

New Vice-Chancellor's Inaugural Speech to Senate on 26th October 2007

REGENERATION FOR A NEW AGE

IT'S A NEW DAY!

Distinguished Members of the University Senate,

Today opens a wholly new vista in the annals of this institution as I address you in my position as the eighth substantive Vice-Chancellor of this thirty one year old citadel of learning. It is a sobering moment of my life as I acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead because I know that with every single opportunity comes corresponding responsibility(ies). The daunting but worthwhile tasks of sustaining, maintaining and reviving , as the case may be, the best traditions of this great institution cannot be achieved by me alone. It is conspicuously obvious that every community thrives largely on the strength of its subscription to collectivism. United, shall we all stand! While humbly soliciting your support, I do sincerely hope that we shall sail safely together and take our university to greater heights.

Permit me to emphasize that being a Vice-Chancellor is a special grace of God. A trial too. I reckon most strongly that it is God's grace that has taken me this far, despite my frailty as a man that God describes generically as "weak". It is also a test for the University of Ilorin as this office will underscore the perfection or imperfection of the training I have received over the years within this same system. You will all agree with me that it is not a trial for me alone. Rather, the trial is for this university that produced me. On my part, I am sustained by the conviction that "to whom much is given, much is expected". I am determined to offer my best with the hope that my best will be sufficient, even if it is not enough.

Distinguished scholars, my ambition to give my best logically derives from the widely held belief that our attitudes determine our altitudes and also that life is reciprocal. I have a strong, positive mental fervor that most of us would muster sufficient loyalty and commitment to this new administration. Kindly allow me to recall that I have served Vice-Chancellors before me with passion, zeal, dedication and unalloyed loyalty, sometimes at great risks to my life, indeed lives of my entire family. The challenges notwithstanding, I neither waned nor wavered in my commitment, loyalty and sustenance of this system. Reason: I deemed it good and decent to be loyal to the system and my former principals. I am thus highly optimistic that God will help to cultivate and nurture a broad-based team that would propel our university to an enviable level. I want to enjoin all of us privileged to be here today to renew our belief in service for it is the only rent we pay for the small space we occupy in this world.

Permit me to remark that being an alumnus of the University of Ilorin, the very first to occupy this seat, I have taken ample measure of time to avail myself with the tradition here. Besides, having worked with six or seven Vice-Chancellors largely in successively rising capacities, I have come to appreciate personal idiosyncrasies, each person with his style and priorities.

Agenda

Trendy Tradition

With due respect to the law, this administration desires to revive the tradition of this great university. I wish to emphasize that there are values we hold in high esteem that we must not only revive but revivify. A case in point is the issue of our yellow book. Has it not turned white? We therefore need to keep the unique values of the system, our own unique selling point, alive.

I wish to quickly add that in doing that, we shall also strive to be actively trendy. Consequently, the actualization of the strategic plan of the university which emphasizes Information and Communication Technology shall be pursued with vigour. It is forever imperative for all individuals irrespective of your professional inclination to be technologically trendy particularly in relation to information and communication. There is no contesting this era as Information Age! We shall therefore empower and encourage all members of staff of the university to possess personal computer so they could mainstream into what Manuel Castells refers to as the world's super highway via the campus-wide wireless internet environment which we shall soon actualise. We are equally poised to bridge the gap between members of this university community and the world by re-activating our international linkages with the UNESCO, IAU, AAU, GUNI, ACU and so forth. We will take further advantage of modern technology in the areas of transportation and energy supply.

We need to be punctual with the schedule of meetings, just as we keep up with our regular lecture schedules. This is a hallmark of our status as academics. We need to sustain peace and stability in the system to consolidate the gains of the past, stabilize the present and insure the future. We will readily take advantage of our fellowship of the Society for Peace Studies and Practice here.

History has convinced us that devolution of power in all societies is highly desirable. America is decentralized (*a la* federalism) and strong. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were centralized and all is history today. Has it not been argued in several disciplines, from economics to physics that decentralization is highly beneficial and that man is even naturally a decentralized animal? We shall therefore strengthen the committee system to smoothen all activities on the campus and indeed as a mark of our respect for democratic culture. This, inevitably, will help the management to concentrate on coordinating the various sub-systems and attracting development to our university.

We shall, at this point, task ourselves to begin to look at the possibility of introducing in our respective units what has come to be popularly known as brown bag sessions in the American university system. We reckon that we have always had enough to do but this could be self-driven using the students who stand to gain from the arrangement in all ramifications, from preparations to presentations by different guest speakers.

Research

We do strongly need to rev up our academic activities in teaching and research so we can be among the most visible in the nation's race to being one of the world's leading economies by 2020. I wish to enjoin us all to apply ourselves more to joint research known for its dual advantage of quality results and availing junior partners good opportunity to learn. I equally look forward to increased multidisciplinary research efforts which have limitless opportunities. Publications shall, however, not be all in all.

Discoveries, ground-breaking works and inventions deriving from publications shall equally attract rewards. I am excited to announce that here that this administration is already working on certain interventions that would make researching less cumbersome especially with regards to access to current information.

Students' Records

I wish to alert you all here that the University of Ilorin Alumni yahoogroup on the Internet is replete with complaints on the difficulty that my colleagues, fellow alumni of this great institution, encounter in the course of applying for transcripts. Do I need say that where records or information are hard to come by, chaos often results? Rumour can manifest in various forms, even criminally. My administration will do its best to reduce this to the barest minimum. Henceforth, full computerization of students' records shall be ascertained and sustained right from the point of admission to that of graduation and where possible, beyond. This will make it possible to know immediately the status of each bona fide student, at any time, by calling for the students' records either in the department, faculty or at the registry.

Annual Reports and Accounts

It is the genuine desire of this administration to give practical expression to the global phenomenon of transparency and accountability by documenting in preservable form the activities of all the units that make up this our university. Indeed, the University Act specifically demands for annual Reports. Henceforth, the university shall institutionalize this to complement weekly news bulletin and other such bits from different quarters. This occasion therefore avails us the opportunity to begin to conceptualise the appropriate template to use for inputs from the various quarters including the office of the Vice-Chancellor, faculties, centres and departments. As soon as any of the editions is ready, it will be mounted on the official website of our university. This will earn our university the desired visibility in no time especially as we begin to warm up to tap resources from relevant local and international sources. In addition, pay slips, notices and bulletin shall be electronically transmitted vide the e-mail system.

Compendium of Academic Publications

Further from the above, we plan to take the preservation of our institutional memory to providing adequately for the efforts of committed academics that accede to our call to engage relentlessly in research. Annually, this administration will endeavour to compile a comprehensive list of all journal articles and books by members of staff of our university. This way, active researchers will conspicuously stand apart from those who have elected to be complacent.

Welfare

My desire is to run a modern, first rate, efficiently administered university that prizes academic excellence and moral integrity where students and staff alike shall have fulfilling careers. While everyone will be alerted to his rights privileges and responsibilities, this regime shall deploy a commitment to service, transparency and accountability. All shall be motivated to muster their best for the realization of the collective goal of impeccable teaching, research and community service. We shall

endeavour to explore all viable sources locally and internationally for support to enable us provide necessary facilities in good time.

Every programme in the university shall have suitable training facilities and where such already exist, we shall be enthusiastic to update. What you practice, it is often said, you remember with ease. Let it be known, my revered colleagues, that this administration shall be willing to entertain suggestions and innovations from time to time.

This brings us to the issue of the need for regular review of courses. It is imperative that we produce graduates that are (labour) market compliant. The current practice around the world is the increasing emphasis on trans-disciplinary bent for all courses. For instance, I dare say that no course can claim to be closer to the knowledge of ICT than any other in this information age.

Justice

As student of peace studies, I have, for long, come to terms with the reality that peace without justice is peace of graveyard. We shall put in our best to sustain justice and equity. We must henceforth deal with every member of this community with fairness, ensuring that all transactions in this our university are devoid of discrimination on account of tribe, race, gender or faith. We shall not allow sheer sentiments, primordial or otherwise, to becloud our sense of judgment. We should not allow mental cobwebs to distort our thinking. Frankness, openness, truth, justice and transparency will be our compass and abiding philosophy. It is time to renew the campaign against the dehumanization of students under the guise of discipline or some other indescribable orientation. It is time to put final stop to sexual harassment of our students. The dignity of the undergraduate students should be restored. A sure way to achieve this is for us to accord our students the respect they deserve. The larger society will surely follow suit. One can only imagine the height of respectability of teachers of respected students. Of no less significance is our concern and appeal to us all to shun corruption in all forms. We, like Ceasar's wife must live above aboard. In this connection we anxiously look forward to establishing the local units of the Accountability and Transparency Unit of the ICPC as well as that of SERVICOM in line with the aspirations of the incumbent government of President Umaru Musa Yar'A dua. These two, to be based in the office of the Vice-Chancellor, will hopefully help to deter corruption and fire efficiency in the otherwise laid back staff of our university. There may not be any leniency left with this regime as far as injustice is concerned.

Permit me sirs and madams to formally register the fact that some of us elected to be academics because of integrity, scientific attitude and credibility which used to be associated with academics. The need to restore the dignity of the university system and its operators and regain the confidence of the society is very urgent and critical just as the tasks are feasible. What we need, in our opinion, are commitment, determination and focus.

We wish to declare that this administration shall adopt "open door" policy. We are open to ideas and suggestions that would enhance the quality and quantum of service delivery.

Conclusion

As we settle down to business, we wish to believe that the unduly externalised acrimony that characterized the immediate past is all over. We hereby genuinely stretch out the olive branch to all and sundry. We all are victors. We are the models for the larger society. We cannot afford to make the society look elsewhere.

Distinguished colleagues, I shall be seeking your most treasured support in the nomination of Deputy Vice-Chancellors in due course. With the support of the Council and the Senate, I shall uphold objectivity and ensure level playing ground. I therefore plead with you for corresponding decorum during the process.

May I, on the final note, reiterate that discipline shall not be compromised for any reason. We shall be consistently bold to maintain it. I learnt, long ago from a writer that effective leadership is putting first things first while effective management is discipline. This is necessary because without a sense of discipline there is no dedication and without dedication, nothing really works.

My revered colleagues, I hereby solemnly and sincerely offer to lead by example. I do hope that together we shall make our university, the University of Ilorin greater, fly it higher, and build it much better by far

I am so grateful for your patience and attention.