

Makerere University

P.O. Box 7062 Kampala, Uganda
Website: <http://www.mak.ac.ug/cedat>

TEL: 256-414-545029 Fax: 256-414-532780
Email: principal@cedat.mak.ac.ug

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING, DESIGN, ART AND TECHNOLOGY (CEDAT)

16th March 2018

The Marconi Society and You

Re: Letter of Appreciation for Donation of Server and Computer equipment to netLabs!UG Research Centre

I wish to thank you and the Marconi Society for donation of server and computer equipment to netLabs!UG Research Centre that is hosted by the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering in the College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT) at Makerere University.

netLabs!UG strives to be a research Centre of Excellence in telecommunications and networking technologies, and traces its origin in the Community Wireless Resource Centre (CWRC), Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. Established in 2006, the general objective of CWRC was to provide or enhance sustainable Internet connectivity infrastructure particularly in rural or underserved areas in Uganda, by means of wireless technology. Building on this legacy, netLabs!UG seeks to be a regional leader in collaborative research, development and solutions on innovative telecommunication and networking technologies, strengthening the innovation ecosystem in Uganda and across East Africa.

As the world of technology enters the next transformative stage with the Internet of Things (IoT), Augmented Intelligence and a new Internet based on dynamic telecommunications network, it is essential that Uganda maintains an R&D centre that supports academic development and assists commercial interests. Research funding programmes should emphasise innovation as well as research, and through netLabs!UG, CEDAT is well placed to support this two strand approach to put Uganda and East Africa at the centre of development and innovation in this very important sector.

Consequently, CEDAT welcomes partnerships and collaboration as a key strategy in addressing technical, financial and capacity gaps towards netLabs!UG being a Center of Excellence. Already with the Marconi Society, netLabs!UG has partnered on the Celestini program to solve local public health challenges with a focus on pre-eclampsia and hypertensive disorder in pregnant women. netLabs!UG has also partnered with the country office of Simplifi Networks for installations and performance testing of low-cost wireless broadband access points. As part of the netLabs!UG

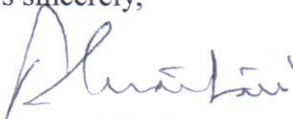


outreach, they are also founding partners of the Africa Code Week where we have taught over 2,500 primary and secondary school children across Uganda how to code. Common across all these initiatives is the equipment previously received under Celestini which enables our students and faculty actively engage in these research and outreach activities.

While we celebrate these achievements, there remains a lot to be done. The number of engineering graduates at CEDAT, which produces the highest number in the country, has increased from 40 to 600 graduates per year over the last 20 years. As part of the drive for a more Problem Based Learning approach to learning at CEDAT, netLabs!UG is keen to increasingly offer students the opportunity for hands-on experience. The growth in student numbers at CEDAT, while welcome, thus places significant strain on available R&D resources. For example, on average, netlabs!UG trains about 50 students per year (20 during the 10 weeks industrial training recess term and about 30 with capstone/final year projects). Not only is the student to equipment ratio strained, but there is also a need to regularly ensure access to key equipment or upgrades for R&D. With high-tech equipment we have generously received through you, we expect both a jump in the quality of research and innovation we are able to support as well as a jump in the number of students that benefit from the use of the equipment. Over the next 3 years, we expect the number of beneficiaries to increase up to 100 annually and with more inclusion strategies for female students (in recognition of the small ratio of female to male students at CEDAT).

The kind of equipment for the transformative networks of today requires significant funding levels and technical collaboration to enable effective engagement and contribution by our students and faculty. The most timely donation of equipment by the Marconi Society will thus greatly support netLabs!UG's capacity in the more software-defined nature of modern networking as well as artificial intelligence and machine learning. I can therefore assure you that the server and computer equipment will get plenty of use in labs and testbeds that are key to student development at Makerere University.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Henry Alinaitwe

Principal, College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology
Makerere University



c.c. Vice Chancellor, Makerere University

c.c. Dean, School of Engineering

c.c. Chair, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering