

Kyambogo council rejects dons' plea over vice-chancellor search

By Cecilia Okoth

Kyambogo University council has rejected claims by a section of lecturers that the ongoing search process is discriminatory and vowed to proceed with the quest to find a vice-chancellor (VC).

Prof John Okedi, the council's chairperson, was responding to a petition made by the academic staff, under their umbrella body, Kyambogo University Academic Staff Association (KYUASA).

On December 20, 2016, KYUASA, chaired by Dr Grace Lubaale, wrote to the university council, expressing

concern about the requirements of the position as indicated in the advert in the *New Vision* in November last year.

The advert stated that an applicant should have at least eight years' working experience at senior management position, four of which must have been served at the minimum level of dean of faculty or its equivalent in a reputable university or institution.

Their argument was that a senior management position should begin at the level of head of department or its equivalent in a reputable university or institution. They also queried the age limit in the advert that was between 45-70 years, saying an eligible member

must at least be below 60 years.

KYUASA wanted the council to amend the requirements to attract more applicants, as compared to the current three.

The three who submitted applications for the job are the university's acting VC, Prof. Eli Katunguka, 62; Prof. George Bazirake, 57, the former dean of the faculty of science and Makerere University Business School's deputy principal, Prof. Geoffrey Bakunda, 50.

However, Okedi told *New Vision* yesterday that although he had not yet looked at KYUASA's petition, the search process will continue.

"I do not think any university council

would accept that kind of intimidation. I think they are overstepping their role as staff," Okedi said.

"For those saying the qualifications are too high, I say, attain that high academic qualification and apply."

Although partly determined by the University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001, Okedi said the role of determining the qualifications of the VC is vested in the university council, adding that the criteria varies from one university to another.

Last year, the university's search for a substantive VC was halted due to irregularities, among them, the search committee submitting two names,

which was contrary to the law that stipulated three candidates.

Former VCs speak out

A former VC of a university in Uganda, who preferred anonymity, said being a VC is a question of position verses rank, saying in any university, a dean is VC material.

According to Prof. Venansius Baryamureeba, the former acting VC Makerere University, when a search committee is serious, it can go as far as encouraging potential candidates to apply for the job so as to have enough candidates to choose from to ensure that the process is fair.