



Speech by

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Vice Chancellor

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)

during

Finalists' Dinner

Taita Taveta Campus

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The Principal Taita Taveta campus,
Director, Academic Programmes
Chairmen of Departments,
JKUSO Officials,
Finalists,
Staff and students ,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed my pleasure to join you this evening for dinner to bid farewell to our students who have successfully gone through various undergraduate programs. This is a special occasion because you are the pioneer group of students to graduate since the establishment of this campus few years ago. It is therefore fitting for me to take this early opportunity to congratulate you for successfully going through your

academic programmes successfully. This particularly considering the fact that you started in a hard way virtually without the necessary facilities that are now available. As you may be aware by now, this campus has now come off age as demonstrated by the large number of applicants wishing to secure a place here which is hard to come by. The Taita Taveta campus continues to attract a large number of students due to JKUAT policy to provide quality education and unique market driven courses. As our products, I believe you will continue to reflect this tradition of excellence once out there.

As the countdown to your last days here as undergraduates begins, I am clear in my mind that consistent hard work and determination to succeed has been the driving force behind your achievements so far. You have acquired a wealth of knowledge that unlocks vast possibilities in your areas of specialization.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to use this occasion to share a few words of advice to you. But remember it is not my intention to dampen your high spirits this evening but to help you, albeit in a very small way, to come to terms with the reality of life as you go out there. You are

going to a saturated job market in a country plagued by many destructive, some disheartening issues such as politics, ethnicity and poverty amongst other concerns.

No doubt, each of you endeavored to excel during your studies. You were the cream of our society four to six years ago, and this privileged position remains today. You still represent the best of this nation's brains. The challenges ahead of you are enormous but not insurmountable.

As you prepare to face the world, it is worth reflecting on the words of Tom Bodett: *“The difference between school and life? In school, you're taught a lesson and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson.”*

I want you to draw inspiration from another wise saying, *“Many of the great achievements of the world were accomplished by tired and discouraged men who kept on working.”*

No doubt, you have come through ups and downs and greater ones await you but with clarity of thought and will, you will triumph.

The immediate challenge to you is to mobilize the accumulated experience and knowledge in addressing the various economic, social and technological problems afflicting our nation. Throughout history, technology has been used as a powerful tool for human development and poverty reduction. However, it is important to make the technologies relevant to the local needs. This is what you are expected to do as we usher you out to the world.

Let me also remind you that many universities, both public and private, are churning out huge numbers of graduates from all kinds of fields. You may be fortunate to have studied in a highly rated university such as ours, but that is not enough. The name of the University can enable an employer be attracted to you because of what they may expect from you, but it is your own competency that will judge and decide whether you should be retained or not.

And you are not short of role models. As JKUAT, we pride ourselves in the many Alumni who have gone ahead and made significant contributions to our great country. The latest one is Evans Wadongo who was nominated as a CNN Hero of the Year Award for his innovation of a solar lamp. Just last week, Wadongo thrilled us again at JKUAT for winning the prestigious inaugural Gobachev Award for his innovation. For Mr. Wadongo, a JKUAT Alumnus for the BSc Electronic and Computer Engineering 2009 class, this recognition is a reflection of the quality of our graduates who go ahead to make positive contribution in society.

If you emulate such Alumni, you will make positive impact on our people's lives in various fields of specialization.

The education and training you have received should be a catalyst for you to further your studies in the true spirit of the German born American Physicist Albert Einstein's counsel that "*Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death*"

Ladies and gentlemen,

A word of caution to the outgoing students.

Drugs and drug abuse is increasingly becoming a threat to the country's youth. We have cases of youth wasting themselves away in drugs, spelling doom for our future as a society. As a mother, I plead with you—as I have always done these past years—that you stay away from drugs. Nobody has ever died because of shunning drugs.

Remember that you are our ambassadors out there and if you keep a good name you will not only excel in life, but you will also open opportunities for others from this institution wherever you go.

As I conclude, let me remind you that you have been here with us for a long while now and we have given you the best education and training one can get. You take with you the name of this institution and guard it jealously with everything you have.

Finally let me wish you a very productive life and the very best as you prepare for your future.

Thank you, God bless you and good luck.