



SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI,

PROF SAMSON SAJIDU

DURING THE OPENING OF POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDENTS

AT STUDENT ATTACHMENT ORIENTATION WORKSHOP

HELD ON

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IN THE CHIKOWI LECTURE THEATRES

Salutations

Mrs Martha Mtenje, OPC Director of Human resource management

Mr Felix Linje, Chief Human Resource Planning Officer, DHRMD

The Dean of Faculty of Social Science, Professor Happy Kayuni

The Head of Department, Dr. Michael Chasukwa

Members of staff

Our beloved lucky students

It is with great pleasure and honour to stand before you to give a few remarks as a way of opening this prestigious function of the University-industry relations.

As a university we do realise that students who have work-integrated learning opportunities gain industry insights, develop their awareness of workplace culture, and also enhance critical workplace skills, such as positive leadership and communication. It is our strategic direction to create opportunities for students' internship and volunteer programmes in a number of ways such as;

- Strengthening linkage with industry including on possible internship for students.
- Ensuring placement of students to gain practical experience.
- Institutionalising internship as part of every program offered by the University.

The Head of Public Administrative Studies Department has elaborated most of these strategic objectives. As such, to avoid repetition, let me dwell much on simple messages to the students.

What is an internship or attachment?

Some define it as a paid or unpaid position taken for the purpose of exploring a given career field or preparing for future studies or employment.

Your performance during the internship will reflect your potential to future employers, impact future prospects, and strengthen UNIMA's visibility in the marketplace. Take the experience seriously. Indeed, the success of the internship is up to you.

I wish to give you some tips

When you go out there, ensure that you do a research about the organization/institution. Who are the key players in the organization/institution? It's not like here where you do not bother to know the organogram of the University (You do not know who a Vice Chancellor is, the DVC, the registrar, not even your Dean?). In the industry, you have no choice but to know the set-up of your company or institution. You also need to know what is the latest news with the organization you will be working with? Ask about appropriate attire for the office. Confirm who, when, and where you should meet on your first day for example. Read all the information that the Human Resources send you carefully and check to see what you need to bring with you. Make sure you observe deadlines. This is why we are tough here at the University on deadlines. When you submit your assignment beyond set deadline, we give you zeros. We do that to prepare you for the future. Out there, if you miss the deadline, the zero is simply termination of service!

Show up on time every day. Do not get used to the bad habit of coming to class after 20 min! Out there you will lose your job for being persistently late. Ask about your organizational policies and procedures. Are there HR policies you should review? Who should you communicate with if you are sick or an emergency arises that prevents you from coming to work? Remember that we do give you zeros

here if you don't inform the system that you were sick during exams? Out there it is termination of your service if you do not inform. Review your internship goals and your supervisor's expectations. Write down the names of the people you meet and their title/roles within the organization.

Exhibit maturity and professionalism by avoiding office politics and gossip. Keep confidential information confidential. Although you may not get along with everyone, focus on improving your working relationships. Remember to remain respectful at all times.

Dressing or attire

Do not confuse business casual with casual! You also need to be gender specific or neutral when it comes to dressing. Khaki, corduroy, twill or cotton trousers or skirts, should be neatly pressed. Sweaters and cardigans and nice jeans (if permitted) should have no holes or fray. Cotton long-sleeved button-down shirts should be well pressed; Polo shirts or knit shirts should be with a collar. Tailored blouses in cotton, silk, or blends; Suit jackets should be solid or patterned. A tie is a good option. Take an example of your fellow students in Law when they have a Moot court. They are always well dressed.

Closed toe loafers, boots, flats, flip flops, slippers, and pajamas are generally not appropriate for the office. Every office has its own culture, so pay attention to what others are wearing. A good rule is to dress one level better than what is expected.

Build networks during your internship.

Take advantage of networking opportunities such as company meetings, trainings, or other extracurricular activities. Do not be shy to introduce yourself to others in the office and try to get to know something about each of them. Be proactive. If you have free time, ask for tasks you can do that will make a difference. Smile and be friendly to everyone.

Sexual harassment

The University encourages anyone who has witnessed, experienced, or has information about possible sexual harassment and/or sexual misconduct to take reasonable actions to prevent or stop such actions, even if some or all information is unavailable or cannot be provided.

Stay alert and tuned in to your surroundings. Stand tall and walk confidently. Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a place or situation, leave right away and get help if necessary.

Some important words

There are three important words I want to share with you. These are 'Thank you'; 'Excuse me', 'I am sorry'.

If you take a ride in minibus and some one gives you a seat, say 'thank you'. UNIMA is proud of you when you humble yourself. A secretary lends you a pen or a car stops for you at zebra crossing, say thank you or wave your hand at them. They will feel so happy and recognize that you are a well trained product of the UNIMA. If you mistakenly wrong someone, please say 'I am sorry'. The situation will not escalate into something bad. Is you want a passage or borrow something, start with the word 'excuse me'.

Need for extensive training of our students

To our partners from Government and the industry in general, you and us have a job to do in order to assist each other in training these students.

Nowadays parents would want to fast track a child's education by sending them to primary school at around 4 years old to do a 6-year primary education followed by 4 years at secondary school. This implies that the child joins University at 14 years! Still being defined as a juvenile. We forget that there is need to balance between mental development and physical growth. The appropriate age to come to the University is 18. This is why in other countries they have a gap year until the child is 18 to be enrolled in university. The normal government system is also set in such a way that you will be in the University at 18 because you start primary education at 6, spend 8 years at primary and 4 year at secondary school adding up to 18.

Now, by sending a child at 14 to University we are transferring child care responsibilities to University system. Unfortunately, the University may also be sending such juveniles for internship and the industry will not tolerate childish behavior for sure.

In appreciation

Let me take this opportunity to thank PAS department through the Faculty of Social Sciences for organizing this orientation programme which fits very well in our strategic direction of increasing our students' employability and entrepreneurial skills which is a requirement in all our programmes.

Our facilitators from Government; Thank you for enhancing our industry links. It is our prayer that other industries (be it public or private) will be emulating this wonderful gesture.

With these few remarks I wish you a very successful orientation and nice experience during the internship.

God bless you, God bless UNIMA and our Country.