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**DEAN'S SPEECH AT THE UCU LAW HOME COMING EVENT 20<sup>th</sup> JULY 2018**

Our dear beloved alumni, I greet you all in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In January 2003, I set foot at Uganda Christian University for my first class as a Tutorial Assistant. I was somewhat nervous and did not know much about what to expect from my class room. I admit that I was also a bit over-confident and took it for granted that the students I would be meeting that afternoon in the Banking and Negotiable Instruments class would take everything I said as gospel truth without question. As such, I did not prepare much for the class, trusting that my basic knowledge of the subject would enable me to last through the next two hours. How wrong I was – during that first encounter with the class, I was challenged throughout by my students. Evidently, they were more prepared for the class than I was, mainly judging from the fact that I did not have half the answers to the questions they threw at me. All that happened fifteen years ago when the then Dean of the Faculty of Law, Prof. Lillian Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza (now Justice of the Supreme Court) invited me to join her teaching staff at UCU.

First forward now to 2018 and some of the students I taught during that first teaching encounter so many years ago are now colleagues at the Faculty and scholars in their own right – these include the likes of Mrs. Sarah Taboswa-Chemonges, Mr. Sam Kiriaghe and Ms. Patience Tusingwire. I am proud of the fact that God has given me the opportunity of witnessing UCU Law grow in leaps and bounds to what it is today. It is also on account of my personal growth in the academic world thanks to UCU, that I have been able to traverse the world and gain exposure from different first class law schools in various continents. Through this exposure, one thing has always stood out: – the most successful law schools have a very close involvement from their alumni in the day to day running of the Law Schools, which is inclusive of the nurturing of the next breed of lawyers. I want to make this the crux of our



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home coming event today. I cannot emphasize enough how much UCU Law needs to rely on its alumni more than ever.

Undoubtedly, UCU is not the only contributor or facilitator to what or who each of you has turned out to be. Nonetheless, it has played a significant and pivotal role in shaping you out into becoming the role models that you are today. Interestingly, this is not a one off. In as long as you continue to affiliate yourself with UCU through presentation of your CVs or in any other capacity possible, this great institution will indirectly continue to open up doors for you that will contribute positively towards shaping your career path. What you should not do, is nurture the belief that once you are out of UCU, then it is of no relevance to you in any other way. Any name that a person holds is carried forever, so God forbid that UCU Law declines in stature some years down the road. Regardless of the fact that you are an alumni, the shame that comes with UCU Law taking a nose dive, will inevitably impact you as well. So, are you successful or not? Are you proud of the Law School that trained you or not? I believe the answer is YES and a resounding YES at that, to each of these questions. Then work hard and roll up your sleeves and ensure that those that come after you will go through UCU and carry the same joy and pride that you have; that they too will partake of the same – if not better teaching environment and exposure – than what you experienced. In that way, UCU Law will continue to soar even higher.

It has been said that *“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.”* Admittedly, there are quite a number of flaws in the system at UCU Law. Unless we face up to these weaknesses and patch them up, they can easily turn out to be the little holes that can sink the great Ship. As administrators we may not even be aware of all these weaknesses, or worse still, we may be aware of them but keep hoping that they can go away anytime and yet we keep doing the same thing every academic year. It is on that basis that we need you as alumni to come on board and work with us in addressing the factors that can easily draw us



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back from progress. We have to avoid complacency and the belief that all is well. We need you to come on board and help us improve on the positive areas as we also plug the leakages and weak areas. We cannot do this on our own. What were your experiences as students here at UCU? What ideas do you have to offer in improving the experiences for the current and future students? How can we bring these ideas on board without shouting at each other and exchanging accusations as well as balancing out egos?

One of the ways in which we can respond to such rhetoric, is by putting in place and cementing a strong UCU Law Alumni Association that will work hand in hand with the Faculty Administration. I envisage a Law Alumni that can get involved in the following respects:

- a) **Mentorship of current students as well as fresh graduates:** This falls in a number of spheres. The current students in their first years of law school as freshmen (1<sup>st</sup> year) or Sophomores (2<sup>nd</sup> year) need guidance as to how to survive the rigors of law school, e.g., quality legal writing; how to read and when to read; to develop team spirit and not be too competitive; how to avoid the wrong peer groups that can easily lead them astray into premarital sex, abortions, alcohol, drugs and night clubs, and so on. As for the finalists (3<sup>rd</sup> year and 4<sup>th</sup> year), these need guidance on career choices; developing personal confidence and practical skills as they prepare to join the labour market; choices on research topics; post graduate choices and so on.

It has been said that the best preacher is the one who shares his life story and not his speech. It therefore follows that mentorship by those who have walked the very paths that current students are going through is crucial and very effective in guiding them into following a great path as they establish their own footprints at UCU. Indeed, investing in young lives is better than any other investment. So we call upon you to join hands with us as we improve on our Mentorship of lawyers in the making at UCU Law.



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To make this practically work, we would need one alumni to take on between five to ten law students that he or she can mentor over a given period of time. The duration for the mentorship is at your discretion but should not be less than one academic year. Other determinants will include the gender and the year-group of the student. Details such as these can be worked out by our Faculty Mentorship Coordinator, Mr. Sam Kiriaghe, who also happens to be the Acting Head of the UCU Law Alumni Association. Mr. Franklin Uwizera will also be sharing on how our alumni can support our proposed Faculty of Law Career Centre.

In the same vein, we recently revised our LL.B curriculum and made it mandatory for all 3<sup>rd</sup> year law students to undertake internships during the long break before entering into their final year. Since our current number of law students is quite big and involves two campuses, we need the assistance of our Law Alumni (not only court-going advocates) to offer to take on our current students for internship placement when the opportunity comes up.

- b) **Supporting UCU Moots:** Training of UCU Law Students into embracing moots has been quite an eye opener over the years. It enabled us to realize that students who participated in moots (which were optional) had a better preparation into joining the legal career than those who disregarded moots. Starting last academic year, we therefore decided that all law students at UCU would have to embrace moots so as not to be left out on the benefits. We did this by introducing a compulsory course in the second semester (Easter/January Semester) for all students in their 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Semesters. This course is called Trial Advocacy and is meant to offer practical training for students in moot related areas such as writing of briefs; oratory skills and research as well as Moot



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courts and debates. I take this opportunity to appreciate all the Law Alumni that have come together so far in supporting this course by offering their time and resources at no charge; offering their law firm board rooms over the weekends; guiding moot teams in their preparations and so on.

We need more Alumni to come on board, especially in the stressful area of raising funds required in supporting our teams in the various competitions they engage in locally, regionally and internationally. For every Moot Court or debating competition that our students partake of, we need money for registration purposes; transport facilitation; per diem or upkeep and for logistics, say in running copies of documents and so on. The University has been supportive in the past by availing us some finances but its resource base is no longer reliable and is dwindling down as it is sucked up by other expensive University projects. This has forced us to think outside the box as to how we can continue supporting the academic growth of UCU Law by maintaining participation in such competitions, regardless of inadequate funding from the University. We therefore kindly call upon our alumni to continue supporting this cause so that we too can continue channeling out great lawyers and winning competitions. Our Moot Court Coordinator, Mr. Arnold Agaba, will give further insight into this proposition and I will also be sharing shortly how we can make financial contributions feasible in this regard.

- c) **Legal Aid clinics:** As global legal education evolves and takes on new trends, UCU Law is not to be left behind. Law Schools everywhere are now seriously embracing Legal Clinics that impart practical skills into law students. As UCU Law, you probably all know that for the past eight years or so, we have been teaching the course unit of Clinical Legal Education, initially through (now Dr.) Brian Dennison and currently



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under the able hands of Ms. Mirriam Achieng. We have taken this a notch higher with the establishment of the John Sentamu Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. The Acting coordinator of the Institute, Ms. Emma Ssali, will be talking more about it. However, through this Institute, we will be introducing a Legal Aid Clinic at the Faculty of Law. The Clinic will be offering pro bono services for members of the Mukono community and the surrounding areas – the same will be done for the surrounding areas of Mengo under our Kampala campus. We are in the process of putting the office structure together for the Institute before we formally seek accreditation from the Law Council.

Here is where you come in as Alumni: We need your financial support to supplement University resources in establishing the office in terms of all the necessary logistical expenses; support in offering some pro bono time once our students have been to the field and gathered cases that need input from Advocates; supervisory support for our law students who go out into the field to disseminate legal information and gather cases from local communities; as well as any other support that will be required in the day to day activities of the Institute. We have also been having challenges now and then in obtaining transportation and up keep for our students that undertake CLE field work with Ms. Achieng. I envisage a time when we can rely on our alumni to support such field work by purchasing a van for our students and operating a fund account from which UCU Law can draw money to support CLE field visits. As one famous United States President once said, “YES WE CAN”. Indeed we can do this with the strong and able support of our alumni.

- d) **Supporting an autonomous Office Structure:** As you will take note from the brief report on our current status and strategic plan, UCU Law is growing very fast.



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However, this is mainly intangible growth which needs to be supported by tangible growth as the most effective way of maintaining what we have so far achieved. The John Sentamu Institute is not and should not be the only Institute hosted by the Faculty. I have a vision of a Faculty that will be transformed into a School of Law with various Institutes supporting various projects in Humanitarian and Commercial laws around the Country; the region; the Continent; and the globe. What does it mean to be the '*Centre of excellence in the heart of Africa*' if we limit ourselves as to how far we can go? We need to start thinking big and work towards achieving that model. Furthermore, one of the challenges we face in administration is the sharing of classroom blocks with other programs and organizing of the time table at the beginning of the academic year.

Our proposal going forward as we think big, is for the Faculty of Law to one day have its own building with Moot Court auditoriums; board rooms and office space for various Institutes; faculty lounges in which Faculty members can make presentations to colleagues on incubator projects; class rooms to accommodate all the law students; and well-designed law offices (which will definitely attract our lecturers into hanging around a lot more instead of rushing back to their law firms after teaching). Having our own building will, among other things, enable us to plan an effective teaching time table without having to worry about competing for lecture room space with other programs. We can also borrow a leaf from Strathmore Law School in Kenya and Law Development Centre (LDC) which rent out their moot court auditoriums for private events. We can thus use this as a financial base for the Faculty by renting out our auditorium as well.

Obviously, all this requires money and if we were to approach the most financially successful UCU Law alumni that we have, he or she may or may not be able to fund



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such a project on his or her own. But if you all join hands as Alumni and dedicate a part of your income on a monthly basis towards such a grand project, it easily bears fruit. I will shortly share my suggestions as to how this can work out.

- e) **Fund a buddy:** UCU currently has a few scholarship funding projects for its students. But they are quite inadequate. Every year as law students approach their semester finals, some of them that do not have the required tuition end up missing exams and applying for dead semesters. It pains me every semester to sign onto a form for a student seeking a dead semester because he or she has failed to pay fees. This is regardless of the student having studied throughout the semester or having been diligent in class participation. Some students have been reaching out to staff members and, quite often, we raise some money among ourselves as staff members and save some students who are then able to pay the fees within the nick of time.

Our alumni can also be supportive in this cause. We call upon you to set up a “Fund a buddy” account for financially struggling law students. It is necessary to set up criteria as to which type of student can benefit from the funds on such an account. For instance, you may focus on students from impoverished families (depending on how you define that); and, excellent academic records and class participation. Applicants for such funding can also probably attach some sort of recommendation from their mentors or faculty staff that interact with the financially needy students in class. As a faculty, over the years, we have noted that the majority of students that we raise money for their tuition, go on to perform very well at UCU as well as at LDC. This means that they get boosted in focusing on their studies as well as out-performing their peers. Needless to say, such students can easily be in a position to “carry it forward” once



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they have benefited from such generosity. So we call upon our alumni to establish and run such an initiative for the good of our financially struggling students.

- f) **Redefining ‘homecoming’**: UCU Law is your home. We do not want to have a one-off event as a ‘Coming home’ function but would like to formalize this as a ‘meet and greet’ as well as networking annual event in which we can take stock of what is happening at UCU; question new policies and offer constructive feedback on administrative improvements; as well as receive accountability for funds being extended to the Faculty. In this way, you will all be actively involved in running the law school that nurtured you, but more importantly, you will be playing a significant role in making the Faculty better each year.

This event should therefore not be a one day event. I mentioned earlier how I have personally witnessed how alumni are involved in various law schools around the world. Borrowing a leaf from other places, we should target various events that run over a few days. These can include sports events in which alumni compete against current students. The objective of competitive sports of this nature is not to see who still has the better physique but to cement the bonding between current students and their alumni through fun and sports.

Such interactions also strengthen mentorship, develop role models and keep alumni spiritually and mentally close to the Law Faculty. Another form of “Homecoming” interaction can involve visiting various lecture rooms while classes are ongoing and sharing a moment with the students during their class, or better still, taking over the teaching of a specific class for one hour by sharing your perspectives or experiences from the field. Again, the purpose in this is not to give oneself an opportunity of chest



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thumping and bragging about how much money you have made in practice. In enabling the students to hear from one of their alumni about his or her specific practical experiences related to what the student is studying, such a student has something implanted within him or her to focus on his/her studies because you end up establishing yourself as a role-model to the student, someone that they look up to.

### **Walking the talk:**

Ideas on paper are of no value, neither can they be implemented by one or two people only. All this is going to require dedication, vigilance, team work and a combined belief in what we are doing as UCU Law. Although a financial pool is not the only implementing force in the ideas above, it is quite key to taking UCU Law forward as well as maintaining some of the support that we have seen and appreciated so far from our Alumni.

What I am therefore proposing in order to walk the talk, is for the creation of a category of endowment funds from our alumni as follows:

- a) **Bronze:** Monthly contributions of not less than 20,000/- (Twenty thousand shillings)
- b) **Silver:** Monthly contributions of not less than 50,000/- (Fifty thousand shillings)
- c) **Gold:** Monthly contributions of not less than 100,000/- (One hundred thousand shillings)
- d) **Platinum:** Monthly contributions of not less than 200,000/- (Two hundred thousand shillings)

Re-emphasizing the point that there is strength in numbers, in order for the endowment fund to achieve any benefit, it has to be supported by a very large number of alumni. If our force of over two thousand UCU Law alumni get together and commit to respective contributions



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as proposed above, we can achieve many of our set objectives and more. To implement this, the alumni need to agree on the legal structure for the organization; appoint or elect leaders that will work as the Executive and signatories to the Organization's bank account(s); and, come up with the Organization's Constitution as well as other key documents necessary for opening up and running of a bank account. Once the UCU Law Alumni account is opened, you can then get various members to agree as to which category of endowment fund they are ready to fall under and then commit to, through signing standing orders with the Alumni's bank. It is through these standing orders that a continuous financial flow will start coming in to raise funds for the various activities mentioned above.

I fell in love with Uganda Christian University, as a whole and by that I mean the caliber of students and colleagues that I work with on a daily basis. This is probably the reason why I am still here after all these years. But more so, it is also the reason why I am so passionate about giving back to UCU and the constant hunger I have to see it succeed beyond the horizons. It gives me great joy whenever I meet with an alumni and find that he or she is doing well career-wise. I would therefore like our alumni to share the some hunger and passion for UCU-Law (as indeed, many of you already do) and as you will be hearing from my colleagues in their own speeches, there is so much that you can do as alumni to leave your mark on the grounds at UCU and thus know that you too have made, or are continuing to make, a contribution towards the growth of UCU Law on a regular basis.

I would like to conclude by giving my heartfelt appreciation to the many alumni that have over the past few years supported the Faculty through various matters without the slightest hesitation. This is through funding our annual awards for the best performing students; supporting moots in various ways and so on. I will not mention the names here but I know them and they know it too. God richly bless them.

God – the beginning and the end.



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Blessings in Christ,

Dr. Anthony C.K. Kakooza

Dean, Faculty of Law