

## Gulu varsity petitions Parliament

By Vision Reporter

The management of Gulu University led by the vice-chancellor, Prof. George Openjuru, has petitioned Parliament to intervene on the underfunding of the university, which they said affects the quality of education they provide.

While meeting the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Jacob Oulanyah, yesterday, the team said because of underfunding, the university has only 22% of the approved teaching staff.

"Every time we submit our recruitment plan to the public service ministry, we are told it cannot be implemented because there is no money for the recruitment of more staff. Our wage bill has been the same for the last five years," Prof. Openjuru said.

He argued that whereas other public universities established in recent years such as Soroti, Muni and Mbarara, were given seed university construction funds, Gulu was not given seed capital for the necessary infrastructure.

The management of the university wants the Government to allocate it a one-off allocation of sh83b for infrastructure development.

Prof. Openjuru said whereas the demand for the education the university offers is too high, they can only admit a limited number due to limited infrastructure.

"In the 2019/2020 academic, above 5,000 students applied for admission and many were eligible for admission, but due to lack of space, only 2,000 were admitted," he said.

The university, which started with 23 students in 2002, now has a total of 4,500 students.

Part of the sh83b the university needs includes sh18b for the construction of Gulu Teaching Hospital, construction of Gulu University Senate to serve as storage for students' records, construction of an administrative block worth sh16b and construction of a business and development centre estimated at a cost of sh35b.

The university management also wants the Government to degazette a forest reserve, which was given to university by municipal authority.

"Degazetting it will help us to acquire the title for the 70 acres we were given," Prof. Openjuru stated.

Gulu Municipality MP Lyandro Komakech said: "You cannot run a university with a staffing level of 22%. That is why it is necessary for additional funding to be allocated to Gulu University."

Oulanyah advised them to break down the money they need so that it is requested for in phases.

"If you bring the total figure at once, it can be rejected," Oulanyah said adding that whereas it is not possible for their demands to be captured in this financial year, they could push for consideration in the next.

On the degazetting of the forest reserve, Oulanyah said apart from Gulu, Mbarara and Mbale towns also have land in towns regarded to be forest reserves, but without forests which could used for development.