

RESTORATION OF STUDENTS' INTEGRITY: A NEW DEAL FOR UNDEGRADUATES

My dear students, it is a new day and an ample moment for a new beginning. The reality of University education in our country today is obvious to all discerning eyes. The rot that characterizes most of what goes for university education and undergraduates today is due to a myriad of systemic factors. These problems, these factors, these obstacles that militate against functional education and quality graduates in learning and character are not insurmountable, provided all of us as stakeholders decide to play our part. A tree does not make a forest and you cannot clap with one hand. For the university system to work, everyone of us must work. And we must work hard. Our mission is a passionate commitment to your success. Our vision is the restoration of all what made students in the past to be proud as students. The thrust of our administration is what I call “a student-centred administration with a focus on the restoration of the integrity and status of the undergraduate students” aimed at benefiting all.

All we need from you is cooperation. All we need from you is discipline. All we need from you is devotion to your studies and determination to excel. All we need from you is to comport yourself in such a way as to make the best use of the opportunities available to you now. When I say this is a student-centred administration, do not take it as a mere sophistry. It is an abiding philosophy, an operational blue-print. This is because I was a student like you, right here in this University three decades ago. If there were some things on ground that made me succeed as a student here in the late seventies, why should the same

conditions not be made available, as much as the prevalent circumstances allow, now in the new millennium?

Towards the achievement of our objectives regarding the restoration of integrity, many things are being put in place. We can quickly gloss through some of them. More toilet facilities are being provided now so that as civilized people, you will continue to be decent with human waste disposal, and discontinue with the previous pattern which constitute a disgrace to any civilized community. We are providing facilities that will make you register with ease. Rather than go out of the campus to the banks, we have drawn many banks right to your door-step so that they may serve you better. We have reached an understanding with them that the era of exorbitant charges is over and under no condition should the commission charged by banks on bank draft for payment of charges be more than ₦100 instead of the prevailing rate of between ₦350.00 and ₦500.00. Indeed, there are many banks from which you can choose from to pay your fees with ease. No staff will collect money from you henceforth; the banks will do.

We are consulting with hostel managers to improve on our existing hostel facilities. We are collaborating with partners in our drive to provide more hostel accommodation. Efforts are at top gear to refurbish your various common-rooms, give them a face-lift and make it much easier for you to live with dignity. When you are dignified, it becomes easier for us too to train you in the best practices that will make you succeed not only in the University of Ilorin but also in the larger University of Life.

As far as your academics is concerned, it is apposite to say that is your primary assignment here, the core of your being students. Every other thing is peripheral. Part of the deal is that we would like to see you motivated and encouraged so that our vision of your excellence will be realized right before our eyes. In this respect, the prestigious University Undergraduate Scholarship has been restored. University scholars have emerged among you from various faculties based on merit. Every parent will be proud for his/her child to be proclaimed a University scholar and so you will. We believe that we should create a drive or internal force that will propel some of you to self-discovery and greater success. I told an audience recently that my parents only paid for my first year fees in this University. The University paid the rest as I enjoyed the scheme from my second year till I graduated. What was good for Oloyede is good for anyone of you too who is ready to square up to the challenge. The requirement is simple: stand out from the rest by being outstanding and you will be duly recognized and rewarded.

As firm believers in openness and transparency, we are creating channels for the verification of results. You would observe that in the last remedial exercise, all students had access to their scores in the various subjects they offered. It is no longer business as usual by which only the pass list would be released. All results will be accessible and verifiable. If a student has a genuine reason to doubt the accuracy of his/her result as given, such a student is free to ask for his/her script for a re-assessment. A pertinent point here is that this is a two-dimensional scenario. While we are favourably disposed to students having their rights, including the right of appeal for re-marking, we won't allow you to cast aspersion on the integrity of your lecturers. In other words, while we won't condone

unethical victimization or cheating of the students, we won't tolerate any attempt to blackmail your lecturers. To cry wolf or raise a storm in a tea-cup by a student will be penalized if eventually the judgement of the lecturer indicted is upheld as a fair and correct assessment. All scripts, after moderation, are now in the custody of the Central Administration.

In furtherance of our resolve to be current and vibrant, we will try our best to improve on power supply. One fact you all have to appreciate is that the issue of power generation and distribution is a macro phenomenon. The power situation in Nigeria is shamefully erratic and irregular. We are operating within such a system and our dream, our vision, is constrained by the reality of the circumstances beyond our control. Nevertheless, it is our commitment that the academic area be provided with light between 10 and 4, at all cost. The hostels will be providing alternative electricity too between 7p.m. and 10p.m. As for the library, we have decided on an all-round, twenty-four hours power supply so that you may be able to sit down and discharge your main duty in the University.

At this juncture, let me quickly direct your attention to Mahatma Gandhi, the father of modern India referred to by his admirers as "the master mind." It was Gandhi who identified the seven blunders of the modern world, as developed as it is assumed to be, as wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice and politics without principle. The extent to which he is right is known to you all but the important lesson therein is that you shouldn't join the blundering band-wagon. Another Gandhi, actually his

grandson, Harun, added the eight, which he identified as rights without responsibilities, the point I would like to harmer on.

Every right that you have has its corresponding responsibilities, the chief among which is that you should be law-abiding. The only way through which you can appreciate our efforts is by being law-abiding, vigilant and honest. The University has its rules and regulations just like every responsible organization. Do not allow disgruntled elements anywhere anyhow to use you in a way that is detrimental to your own interest. Nothing can be achieved in an atmosphere of crises and pandemonium. Nothing can be achieved in a climate of lawlessness and arbitrariness. Play the game according to the rules and you will all be better for it. **The Ilorin-12 is a lesson for all.**

The notion of playing the game according to the rule is also relevant now that we are lifting the ban on student unionism. It is your responsibility to do your internal scrutiny well so that you will have responsible leaders. The era of brawl and brawn is over, this is the age of brain. Those who rule and dominate the world are not giants by their physical sizes but they are giants by their mental faculties. Just look at the world, it will be compellingly true to you that mere brawn and empty bravura do not solve problems, they rather exacerbate them. This is a new age and the slogan of “aluta”, which conjures destruction and violence in impressionistic minds, is outdated and archaic. Let’s sing a new song, a song of dialogue, a song on sound intellectual engagement. Make constructive suggestions and critical analyses and you will be surprised by our forthrightness and sensitivity.

So sensitive to your interest we are that we are labouring day and night now to see that the final year students among you graduate in time so that the unnecessary delay of waiting for NYSC will be avoided. We have condensed the academic session so that they will graduate by July and get ready for the next level. This is at a great cost to the University, which has agreed to pay excess money of five hours per week to lecturers so that they may do their job conscientiously. Our own reasoning is that though it is said that *slow and steady wins the race*, but that is reasonable only in the absence of speed and accuracy. Your interest is our top priority and your cooperation in helping us to advance that interest is a core requirement. Talk to yourselves and enjoin yourselves to be partners in progress with us. When we work together, things will work for us all, a collective interest.

On a final note, this is the “Information Age”, as you must be aware. Computeracy is fast replacing literacy. You need to be ICT- (Information and Communication Technology) compliant. Anyone that is deprived of ICT is systematically burying himself or herself in an uncovered grave. We want you to be actively involved in our ICT strategic plan. We are creating the requisite infrastructural backbone for a University environment powered by ICT. Very soon, all things being equal and God on our side, the whole University will be a place where you can surf the net and browse, taking advantage of the wireless internet connection. Be studious. Be disciplined. Be organized. When you do these, even the sky cannot be your limit.

The body we are here to inaugurate shall be known as Transition and Electoral Committee.

- (i) It shall comprise all faculty presidents who formed the usual Student Consultative Council.
- (ii) The Presidents or SCC members should nominate an alumnus of the University who must be a Senior Staff of the University for the approval of Vice-Chancellor and to serve on the Committee.
- (iii) The Committee has the following Terms of Reference: To
 - (a) coordinate the activities of the Student Body during the Transition period;
 - (b) work our guidelines for elections into the Student Union;
 - (c) propose a timetable for the elections;
 - (d) supervise the elections;
 - (e) present report of the elections;
 - (f) hand over to the duly-elected Student Union Executive
- (iv) If any of the Faculty Presidents on this Committee is interested in contesting any of the posts, the Vice-President of the Faculty Association he/she represents should take his or her place.
- (v) A new Student Union Executive should be put in place by the beginning of the next Semester.

Thank you very much.