

VALEDICTORY SPEECH CLASS OF 2024

Chancellor, Cabinet secretaries, Chairman and the members of the University Council, Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Deans and Directors, Your Excellencies, Chairmen of the departments, Lecturers, parents, fellow graduands, distinguished guest

Ladies and Gentlemen, {Good Morning}.

Congratulations Class of 2024, We made it.

I am delighted to welcome you all to the University of Nairobi for the 71ST Graduation ceremony. Today marks both an end and a beginning. I am deeply honoured to stand before you on behalf of this amazing graduating class of 2024. It is a day we have all been waiting for — the culmination of years of hard work, dedication, sleepless nights, setbacks and triumphs. We each have our unique stories. Today, we celebrate not only our achievements but also the bonds we've formed and the people we've become.

My name is Otieno John Odoyo, from the Department of Architecture where I have been a student for the last six years and this is the day I will graduate with the Bachelor of Architecture degree. Having graduated with the Bachelor of Architectural studies degree two years ago and a former student of St. Joseph's school Rapogi- in Migori county.

I would like to take this moment to express my heartfelt gratitude. To our families, friends and loved ones, your unwavering support and prayers have been our foundation. You've been our greatest cheerleaders, even when we doubted ourselves. Parents and guardians who have toiled and sacrificed to support us throughout this journey—you are truly the best.

To our Professors and Lecturers from all faculties, your wisdom, passion, and guidance have shaped us into the thinkers and leaders we are today. To the Department of Architecture, I am forever grateful. For the support I received from Professors, Lecturers and Support staff, that made the learning experience in the department bearable, and you were more than just educators—you became our parents too. I fondly remember the trying moments in my first year, when I could walk into the computer lab and share my story with Madam Tabitha Kiare.

I want to thank my parents, **Zachary Okoth Obado and Hellen Adhiambo Odie**—you are truly the best. Your love and support has borne the fruit that I

am enjoying today. Thank you. I also dedicate this speech to my late Aunt, **Jane Auma Mukana**, who sacrificed everything to see me succeed but, unfortunately, did not live to witness this special day. I know you're smiling from wherever you are. She represents all the parents and guardians who left us before this particular day. Your sons and daughters have made it.

To my supervisors, **Arch Musau Kimeu and Arch Mumbi Maina**, your support, guidance, patience, and insightful feedback has been invaluable throughout my academic journey. You challenged me to be a critical thinker and a critical thinker I became. Thank you for inspiring me and helping me to achieve my goals. Surely everything you touched turned into gold.

To my great friend, **Savanna Wanjiru Mwangi**, you've been there for me throughout this journey. Your prayers, encouragement, and support kept me going. I feel lucky to have you in my life. To my friends, **Jacob Mumo, Kevin Macharia, Richard Migisha, Tabir Khan, Irauka Lyon, Antony Cheruyot, Stacy Mwongeli, Solomon Kirui, Kelvin Kithetu, Alex Wainaina, Amugamwa, Ajuoga, Claire Wamboi, Islam Rumaisa, Kimingi Joseph**, and many more—we made it to the end! Those midnight dances were not in vain. Finally, to my mentors Davis Gikundi, Vivian Maranya, Samuel Nyarangi, Zedekiah Onena, Erick Nyanjom, Malcom Mwathi, Samuel Thuo and many others- I am truly grateful.

To my fellow graduands, this is our moment. Reflect on the countless hours spent in classrooms, libraries and study groups. Think about the moments of doubt, the perseverance, and the eventual triumphs. {Arch Story}. Look back and thank God. The journey of determination and personal growth. Together, we've built friendships, faced challenges, and created memories that will last a lifetime. When I look at the audience, I see a crowd full of uniquely talented individuals who are ready to leave their mark on the world. I know some of us are nervous about the chapter ahead of us being that the future is uncertain while some are excited about the future. This reminds me of a poem by **Kahlil Gibran**.

Fear

It is said that before entering the sea

A river trembles with fear.

She looks back at the path she has travelled,

From the peaks of the mountains,

The long winding road crossing forests and villages.

And in front of her,

She sees an ocean so vast,

That to enter

There seems nothing more than to disappear forever.

But there is no other way.

The river cannot go back.

Nobody can go back.

To go back is impossible in existence.

The river needs to take the risk

Of entering the ocean

Because only then will fear disappear,

Because that's where the river will know

It's not about disappearing into the ocean,

But of becoming the ocean.

Class of 2024, this is for you. Today you will graduate from the best University to join the World. Will you disappear into the World? Will you disappear into the World or become the World and a positive and impactful difference?

As we leave the University, we must remember that this is not the end. It's a beginning. The world beyond these gates is so vast waiting for us – it needs us and we need the World. The challenges we face globally, from climate change to inequality, demand the creativity, empathy, and leadership that we, the class of 2024, are prepared to offer. We are the architects of the future, and it is up to us to build a world that reflects the values of compassion, justice, and innovation.

Finally, moving forward, let us remember that success is not measured by wealth or status, but by the positive impact we have on the lives of others. As we move into the job market and entrepreneurship, let's strive to be kind, to listen, and to uplift those around us. Let's take risks, embrace failure, and rise stronger with each setback. Let's remain curious, always learning and growing, no matter where life takes us.

Congratulations, Class of 2024. This is just the beginning. The world is waiting for us. Let us go and make it better.

MAY GOD BLESS KENYA, HER LEADERSHIP, THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
AND US ALL.

THANK YOU.