



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**REMARKS MADE BY PROF. PETER M. F. MBITHI, THE
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (A&F) DURING THE TRAINING
OF UNIVERSITY DRIVERS HELD ON 29TH – 30TH
SEPTEMBER 2007 AT CENTRAL CATERING UNIT**

**It gives me pleasure once again to participate and be a
member of this team as we embark on the training of our**

second group of drivers, this time constituting 60 drivers from all units of the University.

As you are aware, the first session of drivers training, targeting another 60 drivers was conducted on 1st and 2nd June 2007. It is on account of the critical service offered by drivers in the University of Nairobi that we are not able to train all of them at once as this would lead to our operations getting paralyzed. Indeed, it is for the same reason that the trainings are scheduled to be held on weekends when there is minimal interference of operations.

The Transport and Garage department of the University plays a key role in the operations of the university. Management recognizes this and that is why in the last

few years, the University has embarked on a fleet modernization programme designed to ensure that our customers in transport are ferried in modern cars and buses. Within the University budget, transport operations are allocated a considerable proportion e.g. in 2007/2008, the central transport vote is allocated Kshs.18 million for transport operating expenses. This is over and above the allocation of Kshs.21.8million allocated to the central departments to cater for their transport and traveling expenses, with the colleges being allocated Kshs.18.2 under this item.

But even with the above budgetary allocations, the University continues to experience financial constraints in its operations. Consequently, the University has put in place certain cost cutting measures in all departments,

including transport, to reduce on costs. Some of the measures in place in the transport department, (and which other presenters will be able to elaborate on), include use of official transport only when absolutely necessary and when it is in furtherance to our core business, and pooling of transport for those going to the same direction or venue. We have currently stopped offering our buses (meant for students academic and inter-campus trips) to ferry our relatives for funerals – especially when such is not provided for in the Terms of Service.

The fuel card introduced last year, by which drivers fuel at designated petrol stations without having to pay cash, has had significant savings in our fuel consumption accounts. Not only does it discourage cheating among drivers, it also saves time and paper previously used by our staff to

process fuel advances. And of course the contracted company has given some token discount in the price of fuel per litre.

But one thing that must be emphasized is that cost cutting and other austerity measures are not meant to negatively impact on service delivery, by leading to slower or less efficient delivery. On the other hand, it is supposed to ensure that we either achieve more with the same (funds), or we achieve the same with less (funds). It is my earnest belief that our drivers, once properly sensitized on the cost cutting measures, will support this endeavor. For ultimately, any funds saved are used for the good of the University, including e.g. purchase of drivers' uniform. Incidentally, provision of uniforms to drivers is a statutory requirement under the relevant

clause of the CBA, and the University has a duty to adhere.

It therefore becomes increasingly important that when the University spends so much in its transport department, it also ensures that the staff therein are well trained to be able to properly take care of the vehicles and other utilities.

CUSTOMER CARE AMONGST DRIVERS

One key area that I wish to emphasize today is the role of drivers as front office operators in the University. You are aware that even before the ongoing deliberate branding of the University, all our buses and big vehicles were painted the official University blue colour, together with the name.

Whenever such a vehicle is driven, it loudly proclaims its ownership. You can therefore imagine the impression created in the public when our buses are recklessly driven, are dirty, or keep breaking down.

As the University's front office staff in this area, it is the duty of the drivers to ensure that they keep time, they use proper and polite language, and their vehicles are clean. You are aware that for many years, some of our drivers were arrogant, rude to other staff and non-apologetic even when late. Indeed, they behaved like they owned the vehicles. Fortunately this trend has gone down considerably.

According to the customer and employee satisfaction survey conducted by Steadman group for the University in

early 2007, there is still ground to be covered especially in areas of courtesy, fairness and transparency in service delivery. E.g. the University scored 78% in courtesy while serving clients (a shortfall of 22%), and 83% in teamwork (a shortfall on 17%). We need to ensure we play our rightful role in improving in the noted areas. On its part, the University is opening up more channels of communication and ensuring key management decisions are communicated to the staff down the line. Feedback from staff and all stakeholders is encouraged, including use of the suggestion boxes in various campuses.

Some of the principles of service delivery that the University has adopted and included in the Service Delivery Charter are:

- **To serve our clients with dignity courtesy and respect.**
- **To uphold high standards of service.**
- **To provide services with diligence and integrity at all times**
- **To uphold transparency and accountability at all times**
- **To espouse the principles of natural justice at all times.**
- **Discharge our duties with enthusiasm and total commitment.**
- **Perform our duties professionally and ethically.**

I am sure that if all of us adopt the above principles, there will be a notable difference in service delivery in the transport department.

As you can observe, the above principles hinge on public relations and accountability. Public relations, which is about those efforts that are put in place to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an institution and its publics, is every one's responsibility.

But public relations starts at a personal level. Even among yourselves, you know those with good individual public relations. Simple things like saying 'please', 'thank you' and 'am sorry' go along way in assuaging even where service may not have been up to expectations. The language we use, our tone of voice, even body language reveal a lot about our inclination at any one time.

But as staff of a big institution, your personal manner of presentation is critical. You have been supplied with Uniforms. Ensure you wear them and keep them tidy. A driver who is tidy, who keeps time, who drives a clean vehicle, who is polite to the passengers and who follows all regulations – those of the employer and those of the government – is our model driver. With the right attitude, this is achievable overnight.

On its part, the University has a responsibility to ensure that our drivers are adequately catered for, promptly remunerated and generally properly facilitated for them to deliver to the expected standards of service. This training workshop is one such undertaking by the University, to equip you with the requisite tools.

As you will note from the programme, among the topics to be covered are the Traffic Act, Road Safety and Breakdown tools and equipment. This should ensure that our drivers are conversant with the requisite government regulations on road use and should adhere to road safety guidelines. The issue of government vehicles check Unit rules, travel documents (for driver and for vehicle), courtesy on the road and accident reporting procedures (to University authorities and to the police) will also be addressed.

Fuel card use, which was initially misinterpreted by many drivers, will be revisited together with procurement rules. The final sessions will be on First Aid, which should not necessarily be seen in the context of an accident situations, but a phenomenon for every work place.

It is my sincere belief that all of us will leave this training having benefited in such a manner that our productivity in our workplaces will improve. We all have a duty to ensure that our working environment continues to improve, through which service delivery should also be seen to improve. We owe this to our clients, customers and stakeholders.

Finally I take this opportunity to wish you fruitful deliberations and productive training.

Thank you very much.