

## **Incoming first-year students are oriented, cautioned about mental health issues**

The College of Engineering, Design, Art, and Technology (CEDAT) this week embarked on the orientation of first-year and graduate students. Several departments organized program-based orientation sessions intended to give as much information as possible to the incoming students.

The general orientation of the freshers was held Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 in the Conference hall, bringing together Academic and Administrative staff that took off time to discuss issues pertinent to the welfare of the students during their time at the college and the University as a whole.

The Principal CEDAT Prof. Henry Alinaitwe was represented by the Dean, School of the Built Environment Assoc. Prof. Anthony Gidudu, who, flanked by a number of staff delivered the message of welcome. 'We pride ourselves at CEDAT as a home of innovations. We want to harness the potential in you so that your aspirations are fulfilled. You begin your professional journey right here in the first years, he told the attentive group of freshers.

The Principal introduced the incoming students to the various programs offered at CEDAT and encouraged them to work hard given that as professionals in training, they needed hard work, ambition, and high aspirations coupled with being focused to realize their dreams.

Alinaitwe said that Makerere University draws its pride through association and therefore set out to have an impact on society working closely with the students as key stakeholders. He advised the

students to ensure they got registered into the University which was the only way for them to become bonafide students who are able to access all university services like the E-Learning platform.

He further advised the incoming students to be disciplined, have respect for one another and avoid extremism whether religious or political. 'The person next to you could be your next business partner, learn to work together and build networks" he counseled. He encouraged them to read and get appraised with the various University policies to avoid getting caught off guard. He also urged them to get involved in extracurricular activities, which, he said was an avenue for growth.

The Head of the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department Dr. Robinah Kulabako cautioned the students against killing their dreams. 'For most of you, your being here is a dream come true but afterward, it is you who will kill the dream', she said and asked them to be mindful, plan to attend classes, and take care of their mental health. She regretted noting that students were increasingly taking drugs and alcohol which destroyed their mental health life and at times they leave without getting the desired degrees.

While addressing the issue of dressing, Dr. Kulabako told the students that they were getting trained to become professionals and this necessitated decency in dressing. She also cautioned them against what she termed as 'the Arrival syndrome', where many see themselves as having reached their destination upon coming to University, which she noted was not right.

Assoc. Prof. Dorothy Okello, the Dean School of Engineering urged the first years to use this time to settle in, and look out for opportunities in areas like leadership, church, or sports as well as the various associations that exist at the university. She specifically pointed out the Uganda Institute of Professional Engineers (UIPE) which embraces students.

The Dean said that as teachers, their role was to facilitate the students learning process and that they as students were individually responsible for their learning. She said there were many other opportunities for learning like the study tours, which would help the students get an all-engaging rather than a book experience.

She asked them to open up whenever they faced challenges and to avoid the tendency to bottle up when feeling down, instead learning to be comfortable talking out when feeling overwhelmed, or down so as to get the needed services like counseling therapy.

Associate Prof. Amanda Tumusiime, the Dean of Margaret Trowel School of Industrial and Fine Art (MTSIFA) addressed the students through a demonstration where she narrated a number of motivational phrases and asked the students that felt they could recall all the six to come to the podium to say them out. The small demonstration was an eye opener that as university students, they should expect teaching that stimulates critical thinking and action.

The students were also addressed by the President of the Institute of Surveyors of Uganda, who is also head of the department of Construction Economics and Management, Dr. Nathan Kibwami, who encouraged them to join the association in order to benefit from the professional counsel.

Dr. John Bosco Mulwana who represented the architecture department cautioned the students against getting complacent given the freedom they found at the campus, which he said could easily be their immediate challenge which calls for time management coupled with the need to set priorities all of which require discipline. 'In the College of Engineering, Design Art and Technology, once you feel free, then you need to get worried' he said while emphasizing the need for hard work that was necessary for the students to enable them take the immediate leap they so much need.

The College Registrar, Dr. Alfred Tingo informed the students to keep abreast of the various information shared through the notice boards and other channels. He encouraged them to enroll as students on the University portal, following which they would be registered to enable them to access all other services.

Other speakers included representatives from the Counselling and guidance center who asked the students to take a keen interest in their mental life while at the University and to uptake the services they offer.