



## How Financing University Education Promotes Kenya's Productivity & Growth

By Dr Edwin Wanyonyi,  
Ag. CEO, Universities Fund

**Every year, thousands of young Kenyans sit the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) Examination with one clear hope of earning a place at a university and a chance to build a better future.**

Over time, the number of students qualifying for university has steadily increased. For instance, while 62,581 candidates met the minimum university entry requirement of C+ and above in 2017, the number rose sharply to 270,715 candidates in 2025. For many families, these results represent years of sacrifice, expectation, and pride.

Yet for too many of the university qualifiers, attaining an entry grade to university sets them into a period of doom and gloom, as their family economic backgrounds are not able to support their fees and upkeep for the higher education studies.

This gap between qualification and enrollment is often viewed as an individual setback. In reality, it is far bigger than that. It is a national skills and productivity issue, one that quietly shapes the strength

of Kenya's workforce and the pace of its economic growth.

Kenya has made significant progress in ensuring that university placement is fair, transparent and supported through structured scholarship and student financing mechanisms.

However, the demand for scholarships has continued to outpace available financial resources, underscoring the need to further strengthen and expand education financing.

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Continuous improvements in scholarships through means testing instrument is therefore essential to transform university placement into genuine opportunity.



*Universities Fund Ag. CEO Dr Edwin Wanyonyi gives his remarks during a past meeting.*

The link between education financing and career outcomes is straightforward. When students cannot afford fees, many are unable to complete their studies.

Without graduation, meaningful entry into the workforce becomes far less likely. This is why scholarships and grants should not be viewed as charity.

They are tools for financing careers, helping students remain in university long enough to graduate, build skills, and transition into the workforce. In that sense, scholarships are not just about access; they are about outcomes.

Since the introduction of the Student-Centred Funding

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# UF Engages Parliament on BETA, Resource Utilisation



National Assembly Departmental Committee on Education Chairman Julius Melly (right) presides over a meeting with the State Department for Higher Education on February 16, 2026.

**The Universities Fund (UF) has highlighted the importance of sustainable financing for universities, monitoring the use of public funds and investing in data-driven planning for accountability.**

Speaking before the National Assembly Departmental Committee on Education on 19th February 2026, UF Ag. CEO Dr Edwin Wanyonyi said the Fund continues

to influence policy formulation and championing better use of resources.

Dr Wanyonyi had accompanied Higher Education Principal Secretary Dr Beatrice Inyangala to submit proposals for consideration in the 2026 Budget Policy Statement.

The meeting sustained deliberations on strategic budgetary priorities with a focus on aligning the sector with the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda and promoting efficiency in funding.

The UF technical team clarified issues raised by the Committee on funding gaps, expenditure prioritisation and mechanisms put in place to strengthen the financial resilience of public universities.

The discussions covered resource allocation for teaching and research and student support services.

Investing in adequate infrastructure and expanding access to equitable, quality and affordable higher education were also at the centre of the meeting. The UF underscored its fidelity to transparency and strategic investment in human capital for growth.

## Agency, Governors Explore Enhanced Collaboration

**With more students expected to join public universities, the Universities Fund is pursuing potential collaboration with regional governments to ensure quality and financial sustainability are not compromised.**

Being cognizant of the rising student enrolment in the institutions, the Fund intends on partnering with the Council of Governors to ensure that no deserving student misses out on education due to lack of finances. As such, UF Ag. CEO Dr Edwin Wanyonyi paid a courtesy call on

the Council, represented by Hon Kizito Wangalwa, Director of Committees and Programmes, on February 6, 2026.

The move aimed to explore avenues for collaboration between the Fund and the 47 county governments to support university students across the country.



Feb 6, 2026: Universities Fund Ag. CEO Dr Edwin Wanyonyi (right) pays a courtesy call on Hon Kizito Wangalwa, a representative of the Council of Governors.

The meeting explored areas of partnership that would enhance access to higher education financing and

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# How Financing Varsity Education Promotes Growth

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Model (SCFM) in 2023, the Universities Fund has funded 437,648 students with scholarships, enabling them to stay in school and complete their studies.

In addition, over KSh 33.7 billion was disbursed in FY2024/2025 to support students in public universities under the student-centred funding model and Differentiated Unit Cost (DUC).

This is a clear testament that higher education financing is no longer a marginal social intervention, but a central cog of how the country builds skills and prepares its workforce. Who receives support today shapes who will lead, innovate, and create value tomorrow.

Under the SCFM, resources now follow the student, guided by financial need. Early indications suggest that the model has brought about a shift on improving

how the system functions. Better predictability and funding discipline have strengthened financial management across the university sector.

Notably, universities' pending bills have declined from KSh 75.35 billion in 2023 to KSh 72.25 billion in 2024.

**Over KSh33.7bn was disbursed in FY 2024/25 to support students in public universities under the student-centred funding model and Differentiated Unit Cost (DUC) model.**

While challenges remain, this trend shows that better-designed funding systems can improve both access and financial sustainability. Our expectation is that, over time, we will see more and more students complete

university. More graduates will join the workforce, earn income, pay taxes, and contribute skills to the economy.

Higher education financing, therefore, is not simply about getting students into classrooms; it is part of the country's economic foundation.

To sustain access to university education, donors, foundations, employers and philanthropists have a role to play in supporting students and strengthening the talent pipeline. Kenya's development ambitions rest on the skills, creativity, and productivity of its people.

When placement is matched with adequate financing and sustained through to completion, qualification becomes an opportunity. Public investment then delivers returns in the form of productive workforce.



*Kenyatta University delegates, led by Ag. Vice-Chancellor Prof John Okumu (fourth right), pay a courtesy call on UF Ag. CEO Dr Edwin Wanyonyi (far right) at UF offices on February 2, 2025.*

# On-ground Support, Awareness Creation in Varsities Crucial to Improving Student Scholarship Experience



Students and other stakeholders visit the UF exhibition stand during the National Career Conference at KICC in January 2026.

**The Universities Fund (UF) provided on-campus and in-person assistance to university students to boost their knowledge about government scholarships and how to access them.**

The Fund mounted help desks in different public universities to respond to scholarship queries, application issues and any other funding concerns.

The visits are part of UF's efforts to enhance open engagement with university leaders and students, and at the same time cross-check student data to ensure accuracy and transparency during allocation.

The publicity initiative will allow the institution to be proactive in its interaction with university management and students.

Further, timely support to students and addressing stakeholders' concerns about

scholarships, bursaries, and other financial assistance will be enhanced.

Visits were made to Kirinyaga University, Karatina University, Kisii University, Tharaka University, Rongo University, Kabianga University, and Maseno University. Others were Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.

In Karatina, for instance, the drive took place from 24-27 February 2026 and 10-13 February 2026 in Kisii University.

The initiative enables UF to improve customer service and data systems. The initiatives come in the wake of the just-concluded KUCCPS' career expo held from January 27th-29th, 2026 in Nairobi.

During the expo, UF Ag. CEO Dr Edwin Wanyonyi endorsed scholarships as a panacea for high learning costs, thereby ensuring students complete their studies.



Students (left) learn about government scholarship during a career expo in January 2026.

## Agency, Governors Explore Avenues for Collaboration

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improve coordination at the county level.

A key focus of the discussions was the need to intensify awareness of available scholarships and financial support mechanisms for all students.

They acknowledged that while opportunities exist, many deserving students, especially those from marginalised and vulnerable

backgrounds may not benefit due to various reasons, among them lack of information.

They agreed on the value of enhancing data sharing and coordination and organising joint sensitisation and career forums.

The engagement will promote access to financing options and more career pathways for students.