

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

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The theme of this year's graduation is "universities through Covid-19: strategies for recovering and surpassing pre-pandemic performance."

For most universities worldwide, and indeed for most businesses, Covid-19 was a very bad thing, but also at the same time a very good thing. It was a very bad thing because hundreds of thousands of people died, and many economies nose-dived. But it was also a very good thing because it forced upon humanity an enhanced appreciation of the powerful tools of the technologies of this 4th Industrial Revolution in which we live. These technologies include internet-of-things, mobile money, video-based communications like Zoom, social-media, cloud computing, learning platforms, and artificial intelligence.

Covid-19 lockdowns unleashed a massive disruption of our routines, methods, assumptions, and lives. In my opinion, this massive disruption has been particularly good for African universities because most of our universities were still stuck in pre-4th-Industrial Revolution systems and methodologies that served our grand-parents well but cannot really serve us well in a highly competitive knowledge-based global economy of winners and losers. In such a world the winners get richer, and losers get poorer. The winners grow more powerful, and losers grow more desperate.

Before the disruptions of Covid-19, our universities and our regulators did not value online teaching and learning, online assessments, online-virtual meetings, online tools, and online libraries. Learning meant sitting in a room watching someone talking and writing on a whiteboard. And for decades we continued to sit in rooms watching teachers talking and writing, as if one can learn by passively watching others talk and write.

Before the disruption of Covid-19, a library meant a room holding thousands of books. After the Covid-19 disruption, a library means access to the global internet that holds billions of books, articles, images, models, algorithms, simulations, and tools for teaching, learning, and building solutions.

Before the disruption of Covid-19, we assumed that students and teachers must be in the same room in order to learn. Now we know that they could be in different countries as they learn and design solutions to important problems. Before the Covid-19 disruption our students were limited to the few teachers on campus, now they have access to thousands of teachers who are willing to share their knowledge and skills through the creative commons of open educational resources. Before the disruption, a student was a student, and a teacher was a teacher. After the disruption, the student may also be a teacher to many thousands of other people worldwide even as she continues to be a student; and the teacher can be a student as he or she chooses to engage in lifelong learning and upskilling.

Before the Covid-19 disruption, most of our universities actively limited themselves to a tiny fraction of human knowledge, skills, and tools. After the Covid-19 disruption, our universities have opened themselves up to the entire stock of human knowledge, skills, and tools that constitute the 4th Industrial Revolution.

It is a cliché that major world events such as wars and pandemics act as inflection points for human innovation because humans are forced to find ways to survive. Covid-19 was a major inflection point for innovation in education. In order to "surpass pre-pandemic performance" our universities, including Cavendish University Uganda, must continue to fully embrace the new experiences of online teaching and

learning by making sure that all our classes are blended, and that our educational philosophies move away from memorization to active learning, passionate problem-solving, and agile innovation.

Thank you, and God Bless.