



Conference Resolutions to Revive Varsities



Delegates at the 2nd Biennial Universities Funding Conference in Naivasha on February 26, 2025. The theme of the event was “Navigating the New Era of Higher Education Financing in Kenya.”

Universities have less than a year to implement major resolutions that will promote financial accountability, bolster partnerships and resolve pending bills.

Higher education stakeholders proposed eight short, medium and long-term resolutions for universities that will spur the adoption of technology, research and innovation to extricate the institutions from the doldrums.

The resolutions were made at the end of the two-day Second Biennial Universities Funding Conference in Naivasha on February 27 under the theme “Navigating the New Era of Higher Education Financing in Kenya.”

The Ministry of Education and Universities Fund were challenged to establish a debt resolution framework by March 31 to address outstanding student fees owed to public and

private universities by the Government.

During the summit, vice-chancellors said the government has not yet cleared the tuition fees for

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Experts Kick Off Reforms

A rallying call was made during the Second Biennial Universities Funding Conference for university leaders to enhance the uptake of artificial intelligence, research and innovation.

Held at Lake Naivasha Resort, the event drew stakeholders from the higher education sector to discuss the evolving financial landscape of higher education in Kenya and how to address the financial

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Leaders Encouraged to Promote National Values

The National Cohesion and Values Secretary Josiah Musili urged university leaders to embrace the principles of governance.

Mr Musili underscored that university leaders should design programmes that build trust and leadership among university communities.

Speaking during the Second Biennial Universities Funding Conference in Naivasha on February 27, Mr Musili emphasised that university leadership should strengthen governance by fostering transparency, accountability and inclusivity within the

institutions.

“Exchange programmes between universities will open debate and build trust among communities. You are required to review existing policies to ensure they promote national values,” he said.

He added that collaboration with civil society and the private sector enhances mentorship, leadership training and policy-driven initiatives.

He also pointed out that the higher learning institutions contribute to a well-governed and cohesive society through development of proactive policies that encourage open dialogue and values-based education.

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Ailing Sector Prompts Calls for More Investment in Research, Artificial Intelligence

gaps.

The conference called for urgent policy reforms on the Student-Centred Funding Model and introduce performance-based funding approaches.

Stakeholders were urged to strengthen accountability frameworks, embrace technology for cost optimisation, and implement research-driven financial strategies.

Moving forward, universities, policymakers

and financial institutions were urged to work together to secure the financial sustainability, global competitiveness and sufficient funding of the higher education sector.

The Universities Fund was encouraged to play a central role in coordinating and bringing together partners towards supporting mechanisms for financial sustainability as a follow up to the conference

Higher Education and Research Principal Secretary Dr Beatrice Inyangala emphasised the need for innovative funding strategies to address the growing financial strain in universities.

“I urge you to focus on equity and inclusion by discussing ways to ensure equitable access to higher education,” she said.

Additionally, higher learning institutions were encouraged to embrace continuous dialogue to address emerging challenges and opportunities in higher education financing.

The vice-chancellors were also urged to foster partnerships with industries and financial institutions to support entrepreneurial ventures and income-generating projects.



Delegates applaud during the first day of the Second Biennial Universities Funding Conference.

PICTORIAL

Second Biennial Universities Funding Conference



Universities Fund CEO Geoffrey Monari (left) welcomes Higher Education Principal Secretary Dr Betsie Inyangala during the Conference.



Ms Lydia Rono, Director, Corporate and Institutional Banking Division, Co-operative Bank, addresses participants during the opening ceremony of the 2nd Biennial Universities Funding Conference.



Universities Fund staff at the 2nd Biennial Universities Funding Conference.



Guests are registered during the 2nd Biennial Universities Funding Conference.



KUCCPS CEO Dr Mercy Wahome addresses participants during the Conference.



KCB Group General Manager David Nyamu addresses participants during this year's biennial conference.

Government Pledges to Fund 2024 KCSE Cohort



Higher Education Principal Secretary Dr Beatrice Inyangala presides over the opening of the 2nd Biennial Universities Funding Conference.

The National Government requires about Sh25.85 billion annually to fund the more than 246,000 students who attained the minimum university entry grade in the 2024 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination.

While opening the Second Biennial Universities Funding Conference, Higher Education Principal Secretary Dr Beatrice Inyangala indicated that the number of secondary school leavers who qualified for university education after scoring C+ and above had increased by 45,258 compared to 2023.

Dr Inyangala disclosed that the government will need about Sh100 billion to finance the students' entire four-year academic journey.

"I wish to inform all necessary stakeholders that the Government has set aside adequate resources to guarantee all eligible and deserving students a place in their courses of choice, and that they transition all the way to complete their programmes," she said during the Second Biennial Universities Funding Conference at Lake Naivasha Resort on February 26.

The conference was convened by Universities Fund to scrutinise sustainable innovative funding models, explore alternative revenue streams for universities, and identify how the institutions can leverage on public-private partnerships and technology to enhance their operations.

More than 100 vice-chancellors, entrepreneurs, MPs, donors, banks, and policymakers attended the two-day event held under the theme "Navigating the New Era of Higher Education Financing in Kenya."

Dr Inyangala challenged the stakeholders to explore alternative funding models that would help assuage the effects of dwindling Exchequer allocation to the institutions.

She allayed fears that though the 2024 cohort is yet to select courses and apply for placement to various academic programmes in universities and colleges, consultations are ongoing before opening of the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) portal.

"I, therefore, ask you to examine various funding options, and explore both their short-term and long-term effects on university finances, student access, and academic quality."

Universities Fund Chief Executive Officer Geoffrey Monari explained that in the 2025/2026 financial year, roughly 207,555 students are expected to apply for scholarships, requiring at least Sh17 billion.

Nevertheless, Mr Monari underscored that progress has been made to address the rising education cost and economic pressures.

"A framework has been designed to integrate climate action, renewable energy, and sustainability goals into our universities. In leveraging technology, universities have fully embraced online teaching and learning," he said.

He pointed out that universities are undertaking entrepreneurial initiatives, investing in AI, renewable energy, and climate action to bolster sustainability.

Mr Monari urged the vice-chancellors to enhance the adoption of technology to boost provision of quality education and explore additional income-generating avenues to bolster their finances.

Varsity Heads Outline Key Issues for Prioritisation

University leaders singled out transformative leadership, mentorship, increased funding and diversification of revenue streams as emerging issues that should be tapped into to bolster sustainability of higher learning institutions.

As public universities teeter, vice-chancellors underscored that it is only through proper leadership and enhanced funding of research that public universities will be sustainable.

National Working Committee on Review of University Education Funding Model Chairman Prof. Micheni Ntiba said peer teaching should be incentivised.

Prof. Ntiba said the capacity of universities to provide emerging academic programmes such as biotechnology to attract more students and funding should be explored.

“We have to develop the capacity of our universities in terms of leadership. It is important for those in universities to be good mentors to our students. There is need to develop mentorship; I think there is a gap,” Prof. Ntiba observed during the 2nd Biennial Universities Funding Conference in Naivasha on February 26.

University of Embu Vice-Chancellor Prof. Daniel Mugendi emphasised the need for adequate funding from the national government through the National Research Fund.

Prof. Mugendi also alluded that insufficient Exchequer funding has led to stalled projects, calling for increased budgetary allocation for research and establishment of commercialisation hubs.

Prof Mugendi, who is also the Chairman of the Vice-Chancellors’ Committee of Public Universities, said his university set up an endowment fund that is expected to thrive in the coming years.

Further, for universities to wean off donor dependency, he said endowment funds and hubs to commercialise research products should be prioritised.



From left: Universities Fund Board Chairman Prof. Karuti Kanyinga, National Working Committee on Review of University Education Funding Model Chairman Prof. Micheni Ntiba, Kabarak University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Henry Kiplangat, and University of Embu Vice-Chancellor Prof. Daniel Mugendi during a panel discussion at the conference.

“The government needs to take this issue seriously. We are supposed to allocate two percent of the budget to research but that is not happening,” he said.

Similarly, Kabarak University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Henry Kiplangat said private universities are working with partners to fund research and innovation.

Prof. Kiplangat said that since government allocation is dwindling, vice-chancellors must change their mindset to be financially sustainable.

He said the universities devised other measures of generating funds to support their expenditure.

Additionally, Prof. Kiplangat indicated that the institutions have introduced income-shared revenues with European institutions to carry out research, leverage on skills for securing grants and undertaking staff and student exchange programmes.

“The future funding model should take care of both private and public universities. It is important for all universities to be enabled to drive the change we need,” he said.

VCs Urged to Publish in High-Impact Journals

University leaders have been challenged to publish their research in high-impact journals to raise the profiles of their institutions and attract industries and donors.

Universities Fund Board Chairman Prof. Karuti Kanyinga called on vice-chancellors to empower young researchers to increase their research output, and publish their work in internationally-acclaimed publications to attract grants.

Prof. Kanyinga emphasised that research will help to build a strong human capital that will transform the socioeconomic state of the country.

“We must strengthen research productivity to make our universities globally competitive and innovation-driven. And we cannot do that if we do not insist on scholars publishing articles on a regular basis, attending international meetings, and becoming visible

in the spaces they have,” he remarked.

He spoke during the Second Biennial Universities Funding Conference at Lake Naivasha Resort on February 26.

Local and international stakeholders brainstormed on promoting financial sustainability through investment in research, innovation and partnerships.

The theme was “Navigating the New Era of Higher Education Financing in Kenya.”

The conference was organised by Universities Fund on the backdrop of low funding, increased demand for higher education and inadequate investment in research.

To manoeuvre the financial hurdles, Prof. Kanyinga asked vice-chancellors to ramp up entrepreneurial and income-generating initiatives.

Prof. Kanyinga noted that regardless of poor funding the onus is on universities to

creatively seek other revenue streams to strengthen the quality of education.

“Most of the commercial manufacturing sectors that hire consultants hire them from our universities as individuals. And the departments have never tapped into their potential to say ‘hire us as a department,’” he said.

And added: “We shall be able to provide good consultancy for this group if the scholars become invisible.”

Prof. Vincent Machuki, a member of the Presidential Council of Economic Advisers, said a policy should be put in place that makes it compulsory for all universities to pursue revenue-generating activities that are aligned to their core programmes.

Prof. Machuki challenged universities to develop and publicise their niche areas to attract partnerships from other stakeholders.



Universities Fund Board Chairman Prof. Karuti Kanyinga moderates a discussion at the 2nd Biennial Universities Funding Conference in Naivasha on February 26, 2025.

Digital Shake-Up: Target Date Set for 2025

Stakeholders in the higher education sector have settled on December 30 this year as the deadline for implementing top digital reforms.

Universities Fund Chief Executive Officer Geoffrey Monari said the move will enhance university financing, expenditure tracking and predictive financial analysis.

Speaking at the Second Biennial Universities Funding Conference on February 27 in Naivasha, Mr Monari said the interventions will be steered by universities, technology companies, research institutions and private sector.

Stakeholders placed a strong emphasis on digital transformation as a key driver of financial

sustainability in higher education.

With universities facing increasing financial pressures, experts highlighted the need to integrate technology-driven solutions to enhance efficiency, improve accountability, and optimise resource utilisation.

One of the central discussions at the summit revolved around the use of Artificial Intelligence and automation in university financial management.

The experts explained how AI-powered tools could help track institutional financial health, monitor spending, and predict funding shortfalls, thus ensuring universities allocate resources more effectively.

Central Bank of Kenya Pension Fund Chairman

Dominic Mwenda highlighted the benefits of new technology in catapulting universities to excellence.

“Use artificial intelligence and new technology to enable universities to keep up with what is happening and understand the opportunities available,” Prof. Mwenda said.

Experts further highlighted that by embracing AI-driven solutions, blockchain technology and digital banking systems, higher learning institutions will secure financial transactions and optimise cash flow management.



CyberGuard Africa CEO Bright Gameli gives a presentation on AI at the 2nd Biennial Universities Funding Conference.

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Plan to Transform Higher Education Identified

students placed in the institutions KUCCPS.

Kenya Association of Private Universities Vice-Chairman Henry Kiplangat disclosed that since the first cohort was placed in private institutions in 2016, the amount disbursed by the government has been declining over the years.

“We have pending bills since some of the KUCCPS-placed students have not yet graduated,” Prof. Kiplangat said.

In the short term, universities are required to forge and bolster linkages with other partners

to support research funding.

The resolution, which is scheduled for execution by July 30, will spur innovation and commercialisation of research through PPPs.

Also lined up for implementation by July 30 is the enhancement of audit mechanisms and commercialisation of university-owned assets to generate alternative revenue streams.

The strategy will mitigate financial profligacy, promote university financing, allow expenditure tracking, and provide predictive financial analysis.