

# CAMPUS THIS WEEK

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY-AFRICA NEWSLETTER

3 - 9 MARCH 2017

## Students represent USIU-Africa at Harvard National Model United Nations



*His Excellency Ambassador Macharia Kamau challenges the USIU-Africa delegation to the 63rd annual session of Harvard National Model United Nations Conference expand their skillset beyond diplomacy, when they paid a courtesy call on him at the offices of the Kenya Mission to the United Nations in New York. Courtesy: Kenya Mission at the United Nations in New York.*

Twenty three undergraduate majors attended the sixty-third annual session of the Harvard National Model United Nations, held at the Boston Park Plaza from Thursday, February 16, through Sunday, February 19, 2017.

Accompanied by Dr. David Mwambari (Assistant Professor of International Relations), and Dr. Oscar Githua (Assistant Professor of Psychology), the delegation led discussion in reforming UN peacekeeping operations, improving governance in Somalia and implications of the digital divide in enhancing socioeconomic and democratic development.

The Disarmament and International Security Committee weighed the implications of the concepts of accountability and censorship in the context of the rights and freedoms of the increasingly activist role played by globally aware social media users.

The delegation paid a visit to the Harvard Center for African Studies which will be hosting the Harvard USIU-Africa Conference from 30-31 March 2017, attended an in-depth lecture on hip-hop culture in US history and politics at the Hip-hop Archive & Research Institute at Harvard's Hutchins Center, as well as an Cuban art exhibition at the Ethelbert Cooper Gallery of African & African American Art.

While speaking on the elements of multilateral diplomacy, Kenya's Ambassador to the United Nations in New York His Excellency Ambassador Macharia Kamau challenged the team to develop other skills besides diplomacy.

In Washington D.C., the team encountered the James Madison University delegation who were representing Kenya at the National Model African Union (MAU) Conference at Howard University. After briefing the James Madison delegation on Kenyan foreign policy issues, they were invited to attend the MAU conference as observers.



# Candidates for SST Dean face public interviews this Tuesday

The Search Committee for new academic leaders has begun the process of arranging public forum video interviews for various shortlisted candidates beginning Tuesday, March 7.

Various university communities will interview the three shortlisted candidates for the Dean of School of Science and Technology from 11am at various locations on campus.

The Management Board will interview Candidate 1 at 11am, Candidate 3 at 12.15pm and Candidate 2 at 2.45pm, in the VC's Boardroom. University employees will interview Candidate 2 at 11am, Candidate 1 at 12.15pm and Candidate 3 at 2.45pm in the Library's Conference Room. Finally, students will get an opportunity to interview the three candidates 3, 2 and 1 at 11am, 12.15pm and 2.45pm in the Freida Brown Student Center.

The Library's Conference Room will also host University Senate interviews with Candidate 1, 3 and 2 at 4pm, 5.15pm and 6.30pm respectively. All three candidates will also hold individual interviews with the Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza and the Deputy Vice Chancellor – Academic & Student Affairs Amb. Prof. Ruthie Rono in the late afternoon and early evening of the same day.



USIU-Africa, Science Centre Building.



Mr. Patrick Mulindi (Program Director, Hotel & Restaurant Management, Tourism Management) responds to student concerns during a consultative forum hosted by the Chandaria School of Business and the Club for Hotel and Tourism Students (CHATs) on Thursday, March 2, 2017 in the Library Bookshop. Looking on is Tourism Management Lecturer Mr. Godwin Njeru.

## FEATURE

# Managing Interview Bias

By Scott Bellows

When sifting through the product offerings of multiple Kenyan-based training and consulting firms, one may notice that invariably many human resources related topics available for delivery include sessions on how to trust one's gut with either the managerial decision making process or while interviewing potential job candidates. Additionally, enter into any sizable bookstore in Kenya and invariably you will come across some variation of a leadership or management title indicating "go with your gut" that espouse the perceived value of listening to one's own instinctive reaction as a highly accurate way for executives to make decisions.

Unfortunately, such simplistic concepts lull supervisors into thinking that they retain the truth inside of them without much effort of deliberate time consuming analysis. In certain narrow parameters, following instincts does prove useful. The social scientists who do advocate for gut reactions in workplace settings often derive their results from simple often non-workplace-realistic experiment settings in controlled environments.

Joseph Mikels and team delineated specific scenarios in workplaces where feelings rather than deliberation resulted in superior results. Erik Dane, Kevin Rockmann, and Michael Pratt detailed that managerial decision making relying on intuition over deliberation only increases in validity commensurate with many years of experience in the specific domain of their jobs. Years and years of experience enables one's unconscious mind to learn many correct conscious decisions and summate those experiences in that specific line of work and internalize it into the unconscious mind.

Notwithstanding decades of experience training one's unconscious mind, otherwise your gut is mostly wrong. Researcher Eric Bonabeau famously implored managers back in 2003 to not trust their guts or else fall victim to a risky delusion. Relying on intuition should not serve as a substitute for fact gathering and doing proper due diligence in one's workplace. Disturbingly, an extensive survey conducted by executive search firm Christian & Timbers revealed that a shocking 45% of corporate leaders admitted to relying on instinct more than on facts and figures in order to run their businesses.

Gut feeling inaccuracy also affects other professions outside board rooms and meeting halls. Dr. Danial Cabrera of the Mayo Clinic led a team of researchers that found medical doctors who rely on gut feeling

diagnosis of patients rather than conducting tests and digging deeper for more information actually misdiagnosed their patients an alarming 46% of the time.

Multiple problems exist with gut feelings. First, unconscious bias represents a real problem with unconscious decision making. Especially in interview settings, interviewers strongly favor candidates more similar to themselves in terms of ethnicity, age, gender, religion, and interests. A similar candidate makes an interviewer over three times more empathetic to them and their plight. Also, on an interview panel, one negative comment by one interviewer speaking from his or her own bias can taint all the other interviewers. Alison Ledgerwood and Amy Boydstun's research shows that negative comments linger in people's minds far longer than positive comments. Further, negative comments change an opinion from positive to negative and also prevent future positive comments from sticking at all thus keeping one's original negative opinion of someone intact far into the future unless conscious intentional thinking overrides it.

Second, when upset or scared, the brain's prefrontal cortex's dominance in the mind diminishes and someone loses rational thinking and emotional regulation while the mind resorts to more primitive areas that respond to simplistic basic survival. An interview candidate who may pose a perceived threat to an interviewer can elicit an irrational response by the interviewer as the prefrontal cortex gives way.

Third, the unconscious mind evolved to protect us from danger in a then frightening world. We can quickly assess whether to fight or flight when walking on a nature path in Hell's Gate National Park and come across a hyena. But a nuanced assessment of rewards, costs, consequences, alternatives, and impacts on others cannot come at an instant from the unconscious mind. In addition to the medical field, certain other industries heightened awareness over the past decade on the dangers of gut feelings and actively work to diminish intuitive decisions among their employees.

Volker Thoma examined persistent fears in the investment banking sector that financial traders use gut feelings and therefore harm client and bank portfolios. Much to the relief of banking executives, he uncovered that financial traders did not use simple intuitive decision rules creating biases instead of rational normative decision making any more than regular retail bankers. However, he did uncover that

the older an employee got, he or she utilized intuition more and more similar to Erik Dane's work described above.

Also, human resources professionals know the dangers of intuitive emotional decisions. Gut feelings taint what researchers Eva Derous, Alexander Buijsrogge, Nicolas Roulin, and Wouter Duyck call the three interview stages of pre-interview initial impressions stage, interview stage, and post-interview decision making stage. The researcher generated solutions to minimize the effect including interviewers taking active conscious processes to identify their biases and writing them down, then mentally overrule their behavioral and cognitive biases about a candidate.

Human resources departments should break down each of the three interview stages into four phases each and make forms reflect desired actions. Type 1 processes allow interviewers to make initial gut feeling impressions about a candidate. Type 2 requires interviewers to record and analyse their biases towards a candidate that may be unjustified. Third, assess situational and interviewer factors. Conducting highly structured interviews helps accentuate type 2 thinking. Fourth, decide on outcomes for the pre-interview initial impressions stage, interview stage, and post-interview decision making stage.

Additional solutions generated by Eugene Sadler-Smith and Erella Shefy include training for managers that enlightens them to the limitations of gut feeling decisions. Then, explore with managers the power of the unconscious mind in its appropriate role. Managers should start with rational decision analysis, then pause for several hours and work on another task allowing the unconscious mind to process the nuances of your detailed start to your analysis, then managers should come back to the formal analysis after the break and use rationality to finish. Such actions powerfully combine both intuition and analysis.

In summary, do not believe the often repeated clichés to go with your gut feeling. Management is far more complex than a simple five word phrase. Understand the role your unconscious can play, harness it, and conduct deliberate analysis with pauses.

*Scott Bellows is an Assistant Professor of Management in the Chandaria School of Business and Chair of the Faculty Council.*



# SPORTS UPDATE

The men's swimming team clinched 2 silver medals, at the just-concluded National Age Group Swimming Championships Gala organized by the Kenya Swimming Federation (KSF) held at Moi International Sports Center Aquatic Stadium on February 24-26. The regional event was attended by 50 teams drawn from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

During the 3rd National Individual Open *Gojukai Karatedo* Championship held in Nyayo Stadium last weekend, the USIU-Africa Karate team were awarded 2 silver and 2 bronze in the under 67 kilograms *Kumite*, 70 kilograms *Kumite*, and *Kata* categories in which they competed.

On February 25-26 at Brookehouse School, our tae-kwo-ndo team's single gold, two silvers and a bronze medal propelled them to the first runner-up position in the Best of the Best Tournament organized by Best Kickers Martial Arts – a Nairobi martial arts organization dedicated to training skilled artists.

Finally, the USIU-Africa cricket team thrashed Africa Nazarene University 156-47 during the joint Cricket Kenya - Kenya University Sports Association (KUSA) league match at the Ruaraka Sports Club on Saturday, February 25. The team is back at the pitch this Saturday, for the league's 6-A-Side cricket tournament, at the same venue.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## SPORTS

### SATURDAY, MARCH 4

**CRICKET:** 6-a-side cricket tournament  
@ Ruaraka Sports Club

**SOCCER:** USIU-Africa Men vs Daystar University  
@ Kenyatta University

### BASKETBALL

USIU-Africa Men vs Zetech University  
@ USIU-Africa basketball court  
USIU-Africa Ladies vs Daystar University  
@ USIU-Africa basketball court

### HOCKEY

USIU-Africa Men vs Kenyatta University (Ruiru Campus)  
@ Kenyatta University (Main Campus)  
USIU-Africa Ladies vs Mount Kenya University  
@Kenyatta University (Main Campus)

### SUNDAY, MARCH 5

**BASKETBALL:** USIU-Africa Ladies vs St. Paul's University  
@ USIU-Africa basketball court

### MONDAY, MARCH 6

**Africa Model United Nations Conference Begins**  
United Nations Offices at Nairobi, Gigiri

### TUESDAY, MARCH 7

**International Mass Media Forum**  
9:00 am - 11:40 am  
@ Journalism Lab, Lillian K. Beam Building

**Drug Awareness Week Begins**  
Behind Cafeteria & Freida Brown Student Center

### FRIDAY, MARCH 10

**Thomas S. Gale Memorial**  
11.00 am @ Auditorium

**Alumni Affinity Meeting**  
8.00pm @ Vice Chancellor's Residence

# MEDIA MENTIONS



**March 3:** The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in article titled "TAKE 5: Abdi Latif Dahir"  
<http://www.usiu.ac.ke/on-campus/news/media-mentions/686-take-5-abdi-latif-dahir>

**March 2:** USIU-Africa was mentioned by Oyaore.com website in an article titled "2017 USIU Round-table |The Role of the Media in Higher Education."  
<http://www.usiu.ac.ke/on-campus/news/media-mentions/685-oyaire-com-2017-usiu-round-table-the-role-of-the-media-in-higher-education>

**March 2:** The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in article titled "Odundo to leave the helm of pension agency after 16 years."  
<http://www.usiu.ac.ke/on-campus/news/media-mentions/684-daily-nation-odundo-to-leave-the-helm-of-pension-agency-after-16-years>

**February 26:** The Daily Nation mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled "Safaricom starts pilot phase of Lipa na M-Pesa cards."  
<http://www.usiu.ac.ke/on-campus/news/media-mentions/683-daily-nation-safaricom-starts-pilot-phase-of-lipa-na-m-pesa-cards>

**February 25:** The Aptantech online magazine mentioned USIU-Africa in an article titled "USIU-Africa to host Roundtable on Higher Education and Media on March 1"  
<http://www.usiu.ac.ke/on-campus/news/media-mentions/682-aptantech-usiu-africa-to-host-roundtable-on-higher-education-and-media-on-march-1>

**February 24:** USIU-Africa was mentioned by the Daily Nation in an article titled "Champs Equity open title defence against Flames."  
<http://www.usiu.ac.ke/on-campus/news/media-mentions/681-daily-nation-champs-equity-open-title-defence-against-t-flames>