

FEATURE: Makerere unveils 2012 vision



Education

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Makerere University has announced a string of academic, administrative and financial reforms which the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Venansius Baryamureeba, says will stem wastage of resources, raise more funds and reduce duplication of services.

The university on April 5 announced a \$300 million (Shs 600 billion) investment plan that will boost its income and enhance education standards. The university plans investment partnerships in a day care centre, hotels, parking yards, banking facilities, petrol stations, departmental stores and privatisation of sports facilities.

Prof. Baryamureeba said \$200 million will be raised in two years, partly from the private sector, while \$100 million has been pledged by the President. Although the university has a lot of land, the move is also intended to eventually turn the main campus into a satellite town in 10 years' time.

The Vice Chancellor argues that the reforms will avail a lot of time for teaching, learning and research, thereby raising the standards and prestige of the university.

The university will in two years' time have shed the faculty system of governance to take on the constituent college system as a way of decentralisation of service delivery and harmonisation of academic programmes. The process involves dropping certain courses and merging similar courses and departments.

In a year's time, Makerere will be able to pay salaries by electronic transfer. Actually, beginning April 2010, the university will pay the entire administration staff and staff of three faculties by electronic transfer.

Since January, the university has closed 46 out of its 121 bank accounts and the new bursar, Joshua Karamagi, says he will close yet more in the drive to reduce financial inefficiencies and losses.

In February, the university opened up an alumni account through which alumni can make donations and will soon launch it in a bid to strengthen self-sustenance. The University

Council approved the 2010/2011 university budget in March, beating the statutory deadline of April 1.

TIMELY BUDGETING

“Beating what had become a tradition at Makerere of approving the budget three months already in the financial year shows the resolve of the new management at the helm of the university,” Karamagi told Observer School last month.

Because of the lukewarm relationship between the university and government, for the consecutive three financial years ending in June, government used to give Makerere MTES (medium-term expenditure strategy) funds of Shs 45 billion annually, Shs 29 billion of which would be for salaries, leaving only Shs 16 billion for capital development and other expenditures, Karamagi explained.

However, because of the improving relationship engineered by the new management, government has additionally committed itself to a number of specific projects where it has an interest.

“For example, they have committed, in the coming financial year, Shs 5 billion to the Faculty of Technology, Shs 5 billion to Department of Food Science & Technology, and Shs 2 billion as start-up fund for AFRISA, a project under the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,” he said.

PARTNERSHIPS

Karamagi added that a number of partnerships with government, donors and private sector are in the pipeline, and was quick to mention the \$25 million memorandum of understanding signed with SIDA last month.

By enforcing the teaching load of 10 contract hours per week per lecturer, the university hopes to lay off at least 1,000 part-time lecturers before the end of 2010. By 2012, the university will cease to provide meals to students in halls of residence so as to reduce expenditure and to concentrate on its core functions. Karamagi says the meals will be outsourced.

The academic year 2010/2011 will see 600 students and 500 students start lectures at the new upcountry campuses of Jinja and Fort Portal respectively. But what is important to note, Karamagi stressed, is that the new campuses will run on a self-funding model, with no support from government, at least for the first year. This pilot model will guide the opening of new

campuses in Hoima and Kisumu in Kenya not beyond 2013.

Prof. Baryamureeba says besides the upcountry campuses helping poor parents to educate their children since the cost of living is lower than in Kampala, the goal is to eventually have upcountry campuses running undergraduate courses and leaving the main campus for postgraduate studies and research.

Makerere plans to increase the proportion of graduate students to 20% of her total enrolment by the end of 2015. The university is also working on a BOT [build, operate and transfer] plan under which private investors will be given land to construct and operate businesses for an agreed time and later hand them over to the university.

This will start with a day care centre in 2011. Prof. Baryamureeba told Observer School that the implementation of the Makerere University Strategic Plan 2008/09-2018/19 at the level of individual administrative units is moving smoothly.

Although cautious not to prejudice the work of several restructuring committees on the ground, he said: "What I can say is that at the unit level, the reforms are on schedule, at 50% as of now. We need to make improvements in the Directorate of Planning and Development to ensure faster monitoring and implementation at the centre."

Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, Dean Faculty of Technology and head of the University Research, Administrative and Financial Reforms Committee, says efforts are now concentrated on achieving the strategic objective of making the relevant academic, administrative and financial reforms that will make the university more efficient and a research-led and learner-centred institution.

Nawangwe told Observer School: "We must work hard to satisfy the Makerere University Strategic Plan 2008/09-2018/19 which seeks to position Makerere as a leading research institution in Africa with topnotch research, contributing to new knowledge and relevant to the social advancement of Uganda and Africa generally."

REFORMS COMMITTEE

Prof. Nawangwe explained that his committee works through three sub-committees. These are: the Research Sub-committee led by Prof. William Banage of Uganda National Academy of Sciences; the Teaching, Learning and College Sub-committee chaired by Dr. Christine Dranzoa, the Deputy Director, School of Graduate Studies; and Financial and Administrative Reforms Sub-committee chaired by Nawangwe himself.

Nawangwe explained that the Academic Programmes Restructuring Committee headed by Prof. Fredrick Jjuuko falls under his overall mandate.

“We are mandated to recommend comprehensive reforms, generally, including harmonisation of programmes. Even as of now, we have already recommended several reforms such as in the management of information systems to introduce more efficient systems of availing information by ICT, especially financial information,” said Nawangwe.

“We have also made recommendations regarding the management of the examination process, as can be testified by the recent provision of academic transcripts on the graduation day. We have worked with the Social Services Committee of Parliament to make an input into the proposed amendments to the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001. We have also recommended improvements on research and its dissemination to the public and how to make it more efficient and more relevant to Ugandans.”

Nawangwe was upbeat that with the few reforms already embarked upon, such as the regular updating and placement of research activity on the university’s website and a revamped public relations office, Makerere’s ranking on the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities and in other places has improved.

Whereas Makerere was ranked 59th best university in Africa in 2008, she jumped to 32nd position in 2009 and to 15th position in 2010. But Baryamureeba’s wish is to have Makerere among the top three in Africa.

Other developments include the recently released human resources manual that among others addresses ethical issues such as drunkenness, absenteeism and trading marks for sex by lecturers.

The method of recruiting lecturers which has hitherto focused on academic qualifications is due to change and stress the lecturer’s readiness to become a professional teacher.

All lecturers will soon undergo a year-long professional training organised by the Ministry of Education and Sports. The university also recently introduced online registration of students and one central electricity meter; moves that have saved a lot of money.

FROM FACULTY TO COLLEGE SYSTEM

The process of forming colleges is planned to be completed by 2012. Sources said the number of colleges might be 9-12. Otherwise, the university currently has 22 academic units:

10 faculties, one college [the College of Health Sciences], five schools and six institutes.

Makerere University's Brand and Marketing Manager, Issa Agaba says under the existing system, all the 22 academic units are directly administered by the Vice Chancellor and they are too many for one VC to manage efficiently.

Although the Makerere University Statute for Constituent Colleges dated July 2006 stipulates that composition and formation of a college may be determined by the constituent units at the formation of the college, Prof. Baryamureeba said the central administration will have to come in to harmonise the situation.

"We can expect units to choose to voluntarily form small colleges and to wait for the 2012 deadline. But since we are aiming at economies of scale and we don't want wastage of resources, we might advise for further mergers and pulling the deadline to next year," he said.

He explained that the College of Health Sciences was planned as a two-year pilot.

"After Jjuuko's committee reports in less than a month from now and the College of Health Sciences, which was intended to be a two-year pilot reports its experiences in September, we will have a sufficient picture to guide us in formation of colleges," he said.

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