

INTERVIEW WITH ICT DIRECTOR-Dr. IBRAHIM OTIENO

Dr. Ibrahim Otieno is the director ICT. He has served in this capacity from May 2012 up to date. The Director took some time to talk to us on work, family and future aspirations.

How would you describe Dr. Ibrahim Otieno?

I consider myself to be a loyal worker, dedicated, committed and a self-motivated person. I am also highly skilled with vast experience in Management of ICT.

Your education background is in IT from Undergraduate to PhD, why this field?

It's good to specialize and master a certain field and I also have a passion for IT. This is largely the reason why I chose to stick to IT. Back in high school this field was still new to many people and I was lucky to be among the first cohort to join the University to pursue a degree in IT. My degree choices then were in Medicine, Pharmacy and Computer Science. I always wanted to be a doctor but I ended up in the IT field which I enjoy.

What inspires you?

I am self-motivated and a strong believer in God from whom I derive my strength and inspiration. I also believe success must first come from within before it spreads out.

What achievements/contributions are most proud of?

I was involved in the design, development and implementation of the University Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) and migrated the payroll system from COBOL to an Oracle relational database platform. I also developed the tool for sending pay slips online through email. The budgetary system that used at the budgetary section in main campus and in Colleges was also my brainchild and has been successfully used to control expenditure over the years. I was also involved in the development and implementation of the Website Marshal Plan which made the University to be ranked position 6 in Africa and 697 in the world. The best ever the University has achieved. The ICT Centre was also ranked position one among the Units in Central Administration in Performance Contracting for two consecutive financial years - 2011/2012 and 2012/2013.

What was the biggest challenge you faced?

User resistance is the biggest challenge we faced during systems implementation

What did you do to overcome this challenge?

Overcoming this challenge required a lot of patience, perseverance and also learning to manage people's fears, their desires and aspirations. Change management, training and involvement of the end user has also helped us a lot in overcoming this challenge.

How was ICT department like before and now?

The ICT Centre was started in the year 2002 as a result of a split of the Institute of Computer Science (ICS) into two sections with one focusing on academic issues (SCI) and the other on IT service delivery (ICT Centre). Initially the unit had slightly just over 40 employees. Back then there were few systems and a smaller IT infrastructure to be supported. These have grown over the years. We now have over 140 members of staff with the merger of the ICT Centre and the former Telephone section.

Is there are particular moment or memory that stands out for you?

My appointment as the Director of the ICT Centre came as a big surprise to me and I still remember it to-date. The job was challenging initially, but through God's grace I have managed so far and when I look back, I don't regret for the achievements I made so far.

How was the journey leading to your appointment to this critical unit at the University?

I have been the Director, ICT since 2012 to date. Previously I was the Deputy Director, MIS for over 5 years and was also Project Leader for over 7 years. I joined the University in the year 2000 as a Senior Analyst/Programmer and rose through the ranks. It surely has been a long journey.

What next as you come to completion of your directorship term?

I thank God that I earned my PhD while still working at the Centre and I believe this has opened up more opportunities for me to venture into. My passion is now in teaching and mentorship.

What advice do you have for the ICT staff: professionally and general life skills.

I would encourage people especially staff in ICT Centre to continue developing their careers and pursue academic lines that are relevant to their field, network with people and gain knowledge and continually adapt to this ever changing field. IT is a very dynamic field and it is important to be open-minded and also learn to adapt or else risk being obsolete in the field. IT staff should also be willing to change with technology and be innovative. They are the agents of change we need in this world. I also encourage them to be involved in team work; build one another through welfare and other avenues.

What advice do you have for the next ICT Director?

I wish to advise my successor to be passionate and committed to his/her work and encourage teamwork as it's only through these that the Centre will achieve its strategic objectives.

Other than work what are your hobbies and things you enjoy doing?

I enjoy playing football, swimming and reading. I like reading inspirational books and among them my favorite book is the "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen Covey.

How do you find the balance between work, study and family?

If you want to be successful in life then you must strike a balance between office, academic, family, social and spiritual life. Family is important; and whenever I am around I always take time to have some quality time with my family.

Finally who is your mentor?

My mentor is Prof. Okelo-Odongo. I have always liked the way he conducts himself and has taught me a lot in my academic and professional life. He is a man of few words but with a lot of wisdom and experience that I have gained a lot from him.

Parting Shot?

I will end with a quote from Martin Luther King Jnr when he said "a man who has no stake in the society that he lives will consciously or subconsciously destroy the very society he lives in." Above all, be at peace with your maker and learn to respect and treat everyone equally.