

NJALA UNIVERSITY

A PRESENTATION AT APLU ANNUAL MEETING

**US UNIVERSITIES AND AGRICULTURAL
HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA**

BY

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WHERE IS NJALA UNIVERSITY?



BACKGROUND TO NJALA UNIVERSITY

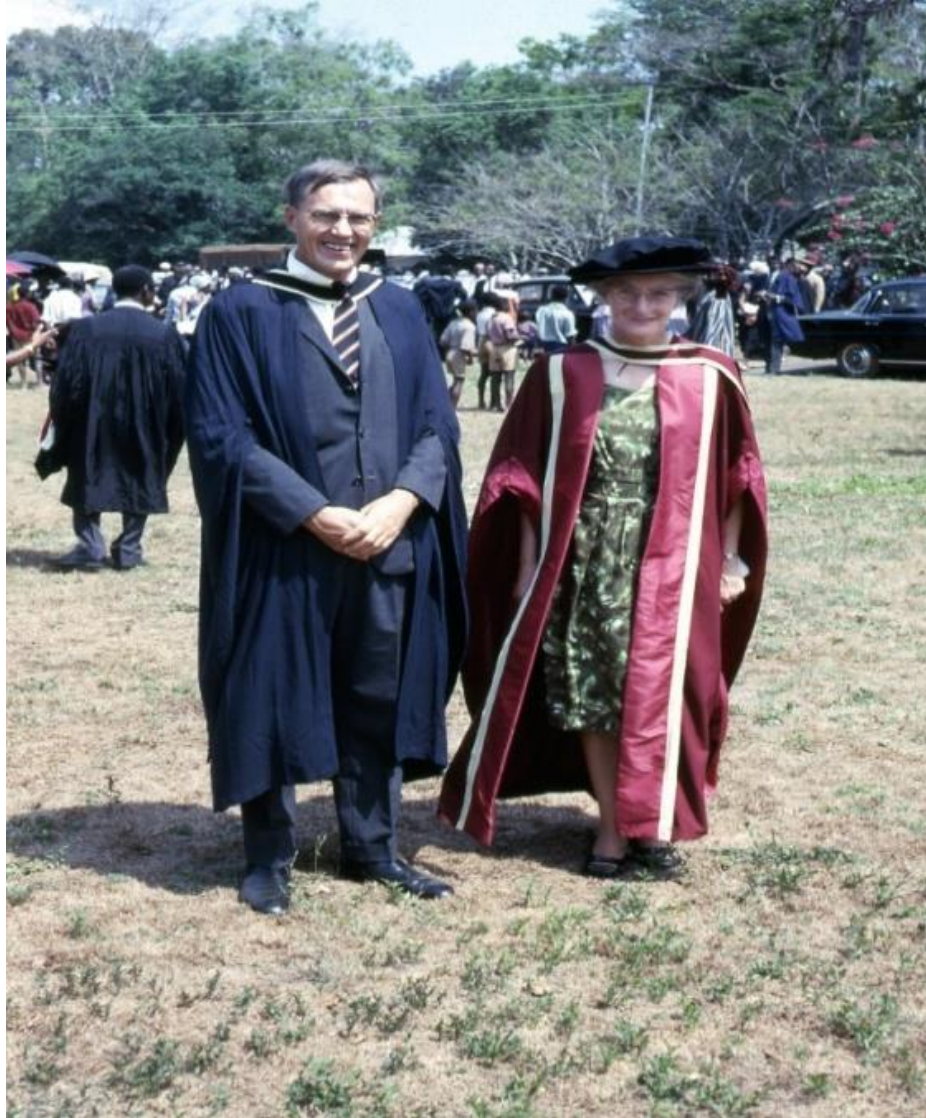
→ Establishment and recent history

1910: Njala Agricultural Experimental Station was established to conduct studies in tropical crops, piggery, plant and animal diseases and pests.

1939: The experimental station was transformed to Njala Training College.

1964: Njala Training College became Njala University College through an Act of Parliament, as an autonomous institution.

Some highlights from Njala University College in 1964/65



BACKGROUND TO NJALA UNIVERSITY

→ Establishment and recent history

1967: Njala University College (NUC) became a constituent college of the University of Sierra Leone, through another Act of Parliament.

1996-2005: NUC was displaced following the destruction of its campus at Njala and operated as a displaced college for over a decade during the 10-year rebel war)

2005: Njala University was established as an Autonomous university with Njala Campus (in Njala and Freetown) and Bo Campus (in Bo).

2009: Njala University finally relocates to Bo and Njala Campuses.

National Mandate:

Teaching, Research & Community Service

Vision:

A leading centre of learning, scholarship and community service with unique capacity to make significant and sustained contribution to realizing the overall socioeconomic aims and aspirations of Sierra Leone and the world at large.

Mission:

To establish a world class centre of excellence in Higher Education committed to advancing intellectual and human capacity resources through teaching and learning, research and creative thinking, their transmission and application and to fostering the advancement of learning in Sierra Leone and the world at large.

Schools:

- Agriculture
- Technology
- Natural Resources Management
- Environmental Sciences
- Education
- Social Sciences
- Community Health Sciences
- Postgraduate Studies

Student Roll:

About **10,000** students (all categories)

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY

- Continuously aligning programmes and service delivery system to address the emerging needs of the country;
- Engage the public and private sector institutions for increased relevance;
- Strengthening institutional capacity (staff, facilities, systems, etc.) through national and international partnerships;

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY (CONT)

- Mainstreaming ICT in University operations to leapfrog over traditional challenges higher educational development; and
- Pursuing funding opportunities for critical infrastructural development and the intensification of teaching and Research Performance

CHALLENGES FACING AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

While a good number of universities in Africa can be rated among some of the best universities in the United States of America, many of them face many challenges. Among these challenges are.

- Inadequate funding/financial resources: Most of these universities are public institutions depending mainly if not solely on government.

- Inadequate Infrastructure in a good number of the African Universities
- Inadequate library facilities
- Poor research/laboratory facilities
- Absence of or poor funding for research
- Inadequate academic staff both in number and quality
- ICT facilities are inadequate

- High staff turn-over rate due to unsatisfactory conditions of service
- Poor linkages with the Private and public sector
- Teaching programmes are still academic with little consideration for training for the work place
- Weak outreach programmes for youths and communities

NJALA UNIVERSITY AREAS OF NEED

- **Poor physical infrastructure and other facilities** while the demand for university education is expanding at an unprecedented rate;
- Existing **curricula are mostly knowledge focused**, thus facilities for effective skills development are still very limited or non-existent;

AREAS OF URGENT NEED

- **Facilities:**

- Limited or no access to essential training equipment and facilities required for practical training in most programmes.
- Limited supply of basic utilities; water, electricity and internet connectivity.

AREAS OF URGENT NEED

- **Human resources:**
 - Staff profile needs upgrading through higher degrees and/ further exposure to modern and contemporary skills and practices.
- **Operational costs:**
 - Important practical training activities and critical field experiences are frequently being challenged by budgetary constraints.

How Can US universities help

➤ **Forming Partnerships with African Universities using various models.**

This can be operationalized in the form of:

- a) Preparation of Joint research projects with African universities for funding by appropriate funding agencies and US government
- b) Staff training and development through:
- c) Joint supervision of post graduate thesis of African university young
- d) staff
- e) Staff and students exchange for sharing of experiences
- f) Training of young staff at Ph.D. level
- g) Helping African Universities to prepare bankable proposals for infrastructural and other developmental needs for submission to international funding bodies

SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FOR NJALA

- **LIMITED ACCESS to library resources and learning aids**
 - Problem of "closed access". We cannot afford the fees for free access to JSTOR and proprietary journals
- **LIMITED ACCESS to laboratory facilities for teaching and research**
 - A major challenge to practical training
- **LIMITED ACCESS to internet connectivity and ICT resources.**
 - broad band internet is being promoted by government but the actual sites and times where and when access to the internet is available are currently rather limited.
 - Limited online research resources by staff and students
 - Challenge routine operations, from time to time.

Recent developments and emerging opportunities

Commercial oil palm nursery supplying improved seedlings across the country while providing hands on training



Recent developments and emerging opportunities

Laboratory facilities in Animal Science:

- Nutrition
- Disease diagnosis
- Breeding and reproduction lab
- Bull stud



- **Animal Production Division – Imported Chicken/Swine**
- **Cattle ranch**
- **Dual purpose (intensive small ruminant and cattle unit)**
- **Local chicken production unit**



UIUC-Njala Partnership

- The UIUC is our most important and most trusted international partner;
- Our relationship goes back to 1964 when NUC was founded and UIUC implemented a USAID-funded effort to construct and train at the newly established institution;
- The partnership was reactivated about four years ago. Several activities have been implemented or are on-going since. Some of which are given below

UIUC-Njala Partnership

- Students and faculty from both universities have participated in various exchanges and research projects;
- Currently, UIUC and NU cooperate actively in research, teaching, and outreach/service domain, e.g :
 - holding of annual workshop;
 - Collaborating in the implementation of the INGENAES Project in Sierra Leone; Testing of appropriate technologies developed at UIUC

UIUC-Njala Partnership

Building ICT capacity, in particular, broadband connectivity and establishing ICT facilities for staff and students' use;

UIUC faculty members teach online courses that include NU students; and

Building capacity in academic libraries and e-resources

LOOKING AHEAD

1. WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE THROUGH A DFID FUNDED PROJECT:

Assuring Quality Higher Education in Sierra Leone

<https://www.spheir.org.uk/partnership-profiles/assuring-quality-higher-education-sierra-leone>

LOOKING AHEAD

2. STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT FOR STRONGER RESEARCH COLLABORATION SYSTEMS

General Approach

1. Building on current foundations to scale out the existing gains with NU for the rest of Sierra Leone.
2. Strengthen existing MoU (recently reaffirmed) to upgrade our mutual expectations.

CONCLUSIONS

1. African universities are constrained in their effort to produce quality graduates to meet the human resources needed for our development
2. Forging partnerships with US universities in strategic areas could help to bridge the gap
3. Such partnerships could be beneficial to both sides

**THANK YOU
VERY MUCH**