

Word from the Rector

Year 2019 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Université Catholique de Bukavu (UCB). The celebration of this anniversary will continue (through organized special events) during year 2020. As for a human being (who usually enters into marriage and becomes parent around this age), thirty years is the beginning of an age of maturity. It is the time to reflect on the past, and use the gained experience to prepare and build the future.

Our University has come a long way since its founding “from scratch”, at a time when there was no other such institution in the Province of South Kivu, and when only very few academics to count on could be available. Despite accomplishing one of the public duties of the state, namely to provide education, UCB as a private institution has evolved till now without funding from the government. UCB came from nowhere and faced many difficulties, including periods of war and insecurity in the region, yet it continued to grow and it is now considered to be among the best universities in our country. The driving force behind this relative success has been the enthusiasm of many local people who, with the assistance of international (individual and institutional) partners, seriously believed in the project of UCB and in its noble missions 1) to educate and train our youth, 2) to promote research into understanding our problems and searching for solutions, and 3) to contribute to the search for a becoming-better and well-being of our populations.

The next driving force was the strong will of South Kivu parents to see their children get the best education, which motivated their financial efforts and sacrifices to raise the money necessary for academic fees. These have up to now constituted the major source of our University’s income.

Other driving forces have been the courage of our university staff and the incredible resilience of our students. UCB academic, administrative and technical staff have all endured cuts in salaries, despite these being already significantly meager compared to those paid in public institutions. The enthusiasm of our students to study and enjoy campus life has not vanished despite the lack of accommodation facilities, very hard transport conditions and other difficulties.

Many great challenges remain ahead at UCB, including the necessity to build infrastructures, to improve the quality of our teaching and training, to produce more research outputs, to have significant impact of the quality of life of our populations, etc. To ease the financial difficulties, contacts have been initiated since a few years now to try and get the government support the salaries of UCB staff and ease the financial burden on the parents.

Our University possesses many assets that could be the basis of new opportunities to improve its income and performance. For example, UCB has agricultural and farm land totalizing 160 hectares (the 80-ha Kalambo campus not counted), that should be exploited and used not only to train our students but also to produce crops that can be profitably commercialized. Similarly, we should consider launching a few spin-offs based on our research in areas such as mining, architecture, medicine, etc., to create innovative enterprises that can generate income but also can constitute posts of employment for our graduates. Obviously, to do all this, we will need to be very creative.

In any case, UCB will continue to cultivate high human/moral values. Common interest, good and transparent management and governance, respect of every human being, inclusiveness without discrimination, and compassion with the most vulnerable members of our society should remain at the core of our actions to acquire, create or propagate new knowledge.

“Quod isti et istae et cur non nos”. “Kama wengine waliweza, na sisi tutaweza pia”. “Yes we can”!

Kanigula MUBAGWA,
05 Jan 2020.