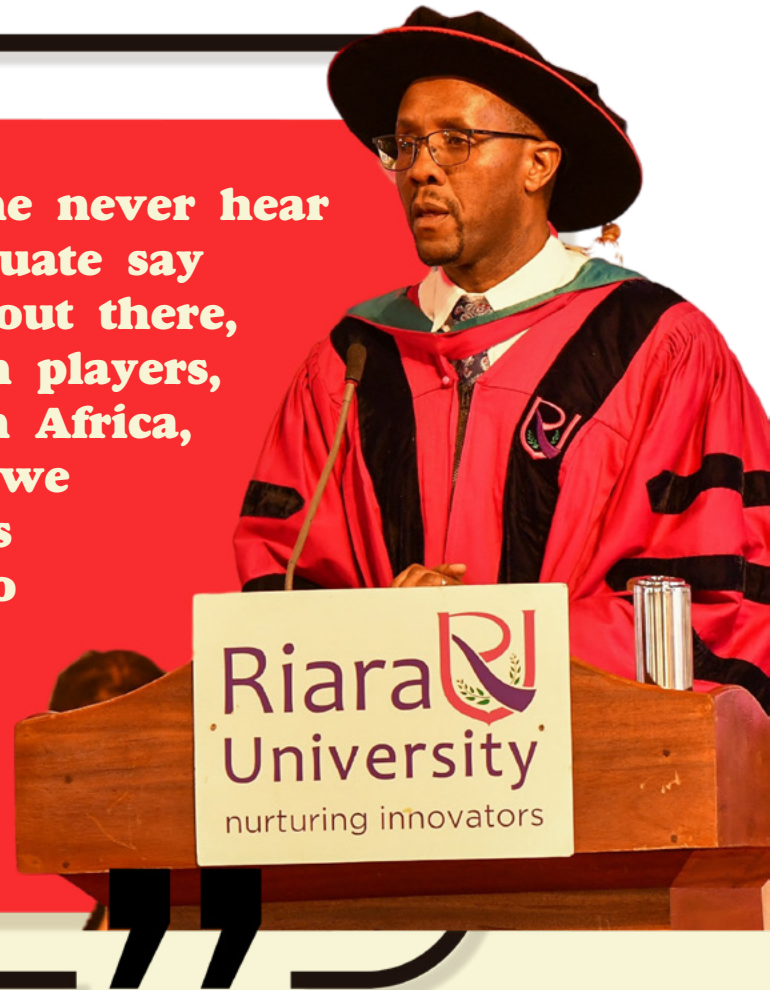


**Wherever you go, let me never hear a Riara University graduate say *tunaomba Serikali*. Go out there, be the innovators, team players, and problem solvers. In Africa, we are so blessed that we have so many problems waiting for graduates to solve. Once you solve a problem, you do not need to market yourself**



**M**r. Chancellor Sir Dr. Wilfred Kiboro, Eminent Founders, Daniel and Prof. Eddah Gachukia, Our Keynote Speaker Dr. Faith Mwendu, Esteemed Graduates, Beloved Parents, Guardians and Family Members, BOT and Council Members, Distinguished Hon. Members of Parliament led by Hon. Njeri Maina, Women Rep Kirinyaga County, Visiting fellow Vice Chancellors, CEOs and representatives of our Partner Organisations, Colleagues, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning! Let me begin by saying a very warm welcome to all of you and to thank you for your presence today, both for those here physically present and all of you joining us virtually. Let's give a big round of applause to all parents, friends and family joining online.

Now, to our wonderful graduating class of 2023, Hearty Congratulations! Please high-five a few of your neighbors for a job well done! Don't leave your seat please!

I want to say what an absolutely great pleasure it is to join you in your celebration today and I really want to thank you for choosing to be mentored at Riara. I also wish to appreciate the support that you have received from your parents, guardians, lecturers, staff, friends and family members. Without this, you wouldn't be here today and I hope that you never forget these support systems. A big round of applause to all of them!

Mr. Chancellor Sir, this Class has overcome very many odds and challenges from COVID-19 disruptions, to financial and family challenges, adapting to digital and remote learning, among many others.

All of them have remarkable stories and success that most of us are aware of but for the sake of our guests, allow me to highlight just a few of them:

- **Elijah Cheruiyot Chepkwony** has developed two major innovations. One is a Smart Farm System that uses Internet of Things, sensors and micro controllers to help farmers track the weather and farm conditions to improve their farming. Another is EJ\_TechArt\_254 that integrates Technology and Art by disassembling electronic devices and converting them to beautiful pieces of Art.
- **Fatma Omar Salim** -from the School of Computing Science completed one of Africa's biggest boot camps, *Cyber Girls*, and graduated as an *AWS/Azure Cloud Security Engineer*. She now works as an ethical hacker, security analyst, and technical trainer at iLabAfrica.
- **Juma Kirubai Shabat** had a tough time starting at R.U., compounded by extreme shyness, deep family and health issues that are not for the public gallery but he faced his fears and overcame all to become the most active Clubs Chairperson, and eventually President of the Student's Government.
- **Tiffany Ndungu** and **Wendeline** who have been phenomenal in serving the community through with club activities among many other ways.
- **Peter Thande, Kenyanito Baraka, and Aida Alazar** collaborated on a powerful Advertising and Sales Promotion project called "*Changamkia Opportunities*," though we all learned hard lessons as a coffee marketing company plagiarized their idea before it was protected.
- Many students have secured jobs while on internship including **Ms. Sumaya Yusuf** at the Network of African Science Academy, **Nathaniel Kariuki** who was absorbed at the National Bank of Kenya and facilitated a Guest Lecture by the Bank's Director of Corporate Affairs, Ms. Bernadette Wainaina, **Tamara Donga** also had an outstanding performance at internship and earned her employment at Kenya Tea Packers (KETEPA), **Paul Wanyoike** was also retained at the Centers for International Health, Education, and Biosecurity. These are just examples of many such stories within this group.
- Allow me to end with **Deka Rashid Ibrahim** This amazing lady survived a terrible road accident that required her to undergo several surgical interventions. She took many of her exams while in post-surgical recovery. She however passed all her units, and is today graduating as one of the top students in her cohort.
- I also wish to appreciate **Scott Okalo, Michael Odunga** and **Peter Mwangi** from the School of Communications and Multimedia Journalism who assisted in capturing graduands learning experiences at Riara University in a video that has been played moments ago.

Please help me applaud these graduands and all of you who have truly remarkable stories.

Indeed, Riara University is a hub of brilliance and outstanding success stories achieved through hard work, support from staff, family and friends, and personal GRIT.

As you graduate today, I am confident that we have equipped you very well for the world out there, through our three key areas of focus i.e. employability, entrepreneurship, and ethical leadership development through great partnerships with organizations such as the British Council, Mozilla Foundation, Education Collaborative under Ashesi University. Your support has enabled us to drive our employability, entrepreneurship, leadership and wellness training for our students.

To our valued partners; Kituo Cha Sheria, Elimu Holding, E-learning solutions, Qwetu, University of Central Lancashire, University of Arkansas, USA, Sheridan College, Canada, Shanghai Polytechnic, Teachers Service Commission, Commission for University Education, Council of Legal Education, HELB, Universities Funding Board, Tech Kidz, Huawei, IBM, International Law Institute, Elsat Hub, Kenia, iHub, iNature, KENAPCO, PASGR, Eveminet Ltd, KENET, ABMA Education, ACCA Global, Junior Achievement, Ashoka, Griffith College, Ireland, Cavendish University, Uganda, Moringa School, NIIT, Coursera, EdX, Standard Media, Kenyans.co.ke, TUKO, Switch Media and Nation Media Group, your input, collaboration, and commitment to supporting this institution is highly appreciated.

I would also like to thank our funders, especially the British Council, the Education Collaborative under Ashesi University Ghana, Mozilla Foundation, and Njeri Global Children Award, among others, for their reliable support. We are because you are!

To our esteemed graduands, despite the many hardships that you have experienced, you have demonstrated that with intense determination, focus, and self-belief, you can achieve and conquer anything.

In this regard, please note that University is not a place where you come to be prepared for everything you need in life (I will say that again, University is not a place where you come to be 100% prepared for life). Instead, the University is a place that equips you with the skills, tactics, and habits that help you realize your innate potential to conquer anything that you set your mind and heart to, and you have demonstrated that today.

As you graduate, I urge to never lose sight of the power of personal GRIT. Graduation is just one mountain of many that you will have to climb to prove yourself to yourself first, your Creator, and to the world. Do not therefore graduate expecting the world to roll a red carpet for you! You must demonstrate your value daily and you must continue to sharpen your skills, your habits, and your thoughts because they determine your level of success.

In this regard, you must not let the joys of graduation, or the pressures of the world crowd your dreams or your resolve to succeed and to make a difference in your generation.

Your dreams will take flight when you are crystal clear not just on what you want to accomplish, but more importantly, when you are crystal clear on what you have to sacrifice in order to achieve your dreams. Many times we focus only on what we want to achieve, rather than on WHAT IT TAKES to achieve it. The bigger the sacrifices, the bigger the rewards.

For those continuing with us at R.U., we look forward to walking with you to the end.

For those leaving R.U., we will miss you dearly but ensure to join the Alumni Association today for continuous support from your Alma Mater. I pray that wherever you go as an individual, you will be the critical thinker, innovator, problem solver, team player, winner, reconciler, peacemaker, and above all, a global citizen that respects diversity, and the environment.

Thank you all so much for giving us the privilege to enrich your path to your destiny and to your bright future. No one has said it more clearly than Eleanor Roosevelt who said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." I cannot wait to see how beautiful all your dreams will become, and how truly proud you will make all of us!

Wherever you go, let me never hear a Riara University graduate say *tunaomba Serikali*. Go out there, be the innovators, team players, and problem solvers. In Africa, we are so blessed that we have so many problems waiting for graduates to solve. Once you solve a problem, you do not need to market yourself.

May the Almighty God richly favor and bless you, your families, and future generations, with every good gift, and may he give you the serenity to remain humble and thoughtful of other human beings, especially those less privileged!

Congratulations my wonderful friends, the Awesome Mavericks!

**PROF. ROBERT GATERU**  
*Vice Chancellor*