

UGANDA PENTECOSTAL UNIVERSITY

New Vision

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The UPU Mucwa campus

Giving hope to needy students

By Geoffrey Mutegeki

It is over 10 years since the Uganda Pentecostal University opened its gates to the Rwenzori region and Uganda at large. In that time, over 3,000 students have graduated from the institution.

The oldest university in the Rwenzori region is located at Kahungabunyonyi and Mucwa extension in Fort Portal town. It has campuses in Mengo, Kampala and a study centre in Kamwenge district.

The vice-chancellor, Dr. Nasani Batungi, says the institution was established to serve the poor. "The university was founded on the principal of helping needy students in the region. We have managed to fulfil this by giving out bursaries and charging the lowest fees in the region," Batungi explains.

He says enrollment has been growing steadily, with numbers rising from 82 in 2005 to over 2,000 today. "We partner with districts and cultural institutions to give half or full bursaries. We also offer bursaries to bright but needy students," he notes.

Although it has been in operation for 10 years, UPU is yet to secure a charter. "The process of accrediting programmes and having this university Chartered is our priority. I think in the next two years we will have a Charter. We are committed to offering high quality education to Ugandans," Batungi said.

Science courses in offing

In order to give balance and serve the people better, the university is set to introduce science courses.

"We want students to be able to get all they want from this institution. A university that is not doing sciences is not balanced; we need to balance it, because we know there



VC Dr. Nasani Batungi

are very many out there who want science courses but do not have the opportunity," Batungi says.

Expansion plans

"We have land on which we are going to construct new buildings, one of which will be a state-of-the-art structure that will house a library, conference hall and administration," Batungi says. Focus will also be put on improving research, recruiting more qualified staff, and building more facilities, among others.

Noel Twinomujuni, the academic registrar, says they have two intakes in October and March.

He revealed that the institution has been able to attract students because of its discipline, good learning environment and quality education.

"We have the most disciplined students and we have produced many prominent personalities which gives us an advantage over others," Twinomujuni says.

Twinomujuni states that they have good hostels and that they partner with private hostels to provide good accommodation for the students.

"The university has partnered with three health facilities to ensure that our students get health services. For emergency cases we pay medical bills for students and cut on school fees later."



Former VC Prof. J. Ntambirweki

Regarding sports, UPU has several sports facilities that include a football pitch, volley and netball grounds, and a badminton court. "We give full scholarships to sportsmen and women; they only pay functional fees. We are committed to educating the whole person," Twinomujuni says. The university has won several trophies among them three Western University Games accolades.

UPU gets students internship placements by connecting them to organisations to get the required experience before joining the field.

One of the directors, Henry Tumwine, commends the former vice-chancellor, Prof. John Ntambirweki, for the solid foundation on which the university is built. "Prof. Ntambirweki did a good job which we all appreciate and we shall always respect him for that," Tumwine notes.

Challenges

"Our library is small and we still have problems with accommodation, but we hope to address all these in the next few years," Twinomujuni said.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Grace Katuramu, the dean of development studies, notes that the university is attached to the community and has social cooperative responsibility projects. She says the



Katuramu, dean Devt studies

institution has helped the staff to go for further studies, which has helped many upgrade.

Johnnie Willy Nuwemujuni, the coordinator of Kamwenge study centre, describes UPU as a community university with study centres in Mucwa, Kamwenge and Kampala, with the main campus at Kahungabunyonyi in Fort Portal.

The Uganda Pentecostal University originated from the Grotius School of Law and Professional studies. It commenced operation in February 2001 when it admitted its first students in law at its campus in Mengo, Kampala.

At the time it operated as an affiliate of another university and continued to operate as such until July 2004, when the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) directed it to register as a separate institution.

David Kiiza, a former student, notes that if it wasn't for the bursaries offered, he would not have been able to finish his degree.

"I got the opportunity to finish my degree because of the bursary. Many students from my home district of Masindi have also benefited and I would like to appreciate the administration for that," Kiiza says.

Polly Junior a continuing student at the Mucwa campus says: "As a sports lover, I would love to see more

Some of the recipients of UPU honorary doctorates



Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu



Dr. Sudhir Ruparelia



Dr. Nathan Karema, director Mbarara Community Hospital

sports facilities constructed, however I'm happy that as sportsmen we are considered in a special way which has helped students who are good at sports but don't have money to study."

UPU will hold its 11th graduation ceremony today at Kahungabunyonyi in Fort Portal Municipality.