



ADDRESS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI, PROFESSOR SAMSON SAJIDU, DURING THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 7TH SEPTEMBER, 2022 IN THE GREAT HALL, ZOMBA

Salutations

1. Honourable Madalitso Wirima-Kambauwa (MP), Minister of Education
2. The Secretary for Education, Mrs Chikondano Mussa
3. The Chairman of Council, Dr George Patridge and all Council members of the University of Malawi
4. Chairpersons of other University Councils and all other councilors
5. All senior government officials here present
6. Vice Chancellors of MUBAS (Dr Nancy Chitera), KUHES (Prof Mac Mallewa), MUST (Prof Address Malata), Dundee University

(Prof Ian Gillaspie) and representatives of other universities present

7. Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi, Dr Sunduzwayo Madise
8. Mr. Martin Matululu, Registrar, University of Malawi
9. Senior members of Management from other universities
10. Professors, Deans, Directors and Heads of Departments
11. All members of staff of the University of Malawi
12. Mr Chimwemwe Malimba, the officiating Clergy
13. Honourable Bester Awali, Member of Parliament for Zomba Central Constituency
14. His Worship Councilor Davie Maunde, Mayor for Zomba City
15. Mr. Fred Nankuyu, Acting Chief Executive Officer for Zomba City Council
16. Dr Smart Gwedemula, District Commissioner for Zomba
17. President of the University of Malawi Students Representative Council
18. Distinguished Invited Guests,
19. Parents and Guardians
20. Graduands and students
21. Members of the media
22. Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my distinct pleasure and honor to welcome you all to the first graduation ceremony of the University of Malawi this year.

We are grateful, especially to parents, guardians, spouses and partners, that you have chosen to share your time with us this morning as we celebrate our 4th Graduation ceremony since the University attained its new status of a standalone university.

The ceremony is happening at during an extremely difficult time in the history of our country. We, therefore would like to join his Excellency the President, Dr Lazarus Chakwera who is our Chancellor, in praying for the souls of fellow Malawians including our beloved student who lost their lives due to the devastating effects of the Cyclone Freddy. We pray for the Almighty's healing mercies to fellow Malawians who have been injured, lost property, displaced and psychologically disturbed by the devastating effects of the cyclone. As if that was not enough, in the evening of the 21st March we received massive unprecedented heavy rains in Zomba for close to 4 hours causing some damages in our structures including the hostels. We pray to the Almighty that He grants us wisdom, knowledge, intelligence and understanding for better management of such challenges when they come. We believe that indeed we will come out these challenges much stronger than before.

Distinguished invited guests

I wish to congratulate all the 2474 graduands who will be conferred with various degrees and diplomas this morning after having satisfied the University senate for the awards. The University and no doubt your families are very proud of your achievements.

This is a crowning moment for you graduands for all the sacrifices you have made in pursuit of knowledge. We are, as all your families and friends are, very proud of you.

In graduating, you have vindicated our belief that the thrust of true education is that of a closed mind yielding ground to an open one. Please receive my very sincere congratulations on your achievements. This ceremony may be an end to many of you but for those who maintain intellectual curiosity, there is a lot more to learn about the universe and beyond.

I therefore urge you not to stop here; our country needs you to conduct research; our Universities need you to teach and train; our families need you to unravel the next discovery and make theirs a better world to live in. I promise you, dear graduands, that our gates will remain open and render respite to all who dare embark on this pilgrimage in search of knowledge.

Let me also join the Chairman of the University of Malawi Council, **Dr. George Partridge**, in welcoming the Minister of Education, Honourable Madalitso Wirima-Kambauwa (MP). We do appreciate the special attention you give to developments at the University of Malawi, and we take your guidance very seriously.

We are also extremely grateful for the guidance provided by the Council of the University particularly at this juncture when we are still transitioning from the federal system to standalone university.

Distinguished invited guests

Before I go any further with my remarks, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to **His Excellency, Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi** and the **Chancellor of the University of Malawi**, for delegating me to preside over this congregation.

This is my third time to be privileged and preside over graduation on behalf of the Chancellor himself. I remain grateful to the Chancellor for such an opportunity.

Distinguished Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Graduation ceremonies all over the world have always been recognized and celebrated as joyful occasions not only by those who are receiving their awards, but by their families, friends (including boyfriends and girlfriends), relatives and others as well.

This function today is no different. We have all gathered here to join our successful graduands who will soon transition from the world of being students who are cared for by others, to that of mature and responsible adults and citizens who are ready to join millions of Malawians in shaping the destiny of our beautiful country.

I would, therefore, like to ask all of you to join me in congratulating our graduands on their success. This achievement is a well-deserved one. It did not come by chance or mistake. No one from the University of Malawi gets their qualification on a silver platter. It is earned through hard work, dedication and a high level of commitment to the academic standards demanded by the institution.

Distinguished Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

The graduates that the senate will present to you shortly have been provided with the necessary knowledge in their respective disciplines, as well as skills for discovery. These fine men and women have received adequate mentorship from the University of Malawi that will give them an edge over their peers. They have been equipped well enough to succeed. They shall succeed. ***We have equipped them with the skills and knowledge for subduing/conquering the earth. They shall not sit back and complain when they encounter new challenges but will draw from what they have been taught to offer solutions. The University of Malawi is proud to produce solution providers. They join a long list of members of the University of Malawi Convocation and alumni. The membership is permanent. Through these members of the convocation, the University has contributed immensely to the social and economic transformation of this country. Our graduates are at the forefront of providing solutions to the three pillars of the Mw2063.***

As a testimony of the relevance of the University of Malawi, our alumni have continued to be entrusted with various leadership positions in this country and globally. His excellency the President of the Republic of Malawi, Dr Chakwera is our alumni. The Vice President, the Speaker of Parliament, almost all the judges of the supreme and high courts, most of the captains of the public and the private industries are from this University. There can never be a clearer endorsement of our training than this. We produce problem solvers. Those who are ready to subdue the earth.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As it was the case last time, the University of Malawi is graduating students not only from UNIMA but also from our sister universities; namely; Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) and Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS). These are the students who were enrolled during the federal university of Malawi at then then Polytechnic, College of Medicine and Kamuzu College of Nursing. What is even more exciting is the excellent partnership which the three universities continue to enjoy amongst themselves and this shall in certain terms continue. This partnership also extends to all the six public universities and the private universities in the country. I therefore wish to take special recognition of Dr Nancy Chitera VC of MUBAS and Prof Mac Mallewa VC of KUHES. Thank you for this strong collaboration

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to provide brief highlights and statistics about the candidates who are graduating today.

SUMMARY STATISTICS

	Male	Femal e	Total
Certificate	6	1	7

Diplomas	18	7	25
Bachelors	1183	1106	2289
Postgraduate Diplomas	0	0	0
Masters	66	76	142
PhDs	6	5	11
TOTAL	1279	1195	2474

We have **2474** graduands this morning and afternoon with 7 certificates, 25 Diplomas, 2289 Bachelors, 142 Masters and 11 PhDs.

In terms of gender parity, the overall statistics shows that there is a very narrow gap between males and females who will be graduating today with 1279 males and 1195 (48%) females. This signals the university's efforts towards attaining the male-female 50-50 gender distribution with regard to opportunities for higher education in compliance with the national policy on gender equity.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

I would like to talk about current academic developments in the University of Malawi.

In my maiden Graduation Ceremony address in April, 2022 I indicated that my standing vision remains that whatever we set our hearts and minds to do, our delivery must bear the stamp of excellence. It may therefore please you to note that our dedicated members of staff and students continue to raise the bar for excellence in both local and regional arenas.

Therefore, from our last graduation on 7th September 2022 (about 6 months ago), I am pleased to report the following achievements:

1. Our current enrollment as a standalone University of Malawi is 11,733 out of which about 10000 are undergraduate and about 1700 are postgraduate. Our vision is to reach 15000 by 2026 as presented by the Chairman of Council.
2. The faculties were reconstituted into five schools, namely, School of Arts, Communication and Design; School of Education; School of Law, Economics and Government; School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and School of Natural and Applied Sciences. The reconstitution was on the basis that a school should have defined related themes and discipline, self contained in development and delivery of programmes; minimum of 5 departments and max of 10; demonstrate potential of efficiency and effectiveness in delivering programmes, research and in resource mobilization; international benchmarking in programmes, research and innovation; programmes should be responsive to the national development agenda, should have an strategic plan.
3. We do have a number of MoUs with local partners such as YONECO, Central High, Malawi Defence Force, Malawi Police, LEAD, the Department of Human Resource and Management and Development (DHRM) to mention a few
4. We are collaborating with a number of African regional partners such as, Universities of Pungwe Rovuma (Mozambique), Mzumbe University and UDSM (Tanzania), The African Psychosocial Support Institute (APSSI), African Economics Research Consortium, UDSM, Southern Africa Water centres of excellence, and WaterNet, South Africa Medical Council, University of Cape Town to mention a few.
5. Internationally we have collaborative agreements with University of Sterling, University court of the University of Edinburgh, Makerere University-School of Public Health,

University of Dundee (hence the presence of the Principal and Vice Chancellor, Ian, thank you very much Ian for coming) University of Eastern Finland, Bath Spa university and University of Oslo to mention a few.

6. After we have taken care of our horses, that is the students and our stakeholders, we must take care of our men, the staff! This University is committed to continually improving the welfare of our staff within the confines of law and practice. Dialogue and mutual understanding between the unions and management is the Holy Grail on matters of staff welfare. This is a continuous process with the best interests of staff at heart. Let me thank each and every member of staff for the support I continue to receive from you in discharging the mandate for which this University was founded and also for your diligent service. As you are aware, we practice an open-door policy and my doors remain open to engage you on matters of staff welfare.

Challenges:

There are three main challenges we are facing as a university.

1. Student accommodation: Out of the 10500 students, only 1200 bedspaces are available. The rest are accommodated in the neighbourhood, in structures that are not ideal for university education. In fact, Chikanda is our main campus these days. Please to note that in our current budget we have provision to start the procurement processes for construction of hostels. I am highlighting, the fact that the allocation is just for procurement processes. We do thank Government for the provision. We are also discussing with a number of companies under the PPP arrangement.

2. Teaching space: Out of the 11700 students, we have teaching space capacity of 2500 seated at once. We are pleased to report that we have funding for construction of prefabricated classrooms with a seating capacity of about 1000.
3. Teaching staff: Out of the 11700 students, our academic staff members are 310 translating to average staff student ratio of 1:34 against the recommended ratio of 1:18. A functional review coordinated by DHRMD is at an advanced stage to increase our staff establishments.

I would like to sincerely thank our **Chancellor, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Malawi and His government** for the financial support and special attention he gives to developments taking place at the University of Malawi.

Distinguished guests

Finally, let me address my graduands one last time. Today you leave our gates and head out into the world. We have prepared you as best as we could. Only one thing will elevate you to greatness, character.

You have developed these skills through your university education at UNIMA. Your university education has built a solid foundation for you to succeed. You now have the potential to achieve what is necessary to meet the challenges of the future.

This university was created to ensure the future security and development of our country. Therefore, as a graduate of the UNIMA, your future role is to fulfil the hopes invested in you by our nation's wise leadership.

You are ready to enhance our world with your talent and imagination. You have the tools, the knowledge, the skills, the ethical commitments, and the passion to steer through the changes that lie ahead.

Therefore, your graduation is not the end. It is a new beginning. You have much more to achieve.

I would like to speak on behalf of the entire university, to honour all those who have supported you on your university journey. We thank your parents, guardians, spouses, our staff members, your advisers, coaches, your friends and the main shareholder of the University, Government. All these people and institutions had faith in your dreams and potential, and they have all helped you to be here today. We are grateful to them all.

We also hope that you, in turn, will offer the same service to those who come after you. You are now a member of the UNIMA's alumni – a group of over 30,000 people who, in the last 60 years, have contributed to the success of the nation through their distinguished careers and service, both in employment and in the community. As a member of this alumni you are the university's representatives in the world. Your success will secure our reputation. And wherever you go, your UNIMA family will be there to support you. Am pleased to inform you that the University is developing an alumni tracking system.

Beloved graduands, allow me to finish with some quotes:

First by Malcom X

Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."

End of quote

Second by Anthony Fauci, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill 2021

"The world into which you'll enter as you leave the confines of this beautiful campuses has changed dramatically. The adjustments that you'll have to make, in order to function in the world that awaits you, are substantial. No doubt it's going to be tough. However, what I've seen of how you've responded to this pandemic

thus far, gives me confidence that you will adjust and you will thrive.”

End of quote

Third by JK Rowling, Harvard University 2008.

“If you choose to use your status and influence to raise your voice on behalf of those who have no voice; if you choose to identify not only with the power, but with the powerless; if you retain the ability to imagine yourself into the lives of those who do not have your advantages, then it will not only be your proud families who celebrate your existence, but thousands and millions of people whose reality you have helped change. We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better.”

End of quote

I thank you all for your attention and May the almighty God bless our University and our country, Malawi.