To our chief guest, Your Excellency Laetitia van den Assum, ambassadors, distinguished guests, board members, faculty, staff, alumni, graduates, family and friends, I would like to welcome you to the 30th Commencement Ceremony of United States International University honoring the graduating class of the year 2008. Since this represents 30 years of graduations, I like to refer to this as our pearl event.

We are indeed graduating the pearls of our institution. Although they come in all different sizes, shapes and colors we still guarantee the quality of them all. We also have some of our old pearls with us today and they just continue to appreciate in value. They, like this graduating class, are the true assets of the University. A university is only as good as its graduates and the learning environment that produces them.

With our theme this year being, “learning for the future,” we appropriately began our academic year this past September with the opening of our futuristic library by President Mwai Kibaki. This educational and information center helps to provide students with the resources needed to prepare them for their study and careers. We like to think of it as the best learning resource in the region.

Our Kenyan accrediting body the Commission for Higher Education also acknowledges the quality of education of our graduates as they once again approved our re-accreditation as an institution of quality. Regionally, we participated in the Inter-university Council of East Africa’s quality assurance program which piloted a new process for improving standards with 23 universities in the region. USIU was viewed as the top among these 23 institutions in term of our commitment to quality assurance. So you see, not only can we guarantee our pearls, but Kenya, the region and hopefully, soon our US accreditation body, will recognize the quality of education our students possess once they complete our degree programs.
While outside recognition is good it could not be accomplished without top quality committed faculty who prepare these young people for the challenges of the future. This year has seen some firsts in the School of Business. We became the first university on the continent to host the Global Business School Network meeting that brought together business schools from around the world. We also launched our program that is being sponsored by Goldman-Sachs— one of the largest investment banks in the world. They want to train 10,000 women over 5 years to be entrepreneurs and leaders. While we won’t train 10,000 we will begin in January to train 200 women each year. This program will be done in collaboration with the Columbia Business School in New York which is ranked among the top 5 business schools in the world. Our new Executive Management in Organizational Development program has proved to be an outstanding success for training managers of non governmental agencies. They have been able to complete their master’s within one year and you will see them among our graduates. The Center for Excellence in Entrepreneurial Development also held a successful conference. Moreover, they trained numerous hospital administrators with Galilee College in Israel and hosted the training of teachers of management program which brought together faculty from business schools around the continent of Africa. They have truly been busy this year.

The faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences have not been absent from view either. They started a new peer review journal of Language, Technology and Entrepreneurship in Africa which has a panel of international reviewers from UK, Hong Kong, South Korea, Harvard-US and local members. They also house the Center for Learning and Teaching which is spearheading our program to provide faculty with new methodologies for teaching. Our faculty from both schools have participated in the Post Graduate Certificate in Academic Practices program along with Kabarak, Egerton, and Moi in conjunction with York St. John’s University in the UK. This program also works with faculty to incorporate new methods of teaching for improved student learning. The Schools of Arts and Sciences are also preparing to launch two new programs this year. As you have heard from President Chunfu Wu, one will be a pharmacy program that will be offered by Shenyang Pharmaceutical University in China under the auspices of USIU. Students will spend two years in Kenya, learn Chinese and then proceed to China for completion. Meanwhile we are preparing to construct a new science building that will provide facilities for this program as well as other science based programs. Secondly, the
faculty are also preparing to launch a Criminal Justice program, the first of its kind in Kenya. It will provide students with skills to work in the criminal justice system which includes police, prisons and courts.

In January, the Division of Academic Affairs is proposing to restructure the university into three schools: the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, the School of Business and the School of Science, Communication and Technology. The IT faculty has identified the need for an IST degree that provides students with the technical skills that will be needed once the country has access to an affordable bandwidth. This program has undergone a program review and is being revised for this eventuality. We have housed our journalism program with IT because the industry is going digital and we want our graduates to be ready for online journalism, blogging and all those technologies of which some of us older generation don’t partake.

There are two groups on campus that are the silent movers on campus. That is our administrative staff who make sure that we have an outstanding learning environment. From the cleaners who make sure our environment is clean to the staff who support our academic activities and the managers that try to make sure all systems are running smoothly. Thank you for your efforts to make USIU a premier institution.

The other group is somewhat mysterious, appearing on occasions to make sure we are an institution of quality. This is our Board of Trustees. Behind the scenes they have scrutinized budgets, helped us get funding for projects, worked with CHE in the revision of our charter, brought resources to enhance our learning and participated in various campus colloquia. Thank you for your commitment to USIU.

So as you can see it has been a very busy year for the academic side but our pearls don’t just lie on the bottom of the ocean either. Our students have engaged in a number of co-curricular activities.

Students
SPORTS TEAMS
Who says women don’t play sports in Kenya???? The USIU Women’s Basketball Team was elected to represent Kenya Universities in Ethiopia later in the Year after scooping 4 titles and emerging as the top team in the university and college basketball league for the 4th time. They also took 2nd position in the Kenya Basketball Federation league.
The men may have to work a bit harder to keep up with our women but they also brought home two first place trophies.

Three outstanding hockey players, Barbara Kivinji, Lorraine Nondi and Barbara Simiyu, will be representing Kenya on the national team in Egypt later in the year. 3 Soccer & 9 Basketball players were also named in the Kenya University Combined team that will represent Kenya in the Africa University games in Uganda in July 2008.

CLUBS
Michezo Africa presented a number of plays at the National Drama Festival, and won various prizes including 1st Position in Swahili Play and Narrative category; 2nd in the English Play and 3rd in the Solo Verse. The club was declared the best University and scooped over 30 certificates and an array of trophies.

Our students often get a lot of press for their social activities but they are not without merit. The 2006-2007, SAC Committee for the Mr. & Miss USIU Beauty Pageant raised a record Ksh 495,478.00 which was used to purchase educational materials and equipment for Brainhouse Academy in Mathare.

International students Club Conducted a very successful culture fair in July with the theme “Different Cultures, One People” to celebrate USIU’s unity in diversity and enhance cultural awareness and interaction in the USIU community. The students shared and engaged in exhibitions of artifacts, food, fashion show and dance from different nationalities.

SAC for the second year running conducted the Annual Campus awards night to recognize unique achievements and talent among students, staff and faculty. The event displayed the student’s ability to organize events. Prof. Thomas Gale won the most prestigious award of the year- The Lifetime Achievement Award. This was in recognition to his selfless service in teaching and community service.

Students Black History month was also an outstanding event this year. Students sought understanding of and alternatives to resolving the crisis that unsettled Kenya this year. Wazee from the community and faculty talked of the historical context, students from other conflict torn nations revealed the long term personal impact of this type of strife, some captured their feelings in poetry and prose. Others put on
a concert to help raise funds for IDPs and joined the rest of the USIU community and Kenya in general by donating clothes, foodstuff, money and their time to the 2007 post election violence Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). We have a truly amazing group of students.

To the Graduates

Some studies have revealed that 99.7% of college graduates can’t remember any pearls of wisdom from their graduation speeches. But since you are our pearls and now full of wisdom, let’s see if I can leave you with a few remembrances. Nelson Mandela once said: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Let me repeat; Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." For those of you who are Obama fans, he notes that "education is the best investment for our future." Education is the best investment in our future.

Reflect on the some of the ongoing events in the world since you have been at USIU: the post election violence, the Darfur crisis, the Zimbabwe elections, the current Iran impasse, the Gaza strip conflict, the energy crisis, food security, global warming. All of these problems require solutions. Some have sought to resolve these crises through violent means but this should never be our weapon of choice. You have the most powerful weapon for change.... Your education. You hold this weapon and you must be an instrument of change. As young educated citizens of the world, you have a responsibility to make our futures brighter. You must be the engines of change if the world will be at peace. Many of you began this year by getting involved to help the IDP’s by donating your time, money and counseling skills. But equally as important by not being participants in the chaos and working to resolve conflicts on campus through peaceful means and careful reflection; you have demonstrated that have learned how to create for us a peaceful and harmonious future by using your most powerful weapon...your education!!!!

Congratulations to the Class of 2008!
The Conferring of Degrees

By the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of the United States-International University, I hereby confer on you the degree for which you have completed all requirements, with all of the rights, privileges, and responsibilities pertaining thereto.

Congratulations.