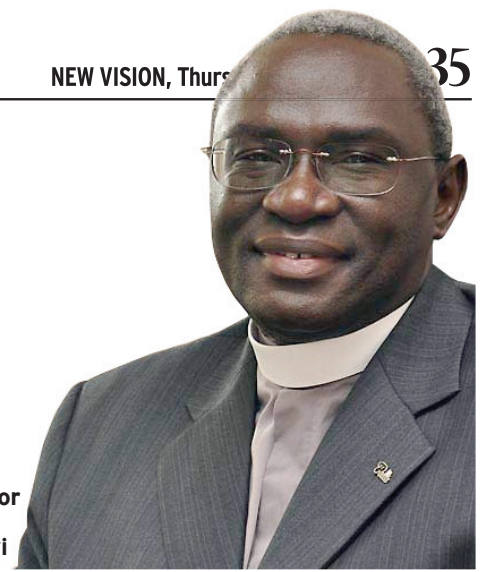


# Students say UCU should have more practical course units

## UCU leads in discipline, scores low on high fees

Vice-chancellor  
Dr. Senyonyi



By Stephen Ssenkaaba

As a Christian-founded university, Uganda Christian University (UCU), Mukono still prides itself in being a beacon of discipline and if *New Vision's* survey is anything to go by, graduates hold the university's efforts to maintain good morals in high regard.

UCU is a private Christian university under the Church of the Province of Uganda. It is located in Mukono town and has a regional constituent college: Bishop Barham University College and other regional campuses in Mbale and Arua.

Respondents also rated UCU highly on teaching staff, learning resources and personal development. However, they said the university could do better to improve facilities, student welfare and studying arrangements. Tuition also remains a major concern for many former UCU graduates, with 36% of respondents stating that they wished there had been a reduction in tuition fees during their time at university. There was also a wish for more practical course units.

Over the years, UCU has invested a lot in developing a holistic curriculum that addresses the academic, as well as spiritual, emotional and moral aspects of student training.

### VICE-CHANCELLOR

REV. CANON DR.

JOHN SENYONYI RESPONDS

**Respondents were pleased with UCU's record on discipline, teaching staff and personal development. How has UCU managed to uphold these values?**

Skills without morality produce clever devils. Furthermore, religious instruction is the best source of morality because right and wrong, good and evil are defined by God and not man.

Consequently, UCU places the highest value on our Christian heritage, which translates into a disciplined life for all who commit to it. This is intentionally done through our documents, the governance, our hires, our worship and our life as a community.

The university has comprehensive codes of conduct for both students and staff. During the first two weeks after registration, our students are taken through this code to help them better understand it. We continuously strive to live by these codes. Our students and staff have over the years appreciated this and are at the forefront of ensuring that UCU lives up to the high standards expected of a Christian university.

### TEACHING STAFF

The teaching staff is screened for their affirmation of the Christian identity of the university. Secondly, there

**36%**

**The proportion of respondents who wished there had been a reduction in tuition fees during their time at university**

is a deliberate effort to ensure that teaching commences on time when a semester opens and that teaching happens when it should happen.

Thirdly, students evaluate teaching staff at the end of each semester. This feedback helps to improve on the quality of service/teaching. We also inculcate into our lecturers (as well as other staff) that they exist for the students rather than the reverse.

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

There is a deliberate effort to ensure that students get the best out of their UCU education, making it a memorable experience. Our theme (tagline) is: "A complete education for a complete person".

This encapsulates our core commitment to give students more than academic training. We aim, plan and avail students the opportunity to grow in all aspects that make a full human being: spiritually,

intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. For each of these, we provide what is necessary for the student's wholesome development in the soft skills.

All students are required to take foundational courses, which equip them with a well-rounded understanding of the world in which they live. These courses include: worldviews, basic computing, writing and reading skills, health and wholeness, as well as the Old and New Testament.

### LEARNING RESOURCES

The university aims at being current with all modern supplies necessary to aid learning. We have a modern, library, well supplied with e-resources, digital repositories of books and publications and the traditional hard copies. Our budget allows for an ever-increasing library resource from year to year. Our students access a lot of up-to-date

information in their respective fields.

Because we know that learning is not just about the content, but also the context, we have also committed ourselves to ensuring that all our campuses and constituent colleges are aesthetically beautiful and user-friendly. In 2014, UCU's Mukono campus was listed among the top 50 most beautiful Christian universities in the world; it is a forested clean paradise surrounded by virgin nature.

**Respondents said they felt dissatisfied with the university premises and studying arrangements. Why is the university not doing well on the above?**

### PREMISES

As a premier university in the country, we are constantly challenged to grow and accommodate more students within our limited resources. However, we have been responsive

to this great demand. Last year, we completed construction of a four-storey lecture hall block that has gone a long way in addressing students' concerns about space for lectures.

We have also relocated our Kampala campus to a more spacious area. Our Mbale University College has also completed a multi-storey building to accommodate classes, offices and the library. We continue to expand our spaces in Mbale, Kabale and Arua.

UCU has both new and old buildings, some of which are over 100 years old. All new buildings are accessible for persons with disabilities.

### STUDYING ARRANGEMENTS

As is the case worldwide, full-time students at UCU are expected to be available for lectures throughout the week. Our strict adherence to lecture timetables ensures that our students get quality education and complete their courses within the expected time. Students are required to attend a minimum of 75% of the lectures in a semester to be eligible for examinations.

### On recent graduates' wish for a reduction in tuition fees

As a private university, the Government does not subsidise fees for UCU. On the contrary, the Government slapped income tax on private education providers that we are still seeking exemption from. The university floated a trading company, UCU Holdings, to help it establish an endowment and lessen the pressure on student fees. This is yet to bring in revenue.

Therefore, UCU relies almost entirely on student tuition to deliver the quality education. The university nevertheless recognises the need for affordable quality education. Therefore, the University Council recently resolved to fix tuition fees for entering students starting with September 2016. So, the students joining the university this year will be charged a fixed tuition amount (that is remain the same) for the entire duration of their study.

UCU also supports students with various financial aid packages, including a work-and-study partial support for the poorest students. Some of this money is sourced from staff members and students, who willingly give to aid the needy.

The reality is that universities the world over adjust their fees, often annually, to meet their rising costs. The difference with some is that they have an endowment that mitigates the actual fee levels.

### What will you do to improve the areas of weakness?

We have built more lecture halls, reduced our charges on international students' tuition, fixed tuition for nationals and are committed to constantly pursuing policies and actions that will improve both the quality of the education we offer and our students' experience.

GRAPHICS BY BRIAN SSEKAMATTE

