



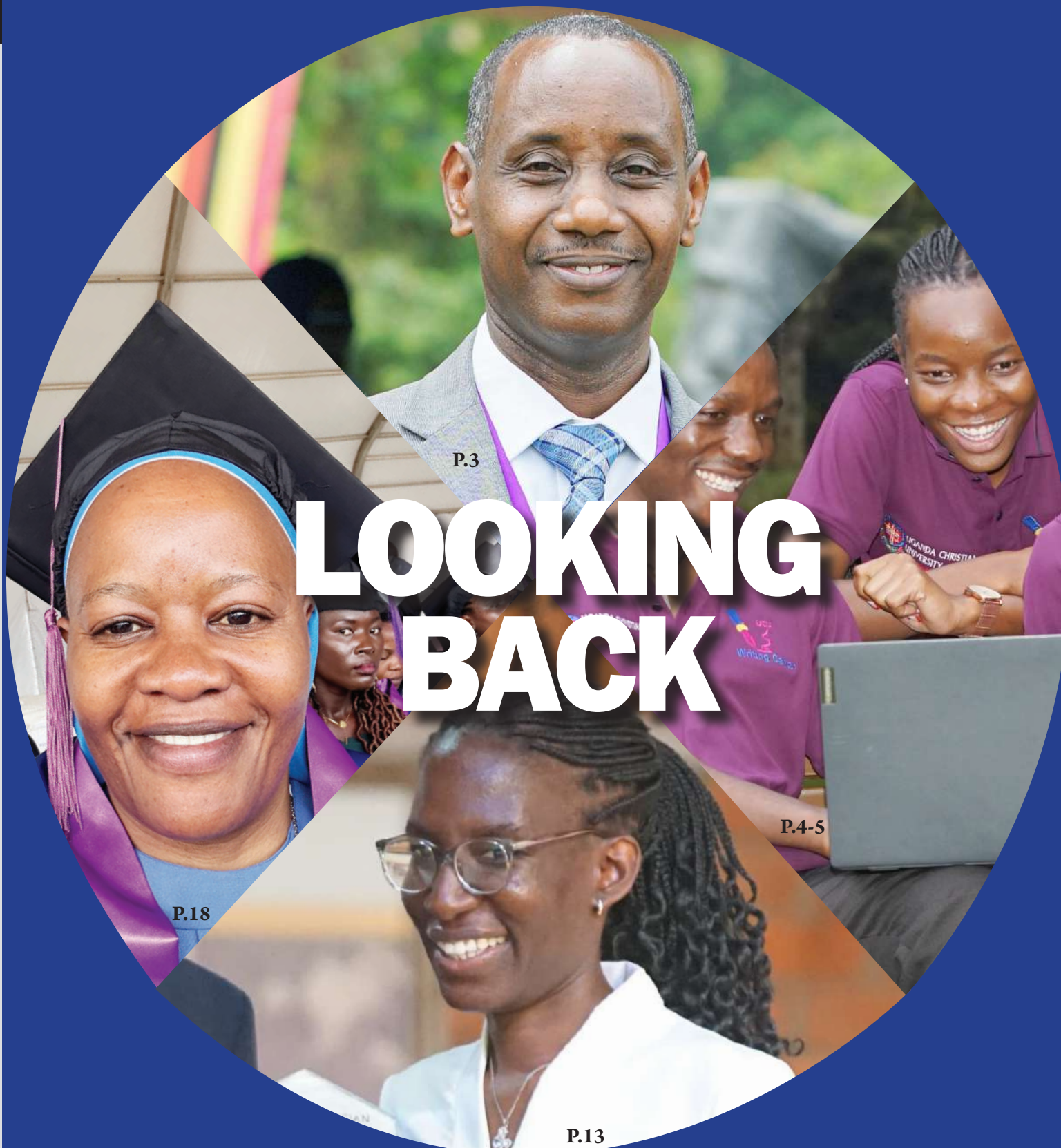
1 Samuel 7:12

Worshiper

UgandaPartners

A PRODUCTION OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION
AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
OF UCU

Issue #3



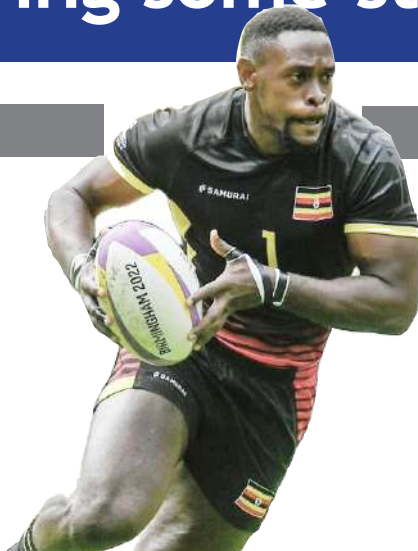
LOOKING BACK

● Reviewing some stories of the past year

SERVING GOD

Nantambi's
switch from
journalism
to theology

P.5



RUGBY KING

Two fractures,
but Arinda's
love for rugby
keeps growing

P.27

STUDY EXCHANGE

It's 20 years
for Uganda
Studies
Program

P.12

UCU EMERGES 2024 BEST EXHIBITOR

For the sixth consecutive year, Uganda Christian University (UCU) emerged in 2024 as the overall "Best Exhibitor" among both public and private universities in Uganda. Among the innovations at the UCU stall was the 2023 print version of *Ebenezer*, an annual publication of stories for and about UCU.



THE EBENEZER PRODUCTION TEAM

This third annual *Ebenezer* publication, a highlight of Uganda Christian University (UCU) stories over the past year, is produced

with the collaborative effort of the UCU Department of Communication and Public Relations and Uganda Partners, a non-profit based in

Pennsylvania, USA. The majority of the work of this 2024 print publication is produced by a nine-member team.



Cover page of 2024 edition



Cover page of 2023 edition



Cover page of 2022 edition

Patty Huston-Holm of Ohio, USA, has been a volunteer contributor for Uganda Partners for 10 years and the Communications Director for eight of those years. A graduate of The Ohio State University with bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism and communications, she has shared her experience as a news reporter and editor and in public relations as a lecturer at six universities, including UCU. She is the author of three creative non-fiction books and a children's story on African wildlife.

University and creative content writer. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication and is pursuing a Master of Arts in Strategic Communication at UCU.

Human Resource from Uganda Management Institute and a bachelor's degree in Environmental Management from Makerere University. She is pursuing a Masters of Transformational Development at Eastern College Australia.

Peggy Noll of Pennsylvania, USA, is a volunteer copy editor for *Ebenezer*. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Cornell University and Georgetown University, respectively, and was an English literature and composition teacher at the Community College of Allegheny County, Pa. While at UCU from 2000-2010, she taught in the Writing and Study Skills course that she helped develop. She is the author of three Bible alphabet books for children and a memoir of her time at UCU with her husband Stephen, the first vice chancellor.

Constantine Odongo of Kampala, Uganda, has been the editor for Uganda Partners for three years. In this role, he mentors budding writers and journalism students and recent alum of UCU and monitors the Partner's X/Twitter site. Constantine has a bachelor's degree from Makerere University and holds a Master of Journalism and Media Studies from UCU. He is currently a Uganda newsroom manager with over 15 years of experience as a text editor and newspaper designer.

Irene Best Nyapendi, a native of Kidera, Tororo District, Uganda, is an intern contributor of stories and photos for Uganda Partners and a writer in the UCU public relations office. She holds a bachelor's degree from the UCU School of Journalism, Media, and Communication (JMC).

Jimmy Siyasa, a native of northwestern Uganda's Arua area, has been a part-time contributor for Uganda Partners for four years and the Communications Coordinator since January 2023. He is Acting Communications Officer of Uganda Christian

Edwin Byarugaba of Entebbe, Uganda, is a technical consultant for Uganda Partners, providing ICT for six years. He manages the Web and blog and offers advice on search engine optimization. Edwin holds UCU bachelor's and master's degrees in Information Technology. A seasoned IT specialist, he works full-time at Mildmay Institute of Health Sciences.

Kefa Senoga, a native of Kabembe parish in the central Uganda Mukono District, has been a writing and photography intern for Uganda Partners for two years. Kefa holds two bachelor's degrees from UCU with one in Education (literature/English) and one from the School of JMC. His professional background includes experience in teaching and public speaking.

Dorothy Tushemereirwe of Kabale, Uganda, is an HR specialist and fundraiser at UCU. Previously, she was in HR at Life Water International, Program Coordinators Research Triangle Institute, and was a UCU Administrative Assistant. She has a Post Graduate Diploma in

Luba Pauline, of Kampala, Uganda, has served as an intern for Uganda Partners for 18 months. Originally from northwestern Uganda, Koboko District, she is in her final year of studies toward a bachelor's degree within the UCU School of JMC. She also is the founder of Kore, a non-profit organisation aiding victims of spina bifida in her community.

HOW UCU PARTNERS HELPS

Uganda Christian University Partners, a non-profit organization based in Pennsylvania, USA, supports Uganda Christian University (UCU) through fundraising and facilitating church connections and academic partnerships.

of individuals and churches, with more than 250 benefactors providing support for scholarships, academic programs and capital needs. UCU Partners provides more than 100 scholarships per year and is currently focused on raising funds to help final-year students who are struggling to pay their last

semester tuition balance and graduate. Current academic program areas of emphasis include the School of Business, the UCU Incubation Hub, the Department of Computer Science and the School of Dentistry.

UCU Partners and UCU are working on an upcoming capital campaign to

expand enrollment of the School of Medicine from 50 students per year to 150 students per year.

UCU Partners facilitates Pilgrimage Visits to Uganda for churches and individuals to learn about how God has been working in and through the Church of Uganda since the late 1800's

and how God is using UCU to serve the Church and society.

For more information about the Partners NGO, reach out by mail to P.O. Box 114 Sewickley, PA 15143; by phone to 214-343-6422; and via email to m.t.bartels@ugandapartners.org.

Mushengyezi gets national award

By Irene Best Nyapendi

Uganda Christian University (UCU) Vice Chancellor Assoc. Prof. Aaron Mushengyezi is a recipient of the Diamond Jubilee Medal, awarded to persons who have made "remarkable achievements" in public and private sector leadership.

The May 2024 designation came from Uganda President Yoweri Museveni during an International Labor Day celebration in Fort Portal.

Overwhelmed with gratitude for the honor, Assoc. Prof. Mushengyezi reflected on his humble beginnings, growing up in a modest rural family where his late father didn't attend school at all, and his mother stopped in Primary Two. At age 11, the Vice Chancellor almost died from an illness.

"When the national medal was pinned on my jacket, I reflected on how far God had brought me," Assoc. Prof. Mushengyezi said. "I share the medal with UCU because I am sure I was noticed because of my current position at the institution. I also dedicate it to my late mother and my wife who have been a great source of prayer support."

Mushengyezi has devoted 35 years to the education sector

"When the national medal was pinned on my jacket, I reflected on how far God had brought me," Assoc. Prof. Mushengyezi said. "I share the medal with UCU because I am sure I was noticed because of my current position at the institution. I also dedicate it to my late mother and my wife who have been a great source of prayer support."



Assoc. Prof. Aaron Mushengyezi, Vice Chancellor of UCU

in Uganda, first as a secondary school teacher at Mbarara High School in western Uganda in 1989. He returned to school and made further academic progress, from a Bachelor of Arts degree at Makerere University where he graduated with First Class honors in 1996, to a Doctorate from the University of Connecticut in the USA in 2007. He rose through the

ranks at a fast pace, becoming an Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Head of Department, and Associate Professor and Faculty Dean at Makerere University, before joining UCU in 2020 as Vice Chancellor.

When he came to UCU in 2020 at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, he spearheaded measures to ensure continuity of

learning, shifting the university from in-person learning to online studies and assessment.

As Vice Chancellor, Mushengyezi has led UCU through challenging financial times, implemented innovative measures to ensure continuity of learning, and with the support of the University Council, he pushed through reforms that

have saved significant funds that have been channeled to infrastructure development, staff welfare, digitizing operations, and improving efficiency in service delivery.

Under his leadership, UCU has achieved significant milestones, including purchasing new property and constructing a new block at the Kampala Campus without borrowing from the bank. In 2024, he led the Management team to roll out a seven-year Campus Transformation Initiative, with a drive to elevate UCU campuses to international standards in all aspects of university life.

Throughout his career in the education sector at Makerere, Assoc. Prof. Mushengyezi won and coordinated many research grants and managed partnerships with several universities and international agencies.

Before he left Makerere, he and the Dean of Social Sciences (Prof. Andrew State) won a \$800,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation to establish a Centre of Excellence in Research, Teaching and Learning at the university. He was part of a network of university programs worldwide, including the Norwegian Program for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development (NORHED),

the African Humanities Program funded by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the International Fellowships Program (IFP) of the Ford Foundation, among others.

The UCU Vice Chancellor's efforts also secured a large grant from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) to train teachers to write bilingual books for primary school students under the Uganda Universal Primary Education (UPE) program.

Through Mushengyezi's passion for community development, he led a team that in 2010 founded Franciscan Investment Co-operative Society, a financial institution based at St. Francis Chapel Makerere and that grew to 2,877 members and a portfolio of sh26 billion (\$6,936,498) by December 2023. While he was a Dean of the School of Languages, Literature and Communication at Makerere University, he founded a staff savings association called Tushirikiane, which has grown to about Shs.1 billion (\$266,788) in savings. "These are things I did out of passion to contribute to the community's transformation," the UCU Vice Chancellor said.

Mushengyezi and his wife, Patience Rubabinda Mushengyezi, have four children.

Arua Campus Director has science, divinity, teaching expertise

By Kefa Senoga

As a young boy, Julius Izza Tabi had a gift in science with proficiency that caused his father, Izza Soyi Severino, to nudge the son toward a career in human medicine.

But Tabi felt a different calling from God – one of pastoral ministry.

That academic path took him to Lake Victoria Christian Center, where he got a diploma in Christian ministries; to the National Teachers' College, Muni, where he received a diploma in education; to Uganda Christian University (UCU) Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology, where he was awarded a divinity degree via a Madi-West Nile Diocese scholarship; and to the Norwegian School of Theology (Oslo), where he got a Master of Philosophy in Religion, Society and Global Issues.

Tabi, who finished his high school education at Metu Senior Secondary School in the Moyo District, northern Uganda, continued to teach as well as work directly with the church. He worked in youth ministry alongside



Rev. Julius Izza Tabi (second-left) with Archbishop Emeritus Henry Luke Orombi during a visit to the UCU Arua campus

UCU lecturing, among other roles.

At his graduation in 2014, Tabi's grades earned him the accolade of

second-best student to Jonathan Tumwebaze, now a staff member at UCU. Tabi's outstanding performance

persuaded the Rt. Rev. Dr. Joel Obetia, the Bishop of Madi-West Nile Diocese at the time, to post him to UCU Arua

Campus as the Assistant Chaplain in October 2014.

Thereafter, he assumed extra roles of tutorial assistant in the Department of Theology and dean of students and acting director.

Rev. Tabi, one of nine children, is now director of the UCU Arua Campus, which is near Usindi Secondary School where he once taught.

As director, he is focused on infrastructural development, elevating the campus into a constituent college, a massive student recruitment strategy, beautification of the environment and infrastructure, implementation of a masterplan project, development of an endowment project and a staff recruitment plan.

In 2024, the campus marked 20 years of being part of the UCU family and 64 years of being a training institute.

Before the campus was made a theological college and part of UCU in 2003, it was offering diploma and certificate courses in theology and also training lay readers in the region.

The Rev. Tabi and his wife, Oliver Driciru, have three children.

Uganda Christian University (UCU) has a longstanding commitment to improving student writing skills, a crucial part of the university's academic fabric. This commitment is embodied in the UCU Writing Center, which, since its inception in 2022, has played a pivotal role in this pledge across various genres and disciplines.

Martin Kajubi, acting manager of the Writing Center, plays a fundamental role in the pledge, overseeing coaches who help students refine their ideas and perfect their drafts.

A 2016 UCU graduate with a bachelor's degree in languages and literature and a student pursuing his master's degree in strategic communications, Kajubi is a passionate advocate for writing. Prof. Tom Deans of the University of Connecticut has served as Kajubi's mentor, helping him publish several articles with the *International Writing Center Journal*.

Prof. Deans, director of a writing center at his American university, has spent time on the ground and virtually to help develop a UCU model that Kajubi wished he had as an undergraduate student. Prof. Deans conducted workshops on nurturing young writers and enhancing coaching skills of prospective writing center staff during his Fulbright stay at UCU from August 2021 through February 2022. The official launch of the center was in October 2022.

Kajubi, who hails from Masaka, says his experience while studying for his bachelor's degree is part of his inspiration to help students develop their ideas and put them into writing. He says he has zeal for academic writing.

The UCU center, housed within the Mukono campus library, is extremely important for international students, many of whom struggle with English ability.

"I've had challenging moments with international students, particularly those who are not fluent in English," Kajubi noted. "However, the training we received from Professor Deans has equipped us to help these students improve their English writing skills."

The center, which has 29 coaches, attempts to pair students with similar ethnicity to guide them in their writing.

Prof. Deans conducted workshops on nurturing young writers and enhancing writing skills of prospective writing center staff, especially writing and study skills for lecturers in March 2022, in preparation for the launch of the center in October 2022. The trained team led by Kajubi has been instrumental in the success of the Writing Center. The center's creation was supported by the UCU Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Aaron Mushengyezi, and Bukenya David, the librarian, who designated a tutoring space within the Hamu Mukasa Library.

As of the summer of 2024, over 200 students from different UCU schools/faculties had been assisted by the Writing Center.

Despite its successes, the Writing Center faces significant challenges,

Writing Center enhances students'

On October 20, 2022, the main campus of Uganda Christian University (UCU) officially opened a writing center located at Hamu Mukasa Library. Guided by Prof. Tom Deans, director of a writing center at the University of Connecticut, USA, the purpose was to help students improve their writing skills in all disciplines. The model is one of personalized support to students through one-on-one coaching, workshops, and other resources. According to Martin Kajubi, the center's acting manager, over 200 students have been served. Stories by Yasiri Kasango, Michael Ainomugisha and Christine Mirembe.



COACHES SHARE GOLDEN TIPS

Milton Abel Opio - School of Business

"Writing should be a compulsory skill for every student; its power speaks a lot more if we go into details. Effective communication is crucial in all fields, business inclusive."

These are the words of Milton Abel Opio, a writing center coach and student in the School of Business. He has a passion for writing and helping others share his passion. He is grateful that Martin Kajubi recruited him as a coach in February 2023.

"I coach accounting in business administration because that is where my strength is channeled," Milton said. "I find it more transparent; it is way more than just numbers, something that most people do not know. My sessions are usually two to four hours, depending on my students' workload and their ability to grasp concepts."

Helping others is a win-win as he has discovered improvements in his own work as he does more reading and research to have a better grasp of concepts and to share with those whom he coaches. His own writing about finance has multiplied. "Coaching at the writing center has been amazing; you get to meet and interact with people from all walks of life," Milton said. He cited an example - "one of my most rewarding moments" - of working with a student who had difficulties structuring essays and how together, they organized ideas, developed thesis statements and incorporated evidence.

He acknowledged that time management has been difficult as he juggles his own work with time to help others with theirs.

"I try to maintain a schedule that allocates time for my personal assignments and office duties," Milton said.

Christy Asimwe - School of Education

Christy Asimwe, alongside Joshua Gira, is working to develop an English language program tailored specifically for international students.

"I am excited about the curriculum," Christy, an English major in the UCU School of Education, said. "I would love to do a masters in Education, Management and Curriculum Development using experience from the writing center as a base. I wish to have an online presence where I teach English."

Having a background in the French language as part of her high school curriculum has accorded

Christy an advantage when tutoring students from Francophone countries. While she encourages them to speak and write English, she greets them in French.

"I am assigned students based on their needs and my competencies," said Christy, who has been a coach, working twice a week for 90 minutes each, since 2023. "As much as I would have loved to engage more with my students, my busy schedule does not allow more."

She credits supportive colleagues, particularly Joshua, also an English major, for any success she has.

Two improvements she suggested are more training for coaches and stronger collaboration with the International Students Association.

Busobozi Ian John Baptist - Faculty of Engineering, Design and Technology

Before coming to the writing center in September 2023, Busobozi Ian John Baptist had a reputation for sharing knowledge with colleagues. He believes that teaching has rewards for both teacher and student.

"You can teach someone; they get 90% and you get 80%," he said.

With average sessions running for two-to-three hours each, he guides groups of five to six students.

"Engineering requires a lot of time and dedication," Baptist said. "I recall conducting a study session that lasted from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. during which we thoroughly reviewed all the work from across all the course units in preparation for exams." Prior to all sessions, he gives students a heads-up on what will be discussed and when. This allows prior preparation, hence making the work more effective. Meeting and interacting with a diverse audience is an opportunity coaching has provided.

Isooba Mbeiza Rachel - Faculty of Engineering, Design and Technology

Since childhood, Isooba Mbeiza Rachel has enjoyed passing on what she knows to others.

"Helping someone understand concepts brings me joy," she said.

Since assuming her writing center coach role in September 2023, she has met with one-to-two students for two hours each week. While helpful, she feels sessions could be more beneficial if they were longer and more frequent.

"Mr. Martin Kajubi, our director, is amazing, helpful and very understanding," Rachel said. "It is such a blessing to be part of the writing center. People are very kind, friendly and embrace teamwork. Generally, the atmosphere is very conducive for all."

She also lauded the 2024 writing week that exposed students to different types of literature. As with other coaches, balancing their own academics with coaching duties can be challenging, according to Rachel, who added that the benefits outweigh obstacles.

"Witnessing the great academic impact the writing center has had on the student body and my passion for teaching others, I would love to continue working with the writing center," she said.



Christy Asimwe

primarily related to staffing and funding. Currently, the center relies heavily on student coaches who volunteer an average of three hours a week, limiting the number of students who can be helped. The Center is designed to allocate each student 30 minutes per coaching session with the reality that most sessions go longer.

Reach

As of the summer of 2024, more than 200 students from different UCU schools/faculties had been assisted by the Writing Center.

Additionally, the Writing Center operates largely on donations, such as those from Uganda Partners.

"We are working towards having the university formally integrate the Writing Center into its budget to ensure sustainable support," Kajubi stated.

Kajubi envisions a Writing Center where all students who seek help can be attended to sufficiently and promptly.

"I hope to recruit more coaches and ensure they are compensated for their time," he said.

The Writing Center's impact on students is profound, transforming their approach to writing from a mere academic requirement to an opportunity for personal and intellectual growth.

I want students to view writing as

academic journey

Students share experience

Said Muhamod School of Social Sciences

"As an international student from Somalia, I used to struggle to write essays and tasks. The Writing Center has helped me develop my skills in essay writing, research methodologies, and dissertations. They offered individual feedback on my work, including advice on proper formatting and directions. Weekly lessons aimed to improve my grammar and fluency, which greatly improved my abilities to write and speak English. Furthermore, the Center taught me how to write resumes and application letters. The Writing Center has been excellent in assisting me in adapting to my assignments and overcoming language barriers, considerably improving my academic achievement and communication skills."

Agenorwot Daphne Amone Faculty of Engineering, Design and Technology

"One of the reasons I went to the Writing Center was because I needed help to improve my writing skills in terms of essays and answering assignments. I was connected to a coach in a course unit, and I have learned a lot and improved my writing. I believe that learning is an ongoing process, so I will continue to attend the sessions at the Writing Center. Also, I have learned communication skills, particularly in public speaking. Mr. Kajubi helped us with presentations in class, and we practised talking about ourselves, which helped me gain confidence and be the best version of myself when speaking to a large audience. I believe that I will continue to learn from the Writing Center and continue to improve my writing skills."

Nambuwa Whitney Gladys School of Business

"I got to know about the Writing Center after visiting the library regularly, and I saw the poster outside. I also had two classmates who are members of the Writing Center. The coaches have guided us on how to write our dissertations, which is one of the requirements as we are graduating in our final year of the course. It's interesting, we learn more and this is a point in time where I was supposed to write something like a

a chance to express their ideas, not just an obligation to fulfill coursework requirements," said Kajubi, who also lectures about writing in various courses at UCU.

"Good writing skills enable students to communicate their ideas effectively, which can take them far in their academic and professional journeys."

Kajubi's passion for writing and

"The UCU Writing Center has been a transformative resource for me. I've learned how to make proper references and citations, write essays and approach my coursework with greater confidence," says Kukundakwe Hope, a student at the UCU School of Business.

review which was one of the questions that we were doing in game Writing and Study skills two, so it kind of challenged me. I would rate my writing to 8.5 (out of 10) before seeking help. I would really struggle with how to write particular things like limits of the CV, the letters. I was narrowed down to some basic things but after interacting more with the coaches, I got guidance and more things that would be beneficial for me when I move out of the university."

Kukundakwe Hope School of Business

"The UCU Writing Center has been a transformative resource for me. I've learned how to make proper references and citations, write essays and approach my coursework with greater confidence. The guidance I've received on how to write my course units has been invaluable. This support has significantly elevated my coursework marks and improved my CGPA. The coaches at the Writing Center have been helpful, providing assistance and ensuring I understand the best approaches to my coursework. They go above and beyond to help us excel in our dissertations and research work, which has greatly enhanced my overall academic performance. My experience at the Writing Center has been exceptional, and I am grateful for the skills and knowledge gained. The commitment of the coaches to student success is evident, and I highly recommend their services to all students looking to improve their academic writing and performance."

dedication to the Writing Center is evident in his ability to balance his roles as a lecturer, manager, and writer. He attributes his success to meticulous planning and a strong support system.

"Proper planning and dedication are crucial," he said. "I also rely on a team of student coaches who play administrative roles in my absence."

From journalism to theology

By Pauline Luba

If you meet Esther Irene Nantambi on the Uganda Christian University (UCU) main campus, she will most likely be in thin heels or sneakers.

Her unspoken love for creativity reveals itself as she leisurely strolls through stalls during an art exhibition. Her face displays a hint of makeup. Her demeanor is friendly.

In the sea of students at UCU, Nantambi would likely be pegged for a career in journalism. She was. She doesn't appear to be a student of theology or divinity.

But she is.

The girl who questioned her brother when he expressed interest in the vocation is pursuing it herself.

Nantambi, a holder of a degree in journalism and communication from Makerere University and a once practicing journalist, is back in school. She is pursuing a Master of Divinity at UCU. When she completes this course, she will become a reverend.

The life of the 28-year-old seems contradictory with a disconnect between her desires and actions.

"Before theology school, I was living like a typical youth in Kampala, attending live band nights. I would also go for at least one trip a year with my friends," Nantambi says.

"In the same breath, I was spending at least 4-6 hours in fellowship with God daily." In addition to salsa dancing, her nights involved an hour reading the Bible, an hour praying and interceding and an hour listening to a Bible lesson every day.

"I would drive to and from work in prayer and have private quiet moments at work, too," said Nantambi, who has since reduced her dancing to better align with her beliefs.

Additionally, for an hour every Monday and Wednesday mornings, Nantambi and a group of friends would visit the Mulago Hospital children's cancer ward to pray with patients and give support.

Nantambi also is a Sunday School teacher at Kampala's St. Andrew's Bukoto Church of Uganda.

"My mother was a Sunday school teacher; she was also a nurse at Mulago Hospital," said Nantambi, whose mother died in 2021.

"Once every month, she and her friends would pray for sick people in the hospital. It was a testimony to me that the spiritual and the medical world can work well together."

Several months after her journalism graduation in 2018, Nantambi was hired by the *Daily Monitor*. It is from that job that she has now moved on to pursue a course in divinity. This new direction has shifted the way she dresses and acts.

"My office pants or jeans, jumpsuits, any sleeveless dresses or blouses are all inappropriate wear for the course," she said. "It is important for a person to know it is a calling for theology, not a space to come making money or a career statement."



Esther Irene Nantambi (right) with Carol Beyanga, a former editor at the *Daily Monitor* newspaper



Nantambi (left) with Rt. Rev. Dr. James Bukomeko of Mityana Diocese

2018

Several months after her journalism graduation in 2018, Nantambi was hired by the *Daily Monitor*. It is from that job that she has now moved on to pursue a course in divinity. This new direction has shifted the way she dresses and acts.

Ayot's research on domestic violence

By Irene Best Nyapendi

Dr. Gladys Ayot Oyat's inspiration to pursue a PhD in Education Administration and Management at Uganda Christian University (UCU) is rooted in her passion for addressing real-world challenges.

Her commitment to women's issues served as a driving force in choosing a research topic focused on the domestic violence impact on female teachers in Uganda. Her study explores how domestic violence affects the teaching and administrative roles of female teachers working in secondary schools in Kitgum, northern Uganda.

Dr. Ayot, a former member of the governing council of Uganda Christian University, graduated with a PhD in Education Administration and Management in October 2023.

Tough

"I was a wife and the head teacher of Kitgum YY Okot Memorial College (2002-2022)," Oyat said.

"I had social responsibilities that I couldn't ignore. At some point, I wanted to give up."

Her research found that domestic violence adversely affects teaching roles, leading to poor service delivery, absenteeism, missed lessons, poor preparation, low self-esteem and mental health issues. This likewise negatively

impacts women in administrative roles, resulting in reduced work, interpersonal relationships, learning outputs and mentorship. Female teachers employ various coping mechanisms, both informal and formal, but some strategies prove counterproductive. Support for victims is insufficient, hindering their ability to manage these challenges effectively.

Dr. Ayot found that the patriarchal nature of Ugandan society determines relationships between men and women irrespective of educational status.

"A lot needs to be done to address this challenge," she said.

"It undermines the laws we have in Uganda entrenched in our Constitution. My disappointment is that even women who are enlightened and educated, conceal what they go through in the name of protecting their marriage, adhering



Dr. Ayot celebrates with her husband, Dr. Michael Oyat, after attaining her doctorate during graduation at UCU main campus, in October 2023

to culture and wanting to remain as role models to the students they teach when they are exposed to domestic violence."

She lauded UCU's academic environment for its unique and supportive characteristics. The university's modular approach, small class sizes, and strong faculty-student relationships foster an

atmosphere of shared learning and collaboration.

Dr. Ayot, who was age 61 at her graduation, acknowledged the difficult journey to a PhD — long hours, rejection of proposals and balancing social and work responsibilities.

Dr. Ayot and her husband, Dr. Michael Oyat, have four children.

By Irene Best Nyapendi

For 13 years, the Words of Hope building at Uganda Christian University (UCU) has housed offices of staff for journalism and communication studies on the Mukono campus.

From that yellow, storied building, faculty members experienced a bird's-eye view of the university and surrounding hills. A disadvantage is that staff members were less accessible to students and to faculty with other programs.

By the end of 2024, the School of Journalism, Media and Communication (JMC) at UCU is set to relocate to a different building. The new building, which previously housed School of Business offices, is located near the UCU Communications Office, the Vice Chancellor's office and other faculty/school offices.

John Semakula, the Head of the Undergraduate Department within the School of JMC, said the JMC move is part of a university-wide space rationalization exercise that began two years ago.

"The new block will be referred to as the School of Journalism, Media and Communication Office Block," Semakula said. "We had a shortage of office space, and as a result, we have been using different office blocks on campus, which kept us scattered."

Prof. Monica Chibita, Dean of the School of JMC, cited additional advantages of being

SJMC gets new home



The new building for staff within the UCU School of Journalism, Media and Communication

near other faculties, school and administrative offices to further promote interdisciplinary partnerships and improved accessibility to students. Prof. Chibita noted that as the school shifts to the new location, the studios and equipment will remain at the current location, transforming it into a multimedia center, with *The Standard* newspaper, the UCU Focus TV and other facilities relocating to the Words of Hope building.

Among those who have noticed the positive growth of the School of JMC is Frank Obonyo, an alumnus and a lecturer at the school. He recalled that a journalism department was started by former journalists - Mr. Illakut Ben Bella for print media, the late Okoku Obomba for radio, and the Rev. Canon Dr. Jackson Turyagyenda for television. The department was later joined by other seasoned professionals, including Ben

Ochan for photojournalism and Jane Gitau, a Public Relations practitioner.

Over the years, the physical identity of the school has been associated with the Hope building, with Tech Park and with *The Standard* news office located between the PR office and the Vice Chancellor's office. Obonyo recalled some early collaboration between the Mass Communication department and Spirit FM radio. He remembered

being a student when there was no media laboratory with five still-photo cameras shared by over 90 classmates.

Today, the curriculum training is supported by highly qualified staff and practitioners in the industry and more equipment in a multimedia laboratory and three studios.

Obonyo, who joined UCU as a student in 2003, was among the first interns at *The Standard* student newspaper. In March 2007, an advertisement called upon Mass Communication graduates to apply for intern jobs at *The Standard*. Four graduates selected were Obonyo, John Semakula, Brian Semujju and Emma Wafula.

"At *The Standard*, I was responsible for Sports news, Semakula was in charge of news and current affairs, Wafula did Campus Life and Semujju was the Managing Editor," Obonyo said. "As a result, we all got employed by the *New Vision* newspaper, Uganda's leading daily English language newspaper."

For Geoffrey Ssenoga, a lecturer at the school since 2008, the move will bring numerous benefits to both staff and students. He notes that it will be easier for students to access them since it is closer to the classrooms, compared to the current building.

"We have course units taught by people from other faculties like the Social Sciences and Education, so being close to other faculty members will allow for easier collaboration," he said.

Benefits

Timothy Okurut, a student leader representing Mass Communication, said: "In the past, there have been times we failed to access the studio for production purposes because the lecturers were in a meeting. With the new building for the staff, we shall have unrestricted access to the studios."

Muhoozi's plans as new bishop of North Ankole

By Pauline Luba

"Beloved, you are most welcome to the House of Bishops and we look forward to your contribution to building God's kingdom."

These were the words the Archbishop of Uganda, Stephen Kaziimba, used as he welcomed the new Bishop of North Ankole, Rt. Rev. Alfred Muhoozi, a Uganda Christian University (UCU) alum, who had just been consecrated. The ceremony

took place in Kiruhura district, western Uganda, in the spring of 2024.

Standing next to Molly, his wife with whom he has been married for 28 years, Muhoozi was introduced to thousands of the people who had gathered in Kiruhura to witness his consecration. He assumed the office of the Bishop of North Ankole Diocese, succeeding the retiring Bishop Stephen Namanya who had been at the helm of the 21-year-old diocese as its second bishop since 2015.



In brief

- Alfred Muhoozi becomes the third Bishop of North Ankole
- During his consecration, Muhoozi and his family, including four children, received special prayers from the Anglican bishops.
- He promised to anchor his leadership on nurturing the younger people with Christian values.

10

Alfred Muhoozi is in charge of more than 10 archdeaconries, the more than 70 parishes as well as schools and health facilities founded by the Anglican Church in his area of jurisdiction.

Muhoozi's father — the late James Byempaka — would have been among the proudest of the people at the May 26 consecration of his son in a diocese where he (Byempaka) contributed immensely to the growth of evangelism. In 1976, agents linked to the Idi Amin-led Ugandan government at the time arrested Byempaka, and he was never seen again.

During his consecration, Muhoozi and his family, including four children, received special prayers from the Anglican bishops.

Kaziimba led the consecration ceremony of the 51-year-old Muhoozi, who has been the Archdeacon of Kinoni in North Ankole Diocese.

Muhoozi, who was ordained in 2007, holds a diploma,

bachelor's and master's of theology from UCU.

The new bishop promised to anchor his leadership on nurturing the younger people with Christian values that will help them grow into responsible citizens by supporting youth programs, innovations, and fellowships.

He emphasized the need to fight household poverty in the diocese by urging the Christians to engage in income-generating activities.

"Our leadership will establish a commercialized agriculture department comprising agriculture and veterinary officers," Muhoozi said, adding that his emphasis in education will be on "good quality and accessible to all."

Muhoozi also reminded the people of their cardinal duty to protect the environment.

"We need water for our animals, domestic use, factory use and irrigation," he said. "That is why we must protect the existing wetlands. We will encourage tree planting by providing tree seedlings, with the help of partners."

Muhoozi has oversight for more than 10 archdeaconries, the more than 70 parishes as well as schools and health facilities founded by the Anglican Church in his area of jurisdiction.

UCU alum uses classroom knowledge to expand crop shelf life

By Kefa Senoga

In 2017, the father of Jean Paul Nageri planted more than 100 acres of bananas in Busia, eastern Uganda. When a middleman who promised to buy all the bananas at harvest never showed up, most of the bananas either got rotten in the garden or were sold at a give-away price.

The pain of that loss was the impetus for Nageri's work on a solution to mitigate the gravity of crop depletion.

Nageri, a Uganda Christian University (UCU) graduate with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science and Entrepreneurship, determined that the shelf life of many fruits and vegetables can be expanded by slowing down their rate of spoilage while being kept at room temperature without refrigeration.

The UCU alum explained that using the skins of oranges, mangoes, bananas and other fruits in the lab, he was able to extract compounds, which he later turned into powder. The powder is blended with water, which is then used for coating the fruits and vegetables.

The coating, which he has named Ka Fresh and is produced by his firm, Sio Valley Technologies, is edible.

"Most of the knowledge I am applying now is what I obtained in class at the



UCU alum Jean Paul Nageri (left) with his award for Most Innovative Export company early this year. Centre is Uganda's Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja and right is the Head of the European Delegation to Uganda, Ambassador Jan Sadek.

Good news

Nageri's innovation is good news for exporters seeking solutions to the rising cost of air freight. Currently, it costs 12 to 16 times more to transport a commodity through air than sea and yet exporters opt for air transport because some commodities cannot last the more than 30 days it takes most of the ships to travel from African ports to Europe.

university," he said.

"I am working with other scientists who are also applying the same knowledge in biotechnology."

For this innovation, Sio Valley Technologies was in early 2024 awarded the Most Innovative Export company at the third annual Uganda/EU Business Summit. Nageri received the award from Uganda's Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja. The Head of the European Union Delegation to Uganda, Ambassador Jan Sadek, was also present.

The World Food Program estimates that as of last year, more than 333 million people in the world were facing acute levels of food insecurity; they did not know where their next meal would come from.

The situation is compounded by the fact that the cost of delivering food assistance was at an all-time high because of the increase in the prices of food and fuel.

Despite the hunger situation, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that 30-40% of total food production is lost before it reaches the market.

But with the Ka Fresh solution, Nageri aims to overcome this challenge, so that farmers can have more bargaining power over their produce while in the market without fear of it getting rotten while on the shelf.

Some fruits and vegetables that have been coated with Nageri's solution, he says, are now able to stay fresh for up to three times their natural shelf life.

Nageri says tests in the laboratory have indicated that tomatoes that have been coated with Ka Fresh, for example, are able to stay healthy for more than 70 days under room temperature without refrigeration.

A little could yield a lot in 10k campaign

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic curfews and shutdowns, Uganda Christian University (UCU) devised a strategy to help students pay tuition.

That strategy was called the 10K campaign with 10K referring to a donation of 10,000 shillings or \$2.50 American.

"The whole world was struggling," UCU Vice Chancellor, Prof. Aaron Mushengyezi, recalled of the years 2020 and 2021.

"Here, with employment closed off, it was especially hard for students to continue their education even with our stepped-up, on-line learning. We thought that an appeal for a little could yield a lot."

It did.

In May 2022, the campaign was launched by Archbishop His Grace Stephen Kaziimba Mugalu, who also is the chancellor for the University. By the summer of 2024, more than 100 students had benefited from the 10K campaign.

As of July 2024, approximately 15,000 people contributed 160 million shillings (\$42,686) to make that happen. To date, student recipients are from

the faculties and schools in law, journalism, engineering, computer science, public health, social science and business.

In addition to traditional and social media appeals and a Go Fund Me page, the 10K initiative engaged in an auction, a running/athletic event, three garage/yard sales, a coffee-and-paint activity, a comedy event and birthday pledges.

"For the sales, we collected items from throughout the Mukono and Kampala communities as well as from students and staff," said Dorothy Tushemereirwe, fundraising consultant, and the facilitator of the campaign.

"They donated kitchenware, toys, books, clothing and other articles that we sold at reasonable prices to raise funds."

Appreciation stories are many. Mukhaye Mercy, a recent graduate of the UCU School of Journalism, Media and Communication, was on the verge of missing her exams with a tuition balance of 3.6 million shillings (\$960 American).

Uganda Christian University has a policy that students can't take exams if fees aren't paid. The 10K helped diminish the



Coffee-and-paint fundraiser participants included (left to right) Josephine Nyende, lecturer, Art and Audio Visual; Francis Alphonse Obonyo, project manager, The Citizen Report Uganda; Dorothy Tushemereirwe, UCU staff fundraising consultant; and Ashton Aryamanya, lecturer, School of Business.

The event

The coffee-and-paint event was a collaboration with the UCU Coffee Club and UCU art and visual programs. Students served coffee and guided novice painters who paid sh30,000 (\$8 American) each for a cup of coffee and a painting on canvas.



balance.

"I would like to thank God for the 10K campaign," she said.

"I am sure I would have missed exams and gotten a dead year if it wasn't for the campaign."

Byishimo Ronald, a student in civil engineering, says the funding assistance "came at a critical time when I needed support for top-up of my tuition, at the last minute." He added, "I cleared my tuition and performed well, better than the previous semesters."

Student uses marketing and work to pay tuition

By Irene Best Nyapendi

What began as a simple stroll around the bazaar grounds at Uganda Christian University (UCU) evolved into a job for Derrick Matovu, a School of Business student.

He was drawn to an exhibit stall that belonged to Stabex International, a fuel and gas company in Uganda. Before he knew it, his inquisitive demeanor landed him a position as an ambassador for the company's Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders, which are largely used for cooking.

And for that role, he would earn a commission of sh5,000 (about \$1.3) for every gas cylinder sold to a buyer. Matovu saw the opportunity as a godsend. At the time, he was a class leader. Using



Derrick Matovu serving fuel at the gas station

WhatsApp groups, he leveraged his leadership position to market the cylinders to classmates.

Matovu took advantage of his free time to market the gas cylinders. That marketing activity

ushered Matovu into the practical side of the Bachelor of Business Administration course he

pursued.

He received more real-world training during an internship with Uganda's forestry agency, the National Forestry Authority, and as a fuel pump attendant with Stabex.

"I chose to work to reduce the burden I was heaping on my sister and father who were providing the money," Matovu, the second-born of three siblings, said.

"I also knew that it was not possible to entirely depend on my family for upkeep."

At Stabex, Matovu's schedule was for night shift. At UCU, his classes took place during the day, allowing him to balance work and studies. Matovu received his degree in July 2024. At the time of graduation, he continued to work for Stabex.

Scholarship recipients give testimonies

The Ubuntu Youth Leadership Centre (UYLC), an organization with a vision of supporting young people, is among groups and people providing financial assistance to Uganda Christian University (UCU) needy students. These are some beneficiary stories.

Carolyn Anyango Ohanga, a Kenyan citizen, wanted to be an Anglican priest. After completing a diploma course at Uganda Martyrs Seminary, she was working on her bachelor's degree in divinity at UCU. She started studies after paying only sh200,000 (\$51.22), which is about 13% of the tuition fees required for the semester. Anyango presented her challenges to the office of the Dean of the Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology, who referred her to the UCU Financial Aid Office, where she secured partial tuition. For the semesters that followed, Anyango received donations from friends, the UCU Guild Fund and UYLC.

For Phoebe Grace Nalwadda, paying fees was never a challenge until the unexpected demise of her father in 2022. Nalwadda, a student of Bachelor of Procurement and Logistics Management at UCU, says she "shed tears of joy" when help from UYLC came.

Praise Kogere, a student of Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance at UCU, was raised by a single mother, who was a primary school teacher. For the times when her salary was inadequate, Kogere's mother secured loans to pay her children's fees. When this and Kogere's part-time job as a house helper were deficient, she received assistance from UYLC.

Rannie Ashaba, working on a Bachelor of Business Administration and Accounting, had an increased financial burden when her parents separated, then her mother died and an aunt supporting her had health complications. The UCU financial aid office and UYLC intervened.

The 7-year plan to transform UCU

By Irene Best Nyapendi

Uganda Christian University (UCU) is striving to transform its face through digitization, infrastructure refurbishment and greening campuses to improve the student experience.

To achieve this seven-year initiative that started in the middle of 2024, the university also will pay attention to improving staff motivation to enable employees to become agents of transformation.

According to UCU Vice Chancellor Assoc. Prof. Aaron Mushengyezi, the project, named the Campus Transformation Initiative 2024-2030, seeks to bring to life the vision of the founders of the university.

Speaking at the project launch in late May, Mushengyezi explained that the timeline is significant, drawing inspiration from biblical themes of perfection, completion and abundance.

This signature initiative formed part of the report card that Mushengyezi gave to the university stakeholders during the Vice Chancellor's address at the UCU graduation on July 5.

"God created the world in seven days and it was perfect, so we are believing in God for a season of perfection of his work here at UCU," Mushengyezi said in May.

The initiative at a glance

Digitized Campus Services - UCU aims to leverage technology to enhance the student experience, improve efficiency and streamline campus operations. This includes the implementation of digital platforms for

FIVE-POINT PLAN: 2024-2030

- Digitized Campus service
- Refurbished and new campus infrastructure
- Paved and remodelled walkways and roads
- Landscaped, green and clean campuses
- Trained, equipped and motivated team to lead the transformation



UCU Vice Chancellor Assoc. Prof. Aaron Mushengyezi with Dr. Kukunda Elizabeth Bacwayo of the Post-Graduate Directorate at transformation plan unveiling.

learning, administration and communication.

"We want to emphasize a digitalized campus, so that our stakeholders can relate with us in a faster and more efficient way," said Mushengyezi.

Refurbished Campus Infrastructure - The university plans to renovate and upgrade its facilities to create a conducive learning environment. This includes the construction of new buildings and refurbishment of classrooms, libraries and other infrastructure.

"Some of our buildings have served their time and may have to come down to give room for bigger and better infrastructure," Mushengyezi explained.

"Even the ones we can still use, we want to renovate them so that we can have a conducive environment for our lecturers and students to enjoy."

"Some of our buildings have served their time and may have to come down to give room for bigger and better infrastructure. Even the ones we can still use, we want to renovate them so that we can have a conducive environment," says Mushengyezi.

Paved and Remodeled Walkways and Roads - UCU aims to upgrade its walkways and roads to create a safe and accessible campus environment. This includes paving and remodeling walkways, roads and parking areas to enhance

mobility and accessibility.

Landscaped, Green and Clean Campuses - The university is committed to creating and maintaining a beautiful, green, and sustainable campus.

This includes landscaping, planting trees and flowers and implementing initiatives to keep the campus clean and green. The goal is to create a conducive environment for staff and students, and to make UCU a benchmark for campus transformation globally.

Trained, Equipped and Motivated Team to Lead the Transformation - UCU is committed to developing a team of highly skilled and dedicated professionals who will drive the transformation process. This team will be equipped with the necessary tools and resources to

ensure the initiative's success.

Students welcome initiative

Ryan Asabo, a year-one student pursuing a Bachelor of Procurement and Logistic Management, expressed joy for the ongoing transformations at UCU.

Asabo, who is on a sports bursary at UCU, was drawn to the university due to its promise of academic and sports transformations. "I'm excited to enjoy some of the transformations, like the paving of the walkways," he said. "I'm sure many more students will be attracted to UCU because of some of these plans."

Lillian Akao, a second-year student pursuing Bachelor of Business Administration, says the value for her money is evident in the quality of services and facilities provided.

She is confident that the transformations will further enhance the UCU experience.

Ruth Rebecca Lamo, a first-year student pursuing a Higher Education Certificate in Arts, finds the university "very attractive" and is thrilled to see the renovations and the five-point plan for the next seven years.

"This initiative will make UCU more competitive not only in Uganda, but also in the region," said Lamo.

"I'm looking forward to pursuing my bachelor's degree here to experience what the university will be like through the initiative."

Emmanuel Olelema, a final-year student pursuing Bachelor of Education, commends the five-point plan that he already sees taking place. "I now have faith there will be no more dust and mud at UCU," he said.

UCU Fitness Club empowers minds, bodies, spirits

By Bena Nekesa

In the heart of Uganda Christian University (UCU), amidst academic endeavors and vibrant Mukono campus life, the UCU Fitness Club emerged.

Charles Miti, a student working toward a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance, School of Business, was the visionary. At age 31, he struggled with a weight of 94 kilograms (207 pounds). Beyond physical fitness, he envisioned a journey of holistic transformation that encompasses mental resilience and spiritual growth not just for himself but

others. Since its inception in 2023, the club has become a cornerstone of support and empowerment for many. The story of the UCU Fitness Club began when Charles engaged in a walk of 78.4 kilometers (48.7 miles) from Kampala to Jinja during the throes of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The journey garnered attention on social media and further ignited a passion for health and fitness within Charles.

"I was inspired to create a space where others could embark on their own transformative voyages," he said.



"Walking is at the center of what we do, but it's so much more. Once you choose the road of fitness, you are cured physically, mentally and spiritually."

With the support of like-minded individuals such as Edonu Emmanuel, a UCU School of Law student, the club took root, fostering a sense of unity and camaraderie among its members. Charles's brother, a medical doctor, Joseph Ssebanenya, played a crucial role in the club's inception as he spoke during an official launch in early 2024.

Through activities like hiking, swimming, and other physical challenges, the club members numbering up to 50 have forged bonds that transcended casual acquaintanceship, evolving into a tight-knit community. Rejecting the allure of vices like clubbing and substance abuse, Charles and others have found fulfillment in the pursuit of holistic wellness.

"Through prayer, fellowship, and shared experiences, our members discovered the transformative power of nurturing both body and spirit," said Charles, who reduced his weight to 74 kgs (163 lbs.). "Our collective efforts have created a supportive

community where individuals thrived, not just academically, but also emotionally and spiritually."

The American Medical Association reports exercise as a top contributor to a healthy and longer life. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the World Health Organization (WHO), regular exercise not only extends lifespan by up to 10 years, but also promotes overall health, reduces the risk of chronic diseases and enhances cognitive function, leading to improved productivity and quality of life.

UCU seeks to expand SoM facilities

By **Patty Huston-Holm**

While all Uganda Christian University (UCU) students have real-world, outside-the-classroom experiences, 250 of them learn in the context of their career path nearly every day.

These School of Medicine (SoM) scholars often are alongside lecturers and other professionals at Mengo Hospital, a private-not-for-profit Church of Uganda Hospital, which is also known as Namirembe Hospital because of its location on Namirembe Hill in Kampala.

In the summer of 2024, the UCU students studying to be doctors were aware of the mpox virus causes and avoidance practices within East Africa, according to Dr. Gerald Tumusiime, a general surgeon and the SoM dean.

"We regularly talk about guidelines for prevention – minimizing person-to-person contact, maintaining personal and environmental hygiene, appropriate use of face masks, washing hands with soap and water, and other general health needs," he said.

"We shared about mpox in WhatsApp groups, in classrooms, during grand rounds, and in the hospital just as we do with all emerging health issues."

Demographically, the SoM students are not much different than the larger population of UCU undergraduates. Like the overall UCU population, the SoM

gender and nationality breakdown is a slight female predominance, and about 20% non-Ugandan students. Both Ugandan and non-Ugandans have financial constraints in common.

"We prefer our students to live in secure hostels that are close to the teaching hospital, but some are traveling distances, and some are living with relatives to save money for tuition," said Dr. Tumusiime.

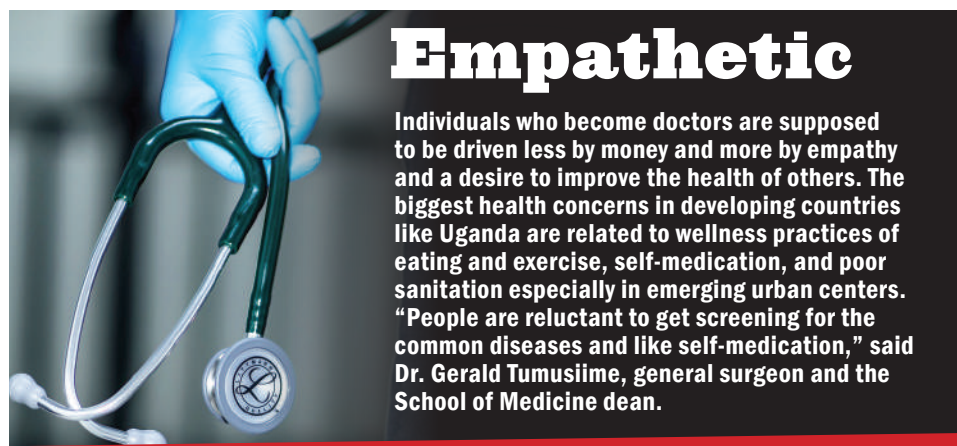
"Our goal is to have all students living safely nearby during their clinical years so that they can have a conducive learning experience."

A semester payment plan of 45% at the onset, 75% by the middle of the term and 100% in the final month helps the financially disadvantaged medical school students throughout their five-year program.

The expense strategy, length of the program (i.e., most UCU undergraduate degrees require three years), emphasis on contextual learning and the demand for doctors trained from Christian environment jobs set the UCU SoM students aside from their UCU peers.

"There are jobs; Uganda needs doctors," said Dr. Tumusiime, who does research in human anatomy, medical photography, noncommunicable diseases, and surgical outcomes. "But the remuneration for doctors is still low compared to other East African countries."

Doctors in Uganda make from \$300 to \$1,000 a month.



Empathetic

Individuals who become doctors are supposed to be driven less by money and more by empathy and a desire to improve the health of others. The biggest health concerns in developing countries like Uganda are related to wellness practices of eating and exercise, self-medication, and poor sanitation especially in emerging urban centers. "People are reluctant to get screening for the common diseases and like self-medication," said Dr. Gerald Tumusiime, general surgeon and the School of Medicine dean.

50

There is high demand for admission at the UCU SoM but the school is licensed to admit only 50 students every year because of the limited infrastructure. That is usually 20% of all applicants.

At that, 80% of UCU Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery graduates remain to work in their country. Others extend their five-year degrees to specialties and/or take rigorous exams to work in higher-paying, developed countries.

Individuals who become doctors tend to be driven less by money and more by empathy and a desire to improve the health of others.

The biggest health concerns in



Dr. Gerald Tumusiime

developing countries like Uganda are related to wellness practices of eating and exercise, self-medication, and poor sanitation especially in emerging urban centers.

"People are reluctant to get screening for the common diseases and like self-medication,"

Dr. Tumusiime said. "Most patients present with advanced-stage diseases, which are costly to treat."

Changes in the UCU SoM since its launch in 2018 include added emphasis on how climate change and non-communicable diseases impact health, blended approach to teaching and learning following the on-line learning during the covid-19 pandemic, training of medical students by the visiting friends of Mengo Hospital especially the University of Leeds specialists in the United Kingdom, and closer collaboration with the UCU department of Nursing.

"Doctors and nurses work alongside each other," Dr. Tumusiime said. "In some universities, first-year nursing students take the same classes as medical students."

"Here, we reinforce the value of teamwork in health care, and the

pivotal role of a nurse in quality healthcare. Our collaboration with the nursing faculty has enhanced acceptability of nursing programs among students who miss admission for medicine because of the current limited slots at the School of Medicine."

There is high demand for admission at the UCU SoM but the school is licensed to admit only 50 students every year because of the limited infrastructure.

Since the admission criteria entails students who have passed Biology and Chemistry at high school (A-level), health-related credit and distinction diplomas, and those who have excelled in the bridging course, the school can only admit 20% of all applicants.

The University management in collaboration with the UCU Partners is currently mobilizing resources to expand the infrastructure for the School of Medicine in order to admit more students that are optimal to maintain the current quality of training and graduates.

"In future, we also hope to construct an independent teaching hospital that will provide jobs for the UCU graduates, and demonstrate holistic excellent healthcare and training in the Heart of Africa," Dr. Tumusiime said.

"For now, our graduates are often favored in hospitals because of their Christian education as Uganda has many private, church-affiliated facilities."

Nsubuga: The man at the helm of Save the Mothers

By **Pauline Luba**

Mushin Nsubuga, executive director of the Save the Mothers (STM) program, credits his now-deceased grandmother for his faith and his career.

She worked in a hospital and took him to church on Sundays – the latter activity adverse to his parental belief as Muslims.

"I was chased away from home for owning a Bible," said Nsubuga, who is married, with four biological children and another adopted in 2024.

His father eventually accepted the son's belief.

A gynecologist, Nsubuga became interested in maternal health during his medical internships.

He witnessed some expectant women failing to buy delivery kits that they were expected to have as

they went into labor.

Resources were so scarce at the hospital that women were often asked to buy gloves for the delivery of their babies.

After Nsubuga received his Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at Gulu University, and delivered countless babies while in Gulu, he continued to find the suffering of women hard to bear.

This prompted him to specialize in obstetrics and receive a Master of Medicine in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Makerere University.

Early this year, he was appointed the Executive Director of the STM organization that was created when Dr. Jean Chamberlain Froese, a Canadian obstetrician/gynecologist, was confronted with mothers in need.

As a volunteer with the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Under Nsubuga's leadership at Save the Mothers program, a stronger alumni network is being established, especially following the alumni meeting in May 2024; higher quality facilities are being provided to people in the postgraduate program; and several projects are being implemented to help the organization realize its goals.

of Canada and the Association of Obstetricians of Uganda, Dr. Chamberlain and others discovered many of the causes of maternal death went beyond medical barriers.

In 2005, Save the Mothers launched its first program, Master

of Public Health Leadership, at Uganda Christian University (UCU).

Nsubuga sees his task is to help the organization to stop mothers and children from dying through multidisciplinary training of individuals and to promote the safety of women in hospitals.

Currently, under his leadership, a stronger alumni network is being established, especially following the alumni meeting in May 2024; higher quality facilities are being provided to people in the postgraduate program; and several projects are being implemented to help the organization realize its goals.

When not doing work at Save the Mothers, Nsubuga is working at C-Care Medical and International Diagnostic Centre in Kampala.



Dr. Mushin Nsubuga, Executive Director of the Save the Mothers program

By Kefa Senoga

Uganda Christian University (UCU) has two cohorts of alumni from its six-year-old School of Medicine (SoM). With Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery graduates within the last two years, the university has contributed nearly 100 new doctors to the healthcare field.

The SoM was launched in partnership with Mengo Hospital, Kampala, in September 2018. The 2023 and 2024 UCU graduations yielded 45 and 48 new doctors, respectively. In the summer of 2024, the SoM had 250 students with 50 of them studying in their first year.

A sampling of the 2023 UCU graduates provided insights about their first-year internship experience while some new SoM students shared their early impressions about the school.

SoM interns, new students share impressions, experience

MEDICAL INTERNS



Basule Isaac Ahamada – ‘occasional shortage’ challenge

Basule was assigned to work at two medical facilities — Soroti Regional Referral Hospital and Pearl View Medical Center, Kiwanga, Mukono.

“I have been able to grow from a theoretical medical student to a doctor capable of making sound on-the-spot decisions in situations where the outcome would be either life or death,” he said. “While working in Soroti, I’ve faced challenges, particularly with the language barrier. However, I have been able to learn the local language, Ateso, to be able to communicate a few messages to the patients. I have been able to use translators when available.”

He cited “occasional shortage of some logistics/services” as a challenge. Care of patients is improved with essential medicines such as the first-line malaria drug (i.e artesunate) and supplies like sterile gauze. His realization of “the importance of providing the best possible care to every patient” has increased. “It’s a reminder that each patient is someone’s cherished family member,” he said.

Wasswa Travor – ‘maintain an open mind’

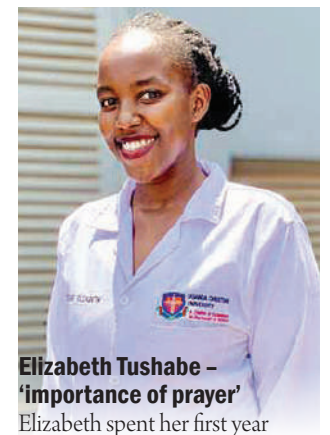
Travor did his internship at Lubaga Hospital, a Catholic-founded, Private and Not-for-profit (PNFP) facility.

“I have been able to learn and to grow both at a personal and professional level. My confidence levels have improved. I now feel well-prepared for medical practice. Sometimes the work schedule can be demanding, but when I get free time, I spend it with the family.”



Birungi Beatrice – ‘a good foundation’

Beatrice is an intern doctor at Lubaga Hospital. With her adjustment from a school to work environment “came the joy of working in a healthcare facility,” she said. “Many of the situations that I have come across are what I would call learning points. However, one thing I have observed is that what we learned in medical school was a good foundation to build on what we have found in the field.”



Elizabeth Tushabe – ‘importance of prayer’

Elizabeth spent her first year out of medical school working at Kawempe National Referral Hospital in Kampala.

“I continue to learn from the senior doctors I work with,” she said. “I have been fortunate enough to work with doctors who are hospitable and are ready to help. Personally, I have gained extensive knowledge in both medical and non-medical areas from them.”

Being outside of a school environment has required adjustments, including transportation to the work site. While she was not provided food and accommodations as some hospitals do for intern doctors, she adapted with the “importance of prayer” being the biggest lesson from this experience.

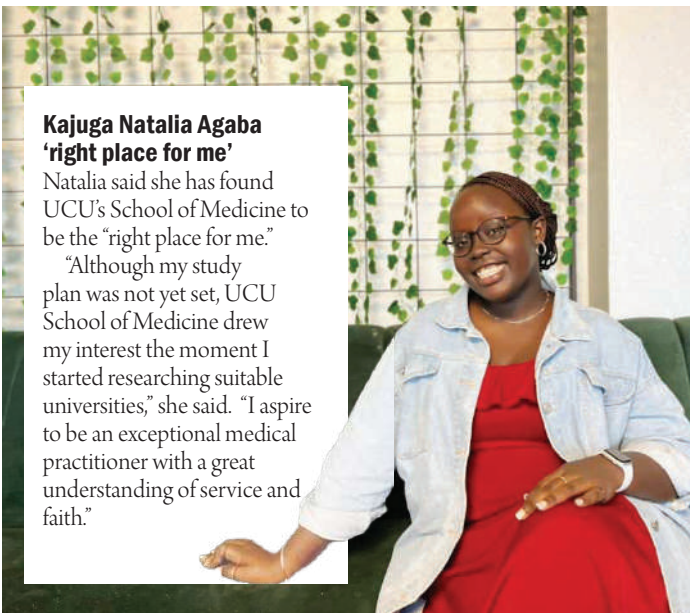
NEW STUDENTS

The Uganda Christian University School of Medicine had 70 applicants in 2023. This is a sample of what this first year was like for some new students.

Nsubuga Victoria ‘Psychiatry intrigues me’

Victoria applauded UCU for its organization and commitment “to empowering learners to reach their full potential.”

“It’s here that I’ve realized I can utilize this environment to fulfill my aspirations of becoming the excellent doctor I want to be,” she said. “As a new medical student, I am still exploring various specialties. However, psychiatry intrigues me because delving into understanding how people think would be a fascinating journey.”



Kajuga Natalia Agaba ‘right place for me’

Natalia said she has found UCU’s School of Medicine to be the “right place for me.”

“Although my study plan was not yet set, UCU School of Medicine drew my interest the moment I started researching suitable universities,” she said. “I aspire to be an exceptional medical practitioner with a great understanding of service and faith.”

Mugisha Derrick ‘expertise of lecturers’

Derrick’s early impression is connected to high academic standards and industry standards.

“Given the expertise of lecturers, such as Dr. Gerald Tumusiime, who are seasoned medical practitioners, I am confident I will successfully graduate from UCU as a skilled medical professional,” he said. “I selected the course of medicine at UCU because the field demands discipline, hard work, a Christ-centered approach and an unwavering dedication. I am confident that UCU embodies these qualities and will nurture me into the future doctor that I aspire to be.”



Nanteza Agatha Suubi ‘can be demanding’

Nanteza applauded the facilities and “friendly learning environment” as well as “cultural diversity.”

“While medical school can be demanding, I trust that the one at UCU will provide the support needed to manage the challenges,” she said. “With the resources, facilities and guidance from the school, I am confident that I will achieve my goal of becoming a surgeon.”



Tumusiime Ivan – ‘Christ-centered’

Ivan said the UCU SoM presentation made at his secondary school is what he experiences as a student.

“UCU is an excellent university that is Christ-centered and nurtures its students exceptionally well,” he said. “It instills good morals, a strong work ethic and discipline among its students. There is also a good student-teacher interaction that ensures a better understanding of what the lecturers are teaching. I strongly believe UCU medical school will shape me into a skilled surgeon who is able to save people’s lives.”



Nakakande Joan – ‘a holistic education’

Joan says she has been impressed with facilities, Christ-centered curriculum and an environment conducive for learning.

“One of the things that attracted me to the university is its foundation on Christian principles,” she said. “Since joining the institution as a student, I have experienced this first hand. At UCU, we receive a holistic education that seamlessly integrates academic excellence with spiritual growth... a unique



opportunity to be shaped into a quality doctor who embodies spiritual and Christian values.”

Joan is especially interested in serving “the needs of the less privileged.” Already, she has found other students and professionals with this goal and a place where she can learn more about oncology and neurology.

“I aspire to make a meaningful impact on the lives of cancer patients and their families,” she said. “Cancer is a devastating disease that affects millions of people worldwide, and I want to contribute to



Uganda Studies Program students pose for a photo shortly before being sent home early due to a 2015 Al-Shabaab terrorism attack on students at a university in Kenya. Rachel Robinson, the director at the time, is fourth from right.

It's 20 years for North America-based program at UCU

By Nathan Simbilyabo and Bena Nekesa

In 2004, Mark and Abby Bartels embarked on a journey to create a unique educational experience for students from Christian colleges and universities in North America. What started as the Uganda Studies Program (USP) at Uganda Christian University (UCU) has now blossomed into a 20-year legacy of cultural exchange and academic learning.

"We learned early that relationships would be the key to the success of the program," said Mark Bartels, now executive director of a USA-based nonprofit, Uganda Partners.

"Beyond the essential rapport with the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCCU) and UCU was that the program provided relationships with other students, host families, faculty members and supervisors – primarily Ugandans."

Now living in Pennsylvania, Mark and Abby, who had USP founding roles of coordinator and assistant coordinator, respectively, spent 10 years at UCU, working, living and raising their three children there. Both are graduates of Wheaton (Illinois) College, which is one of more than 100 higher education institutions under the CCCU umbrella.

When the couple launched USP 20 years ago, Abby's father, the Rev. Dr. Stephen Noll, was UCU's Vice Chancellor.

According to Mark, CCCU had other programs designed with academics and home stays in Russia, China, Egypt, Costa Rica and England. One distinction was that

ABOUT USP PROGRAM

When applying for the Uganda Studies Program at UCU, students choose from one of the following academic concentrations: Social Work, Global Health, or Interdisciplinary, and engage in internships at different organizations depending on their area of study.

The program also creates a different learning experience for students in Uganda and Africa as a whole, arranging for a student to be placed with a host family on arrival, and during the semester they stay in villages for a week, where a student can learn what academics cannot teach.

During one of two semesters known at UCU as Advent/Fall and Spring/Easter Semester, they do a homestay in Kapchorwa or Serere. At the end of a semester over the years, they make a final study trip to Northern Uganda or Rwanda and finish with a debrief in Entebbe before returning to North America.

The USP since its inception boasts of up to 970 alumni, who have since become global alumni ambassadors of UCU and sponsors in partnership with UCU. For over two decades of USP existence, the program has had over 93 American and Ugandan staff members, including a coordinator, program assistant and a homestay coordinator.

The USP program's 20th anniversary was marked with a July 2024 reunion in Colorado, USA, and an April celebration in Mukono. Participants included alumni, host and homestay families and previous USP staff including the former Vice Chancellor Rev. Canon Dr. John Senyonyi, Deputy Vice Chancellor Finance and Administration David Mugawe and University Chaplain Rev. Canon Paul Wasswa Ssembiro.

"I have seen this program grow and go through different seasons, both difficult and good, for example during COVID-19 and the attack on the university in Kenya in 2015," recalled Dr. Senyonyi.

USP was the first CCCU program to be closely partnered and embedded within a Christian university.

A key UCU component was alignment with the Honors College, coordinated then by the Rev. Canon Dr. Sam Opol, assisted by his wife, Margaret.

Today, the USP is a program with a focus on Social work, Global Health, and Interdisciplinary studies, offering students a wide range of educational opportunities. Emily Entsminger is the program director, replacing Rachel Robinson, who left that post in June 2024.

Birth of UCU triplet initiatives – Partners, CCCU, USP

By Rev. Prof. Stephen Noll

As we recognize the 20 years of contributions through the Uganda Studies Program (USP) at Uganda Christian University (UCU), I add some background about its birth.

Actually, USP was the third "child" of my tenure as the first Vice Chancellor (2000-2010). Twenty-five years ago, after our first visit to Uganda, my wife, Peggy, and I accepted the call we sensed from God to "come over and help." The call presented a daunting challenge: How does an American with little acquaintance with Africa and with higher education begin to help?

During the 12 months as we prepared to come, two "children" were born.

The first child was a support charity in the USA: "Uganda Christian University Partners (UCUP). As early as January 2000, UCUP was attempting to match donors with outstanding students nominated by the University. We ended up with 30 scholars in the pioneer cohort, with more to come in later years. Later these scholars would become the Honours College at UCU.

The second child was UCU's acceptance into a North American network of Christian universities – the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU), which was expanding its vision of Christian higher education globally. In mid-year 2000, UCU was accepted as an adjunct member of CCCU, the first of its kind in Africa. As Vice Chancellor, I was invited to the annual Presidents' meetings in Washington, D.C., as has been the case of my two successors. Out of this alliance, UCU has hosted many faculty members from CCCU schools.

Which brings me to the third child. The CCCU operated a number of study programs around the world – from Latin America to Russia to Egypt to Oxford, England. But there were none in Africa. Most of these programs were self-contained, with their own faculty and students living outside a host institution. In 2003, I worked with the CCCU to innovate a new model: American students

A call from God

"USP was the third 'child' of my tenure as the first Vice Chancellor (2000-2010). Twenty-five years ago, after our first visit to Uganda, my wife, Peggy, and I accepted the call we sensed from God to 'come over and help.'

The call presented a daunting challenge: How does an American with little acquaintance with Africa and with higher education begin to help?"

would not only live on the campus at Mukono but would take classes along with their African counterparts.

The Uganda Studies Program came to birth in August 2003, and to our delight, our son-in-law, Mark Bartels, and our daughter, Abby, came to head up the program. Abby and Mark (and in time their three children) lived in Mukono until 2014 when they handed the USP leadership over to Rachel Robinson.

The USP has developed a special relationship with the Honours College and its members.

One final note. After the Covid pandemic in 2021, the CCCU shut down most of its international study programs. Mark, who had become the Executive Director of UCUP, was determined not to let the USP die, and so for the past three years UCUP has taken ownership of the program.

I am proud to have been foster father to these three "children," who have proved a benefit to many students on two continents.

Top students at July UCU graduation

By Kefa Senoga and Pauline Luba

Sarah Nsereko and Timothy Ddumba, both studying programs in the Uganda Christian University (UCU) Faculty of Engineering, Design and Technology, were the top two students at the July 2024 UCU graduation.

Nsereko, who has a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, was the number one student among 1,159 students.

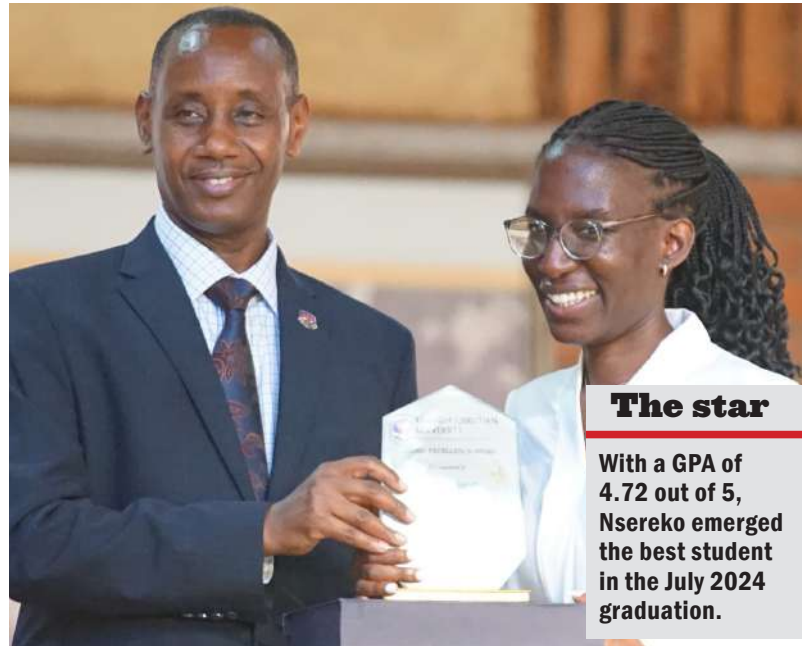
She had a Grade-Point Average (GPA) of 4.72 out of 5.0. Ddumba, who has a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, had 4.64 out of 5.0.

“There was a lot of sacrifice,” Nsereko said of her achievement. “There is nothing that comes out of being in the comfort zone; you have to put in the hours.”

Nsereko, the oldest of three children, credits supportive parents, the Robotics Club, an internship at Stanbic Bank and



Timothy Ddumba



Sarah Nsereko receiving an award from Vice Chancellor Aaron Mushengezezi

The star

With a GPA of 4.72 out of 5, Nsereko emerged the best student in the July 2024 graduation.

classmates with knowledge of the work world for her academic standing. One classmate, Charles Muganga, whom Nsereko said

was especially helpful, said the support was mutual as “she also kept on encouraging us.”

As Nsereko continues her

internship at Stanbic, she aspires to create her own tech company, dealing especially with automating tasks, a specialty she

learned during her UCU studies.

Ddumba excelled academically in spite of his responsibilities as Guild President at the UCU

campus from December 2022 to December 2023 and other outside-of-class engagement.

His father had been guild president when he was a student at Kyambogo University. Among notable firsts beyond academics, Ddumba conceived a First Undergraduate Experience in Leadership (FUEL) program at UCU.

Sitting in the front of each class, completing assignments on time and growing up in a home frequented by adults discussing issues and solutions were keys to his success, Ddumba said.

At that, he knew he had a First in Class designation but was surprised to be second best – the top male – among all graduates. A UCU First Class is given to all graduating seniors with a GPA above 4.40.

Now graduated, Ddumba hopes to see FUEL blossom as he continues building his software ideas. He is considering a post-graduate program in 2025.

By Pauline Luba

Micropropagation refers to the growing of plants in closed vessels that contain culture media with nutrients and growth regulators.

Since the plants are grown in glass, they are described as in vitro, as opposed to in vivo plants that are grown in soil.

Knowing the multiple benefits and uses of the bamboo plant, Winnie Namutosi, a Uganda Christian University (UCU) alum and lecturer, and her co-researchers have been in the laboratory in a bid to micropropagate this member of the grass family, using a growth medium that has nutrients and hormones.

To produce the micropropagated plants, clear protocols are needed. These protocols are what Namutosi and her colleague researchers—Prof. William Kisaalita, Joel Karama and Joseph Galiwango — are attempting to develop.

Namutosi is part of the group that is developing the bamboo tissue culture protocols. She comes from Sironko district in eastern Uganda, where smoked bamboo shoots are one of the staple foods.

Locally known as malewa, the staple was originally served as a complete meal, but was later transformed into sauce, prepared with simsim paste or peanut butter.

Bamboo shoots, which are eaten like vegetables, are a source of protein, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins E and C.

Bamboo also can be burned for fuel, taking pressure off dwindling forest reserves of eucalyptus and other natural resources.

But Namutosi is looking beyond just the malewa that bamboo provides.

For her master’s research, she focused on the study of improving crops (African eggplants). It was then that she realized how charcoal is a major source of fuel in many households in Uganda.

However, it is that great need for charcoal that has conspired with other factors to lead to deforestation in the country.

“When you look at the environment, it needs to be conserved,” said Namutosi, who has a Bachelor of Agricultural Science and Entrepreneurship and a Master of Science in Agriculture from UCU.

The wood asset in Uganda reduced by 45 per cent between 1990 and 2015, from 355.5 million to 197.1 million tons.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, after an initial 4 per cent increase in wood biomass between 1990 and 2000, the national stock suffered a significant reduction of 42.5 percent



Researchers multiply bamboo production

Namutosi and colleagues are exploring possibilities of large-scale production of bamboo so it can serve the high demand for wood from charcoal burners.

between 2000 and 2005. Despite a modest 3 percent recovery between

2005 and 2010, the aggregate stock fell by another 9 percent between 2010 and 2015.

Uganda’s total forest land area was 4.93 million hectares (12.2 million acres) in 1990, which decreased by 60 percent to 1.95

million hectares (4.8 million acres) by 2015, according to the Ugandan government statistics.

However, by 2023, the forest cover had shown a reversal in the trajectory, improving by four percentage points.

Namutosi and colleagues are exploring

possibilities of large-scale production of bamboo so it can serve the high demand for wood from charcoal burners. Bamboo is a fast-growing plant and easily adapts to many weather conditions.

A hectare (2.47 acres) of a bamboo plantation is said to absorb more than 60 tons of carbon dioxide per annum, which is 30 percent more than the case with other plants. Bamboo is said to release more oxygen to the atmosphere than other plants.

As such, Namutosi believes that the plant will help to reduce carbon emissions to the atmosphere, hence mitigating the effects of climatic change.

Namutosi also has worked with UCU academics and researchers Bulyaba Rosemary, Nakanwangi Mildred Julian, Buteme Ruth, Sseremba Godfrey and Kizito Elizabeth Balyejusa to decipher the reproductive barriers that hinder improvement of African eggplants.

The study findings were published in Euphytica under the title “Compatibility Barriers affecting Crossability of Solanum Aethiopicum and its Relatives.”

By *Patty Huston-Holm*

A man Kasule Kibirige met unexpectedly during a 2023 trip to the United States believes in UFOs (Unidentified Foreign Objects) and Sasquatch, also known as “Big Foot.”

After a quick handshake, the man, donned in a baseball cap embroidered with the Sasquatch name, asserted that USA government data verifies the existence of alien life (i.e., UFOs), and many videos authenticate that a large hairy creature is walking his big feet around North American forests.

Kasule listened without prejudice during the five minutes that the man in the hat espoused views that many consider fictitious. That’s what social workers, especially those who are Christian, do.

“Social work has a value base similar to Christian faith,” said Kasule, head of undergraduate studies, School of Social Sciences, Uganda Christian University (UCU), since 2016. “Social work is a program of study that includes accepting others without judging them.”

The profession is much more, of course. The Webster dictionary defines social work as a field with “activities or methods concretely concerned with providing social services and especially with the investigation, treatment and material aid of the economically, physically, mentally or socially disadvantaged.”

The brief, unexpected encounter with the Sasquatch-UFO follower – who also might have shared more traditional beliefs had he remained longer – provided an example of implementing social work skills outside the confines of a dictionary or textbook, according to Kasule. He met the stranger during a three-week trip to the USA in the midst of more formal conversation with faculty at Cedarville University in Ohio.

Kasule shared other illustrations, including his early recognition of how listening and observing make a difference in the field of social work. “Most students come to universities directly from high school,” Kasule said. “I didn’t.”

Without sufficient funds, or academic marks to garner a government scholarship grant, Kasule first enrolled in vocational training. Using his tertiary knowledge and skill, he was employed as a welder in a small-scale steel fabrication factory that made machines like the ones used in the agro-processing industry. He later saw social workers in action when working for a child-focused non-profit organization in Kampala, Uganda.

“Choosing social work was largely inspired by that life-

UCU social work leader strives to forge USA collaborations



Posed at the Uganda Studies Program (USP) and Uganda Christian University (UCU) display that was part of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work Convention in Pittsburgh, Pa., in November 2023 are (left to right) Dr. David Hodge (Arizona State University), Kasule Kibirige (UCU), Dr. Micah Hughes (Baltimore Urban Studies Program) and Lisa Tokpa (USP Director of Field Education).

changing opportunity of working has with a non-governmental organization that helped disadvantaged, urban out-of-school children,” Kasule said.

From 2001 to 2007, Kasule received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work from the University of Botswana in Africa. Since 2008, he’s been a social work faculty member at UCU and participated in numerous community engagements, both integrated in fieldwork supervision of students’ practicums and community service, researching to enhance teaching and leading social work curriculum at UCU. He also is involved with UCU’s Uganda Studies Program (USP), a semester-long course of study for American university students.

The goal in collaborating is to create mutual benefit among their two programs at the university, including research, co-teaching, social work supervisor training and cross-cultural student groups.

“My major interest is to contribute to improving the quality of social work educational experiences for both students and

2008

Since 2008, he’s been a social work faculty member at UCU and participated in numerous community engagements, both integrated in fieldwork supervision of students’ practicums and community service, researching to enhance teaching and leading social work curriculum at UCU.

faculty,” said Kasule, who has two children, ages 4 and 7, with his wife, Grace, a pediatrician currently engaged in clinical research. “I continuously seek to engage with colleagues who share this passion through collaborations – in international field education, co-teaching and learning, and applied research.”

The main objective of Kasule’s 2023 visit to the United States was expanded partnerships. He spoke and listened during the

North American Association of Christians in Social Work Convention 2023 in Pittsburgh, Pa.; engaged with educators and students at two USA universities that have been involved with the USP in the two decades of the program’s existence; and spoke with the Rt. Rev. Deon Johnson, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri at St. John’s Episcopal Church, St. Louis, Mo. In the state of Pennsylvania, he visited Grove City College. In Ohio, he spent two days at Cedarville University. In Missouri, he met with social work faculty at St. Louis University.

“My key initiatives are local and international,” Kasule said.

“Locally, UCU social work and USP social work emphasis is through cross-cultural learning groups. Internationally, there is an exchange with universities outside Uganda.” While partnership benefits are readily acknowledged, money is a barrier for an equal exchange because Ugandans have fewer resources than Americans.

“There is the possibility of grants, but we don’t expect our partners to throw money at a

problem,” Kasule said. “Rather, we seek mutually-beneficial collaboration.” He pointed to the internet with possibilities for co-teaching and co-research, especially since all UCU postgraduate programs are now online. “Even for non-believers, Christian principles and similar intervention strategies can be applied,” said Kasule.

According to census data, 82 percent of Ugandans are Christian. In the USA, 63 percent identify as believers in Jesus Christ.

Kasule sees Christian faith playing an integral part for worker efforts to rebuilding community resilience, prevention and mitigation of social struggles, such as domestic violence, mental illness and children not in school. Loneliness issues for people of all ages also is a current focus both in Uganda and the United States, he said.

“We need to engage agencies as partners, teachers and students as learners,” he said. “We learn so much from each other to help others.”

Journey from homeschool to university

By *Pauline Luba*

For 12 years, Precious Abangira Nimusiima didn’t know what it meant to sit inside a classroom in a formal school setting. From Primary Three until she completed secondary school and enrolled at Uganda Christian University (UCU), Abangira was studying from home under the tutelage of her parents.

Francis and Allen Mutatiina, missionaries with LIFE Ministry Uganda, traveled with their children throughout Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda. Abangira and her brother learned through the USA-based, Liberty Christian Academy homeschooling system.

“I liked the flexibility which came with the homeschooling program,” said Abangira, working to finish her Bachelor of Science in Computer Science at UCU. “If I had to miss for a few days because of trips, it was okay since I didn’t miss school or have the class leave me behind.”

Each morning, Abangira and her brother woke up between 6 and 7 a.m. to do house chores, after which they prepared for class. They would dress in uniforms and proceed to the place in their home dedicated for classes. The section was equipped with a chalkboard and other essentials necessary in a classroom. A morning devotional prayer was said.

The homeschool curriculum included Bible studies, mathematics, English and grammar, science, history, geography, government, literature and economics. While the classes did not include extra-curricular activities, Abangira often participated in sports and music. The final grading and certification is done at the school campus in the United States.

Homeschooling has not been a common practice in Uganda. However, it gained some popularity during the 2020-2021, Covid pandemic lockdown of schools in Uganda – after Abangira and her brother enrolled in it in 2011.



Precious Abangira Nimusiima

By Irene Best Nyapendi

At Kalotom Primary School in northeastern Uganda, Sarah (full identity withheld) started her menstrual cycle with no knowledge what the blood discharge was about and that it had stained her skirt.

The girl, age 14, was not only confused but shattered emotionally by classmates who mocked her.

"I was in class when I heard the girls and boys laughing at me, saying my dress was stained," Sarah said.

"I didn't know. When I saw the blood, I felt embarrassed. Tears flowed down my cheeks."

At home, Sarah's mother says she has no money to buy her daughter sanitary pads. As a result, the teen misses school on heavy flow days and resorts to catching the discharge with old pieces of cloth on lighter days.

Sarah is not alone. Hers is a story of many.

Elizabeth (full identity withheld), a Senior Four student at St. Daniel Comboni in Napak District, also uses old pieces of cloth to avoid shaming.

Like Sarah, Elizabeth's menstrual cycle means missed school along with cultural pressure to get married and have babies. She brews and sells local alcohol to finance her education but has no money for pads.

"My friends always tell me to get a boyfriend who will buy

No more stains for girls



Martha Nanjuki Najuka, a fourth-year student of Bachelor of Laws, guides pupils on how to make reusable pads.



Patricia Munyes, one of the learners

me pads," Elizabeth said.

"Sometimes it gets really hard, and it hurts when I don't have any spare clothes to use."

The stories of Elizabeth, Sarah and others exemplify the silent suffering of many adolescent girls for whom

poverty denies the basic dignity of hygiene when they begin monthly hormonal bleeding.

A 2020 report by Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports says one out of every four girls aged 12 to 18 drops out of school upon the onset

of menstruation, leading to the increase in absenteeism rates from 7% to 28% during their menstrual cycle.

Samaritans such as students at Uganda Christian University (UCU) offer hope. Under the UCU "Pad a Girl" initiative,

Adults not left out

The UCU students also distributed clothes, shoes and household items to the members of the community.

Asimah Onyang Lillian, a mother struggling to make ends meet after her husband abandoned her, expressed gratitude for the support received.

"Every day is a struggle for survival," she said. "The students enable me to feel blessed amidst my hardships."

students have been providing reusable sanitary towels along with instructions on how to make them, clean them and use them again.

The UCU Para-Counseling Department as well as education, business and journalism students were involved.

Gerald Emmanuel Abura,

a UCU student pursuing a Bachelor of Social Work and Social Administration, led the initiative after seeing a secondary school classmate ridiculed out of class.

"My friend got up from her seat, and little did she know that her skirt was stained," Abura said.

"I was in shock when other students started laughing instead of helping her."

In March 2024, Abura and 26 other UCU students brought their "Pad a Girl" mission to three northeastern Uganda schools.

Their outreach distribution of 600 reusable pads and 768 packets of disposable pads involved lessons on the law, menstrual health and the importance of education as well as mechanics of using pads multiple times. The charity in 2024 benefited more than 300 students and over 100 community members.

Grace Agape Asimah, a student of Bachelor of Laws at UCU, used the opportunity to teach the students about their rights.

"You have a right to education," she said.

In 2023, the "Pad a Girl" initiative was in Bukwe, central Uganda, for the same purpose. This year's campaign was funded by Period Equity, Kisoboka Africa – It's possible, Compassion Uganda, UCU students and staff.

Law grad strives to 'fix the injustices', promote green economy

By Pauline Luba

Uganda Christian University (UCU) Bachelor of Laws alum Frank Mike Ogwang is an overcomer.

He grew up poor, sometimes hiding from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) extremist group. Born in Soroti, Ogwang was raised in Lira, where he often slept in the bush to avoid capture by LRA rebel leader Joseph Kony.

From 1986 and for 20 years, the LRA waged an armed struggle against the people in the northern Uganda area where Ogwang lived.

In secondary school, Ogwang's self-esteem and the bullying about his poverty were so bad, he contemplated suicide.

Now a lawyer, Ogwang is pursuing a master's degree in environmental and energy law as a Mandela Rhodes scholar at the University of Cape Town.

Being a postgraduate student at one of Africa's elite universities is a dream come true for the sixth born in a family of 12, whose childhood was

Goal

But once on his way in the legal profession, Ogwang was driven to "fix the injustices" caused by the LRA. Being on the International Justice Commission, as well as engagement with Para Counseling and the Africa Youth Leadership program, further cemented this goal.

fraught with barriers.

"When they (scholarship foundation) called, I was freaked out," he said. "It was quite emotional, knowing that everything I believed in as a child was coming true."

Ogwang's mother, Akao Hellen, struggled to provide her children with food, clothing and school requirements because their father had other families.

Benefactors from the USA and Canada helped with secondary and postsecondary education needs.

"A child's biggest asset is to have peace and be able to play," said Ogwang, a teaching assistant at UCU's Kampala campus.

"I didn't have that. We were always either running, sleeping in the bush, or hearing of abductions and violence."

Law was a third career choice after being a driver and teacher.

But once on his way in the legal profession, Ogwang was driven to "fix the injustices" caused by the LRA. Being on the International

Justice Commission, as well as engagement with Para Counseling and the Africa Youth Leadership program, further cemented this goal.

"Frank (Ogwang) is intelligent and creative," Richard Agaba, another UCU alum and a tax lawyer in Kampala, said.

"For the time I have known him, he has grown more confident."

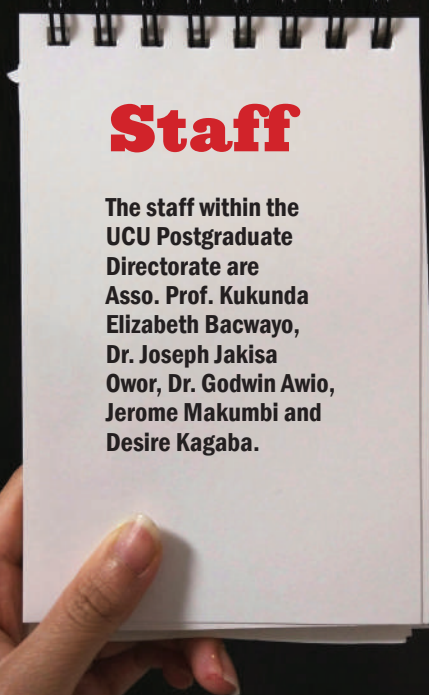
At UCU, Ogwang graduated with a second-class upper degree and set up businesses, such as salons, around the campus, to help his income.

"I have never doubted his determination, and I knew that from an early age," Ogwang's mom said, adding: "He is an ambitious man. He has overcome many obstacles to reach where he is. I am proud of him."

Following his postgraduate studies, Ogwang hopes to help support the transition to clean energy and offer environmental consultancy on the green economy.



UCU boasts 66 post-grad programs with 3,000 alums



With 66 postgraduate degree opportunities, Uganda Christian University (UCU) provides expanded academic and professional programs to students in Uganda and beyond.

The university, which started in 1997 with master's degree offerings since 2003, has 3,000 postgraduate alumni.

Although theory and practical application are important components of any curriculum, the UCU postgraduate research element is key to an advanced degree.

The dissertation at UCU uniquely defines the graduate with an expanded body of knowledge for the research field and the researcher.

While UCU postgraduate students with undergraduate degrees from UCU generally have research experience, the master's level students coming from other higher education institutions may not.

Thus, the Centre for Research and Academic Writing Services (CRAWS) evolved under the Postgraduate Directorate at UCU to serve both experienced and inexperienced researchers.

CRAWS, launched in July 2023, addresses the significant demand for academic writing and research support – an effort previously met through one-off clinics that, while useful, were insufficient to fully meet students' needs.

CRAWS provides a structured and sustained system of support through regular, on-line seminars and one-on-one coaching sessions.

These services are designed to help students develop the advanced writing and research skills necessary to successfully complete their dissertations and theses.

Since its inception, CRAWS has supported over 500 students, significantly contributing to improved research completion rates and the quality of research output at UCU.

The Postgraduate Directorate shares the university mission of promoting high-quality, Christ-centered graduate



Dr. Joseph Jakisa Owor, Head, Graduate Research and Training, Directorate of Postgraduate Studies, provides guidance to Sandra Namisango, a UCU student pursuing a Master's in Business Administration. (Photo by Andrew Bugembe)

education. With a vision to become a leading center for graduate training in Africa, the Directorate strives to develop globally excellent scholars and professionals who embody Christian values. The core values — Christ-centeredness, diligence, integrity, stewardship, and servanthood — are aligned with all of UCU and underscore commitment to holistic education.

This approach not only sets UCU apart from other institutions but also ensures that its graduates are prepared to

CRAWS

The Centre for Research and Academic Writing Services (CRAWS) evolved under the Postgraduate Directorate at UCU to serve both experienced and inexperienced researchers.

lead with integrity and purpose in their respective fields.

The Directorate strives to enhance graduate research and training capacity include training staff in research supervision, online instruction, and scientific writing.

The Directorate has introduced measures to standardize postgraduate programs, monitor compliance across schools and faculties, and organize scientific writing seminars and workshops.

Marketing strategy

To sustain and grow its postgraduate programs within all of UCU's 11 faculties and schools, UCU has developed a comprehensive marketing strategy aimed at increasing enrollment and retention.

This strategy includes person-to-person marketing through alumni, lecturers and other stakeholders, as well as a focus on online offerings for many programs, which is particularly attractive to working professionals.

UCU also recognizes the importance of selecting qualified and engaging facilitators to ensure that students receive the best possible education.

The university understands that to remain competitive, it must continually revisit and refine its strategies, curricula, and support systems. The Postgraduate Directorate's ongoing initiatives, including the work of CRAWS, are central to this effort, ensuring that UCU remains at the forefront of graduate education in Africa.

The quality of UCU graduates is a reflection of the university's commitment to excellence.



The effective use of external examiners is also a critical component in maintaining the high standards expected of UCU graduates.

The Directorate also is focused on efforts to enrich and harmonize recruitment across the university, promote research and learning opportunities, and improve the quality of graduate student supervision to ensure timely completion.

Regular reviews of graduate programs and the implementation of recommendations are key to maintaining high academic standards.

Recognizing the importance of student retention, the Directorate has implemented strategies to improve support for graduate students, foster vibrant academic communities, and streamline administrative processes.

These efforts are aimed at ensuring that students have a positive and fulfilling experience at UCU, which in turn contributes to higher retention and completion rates.

Mbabazi: Juggling work, business, family, school

By Kefa Senoga

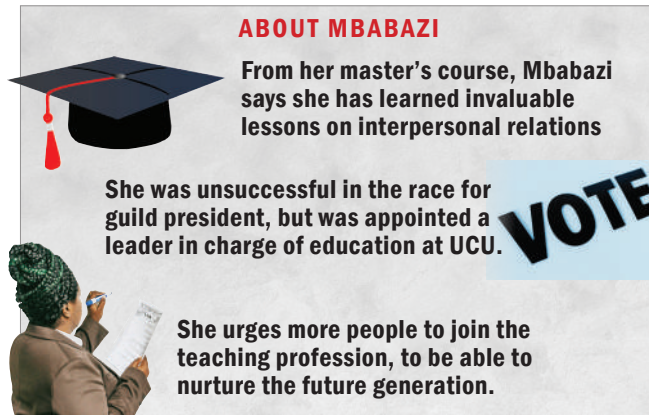
By the time Challe Mbabazi completed her Bachelor of Arts with Education from Uganda Christian University (UCU) in 2020, she had saved up to sh5million (\$1,357) from the funds her parents provided during her undergraduate studies.

This savings became her lifesaver for the next two years – especially since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 led to the global closure of operations, including Ugandan schools where Mbabazi would be employed. Those places she planned to teach in Uganda were shut down until 2022.

However, as expected, the demand for food did not wane during that two-year period. Mbabazi set up a grocery shop near the UCU Main Campus in Mukono.

When the business expanded, she relocated it to Hoima, her western Uganda hometown, where that establishment continues.

While the food store income was sufficient, Mbabazi's satisfaction with the type of work was not. She enrolled for a UCU postgraduate program in Master of



Human Resource Management in Education.

"Education adds value to a person," Mbabazi says, adding that she hopes to leverage her postgraduate knowledge to grow her business and be a better educator.

She is employed as an ICT teacher at St. Cyprian High School in Kyabakadde, Mukono district.

From her master's course, Mbabazi says she has learned invaluable lessons on interpersonal relations, particularly in working with teaching staff, non-teaching staff and managers within the education sector.

"I now understand better how

to retain and develop talented people in any kind of organization, especially for schools," Mbabazi says. She also highlights mentoring as a key takeaway from her course. She had already started mentoring students, particularly those in the ICT club where she serves as the patron at her current school.

Mbabazi believes that schools must consider hiring a human resource professional within their administration, something uncommon in Ugandan schools where headteachers typically handle HR responsibilities.

Through the skills and knowledge that Mbabazi has gained in her master's course,

she says she has learned that HR managers are trained to create productive workplaces that can lead to improved outcomes.

Despite the widespread bias against a career in teaching due to low pay, Mbabazi argues that it's important for more people to join the profession, to be able to nurture the future generation.

At that, just like students within programs related to non-teaching careers, she struggled balancing work with school.

"Sometimes, you would have work assignments to handle, with a proposal to defend and course work to hand in, and yet you also are the teacher on duty," said Mbabazi, who also juggled being a wife and mother of two.

While pursuing her undergraduate studies at UCU, Mbabazi, age 28, engaged in an unsuccessful competition for guild presidency, but was appointed a leader in charge of education in the university's guild government.

She completed her primary education at Bwikya Primary School in Hoima, then attended Jinja Secondary School for her O'level, proceeding to Mpoma Girls School, where she completed her A'level.



Mbabazi on the day she graduated with a master's degree

Master of Arts in Strategic Communication was invaluable

By Ivan Naijuka

In the last two years, I re-joined Uganda Christian University (UCU) studies – this time to pursue a Master's degree in Strategic Communication. As an undergraduate degree alumnus and having worked at UCU, I knew UCU was the best university to do my master's course. In fact, it was the only university in Uganda that was offering the post-graduate course I wanted.

As a pioneer class, I was not entirely sure what to expect. However, since I had done a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication, I knew it would deepen and add to the skills and knowledge I already had. The course did exactly that.

One of the most significant things I learned during my program was the importance of strategic planning and execution of duty for an organization in an efficient and effective manner.

I also acquired valuable skills and expertise in managing public communication and stakeholder relations, design and execution of communication and marketing strategies. Since the digital era is at hand and we tackled issues



UCU graduate, Ivan Naijuka, with wife, Edgar T. Naijuka, carrying Malaika Ahabwe Ivana, age 1; Esther Maya Aijuka age 5; and Abigail Ahairwe Migisha, age 4. Edgar has a Bachelor of Procurement and Logistics Management from UCU and a Master of Public Procurement from Uganda Management Institute.

concerning digital media management, I know that my line of work now and in the future will be easier through editing and production of information for various audiences including the public, media, and management.

The course gave me an opportunity to better my oral and written communication skills, leadership skills, decision-making and problem-solving skills. The whole program was practical and this gave me a chance to interact with many people,

APPLYING SKILLS

"I hope to apply the skills everywhere I work. Currently, I work with the Church of Uganda-Diocese of Kampala as the Communication and Media Officer. I am proud to say that the skills I acquired are valuable at my workplace.

I also deliver content for campaigns across all digital platforms, observing our tone of voice and using our visual identity assets correctly and supporting our communities to do the same to increase the reach of our output," Naijuka said.

which in turn has built my networking skills, ability to multitask and prioritize projects with attention to detail.

Furthermore, I also learned how to develop a crisis communication plan.

The most practical part was when I

learned how to develop communication strategies. Surprisingly, immediately after that module, at my work, we were developing one and I was a valuable resource. My research topic was "Facebook as a corporate communication tool: a case study of the Church of Uganda." The study aimed at examining the contribution of Facebook as a tool of corporate communication. It was guided by objectives which included: investigating how the Church of Uganda uses Facebook for corporate communication, establishing the effectiveness of Facebook as a corporate communication tool for the Church of Uganda, examining the opportunities related to the use of Facebook in corporate communication and examining challenges related to the use of Facebook in corporate communication in the Church of Uganda.

The study revealed that the use of Facebook in Church of Uganda has been effective in corporate communication because of the positive feedback from the users and followers.

The writer is a July 2024 UCU alum with Master of Arts in Strategic Communications

UCU alum breaks barriers in nursing

By Pauline Luba

“Men are doctors, while women are nurses.”

These words were told to Otim Douglas Tonny repeatedly as he worked as a nurse in Northern Uganda, working against a stereotype and stigmatization in the field of medicine.

Today, the 41-year-old Otim is not only a married father of four, but also a registered nurse with an ardent desire to care for others.

A July 2024 graduate with a Masters in Nursing from Uganda Christian University (UCU), Otim has a 2008 diploma from Butabika School of Psychiatric Nursing and a 2016 Bachelor of Science of Nursing Science from Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST).

Otim, a member of the Lango tribe from Northern Uganda's Lira District, has a passion for caring for those with deep-seated issues in mental health, cancer and HIV/AIDS, among other chronic and non-chronic conditions. His desire to improve the health of others stemmed from a childhood punctuated with fear of kidnapping and lack of food related to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency. “How you grow up may not define who you will be



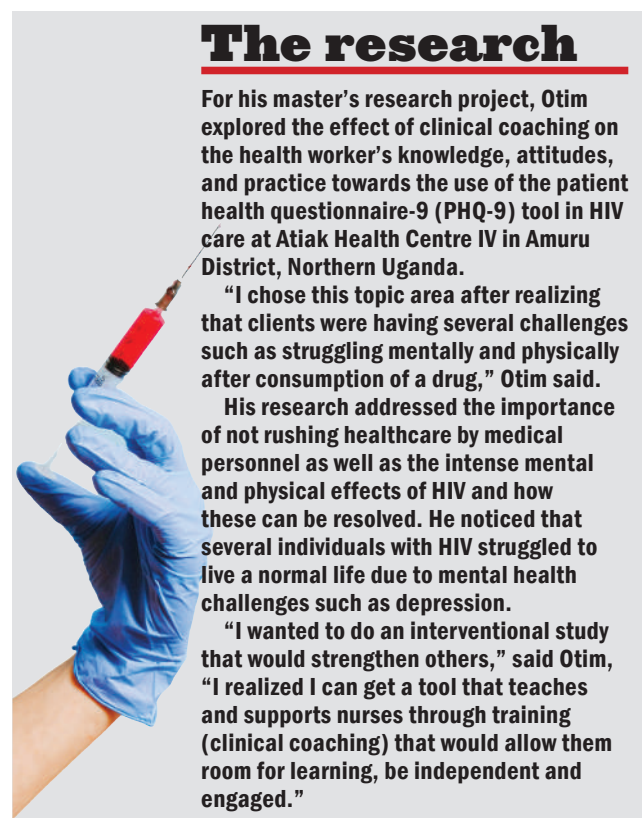
Otim Douglas Tonny, July 2024 UCU Masters in Nursing grad

in life,” he said.

Such is the story of Otim, who grew up within the Joseph Kony LRA (1986-2006) insurgency as well as the widespread food insecurity from Karamojong home raids. He often found himself on the run, sleeping in bushes and trying to stay alive.

This was not easy for him and his large family. His father, now a retired accountant, had two wives who produced a total of 18 children.

Despite obstacles, Otim met university admission requirements. He attended Te-Lala Primary School, Kangai



The research

For his master's research project, Otim explored the effect of clinical coaching on the health worker's knowledge, attitudes, and practice towards the use of the patient health questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) tool in HIV care at Atiak Health Centre IV in Amuru District, Northern Uganda.

“I chose this topic area after realizing that clients were having several challenges such as struggling mentally and physically after consumption of a drug,” Otim said.

His research addressed the importance of not rushing healthcare by medical personnel as well as the intense mental and physical effects of HIV and how these can be resolved. He noticed that several individuals with HIV struggled to live a normal life due to mental health challenges such as depression.

“I wanted to do an interventional study that would strengthen others,” said Otim, “I realized I can get a tool that teaches and supports nurses through training (clinical coaching) that would allow them room for learning, be independent and engaged.”

Senior Secondary School (O' Level) and Amuca Seventh Day Adventist Secondary School (A' Level) in Lira town before engaging in post-secondary studies.

After completing the nursing program at Butabika, Otim worked in a clinic before being

employed a year later in the Amuru district local government as a nursing officer in psychiatry. His other employment involved St. Mary's Lacor Hospital, Gulu, where he was engaged in learning and helping patients with chronic illness; and with local government as a mental

health officer and HIV/AIDS wellness worker with Lamwo Refugee Settlement.

With a new master's degree, he has integrated significant knowledge into his work as a nurse and as a teaching assistant in Muni University in Arua City.

For his research, which explored the effect of clinical coaching on the health worker's knowledge, attitudes, and practice towards the use of the patient health questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) tool in HIV care at Atiak Health Centre IV in Amuru District, Northern Uganda, with the guidance of supervisors, Prof. Karen Drake and Dr. Faith Ssebuliba, Otim engaged in his postgraduate study that included use of a tool to recognise patients of mental health illness and depression. This questionnaire (PHQ-9 Tool) allows nurses to screen, diagnose, classify and monitor patients who have depression among other mental health issues, allowing better care and treatment. According to the research, the tool deepens healthcare worker understanding of depression assessment that leads to improved knowledge, practice, and attitude.

Otim plans to do a similar study on a larger population and longer time frame with hopes to pursue a PhD in this area.

By Christine Mirembe

With a heart called to serve, Sister Mary Nakitto devotes her life to abandoned zero- to three-year-old children, providing them with love, support and a chance for a brighter future. The recent Uganda Christian University (UCU) master's degree graduate in Social Work sees herself as a caregiver and voice for this often-overlooked population.

“As a religious person, my call to serve is so obvious and most expected by the community,” she said. “Therefore, my field of study was directed towards empowering my capacity to serve with expertise and confidence which merged well with what I should be as a religious person.”

Born June 23, 1979, at Nsambya Hospital, Kampala, Uganda, Sister Mary's journey is marked by compassion, dedication, resilience and a deep commitment to her faith. Her educational voyage from 1992 to 1997 took her through St. Pontiano Ngonde, a humble Senior Secondary School, in

An endless call to help abandoned kids

Nazigo, Bugerere. From a tender age and because her school required students to perform manual labor, she learned the value of teamwork and various practical skills.

After completing her secondary education and focused on the complex needs of marginalized people, Sister Mary pursued a Bachelor of Development Studies at Makerere University. With a desire to learn and do more, she embarked in 2019 on a master's degree at UCU. Studying from the Kampala campus, she is among the inaugural class of 21 students to graduate in July 2024 with a master's degree in Social Work.

“Among my classmates were three fellow nuns from different religious institutes,” Sister Mary recounted. “We attended in person and bonded well.”

Her postgraduate academic journey was fairly smooth until the Covid-19 pandemic



Sister Mary Nakitto

sentenced all institutions of learning to a lockdown.

“The total lockdown and many other government directives

could not permit movements at any cost,” she recalled. “UCU had immediately engaged us to study online but the government

interrupted and ordered them not to proceed with the online classes because other universities were not able to facilitate online programs.”

In 2021, UCU online classes commenced during the Easter semester, allowing Sister Mary and her classmates to do their examinations online under supervision.

With all requirements but her dissertation completed, she embraced the work of research on the topic of “Push Factors Associated with Parental Child Abandonment: A Case of Kalungu District.” Her study examines why child abandonment persists despite endeavors to rescue children. She assessed the factors that sustain the prevalence of child abandonment. She looked at possible mitigation measures for this problem.

By the end of 2022, she had successfully completed and

defended her research to qualify for UCU's July 2024 graduation.

With a master's degree, Sister Mary qualifies within required government guidelines to work with the probation office, police and the magistrate to help rescue the babies in dire need. Apart from helping her fellow workers with hands-on knowledge and being a consultant in the field, this advanced degree has built her confidence in community work and all issues concerning child care and other social activities like counseling, community development, donor funding activities and more.

“I would say that service is an endless call in our society which we all ought to willfully offer to our respective communities; this is what our faith calls for,” said Sister Mary, 45, and warden at St. Francis Revival Home, a baby facility in Kalungu District. “Education is a weapon that empowers us and shields us to serve with expertise and confidence amidst the challenging world where we live so that our efforts don't go to waste or are misallocated.”

Support of UCU nursing 'felt right'

By *Patty Huston-Holm*

When many think of philanthropy, the name of billionaire Bill Gates frequently comes to mind.

Christians might think of Jesus Christ. While economically poor, the son of God is known for promoting the welfare of others. Examples are in many Biblical stories (John 4 woman at the well, etc.) and scriptures (Jesus's advice to "give freely" per Luke and Matthew and Acts 10 about doing good). Jesus Christ was a philanthropist.

Then, there is Craig Hammon, who lives with his wife in the small coastal town of Essex, Massachusetts, USA. In addition to his titles of husband, father and grandfather, Hammon has been vice president of CURE, a nonprofit network of children's hospitals; vice president of Christian colleges in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts; and head of development for the World Vision humanitarian aid organization.

Hammon, in his late 70s, is a philanthropist. More specifically, he consults about where to give and why. Over the years, he has advised many about responsible giving. Among beneficiaries of those gifts is Uganda Christian University (UCU). Amid the givers is the Tennessee-based Westwood Endowment, where Hammon was once affiliated. Westwood provided UCU's nursing program with \$275,000 over 12 years.

"In 2024, the UCU nursing program marks 20 years," said Mark Bartels, executive director of the Uganda Partners nonprofit that supports UCU. "This seemed an appropriate time to recognize the generous donations

of Westwood, where Craig was a trustee."

Hammon, who has philanthropy consulting affiliations for various health-and-education-related entities, recalled a 2009 meeting at UCU where he was convinced that nursing education was a good investment of Westwood funds. Doug Fountain, formerly involved in UCU health sciences and finance and now executive director of Christian Connections for International Health, was at that meeting in Mukono, Uganda. The idea of UCU nursing education was developed by former UCU Vice Chancellor John Senyonyi and officials at Bethel University (Minnesota, USA).

"Doug and some folks from Bethel University said they wanted to develop a transformative nursing school to undergird health care in Uganda," Hammon said. "It felt right."

Fountain recalled that "Westwood showed up ready to help" current and future nurses who had a passion to positively impact Uganda's health care.

A dozen years of grants for UCU equipment and training nurses from midwifery to bachelor, master and doctoral degrees was aligned with Westwood's Christian focus and other education and health care initiatives. From the start, Hammon saw that UCU had the need and accountability in place to make good use of funds.

"There is a terrible crisis in health care – lack of supplies and equipment and inadequately trained staff," he said. "Things are improving. In 1988 around the world, 35,000 kids a day were



Craig Hammon, philanthropist who saw value in the UCU nursing program, presents a certificate at a school in Kenya

THE NUMBERS

50

Hammon has made 50 trips to Africa, including 15 each to Kenya and Uganda

275k

Westwood Endowment, where Hammon was affiliated, gave UCU \$275,000 for the nursing program over 12 years

35k

In 1988 around the world, 35,000 children a day were dying of preventable diseases; now it's 19,000

dying of preventable diseases; now it's 19,000 a day. Nurses are key."

In his 50 trips to Africa, including 15 times each to Kenya and Uganda, he has observed the worst (malaria, children living

in slums, "families cooking food outside for hospital patients inside") and the best, including a neurosurgical hospital in Mbale.

"I'm focused on people and places with solutions to help the least and the lost," Hammon

said. "I don't have a medical background, but my 35 years of fundraising provides me the insight into where donations are best used. UCU nursing is one of those areas."

Semi-retired since 2010, Hammon says that "advocating for and helping people less fortunate than yourself is the reason for living." He adds that "philanthropy is not engagement only for the wealthy, but for all who have an altruistic desire to improve human welfare. As believers, we find out what God is doing and become part of it."

Hammon said he was moved to support UCU nursing in part because he was "blown away"

by the passion, qualifications and leadership at UCU.

"The key is not sending doctors or medical teams somewhere, but training local people to be as good as they can be to do the work where they live," he said.

The 1,850 small and large contributors to the Uganda Partners organization since its inception 23 years ago have subscribed to this belief, according to Bartels. In 2024, Uganda Partners has 1,000 donors of various levels.

Hammon said none of the benefactors he has represented has "expressed regret." He added, "Once you've seen the need, you can't turn your back."

American at UCU receives honorary doctorate from Dartmouth



Richard Ranger receives Dartmouth College honorary doctorate

Dartmouth College, of Hanover, New Hampshire, USA, has awarded an honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters to Richard Ranger, a missionary with the Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders (SAMS) and lecturer in Business and Law at Uganda Christian University.

Each year, a member of the Dartmouth 50th reunion class is chosen to receive this award in recognition of service to the Dartmouth community and the broader world. Ranger, a member of Dartmouth's Class of 1974 that celebrated its 50th Reunion in June, was selected for the 2024 honor.

In a ceremony on the Dartmouth campus in June, Ranger was honored with eight other recipients. About

Ranger, these remarks were made by Dartmouth President Sian Leah Beilock:

"As a Dartmouth man who has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to service and faith, you have shown our community and friends all over the world what it means to live your values.

"After majoring in English and serving as Class President, you began a successful 43-year career as a negotiator, environmental compliance manager, and government relations specialist.

"Yet, you always stayed deeply involved in our community — as representative to the Alumni Council, head of the Class Officers' Association, and of course, the Class of 1974 newsletter editor for 40 years. You helped lead and guide construction of the first class-sponsored

bunkhouse at Mt. Moosilauke.

"But your involvement with Dartmouth only scratches the surface. From civic and church activities, to chairing local boards, to hosting for 10 years a public radio jazz program in Alaska, you have made an indelible impact wherever you go. And through your faith and mission work, you've respected the dignity of every human being while serving others in need.

"For your lifelong pursuit of adventure; for your 50 years of deep involvement and commitment to our Dartmouth family; for a life lived in service of others; Dartmouth is proud to award you the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters."

Tragedy propels Save the Mothers alum into advocacy

By Pauline Luba

In 1984, when 18-year-old Boaz Mbagaya arrived at his secondary school, he was called home because of a tragic loss. His pregnant mother and an unborn baby had died from childbirth complications. From this heart-break, Mbagaya began to lead the fight against maternal and child mortality.

“We should do everything in our power to stop mothers from dying,” said Mbagaya, who grew up in a family of 16 children that needed to support themselves and their father, George Mbagaya. Boaz Mbagaya engaged in farming and brewing local gin, which was sold for

school fees.

After completing secondary school, Mbagaya joined Makerere University in Uganda, to pursue a course in Mental Health and Community Psychology. He pursued the Master in Public Health Leadership (MPHL) under the Save the Mothers program at Uganda Christian University (UCU) — a course that would later provide him the platform to fulfill his earlier passion for healthier expectant mothers.

With this program, Mbagaya believed he could do something to change the narrative of the high mortality rate, especially in



Boaz Mbagaya (left) poses with staff at the Mbale People's Hospital that evolved from People's Life Care Foundation, the non-profit that he founded.

rural Uganda.

According to the 2022 Uganda Government statistics, the Maternal Mortality Ratio is at 189 per 100,000 live births while the infant mortality stands at 34 per 1,000 live births. Globally, according to the United Nations, by 2020, there were 223 deaths per 100,000 live births.

“The Save the Mothers course helped me see the many challenges that the community faces,” said Mbagaya, who also studied clinical medicine at Mbale College of Health

Sciences.

During the MPHL program, students moved to different geographical areas to learn about maternal needs. Since 2005, Save the Mothers East Africa has hosted the MPHL at UCU. Students pursuing the course study on a part-time basis over two years completing the modular program with an intensive community outreach project.

Upon completing school, Mbagaya started a non-profit facility, the People's Life Care Foundation, to help him

promote and strengthen the health care system in Uganda. That foundation gave birth to Mbale People's Hospital, a facility located in eastern Uganda. Mbagaya is currently the Managing Director of the facility.

Among the many outpatient and inpatient services provided at the facility is obstetrics and gynecology. Mbagaya, a father of four, also has a passion to combat obstetric fistula, a childbirth injury where a hole develops between the birth canal and the bladder and/or the rectum. It is caused by prolonged, obstructed

labor without access to timely, high-quality medical treatment. The hospital began identifying mothers suffering from obstetric fistula for treatment.

According to Mbagaya, whenever his mother got pregnant, she would offer gifts to the midwife to receive better attention during labor. This propelled Mbagaya, 57, to set up a system where people, especially in the event of emergencies, can pay with produce instead of money.

There is more to do. Mbagaya is driven to do it.

By Irene Best Nyapendi

Victoria Nantambi remembers one patient well during her first time working in a hospital.

With a team of three other health care workers, she treated an elderly woman with a lung infection and an open ulcer. Nantambi, a final year student pursuing a Bachelor of Nursing Science at Uganda Christian University (UCU) at that time, went home after seeing the patient's condition had improved.

When she returned the following day and saw an empty bed, she sadly learned the woman had died.

“The death of my patient struck me, but also taught me that we only treat; it's God who heals,” she said. “We do our best to save lives, but the outcomes are not

ours to determine.”

Such experiences are a reminder that “nursing keeps me on my toes,” according to Nantambi who, like other UCU nursing students, had hands-on training to supplement classroom knowledge.

In Nantambi's maternal health clinical practice at Mukono General Hospital, for example, she learned that HIV/AIDS person-to-person transmission is rare. The virus is passed to another person through blood, semen, vaginal fluid, anal mucus and breast milk only if the uninfected person has broken skin.

“Working in the labor suite has taught me that patients'

lives depend on the nurses,” Nantambi, who graduated in July 2024, said. “We have to be fully alert and attentive.”

When Erick Rwamurenzi, also

a July 2024 UCU graduate of Bachelor of Nursing Science, was 17, he got an injury while playing

football. At the hospital, the nurse seemed too afraid to work on him, causing him to wonder if she treated all patients the same way. This experience ignited a passion in him to have compassion for patients.

“I prayed to God to help me become the person that will help people,” he says.

Rwamurenzi and his colleague nursing students would reach the hospital by 8 a.m. and start their day with ward rounds and drug administration, and, later, hold post-conference discussions to share experiences and discuss what they saw in the wards.

During one of his days in the hospital, he attended to a 35-year-old woman who had

been pregnant nine times, but had only given birth to five babies at full term. The rest were miscarriages. The day before, she had undergone a cesarean section, but due to strong uterine contractions, she experienced a severe uterine rupture that resulted in the loss of her uterus. She was also HIV-positive, epileptic, and had lost her husband only a month before.

Despite her condition, Rwamurenzi did his best to save both the mother and the baby. He administered fluids, antibiotics, and offered psychological support. He monitored them and was happy to see them improve and be discharged from the hospital.

Healing, according to the two new nurses, is the most satisfying part of their careers.



Erick Rwamurenzi

Victoria Nantambi

Rural women defy odds to create family livelihoods

By Kefa Senoga

Achito Loyce and Anayo Mary defied the odds to transform their lives and those of their families.

Destiny Community Development Initiative (DECODI) is one organization enabling the positive alteration. With DECODI's help, Anayo and Achito learned how to keep afloat in the world of business. The two women got training in running businesses, including basics of how to save money, bookkeeping and accounting, customer care and record keeping.

Elotu Mercy, an alum of Uganda Christian University's School of Social Sciences, is the head of business and investment at DECODI. The organization mobilizes and applies its resources, leverages its networks, and avails its expertise to engage with and directly meet the psychological, economic and social basic needs of vulnerable women and their homesteads, focusing on single mothers in northeastern Uganda.

Achito and Anayo are among the success stories. From an early age, Achito, a resident of Soroti in northeastern Uganda, shouldered the responsibility of caring for her seven siblings. Following the passing on of her father and her mother's ailing health, Achito became both the breadwinner and a mother figure for her family.

In fact, her clan members forbade her from marrying because there was no one to take over the responsibility of looking after her family members.

Achito and her seven siblings were being raised on land their mother's family had given their father.

However, upon the passing on of their father, Achito says her maternal relatives had a change of heart on the land – they sent them off, reasoning that the children were supposed to return to their paternal relatives. They neither knew the paternal relatives nor where they lived.

After months of wandering, Achito and her siblings finally



Anayo Mary with some of her livestock

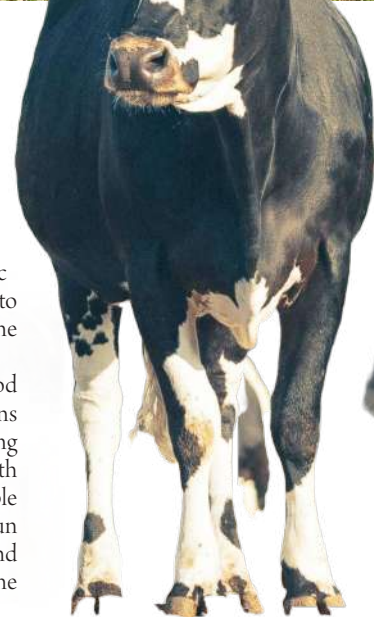
settled on land donated to them by a Good Samaritan. They engaged in casual work and saved money, which they used to set up a restaurant in Tuburi Town Council, Soroti district. From the restaurant, also has been able to save money and build a permanent house.

Anayo, a widow, is five kilometers (three miles) away from the home of Achito. Anayo was living with her husband in Adjumani, located in the northwestern part of Uganda. However, upon his death, she faced economic hardships that made it almost impossible for her to take care of her four children. For support, she returned to her

parents in Soroti.

Anayo complements livestock farming with small businesses. She engages in the sale of agricultural produce, such as millet, tomatoes, wheat and soya. She also owns 100 plastic chairs, which she rents out to people who have parties in the community.

Illiteracy is a barrier to good business. DECODI runs programs on adult learning to equip its beneficiaries with literacy skills that can enable them to successfully run businesses. Both Achito and Anayo are graduates of the organization's literacy classes.



One learner in the DECODI adult education program, Amoding Sarah, cited proper sanitation and diet information as a valuable part of her education.

"I have been able to learn about a balanced diet and now I am able to feed my family well and nutritiously," Amoding said.

Micheal Eberu, an official at DECODI, said although their target is women, they also include men in their programs, reasoning that in many communities, when women get more economically empowered than the men, it can create domestic violence. On many occasions, men can sabotage women's projects because they feel marginalized.

Uganda Christian University news in video

Using your smartphone, scan the QR codes to watch videos about academic activities at Uganda Christian University

UCU School of Medicine microbiology lab

Students discuss their hands-on learning in UCU's microbiology lab, thanks to generous donations from UCU Partners and their donors.



UCU nurses

Students share what they learn at UCU and how it makes a difference in East African health care.



Student testimonies

Students from various parts of Uganda and DR Congo talk about what they value in their UCU education.



School to work advice

UCU faculty members, including alumni, provide information related to securing and maintaining temporary or full-time employment with advice about avoiding harassment.



UCU new PhD recipient shares journey

By Kefa Senoga

The Rev. Dr. Richard Muwonge Mulindwa is among the newest doctoral degree recipients at Uganda Christian University (UCU), continuing a trend of increasing PhD holders among teaching staff.

In 2024, Dr. Mulindwa earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Biblical and Religious Studies from the University of Pretoria in South Africa. The UCU Church

Relations Manager has a Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies from Kyambogo University and a Master of Science in Public Health and Master of Divinity at UCU.

Mulindwa sees his academic achievements as nothing short of a miracle for the youth who could hardly afford to eat following the death of his parents and grandmother. He took such jobs as cooking porridge and cleaning classrooms to pay school fees and buy food.



Rev. Dr. Richard Muwonge Mulindwa during his graduation in South Africa

“I became independent and survived on my own,” Mulindwa recalled of his teenage years. “Life was hard, tough and full of struggles.”

He credits the Rev. Capt. Titus Baraka of the Words of Hope nonprofit for one lifeline. Another came from Vision for Africa, where Mulindwa pursued a certificate program in motor vehicle mechanics at the Nakawa Vocational Training Institute. He was later employed by the

Mukono diocese as a driver and mechanic.

Mulindwa says he seized the opportunity of working in the diocese to get a bursary in the church-founded schools to continue with formal education. He joined Mukono High School to complete Senior Five and later moved to Kisowera Secondary School for Senior Six.

“Studying as an older man was a challenge as I often got mocked,” he recalled. “But I had to

swallow my pride and go for what I wanted.”

His bachelor’s degree at Kyambogo University was sponsored by Good Samaritans from the USA, and the Master of Public Health Leadership at UCU was sponsored by Save the Mothers, while the Master of Divinity was through a scholarship from the Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology.

UCU faculty earning doctorate degrees during the past year are in

all 11 of the UCU faculties and schools: School of Education; School of Dentistry; School of Social Sciences; School of Medicine; School of Business; Faculty of Law; Faculty of Agricultural Sciences; Faculty of Engineering, Design and Technology; School of Journalism, Media and Communication; Faculty of Public Health, Nursing and Midwifery; and Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology.



Appreciation

Mulindwa credits the patience of his family members – wife Deborah and children – for his educational attainment.

Despite being sponsored for his education, in many instances, he had to contribute some funds towards the expenses, thereby depriving his family of some basic needs.

He balanced family time with work, studies, and being chaplain for Makerere College School.

Ahumuza hopes to use PhD knowledge to help refugees

By Pauline Luba

John Vianney Ahumuza is a life-long teacher and learner – something he gleaned from his parents and primary school teachers, Joseph and Mary Bagambe. He learned academics alongside life values.

“He was a brilliant and inquisitive boy,” Mary says of her son, who started his education in rural schools.

“As a child, Ahumuza used to ask many questions. We once saw a beautiful bird that was singing, and he asked if that was the preacher of all the other birds.”

In 2004, Ahumuza made history in his village in the western Uganda district of Rukungiri by becoming the fourth person to acquire a degree. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Education from Uganda Christian University (UCU).

Initially, Ahumuza had hoped to pursue a course in law. But education was more academically and financially attainable and aligned with his already cemented passion.

“I love teaching and, along the way, I discovered that reading gives one a lot of opportunities,” said Ahumuza, who was a teacher at Seeta High School and

a lecturer at UCU.

“From childhood, academics were always instilled in us.”

He attended Kishonga Primary School, which was 2km (1.2 miles) away from his home.

From Kishonga, Ahumuza went to St. Gerald’s High School, also in Rukungiri, and then St. Mary’s College Rushoroza, in Kabale district, south-western Uganda, before joining UCU, where he was a student leader.

In 2012, he enrolled for a Master of Arts in Peace and Conflict Studies at Makerere University.

From that groundwork, Ahumuza has scaled the education ladder. With the help of the Greda Henkel Foundation Scholarship, he is winding up his research for a doctorate degree in history at the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra.

The scholarship, which seeks to develop 30 PhD holders in Africa, is offered at three universities in the continent – the University of Ghana, Makerere University in Uganda and the University of Pretoria in South Africa. Of the more than 50,000 students at the Ghanaian university, 7,500 are graduate students.

With his topic “The Refugee Question in Ugandan History, 1942-2010,”

Ahumuza believes his research will, in addition to contributing to the body of knowledge on the subject, also help to harvest indigenous knowledge to enable the creation of appropriate policies to help in the response to

Life away from books

Ahumuza is married to Nyangoma Patience Ahumuza and is a father of four girls. During his free time, Ahumuza goes fishing, reads and listens to music. His goal is to acquire pre-colonial knowledge and to harvest indigenous knowledge to create policies that favor refugees.



refugee-related issues. His goal is to acquire pre-colonial knowledge and to harvest indigenous knowledge to create policies that favor refugees.

Ahumuza’s choice of the subject of refugees in Uganda is not by accident. For many years, the country has hosted refugees and asylum-seekers from more than 10 countries, such as Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Rwanda, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. Many of the refugees and asylum-seekers run away from conflicts in their countries.

As of December 31, 2023, Uganda had 1,615,162 refugees and asylum-seekers, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Of these, over 1.5 million were refugees, with South Sudan responsible for over 900,000 of that number. The Democratic Republic of Congo contributed over 500,000 of the number.

Ahumuza, who is completing his data collection before returning to Ghana to finish his studies, is married to Nyangoma Patience Ahumuza and is a father of four girls. During his free time, Ahumuza goes fishing, reads and listens to music.

By Kefa Senoga

What kind of journalists and communication professionals does Uganda Christian University (UCU) want to prepare?

This was the overriding question during the School of Journalism, Media and Communication (JMC) curriculum redesign discussion in the past year. The answer: Practicality with theory.

Dr. Emily Comfort Maractho, an associate professor with the School of JMC, was at the helm of the work to fulfill the requirements of the National Council for Higher Education that mandates curriculum revisions every three years. Among her achievements – Daily Monitor columnist, postgraduate degrees, board member and chair of the Editorial Board Committee of Monitor Publications Limited, board chair of the African Center for Media Excellence (ACME), vice chair for Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) and the Nation Media Group, Uganda, among them – she holds the JMC re-design and leading curriculum reviews at the top.

“Reviewing and redesigning the journalism and communication curriculum is one of the proudest

Journalism curriculum reinforces practicality

Emily's venture into media

Her venture into media academia began in 2005 when she took a postgraduate program in environmental journalism at Makerere. In 2012, she pursued a master's in communication from Daystar University in Nairobi, which followed another Masters in development studies where she specialized in policy, graduating in 2007. Her PhD in Cultural and Media Studies is from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

“Whether learning, teaching or practicing, excellence is key,” she said.

Emily Comfort Maractho

things I have ever done in my career and in journalism,” she said.

Maractho, a native of northern Uganda's Nebbi Town, shaped the program's emphasis on providing journalism and communication students not just knowledge, but also the skills for careers.

For instance, she says, a person needs a solid understanding of economics in order to be a successful business journalist. That was the thinking behind the introduction of course units like business and economics journalism. She also has had a hand in drawing attention to gender-sensitive stories such as domestic violence.

Maractho found herself leading the curriculum review because shortly after obtaining a PhD in 2017, she was named the head of what was then called UCU's Department of Journalism and

Media Studies. The previous office bearer, Prof. Monica Chibita, had been promoted to the position of Dean in the then-newly established School of JMC.

The titles of senior lecturer, associate professor and professor are often tied to published research and affiliations like Maractho's chair position with the JMC Media, Democracy and Development Research Group. But experience in the field is equally important, she said.

Maractho's practical experience in journalism and communications includes work as an editor for the West Nile, a community newspaper whose target audience was northwestern Uganda; communication consulting role at National Planning Authority; and opinion writing for the Daily Monitor newspaper.

Like many students today, the start of Maractho's higher education journey was financially driven. Her 2003 bachelor's degree from Makerere University was in development studies that “had the lowest tuition,” she said. She went there after completing O' Level at Muni Girls Secondary School and A'level in Mvara Secondary School.

Computer science student leads best pitching team at national hackathon

By Kefa Senoga

Charles Muganga, a final-year student in the Bachelor of Computer Science program at Uganda Christian University (UCU), led a team that pitched an idea for what soil nutrients can yield the best crops and how data can clarify that.

The solution the team provided at an agricultural technology hackathon in the spring of 2024 earned the members a reward of sh2.2 million (about \$577). The hackathon, held at the Uganda Institute of Information and Communications Technology in Kampala, was in collaboration with government stakeholders including the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology and National Guidance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, and the Uganda Communications Commission.

In addition to Muganga, the winning team was comprised of Abalo Proscovia and Nsubuga Daniel from Uganda Institute of Communications and Technology and Kibalama James from Mbarara University. They explained:

When the fertility of the garden soil is poor, farmers



Charles Muganga presenting his team's pitch at the Agri-Tech Hackathon

get low quality produce. Many working the fields devise means of increasing the productivity of the soil, such as using fertilizers to add more nutrients. To apply the necessary fertilizer, a farmer must know what nutrients are deficient and what their soils need. The smallholder farmers add fertilizers based on experience, what is available on the market or what other farmers

recommend.

Because of the lack of knowledge of the genetic makeup of the soil, blanket application of fertilizers can lead to wrong nutrients applied to the soil, under fertilization or overfertilization.

Muganga's team came up with ideas that could empower farmers to increase productivity and profitability by

understanding the soil data.

A hackathon is an event where participants, mainly computer programmers, come together to solve a problem or identify new opportunities through software programming. The May event brought together hundreds of young innovators from various universities to design digital tools that could help address critical challenges

within Uganda's agricultural sector. Other universities with teams competing against Muganga's represented Makerere University, Uganda Martyrs University Nkozi and Kyambogo University, among others.

“We came up with a simple testing kit with a data-driven advisory model that can test for the nutrients in the soil and advise the farmers on what kind

of crops to plant,” explained Muganga.

He elaborated that their solution also caters to monoculture farmers who grow a single crop year after year on the same land. He described how their soil-testing kit, which is AI-integrated, can provide farmers with clear guidance, in lay language, on the most effective methods to use to continue sustaining high productivity.

According to government statistics, in 2022, agriculture accounted for about 24.1% of Uganda's Gross Domestic Product and contributed 33% of the export earnings. About 70% of Uganda's working population is employed in the agriculture sector.

According to Uganda's statistics agency, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), between 2016 and 2020, there was an 8 percent increase in households participating in subsistence agriculture, with many more people switching to the sector during the pandemic as a result of job losses.

The country also has an aging farmer profile — 55 percent of the heads of the households that practice farming are over 40 years, while 20 percent are over the age of 60 years.

Hope for parents of children with special needs

By Kefa Senoga

Akut Suzan gave birth to a son in the midst of a 2018 hospital emergency that depleted staff in the maternity ward where she was in labor. Her son, Ajono Daniel, paid the price.

"He did not cry at all," Akut narrated during a seminar at Uganda Christian University (UCU) main campus.

"When I was discharged, he turned yellow and got jaundice. He got sepsis in the umbilical cord, and that part got paralyzed," she recalled, adding, "By the time we returned to hospital for review, I was told they could not reverse his situation."

Today, Akut, who works as a house-help for a living, mothers a child with cerebral palsy and other health issues. At age 5, Ajono uses a walker to move and cannot use

his hands.

On Feb. 16, Ajono and Akut of Makindye, a suburb of Kampala, were among participants in a seminar focused on children with special needs. The theme of the two-day seminar was "Unlocking the Potential Towards Inclusive and Equitable Education for Children with Special Educational Needs in Uganda."

Schools do not exist for her son, according to Akut. The few that agree to admit him require more fees with the justification that Ajono needs specialized care.

In addition, they ask Akut to hire a special caregiver for her son while at school. Akut and the boy's father try to be positive, finding hope in a seminar that reminds them they are not alone.

At the event dialogue, discussion centered on inclusive education, aiming to spark



Dr. Jeremy Waiswa (holding microphone), coordinator of a partnership between UCU and Promise International, addresses the audience at a seminar focused on children with special needs

potential actions or policy interventions for the betterment of children with special needs. The event also focused on fostering interaction with special needs children, their parents and teachers.

Two objectives were to gain insights into their challenges and to advocate support.

The engagement involved collaboration between the UCU

School of Social Sciences and Promise International, a USA-based not-for-profit organization dedicated to empowering and educating children with special needs and their families in Uganda. Dr. Jeremy Waiswa, the coordinator of the partnership between UCU and Promise International, said they fronted the partnership, so that UCU, given its strong foundation on Christian

principles, can make a difference in the lives of children with special needs.

Representatives from the government, academia, the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), among others, took part. Uganda's minister in charge of disability affairs, Hellen Grace Asamo, was among the

special guests. Sarah Bugoosi, the Commissioner for Special Needs in Uganda, urged parents to embrace and support their children with special needs, and not to listen to negative public opinion about their children.

As part of the seminar, the UCU School of Medicine students assisted Allan Galpin medical workers with a health care camp for children.

Farmers are so important to us

By Irene Best Nyapendi

It's not uncommon for farmers to come on the Uganda Christian University (UCU) main campus with their pest- and disease-affected crops. UCU's agriculture students examine the damaged produce to establish the different diseases and offer solutions.

This field day exercise, organized by UCU's Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, also offers a platform where students teach farmers about good management practices. The crops include Nakati (solanum Aethiopioum), collard greens, squash, sorghum grass, corn, grain amaranth, spinach and bulb onions.

Dr. Rosemary Bulyaba, Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, explained that working with farmers is a corporate social obligation and a reminder of the value of farming.

"If you ate today, it means a farmer grew crops, so farmers are so important to us," Bulyaba said, noting that agriculture is a practical field, and that students cannot learn everything in class.

In 2023, third-year students of Bachelor of Agricultural Science and Entrepreneurship participated in outreach activities in the gardens set up at the university's demonstration plot. At that

'I benefited'

Filda Acan, a small-scale farmer, was happy to discover zucchini, something she said she can grow in her compound.

"Today, I saw plants I had never seen in the market," she said.

"I was excited to learn about zucchini, and I'm surely going back to plant it."



outreach, 30 farmers from Bugujju came to learn how plant damage is identified.

In 2024, students again drew from classroom knowledge to diagnose diseased crops and make recommendations. Charity Rojo, a fourth-year student, was among the examiners.

"For fungal diseases, we looked for leaf spots with concentric rings, and for bacterial diseases, we looked for wet spots," Rojo explained.

For pests, she said they looked for holes

in the leaves, and if the stem was affected, they looked for boring on the stem. According to Rojo, fungal diseases are the most common because they can easily be spread by rain and wind.

Joseph Odongo, a farmer from Kazinga village in Mukono district, said he learned about the option for organic spray for onions, instead of chemicals.

"The students taught me how to make a spray for my onions by mixing ash, red pepper, onions and garlic, and allowing it to ferment," Odongo explained.

The students from the Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences in the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences encouraged fellow students and farmers to embrace a healthy lifestyle.

Kelly Senoga, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, emphasized that physical size alone doesn't determine one's state of health, explaining that both underweight and overweight individuals can face health challenges.

The students studying Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Technology also presented to the farmers value-added agricultural products, such as bread made from pumpkin. The bread contains 10% pumpkin and is high in vitamins A and C.



UCU students use charts to demonstrate potential symptoms of diseases in plants

By Kefa Senoga

As a son of an Anglican priest, Barnabas Tibaijuka was expected to lead a God-fearing life.

At home, he did. Away, he didn't.

Tibaijuka, a Uganda Christian University (UCU) Bachelor of Divinity alum and son of the Rev. Timoseo Wediime, admits his teenage behavior was often influenced by wayward peers.

He mastered the skill of living the double life well, turning from sinful deeds when giving his life to Jesus in 1994. Thus, he began his journey to the pulpit.

In the summer of 2023, he was consecrated and installed as the first bishop of West Ruwenzori Anglican Diocese in western Uganda.

Tibaijuka, a native of Bundibugyo district in western Uganda, did not have an easy climb. Rejection as a church lay reader propelled him to teaching. In 1998, he graduated with a certificate as a primary

Alum becomes first bishop of new Anglican diocese

2023

After nine years of full-time church ministry, Tibaijuka was elected in 2023 as the founding bishop of West Ruwenzori Diocese. At the time of his election, he was serving as parish priest at Buganikere Church. As the bishop, Tibaijuka focused on building the capacity of the clergy.

school teacher.

Four years later, he had risen through the ranks, becoming a caretaker headteacher at Kuka Primary School in western Uganda.



Barnabas Tibaijuka waves to Christians at his consecration as bishop. With him are other bishops, including the Most Rev. Stephen Kaziimba (right), the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Uganda.

In 2005, he got a diploma in education at the National Teachers College in Mubende, central Uganda, and taught while working on his divinity degree and thereafter even when being an ordained priest in 2011 and working on his master's degree.

His Masters of Education Leadership and Policy Studies is from Mountains of the Moon University in western Uganda.

At this point, he had to choose one of the two paths — ministry or teaching.

"As a priest and teacher, I realized I wouldn't be effective on either side, so I opted to leave teaching and concentrate on the church ministry," Tibaijuka said.

"I am also thinking of protecting our environment due to the fact that Bundibugyo is prone to landslides, which are largely influenced by environmental degradation," he said.

Tibaijuka and his wife, Alice, have seven children.

Dental outreach cultivates compassion for the less privileged

By Dorothy Tushemereirwe and Kefa Senoga

Tooth decay, gum disease and tumors are common problems for economically challenged men, women and children in areas located far away from dental facilities.

This awareness prompted the Uganda Christian University (UCU) School of Dentistry (SoD) to reach out to these populations. Two such service trips in 2024 involved residents of Koome Island, located on Lake Victoria near Entebbe and Kasiso Village in the central Uganda district of Luweero.

The service to Koome required traveling nearly three hours by boat to reach some of the 19,000 residents from the tribes of the Baganda, Banyankole, Bakiga, Acholi, Langi, the Iteso and Lugbara. In addition to dental students, travelers included representatives of the UCU Directorate of Research Partnerships and Innovations, the USA-based Uganda Partners NGO and Dr. Arabat Kasangaki, a dentist and lecturer at the SoD.

"Service learning is essential in our training," Dr. Kasangaki, a seasoned dental professional said. "Taking our students to remote areas like this one is of value to our students to help those who have been urban all their lives appreciate the need within our communities."

Dr. James Magara, dean of the SoD, says outreach to remote communities helps students cultivate compassion for the less privileged. This contributes to the school's aim to graduate competent and compassionate oral healthcare professionals. The SoD recently graduated its second cohort of dentists totaling 14 graduates since the dental program



UCU's Maria Kabogozza examines a child at the outreach in Kasiso village



began training dentists in 2018. School enrollment currently stands at 44.

Initially, the Koome dentistry team was to stay at Ngamba Island (renowned for its chimpanzee tourism), but the island was flooded, which meant sleeping overnight at Walindi Point, another island about 20 minutes away from the area where services were provided.

On Koome Island and with facilitation by the Uganda Wildlife Conservation and Education Centre, dental students saw 400 men, women and children with cavities, gum diseases and tumors for four days.

For ongoing wellness practices, toothpaste and toothbrushes, compliments of Henry-Schein Dental Supplies, were left behind.

As with many low-income populations, the number of Koome teenage mothers was high. One young woman arrived with her two children, seething with tooth pain and in need of fillings and extractions. Like many Koome Island residents, these had never seen a dentist.

A similar clinic was offered at Kasiso in partnership with the Christian Medical and Dental Association of the United States, Reach Unreached Needs (RUN)

Foundation and the Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO). Along with UCU dentistry students, specialists provided free dental services like fillings, teeth cleaning, restorations, extractions and surgeries.

"They brought in a child who had undergone tooth extraction at the main hospital in Kasana," said Joseph Lubowa Ddiba, the coordinator of Village Health Team (VHT) members. VHTs are lay people hired by the Ugandan government to empower people in their communities to take part in making decisions that affect their health.

Dr. Brian Rushaju, a dentist and the director of the RUN Foundation, said they found many cases of tooth decay among the people. Others had swellings and tumors, something he noted is an indication that many people in the community do not have access to dental services.

The nearest health facility that provides dental services to the Kasiso area is Kasana Hospital. Ddiba noted that to visit the health facility, a Kasiso resident needs sh30,000 (about \$8) for transport. And many of them cannot afford that.

Juliet Seruyange, a resident of Kasiso Village, said she received a comprehensive dental examination at the outreach. A thorough cleaning and washing of her teeth, she said, made a big difference between how she arrived for the camp and how she left.

Dr. David Ciesla, the coordinator of HVO and a clinical assistant professor at the University of Oklahoma (USA) College of Dentistry, said many of the people he attended to had cavity issues.

"What I see here is the need for providers and a combination of lack of health education," Ciesla said.

Business, social work students study in Netherlands

The experience that Julia Christy Ayinza Kizza had in 2023 couldn't have been farther from her comfort zone in terms of ethnicity, religion and outdoor temperature and landscape. In her first airplane ride from Africa, she dove in anyway.

"It's flat and cold," Julia recalled of her five-month international study experience at Hanze University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. In comparison, she added, "Uganda has hills" with warm-to-hot days.

Uganda's year-round, daytime temperatures average in the low 80s Fahrenheit (27 Celsius). In the northwestern European country of the Netherlands, winters can be snow covered, and summers

average in the low 60s (17 Celsius). The Netherlands, which is sometimes called Holland, is known as one of the most liberal countries in the world with 55% of its citizens declaring to be non-religious. In Uganda, over 80% of the population is Christian.

Julia, from UCU's School of Business, was the only African among French, Italian and Spanish students and Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese lecturers for her International Marketing and Management cohort.

According to Kasule Kibirige, head of undergraduate studies, School of Social Sciences, and one of the UCU faculty who guest lectured, the teaching and learning



Millie Mercy Namikka in tulip gardens in Appingedam, Netherlands

have been "immensely valuable for both students and faculty."

Martin Kabanda, acting dean, UCU School of Business, at the time Julia had her experience, concurred that the involvement "serves to increase student exposure to learning, culture, and life skills and increase their social network."

Millie Mercy Namikka of the School of Social Sciences shared

her experience was similar to Julia's. She talked about adjusting to different food and high costs. She learned to change her diet to sandwiches and pasta. With her friends, they pooled resources and started buying food in bulk, sharing costs.

Asimwe Ruth, also in social work, is an alum of UCU and the Hanze experience who found that her observation and modeling

Over 30 beneficiaries

Since 2017, UCU has offered four business and social work undergraduates annually the opportunity to study abroad at Hanze. More than 30 students, including Dutch counterparts who have come to UCU and completed fieldwork training in Ugandan agencies, have participated.

In the years since the partnership began, two faculty each from UCU and Hanze, have served annually as guest lecturers at the respective locations. Such collaborations are supported by UCU leadership and coordinated by the Research, Partnerships and Innovation Directorate.

how her mother engaged with people served her well in another country.

"It was my first time traveling alone and the trip was a process of self-discovery," said Ruth, who spent some time in the USA when her father worked on his PhD in the state of Pennsylvania.

Another UCU exchange student in social work, Elotu Mercy, adjusted by finding a

church and making friends who supported her social and spiritual life in a new country.

In the church, Elotu met three Nigerian ladies, one of whom had received a Bachelor of Laws degree from UCU. The three Nigerians, Elotu and another UCU student, Milly Mercy, formed a quintet that for the next five months took time off their studies to tour the Schengen region.

While the tuition, lodging and most food was provided, other experiences were not. Mercy got a housekeeping job, where she worked 16 hours a week. With these funds, she traveled to France and Belgium.

Racheal Drateru, also in social sciences, counted herself lucky to be chosen for the study program in the Netherlands. The emphasis on punctuality was challenging as she embraced opportunities for cross-cultural exploration.

"My advice for students is never take an opportunity for granted because it's a blessing since not everyone is able to attain it," she said.

"This enables one to travel across borders and network with others from other countries, including learning new things that are not in your country."

(Story by Patty Huston-Holm with contributions from Bena Nekesa, Kefa Senoga, Pauline Luba and Irene Best Nyapendi)

Students combine theory with practical business skills

By Kefa Senoga and Irene Best Nyapendi

From gaming technology to soap and coffee, students at Uganda Christian University (UCU) have been busy with marketable ideas in 2024.

Curriculum that includes theory while reinforcing the value and practice of entrepreneurship is most obvious in the School of Business. Students learn how to work for themselves and for others within six bachelor's degree programs in human resource management, procurement and logistics management, accounting and finance, tourism and hospitality management, economics and statistics and business administration.

A key entrepreneurial example is the new UCU Coffee Club. Led by Daniel Karibwije, a business lecturer, the club was piloted in the spring and offered more broadly at the start of summer. Opening the coffee services required collaboration with the Uganda Coffee Development Authority that regulates, promotes and oversees the coffee industry in Uganda.

The UCU Coffee Club is located at the main campus incubation club. The club sells the beverage and, if desired, offers instructions on how to brew coffee.



Lydia Natasha Muheire, a School of Business student, shows a latte she brewed.

"I don't like milk, but mixing it with coffee transforms it into my favorite drink," said Lydia Natasha Muheire, a student pursuing a Bachelor of Science

in Accounting and Finance. "That's how I fell in love with cappuccino and latte – they offer a delightful aroma and flavor combination." Uganda is among the

highest coffee exporters globally, and second in Africa.

Despite being one of the largest coffee producers in Africa, Uganda's coffee

industry remains largely untapped by its citizens, with only five percent of its coffee being consumed locally. Globally, the highest exporters of coffee are Brazil, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands.

Other examples in an early 2024 business expo evolved from the Faculty of Engineering Design and Technology.

"Using the knowledge and skills I acquired in class, I set up Shelby Gamers, a gaming technology company," said Miuro Joseph, studying for a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology.

"I showcase various gaming technologies, including virtual reality and gaming consoles, such as PlayStations, featuring popular games like Mortal Kombat and FIFA soccer."

Tumwesigwa Emma, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering, talked about a bar and liquid soap company he launched with a group of friends. The main ingredients are sunflower oil and honey.

"We make the products ourselves and then distribute them to supermarkets and retailers," he said. "We use social media platforms to reach different potential customers."



Alex Aturinda, a UCU School of Business alum, making a sprint with the ball during the tournament

Aturinda's love for rugby

By Kefa Senoga

While playing football at Ntare School in Mbarara, southwestern Uganda, Alex Aturinda, a Senior Four student, fractured his tibia. That painful below-the-knee fracture in 2014 forced him to retreat from sports.

However, the departure was short-lived as Aturinda, a Uganda Christian University (UCU) alum, switched to rugby. During his recovery from the tibia fracture, Aturinda's friends encouraged him to use his speed and strength in rugby.

While in Senior One and watching for the first time this game of players who kick, carry and pass an oval ball, he thought then that he might join them some day. As he headed to the rugby turf, he knew he was joining a sport as rough or more than football (often also called soccer by Americans).

A former player for the UCU rugby team, the UCU Shepherds, Aturinda joined UCU in 2017, eventually earning a Bachelor of Procurement and Logistics Management.

Aturinda's success in rugby was so dramatic that five years later, he earned a call up to the national team. In the same year, 2019, he joined the Stanbic Black

Pirates, one of the clubs in Uganda's rugby premier league. Two years after his call up to the national team, Aturinda got a fracture for the second time, this time on his jaw, during a rugby game.

For three months, he sat out of the games, as he recovered from the injury. He eventually made it back to the pitch and vowed to lead his country to winning at least a silverware during his playing time. He has now won two, with Uganda's Rugby Sevens. Both trophies came in 2024, with Aturinda playing a remarkable role in winning the latest, which came on the weekend of July 6-7, at the Labourdonnais Sports Grounds in Mauritius, an island nation in the Indian Ocean, during the Rugby Sevens Africa championship.

Uganda secured victory on July 7, the last day of the tournament, defeating South Africa 20-17.

In the final, Uganda gained an early advantage with tries from Alex Aturinda and Denis Etwau, pushing the score to 15-5 in Uganda's favor.

Aturinda noted that the two weekends of competition in Mauritius were not a walk in the park. Before travelling to the Africa Sevens competition,

2019

Aturinda says that it was in 2019, as he played for the UCU Shepherds during the inter-university competitions, that he was noticed by the management of the national rugby team.



the team competed in the Olympic Repechage tournament in Monaco on the weekend of June 22-23.

Unfortunately, they were unsuccessful in the Repechage. This tournament was the final chance for the Uganda Rugby Sevens team to qualify for the Olympic games that were held in Paris, France, from July 26 to August 11, 2024.

The huge loss in Monaco, Aturinda notes, gave the team great lessons, which they carried to Mauritius. He says to redeem their image at the competition in Mauritius, they had to do thorough research and study the playing styles of their would-be opponents.

He holds the championship they won in Mauritius dearly, as it marks his second gold medal with the team this year. The first came in March from the All-Africa Games in Ghana, where Uganda secured gold after an outstanding performance, with players like Aturinda, Desire Ayera, and Philip Wokorach (all UCU alumni) scoring multiple tries.

Winning the Africa Men's Sevens Championship opens the door for the Uganda Sevens team to compete in the Challenger Series again in 2025.

The Challenger Series serves

as a "second-tier" tournament, where teams that have not yet made it to the main World Rugby Sevens Series (the top tier) can compete and showcase their talent.

The top-performing teams in the Challenger Series have a chance to be promoted to the World Rugby Sevens Series, the premier international competition for rugby sevens.

According to Aturinda, their goal as a team is to compete in the World Rugby Sevens Series, the highest level of the rugby sevens.

Aturinda recalls that it was in 2019, as he played for the UCU Shepherds during the inter-university competitions, that he was noticed by the management of the national rugby team.

As a result, he was given an opportunity to join the Sevens setup and began training with the national team in January 2020. He says that rugby has enabled him to earn a living. However, to further support himself and his post-graduate education, he sells sportswear while pursuing a Master of Science in Procurement and Supply Chain Management at Kyambogo University.

"My goal is to make sure that even after rugby, I can live a healthy and quality life," Aturinda says.



UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

**Uganda Christian University
Mukono Hill, Bishop Tucker Road
P.O. Box 4**

Mukono, Uganda

For inquiries: +256 312350800/880

UCU CAMPUSES

Main Campus in Mukono (depicted in drone shot)

Kampala Campus

Arua Campus

UCU Bishop Barham University College, Kabale

UCU Mbale University College

UgandaPartners

Uganda Partners

P.O. Box 114

Sewickley, Pa. 15143

info@ugandapartners.org

For inquiries: 214-343-6422

<https://www.ugandapartners.org/>



<https://ucu.ac.ug/>



info@ucu.ac.ug



Uganda Christian University



@UCUniversity



Uganda Christian University



Uganda Christian University