

**An Address by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adekunle Bashir Okesina on the Occasion of the 3rd Convocation of Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria on Saturday, 29th March, 2014**

**Protocols**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all on behalf of the Council, Senate, Congregation and the entire staff and students of Osun State University, Osogbo, to this auspicious occasion marking the 3rd convocation ceremony of the university. I wish to warmly welcome, in a special way, our Visitor, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola, Governor of the State of Osun.

Permit me to briefly use this opportunity to publicly thank the Visitor, the Deputy-Governor and Hon. Commissioner for Education, the Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor, all members of the Governing Council and the Senate of the

University for investing me with the mandate to direct the affairs of Osun State University as Vice-Chancellor.

On April 2014, I accepted the challenge of leading Osun State University, as the 2nd Vice-Chancellor, through a process of change. On this great occasion of the University, I wish to emphasise that my vision is to position this university as one of the best universities in Nigeria and Africa in terms of cutting-edge research, quality teaching and learning and relevant academic practices in compliance with best global educational practices. My mission is to leave behind a university well-positioned to compete favourably with leading universities around the world. Indeed, I am irrevocably committed to the ideals of academic excellence. My administration is also very keen on the internationalisation of UNIOSUN's activities and engagements. The attainment of financial sustainability

and prudent utilization of the university financial resources also form part of our core agenda.

I am happy to announce that as at the end of 2013, Osun State University had succeeded in securing 100% full NUC accreditation for all its 32 programmes presented for accreditation. Given this remarkable feat and in order to actualize the academic programme component of Strategic Plan of the institution, the University processed and obtained NUC approval for the commencement of twelve new undergraduate academic programmes. Furthermore, seventeen (17) additional undergraduate programmes are currently being processed for NUC Resource Verification. In terms of the strength of our manpower, there are currently 613 members of staff in the University. This is made up of 244 Academic staff, 157 Senior non-teaching

staff and 212 Junior staff. There are 7582 students across all Colleges.

Prior to today's convocation, Osun State University had graduated two sets of well-groomed, academically sound, employable and entrepreneurial oriented students both in 2011 and 2012 respectively. A total of 1017 students were graduated and mobilized for the National Youth Service Corps scheme. Of this number, a significant percentage have either taken up employment or sought higher qualifications in reputable institutions in Nigeria and abroad.

I am very pleased to report that our graduates have continued to excel. In particular, two of the pioneer set of Youth Corpers produced by the University distinguished themselves during the NYSC year. Miss Racheal Omobukola Jegede, a 2011 graduate of Biochemistry

emerged as the Kogi State Corper of the Year and was decorated by the Governor of Kogi State, His Excellency, Captain Idris Wada, in recognition of her outstanding performance and excellent service to the people of Kogi State during the 2011/2012 National Youth Service Corps. Similarly, Hassan Omolaja Abayomi, a 2011 graduate of History and International Studies, received commendation from the State Governing Board of the Edo State Chapter of the National Youth Service Corps for exceptional performance, loyalty and devotion to duty.

Furthermore, a 400-level student of the Department of Information and Computer Technology, Miss Mujidat Olaide Akande with Matriculation Number CSC/2011/0046, has become one of the newly selected Google Ambassadors (GAS) from various African universities. Miss Akande, qualified after a highly

competitive selection process. The Google Student Ambassador Programme is an avenue for students to act as ICT Ambassadors in their universities and to network with other Google Ambassadors across the world.

More importantly, our certificate is recognised nationally and internationally. This attests to the quality of education one gets at UNIOSUN and our commitment to vigorous scholarship. In fact, I was highly elated early this year when the Director of Development and Alumni Relations informed me that some of our alumni have already completed their MSc degrees in reputable world class universities abroad. For instance, Miss Abdul Oluwafisayo Fatima a graduate of English and International Studies has just obtained her MSc degree in New Media Technology from Coventry University, UK while Bolaji Richard, a graduate of History and International Studies also

completed his MA International Studies from the same university. I am also aware that Damilola Olatunde, a 2012 graduate of English and International Studies is about completing her MA degree in Translation Studies at the University of Birmingham. In the same vein, I have been reliably informed that Mr. Akinola David Ifeolu, another former student is currently pursuing his post graduate studies at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Several others are also currently pursuing their postgraduate studies in reputable universities at home and abroad.

One other information I like to give is that the university is about to begin its post-graduate programmes. Ten (10) Postgraduate programmes have been processed to the National Universities Commission (NUC) and they are awaiting resource verification before final approval. Thus,

very soon, the university will be placing adverts in the newspapers and on its website for application into its PG programmes. Through these programmes, we hope to provide world class training to our graduate students. The university is also commencing its part-time programmes for students that are unable to enrol for full time programmes in the university. We are also encouraging students to enrol for IJMB programme to allow them improve their chances of admission into the university.

### **The 2014 Convocation**

A total of 1,186 students will be graduating at this 3<sup>rd</sup> Convocation Ceremony. The breakdown of graduands' performance and class of degree is as provided below.

First Class	20
Second Class Upper	328

Second Class Lower                      660

Third Class                                      178

Our University is quite distinct from others. We do not award pass degree.

It is a thing of joy to report that Mr. Oladipupo Rasheed Oluwaseun, matriculation number ECN/2009/0076 of the Department of Economics emerged the best graduating student with a cumulative grade point average of 4.73 while Abdul-Majeed, Muhammed Kabir of Electrical and Electronics Engineering and Odunlami, Oluwabunmi Awawu of the Department of Accounting had CGPA of 4.70.

I wish to rejoice with all our graduating students and I congratulate you all on the successful completion of your studies. All of us are very proud to be associated with your

success. I can assure you that the degree you have earned from UNIOSUN is one of the best in the country, and it is a tool to achieve your dreams in life. But you must also be able to work hard to have the good life you so much desired. To compete in the 21st century, we need graduates like you - young people that are truly outstanding in character and learning, fired up and ready to compete in a highly globalized and fast-changing world. You are now joining the alumni community of Osun State University, a global family and our most treasured assets. I admonish you to transfer the lessons of the UNIOSUN spirit that is encapsulated in our motto and core values—the 'living spring of knowledge' - to the wider world where you will now function. I urge you to be courageous, adventurous and be good ambassadors of your citadel of learning. Give us a tomorrow, more than we deserve.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, at this juncture, I can confidently report to this gathering that within the last one year since I took over the mantle of leadership of this great institution as Vice-Chancellor, UNIOSUN has not consolidated on past achievements, it has also recorded several new accomplishments that are in line with the vision of the institution. I crave the indulgence of this distinguished gathering to briefly recount some of these landmarks.

### **Milestones**

In 2013, the Federal Executive Council approved the recommendation of the National Universities Commission (NUC) for Osun State University to be part of the First Phase of the Nigeria Universities Electronic Teaching and Learning Platform. Essentially, this is to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In this First Phase, the

University has been provided with 20 units of interactive whiteboards; and 20 units of higher resolution Liquid Crystal Display Projectors to be used with the boards.

Recently too, our university received the support of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) under the Advance Digital Programme for Tertiary Institutions (ADAPTI). In line with the ADAPTI project, one of our colleges, the College of Humanities and Culture, Ikire Campus was given 110 laptop computers with E-Learning facilities, the objective of which is to support flexibility and mobility in the use and application of ICT in teaching, learning and research. According to Hon. Ayo Omidiran, a highly distinguished member of the House of Representatives, who facilitated the delivery of the laptops, this gesture would soon be extended to our students at the main campus in Osogbo.

Again, as part of our long term preparation for the next accreditation, the Faculty of Humanities entered into an agreement with the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA) last December. The outcome of this collaboration is the establishment of an IFRA-UNIOSUN Newspapers Repository at Ikire. The newspapers archive is particularly useful for our communication as well as history and international studies programmes.

Osun State University is also about to commence an international, IGR driven collaborative short term course on Yoruba culture and religions. The course would be jointly mounted by UNIOSUN on the one hand, California State University at Long Beach as well as the Sustainable Neighbours Network, California. The project which is expected to take off this August is to be anchored by

Emerita Prof. Marian Zeitlin of Tufts University, Boston, Prof. Roger Morton of California State University and our own Prof. Olukoya Ogen. The course entails an annual summer visit to UNIOSUN by about 20 American students. A certificate of participation will be jointly issued by UNIOSUN and California State University to the participating students at the end of the course.

Interestingly, our Faculty of Humanities was also recently sounded out regarding the possibility of establishing a Centre for Chinese Studies and we have commenced preliminary discussions with Dr Jason Han and Prof Jon Xue of the Guangdong Free Trade Zone. The duo are committed to the teaching of Chinese language and culture in Nigeria and are eager to establish a Chinese Centre for Osun State University.

Since assumption of office, the office of Development and Alumni Relations, a unit in the Vice-Chancellor's Office has been very active. The primary purpose of this office is to forge linkages with the public, organized private sector, high net-worth individuals, public spirited, parents and alumni. The Development's office interaction with UNIOSUN Parents' Forum has led to the establishment of a Parents' Fund. Through the interaction, the Parents' Forum unanimously agreed to pay a sum of N5, 000 annually on behalf of each student/ward in UNIOSUN. The implication is that if there are 10, 000 students in UNIOSUN, the Parents' Forum will support infrastructural development of the university annually. It is our expectation that this synergy; a symbiotic partnership will

go a long way in improving our commitment to the training of the best set of students at all times.

I will also like to inform this distinguished gathering that UNIOSUN has wisely and judiciously utilised TETFUND financial support for the construction of lecture halls and college laboratories, and for academic training and development of staff. This is in addition to the TETFUND Special Intervention Grant for the construction of the Faculty of Environmental Science building and the Centre for Pre-Degree Studies. We have also received donation for UNIOSUN Endowment Fund from Comrade Hassan Sunmonu. Furthermore, Prince Olusoji Alex Ajayi, the Executive Secretary of Irewole Local Government of Osun State recently donated an 18-seater bus to the university.

### **UNIOSUN Academic Ranking**

I am happy to report that our commitment to quality education, teaching and research has yielded positive result and recognition outside the country. In the current Webometric Ranking of universities across the world which covers 20, 000 Higher Education Institutions released in February 2014 by Cybermetrics Lab, Madrid Spain, UNIOSUN is ranked 24<sup>th</sup> Best University in Nigeria (10, 114<sup>th</sup> worldwide). This is a remarkable improvement from the previous edition released in February 2013 where the university was ranked 30<sup>th</sup> in Nigeria and 12, 612<sup>th</sup> worldwide. I offer broad thanks to our Visitor and Council for funding our research initiatives. I am also happy to report that Osun State University has been adjudged as the Best Research University in Southwest Nigeria.

## **Our Faculty**

Quite a good number of our academic staff is also making waves locally and internationally. Indeed, they have been winning some of the most prestigious fellowships and research grants in their fields. It suffices to briefly mention a few. Courtesy of a WHO/Lions Club International Foundation Grant, Dr M. A. Isawumi of our College of Health Sciences is working on setting up a satellite medical centre at Osogbo for the prevention of avoidable childhood blindness. I like to also add that Dr. M. A. Adeleke of the Department of Biological Sciences is currently utilising a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Grant for the development of novel black fly trap for the surveillance of onchocerciasis in Africa and Latin America. With a starting research grant of 1.5 million euros from the European Research Council, Professor Olukoya Ogen, the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, in conjunction with

Professor Insa Nolte of the University of Birmingham is working on a five-year (2012-2017) research project primarily aimed at investigating the social dynamics of everyday interaction and encounter among Yoruba Muslims, Christians, traditionalists and people of other faiths. The statement below, culled from the European Research Council Grant Agreement speaks volume of the growing reputation of UNIOSUN as a centre of academic excellence:

*Since its foundation, Osun State University has shown itself to be strongly devoted to supporting research excellence at all levels...Reflecting the success of its ambition; the University has already won several large-scale international grants. The University's track record has convinced us that UNIOSUN will be the best possible Nigeria-based partner in helping to deliver the intellectual work envisaged in this project."*

It is also significant to mention the fact that Prof. Clement Adebooye, our Director of Research and Linkages facilitated a research grant of \$2.9 million from the International Development Research Centre and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development that was given to Osun State University and three other universities to conduct research into indigenous vegetable production. The research focuses on training and empowerment of rural farmers on production, processing, utilisation and marketing of underutilised vegetables. The other benefiting institutions are the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and two Canadian institutions, the University of Manitoba and the Cape Breton University. The principal investigators are Professors Clement Adebooye of UNIOSUN, Wole Akinremi (Manitoba), Duro Oyedele (OAU), and Thomas Bouman

(Cape Breton). It is significant to note that at the commencement of the IDRC project in 2010, UNIOSUN was rated as a "high risk" institution because it had not been "tested" by international funding organizations. However, in 2013, after a careful scrutiny of our project accounts and project implementation, UNISOUN has been rated by IDRC as an "A+" institution without any trait of risk. This rating places UNIOSUN above several first generation Nigerian Universities. This is a piece of good news because the University is now certified globally as a financially and administratively reputable University.

Professor Siyan Oyeweso, the our newly appointed Director of the UNIOSUN Development Office was also unanimously elected to the Advisory Board of the European Research Council funded 'Knowing Each Other Project' and was awarded a four year travel fellowship

from 2013-2016. He is also currently being considered for an Academic Writing Residency at Michigan State University towards the last quarter of 2014. Similarly, in 2013, Dr. Rotimi Fasan of the Faculty of Humanities set a new record by winning three highly competitive postdoctoral fellowships within a space of one year. These are the Leventis Fellowship at SOAS, University of London, the Cadbury Fellowship, University of Cambridge and the ACLS (AHP) Residency at Rhodes University, South Africa.

Dr Kemi Adesina of the Department of History and International Studies who also won the AHP postdoctoral fellowship is also currently at the University of Legon, Ghana for her 3-month residency. Again, Dr. Joseph Adeyemi of the Department of Biological Sciences also won the African-German Network of Excellence in Science Research Grant valued at 3,000 euros.

Apart from fellowship awards and research grants, the published works of our scholars have also received international accolades, for instance, Professor Clement Adebooye's paper on "Phyto-constituents and antioxidant activity of the fruit pulp of Snake Tomato (*Trichosanthes cucumerina* L.) "was rated by global publication rating agencies such as PUBmed and Scopus, to be one of the best 20 articles on the subject globally. Again, one of the published works of Professor Oguntola Alamu, the Director of Academic Planning, was ranked by Science Direct as well as Elsevier as one of the top 25 most cited articles on fuel in 2013. It is also noteworthy to mention that the College of Black World Studies, Loyola University, Chicago and the Department of Sociology, Trinity College, Dublin have since 2013 adopted Prof. Olukoya Ogen's work on the Yoruba cultural influences in the diaspora as

one of the prescribed texts for teaching Black World Religions. Indeed, in January 2014, Prof. Ogen successfully scaled through a rigorous screening and interview process to become a member of ***Faculty Row***, a US-based exclusive global elite network of distinguished and super professors that accepts new members by invitation only. Thus, it is apparent that many of our scholars remain globally competitive in spite of the fact that they are primarily based in UNIOSUN.

I cannot end this address without appreciating our Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, the indefatigable Professor Gabriel Olawoyin, SAN, as well as all our distinguished members of Council who have enthusiastically supported my administration and provided the much-needed direction targeted at upholding our core values of integrity, accountability,

probity and ethical behaviour, openness and shared governance. All of these have promoted better orientation, improved security situation and discipline in the University.

In spite of these giant efforts, I like to inform you that UNIOSUN is also having several challenges which are hindering our effort to move forward.

### **The Challenges**

UNIOSUN is a fee paying institution, and I would like to stress that this has not been easy for many of our students. We are using this occasion to call on corporate bodies, philanthropists and organizations to come to the aid of these students by instituting a scholarship scheme to support their education.

One of the urgent challenges the university face is how to develop a twenty-first century and state-of-the-art Teaching Hospital which is a basic requirement for the operation of a standard medical school. The State Hospital at Asubiaro, Osogbo and the State Hospital in Ilesa have been adopted as our future teaching hospitals. But both hospitals need substantial upgrading and equipment. As a professional, I know this will cost some fortune.

Our plans to make teaching and learning conducive for our students, guarantee their security, and inculcate qualitative academic culture into them, have also been encumbered by the non-availability of halls of residence for our students. Except for the 80-bed hostel donated to the College of Law by Barrister Yusuf Ali (SAN), no other campus of our university has halls of residence, and this has put many of our students at risk.

I urge you to support our vision of establishing Vocational and Skill Acquisition Centres across our campuses, and also the Centre for Open and Distance Learning with capacity for 500 students and 500 computer workstations. We need sports and recreational facilities to complement teaching and research across our campuses and colleges. This will not only help to develop the physical and mental abilities of staff and students, it will also encourage greater interaction among them. More importantly, sporting facilities can be used to develop the talents of students in various sporting interests. Presently, we do not have basic sport facilities on our campuses.

Conducting cutting edge research into all areas of human endeavours is our top priority at UNIOSUN. To this end, we seek mutually beneficial partnerships with all categories of friends of Osun State University to give us

support which would translate to the much-needed resources to make this laudable dream a reality. We request you to endow professorial chairs in the department of your choice in the university and support the research interests of our staff through grants.

### **Appreciation**

I like to end this by thanking the State government for its continuous support towards the growth and development of the university. We appreciate your giant efforts in the development of education and provision of basic facilities to train our children in their various schools. UNIOSUN has also received your goodwill, and all we have to say is THANK YOU.

I am most grateful to the Council of Obas and Chiefs of the State of Osun. I appreciate the unflinching support of His

Imperial Majesty and Chancellor of the University, Oba Okunade Sijuwade, Olubuse-II, the Ooni of Ife. I thank the Governing Council of the University, chaired by Prof. Gabriel Olawoyin for its untiring efforts at repositioning UNIOSUN for a brighter tomorrow.

I also want to appreciate our distinguished guest lecturer, Prof Toyin Falola of the University of Texas at Austin for his brilliant, thought-provoking and scholarly convocation lecture. We thank you for the insightful exposition you gave in that piece. We also appreciate your support and donation of books for staff and students of the university. Thank you for sharing in our vision.

We are grateful to all our invited guests for their time in making this occasion a huge success. I must not fail to express my deepest appreciation to the members of the University Ceremonials Committees for their efforts in

making this ceremony possible. I am immensely grateful to the Chairman, Prof. O. Oladele and other members of the committee.

I thank you all for your attention!!!

**Professor A. B. Okesina**

Vice-Chancellor, Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria

29<sup>th</sup> March, 2014