

UNILORIN @ 50: GOLD NEVER RUSTS



Celebrating Excellence, Sustaining Greatness...

**Text of the Press Briefing Made by the
Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin,
Prof. Wahab O. Egbewole, SAN,
as Part of the Activities Marking the 50th Anniversary of the University
at the University Auditorium on Tuesday, November 25, 2025**

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It is my singular honour and profound pleasure to welcome you all to this historic occasion, which heralds the activities marking the golden anniversary of our great University of Ilorin. It is an unassailable truth that 50 years is a remarkable landmark in the life of a person, an institution or organization. It exemplifies maturity, resilience, sustenance, legacies and on the whole, the manifestation of proper planning. Like a child of destiny, the University of Ilorin that was a baby in 1975 has grown to become an accomplished man. If truly the thoughtful are grateful, I begin by acknowledging the gracefulness of Almighty Allah in the life of this international citadel of higher learning for sustaining the University for these past five decades.

In the same spirit, I express gratitude to the founding fathers of the University for the clarity of their vision and the keenness of their passion for human capacity development with which the noble mission of the university was conceived. The University of Ilorin shall continue to honour the memory of their legacies and appreciate the solid foundation they provided for it. In this regard, along with many others that worked behind the scene and under the cloak of anonymity, we celebrate Prof. T. N. T. Tamuno, Prof. O. O. Akinkugbe, Prof. A. O. Adesola, Prof. S. A. Toye, Prof. Emeritus Adeoye Adeniyi, Prof. S. O. Abdulraheem, Prof. S. O. Amali, Prof. Emeritus I. O. Oloyede, Prof. A. G. Ambali and Prof. S. A. Abdulkareem along with their teams and stakeholders. These great minds did not work alone, I acknowledge the various individuals that worked with them.

The Golden Age

It is highly gratifying that the University of Ilorin that started as just another university 50 years ago, derided even by its own students as a ‘glorified secondary school’ in the humble ambience of the Mini Campus in the mid-80’s, and considered one of the best second generation universities in Nigeria during the Silver Jubilee, has undoubtedly become the number one university in Nigeria at its golden age. The monumental achievements of the University within the past 50 years are so monumental that they would fill several volumes of books if they are to be documented. The impacts it has recorded on the global academic and professional landscape are impressive and staggering. When we look at the mirror, what reflects back to us is a kaleidoscope of stability, character, excellence, development, progress and more.

What suffices is that the University has contributed immensely to the manpower development of Nigeria and the world, with its graduates all over the continents making waves with the knowledge, skills and enterprise gained from the institution. The University has also left indelible footprints on the Nigerian university ecosystem with its innovation, excellence and leadership. These innovation, excellence and leadership include the introduction of the Computer-Based Test (CBT) to the university examination system, vast academic awards and fellowships won by staff and students, as well as provision of quality leadership to universities and their consortia. In other

words, the University of Ilorin within the period of 50 years has provided leadership at the global International Association of Universities (IAU), Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), Association of African Universities (AAU), Consortium of Six African Universities (U6+), Association of West Africa Universities (AWAU), Association cum Committee of Vice Chancellor of Nigerian Universities (AVCNU/CVCNU), Consortium of Universities in Kwara State (KU8+) among others. The University has every reason to be proud of itself as it continues “standing firm in wisdom, in knowledge and in truth... 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!”

We affirm the *better by far* University won’t turn away from the core values that define it. The values of Integrity, Networking, Justice, Excellence and Teamwork (INJECT). We hold them dear and will continue to nurture these values that define us.

Reinventing the University

In the past 50 years, just as one of our scholars had noted in an essay, the University has passed through the stages of formation, consolidation, actualisation, transformation and innovation. Currently, the university is in the era of innovative reinvention under our smart administration where we build on the past legacies to launch the university into the space. That is why we are celebrating excellence with a view to sustaining our greatness.

Today, the University of Ilorin stands tall as the University of First Choice and it is renowned for its reinvented stable academic calendar, competent and highly motivated workforce, adoption of technology in university life, sustainable funding, internationalisation, research for knowledge economy and provision of adequate infrastructure within the limits of our expanding capacity. These are part of what I envisioned for the University three years ago in my inaugural address to the University Senate on Friday, October 21, 2022.

The University of Ilorin essentially has made its mark within the past 50 years by recording a good number of firsts, including being consistently ranked the best university in Nigeria and the first Nigerian university to be ranked among the best 20 in Africa. Our Vision 1:10:500 captures the thrust of the moment that seeks to consolidate on the *numero uno* status of the University in Nigeria and position it to become one of the best 10 universities in Africa and among the best 500 in the world. This is not just a pronouncement or a campaign slogan but a commitment to excellence that would trigger a new thinking propelling the University to the apogee of reckoning in Africa and the world.

I enjoin all stakeholders, students, staff, alumni and friends, to support the University in accomplishing our vision, which aligns with the Strategic Plan of our Golden Age.

The 50th Anniversary

In a sense, the 50th anniversary activities had started since January this year when the Planning Committee was inaugurated and the Jubilee logo was unveiled. There have been events held, programmes organised and projects executed in the spirit of the season. We had appointed 50 Unilorin Ambassadors and honoured distinguished personalities who had contributed their quotas to the greatness of the University. The anniversary activities, however, gained momentum this week starting with the Anniversary Service and Thanksgiving held on Sunday at St Thomas Aquinas Chaplaincy and Chapel of Light here on the Main Campus of the University. The programmes were beautiful and spirit-filled.

Yesterday, Monday, November 24, 2025, there were three activities starting with the ‘Unilorin at 50 Walk’ in which our staff, students and alumni participated in their colourful branded T-shirts. This walk terminated at the Emir’s Palace where we congratulated His Royal Highness, Dr Ibrahim Sulu Gambari CFR and received the royal blessings. This was followed with the Vice Chancellor’s Interactive Session with the former Principal Officers of the University at the Dam Site, an interesting reunion that enabled the past to flow into the present and thereby inspire the future. After that, there was the premiere of the movie ‘The Son of Iron’ at the University Auditorium. It is noteworthy that the script writers and majority of the lead cast members are alumni of this great University. The excitement at the premiere was contagious. While waiting to watch the film, a free medical screening session was held courtesy of our Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences.

Today’s activities begin with this press briefing on our golden anniversary. You will agree with me that the University of Ilorin is gold and *gold never rusts*. As we march into the future ahead, the University is poised to glitter more, adding brightness and value to the lives of the future generations of not only Nigerians but also other members of our shared humanity across the world.

After this event, we shall commission the Space Research Centre and there will be visits, part of our Corporate Social Responsibility, to the Governor of Kwara State and other stakeholders. If you are not on the list, just receive us in spirit because everyone is important though not everyone will occupy an important spot or position at the same time. When we return from the visits, exactly by 5:00 p.m., we shall meet the leaders of the Student Union to cross-fertilise ideas with them and deepen discourse on how to advance this University’s mandate from their unique perspectives as today’s readers and tomorrow’s leaders. The medical screening by our Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences still continues and everyone can take advantage of the golden opportunity at no cost.

Tomorrow, which is Wednesday November 26, 2025, is dedicated to the alumni as the Alumni Day and Colloquium. The activities include a special presentation by our notable alumni, presentation of the 3D Model of the 50th Anniversary Project of the

University, fundraising for the Special Alumni Project (Innovation and Transcript Hub), commissioning of the Alumni Secretariat as well as the alumni luncheon and anniversary play.

On Thursday, November 27, 2025, the grand finale of the activities will take place with an anniversary lecture, **Unilorin at 50: Innovating for a Sustainable Nigerian Future**, to be delivered by the world renowned African intellectual, Prof. P. L. O. Lumumba, all the way from Kenya. This is a lecture you don't want to miss as Prof. Lumumba, who does not need any introduction in an academic community like ours and informed African circles at large, will be his quintessential self with profound ideas that ignite value, engender change and inspire hope. Other activities of the day include the presentation of the 3D Model of the 50th Anniversary Project, launch of a N50 billion endowment fund, special recognitions and conferment of Award of Excellence on a few notable Nigerians including Her Excellency, First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu CON, commissioning of JAMB hostel and the Innovation Hub, and the day will be capped with the anniversary dinner.

This amazing week of light, learning, reminiscences, reunion and colours will come to a glorious end on Friday, November 28, 2025 with a special Jum'at service dedicated to thanking Almighty Allah for successfully *celebrating excellence* and praying for more grace and wisdom in *sustaining greatness*. I cordially invite you to all the events and I urge you to be part of this history.

Unity against Insecurity

It is an open truth that these anniversary activities are taking place in the context of a defining moment in Nigeria's history. The United States President, Donald Trump, recently threatened to come to Nigeria 'guns-a-blazing' as a way of confronting what he called 'Christian genocide', an allegation that has been denied by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the African Union Commission and the European Union, among others. There has been a spike in insecurity in the past few days and even Kwara State, our State of Harmony, is under the threat of killers and kidnappers. The Nigerian faultlines of religion, ethnicity and politics are being conflated to obfuscate an existential challenge and uncertainty pervades the horizon.

While partnership with world powers is welcome in defeating the monsters of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and other forms of insecurity ravaging Nigeria, to which Nigerians, regardless of sectional or sectarian orientations, are victims and casualties, it is another thing entirely for the sovereignty of Nigeria to be compromised, a violation of international law. It is in this regard that I urge the American government to assist the Nigerian government with technology and equipment, both software and hardware, to defeat the monsters that make our lives 'nasty, brutish and short', as philosopher Thomas Hobbes would describe the 'state of nature' that appears to be our lot at this critical time.

Anything other than that could create ‘The Cobra Effect’, which should be avoided. *The cobra effect*, for the benefit of hindsight, illustrates how well-meaning actions can backfire, often worsening the original problem as it happened in the 19th century during the British rule in India, when the colonial government faced a venomous crisis of cobras overrunning the land.

As a way of containing the problem, they introduced a bounty for every dead cobra. While the plan initially worked, with villagers enthusiastically bringing in dead cobras, it was soon noticed that something odd was happening as the cobra population wasn’t declining. Investigations revealed that villagers had begun breeding cobras to claim the bounty. The British angrily ended the programme and a bigger problem emerged with breeders releasing cobras into the community, causing the Cobra population to dramatically increase. This became a classic example of unintended consequences, or ‘The Cobra Effect’, a warning about linear thinking, human unpredictability, and the ripple effects of misguided incentives.

Therefore, if there is a time for Nigerians to rally together and confront criminals and human cretin among us, it is now. It is time Nigerians put ethnic, religious and political differences aside to save the country from these recurrent orgies of violence. As our former Senate President, Dr Chuba Okadigbo, was reported to have once said, “If you are emotionally attached to your tribe, religion or political leaning to the point that truth and justice become secondary considerations, your education is useless. Your exposure is useless. If you cannot reason beyond petty sentiments, you are a liability to mankind.”

As Nigerians, we need not be liabilities to Nigeria. All hands must be on deck to ensure the success of the Nigerian project. We should all say an unequivocal NO to all forms of extremism across religious, ethnic and political faultlines that define us. Let us be gold that never rusts.

What Next in the Next 50 Years?

Today, we are celebrating 50 years but our goal is to use this celebration to chart our path for the next 50 years which will be the centenary of our great citadel of learning. What do we intend to be known for in the next 50 years?

- Academic stability
- Innovative thinking
- Artificial Intelligence-driven knowledge
- Impactful researches
- Exploration of new fields and disciplines
- Sustainable Development Goals as a driving force for teaching, research and community service
- Improved global ranking
- Complete automation of all our processes

- A satisfied and disciplined workforce equipped with 21st century facilities to excel in their work.
- An all-rounded trained student imbued with the 21st Century skills sets
- Sustainable and enduring systems, policies, practices, processes and procedures
- Unmatched community service
- Secure and safe campus
- Climate-resilient University

Appreciation

The story of the University of Ilorin would have been different if not for the quality of human resources it has been endowed with right from the beginning till now. The University, especially on this golden jubilee, appreciates the Visitor, His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu; the Governor of Kwara state, His Excellency, Mall. Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq; the Honorable Minister of Education, Dr Maruf Olatunji Alausa; the Chancellor, His Royal Highness, Alh. (Dr) Abdulmumini Kabir Usman; and the Emir of Ilorin, His Royal Highness, Alh. (Dr) Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari CFR; and the Chairman and Pro-Chancellor of the Governing Council, Surv, Abiodun Jacob Aluko, as well as the entire members of the Governing Council.

I cannot thank my management team enough for their unflinching cooperation. I appreciate the Deputy Vice Chancellors, the Registrar, the Bursar and the University Librarian. I acknowledge the Senate, the Provost, Deans, Directors as well as our various Heads of Departments and Units. I also thank our unions, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT), Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions (NASU), Nigerian Association of Medical and Dental Academics (NAMDA) and our Student Union. I appreciate our faith communities and I am grateful to the Alumni Association of our great University. Then, I specially applaud the 50th Anniversary Planning Committee under the able and dynamic chairmanship of Prof. Olugbenga Mokuolu for a job well done.

Our host community deserves our appreciation for being a great and wonderful host by providing the enabling environment in which the University has thrived. The conducive atmosphere that the community provides for us has been responsible for our growth and progress. The relationship between the town and gown has culminated in the celebrations of today but our appreciation is a solemn request for more. We hope that the host community will continue to work with us to achieve our lofty goals. We thank the security operatives for ensuring a safe and secured University.

And, to everyone of you, gentlemen of the press, and other stakeholders who have supported the cause of the University, may you never rust, and like gold, may you continue to shine and glitter now and forever. Happy golden jubilee to us all.

Thank you very much for your attention.

