ACCESS Summer School

On INES Campus, Welcome speech by VC on 7th February 2024

[Presentation of the guest]

Distinguished guests, esteemed colleagues,

After the two first days of the Summer School in Kigali, INES-Ruhengeri is delighted to welcome you to its Campus. As we decided to embrace a big ambition to not only become a University of Applied Sciences but also to become an international university, it is a great opportunity for INES Community to learn from you and to share its expertise.

Keeping in mind the same general theme of our Summer School, ***Universities And Businesses As Agents Of Change: Embracing Transformational Learning Approaches“***, I wish to introduce this daywith something smaller:"Turning the Campus into an Integrated Vibrant Learning and Development Space for Business,"

This is not just an ambitious goal, but a necessary evolution if we want to help our students shape their future and bake early while we are enjoying our bread.

That is why I wish today marks a pivotal moment as we are stepping away from the traditional and embracing a dynamic ecosystem where learning transcends classrooms and development flourishes beyond textbooks. This is the sense of gathering in this room, professors of universities, owners and managers of businesses, and representatives of Government institutions.

This Summer School is our way to build a community where curiosity grows, where all are making an effort to listen and speak to one another, where collaboration is born and strengthened, and where innovation takes flight.

I our academic context, I wish to suggest to all us a few skills that are vital today:

* Artificial intelligence skills,
* Tech skills,
* Social media marketing skills,
* Digital proficiencies or client engagement and communication,
* Cybersecurity skills,
* Customer service skills.

Without skills, our graduates will be unemployable because useless at the marketplace. Our staff and students need these skills and many more.

Otherwise, we will only continue to be isolated agents while today’s challenges are requiring closing our fingers. The collaboration and the symbiosis that we are talking about, are not needed only between us as different agents but they are also needed at the level of the Campus. Our campuses should be integrated for being at the same time a space for learning and creating knowledge, and the space of generating new businesses. Without our commitment, only strong students, students with a very high sense of innovation will meet these three goals. It is time to help all students to equally enjoy this environment.

The business landscape is evolving at high speed, and we must prepare our future leaders with the agility, adaptability, and entrepreneurial spirit to navigate this dynamic world.

This is possible if our campuses are vibrant hubs where students can:

* Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
* Embrace creativity and innovation.
* Improve their communication and collaboration abilities
* Gain essential digital literacy and technological fluency.
* Build a strong network of peers, mentors, and industry professionals; etc

This is more than just an education; it's an investment in the future. An investment in individuals who will shape the business landscape, drive economic growth, and create a better tomorrow.

Dear brothers and sisters, dear colleagues in education. If our Higher Learning Institutions in Africa have to turn into an integrated vibrant learning and development space for business, we have to think strongly about people: students and staff. For sure, we care about our students, future entrepreneurs, future educators, future leaders of our societies and our universities. We cannot mind our students without minding our staff, both teaching staff and administrative staff. University staff have a net-zero tolerance for university leaders who are not engaged on all fronts and, in this uncertain environment, it is becoming increasingly clear that university leaders have the opportunity to show their workforce they genuinely care about staff wellbeing. In the Rwandan context, thirty years after the genocide against the Tutsi and the different wars in this African Great Lakes Region, the trauma is still vivid and often exacerbated by the unceasing fear of some other wars.

In Africa and for the African in general, the trauma of *slave trade* and *colonization* are still present. The anthropological poverty and some psychological inferiority complex are still a block to development. Only universities have the cure to these sicknesses. To cure these is our duty and responsibility. The ancient Roman adage is still valid mostly in Africa: *Homo homini lupus, a man is a wolf to another man* especially considering the African politics in general (there are exceptions). We need to care about our people listening to their worries and their good expectations. Development is all about people. We need to be sure that our staff have salaries levelled to the living standards, we need to be sure that our staff receive the necessary formation and required degrees, we need to make sure that we listen with an attentive ear to the pleas of our staff.

We are thanking our respective Boards of Directors, the Founders of our universities, and our Governments for availing the needed resources and giving clear visions. We hope to see soon more investments in line with the recommendations resulting from this summer school.

We thank the representatives of the Government institutions from our respective countries for the effort made in providing guidance, advocacy, and recommendations whenever they are needed.

We thank our partners from the industry for their collaboration in framing the future of leaders.

Ladies and gentlemen, on this note, I wish you to enjoy our beautiful region, a hub of tourism, and our campus, a good place to think big.

Thank you, and let the transformation begin!