

REPORT ON A MEETING HELD WITH THE FOURTH YEAR LEAVERS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANT SCIENCE AND CROP PROTECTION

The students leaving after the four years of undergraduate studies in the department will be contributing toward national development. They have little knowledge of what is awaiting them, nevertheless they are expected to join in and make their contributions. These students form the pool or catchment of those expected to proceed on to graduate studies. As a department these leavers are critical for the continuation of the graduate courses conducted in addition to other students received from other colleges and universities. The meeting of 16th December 2016, was called with this background. The meeting was organized with two main objectives. Firstly, to present to the students' knowledge that will cause them to plan for their professional growth and secondly to convey to them some of the leadership and soft skills required to interact with other people while participating in nation building. It was attended by 35 students and 11 staff members inclusive of 2 technicians.

The students were addressed by the chairman of the department who explained the purpose of the meeting. He encouraged them to open their minds to receive the nuggets of life which may never have been taught in class. He also enumerated the courses that are offered at graduate level that the students could choose from should they plan to progress to graduate level. The courses enumerated include; MSc Pathology, MSc Crop Protection, MSc. Plant Breeding and Biotechnology, MSc. Agronomy, MSc. Horticulture, MSc. Seed Technology and Business Management and MSc. Agriculture Resource Management.

As promised by the chairman, the speakers dwelt on different skills that these students should sharpen to succeed in their endeavors. The Dean, faculty of Agriculture encouraged the students to identify mentors, improve their CVs and develop networks. Prof. A. Mwang'ombe emphasized on the need for professional growth exposing the students to what is available. That is, the traditional/regular mode of learning within and outside the country. Improving their education and careers by using the e- mode of learning, where learning is achieved without leaving their work or businesses or any activities being undertaken. The e-mode has increasingly become popular. She encouraged them to look out for opportunities and seize them and also desire to participate in generating knowledge and utilize what is available in the new initiative "open data" among scientists to provide solutions for problems facing the world. Improving themselves places them ahead of the common group, where there is less 'traffic'/competition. She singled out youth, agriculture and ICT that offers opportunities for innovation and growth.

Other speakers, dwelt on various skills which included setting own life values such as integrity, working hard, being fair and just, compassionate and empathetic, deciding to move own in the face of failure, being humble, respectful, working with others despite their backgrounds or emotions and to be decent always in talking and in dressing. In facing the future, they were encouraged to: be confident, be innovative, seize opportunities around them and avoid being idle, work to the best of their abilities and seek to perfect their technical and soft skills as they grow.

One question they were asked was ‘WHAT LEGACY THEY WOULD WANT TO LEAVE?’ It is not early to think about it. Overall the meeting objectives were met and it would be necessary that such meetings are held more often for the students in the department.