

SERVANT LEADER

BY

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***At the 2023 Orientation Programme for newly
appointed Deans, Directors, HODs, and
Deputy Directors organized by CREDIT held
on 2nd August, 2023***

Ladies and gentlemen,

I stand before you today with great enthusiasm and determination to share our vision for turning this esteemed institution into a world-class center of excellence. First, let me Congratulate all those who have just been appointed. I hope you have all resumed and have received handover notes from your predecessors. I extend my warm welcome to all the Deans, Directors, Deputy Directors, Heads of Departments, Deputy registrars, Faculty Officers, Faculty Accountants, Deputy Bursars, Deputy Librarian and all other Heads of units present here. All of you would play pivotal roles in shaping the future of our university.

As we progress towards these ambitious goals, it is crucial that we uphold and honor the vision of our founding fathers. They have laid a strong foundation upon which we stand today. I acknowledge the great work done by my predecessors, and it is our collective duties to carry their legacies forward while ensuring that their efforts do not go in vain.

As heads of various unit in this university, let me remind you that this administration adopted the leadership model of ‘a servant leader’ which we want you to also adopt, and these are some of the characteristics of a servant leader that we want you to emulate:

- (a) **Show Empathy:** We must be ‘a servant’ leader who actively listens and understands the concerns, aspirations, and challenges of our staff and students. We must empathize with their needs; we must create a supportive environment that fosters trust and open communication.
- (b) **Shared Vision:** We must have a shared vision, First, you must share the vision of the University administration and you must also have your own vision and targets. Your team must be involved in the vision-setting process. We want you to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and develop mechanisms that would allow you to see how you perform against these KPIs. Make the KPIs known to your team such that they share your vision. Seek their input and feedback, and ensure that the vision of the administration and that of the founding fathers of this institution aligns with the collective aspirations and values of your team.
- (c) **Empowerment:** We must empower our team by delegating authority and responsibilities to them. We must guide them and ensure that they remain guided by the rules and regulations of the University. Please empower and foster a sense of ownership and accountability and motivate your team to work towards our vision with dedication.
- (d) **Development:** A servant leader must invest in the personal and professional development of the followers. We shall provide training opportunities as much as we can. You in turn must provide your team with opportunities for skill enhancement and growth that would enable them to contribute effectively to our vision while they also grow in the system.
- (e) **Leading by Example:** We must all model the behavior we expect our team to follow. By demonstrating commitment, integrity, and dedication to our collective vision and leading by example, we would inspire others to do the same.

- (f) **Collaboration and Teamwork:** One of the main reasons for this session is to emphasize collaboration and teamwork. We cannot do it alone and you cannot do it alone too. We want you to know each other, work together, put aside your differences and eradicate silos. A lot of our responsibilities overlap, we must not think that a director is superior to a dean or vice versa, we must put aside our ego for the sake of this university. We must create a culture of inclusivity, where diverse perspectives are valued, and teamwork is encouraged.
- (g) **Recognition and Appreciation:** We as leaders of various units must acknowledge the contributions of others and celebrate their achievements. We must give credit to the efforts of our team while pushing them to do more. We must also recognize that their efforts, boost morale and motivate them to continue working towards our shared vision.
- (h) **Continuous Communication:** We must maintain open and transparent communication with our team and the university management. We must keep our teams informed about the progress towards our shared vision, address their concerns promptly, and provide feedback regularly.
- (i) **Servant Leadership Mindset:** The philosophy of servant leadership must be deeply rooted in our mindset and values. I emphasis again, that we must not see ourselves as leaders with absolute authority. We must show a genuine desire to serve and uplift others, placing their needs and that of this University ahead of our personal interests.

Before I proceed let me share with you the vision, mission and anthem of the University so that we can together understand the vision of our founding fathers. Let us read this line by line so that we can understand the meaning.

Vision Statement of the University

To be an international centre of excellence in learning, research, probity and service to humanity.

Mission Statement of the University

To provide world-class environment for learning, research and community service.

University Anthem:

In love peace and harmony,
We shall build the tower Unilorin
Hear the clarion call
In unity we grow
Committed to the seat of our Learning
Our hearts from vanity
Standing firm in wisdom
In knowledge and in truth
We honour your virtues unilorin
You stand in strength and pride.
Learning
Winning

Building
Praying
Showing the way for all who yearn
Making a future for the ones who follow
Rising high we must never turn
Ilorin unilorin
Your torch has guided us
Upwards and onwards
Ilorin unilorin
Our Alma Mater
We sing

My Question is How far away are we from the vision and mission of the founding fathers?

My Vison As Vice Chancellor:

1: 10: 500

What does this mean?

Simply, I want to return this University to its number 1 position in Nigeria, among the best 10 in Africa and among the top 500 universities in the world

Our desire is to become an international center of excellence in learning, research, probity and service to humanity.

A center of excellence in learning, research, probity and service to humanity must excel in various aspects of its operations: By offering exceptional education, research, and overall academic experience. These are some of the other characteristics that we must have in mind as we go forward:

- (a) **Academic Excellence:** World-class institutions are known for their high academic standards and rigorous academic programs. They attract top staff members and students, offering a wide range of high-quality courses and programs.
- (b) **Research and Innovation:** Leading institutions invest significantly in research and development, fostering a culture of innovation and cutting-edge discoveries. They produce impactful research that advances knowledge and addresses real-world challenges.
- (c) **Staff members:** World-class institutions have highly qualified and dedicated academic and non-academic staff. They attract and retain top talent, and provide continuous professional development and support to enhance their expertise.
- (d) **Infrastructure and Facilities:** Word class institutions boast of state-of-the-art infrastructure, modern classrooms, advanced laboratories, well-equipped libraries, and other facilities that enhance the learning and research experience.

- (e) **Internationalisation:** World-class institutions embrace internationalization, fostering global perspectives by attracting international students and staff, offering collaboration opportunities, such as study abroad programs, and engaging in collaborative research and partnerships with renowned institutions worldwide.
- (f) **Reputation and Rankings:** Prestigious institutions earn global recognition through positive reputations and high rankings in international educational and research rankings.
- (g) **Graduates' Success:** A world-class institution produces successful and employable graduates who contribute positively to society. The success of their alumni reflects the quality of education and training provided.
- (h) **Engagement and Community Impact:** Leading institutions actively engage with their communities and contribute to societal development through research, outreach programs, and community service.
- (i) **Alumni Network:** World-class institutions have active and influential alumni networks that support the institution's growth and provide opportunities for current students.
- (j) **Continuous Improvement:** These institutions are committed to continuous improvement, regularly evaluating and updating their curriculum, programs, and facilities to remain at the forefront of education and research.

We can achieve these if we work as a team. It is important to note that achieving a world-class status is a continuous journey, and we at the University of Ilorin must adapt to changing global trends and needs to maintain our reputation and standing. The path to becoming a world-class institution requires sustained efforts, investments, and a focus on excellence in all aspects of academic life. **For example, we have built a reputation for ourselves as an institution with an unbroken academic calendar, but we deviated a bit from this due to some circumstances beyond our control. We must ensure that we regain this reputation.**

What should we do going forward?

1. Academic excellence

- **Improved curriculum:** NUC has allowed us to be innovative with 30% of our curriculum in the BMAS. A lot of us did not contribute towards this. Deans should ensure that innovation is encouraged in our curriculum and you must drive this with full determination of turning this university into a world-class University.

2. Innovative ways to Lecture monitoring and Quality Assurance: I would expect that heads of departments, deans and heads of other units would work with the quality assurance directorate. The quality assurance directorate sent out a plan recently I do not think anyone responded or provided feedback to that document. Please we need to work as a team.

3. **Research Excellence:** We must continue to encourage research excellence. We have distributed the senate research grant to all faculties based on your student population. This money must be spent on quality research that would lead to more grants in the future. This money must not be spent on frivolities. We must ensure that all categories of staff from Professors to Junior staff who would be mentored benefit from this grant. On Assumption of office, I discovered that we have been blacklisted by TETFUND in some areas. We could not access the TETFUND Institution-Based Research (IBR) grant because we have 6 years of unretired funds. This was also the same for the international conference funds managed by the Center for International Education. I have engaged with the Ag director of CREDIT and Directors of CIE and the staff involved. We have given them deadlines because these two important TETFUND grants must be restored by September this year at all costs.

For the TETFUND National Research Fund (NRF), our university currently has had about 10 NRF grants in the last 3 years. However, we need to do more. My vision is that we must have 20 in the next three years. The way to achieve this is in two folds. We must adequately monitor the current recipients and ensure that they complete their research in time so that we are not backlisted from the TETFUND NRF and we must also ensure that we get staff members to submit quality applications. CREDIT unit and Deans must work together on this. At the moment, for money to be released, it has to be signed for by both the PI and the Ag. Director of CREDIT. I would want the deans to be involved in this process. PI's in various facilities must submit their reports through CREDIT with the knowledge of their respective Deans and Faculty research managers.

For External research grants, there is no longer a problem of being short-changed as a result of the official exchange rate. This is because the government has harmonised the exchange rate. Please work with the bursary unit and educate others in your unit so that they no longer have to fear that their money will be trapped in TSA. We have put in place mechanisms to ensure that they get their grant in time. Please let us continue to encourage all staff to apply for external grants and ensure that this grant is appropriately documented with the CREDIT unit. It is important for us to have proper records of all grants just as the grant is important to the recipients.

4. **Quality Staff recruitment:** At the moment, we cannot employ new staff because of the embargo by the federal government but we have been engaging adjunct, visiting and sabbatical staff. We want you to look for staff in these categories from outside the shore of this country too. Every faculty should have an international adjunct or visiting lecturer who would be dedicated to teaching and research and can do this using virtual platforms. We currently have Zoom accounts that are grossly underutilized. We are also working on the internet bandwidth and we shall also be purchasing cameras and equipment that you can utilize for virtual lectures. We know that there would be challenges but let us look for solutions, let us be creative and think outside of the box. Before the end of this year, we shall conduct a number of senate meetings 100% virtual so as to test our readiness.
5. **Upgrading of critical infrastructure:** The university funds cannot do this alone and we are in this together. I want you to help us seek external funding to upgrade our infrastructure

and equipment. Do not always come to us for funding requests. We want you to always seek alternative means, for example, let us open an avenue of discussion with our alumni, we can also do this at the facility level and even at the departmental level. We have graduates who are doing well and are ready to contribute either directly or using their networks. we are currently working to ensure that the alumni association is more vibrant.

6. **Student support:** It is essential that we adequately support our students. The students are very important and we must ensure that we support them better. We must seek to provide the following support to our students
 - (a) **Academic Support:** We must ensure that we provide academic support services such as tutoring, mentoring, and academic advising to help students excel in their studies and navigate through challenging courses. Academic support services, deans, and Heads of departments must take the lead on this.
 - (b) **Counseling and Mental Health Services:** Offer counselling and mental health services to address students' emotional and psychological needs, ensuring their well-being and mental health. The counselling centre must expand its services and be more efficient. Mental health is real and of major concern especially with the younger generation these days.
 - (c) **Career Services:** At the faculty level we want you to establish a robust career services center that provides career counseling, job placement assistance, internship opportunities, and workshops on employability skills. The SIWES unit must also take a lead in this while working with the Deans and HoDs.
 - (d) **Health and Wellness Services:** access to healthcare services, promote healthy lifestyle choices, and create awareness about physical wellness.
 - (e) **Financial Assistance:** We have been offering grants, and financial aid programs to help students who are doing well knows as our scholars. We need to coordinate this initiative better. Can this process be fully digitize and necessary approval sort in time? Can we better coordinate the process of hostel allocation in the needs hostel. Please let us think about it.
 - (f) **Student Development Programs:** We must collaborate with student affairs to Organize workshops, seminars, and training sessions on leadership, time management, communication, and other essential life skills to promote personal and professional growth.
 - (g) **Student Involvement and Engagement:** we must encourage student participation in extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations to foster a sense of belonging and community.

- (h) **Digital Learning Support:** The university library must enhance the university's technological infrastructure to support digital learning and ensure that students have access to necessary resources online.
 - (i) **Transparent Communication:** We must also Establish open and transparent communication channels between students, staff members, and the university administration to address concerns and provide updates effectively.
 - (j) **Student Feedback Mechanism:** We must at the departmental and faculty level Implement a robust system for collecting student feedback regularly and using it to make improvements and address issues proactively. This should be done in conjunction with academic planning and the quality assurance unit
 - (k) **Inclusive Policies:** We must ensure that university policies and practices promote inclusivity and diversity, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all students.
 - (l) **Internationalisation Programmes:** The CIE and facilities must seek ways in which we can attract international students and ways in wish, exchange programs, and international exposure are offered to broaden our students' horizons and promote global citizenship.
7. **Univeristy Ranking:** This university must be ranked number 1 in Nigeria and among the top 10 in Africa. We must achieve this by working together.
- To Archive this:
- (a) All staff members must have Google, Scopus and other account with affiliation showing the University of Ilorin, this should not only be tied to promotion because we have a lot of professors who are no longer looking for promotion and does not have these accounts, we must seek for ways to ensure that they have these accounts.
 - (b) Our publications and citations must improve. No master's or Ph.D. student can graduate without publications. We would continue to push for this at the senate.
 - (c) We must ensure that staff and students are using the University emails. One major reason to ensure this is because ranking organizations send surveys to staff and students using their official emails and we must ensure that we guide the students in filling these surveys. The use of other email platforms must be henceforth discouraged at all levels.
 - (d) We need accurate records of staff student ratio, this must be done to include every category of staff including adjunct, sabbatical and visiting lecturers. Deans must work with academic planning to ensure that the records are correct and up to date.
 - (e) We shall have a dedicated officer for ranking. We all must work with this officer and do everything possible to improve our ranking.
 - (f) We need to improve in the following areas to improve n our ranking
 - Accurate data collections
 - Enagage international staff and students
 - Improve our research output
 - Improve our citations, especially with the Scopus database.
 - Ensure that we have an online repository for student projects on the University website.

- All departmental and faculty journals must be linked to the university website and we must work towards them being indexed on Scopus. Department and facilities should work with COMSIT and the University library on this
- All conferences organized must be linked with the university website. Please work with the Director of COMSIT on this.
- We must encourage research that leads to patents and startups that can showcase the university's impact on industry and society. The director of TEC should actively drive this.

Other Issues

To achieve this vision, we must embrace technology as the driving force for progress and innovation. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will empower us to excel in teaching, research, and administration. Our website is a vital tool for sharing information and showcasing our achievements. Let us create subdomains for conference advertisements, attracting more traffic to our online platforms. Digitization plays a critical role in modernizing our processes and services. The university library is committed to supporting digitization efforts, and we are actively working on digitizing all units. The new director of Computer Services and Information Technology (COMSIT) will ensure that our technological infrastructure is up-to-date and efficient.

We should focus on obtaining accreditations for our programs and raising the bar for research and scholarly work.

Thesis and dissertations must be available in a digital repository rather than printed copies. Don't you think that the university should use the money being collected for printing by students to build an online repository such that we shall abolish the printing of projects? Why do we need to print in the 21st century and in our drive for a world-class university? I hope you will champion this on the floor of the Senate.

In conclusion, I reiterate my strong commitment to this vision, and I implore every member of the University of Ilorin community to join me on this transformative journey. Together, we can achieve greatness and fulfil the aspirations of our founders. Let us embrace technology, nurture collaboration, uphold academic excellence, and communicate effectively. By doing so, we will propel our beloved University of Ilorin to the summit of success and global recognition.

Thank you for your attention and dedication. Let us unite in our pursuit of excellence!