

AN ADDRESS BY THE PRO-CHANCELLOR AND CHAIRMAN, GOVERNING COUNCIL OSUN STATE UNIVERSITY, YUSUF ALI SAN, FCIArb AT THE 8TH CONVOCATION CEREMONIES FOR THE CONFERMENT OF FIRST, POSTGRADUATE AND HONORARY DEGREES IN SEPTEMBER, 2019

LET'S BUILD A 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITY

Courtesies:

It is traditional in a speech like this to appreciate and welcome all the dignitaries, invitees, graduands, parents, guardians, well-wishers and others to an auspicious occasion. In particular, we appreciate the attendance of our Visitor and Governor of the State, **Alhaji Isiaka Gboyega Oyetola**, our Chancellor, the woman with the Midas touch, Dr. (Mrs.) Folorunso Alakija, Our Honorary Degree Awardees and others too numerous to mention. You are all welcome and you are highly appreciated.

Because of what I intend to say, I will quote the **philosophy** of Osun State University as encapsulated in the Osun State University strategic plan for 2017-2036 which goes thus:

“Osun State University conceives of education as the engine of national development. The University is thus established on the philosophy that, to be relevant, education must continually be responsive to the changing imperatives of the socio-economic and technological development of the nation. Essentially, the University shall seek to raise men and women imbued with the requisite skills, knowledge and competencies to be the arrow heads of the socio-economic and technological development of Nigeria in general and Osun State in particular”.

The above philosophy is not a catch phrase or an empty exultation. It rather represents the core values of this institution in trying to build a University that will be 21st century compliant and will be able to hold its own in the comity of Universities in the world.

Howbeit, in order to live and measure up to the philosophical underpinning of the University, we need to put in place some minimum, irreducible, human and material contributions in the immediate, medium and long

terms. This irreducible, minimum contribution will be the focus of my attention in this address.

1. **Funding:** Any form of education does not come cheap not to talk of University education. For the University to achieve its aim, there must be adequate and proper funding from the owners and other stakeholders. It is now axiomatic that government alone cannot fund education. It is therefore desirable that, if we want qualitative and 21st Century University education for our children, the government must be committed to proper funding and must be supported by willing and able philanthropists in our midst.

Endowments, trusts, foundations are needed to support the efforts of government in the funding of our universities.

At this juncture, let me remind us and single out two families that are benefactors to our University. Mr. Modupe and Dr. (Mrs.) Folorunso Alakija, standout in their benevolence to this University. Their family is currently building a world-class 250-bed Teaching Hospital, worth billions of naira for the University. In the same vein, the family of Prince (Engr.) Tunde Ponnle, is worthy of mention for the donation of his multi-million naira property in Ada, for the use of our faculty of Health Sciences, for life. This is a welcome development and we appeal to other well-meaning Nigerians to weigh-in in this respect.

2. **Judicious use of Resources:** If the owners of the University and other well-wishers harken to our call for robust funding of the University, it behoves all of us who are administrators in the University to deploy all the resources that are made available in the university, *judiciously, prudently* and *sensibly*. Fanciful and white elephant projects should find no place in the university. Resources must be channeled towards teaching and research.
3. **Infrastructural Development:** A University worth its name must be dotted with buildings that are not only aesthetically beautiful but, designed to last for tens of years. We should discourage temporary structures or make shift buildings, we should deploy money towards

the building of world class laboratories, classrooms and befitting offices for the Academic and Non-Academic members of staff. While it is true that the hood does not make the monk, there will be no monk without the hood.

4. **Modern Curricula/Academic Programmes:** We must be able to develop Academic programmes that are fit for purpose. In today's labour market, graduates that will be found employable are those whose training meets the expectation of the labour market. The place of entrepreneurial abilities can no more be taken for granted. For our graduates to compete with others from within and without the borders of our country, their training must be *wholesome, trendy* and *progressive*.
5. **Excellent Members of Staff:** The University must employ Academic and Non-Academic staff who are current and up to date in their areas of specialization. We must look for and source the best among the teaching staff. Those who attract grants and other funding for research must have a pride of place. If we want to meet the challenges of the 21st Century, emoluments must be tied to productivity, attraction and winning of grants.
6. **Quality Students:** Our admission policy must not sacrifice merit on the altar of indigeneship and such other bland considerations. Our University must admit the best among the candidates that the system throws up. It should not be the dumping ground for those who are unable to compete favourably with their peers in other Universities.
7. **Information Technology:** The University must invest heavily on Information Technology and must be heavily visible in the social media. In today's University ranking system, presence on the internet and the social media generally, by a University and its constituent parts is a **sine qua non**. Publications by the members of the Academic Staff and other activities of the University must populate the social media. This promotes visibility and interconnectivity.

8. **Academic Freedom:** Academic freedom is a must in a University that aspires to be a world beater. Members of the Academic Staff must be free in the core areas of teaching and research. Expression of divergent academic views and opinions must be encouraged. This freedom is not a license to dabble into politics or other mundane Non-Academic issues. It is freedom to teach, undertake research, publish and depending on the nature of the research, patent the outcome for commercial purposes, in collaboration with the University.
9. **Responsible Unionism:** It is axiomatic that there can be no progress without peace. By extension, there cannot be academic excellence without peace and stability in the academic calendar of the University. The greatest disasters that befall our tertiary education from the 90's is the unstable academic calendar that has plagued us. The various unions in our tertiary institutions should exercise maximum restraint in resorting to the disruption of the academic calendar when they have issues with the owners of the institutions. We are all parents and guardians. The interest of our children and wards must come into play when we are agitating for our rights from those who own the Universities or tertiary institutions.
10. **Knowledgeable Council and Management:** The Council of the University should be made up of men and women that will not see their appointments as a source of employment. They must be men and women whose knowledge of a University system is beyond mere attendance as undergraduates. They must be men and women who are knowledgeable about the university system and have the commitment to help the University to attain excellence. A knowledgeable Council will not ride roughshod over the Management nor try to usurp the functions of the various arms of the university. In the same vein, the Management must also exhibit the same set of qualities and be prepared to assist and support the Council in discharging its mandate.

The above identified critical issues that should be addressed, if we want our University to become a 21st Century University, are not by any stretch

of imagination, exhaustive. Let me therefore, seize this opportune time to call on and appeal to the Visitor of our University that, if we are to fulfill our core mandate of teaching and research, then the state will have to come in decisively to increase our funding. While appreciating the financial contributions of the state to the University in recent times, we cannot but play Oliver Twist. In order to attain the vision set and envisaged for the University, the University must be largely residential for both members of staff and students. We therefore call on the State Government to assist in the construction of more hostels for the students and residential buildings for the members of staff. Given the age of our University, it is high time we have official quarters for our Principal Officers and some others at the Osogbo Campus.

Our assembling here is to celebrate our graduands whose efforts in burning the midnight candle has yielded success. I congratulate our graduands, their happy parents and guardians. The journey has not by any means been easy, but when you remember that it is not all those who started this journey with you that have ended it the way you have, you have every reason to thank the Almighty for your achievement. It is my belief that this University has prepared you adequately for the outside world and having been found worthy in learning and character, you should all go forth into the world to exhibit the stuff of which you are made. Undoubtedly, as fresh graduands, you will meet challenges but, with your training, you should be able to find opportunities where others are groping. Let me assure you that, with ***integrity, honesty, diligence, focus*** and a ***good dose of aversion for corruption***, you will go places.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Governing Council of the University, based on the recommendation of the Senate, approved the award of Honorary Degree to some eminent and worthy Nigerians who have excelled in their different chosen endeavours. These individuals, that will be presented shortly, are Mrs. Nike Okundaye, a celebrated international scholar, Dr. Olawale Babalakin SAN, a Lawyer of note, Chairman of the Governing Council of University of Lagos and Entrepreneur and Mr. Jim Ovia, Former Managing Director of Zenith Bank and a well-grounded employer of Labour. You will recall that, last year then Governor of the State and Visitor to the University, Ogbeni Rauf Adesoji Aregbesola, was also nominated for a Honorary Degree but His Excellency

made it clear that he will only accept the award after leaving the position of Governor. Today, His Excellency is the Honourable Minister of Internal Affairs of our Country. He is the fourth recipient. These individuals have done so much in their different fields and made significant impact on our landscape. I heartily congratulate each and every one of you for this honour that is richly deserved.

In concluding, let me reiterate that all it takes for a street to be clean, is for each resident to clean his space. We should all resolve to be change agents in moving our University forward. I call on the Academia especially that they should be the drivers for the new vision for the University.

Once more, I felicitate with the graduands, their parents, guardians, friends and well-wishers and wish each and every one of us Godspeed in our return journeys. God bless Our Country, Our State and Our University.

Thank you all.