



SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE 'REFORMED' UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI, PROFESSOR SAMSON SAJIDU DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION OF HIS ACCAEP TANCE SPEECH ON 27TH JUNE, 2022 FROM 2:30 PM IN THE GREAT HALL, ZOMBA

Salutations

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Deans

Heads of Department

Acting Registrar

All Members of staff

President, CCASU

President, UWTU

Director of ceremonies

Students

Ladies and Gentlemen

Colleagues,

The theme of my address is “**Redirecting University of Malawi to its former glory: Ripping the fruits of reformation**”

I would like to set off my acceptance speech by indicating how all of us, as a nation and as a University have remained in a deep sense of grief for the many lives that have been lost through the Covid – 19 pandemic and other illnesses in the past few months.

As a University we have lost some of our most talented and dedicated staff including our former Principal and my friend, the late **Professor Richard Tambulasi**.

I pay tribute to these fallen colleagues who devoted all their efforts and knowledge to developing this University and raising the performance outlook of our great institution by ensuring that UNIMA only gets better.

They participated in preserving and consolidating on the past achievements of the University of Malawi in the provision of higher education. Unfortunately, they were taken away from us.

Acknowledging that this is the very first time we meet since Covid-19 attack, and the appointment of myself as the Vice-Chancellor and Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise as Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I request you all to rise up from your seats so that together we can observe a minute of silence in honour of our beloved colleagues...May their souls rest in eternal peace.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed a great honor and privilege to stand before you on this historical day in my life. With a great sense of humility and honor, I accept this appointment as the Vice Chancellor of University of Malawi – to be the Chief Executive of the University responsible for Academic, administrative and financial affairs of the University.

I wish to extend my deepest respect and appreciation to all the stakeholders of this institution. Special thanks go to His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Malawi and Chancellor of University of Malawi Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera for appointing me to lead this great University at the recommendation of Council of University of Malawi.

This is a pinnacle of highest honour and trust that anyone can get from the Head of State, Council, Senate, Staff, Students and the entire UNIMA community.

I am truly humbled by the many messages that I received and continue to receive congratulating me as a new Vice-Chancellor. These messages have been a source of encouragement, inspiration, and determination to take on the task of redirecting University of Malawi to its former glory.

The fact that the DVC and I emerged at the front does not mean we are exceptional. It may just be that it's the hands of fate, or indeed the design of the heavens, that we lead the process, for now. Let me therefore salute all those who expressed their interest and offered themselves to take up the leadership positions of this great university

It is indeed my prayer and hope that the Almighty God continues to grant me wisdom, good health and knowledge to diligently serve this great institution.

Ladies and gentlemen

Allow me also to pay tribute to the former Acting Vice Chancellor - Professor Alfred Mtenje for his relentless contributions to this institution.

Now to the main business of the day

Under my leadership for the period 2022-2027, all my efforts will be geared towards the restoration of University of Malawi's glory to a University that will be both locally and internationally recognized as:

- i. A university that is well governed;
- ii. A university that promotes innovative teaching and learning;
- iii. A university that is research-driven;
- iv. A university with a conducive learning and living environment;
- v. A university with adequate and motivated staff; and
- vi. A university that is financially sustainable.

I accept this appointment well aware of the challenges that University of Malawi is faced with. These include amongst others:

- i. Not rated among the top best universities in Africa by research, teaching and outreach
- ii. No acknowledgement of our scholars' research contributions and publications in some international major publications.
- iii. Limited research capacity
- iv. Inadequate funding
- v. Lack of both local and international visibility
- vi. Low access to higher education by most deserving Malawian youths
- vii. Limited ICT capacity

Ladies and gentlemen

Overcoming these challenges facing our University cannot be the responsibility of the Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor alone. Therefore, I call upon all of us - academic, administrative and support staff, to work together as a team. Let us be open and honestly communicate to each other for the good of our institution.

We will succeed!

Jointly and in unison, we will succeed

We cannot afford not to succeed

Failure is not an option

For University of Malawi to achieve her vision of being **A quality driven University that leads in humanities, social sciences, science and technology for skills development for Malawi and humanity**, we need to work together as a team – government; council; management; senate; staff; students and other stakeholders.

This being a public institution, I have to honestly work closely with the government on all matters affecting our University. I pledge to work closely with the Chancellor and Council, to address the challenges within our institution. In particular, we need to work together to convince government to continue its support for our wage bill and to actively get involved in infrastructural development.

I pledge to work with the University Senate in ensuring that UNIMA becomes the leading institution for academic excellence and innovations here in Malawi and beyond. In this regard, the section of Quality Assurance is expected to play a greater role and be accountable for its actions.

Ladies and gentlemen

The strategic priorities of my term in office are outlined in the University of Malawi Strategic Plan Draft for 2022 to 2027, which has already gone through rigorous edification by our stakeholders and now awaits Council's input.

Our Strategic Plan complies with the UNIMA Act No. 18 of 2019, the MW2063 and its first 10-year implementation plan (MIP-1), the Government's Reforms Agenda; the National Education Sector Investment Plan 2020-2030 and many more government policies and directions including international best practices on management in higher education.

Our major preoccupations, for the next five years, upon agreeing on a shared vision, will be on:

1. Increasing enrollment to 15000 by 2026.

- a. Implementing the World Bank Skills for a Virant Economy project which will increase student enrolment by about 3200 (largely females);
- b. develop new programmes to provide solutions to the current socio-economic needs of our country and beyond;
- c. Establish at least 2 ODeL centres in the country starting from Mzuzu where processes are already at a very advanced stage;
- d. Run approved ODeL compatible programmes. (10 ODeL programmes should increase enrollment by about 6000 students since one programme such as the Diploma in Statistics can potentially enroll 600 students. Imagine each one of our 100 plus programmes offer being offered through both ODeL and face-to-face- delivery);
- e. Review staff establishment through HR functional review which is underway;

2. Constructing hostels for our students who are currently around 8000 against 1200 bed-space.

- a. Already submitted a proposal to PSIP for construction of 4000 bed spaces
- b. Negotiating with the private sector such as Old Mutual for construction of more bed spaces
- c. Have initiated discussions with PPPC and IFC of World Bank for even more bed spaces
- d. We would want to have alumni/corporate world contributing to rooms of a hostel

- e. Have land for possible 15000 possible beds spaces if we can maximise vertical construction; hence, we can have multiple donors/investors in hostel construction

3. Expanding the teaching and learning space through such initiatives as;

- a. Development of proposals for developmental projects (as you may be aware that only a quarter of UNIMA land is built so that we make Zomba a real university city). A master plan is almost finalized.
- b. The SAVE project with support from World Bank facilitated by Malawi Government will among other activities achieve construction of a teaching complex with a total seating capacity of 2000 and some offices.
- c. Construction of University Administration Offices currently, 33% of the works has been completed and 29.2% of the works period exhausted. It contains 80 offices and a carpark that will accommodate over 100 vehicles.
- d. Construction of Department of Economics, Currently, 99.4% of the Phase 2 has been completed.
- e. Last month, through Government, we submitted a mega proposal to Bridgin Foundation for construction of multipurpose events arena (47 million USD), students' accommodation for 12000 bed spaces (233 million USD), High Tech Laboratories (4.5 million USD) and High-Tech ICT Laboratories (85 million USD) totaling about 370 million USD
- f. In the past two months, through the Faculty of Science, we have won project funding for the establishment of a Centre for Resilient Agri-food systems (CRAFS) through World Bank funding for 5.7 million USD. One key activity of the project includes

construction of Post Graduate (PG) Students facilities (Teaching Auditorium, Students Sitting Space with their amenities).

4. Improve students' success; Reduce withdrawals

- a. Review students' rules and regulations (We have lots of students withdrawing on financial or illness grounds while in actual sense they run away from academic pressure)
- b. Implement personal tutorship system
- c. Introduce more scholarships for students (including UNIMA scholarships such as Vice Chancellor's scholarship)
- d. Conduct supervision workshops, mentorship programmes etc. for timely completion of PG studies
- e. Continue offering of regular career guidance sessions in secondary schools including those in hard to reach areas
- f. Intensification of UNIMA open days to secondary schools
- g. Introduction of online library services open to secondary schools
- h. Specialised programmes to have their own core modules such as Mathematics for Chemistry
- i. Entrepreneurial skills to be included in all programmes for subsequent survival of the graduates in the industry

5. Increasing our research profile in our schools.

- a. Develop UNIMA research agenda
- b. Establish multi-disciplinary research groups
- c. Use of professors for seeking research funds
- d. Have a university research fund
- e. Introduce incentives for active researchers
- f. Orient and mentor junior faculty
- g. Institutionalise research seminars and conferences

- h. Establish Grants Management unit
- i. Implement the policy on Intellectual property right to ensure that any publication done by all affiliates and members of the University regardless of where they are, on scholarship or not, shall acknowledge the University as a key contributor of all research endeavours including innovations
- j. Encourage scholarly exchanges and collaborations
- k. Promote student's engagement in research even at undergraduate level
- l. Establish UNIMA press (two elements: academic research publications and business)
- m. Capacitating academic staff in research and grants proposal writing through training programmes
- n. Collaborating with international reputable research institutions
- o. As we reconstitute our faculties into schools we also need to reconstitute existing research centres for increased capacity in research publications, financial sustainability and UNIMA ranking positively

6. Reducing our dependence on government by enhancing our resource mobilization initiatives;

- a. Increasing share of economic fee-paying students (10% already approved by government but we enroll less than 1 %)
- b. Short courses on skills NOT just degrees targeting school leavers and working groups
- c. Use of strengths and connections existing in our units and departments
- d. Continue harnessing diversity like use of ICT services for income generation
- e. Use of professors for income generation/seeking research projects etc. Only teach 1st years and PG students (to be included in workload policy for professors and PMS). In future we should give

professors seed money to develop research themes around which students will be recruited and we gain on the tuition collected. Currently, we should be able to give professors support to develop proposals (at least the first 3 proposals, hoping that atleast 2 will be externally funded and implemented).

- f. Engagement of the alumni and friends of UNIMA for resource mobilisation;
- g. Holding periodic UNIMA-Corporate functions
- h. Creating wholly owned holding company (with units like University press, Chanco Radio and TV, departmental products etc).
- i. Having strategic presence in priority sectors funded by GOM/Donors
- j. Implementation of relevant policies on resource sharing such as research/consultancy/intellectual property policies

7. Promoting our international visibility

- a. Need to have the internationalisation policy finalized for implementation.
- b. Finalise qualifications framework including credit transfer policy;
- c. Ensure we have a stable calendar and jealously guard it;
- d. Ensure that we have proper accommodation for international students (can start with Kwacha hostel);
- e. Increasing international research and consultancy collaborations
- f. Offer joint degrees;
- g. Publishing research findings in international high impact journals;
- h. Holding periodic international research dissemination conferences;
- i. Intensive participation in international high impact conferences. However, we will need outcomes that are

academically tangible at least from the first 3 conferences in a year. Not using them for holidays.

- j. Ensure that internationalization applies to both staff and students.

8. Introducing Performance management system for managing organisational and individual staff performance and building organisational capacity for the future.

The system will be aimed at;

- a. clarifying individual roles and responsibilities;
- b. providing performance feedback;
- c. promoting communication between supervisors and employees;
- d. contributing to career planning;
- e. encouraging employee training and development;
- f. recognizing good performance;
- g. handling poor performance effectively;
- h. providing an objective basis for job placement and promotion and;
- i. enhancing performance/productivity of the organisation.

Please note that as part of my terms of engagement Council requested me to draft KPIs which are yet to be considered and approved by Council. It is expected that after the approval of these KPIs, the process will trickle down to the lowest cadre in the system as we inculcate positive mindset change in our business. In other words, each one of us regardless of position will be subjected to the Performance Management System which I am being subjected to for various reasons including promotions, merit award, trainings, among others.

9. Strengthen quality assurance for teaching and learning programs

- a. Let's ensure that there should be zero cheating in the University.

- b. Let's have a functional and accountable section of Quality Assurance which will ensure that:
 - i. Quality assurance tools (including external examining, continuous assessments) are developed and utilized all the time,
 - ii. All staff are trained on quality assurance issues:
 - iii. Strategic investments are made for example in human resources and functional cameras to curb cheating during examinations, and that all new staff, unlike what has been happening over the past 30 years, are properly inducted in the UNIMA teaching philosophy.
 - iv. That there should be quality services in terms of accommodation facilities, food, teaching and learning environment, sports and other recreational facilities

10. Development and review of instruments.

You will recall that as we were preparing for delinking, we were intensively involved in development of new policies and instruments and reviewing the existing ones. The instruments were meant to feed into 11 KPIs; namely, the establishment of the reformed UNIMA; Organisation and administrative structures; Enhancement of Teaching and Learning; Establishment of Research and Consultancy Structures; Development, review and harmonisation of Administrative and Operational Policies; Establishment of Student Affairs Structures and Systems; Staff welfare; Conveyance and Crystallisation of Property; Development of Consolidated Information Services; Reviewing the Conceptualisation of the Resource Mobilisation and Investment office; and Establishment of Marketing and Communication office.

I would like to report that some of the instruments are at an advanced stage. Statutes are with the Ministry for gazetting, organogram was approved by Council but we may request further modification depending on the recommendations of the functional review which is underway. Schools were approved by council. Conditions of service were submitted to council but not yet approved whereas strategic plan and other policies are being validated. Funding or no funding we need to come up with a priority list of the instruments and resuscitate the task forces which were working on the instruments because we need them for the University's operations.

11. Reducing conflict escalation in order minimise abrupt closures:

Conflicts can't be avoided in academia due to our organization communication culture, competitiveness, and democracy). We need to develop a collective bargaining agreement with staff unions and student representative council.

For the fulfilment of our vision, I pledge to work closely with:

- i. The DVC and the Estates Department to make sure that we have a conducive learning and living environment;
- ii. The DVC, Executive Deans, Heads and Registrar and the Directorate of Finance and Investment to ensure that the Directorate becomes relevant by implementing the Investment Policy; and that University finances are efficiently and prudently used;
- iii. The DVC and the Registrar to ensure that we effectively and efficiently deliver quality academic services;
- iv. The Directorate of Students Welfare and the Students' Representative Council to improve upon the welfare of our students;
- v. The Librarian to make sure that we are academically and technologically relevant on library resources;

- vi. The University Procurement and Disposal Unit to streamline the procurement processes within our University;
 - vii. Both staff associations to make sure that we improve the welfare of our staff;
 - viii. With Private Sector and Development Partners for additional sources of income.
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Colleagues,

During these transition times, there may be elements of uncertainty, and even push-backs. It is normal to be satisfied with the status quo. However, if we are to forge forward, we need to get out of our comfort zone and move forward. The weather out there may not always be nice, and the experiences maybe unsettling. But it is forward ever and backward never. Ladies and gentlemen, the train has left the station. It will only stop to drop those who want or need to disembark, and pick those who want to join the journey. This train will not be derailed. This train has an appointment with destiny. To paraphrase what Martin Luther King Junior famously said, "I may not personally be there at the helm when we get there, but I know that we, as a university, will get to the promised land. (I am sure Late Prof Tambulasi would have said the same if we had the ability to tell our fate) But we need to remember that we are in this together. We ride together and we sink together. But we must not be like the Titanic. We need to be each other's brother's and sister's keepers. Let us be on the lookout against icebergs that may perilously damage our ship. What am I saying? You see a problem, raise it up with the captain. This captain has ears, and he will listen. That is my commitment to you all.

As I finalise my remarks, let me say something on the following:

1. Staff welfare/Cost of Living/Motivation

- I am aware that cost of living has gone up which has adversely affected each one of us. As Management, we are finalizing consultations with relevant authorities including our Council and Treasury for a possible cost of living adjustment. We would like you to note that there are a number of considerations that are being made and we shall provide progress on these matters as and when we conclude the discussions and consultations.
- On the same, we have engaged our financial lending institutions especially banks to provide financial support to our staff members in form of loans which will cover vehicle loans, mortgage, cash, among others. These loans will complement those that the University already provides. The details will be provided as soon as we concretise the agreements.

2. Sports

- Previously as you will agree with me sports in Unima was a prominent feature. Our football club, University FC played in the Super League of Malawi. Some of our prominent players in basketball and volleyball made into the national team. This was quite a feat. It is an international practice for the universities to participate in both national and international major sports events for our visibility and local internationalisation. I therefore would like to pledge that working with various individuals, committees and the private sector we would bring the lost Unima sporting glory so that we become a force to reckon with in sports.

3. Fiscal discipline or Financial Management

- As a head of this institution, I have received both internal and external audit reports indicating that at least 60% of our financial resource goes to procurement. The indication is that most of our procurement is unplanned for. That means we use our funds to procure materials

that were not even budgeted for. That kind of approach puts a lot of pressure on the status of our finance.

- To avoid this scenario, I would like to advise our Finance Department to start budget consultations way before the government stipulated time for consultations. The idea is that we give heads and Deans enough time for consultations in order to accommodate their aspirations and requirements for various departments and units. This in the end entails that the University will not procure anything that has not been budgeted for regardless of whether the faculty/school, department or unit has its own funds or not, unless if the matter is very urgent.

4. Open door policy

- I would like to assure everyone here that my leadership will be premised on an open-door policy. This means that every manager's door should be open to every employee. We should avoid blocking staff members from engaging us in any form possible. The purpose is to encourage open communication, feedback, and discussion about any matter of importance to an employee. Our staff should be able to take their workplace concerns, questions, or suggestions outside their own chain of command without worrying.
- However, let me emphasise that the fact that I am an advocate of open-door policy does not mean in itself that staff members should break the protocol, procedure and processes as provided in our administrative manuals but the idea is to encourage honest conversations and exchange of ideas to improve ourselves in various areas.
- For example, our office procedure demands that when we raise a requisition for something, the same should be taken through the stipulated processes of approval until it gets to the offices of Registrar, DVC and VC. However,

colleagues in faculties, departments and units in particular, choose to write direct to the procurement office with instructions to commence a procurement process without undergoing the due processes as outlined herein. This affects the speed at which the requisition needed to be processed because the procurement office cannot process this without an approval from the Registrar, DVC or VC.

5. Mindset change

- As we know the University of Malawi is undisputedly the mother university in Malawi. That brutal truth gives us a lot of pressure to set standards for higher education.
- I am sharing my vision in which some of the programs or approaches to achieve what we aspire might not be compatible or comfortable with the culture, tradition or mindset as we used to do in the federal UNIMA. We will be developing new policies and reviewing the old ones. As you know, a policy creates losers and winners.
- I implore all of you to be receptive to change, be part of the change, our attitudes should be “what is it that I can contribute and **NOT WHEN ARE THEY GOING TO FAIL. There are no spectator ions on this journey.**
- In some quarters, we have been labelled as “**AMANGOKANGANA**”, meaning we waste time debating matters that will not bring progress instead of discussing how we will run resource mobilisation and others.
- I therefore reiterate that we become and remain positive ambassadors of this great institution. And every moment as we work, remember **that “we are in these positions on trust” and “our primary responsibility is to provide public service”, and nothing else.**
- In that case, set your own goals based on the wider UNIMA goals, share your ideas and let us work together.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Universities are known to be change catalysts world over and we have no choice. As the University of Malawi,

- we will create value,
 - we will enhance quality, and
 - we will transform our citizenry.
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In conclusion:

Our challenge is, therefore, clear. However, this cannot, and must never be, an operation by the two of us. And in that case, every student who passes through here should get a unique space in the World as great teachers, great lawyers, great economists, great natural and social scientists, great philosophers, great artists, great psychologists, great actuarists and many more.

This shared value will lead us to continuous improvement in all aspects of our mission without compromise.

And therefore colleagues, with the new team that is about to undergo the grueling process of interviews (**Registrar, Director of Finance and Investments, Director of Students Affairs, Librarian, and later Executive Deans**) we are 100% confident that together we will achieve the vision, mission and objectives of the mighty UNIMA.

We will move forward. We will not only build a legacy but a great sea of responsible citizens and UNIMA is well positioned to give impetus to the MW2063 where we seek to innovate in order to support agricultural productivity and commercialization, industrialisation and urbanisation of our beloved nation.

For this I say “**Connect with Excellence**”

I thank you for your attention

MAY GOD BLESS THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI AND GOD BLESS MALAWI