



STRATHMORE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

The Magazine for **ALUMNI** and friends of Strathmore University



Students taking a tour of the Students Centre building under construction

IN THIS ISSUE : Interview with Rosemary Kibui.

Alumni Testimonials
“ Meet Oscar Kimani”

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STRATHMORE ALUMNI LIAISON OFFICE

Keeping us Together

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Editor's note



Welcome to the first issue of the Alumni E-Newsletter for the year 2010. In this issue, we continue to update you on the developments in campus as well as share with you the experiences of other alumni as we bring you their profiles. We hope you like this new, quicker-to-read format. You will be able to read this e-newsletter in your e-mail and it will be posted in the alumni web site. You will also be able to access our past and future issues of e-newsletter. We are encouraging you to continue sending in your personal or professional news briefs and photos for publishing.

Please send them to: pkuria@strathmore.edu Please note that you can send them at any time throughout the year. In the meantime, I continue to value keeping in touch with our alumni for feedback, so feel free to make suggestions for future articles. It's our desire to make this communications tool a quick, fun read because we know our alumni lead busy lives.

I would like also to mention that we have accomplished much together in the last 5 years since the Alumni office was established and hopefully I have represented you well, and the updates I send to you do impact your lives in some way. I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you at the various alumni class reunions and other events the university has been holding not only here in Kenya but also in other alumni events held across the world.

I am always touched by how enthusiastic our alumni are in sharing their past experiences of studying at Strathmore University. I would also like to thank those of you that have volunteered to become Chapter leaders and Club representatives. Not to mention those also who have been responding to our Alumni Annual Fund that has been in existence for the last three years. I personally appreciate the time you continue to devote in promoting the work of the Alumni Office.

How rewarding for me to appreciate, first-hand, the influence Strathmore University has had in Kenya's corporate world by companies employing our professionals and the world as a whole. Clearly our alumni are found across the globe, in all echelons of society. It is my hope that I will continue to meet many more of you in different parts of the world throughout 2010 which, I feel confident will be another good year for all of us out there.

Good wishes to you all and May God Bless You!

Pauline Kuria

Farming is not for the faint-hearted

“Money doesn't come easily; it takes hard work, determination and a lot of patience to earn it,” says Rosemary Kibui, a Strathmore alumna entrepreneur who shared her story with Pauline Kuria.



Rosemary (left) explaining to Pauline how mushrooms grow.

A survey done by the Institute of Economic Affairs in 2003 indicated that only 4.7% of urban youth in Kenya wanted to be farmers, and only 9.5% of the youth between 21 and 25 years wanted to start their own businesses.

Either the trend has changed or Rosemary, a 2008 BBIT graduate is in a very select group of 21-25 year old Kenyans. 24 year old Rosemary is growing mushrooms at the foot of Ngong Hills in the outskirts of Nairobi.

Has she always been passionate about farming, the backbone of the country's economy as the cliché goes? Hers is an emphatic NO! “I grew up in Nyeri and my mother would drag all my siblings to the shamba to tend to potatoes and coffee,” she recalls.

But she hated farm work so much that she became allergic to it. “I used to grow lumps all over my skin. I was taken to a doctor who said it was an allergy. I think it was psychological. But it got me exempted from farm work and my siblings were jealous,” she said with a soft laugh.

So how did you end up farming?

“I wanted to pursue Pharmacy after high school. But I missed the cut-off mark for the

course by three points. I didn't have a plan B and when my dad asked me what else I wanted to do, I told him I didn't know. He pulled out two brochures from Strathmore University one for Bachelor of Commerce (BCOM) and one for BBIT (Bachelor of Business Information Technology) the

only degrees offered at Strathmore then and asked me to choose between the two. I went through the courses as outlined in the brochure and settled for BBIT. But by the end of second year, I knew IT was not for me,” said the alumna of Thika's Mary Hill Girls High School.

But she slogged on and graduated in 2008 with a first class. The idea of growing mushrooms came from a friend who had a brother who was in the business. “My partner and I were always complaining about our jobs. We were very disillusioned and wanted to move on. So this friend told us her brother was growing mushrooms and doing well. We went to see him and he explained to us the intricacies of the business and we were sold,” she explained.

How is the business getting on?

“It is tough. Mushroom growing is knowledge intensive. The learning curve has been long and steep. Unlike a job where you are actually paid as you learn the ropes, there is no such luxury in business. First, we had to contend with an unscrupulous character who offered to train us but misled us. This was a huge setback as we had to start learning all over again,” Rosemary related.

“We were a start up and there no bank willing to bet its money on us. Not even KWFT (Kenya Women Finance Trust). KWFT lends to women groups but not to a group of two. So we did not qualify,” she said.

“But we were heartened that Chora Bizna, the countrywide business planning competition organized by the Ministry of Youth ranked us second runners up countrywide. The fact that some judges sitting somewhere showed that our idea was worth something. This was uplifting. We were also awarded some cash which we ploughed into the business,” Rosemary enthused.

What keeps you going?

“The freedom of being my own boss! It is very demanding but also very rewarding when you are your own boss because you know what you invest is what you get. The sheer challenge of starting something from scratch and seeing it grow is also exhilarating. Even if this does not work, I will try something else. Failure is not an option,” she says almost sub-consciously revealing for a moment the steel beneath the velvet glove.

The photographer with me chides her that maybe she got the farming bug from her mum. She mulls over this for a moment and agrees that she is taking after a mum in very cunning ways. “My mum is a hustler. We tease her that the only business she hasn’t been in is funeral homes!” Rosemary says with a deep laugh.

The future

“We plan to start training sessions for farmers this year. There is a lot of unethical behavior in the business and we want to do something about it. We will start training people about mushroom growing. We have prepared two rooms for this,” she revealed.

Rosemary has become very proficient in the business. She explained that it takes about three months from the start to harvesting. Since she grows her mushrooms organically produced, she uses a minimum amount of insecticides. Instead, the rooms where they grow are sanitized. “They have to be very

clean. We keep flying insects out by using nets for example,” she said.

What was your experience like in Strathmore?

“Well, I made good friends. I also learnt the virtue of humility and patience. This was especially important when dealing with the guards. I learnt not to get angry very fast and for me that was a good thing which I think has helped me in my day to day life,”.

A word of advice to Strathmore graduates who aspire to be entrepreneurs. “Money doesn’t come easily. It’s through hard work, determination and of course focus. Patience is an important aspect in entrepreneurship because your hard work takes long to payoff.” She said.

Rosemary is a member of Strathmore Alumni Entrepreneurs Club (SAEC). SAEC which was launched on 27th February 2010. She says she was impressed by the number of SU graduates who showed up at the entrepreneurs’ reunion held in July 2009. She also says she would be happy to give talks on entrepreneurship to Strathmore students if invited to do so.

Last word

Rosemary is extremely grateful to her parents for believing in her and supporting her in her business. “My parents paid for my degree. The easy thing for them to do would be to ask me to look for a job. But they have been very supportive and have helped me establish the business. I am also pursuing a master’s degree in Finance at USIU and my parents are paying the fees for me,” she said.

Rosemary can be reached via email: rozekibui@googlemail.com

SU launches new school and will start seven new degree programmes

The University launched the School of Finance & Applied Economics (SFAE) on Thursday, 13th May. SFAE will start three programmes, the Faculty of Information Technology will start two new undergraduate programmes, and IHEDS (Institute of Humanities, Education, and Development Studies) will start two master's programmes.



SFAE will offer a Bachelor of Business Science (BBS) programme with three tracks that will lead to three degrees i.e. BBS in Actuarial Science, BBS in Finance, and BBS in Financial Economics.

1. BBS in Actuarial Science
2. BBS in Finance
3. BBS in Financial Economics

The BBS programme is designed to equip the graduates with academic, practical and interpersonal skills that can be applied in the financial modeling and risk analysis practice. Emphasis will be on the use of simulations, case studies, seminars and guest lecture methods of delivery to ensure the graduates get a real feel of the industry and benefit from this world-class programme.

Why Choose Strathmore's BBS?

Because it will provide a rigorous, in depth and all round programme unparalleled in the region. Strathmore's own strength and emphasis on quality and excellence; and the University's active partnership with industry and leading schools ensures the programme's content and delivery reflect industry needs.

New Degrees in FIT

The two new degrees to be offered by FIT

are the Bachelor of Science in Informatics (BSc.IF) and the Bachelor of Science in Telecommunications (BSc. TC). BSc.TC is designed to give graduates good computer and telecommunications skills which are important in the emerging knowledge economy defined by such technologies such as mobile telephony.

BSc.IF will start in response to employer demand for people who have not just technical skills but also understand their employer's organization and are able to work in a team environment.

New Master's programmes

IHEDS will offer two master's programmes. These are the Master's of Science in Education Management under the Centre of Education (CoE), and the Master's in Philosophy and Ethics (MAPE) under the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Ethics (CAPE).

Education Financing

In order to help manage education financing better, Strathmore has partnered with the Commercial Bank of Africa and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation to offer low-interest loans to students pursuing degrees and diplomas at the University.

Students pursuing degrees and diplomas are also eligible for loans from the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB).

Alumnus is now a business consultant in USA



John K'Otieno

John K'Otieno was in the pioneer undergraduate class. He graduated in 2005 and is now working as a business consultant in USA. Pauline Kuria of the Alumni Office interviewed him online.

Pauline: How did you get to know Strathmore and how and when did you get admitted here?

John: I first heard of Strathmore College (then) during my days at Starehe Boys' Centre. I joined Strathmore through the then Guinness Scholarship (EABL Foundation Scholarship) in July 2001.

Pauline: What do you see as the greatest strength of Strathmore and how has it helped you in life?

John: Strathmore's greatest strengths are professionalism, ethics and integrity. More important still is the University's value – based approach to education. These beliefs have defined my operating space and so far the results have been beyond my expectations.

Pauline: What is your job and what does it entail?

John: I serve as a Consultant with the McKinney Rogers, Americas' team. McKinney Rogers is a global business performance firm. My work entails partnering with clients to drive business performance and strategy execution. Essentially what we do as a team

is to drive clarity and alignment within the client team i.e. from the C – level (top management) to the frontline (front office).

Pauline: News got to us that McKinney Rogers won Her Majesty the Queen's Award and that your CEO Mr Damian McKinney mentioned that you are shining in their projects.

Tell us about that.

John: Really? I work on various projects across the globe but my main work is with Wal-Mart, the world's largest public corporation by revenue in 2008 according to the Fortune Global 500. It is also the largest majority private employer and the largest grocery retailer in the United States. I work in a team of very talented individuals who support the Wal-Mart project. Our work here ranges from business execution to leadership development.

Pauline: What are the challenges in your job?

John: As a business and strategy execution consultant I must consistently work with two pairs of eyes. I have to look at real business issues through the client's eye as well as looking through the eyes of an outsider. This is challenging but a lot of fun and I enjoy it.

Pauline: What drives you and what motivates you most especially in your current job?

John: I am driven by the urge to create positive transformation in all aspects of my life, society, personal and work.

Pauline: Do you intend to change your career? If yes, why?

John: Not in the medium term. In the long term I would like to teach at a leading business school and partly consult on business leadership and strategy. I am fascinated by the power of shared knowledge to improve the future.

Pauline: As you look in the future, where do you see Strathmore?

John: At our leavers' dinner in December 2004, I said that Strathmore has the potential of playing in the big league across the globe. I am happy that this is becoming a reality, at least via the global rankings. Very few African universities feature on these rankings and Strathmore is always among them. In the future, I see it appearing nearer the top. But we need to keep the growth momentum.

Pauline: What qualities would you like to see in Strathmore graduates?

John: One thing: espousing the values of

Strathmore.

Pauline: A word of advice to Strathmore students and alumni?

John: The opportunity that Strathmore has accorded us gives the power not only to make history but to write it. What a privilege!

Pauline: Would you be interested to meet other Strathmore alumni who are working in your location just like you and how would you contribute to that process of knowing them?

John: I am very interested.

SOA honours prisons officer and inmate

A new page was written in Kenya's and University's history on Friday, 7th May when Peter Kamau, an inmate on life sentence at Naivasha Maximum Security prison and Joseph Mutiria, a prison officer at Shimo-la-Tewa sat with other SOA (School of Accountancy) CPA and ACCA finalists to be awarded certificates for completing the course.



Jovial CPA finalists Peter Kamau (left), inmate on life sentence at Naivasha Maximum Security Prison with Joseph Mutiria, a prison officer after the ceremony

Mr Kamau and Mr Mutiria pursued the CPA (Certified Public Accountant) course under a special distance learning project the University set up under the Community Outreach Program (COP) and in conjunction with the Prison's Department. The program was initially funded by monies collected from pilgrims who attended the canonization of St Josemaria Escriva in Rome in 2002.

Afterwards some Strathmore alumni led by Mr and Mrs Kim Bhari started an endowment

fund to keep it going, but the demand for the program is greater than the money available. Strathmore is seeking support from individuals and organizations to further the education and welfare of people in Kenya's prisons.

Strathmore alumnus Mr Jimnah Mbaru, an investment banker was the Chief Guest at the function. Ms Caroline Kigen, the CEO of ICPAK (Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Kenya) also addressed the assembly. Over 400 students were awarded

certificates of completion.

Basing his remarks on the University's motto *Ut omnes unum sint* – that all may be one – Vice Chancellor Prof John Odhiambo said that unity was key to achieving economic development. He also said that the University is looking up to the graduates to support COP projects like the one Kamau had gone through.

Mrs Kigen said the finalists were joining a select group of about 18,000 Kenyans and

urged them to strive and become members of the organization to broaden their opportunities in the profession. She added that they were lucky to have pursued their studies at Strathmore since the University offers more than the minimum requirements.

Mr Mbaru urged the accountants to embrace a culture of openness to learning at all times and urged them to be relentless in whatever they venture so as not to have any regrets and bitterness later in life.

He pointed out that to achieve excellence they should hold close the positive attributes that have elevated them to where they currently are. Mbaru credited his determination and success to several people he looked up to as role models and mentors starting with his mother and told the young accountants to have someone they could emulate even in some small way.

Mr Godfrey Madigu, the Director School of Accountancy stressed the human element of life and learning. "You are called to answer the greatest call common to all of you... To

put the knowledge you attained from the study of accountancy for humanity's benefit and not just to enrich yourselves and others whose only objective is to amass wealth, he said.

"Real wealth is not growing profits only... increasing cash flows or maximization of shareholder value or a host of other financial indicators. Real wealth is achieved when we become more human. When we serve the common good while driving profits up, cutting costs or growing cash flows," he added. He also noted the expectations the country has of them. "Our recent graduate destination survey provides fresh insights into the expectation that others have of Strathmore. The University is not the buildings nor the administrators and teaching staff of this venerable institution. You, the successful candidates are not just mere ambassadors of this institution, you are the institution. If others speak well about Strathmore, it is you they are speaking about. It is you... because they have worked with you and interacted with you," he said.

Alumni Profiles and Testimonials

OSCAR KIMANI

Address: P. O. Box 25262 - 00100
Nairobi, Kenya

Organization: *Entrepreneur:* TransTech Investments Ltd & Unique Africa Group

Position: Founder & CEO

I believe I am a good example of the positive transformation that the Strathmore environment has on students. I Joined Strathmore in 2003 after my dreams of being a doctor, died with my KCSE results and I was sure that I won't join public University. However the next 3 years at Strathmore transformed me from a student without a clear path in life to an



entrepreneur at heart and a firm believer in youth entrepreneurship as a driver of economic and social growth.

Strathmore gave me opportunities that changed my life. I was the president of Strathmore University Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) Team which opened my eyes to see the opportunities that lie in

Course: CPA

Years taken: 2003- 2007

Alumni Registration Number: 1000

entrepreneurship. I got a chance to work at the American Embassy, Commercial section for Eastern Africa and later in the Finance Department of FedEx in Nairobi, which was my last place of employment.

Strathmore is endowed with people that assist students to obtain the hard and soft skills required for the market place. To name just a few; passionate lecturers, fellow students who give the required moral support for success, my mentor who taught me how to be professional in my affairs and my SIFE Patron who coached me on business communication skills that I greatly benefit from here in the market place.

Having gone into the world of entrepreneurship at the age of 20, I owe a lot of my success to the solid foundation I got in Strathmore.

I am currently running two businesses; TransTech Inv Ltd (www.transtech.co.ke) which is an E-business Solutions provider and Unique Africa Safaris (www.uniqueafricasafaris.com), a tours and travel company. I actively participate in training young people with an interest in

entrepreneurship through an organisation I founded; Forum for Economic & Entrepreneurship Development (FEED). I have successfully participated in various entrepreneurship forums in the country and opportunities are opening in the USA, University of Connecticut and Zimbabwe, from where I look forward to learn more and make an impact in the country.

I actively participate in the University Alumni affairs as the chair of the Strathmore Alumni Entrepreneurs Network (SAEN) coordinating committee and as a Business Advisory Member (BAB) for Strathmore SIFE Team. I am excited to see Strathmore become the leading university in Eastern Africa in Entrepreneurship and business leadership, a cause I am ready to sacrifice for.

I urge all the alumni out there to contact the alumni office and let's give back to the University in various ways, as a way of gratitude.

I am proud to be a Strathmore Alumni
God Bless Strathmore University!

ALUMNI ONLINE REGISTRATION

Strathmore Alumni Liaison Office wishes to congratulate all the Alumni who've taken an initiative to register on our website

So far, over 1,200 Strathmoreans from and across all professions are registered.

Online registration helps one to update his contact details from time to time. It also enables you to receive the Alumni

E-newsletter without doubt.

To register online please visit our website:

www.salo-kenya.org

or get in touch directly with us at

salo@strathmore.edu /

jkilonzo@strathmore.edu /

pkuria@strathmore.edu

REUNIONS & UPCOMING EVENTS

1. Strathmore Alumni Entrepreneurs Club Launch.

Date: *To be confirmed*

Venue : *Strathmore University Auditorium*

3. Kampala Reunion - For all Alumni in Uganda

Date: *To be confirmed*

3. Mombasa Reunion - For all Alumni in Mombasa

Date: *To be confirmed*



Alumni Elizabeth Njagi(right) and Lina Okondo during the recently held Alumni reunion in Meru town on Saturday June 5th 2010

4. Grand Reunion for All Degree Students

Date: *To be confirmed*

Venue : *Strathmore University Auditorium*

ADVERTISEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



Strathmore Alumni Liaison office wishes to invite Enterprising Alumni to advertise their businesses on the Alumni E-Newsletter that reaches more than 5,000 Alumni every month at competitive price rates..

Get in touch with us for more details!

SPORTS NEWS



Left: Former rugby player Joshua Gathumbi who passed away on May 18th 2010 upon alighting from a Matatu. He was laid to rest on May 26th. Rest in peace.

Right: Gladiators, the University men hockey team, plays with Egypt's Sharkia.ia.

STRATHMORE ALUMNI LIAISON OFFICE



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The SU Alumni E-Newsletter is a publication of
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*Inset: Some photos of the
University's phase III Buildings.*