

Africa's 2nd bioinformatics and sciences centre launched at Makerere

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The biometrics lab is the second of such kind in Africa

An African Centre for Excellence (ACE) for bioinformatics and data intensive sciences has been launched at Makerere University's Infectious Disease Institute (IDI).

The ACE will help local scientists to analyze large scientific data on their own but also collaborate with their counterparts worldwide in realtime. The project is funded by the USA's National Institutes of Health (NIH). The facility is the second of its kind in Africa but the first in the region - with the only other such facility housed at the University of Sciences, Techniques and Technologies (USTTB) of Bamako in Mali.

Apart from being used for research development for institutions all over the region, the facility will offer training in Masters, Doctorate (PhD) and post doctorate in bioinformatics.

The launch of the ACE was presided over by the United States deputy chief of mission in Uganda Colette Marceline. She applauded Makerere for improving its capacity in order to foster collaborative research with institutions in America and the world.

Makerere is scheduled to start its own Master's and Doctorate bioinformatics programmes in the next academic year. The programmes will leverage the ACE infrastructure facilities including a dedicated tele-learning capable classroom, a visualisation lab featuring virtual reality based training, collaborative space for consultation and project planning and significant computer and storage IT infrastructure." Marcelline said.

"By improving the science and the understanding of both the biology and the endemic environment of the infectious diseases at the source, Uganda can improve the overall level of research and quality of data collected through collaborations with investigators in the United States and elsewhere." she added.

The other services to be provided by the ACE include; human and pathogen DNA sequencing for private individuals and researchers, short-term trainings in bioinformatics, biostatistics and image processing as well as VR infrastructure and services according to the officials.

Makerere University deputy vice chancellor academics Dr Umar Kakumba said the ACE for bioinformatics and data intensive sciences shows that Makerere is taking the right steps to improve its status as a world class institution and projects like this can only elevate its already high reputation.

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