WHAT NEXT?



Convocation Address of the Vice-Chancellor
Professor Wahab Olasupo EGBEWOLE, SAN
On the occasion of 41st Convocation Ceremonies on
Thursday, October 22, 2026

Courtesies.

I am delighted and deeply honoured to welcome you all to this glorious occasion. Since the commencement of our 41st Convocation Ceremonies, the experience has been extraordinary, memorable, and fulfilling for me and, I believe, for everyone gathered here at the University of Ilorin.

First and foremost, I give eternal gratitude to Almighty Allah, the Owner of the universe, the Eternal One, the ultimate Planner and Executor of all things, for His infinite mercy, grace, and protection throughout this journey.

With immense joy, I once again warmly welcome our distinguished Visitor, His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR. Your presence at this historic occasion is a tremendous honour to the University community, and we are deeply grateful for your continued interest in the affairs of our institution.

I must specially acknowledge the esteemed presence of the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa. I remain profoundly grateful for your remarkable contributions, uncommon commitment, and transformative efforts towards repositioning the education sector in our country. The peace, stability, and renewed direction witnessed in the sector, driven by your proactive leadership, effective coordination, and progressive ideas, are worthy of commendation.

I equally extend my profound appreciation to our Chancellor, His Royal Highness, the Emir of Katsina, Alhaji (Dr.) Abdulmimini Kabir Usman, CFR, for his distinguished leadership, wise counsel, and unwavering support.

We deeply appreciate the support of the Governor of Kwara State, Mallam AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq CON, who also serves as the Chairman of the Nigeria

Governors' Forum. Your Excellency's continued commitment to the development of our University and the advancement of education in Kwara State is highly valued.

I must also specially acknowledge the Emir of Ilorin, His Royal Highness, Alhaji (Dr.) Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari, CFR, for his consistent support, fatherly disposition, and invaluable guidance. We do not take the goodwill of Your Royal Highness and encouragement for granted.

To all our distinguished guests, members of the University community, parents, guardians, sponsors, alumni, and friends of the University, I warmly welcome you to this glorious assembly.

Today marks the second day of the conferment of degrees and awards at our 41st Convocation Ceremonies. To our highly esteemed parents, guardians, and sponsors, and, most importantly, our dear Graduands of 2026, the stars of today's celebration, I say a resounding congratulations!

Your sleepless nights have given way to celebration. The anxiety of examinations has given way to the joy of achievement and the satisfaction of accomplishment. You came to us as hopeful students, and today, you leave as proud graduates of this great University.

You have worked hard for this moment, and you have earned it. Please, celebrate yourselves!

To our parents and guardians, you deserve our hearty congratulations. This certificate carries two names: your child's name on the front and your sacrifices, prayers, and perseverance behind it.

You paid the fees, offered prayers, made sacrifices, and remained steadfast even when the journey grew difficult. Some of you worked long shifts; some took loans; while others made countless sacrifices, all in the hope of seeing this day.

Today, we celebrate you. Thank you for trusting the University of Ilorin with the education and future of your children. We will always take your confidence in us seriously.

To my dear colleagues and friends of our University, fellow Vice-Chancellors, thank you for being part of this memorable occasion. Your friendship, solidarity, and support throughout the past four years of my vice-chancellorship have been invaluable. I sincerely appreciate each of you.

As I remarked yesterday, while this occasion celebrates all of us, it belongs especially to our proud graduands and their elated parents, guardians, and sponsors.

Dear Graduands, for the past three, four, five, or six years, depending on your programmes, this University has invested its time, resources, knowledge, and expertise in you. We did not merely teach you; we trained you. We taught you theory, but we also gave you practical experience. We took you into laboratories, teaching-practice classrooms, clinics, farms, industrial training environments, moot courts, and innovation and incubation hubs.

We deliberately designed your education to move you beyond acquiring certificates toward developing practical skills, professional competence, and the ability to solve real-world problems.

We did this because we understand that the Nigeria and indeed the global community of today and tomorrow needs more than certificate holders; it needs competent, creative, resourceful, and innovative graduates who can identify challenges and develop practical solutions. A certificate without competence is merely a piece of paper.

We are therefore confident that you possess the knowledge and skills required to make a difference. You can code, teach, litigate, diagnose, farm, build, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to national development. We have further imbued you with leadership skills through our U-INSPIRE programme.

But today, I must remind you of something very important: **competence alone is still not enough.** That is why I have chosen to address you on the theme: **WHAT NEXT?**

Yesterday, I spoke to your colleagues on the theme, *LET THE INVESTMENT COUNT*. Today, I invite you, our dear graduands, to reflect on what comes after the investment, after the graduation, and after the certification.

What next?

As you leave the gates of this great institution, you carry the name and reputation of the University of Ilorin with you. You are now our ambassadors, our valued alumni, and an enduring part of our institutional legacy.

Wherever you go, people may not ask to see your transcript first. They will observe your conduct, assess your professionalism, and judge the University by the way you behave and perform.

Our expectation is simple: **be worthy ambassadors of UNILORIN.** Let your employers say, "If this is how the University of Ilorin trains its graduates, give me more of them!"

Let members of your communities say, "We want our children to attend UNILORIN because of the exemplary conduct and accomplishments of this graduate."

Let your integrity, competence, discipline, and achievements become compelling testimonies to the quality of education you have received. Do not disappoint us. More importantly, do not disappoint yourselves or the people who have invested so much in your future.

Permit me to share a short story with you.

A few years ago, two graduates of the same university were employed on the same day by a major company in Lagos. Both held First-Class degrees. Both were brilliant, technically competent, and highly skilled with software and presentation tools.

For the first two years, they performed exceptionally well and rose rapidly through the ranks. In their third year, a committee was to award a ₦800 million contract, and both were members of the committee responsible for the process.

One of them secretly accepted a 10 per cent kickback in exchange for influencing the contract award. The other refused to compromise his integrity, even when he was threatened.

Eventually, the company uncovered the misconduct. Despite his brilliance, impressive certificate, and technical competence, the first employee was dismissed,

blacklisted, and handed over to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

The second employee, equally competent and with an uncompromised character, was promoted to Head of Department.

The lesson is clear:

Same certification. Same competence. Different character. Different destination.

Dear Graduands, this is life beyond this arena.

Certification may open the door for you. Competence will help you remain relevant and deliver results. But character will determine whether people can trust you, how far you rise, and the legacy you ultimately leave behind.

At the University of Ilorin, we have consistently affirmed our commitment to character development and learning. Your education has provided you with academic qualifications and professional competence. As you step into the wider world, life will test your character.

Do not compromise the truth for personal gain. Respect time. Respect people. Honour agreements. Follow due process. Treat others fairly and with dignity, even when you have the power to do otherwise. That is character!

When you possess character, your qualifications will shine, your competence will be trusted, and your opportunities will multiply. But without character, even the finest qualifications and the greatest talents can be destroyed.

Dear Graduands, after the investment, after graduation, and after certification, what's next?

Life is much bigger than this. You can invest and still feel empty. You can graduate and still feel lost. You can earn certifications and still wonder whether there is more to life. Life was never meant to be merely a checklist of achievements.

Life is more than degrees. More than proving your worth. More than chasing the next milestone. There is purpose. There is peace. There is impact. You can discover who you are beyond what you have achieved. Build your career, but do not lose yourself in it. Pursue success, but do not sacrifice your well-being for it. Set goals, but leave room for wonder, relationships, joy, and the unexpected.

As you navigate the world beyond this University, remember that your life should not be measured solely by the titles you acquire, the positions you occupy, or the wealth you accumulate. Ultimately, what will remain is the life you lived, the people you loved, the difference you made, the memories you created, and the person you became along the way.

So, dear Graduands of 2026, I ask you once again: **WHAT NEXT?**

What next is for you to step confidently into the world and demonstrate that you possess three essential attributes: **Certification, Competence, and Character.**

Go out and apply the knowledge you have acquired. Use your skills to solve problems, create opportunities, generate employment, and contribute to the development of our dear nation.

Be innovative in your thinking, excellent in your work, courageous in your convictions, and unwavering in your integrity. As you graduate today, do not merely aspire to be successful; aspire to be useful.

The world is waiting for you. Nigeria needs you. The University of Ilorin believes in you.

Go forth, therefore, as graduates distinguished by your learning, respected for your competence, and trusted for your character.

Distinguished guests, this convocation is particularly special to me for many reasons. It celebrates academic excellence, institutional progress, and the fulfilment of our collective investment in our nation's future.

For ease of reference, I am pleased to present the outstanding academic achievements of our graduands. This year, we are celebrating: **365 First-Class graduates. 4,367 Second-Class Honours graduates in the Upper Division. 5,102 Second-Class Honours graduates in the Lower Division.** In our professional programmes, we are celebrating: 19 graduands in Medicine and Surgery (MBBS). 89 graduands in Nursing Science. 73 graduands in Pharmacy. 41 graduands in Optometry. 89 graduands in Physiotherapy. 32 graduands in Veterinary Medicine.

In total, **4,939 graduands** are receiving higher degrees and diplomas, including **251 newly minted Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) graduates**.

These figures represent more than numbers. They reflect years of dedication, the resilience of our students, the commitment of our staff, the sacrifices of parents and

sponsors, and the University's enduring commitment to teaching, research, and community service.

Each graduate represents a story of determination, perseverance, and hope. Each qualification represents an investment in human capital and a contribution to the future of our nation.

We are proud of every one of you.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the University of Ilorin continues to demonstrate that our commitment to excellence extends far beyond the graduation arena.

Our alumni are making remarkable contributions across professional fields, public service, business, education, and national development. Their accomplishments are a source of pride to the University and a testament to the enduring value of a UNILORIN education.

We proudly celebrate Mr. Francis Taiwo Solanke, a 2010 graduate of the Department of Educational Management of this great University, who emerged as Nigeria's **2025 Overall Best Teacher in the Primary School Category**. We also celebrate Mr. Israel Adekunle Adeniyi, a recent graduate of our Faculty of Law, who emerged as the **2026 Best Graduating Student at the Nigerian Law School**. In addition, 15 other graduates of our University earned First-Class honours in the Bar Final Examination results released in April 2026. These achievements represent exceptional academic distinction and mark a significant milestone in the history of our Faculty of Law and the University.

We equally celebrate an alumna of our Department of Biochemistry, Kemi Omotosho, who was appointed Chief Executive Officer of MultiChoice, an international pay-TV company. Her achievement demonstrates the capacity of our graduates to rise to leadership positions in major organisations and make their mark in competitive industries.

Our record of being ***Better by Far*** continues. Four of our graduates have once again been named among the newly elevated Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SAN). They are Mr. Adebisi Emmanuel Adeniyi SAN, Mr. Adebayo Folorunsho Ologe SAN, Mr. Akorede Habeeb Lawal SAN, and Mr. Mohammed Adelodun SAN.

These accomplishments are not merely individual successes; they are institutional milestones. They demonstrate that the University of Ilorin continues to produce graduates who distinguish themselves through scholarship, professionalism, leadership, and service.

To our distinguished alumni, we say thank you for making us proud. You are living proof that the UNILORIN investment continues to yield dividends long after graduation.

To our graduands, let these accomplishments inspire you. The next distinguished teacher, leading executive, outstanding legal practitioner, innovator, or national leader may be seated among you today.

Distinguished guests, while we celebrate our graduands and the achievements of our alumni, we must also recognise the continued progress of the institution that has nurtured them.

Year after year, we remain committed to improving our facilities, strengthening our infrastructure, and creating a more conducive environment for teaching, learning, research, and innovation. We do not rest on our oars; we continually seek to raise the bar and improve. We hope to commission the completed projects during this convocation to further improve our facilities.

We remain determined to build on the gains already recorded, address emerging challenges, and ensure that our infrastructure continues to support our aspiration to remain a leading institution of higher learning.

Our vision is clear: to provide an environment in which our students can thrive, our staff can excel, and our researchers can contribute meaningfully to knowledge creation and national development.

At this point, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to those whose support, commitment, and contributions have made this convocation a success.

To our Visitor, His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, we thank Your Excellency for the continued support for university education and for sustaining industrial harmony that has enabled us to maintain an uninterrupted academic calendar. We deeply appreciate your commitment to the advancement of education and the stability of our university system.

To the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa, thank you for your leadership, support, and commitment to strengthening the education sector. We look forward to continued collaboration in advancing the quality and relevance of university education in Nigeria.

To our Chancellor, His Royal Highness, the Emir of Katsina, Alhaji (Dr.) Abdulmimini Kabir Usman, CFR, thank you for your wise counsel and steadfast support. To the members of the University Council and our principal officers, we thank you for your dedication, professionalism, and contributions to the success of our institution.

To the University Senate, you are the academic engine room of this institution. Thank you for your rigorous scrutiny, for upholding academic standards, and for ensuring that those presented for graduation have met the expected requirements in character and learning.

To our parents, guardians, and sponsors, thank you once again. You are central to our mission. We deeply appreciate your sacrifices, trust, and continued investment in the education of these graduands.

To our friends, partners, alumni, and well-wishers, thank you for standing with us and believing in the University of Ilorin.

And to our dear graduands, thank you for giving us yet another reason to celebrate the enduring value of education.

My dear Graduands of 2026, as I bring this address to a close, I return to the question with which I started: **WHAT NEXT?**

You have received your certificates. You have acquired knowledge. You have developed skills. You have been equipped to face the challenges of the world beyond these gates.

Now, the responsibility rests with you.

Go out and fly!

Fly with confidence, but remain humble. Pursue excellence, but remain compassionate. Seek success, but remain principled. Embrace opportunities, but never compromise your values.

Remember that the University of Ilorin will always be your home. Come back to mentor our students. Come back to support the institution. Come back to endow programmes, fund research, establish scholarships, create opportunities, and employ your juniors.

Become the kind of alumni whose achievements will make a future parent say, "I must bring my child to UNILORIN!"

Let the world see the value of your education through your conduct, your accomplishments, your service, and your impact. Let your certification open doors. Let your competence create value. Let your character earn trust. Above all, never forget that your success is not measured only by how far you rise, but also by how many people you lift along the way.

To the Ceremonial Committee, I must commend you on an exceptionally well-done job. The gathering, décor, glamour, and orderliness all reflect a University that does things with class. Thank you for your hard work, attention to detail, and commitment to making this occasion memorable for our graduands and their families.

To every member of the University community, congratulations on the successful celebration of our 41st Convocation Ceremonies.

To our graduands, congratulations once again. May this be the beginning of a lifetime of meaningful achievements, purposeful living, and distinguished service to humanity.

May Almighty Allah guide your steps, bless your endeavours, protect you from harm, and grant you success in all your legitimate pursuits.

May He grant our parents and guardians the joy of witnessing the fruits of their sacrifices, and may He continue to bless and strengthen the University of Ilorin.

God Bless you all.