

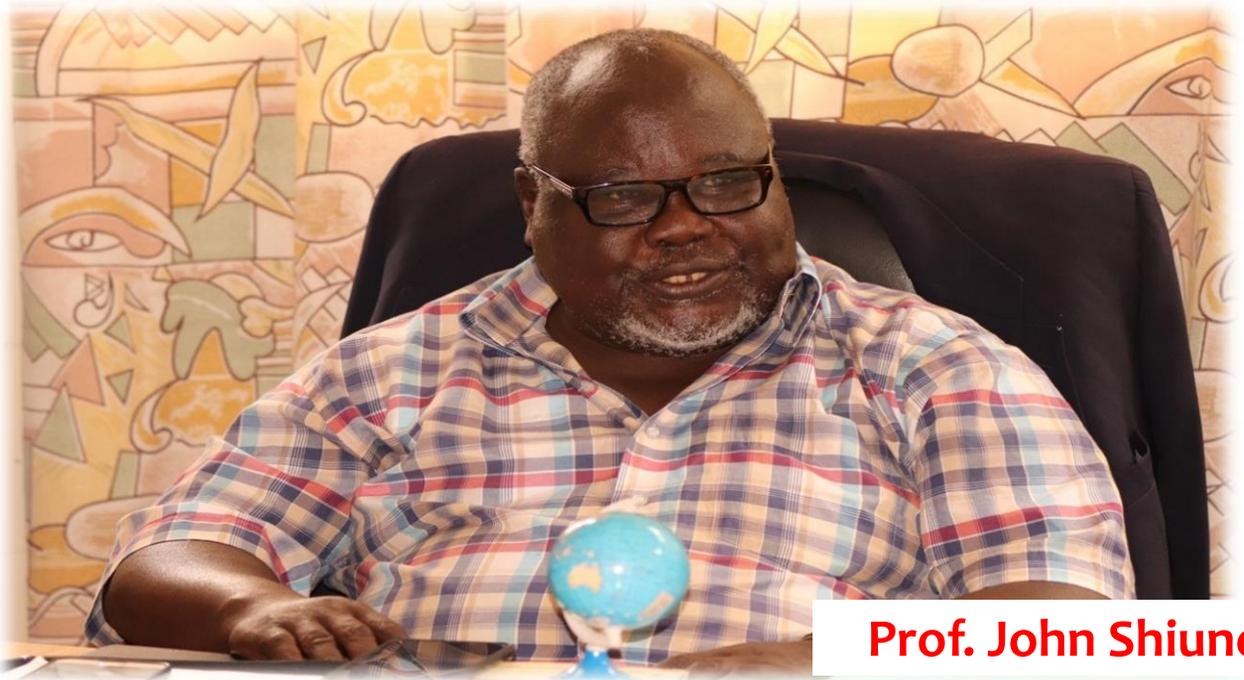


# MMUST NEWS *Post*

A Weekly digital publication of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

Vol. 4 Issue 2: 19<sup>th</sup> January to 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2020

**“ACADEMIA SHOULD BE INVOLVED MORE IN RESEARCH THAN TEACHING”**



**Prof. John Shiundu**



**International Mother Language Day Conference (IMLD)- Feb 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, 2020.**

**Theme: “Indigenous languages matter for development, peace building and reconciliation”**



## Editor's Pen



Dear MMUST Community,

Welcome to the year 2020!

After a short break, it is our pleasure to bring you this edition of the *NewsPost*.

We hope you enjoy it.

We encourage you to continue sharing with us events taking place in your sections.

Our team is always ready and available to offer the support that you require.

We look forward to a productive year.



Nashilluh Brendah Kabindio

**Ag. Public Relations Officer/ Editor-in-Chief**



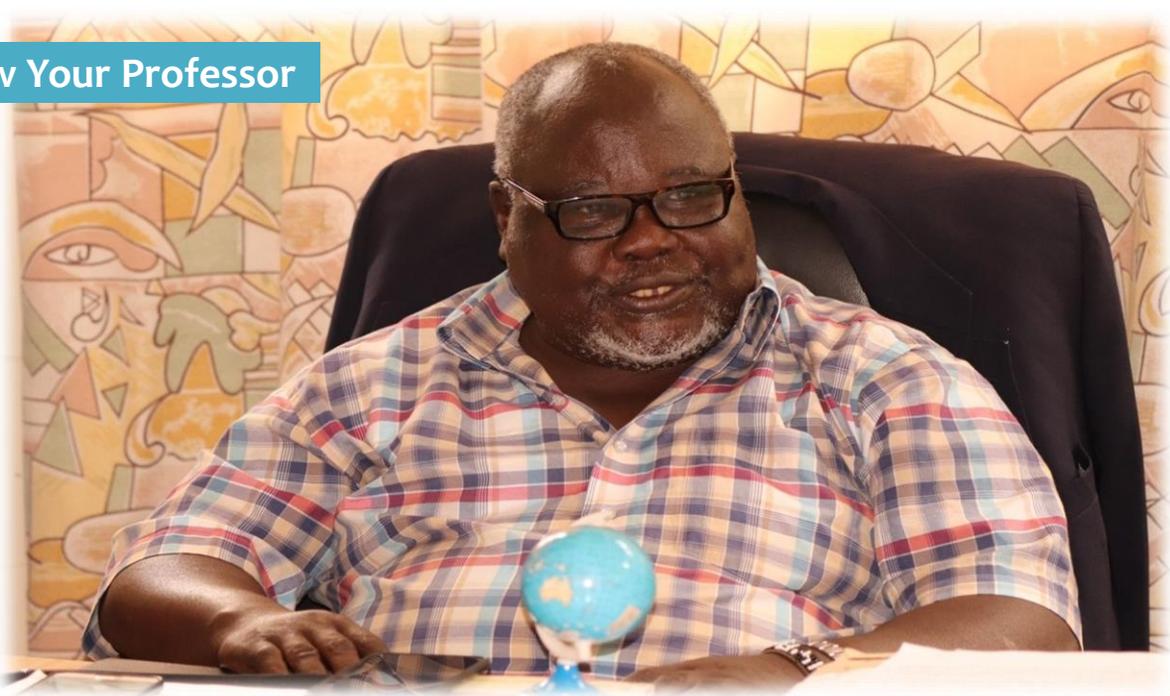
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Professor John Shiundu is one of the first professors to be appointed at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). As a full professor of Education spanning over 20 years, he has immensely contributed to education in the western region of Kenya and beyond. As an avid advocate for more quality research in universities, we spoke to the knowledgeable Professor on matters research and education. Prof. John Shiundu is currently working to establish a multidisciplinary institute of research at MMUST.

**Interview by**  
**Awuor Sandra Dorcas**

**Q: Please tell us about yourself.**

My name is Prof. John Shiundu, a professor of Education at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). I was born, raised and went to school in Busia County. In the course of my academic journey, I also studied in Kisii, Nairobi, Canada and then, partly, Sierra Leone. Before becoming a Professor, I was a teacher in primary and secondary schools and also trained teachers in various colleges in Kenya.

I also worked at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), which is currently Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) in charge of teacher education and curriculum. I have also worked as an Assistant Director of Education, in charge of Research and Statistics.

**Q: As a Professor of Education here at MMUST, what are your current research interests and teaching?**

I teach various courses in the School of Education at all levels from undergraduate to PhD. My research interests are really vast because they cut across all areas of education, social sciences, curriculum issues at all levels of education, early childhood education, non-formal education and community development. I am currently doing a lot of research on educational issues and striving to establish an Institute of Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Studies at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). Research is the main activity at the University, therefore, we need a research institute to be able to attract research funds.

### **Q: Do you think universities are doing enough in matters research? If not, what can be done better?**

Universities in Kenya are struggling. Scholars try as individuals to get money for research but to no avail. The amount given to research in Kenya cannot support any meaningful research. This is where the Government of Kenya has let us down as scholars because they expect you to do research without proper funding. Research that can really influence policy and development, embrace various aspects of human life in this country in order to bring development. We are not doing very well. The attitude of research and research culture is also a big concern. Countries like America, German and Singapore are high because of research. We need more research funds and to create a framework of research, hence more of these institutes of research should be set up in our universities.

### **Q: What are your views on the emerging focus on research productivity and collaborative research in Kenyan Universities?**

This is the way to go. When dealing with knowledge as an individual, you are more or less just talking to yourself. I would not recommend any research done by an individual because the value is low. Collaborative research means you will produce more meaningful knowledge. When people come together to do research, there are different sources and opinions coming in which boosts the quality of research.

### **Q: What can postgraduate students do to make themselves good candidates when conducting research?**

First of all, they must form a positive attitude and develop a research culture. A research culture is a very important framework in doing research. Continuous research training is also important and should focus beyond getting a certificate for Masters or PhD. Collaborative research between universities should also be encouraged so that students are motivated when they see others doing research. We do not have scholarship programs to take students for post-doctoral training, which are meant to enhance research skills. Sometimes, priorities in universities are upside down. Research should be priority for universities and they must boost the budget for research.

### **Q: Any future plans for research in your profession?**

I want to establish the Institute of Indigenous Knowledge and Culture. We are currently working on a proposal with Spencer Foundation in USA for research funding worth 50 million. I want academia to be involved more in research than teaching. Teaching is not scholarship because one can as well teach in high school. The difference between high school and university is research. We must get more research institutes. I plan to mobilize young scholars to collaborate and be active in research that impacts lives and informs governments so that the knowledge can be used in transformative projects.

In the absence of the research Institute, I am working closely with my fellow lecturers and professors to establish a research consortium in order to attract more research funds. We can have other research institutes in various disciplines like in health, environment, nutrition and other areas and bring the University to the limelight. More research institutes mean more research activities and, therefore, more publications. I also publish with other young scholars so they can also catch up in terms of visibility in their area.



**Prof. Shiundu addressing the media at a past event**

## Know Your Professor

### **Q: What are some of your contributions to education in the country and beyond?**

After the genocide in Rwanda, many professors had been killed in the National University of Rwanda so the Government of Rwanda pleaded for assistance. I sacrificed to go to Rwanda against people's wish because they were worried for my safety since the war was still on. I coordinated a project which brought teachers from other countries such as Kenya, Uganda and India to teach at National University of Rwanda. After that, the Government of Rwanda again asked me and other Kenyans to do a survey and wrote a paper on education for Rwanda, which has been used to improve the country's education. I also came up with a proposal for teacher education in Rwanda.

In the western region of Kenya, we had a taskforce in 1977 on the standard of education in the Western Region and came up with the *Red Book*. The Book recommended the establishment of a university in Western Province. From the *Red Book*, we were given a constituent college of Moi University.

### **Q: There is a section of stakeholders who argued that the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) needed more research before its implementation. What is your take on that?**

You cannot change a curriculum before you undertake a serious evaluation research on what was wrong with the previous curriculum and what the people's needs are. This will give a blueprint for curriculum specialists to develop a good curriculum. There is also a

### **Q: We are aware that you have held various administrative and management roles. You were the first Deputy Vice Chancellor then in charge of Planning, Research and Extension at MMUST. What is your view on the current politicization of management in Kenyan universities?**

I joined the university as a junior research fellow and grew from that. When I was in university as a student and teacher, the university was autonomous. The Government gave funds and the Vice Chancellor was appointed on merit. Universities need to be managed by people who understand the university. Today, most decisions made in universities are by politicians not academicians and that is the mismatch.

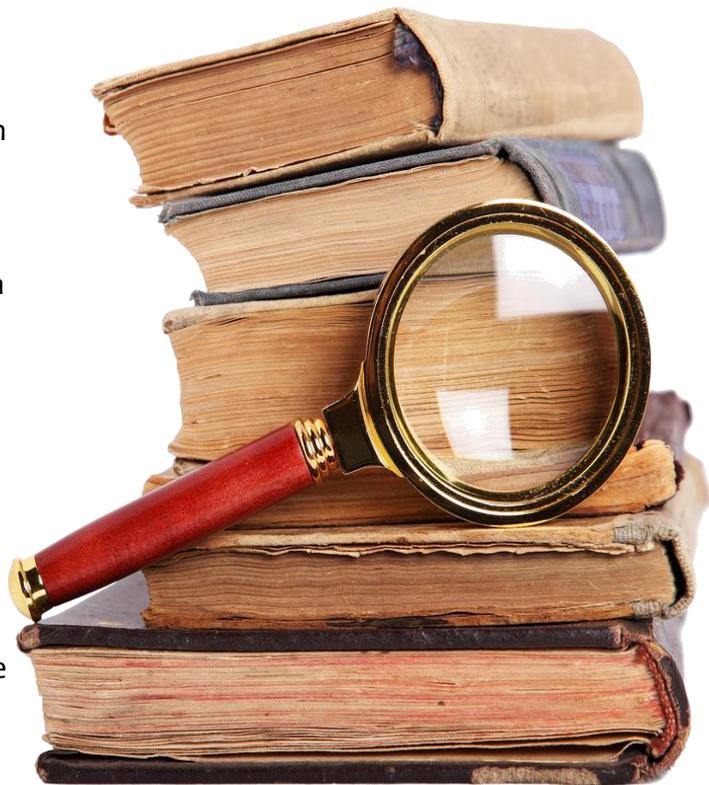
process of curriculum implementation which should be systematic. People should be prepared and trained properly

to make sure all stakeholders accept the curriculum. CBC is not a new thing. In the 80s, I was training technical teachers using CBC but they give a picture that it is a new thing.

### **Q: Partying shot?**

Education is important. Education is life and life is education.

**“Education is important. Education is life and life is education.”**





# MMUST TVET Directorate Re-aligns Its Programs Towards Realizing An Institute

**By Albert Induli**

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) through the Directorate of Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) is in the final process of its curriculum restructuring in line with the Technical, Vocational, Education Training Authority (TVETA) standards and guidelines in a bid to become a full-fledged semi-autonomous institute. The Directorate held a three-day workshop from 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2020 at Bishop Stam Pastoral Centre in Kakamega that saw TVET coordinators from various Departments in MMUST participate in re-generating the curriculum to bring to fruition the TVET institute at the University.

Eng. Waweru further notes that they are dealing with over forty (40) programs both, Certificates and Diplomas, which he hopes at the end of the exercise would be forwarded to the Authority for accreditation.

[MMUST has embraced Competency Based Curriculum and is stepping up its TVET vibrancy in the western region through offering skill-based programs.](#)

The University has been able to create links with; Sigalagala, Shamberere, Bushiangala and Butere Technical Training institutes. According to sources, MMUST will soon be signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Kenya National Youth Service (NYS) in an agreement that will see the University offer technical courses to the recruits through an exchange program.

However, the Directorate sights various impediments that may hamper the realization of this venture which include; lack of resource persons, lack of adequate workshops and laboratories, limited space to expand, very few equipment for TVET students to engage in practicals among other challenges. Even though that may pose a setback, Mr. Norman Wambayi Owate, who has been the National TVET Coordinator now working in MMUST, says that they are not focusing much on the challenges rather the bigger objectives.





## PRACTICE-ORIENTED UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN WESTERN KENYA

**By Wambugu Mary Wangari**

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), through the Department of Pure and Applied Chemistry, under the School of Natural Sciences (SONAS), organized a training workshop on Catalysis that took place from 20<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020. This was the second one of its kind since the year 2019.

The Seminar was conducted in collaboration with Prof. Rainer Malessa from the Brandenburg University of Applied Sciences (THB), Germany. The two (2) institutions have been working together on the Practice-Oriented University Education in Western Kenya (ProUniEdu-WeK) project which is funded by DAAD, the largest German support organization in the field of international academic co-operation.

Other Schools participating in the project were; School of Agriculture, Veterinary Sciences and Technology (SAVET), School of Engineering and

Built Environment (SEBE), and School of Public Health, Biomedical Sciences and Technology (SPHBST).

During the workshop, participants were actively engaged in lectures, group discussions as well as practical sessions. Prof. Malessa, who is an expert in Catalysis, together with Dr. Francis Orata (Chair of the host Department) and Dr. G. Mutua, gave insights on the topics of discussion, that is; Catalysis, Biomass Gasification and Bio-oils Production.

The climax of the exercise was a trip to the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI), and Orbit Chemical Industries Ltd (OCIL), Nairobi, by selected members. It is worth noting that some of MMUST staff went to visit THB on the same project in the year 2018.

**Participants during the Workshop** →



# MMUST COMMUNITY PARTICIPATES IN FIRE SAFETY AWARENESS



*A practical session during the awareness training*

By Wambugu Mary Wangari

The Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) Security Department, in conjunction with the Kakamega County Fire Services, on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2019, conducted a disaster preparedness, security, fire safety and emergency sensitization training to the University staff and students.

The exercise was meant to raise awareness on how to act in the event of a fire outbreak in the workplace or at home.

“For us to understand fire, we must know the triangle of combustion, that is, the three components a fire needs to ignite. These elements are, heat, oxygen and fuel,” said Mr. Anambo, the County Chief Fire Officer.

Additionally, he stated that the work of a fire fighter is more than just extinguishing fire.

“Other than putting out fire, our responsibilities are to save life, to render humanitarian services and to salvage property.”

Mr. Anambo showcased gadgets that the fire brigade use in their line of duty to rescue people. This equipment include; fishing hooks used when the team is unable to access victims especially in water, cutters for breaking doors or walls in order to enter buildings, ropes and fire tunics made from fire resistant synthetic fabric that they wear to save casualties that have been trapped.

He also articulated on portable fire extinguishers as one of the available tools that can easily be acquired during the incident.

“This gadget is used to extinguish fire at its initial stage,” he stated, as he showed the audience how to operate it.

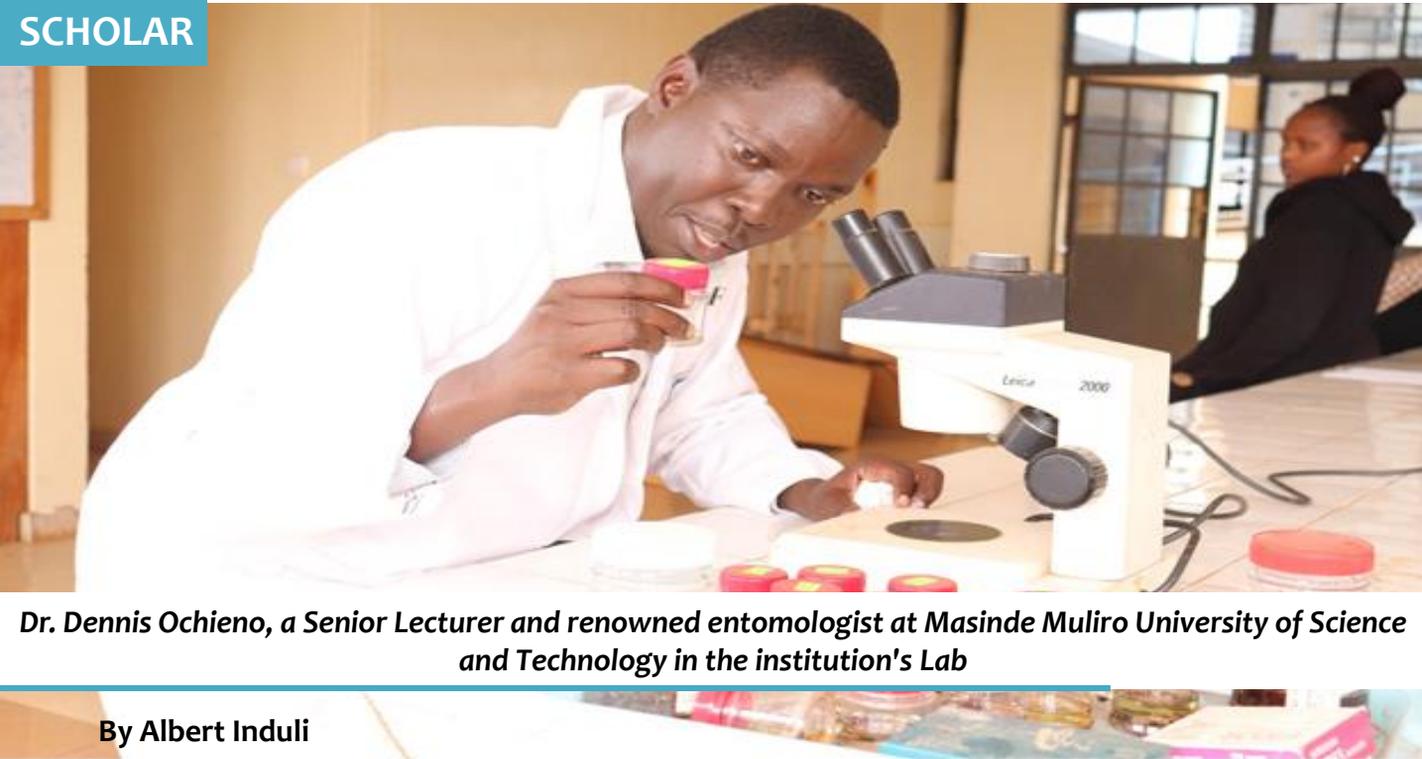
Subsequently, he encouraged people to observe fire safety measures that have been put in buildings.

“When you spot a fire outbreak, the first thing you should do is raise an alarm before looking for any available extinguishing method,” he advised.

He urged participants to understand the topography of their houses so that in case of anything, they are able to save themselves.

# MMUST SCHOLAR'S FOCUS ON KENYA'S DESERT LOCUST MENACE

SCHOLAR



*Dr. Dennis Ochieno, a Senior Lecturer and renowned entomologist at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in the institution's Lab*

By Albert Induli

**M**asinde Muliro University's Dr. Dennis Ochieno, a senior entomologist, has joined the Government's effort in grappling with the ongoing desert locust invasion in Kenya. Dr. Ochieno is carrying out a short research and is also sensitizing the public. According to him, this kind of situation can easily lead to a breakdown of the country's food system.

In his research, Dr. Ochieno analyses the environmental conditions that supports breeding and survival of the desert locust exclusively. The renowned MMUST senior Lecturer and insect expert asserts that the current invasion of the desert locust poses an unprecedented threat to food security which is the worst in 70 years. Invasion of desert locust are irregular in the region, the last instance being in 2007 at a much small scale.

According to him, irregular weather and climate conditions in 2019, including heavy rains between October and December, are suspected to have contributed to the spread of locusts in the region. He adds that the cyclone that swept through Somalia and eastern Ethiopia in December, bringing heavy rains to the area, created ideal conditions for the insects to breed in a period of the next six months.

"If left untreated by control measures, swarms can potentially grow 400 times larger by June", he says.

The insects do not attack people or animals and there is no evidence they carry diseases that can harm humans. However, they can stay for a very long period of time travelling up 130 kilometers (80 miles) or more a day. The researcher, furthermore, states that a swarm can vary from one square Kilometer to several hundred square kilometers with up to 80 million adult locusts in each square kilometer of the swarm.

In appearance, Dr. Ochieno describes a desert locust as a species of locust, a swarming short-horned grasshopper in the family Acaridae. Plagues of desert locusts have threatened agricultural production in Africa, the Middle East and the Asia for centuries.

"The livelihood of at least one tenth of the world's human population can be affected by this voracious insect", observes Dr. Ochieno.

The desert locusts are potentially the most dangerous of the locust pest because of the ability of their swarms to fly rapidly across great distances.

# MMUST STUDENTS TO BENEFIT FROM U.S INSTITUTES STUDY

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By Albert Induli

United States Embassy Cultural Exchange office has identified twelve (12) female students from the eleven (11) Schools in Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology for a program dubbed Study of the U.S Institutes (SUSI).

During a meeting with the Cultural Attaché who paid a courtesy call in her office on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020, the Acting Vice Chancellor, Prof. Asenath Sigot, thanked the Attaché for identifying MMUST as a prospective participant and providing the University with the opportunity to represent Kenya in this prestigious scholarship.

According to Prof. John V.O Muoma, a Fulbright Scholar working closely with the U.S Embassy Cultural Exchange Office, the identified students were interviewed by the Consulate Cultural Attaché, Christopher Munchin, shortly after the VC's courtesy call. The intense interviews were to shortlist identified students for the program and send them to Washington DC for further processing and travel to US tentatively in June 2020. The event will bring together eighty (80) SUSI student leaders with MMUST selected students representing Kenya.

SUSI program is a fully funded intensive short-term academic program whose purpose is to provide groups of undergraduate student leaders with a deeper understanding of the United States while simultaneously enhancing their leadership skills. The five week visit to institutes will consist of a balanced series of seminar discussions, readings, group presentations and lectures. The coursework and classroom activities will be complemented by educational travel, site visits, leadership activities and volunteer opportunities within the local community. Each institute will have 20 female participants and will include a four week academic residency component and a one week integrated study tour. At the same session, they will also get the chance to engage in educational and cultural activities outside of the classroom.

It is worth noting that this program is principally centered on student leaders on women leadership and it will examine the history and participation of women in public life at the United States.





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