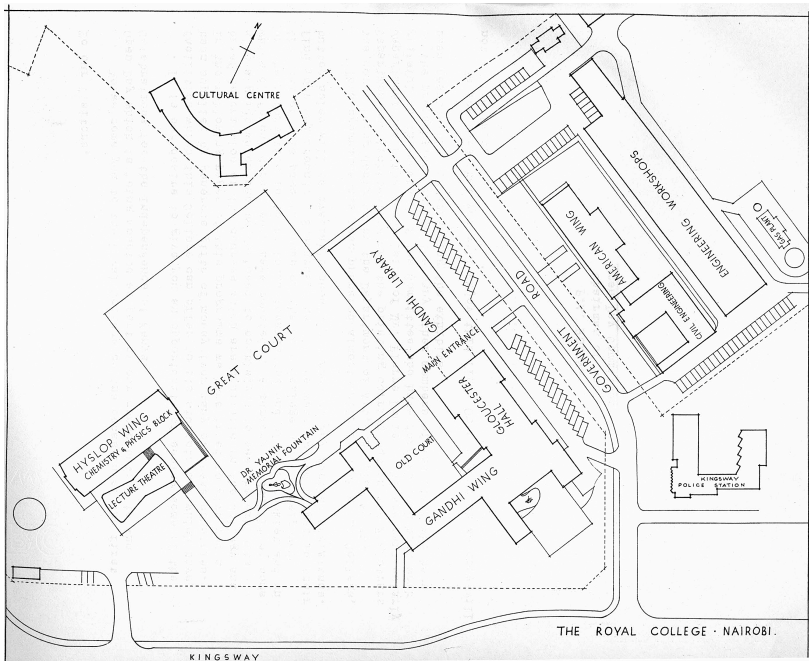
³⁷ *University College Nairobi Calendar 1964/65*, pp. 95-98.

³⁸ The Royal College, *Annual Report and Accounts for the year 1961/62*



Source: Royal Technical College of East Africa, Alumni Network, rtnairobi.org.

Figure 1.15 – Yajnik Memorial Fountain – “The Fountain of Knowledge”, 1962



Source: Royal College Open Day Programme, 1963

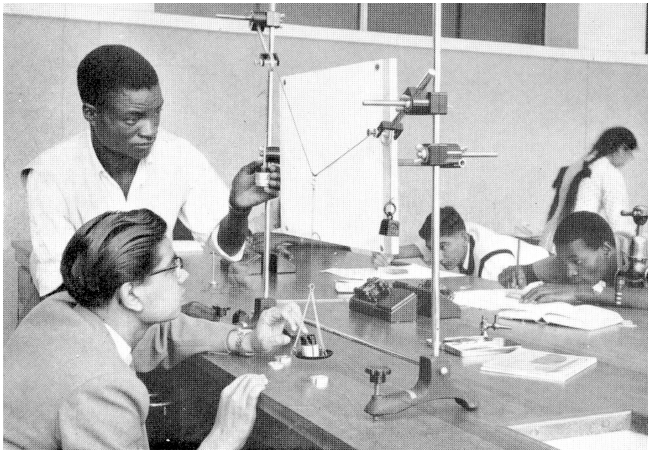
Figure 1.16 – Layout of Main Campus buildings, 1963

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Source: University College Nairobi Master Plan, 1968

Figure 1.17 – *The library, Taifa Hall and the Gandhi Wing on the Main Campus, 1968*



Source: RTC Annual Reports and Accounts

Figure 1.18 – *Royal Technical College Students in Physics Lab, 1958*

- e Faculty of Special Professional Studies with the Departments of Accountancy and Business Administration.
- f The Department of Domestic Science.

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FOR THE RECORD

A. FOR THE RECORD

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- iii President Daniel Moi, 1978-2002
- iv President Kibaki, 2002-2003
- v Dr Joseph B. Wanjui, 2003-2013
- vi Dr Vijoo Rattansi, 2013 -

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- i GP Willoughby (Governing Council, Royal Technical College, 1956-1963)
- ii Bethuel Gecaga (Governing Council, Royal College, 1963-1963)
- iii Bethuel Gecaga (Governing Council, University College, 1964-1970)
- iv Bethuel Gecaga, 1970-1979
- v William Odongo Omamo, 1980-1983
- vi Lawrence Sagini, 1983-1995
- vii Prof Sam Onger, 1995-1998
- viii Prof David Wasawo, 1998-2005
- ix Dr John Simba, 2005-2013
- x Dr Idle Omar Farah, 2013-2017
- xi Prof Julia Ojiambo, 2018-

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- i Major General Colin Bullard (Principal, Royal Technical College), 1953-1957
- ii Dr Herbert Philip Gale (Acting Principal, RTC), 1957-1960
- iii Prof James Morton Hyslop (Principal, RTC) 1960-1964
- iv Dr Arthur Porter (Principal, University College Nairobi), 1964-1970
- v Prof Josephat Karanja, 1971-1979
- vi Prof Joseph Maina Mungai, 1979-1985
- vii Prof Philip Muinde Mbithi, 1985-1991
- viii Prof Francis John Gichaga, 1991-2002
- ix Prof Crispus Makau Kiamba, 2002-2005
- x Prof George Magoha, 2005-2015
- xi Prof Peter MF Mbithi, 2015-2019
- xii Prof Isaac Mbeche (Acting), 2019
- xiii Prof Stephen G Kiama, 2020-

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- i Prof David P Wasawo (Deputy Principal, University College Nairobi), 1966-1968
- ii Prof Bethwell A Ogot, 1970-1973
- iii Prof Joseph Maina Mungai, 1973-1975

iv Prof Douglas Odhiambo,
1975-1979

v Prof Richard Musangi,
1979-1981

vi Prof Phillip M Mbithi,
1981-1983

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

i Prof Phillip Mbithi, 1983-1985

ii Prof Philip Githinji, 1985-1987

iii Prof Shem Wandiga, 1987-1994

iv Prof Raphael Munavu,
1994-1998

v Prof Cripus Kiamba, 1998-2002

vi Prof George Magoha, 2002-2005

vii Prof Peter Mbithi, 2005-2014

viii Prof Benard NK Njoroje,
2014-2015

ix Prof Issac Mbeche (Acting),
2015-2019

**HUMAN RESOURCE AND
ADMINISTRATION**

i Prof Stephen Kiama, 2019-2020

ii Prof Enos Njeru (Acting),
6/2020-

**FINANCE, DEVELOPMENT AND
PLANNING**

i Prof Isaac Mbeche, 2019

ii Prof Stephen Kiama (Acting),
6-12/2019

iii Prof Madara Ogot (Acting),
1-5/2020

iv Prof Margaret Hutchinson
(Acting), 6/2020-

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

i Prof Festo Mutere, 1983-1989

ii Prof Nimrod Bwibo, 1989-1991

iii Prof Francis Gichaga, 1991-1992

iv Prof Onesmus Mutungi,
1992-1994

v Prof Florida Karani, 1994-2004

vi Prof Jacob Kaimenyi, 2004-2013

vii Prof Henry Mutoro, 2013-2018

viii Prof Julius Ogeng'o, 2018-

STUDENT AFFAIRS

i Prof Isaac Mbeche, 2011-2019

ii Prof Madara Ogot (Acting),
7-12/2019

iii Prof Julius Ogeng'o (Acting),
1-6/2020

**RESEARCH, PRODUCTION AND
EXTENSION**

i Prof Lucy Irungu, 2011-2018

ii Prof Madara Ogot (Acting) 2018

iii Prof Madara Ogot, 2019-

COLLEGE PRINCIPALS

**AGRICULTURE AND VETERINARY
SCIENCES**

i Prof Geoffrey Mariaso Ole
Maloiy, 1983-1988

ii Prof Shellemiah Okoth Keya,
4/1988-7/1988

iii Prof Dominic Okelo Oduor,
1988-1994

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- iv Prof Daniel M Mukunya, 1994-2003
- v Prof Peter MF Mbithi, 2003-2005
- vi Prof Agnes Mwang'ombe, 2005-2016
- vii Prof Stephen Kiama, 2016-2019
- viii Prof Rose Nyikal (Acting), 2019-
- ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING
- i Prof Phillip Githinji, 1983-1985
- ii Prof Francis J Gichaga, 1985-1991
- iii Prof GK King'oriah, 1991-1994
- iv Prof Cripus Kiamba, 1994-1998
- v Prof Paul Syagga (Acting) 7/1998-3/1999
- vi Prof Francis Aduol 1999-2008
- vii Prof Benard Njoroge, 2008-2014
- viii Prof Peter Ngau, 2014-2020
- ix Prof Robert Rokwaro (Acting), 2020-
- BIOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES
- i Prof Shem Wandiga, 1983-1987
- ii Prof Mohamed M Hyder, 1987-1990
- iii Prof Fredrick Onyango, 1990-1997
- iv Prof Aloys Tumbo Oeri, 1997-2002
- v Prof Richard Mibey, 2002-2004
- vi Prof Lucy Irungu, 2004-2011
- vii Prof Benard Aduda, 2011-2020
- viii Prof Francis Mulaa (Acting), 2020
- EDUCATION AND EXTERNAL STUDIES
- i Prof Peter Kinyanjui, 1983-1988
- ii Prof Florida Karani, 1988-1994
- iii Prof Lucia N Omondi, 1994-2004
- iv Prof Henry Mutoro, 2004-2013
- v Prof Isaac Jumba, 2013-
- HEALTH SCIENCES
- i Prof Nimrod Bwibo, 1983-1989
- ii Prof Samuel K Sinei, 1989-2000
- iii Prof George Magoha, 2001-2002
- iv Prof Joseph Kitonyi, 2002-2007
- v Prof Isaac Kibwage, 2007-2017
- vi Prof James Machoki M'Imunya, 2017-
- HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
- i Prof Onesmus Mutungi, 1983-1992
- ii Prof Joseph M Nyasani, 1992-1997
- iii Prof Francis Kibera, 1997-2002
- iv Prof Isaac Mbeche, 2002-2011
- v Prof Enos Njeru, 2011-2020
- vi Prof Mohamud Jama (Acting), 2020-

**HIGHER DOCTORATE
RECIPIENTS**

- i Prof John Kokwaro, 2008
- ii Prof Geoffrey Ole Maloiy, 2013
- iii Prof David Musyimi Ndetei, 2013
- iv Justice Prof Jackton Ojwang', 2015
- v Prof Julius Ogeng'o, 2018
- vi Prof Patricia Kameri-Mbote, 2019

HONORARY DEGREES

- i President Jomo Kenyatta, 1970, awarded for leadership in building independent Kenya.
- ii Dr Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, 1976, awarded for his long and outstanding service in the development of education. M'bow, the first African to hold the position of Director-General of UNESCO.
- iii President Daniel arap Moi, 1978, awarded for his long and varied experience in public affairs.
- iv Dr Abdus Salam, 1980, awarded for his discoveries in theoretical physics.
- v Dr Bethuel Mareka Gechaga, 1983, awarded for his steering of the governing council of the University in the post independence period, during which he promoted the Kenyanisation of staff, defending

the quality education the University was giving.

- vi Judge Taslim Olwale, 1983, awarded for his achievements as an academic and international scholar in the field of law. Olwale was the first African to hold the position of the president of the International Court of justice at The Hague.
- vii Albert Matson Thomas, 1983, awarded for his his contribution to the study of the history of Kenya.
- viii Rafael M. Salas, 1983, awarded for his meritorious services to the United Nations.
- ix Dr Walter Plowright, 1984, awarded for his contribution to the study of animal diseases.
- x Dr David Ikeda, 1992, awarded for his immense contribution to promoting a culture of peace.
- xi Dr Arthur Thomas Porter, 1994, awarded for his work as the the founder principal of the University College Nairobi. A pioneer scholar who achieved academic status both at home and nations beyond.
- xii Dr Lawrence Sagini, 1995, awarded for his dedication and vision while serving as chairman of the Council of the University of Nairobi.
- xiii Dr Gideon Saulo Were, 1995, awarded for his pioneering

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- scholarship on the history of Kenya.
- xiv Prof Simon Hongo Ominde, 1995, awarded for his distinguished academic career and the first African Professor of the University of Nairobi and East Africa.
- xv Dr Manilal Premhand Chandaria, 1995, awarded for his involvement in many charitable and social welfare activities which support education in Kenya.
- xvi Dr Julius Gikonyo Kiano, 1994, awarded for his efforts as a promoter of educational opportunities and business linkages for Kenyans.
- xvii Prof Joseph Maina Mungai, 1998, awarded for his immense contribution to higher education in Kenya, and to the application of advanced knowledge in dealing with health problems in Kenya.
- xviii Prof Godwin Olu Obasi, 1998, awarded for his contribution in the field of meteorology and hydrology.
- xix Hassanaly Rattansi, 1998, awarded for his outstanding personal contribution to social justice and a renowned philanthropist.
- xx Prof David Peter Simon Wasawo, 1999, awarded for his outstanding dedication to the
- application of science and technology to development.
- xxi Prof Richard Keynes, 1999, awarded for his contribution to the understanding of electro-physiological processes and international science.
- xxii Prof Gerald Munene Mugeru, 2000, awarded in recognition as the first black holder of a Ph.D in veterinary medicine in Africa.
- xxiii Dr Vak-yeong Yoo, 2001, awarded for her efforts towards the promotion of medical education in Kenya.
- xxiv President Mwai Kibaki, 2004, awarded for his tireless work to establish harmony, understanding and cooperation between the many groupings and parties of Kenya.
- xxv Dr Joseph Barrage Wanjui, 2004, awarded in recognition of his outstanding industrial development professional with exemplary skills in business leadership and as a major contributor to the development of institutional management in Kenya.
- xxvi Prof Wangari Maathai, 2005, awarded in recognition of her distinguished and selfless service to the nation and her outstanding work in conservation of the environment.
- xxvii Prime Minister Raila Odinga, 2008, awarded for role in ending

- post-election violence of 2008 and as a nationalist who has walked the journey of academics, publics servants, entrepreneurs, liberator of the oppressed and now walk the journey of an eminent African statesman.
- xxxiii Dr Peter Munga, 2015, awarded for his philanthropy and charitable work.
- xxxiv Prof Julia Ojiambo, 2020, awarded in recognition of her distinguished and exemplary career in leadership which has helped shape the face of leadership and politics in Kenya.
- xxviii President Mwai Kibaki, 2008, awarded for role in ending post-election violence of 2008 and for for being an inspiring leader committed to scholarship, democratic ideals, and ensures opportunity and fair treatment for all, especially for the vulnerable member of the society.
- xxxv Prof Micere Mugo, 2020, awarded for her outstanding achievements and contributions to scholarship in literature and the arts, her relentless pursuit of a socially just world, and her broader service to humanity.
- xxix Dr Koffi Anan, 2008 awarded for his role in ending post-election violence of 2008 and his diverse diplomatic success, and that the paradigm of peacemaking he applied to Kenya which is being replicated in different countries.
- xxx Dr John Simba, 2014, was awarded for his contribution to injecting a business approach into the University.
- xxxi Dr Vijoo Rattansi, 2014, awarded for her philanthropy and charitable work particularly in Education.
- xxxii Dr Samuel Kamau Macharia, 2014, awarded for his his achievements, particularly in business, community service and targeted support to the University of Nairobi.