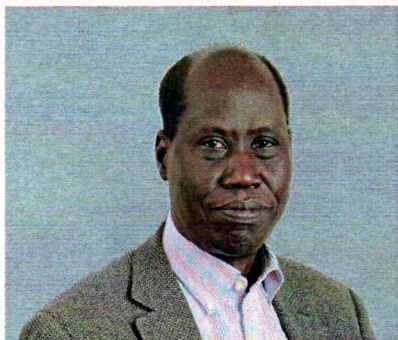




## Why Chance Favors the Prepared Mind?



Prof. John Akec

### A word from the Vice Chancellor

When the University of Juba announced a contingency Plan C which meant delivering a home-based learning that is supported wholly by arrays of digital technologies, some concerns were expressed by many of our stakeholders (students, parents, and government officials) about the feasibility of such a project in South Sudan's context. And I do understand their concerns.

And before I delve into addressing such concerns, I would like to explain something about different plans the University of Juba considered for teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic.

First, Plan A was the normal academic calendar that would have seen teaching beginning in May 2020. This plan was rendered useless under Covid-19 lockdown and closure of schools and universities in March 2020. The closure of schools and churches has not been lifted until the date of this writing. Towards the end of May, the University of Juba deliberated on Plans B, C, and D that described different teaching scenarios as follows:

Second, Plan B involves a hybrid system of learning in which students mostly from science-based schools and departments, all first year and all final year students will be taught in small classes that are spread out throughout the day with teaching contact hours reduced by 50%. Under this scenario, students would download lecture notes online or given printed lecture notes during the lecture (for those with no access to internet). However, majority of students from social sciences, arts, and humanities will entirely depend on material delivered over the internet, or printed material delivered through other means, for their home-based distance learning, until the situation changes.

Third, Plan C expressed the adoption of complete home-based/eLearning approach in which students will have no

direct face to face teaching as described earlier in the introduction of this article. Namely, students will use various digital technologies and online resources for their instruction and learning.

Fourth, Plan D stands for a scenario in which the University of Juba administration and faculty just "wait and see" what the government will decide. The Deans' Board and the Senate of the University, through their various meetings conducted in recent weeks, flatly rejected Plan D (also called "Do Nothing Scenario"); and proposed Plan B as the best of the two worlds (between doing it in the old conventional way, or doing nothing) in the face of Covid-19 Pandemic, while endorsing Plan C as the minimum scenario to adopt. That is, provide some learning if Plan B does not get government approval.

Plan B was applauded by most students, while Plan C got a mixed reaction. Some of our stakeholders approved Plan C as necessary in the face of continued closure of universities, while others condemned it as infeasible, or amounts to "damping down of the quality of university education." These stakeholders prefer that we wait until such time when it is possible to open all universities. Weak ICT infrastructure in the country and ICT illiteracy among students deem this project impossible, they claimed.

In addressing the above concerns, I presented several arguments.

First, I reminded them that some learning is better than no learning. In fact, studies have shown that long periods spent without engaging in some learning lead to deterioration in learner's academic and intellectual abilities (this concern was expressed by UNESCO leaders recently in the context of South Sudan).

Second, I urged that the University of Juba as well as all other South Sudanese universities to see the challenge of teaching in era of pandemic as an opportunity to close the digital divide and catch up with the rest of the world by harnessing the available digital learning technologies to the full potential. In one of my radio talk shows, I reminded listeners about the fact that the opportunity for digital connectivity in South Sudan today is much better than the US and Europe's in the late 1990s and early 2000s. I lived in Europe during that time and I can testify to that experience.

Third, that we will provide choices to suit conditions and needs of different students and staff for access to online learning and teaching resources. A special taskforce set up to study opportunities and available digital technologies for online and distance learning, as well as institutional ICT-readiness, has delivered its report. We are also talking to different technology providers to explore how we may improve our digital infrastructure.

Finally, come 31 August 2020, we will start teaching under plan B or C. This goes to support the mantra that "chance favors the prepared mind!"



## Joint Senate and Academic Staff Meeting

On Friday, 10 July 2020, the University convened a joint meeting of the senate and academic staff in the Al-Sammani Hall. The meeting considered a number of options for resumption of teaching and learning at the University considering that the COVID-19 is not going away soon.

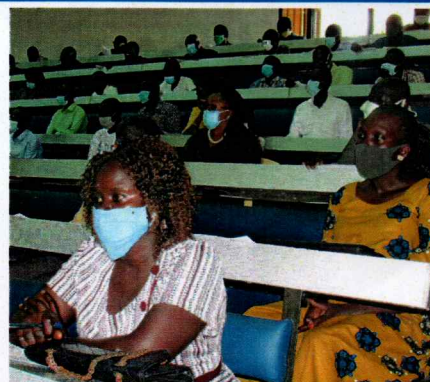
The meeting resolved that:

- While awaiting the decision of the government on easing COVID-19 lockdown measures, the University should start engaging students, using Distance Education Methods or Home-Based Learning, in the learning process. This decision is initially for the first semester of this academic year, 2020 - 2021. Adjustments would be made as and when necessary;

- All diploma students who had not sat for their examinations would have to take them in an open book format or as take-home exams. The exams start on 27 July 2020; and

- The new Academic Calendar 2020-2021, using Home-Based Learning, would start on 31 August 2020.

As we go to press, we received news that Plan B has been endorsed by the High-Level Taskforce on Covid-19, and we are awaiting formal communication from them.



Senate and Academic Staff meeting



Students collecting exam papers

## MoU between University of Juba and m-Gurush Company concluded

On Monday, 13 July 2020, Vice Chancellor Professor John Akec of the University of Juba and Mr Ambrose Mou Thiik Riiny of the m-Gurush company signed a MoU concerning collection of tuition fees from students. The arrangement will ease payment of tuition fees as students can use the m-Gurush electronic mobile money payment platform to pay amounts owed to the University.



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## Happy 9<sup>th</sup> Independence Commemoration

**S**outh Sudanese commemorated their 9<sup>th</sup> Independence on 9 July 2020. They emotionally recalled the sacrifices of their fallen compatriots, who paid the ultimate price for freedom, as well as the contributions of others to the liberation struggle. Among them are past and present students and staff of our University. The sacrifices of South Sudanese for freedom will inspire the present and future generations to serve our people with dedication, even during trying times such as at this moment when COVID-19 is ravaging our nation.



## Congratulations



**Dr. Rose Ajak Costa**

The new Dean of the School of Medicine

Congratulations to Dr Rose Ajak Costa on her appointment as Dean of School of Medicine. She is the first female to head this school. Dr Rose holds a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of Juba and Doctorate in Paediatrics and Child Health from University of Khartoum, and also previously served as Dean of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at University of Bahr el Ghazal, Consultant of Paediatrics and Child Health, and Project Coordinator at Cordaid.

We wish her success in the new role.

## New Schools Established

**Deans' Board Gives Go ahead to Establish New Schools and Appoint Interim Deans**

To widen access to quality higher education, the Deans' Board of the University agreed plans to establish the following schools by academic year 2021/2022:

- School of Medical Laboratory Sciences
- School of Pharmacy
- School of Petroleum and Minerals
- School of Public Health and Nursing
- School of Architecture, Land Management, Urban and Regional Planning

And subsequently the Vice Chancellor appointed the interim Deans for the forthcoming schools as follows:

- **Dr Joseph Badys**  
School of Medical Laboratory Sciences
- **Dr Moses Hassan Tiel**  
School of Pharmacy
- **Ms Flora Eyoha Severino Lado**  
School of Petroleum and Minerals
- **Dr Ajak Makor Dehel Deng**  
School of Public Health and Nursing

Congratulations to the interim Deans and wish them success in their new roles.

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## University of Juba Custom Campus Gate

The University constructed a new gate for its Custom Campus, which is close to the Freedom Square. The construction began on 18 March 2020 and ended on 3 July 2020 at a cost of 6,995,390 SSP or approximately 21,800 USD. The design and construction was done by the Directorate of Engineering, and the entire cost was covered by the University, which charges students fees so as to undertake development works of this kind. Recently, the University embarked on a number of infrastructural works to improve the learning environment as well as the aesthetic view of its campuses. The gate will ease movement of the vehicles and people.

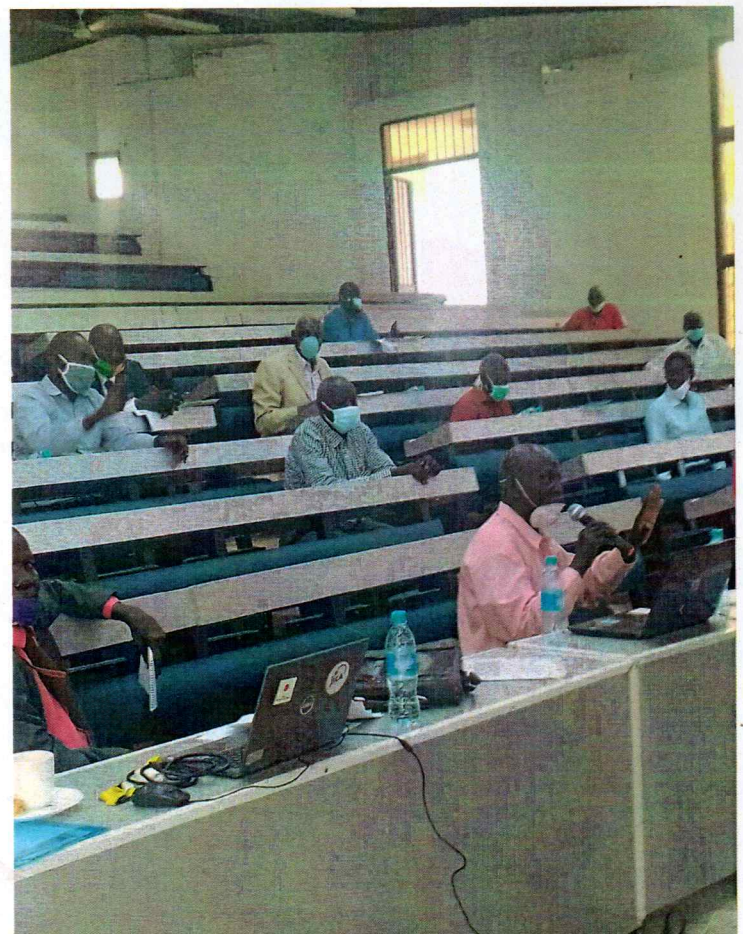


## School of Education Curriculum Validation Workshop

The NORHED-UJ Science Project (ETH-16/0029) and Curriculum Committee on Bachelor Degree in Primary Education Program at the School of Education held a curriculum validation workshop from 6 to 8 July 2020 in Al-Sammani Hall. The main objective of the workshop was to validate the curriculum in primary education, a program that the School of Education is planning to establish soon.

According to Kennedy Crispo Galla, the Project Coordinator, the Project provides support to quality education in primary and lower secondary schools in South Sudan and Ethiopia. He also stated that the Project had trained six teaching assistants to the level of master's degree (four for Math, one for Physics and one for Biology). All of them are now lecturers in the School of Education.

He further said that the project has currently enrolled eight master students at Bahir Dar University (BDU) in Ethiopia and two PhD students at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). The partners in this project are University of Juba, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, and Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia.



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