

**College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES)
Remarks by Principal at the Launch of the Research Grants Office-Tuesday
May 26th 2015**

Protocal

The Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Principals here present, Deans and Directors, Departmental Chairs, Friends of CAES, All Invited Guests in your respective capacities, CAES colleagues and Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Purpose

Today we are gathered here to celebrate a milestone in the long CAES journey. We are here to launch the CAES Grants Office that I believe is long overdue. But better late than never.

Thanks:

Sincere thanks to our colleagues at DRGT and Quality Assurance for your immense support to the realization of this effort. Through you I wish to thank the Development partners who have made resources available for us to get to this point.

Many thanks to my colleagues in CAES for embracing the idea or at least for not openly opposing the idea.

Promise

My business plan promised you a CAES Research Enterprise Service (RES) to complement staff efforts to look out for competitive funding opportunities, prepare competitive proposals while at the same time supporting the proposal preparation initiatives of individual members of staff. I promised to support both individual and institutional proposals to increase the research resource envelope. I pledged that the centre would be headed by an experienced fundraiser and senior person at the rank of Associate Professor and above.

I am happy to note that we are realizing this promise today with Prof. Tenywa coordinatong this effort. Efforts to hire an experienced fundraiser are in advanced stages.

The Research Office

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, what we are witnessing today is part of a new beginning for CAES. The research office is consistent with our multiple mandates of teaching, research and outreach and policy influence. It actually goes beyond in the sense that it promises to address the financial needs of the College as well as enhancing the ranking of the University.

Training:

Examining the graduate students mix in the colleges, it is not hard to see that close to 90 percent are on research project support. This speaks volumes and highlights the symbiotic relationship between research and training.

Research:

Research is part and parcel of the reason we have a job. It generates new information for economic development and policy. It advances the frontiers of knowledge and it is a common denominator for promotion. This point is very clear in the mind of each and everyone seated here. I can assure you that without research our college would have already gone down.

Outreach and policy: Universities are part and parcel of the business of improving livelihoods and landscapes for the well being of mankind. The outside looks to us for knowledge and insights and this we do through our outreach programs. The CAEC platform at MUARIK needs to be strengthened and it needs to have stronger linkages with the office we are launching today. Without policy relevant research, policies are made in the dark and such policies have little impact on society.

Financing

The University resource envelope continues to shrink and I think you all appreciate this. Operational funds have dropped significantly. CAES had been allocated 750 million shillings this academic year as operational funds but we have so far received UGX 200 million only despite repeated trips to the main hall. College operational activities would have grounded to a halt without support from the research resources.

I may be wrong but Makerere University is the only one I know that allocates no funds to research from its core finances. This is not something to be proud of. It seems to me that all

research in this University is donor or privately funded bringing into question its relevance and sustainability.

University Ranking

I am reliably informed that these days all University rankings are powered by research and other academic outputs on the University websites not well written articles on bookshelves. Without research there is not much to show on the websites and this negatively affects University rankings. We have dropped from number 4 to number 12 and this is not something to be proud of. I am very sure that the Director Quality Assurance will underscore this point further and better.

The College has over 300 research projects of various sizes but we are not yet there. Some of them are the size of USD 5000 or below. As the Buddonians say “*Gakyali Mabagga*”.

The office were are launching today is intended to serve the needs of the experts and the novice. If you are a seasoned proposal writer and have many grants already the office gives you a platform to move beyond self and service the wider good by building he capacity of others. Make no mistake, we will all one day grow old, get tired and the joy will be in seeing those you have mentored proposer and mentor others to extend your chain of influence. If you are a young and upcoming researcher, the office gives you an opportunity to learn and improve your grant writing and research skills.

I implore all of you to rally behind and support this office. For once, put the politics aside for the good of the College. It is sad to see senior academicians releasing too much negative energy putting politics ahead of good policies and programs for the college.

Finally, we still have unfinished business in the name of an Institutional Review Board (IRB). The multidisciplinary nature of our College is such that we venture into human subjects with serious research ethical issue. We thank the research committee of the School of Public Health, College of Health Sciences for handling many of our IRB needs to date. We need independence in this area and I shall be making concrete proposals in the near future. I thank you.