

## MMUST'S BLENDED COVID -19 RESEARCH DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE ATTRACTS COMMENDATION FROM HEALTH CS HON. MUTAHI KAGWE



*Members of the University Council follow the presentations during the Conference.*

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The Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Health, Hon. Mutahi Kagwe, has commended MMUST for its timely focus on the need to grow research capacity through University Funding. This was during the University's first Blended Research Dissemination Conference which ran from 30<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2021. The Conference, themed '*Growing Research Capacity Through University Funding*,' was as a result of over 30 research projects that were funded by the University, for the year 2020/2021, focusing on involvement of communities in Understanding and Management of COVID-19. Researchers, Education Stakeholders, Research Institutions, National and County Government Representatives and Policy Makers were part of the important discourse on COVID-19 Management during the Conference.

The CS assured scholars of the government's support and said that he is at the forefront of fighting for increased allocation of funds to research.

“From a health perspective, and coming at a time during which we are enduring a global pandemic, this initiative couldn’t be more apt. Now more than ever, there is an urgent need for nations to escalate their investments in research and development as it will be critical to the post-pandemic era of sustainable economic growth,” said the Cabinet Secretary.

Hon. Mutahi Kagwe challenged scholars to exploit and utilize every available resource that the government has provided and to push their levels of discipline and innovation so as to catch up with countries that Kenya benchmarks on economic development. Further, he urged researchers to make patenting an important aspect of their work. “We must pursue our rights as researchers, and as a nation, if we want to benefit commercially from our innovations,” he said.

The Chancellor, Dr. Peter Wanyaga Muthoka, said that in conjunction with the University Council, the Management and other stakeholders, he will ensure that researchers who are willing to engage in topnotch research are effectively equipped and funded. He talked about the MMUST benevolent fund that has been put in place to ensure that students who are unable to access education get scholarships while at the same time enhancing the University’s capacity for research.

“Research, as has been emphasized, is the key to economic development. As a University, we are working towards ensuring that we play a significant role in contributing to a more sustainable world by mainstreaming sustainable development goals and the tenets of the Big Four Agenda. We have invested heavily in the recruitment of highly qualified academic staff as well as in research infrastructure to position the University as a center of excellence in higher education,” said Dr. Muthoka.

The Chair of Council, Dr. Jane Musangi Mutua, said that the Conference was an indication of the fortitude and resilience of scholars to keep research vibrant at MMUST. She applauded researchers for taking up the mantle of discovering COVID-19 mitigation measures through impactful research. “MMUST has been leading in the fight against COVID-19 especially in the western region. Our investment in research projects is a conscious effort towards ensuring that this University provides solutions to challenges in the society. I can assure you of the Council’s commitment to mobilize and allocate more resources for research,” she stated.

She urged researchers to translate key research findings into viable products that can be used by industries and the society at large. “We will continue to seek government’s support in providing both funds and regulations that accelerate translation of research findings into national policies,” said Dr. Musangi.

The Acting Vice Chancellor, Prof. Solomon Shibairo, said that MMUST is dedicated to supporting its researchers in many ways which includes providing them with the necessary resources. “In the last two (2) financial years, the University spent close to Kshs. 100 million to fund research projects involving over 150 staff and students. I am glad to inform you that this is slightly more than 2% of our recurrent budget which is more than what the government gives to support research on URF,” said Prof. Shibairo.

The two-day intensive Conference ended with meaningful deliberations and presentations from close to one hundred (100) researchers and fifty (50) Students. The Guest Speakers present also included Editor in Chief of Scientific African Journal-Dr. Benjamin Apraku Gyampoh, Senior Corporate Communications Officer-Ms. Mildred Mugambi, Project Manager in Research Management at Southern Africa Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA), Dr. Prenitha Sewnarain and Senior Principal Clinical Research Scientist at KEMRI, Prof. Matilu Mwau.

Clearly, MMUST researchers have the capacity and expertise for carrying out cutting edge research but are lacking funding. The Ministry of Health should consider funding the University's research activities to enable them compete other institutions across the world in developing a COVID-19 vaccine.

## Pictorial





## Memorable Quotes from the Conference...



“We have invested heavily in recruitment of quality staff and research in order to position MMUST as a center of excellence in research.”

**Chancellor, Masinde Muliro University of Science & Technology.  
Dr. Peter Wanyaga Muthoka**



“This conference has exhibited that MMUST is contributing to sustainable development. As Council, we are determined to ensure that researchers are supported.”

**Chair of Council, Masinde Muliro University of Science & Technology.  
Dr. Musangi Jane Mutua**



“We are truly proud that MMUST’s researchers are at the forefront in the war against the pandemic since its onset. Like KEMRI, we can produce our own local vaccine.”

**Ag. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Solomon Shibairo**



“This conference provides a forum for interdisciplinary interactions among private and public organizations, academia, researchers and policy makers to exchange ideas on matters research as well as finding suitable solutions to some of the challenges facing the society.”

**Ag. Deputy Vice Chancellor  
(Planning, Research and Innovation), Prof. J.S.K Achoka**



“As a University, MMUST should generate knowledge that addresses societal problems. Interdisciplinary research is the way to go. Research and innovation are the drivers to economic development, and our researchers are capable and possess great potential to take us there.”

**Ag. Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration and Finance), Prof. Charles Mutai**



“MMUST’s research outcomes will have far reaching effects to the community and beyond. COVID-19 is a reality and therefore researchers should come up with solutions to save humanity in as much as we think about the precautions.”

**Ag. Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Students Affairs),  
Prof. Peter Odera**



“BRECCIA is committed towards building research capacity across institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa and MMUST is among the institutions we work with. The Pandemic has shifted priority for funders so that they have now moved towards supporting response to COVID-19.”

**Ag. Director, Department of Research and Innovation,  
BRECCIA, Dr. Rakeshnie Ramoutar-Prieschl**



“COVID-19 has presented an unfettered prospect for countries and institutions to increase investments in research and development for national security, public safety, social order and wellness of the society.”

**Senior Corporate Communications Officer,  
NACOSTI, Ms. Mildred Mugambi**



“I believe that with more research initiatives, we shall overcome the current turbulence of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

**Director, Research and Postgraduate Support,  
Prof. Peter Bukhala**

### **Chairman, *MMUST COVID-19 Rapid Response Team* speaks...**



Clinical Scholar in the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedical Sciences at MMUST, and one of the Guest Speakers at the Conference, Prof. Lt. Col (Rtd) John Okoth, presented his findings on the ‘*COVID-19 Crisis and Missed Opportunities; Public Health Perspective for Sustainable Development*,’ citing persistent uncertainty about vaccine production capacities, duration of protection, long-term safety, evolution of the Corona Virus and the timelines for stopping transmissions. According to

Prof. Okoth, who has led the MMUST COVID-19 Rapid Response Team’s activities in the University and Western Region, said that the dedicated team embarked on different strategies to combat and deal with COVID-19 pandemic, such as screening and triage, infection, prevention and control, case management, surveillance and data collection as well as risk communication and community engagement.

Some of the recommendations from the research project include involvement of community members as well as social structures at community level in design and dissemination of COVID-19 media messages, opportunity to build the emergency response human resources for health interventions, take actions to move more rapidly towards Universal Health Care(UHC), leveraging on approaches such as telehealth and increased mobilization of community health workers, strengthening Primary Health Care(PHC) Systems, setting up of a functional structured feedback system in all media programming and introduction of special interactive segments targeting communities with COVID-19 information in-order to increase the level of participation.

## **In the words of Health CS., Hon. Mutahi Kagwe...**



“Research recommendations from MMUST such as building Emergency Response Human Resources, have already been implemented. The Ministry of Health will support research in COVID-19 management. The Ministry of Health will ensure continuous information to citizens on Universal Health Care”

## **Message from NACOSTI Director-General, Prof. Walter Oyawa...**



“It’s time for researchers to figure out what is happening globally and strive to conduct impactful research, despite limited resources. Effective research funding is only possible if research is seen to be directly linked to the well-being, prosperity and security of mankind. Value Proposition is important for modern Universities because research is an investment which produces seven-fold profits. Whatever we are doing and the policies that we have in the country are directly linked to the Global Agenda.”

## You should know...

*Africans Contribute just 3% of the Global Share of 36326 indexed publications on SARS-CoV-2 at ten (10) months into the pandemic.*

*65% of Africa's Contribution to the world's economy comes from Egypt, South Africa and Nigeria.*

*MMUST spent close to Kshs. 100 million to fund research projects involving over 150 staff and students in 2020/2021 Financial Year. This is slightly more than 2% of the University's recurrent budget, which is more than what the government gives to support research on URF in the country.*

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