

TOGETHER EVERYONE ACHIEVES MORE

**Address Delivered by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, Prof. Wahab
O. Egbewole, SAN, at the Meeting of the Congregation at the University Auditorium
on Friday, October 21, 2022**

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Preamble

It is my honour and privilege to stand before you this morning as the 11th substantive Vice Chancellor of this University. As a member of this Congregation before I got my recent job description, I am delighted we have another opportunity of meeting after a long time that the meeting had not been held as a result of certain circumstances beyond our control. Today ordinarily would be a day of convocation for the award of undergraduate degrees, given the usual practice, but it is consolatory that this congregation is taking place in its stead. In a sense, to convoke is also to congregate and we thank God we are alive to congregate again after a very challenging period of a prolonged strike.

A Little NASA Story

Let me begin with a little story, an incident that happened some 60 years ago. President John F. Kennedy visited the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for the first time in 1962. As he was touring the facility, he met a janitor who was carrying a broom down the hallway. Then, he casually asked what the man did for NASA. The man replied, "I'm helping put a man on the moon".

If you reflect a bit on this story, you would appreciate the mindset of this janitor, a cleaner at NASA. He understood what many graduates and educated employees today do not understand and that is the purpose of his work. He knew that his work, which was to clean the whole building so that scientists, engineers, experts and astronauts would be able to concentrate on their jobs, was important to the space mission. He did what he did and contributed to the success of the organisation. He knew his purpose and he served it well, with a good mindset.

Vision 1:10:500

We all know that the University of Ilorin has a vision "to be an international centre of excellence in learning, research, probity and service to humanity". The University also has a mission, which is "to provide a world-class environment for learning, research and community service." Within these two frameworks, I have a vision to make the University of Ilorin the first in Nigeria, one of the foremost 10 in Africa and one of the best 500 globally. It is possible if we all believe it is and I urge you all to believe it and key into it.

There was a time the University of Ilorin was Number One in Nigeria across all ranking tables. Somehow along the line, we became complacent until universities established some 10 years ago around us started to rank above us, this is totally unacceptable. I want to crave your indulgence to let us all work together in returning the University to its topmost position not only in Nigeria but also in Africa. After all, *together everyone achieves more* and we can certainly achieve better than we are now.

To achieve this vision, we are all important. As a matter of fact, the Director and the janitor, the Manager and the messenger, the staff and the students are all stakeholders in this drive to reposition the University for higher heights and global excellence. We must be outstanding in what we do so that we may stand tall and stand out as the University that is truly better by far than the rest and the best by all standards.

The journey to being one of the topmost world universities definitely requires some specific strategies which I shall share in due course with a critical segment of the university community. It is sufficient as a Congregation that we know that everything will be achieved on the strength of being SMART, our operational mantra.

Be SMART

As I mentioned in my inaugural address this Monday (October 17, 2022), “The Sun Rises Again”, our next Strategic Plan shall be about “Shuttling to the Space” after the expiration of the current one, “Beyond the Frontiers” (2019-2023). I want you to keep it in mind that everyone of you is important to the actualisation of the mission to the space. Like the NASA janitor who understood his purpose, I expect you all and I plead with you that you imbibe the work ethics that defines those that aim for the space. With this mindset, we shall be able to face the future together and contribute our quotas towards institutional advancement.

We are living in the era of smart technologies and high-tech devices. There is virtually nothing meaningful that we can achieve in today’s knowledge economy and university ecosystem without technology. This informs my desire for us all to contribute to the development of a SMART campus where we shall be aided by technology and driven by the acronym towards sustainable development, monumental achievements, adaptive capacity, rapid response to change and team building.

Sustainable Development

What is sustainable development? It is all about environmental, economic and social well-being for today and tomorrow. Its most frequent definition is the one contained in

Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report: *sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. We all know that Sustainable Development, as a global agenda, has 17 goals some of which are beyond our reach as an institution but that we shall still strive to domesticate, the three core elements of SD that will guide us are economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. In this regard, all of us are important towards creating wealth for the university, ensuring inclusiveness at our various levels and protecting our environment so that we shall have a green and clean university.

Monumental Achievements

The University of Ilorin in this dispensation is keen on regaining its previous status as the number one university in Nigeria. Currently, this is not the case but with a commitment on our part to achieve the best achievable in our various departments and units, we shall get there. It is in this regard that I want to urge you to double your efforts so that we shall achieve monumental achievements in teaching, research and community service.

The University shall be a partner-in-progress with you in this regard and we shall do the best we can in creating an environment that would allow you to excel at what you do. This is with regard to the provision of facilities and equipment that would engender excellent results.

Adaptive Capacity

Though as far back as the 17th Century, John Donne had written that *no man is an island* and it is a common saying that no one is an island unto himself, the saying holds special significance to everyone in our today's age of globalisation and increased interconnectivity. In this regard, what happens somewhere is crucial to the survival of people elsewhere and no one can afford to be insular. Rather, we should be able to connect with one another and adapt best practices within our own system. The capacity to adapt is more important than adopting what others are doing without considering the contextual variables.

Therefore, as you encounter or experience developments and innovations elsewhere, I encourage you to share what you know with us so that we can adapt it. There are landmarks in the University of Ilorin today (and I do not have to mention them) that are products of adaptation of what is done elsewhere. In essence, the University is keen on instituting best practices and is committed to making good better and making better best with ideas that are transformational.

Rapid Response to Change

My dear brothers and sisters, the only thing permanent in life is change and in order to embrace change, we must leave our comfort zones. Change allows us to move forward and experience new and exciting things. It brings more opportunities to improve the quality of our life, the way we do things, the way we live life, the way we work, the way we learn and the way we earn. What often happens is that some people ignore change rather than respond to it. Change is normal and natural as, without change, there is stagnation or regression. While change is desirable, responding to it rapidly is even more crucial.

From attitude to assignments to the treatment of memos, from the grading of students' scripts to all aspects of official work, rapid response is required as we reposition ourselves for more institutional excellence. The University under my stewardship shall be receptive to ideas that ignite change and we shall be responding to suggestions and advice brought up after weighing their pros and cons. Even if a suggestion is not implemented, it would not be because it has not been considered. Everyone certainly has something to offer.

Team Building

This Administration will be anchored on team building because I understand that the *actual* meaning of TEAM is Together Everyone Achieves More. In achieving effective team building, everyone of us has to embrace its seven C's which are Clarity, Capability, Collaboration, Commitment, Continuous Improvement and Creativity. We need to be clear about our purposes and assignments, be capable to execute them, be confident enough to collaborate with others, commit ourselves to the task at hand till we succeed, and continue to improve ourselves in skills and capacity as we remain creative in deploying strategies and applying solutions.

Everyone of us is a leader and everyone of us is accountable as team leaders. Principal Officers, Provost, Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments and Units, Coordinators, Level Advisers, Representatives, Chairmen and Committee Members, Secretaries and officers at any level, virtually everyone of us here falls into one category or another. HODs should carry staff along, Deans should be accountable to the Faculty. Everyone of us should build a strong team where we find ourselves and strengthen the committee system. The result will be effectiveness and efficiency.

Technology and Trends

It is evident from the foregoing that we must leverage technology to achieve our desired vision. All members of this Congregation will be expected to have smartphones and high-tech devices to be connected. The University will create an avenue for ease of acquisition. The era of treating memos through the paper and pen method will soon be over.

Memos will be electronically processed and digitally archived. Where hard copies are used, they will just serve as backups. The Senate has already been paperless for some time already. Transcripts will not require physical presence and the application process will be more automated.

Our Internet infrastructure will be bolstered for increased efficiency while efforts will be made to make it accessible to every office, staff and student. It will be expected that official work is done through this IT so that it will not serve as a distraction. We need our COMSIT to brace up for the optimal achievement of this goal.

Welfare

As a former Chairman of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), University of Ilorin Chapter, I know from experience that the main purpose of trade unions is to promote the welfare of their members. It is axiomatic that unionism would not have been necessary if leaders were responsible for discharging their duties and responsive to the needs of their followers. The interest of Administration and unions intersect at the point of welfarism. We cannot succeed beyond the limits of our human capacity and the staff constitute a dynamic force that makes change happens.

In light of the foregoing, our Administration will champion the welfare of staff and put their advancement and satisfaction as our top priority. When competing obligations and unexpected constraints limit our capacity, we shall be transparent enough to explain the rationale behind actions or situations that require elaboration. One thing is certain: Egbewole will not deny anyone his due and everyone will be treated with fairness and truth.

On Our Marks

Now that the strike is over, I urge us all to be on our mark, be set and then go. The journey starts now and we should begin work in the interest of our students, the system and humanity. We shall be addressing the lingering issues and I am already setting up a committee to draw mechanisms that would make us happy and motivated.

I look forward to harvesting more ideas from you because ideas rule the world.

Thank you very much for your attention.