

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY

BY

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THEME: "What we expect from A Nigeria University: The Pursuit of Excellence"

**Preamble:** It gives me great pleasure and honor to be invited to address the Students and Staff of this University on this your 10<sup>th</sup> year Anniversary. Am a very <sup>busy</sup> person, apart from being a Pro-Chancellor of Renaissance University, Proprietor representative of Paul's University Awka and the Archbishop of Enugu Ecclesiastical Province covering Enugu and Ebonyi States, I still find time to be here because of the love and relationship I have with your VC and Father Ikechukwu Ani who was always on my neck to come. Am happy and delighted to be here.

Again, I very congratulate you all for your 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary which by the grace of God has experienced a tremendous growth since inception. I commend the efforts of the Church and the University for reaching out to all asundry.

Now am being asked to address you on "What we expect from a Nigerian University". I add to it "Pursuit of Excellence".

**The Pursuit of Excellence in a University: An Introduction.**

The pursuit of excellence in any sphere of engagement is always a worthy goal, and particularly so in a university, whose core mandate is usually the development of people and ideas in order to propel societal progress. Excellence which may be defined as a state of *eminent merit in good attributes, OR, Possessing outstanding merit in positive/useful attributes*, is a tall order to pursue for a university. In a conversation reported to have taken place nearly 200 years ago, between John D. Rockefeller, a notable wealthy man of that era, and Charles W. Elliot, then President (Vice-Chancellor) of Harvard University, Elliot had responded to a question by Rockefeller on what it would take to build a world-class university: "50 million dollars and 200 years". This response from a former Vice-Chancellor or President of a world-class university should concentrate our minds to the fact that the pursuit of excellence in a university is an onerous and materially expensive task, which would take back-breaking, diligent, consistent and dedicated work over time to achieve. Indeed, some of the world's top class universities were established centuries ago: Harvard-1636; University of California, Berkeley-1869; Stanford University-1891; M.I.T -1865; Cambridge University-1209; California Institute of Technology-

1891; Princeton University-1746; Columbia University-1754; University of Chicago-1891; and Oxford University-1096.

The foregoing should not unduly discourage us but should rather inspire and instruct us into recognition that excellence cannot be achieved overnight. Those involved in university development must accept the reality that a university of excellence is the result of a regular and sustained accretion of credible effort over time by committed people doing their bit in their own time and handing over to others, generation after generation, until a world class university emerges. So we must note that these worlds -class universities did not stumble into excellence. Nor did it take them up to a century to establish themselves as top class institutions.

Oxford and Cambridge for example, were able to show themselves as well-regarded citadels of learning within 3 years of their being founded, through especially their rigid insistence on quality and merit among staff and students. Harvard, starting with 4 students and a professor, was a pace setter from the onset. Let me also cite the example of the Old Imo State University, now Abia State University, which within 2 years of its being established in 1981 had her students winning pan-Nigerian prizes in Banking and Finance, and Law. This was thought to have been due to the founding VC's insistence on ensuring that the best available academic staffs were recruited, while a great emphasis was laid on merit in student admissions.

In past discourses on this theme (see Ogwo, 2005; 2012; and 2016) some of the factors that have discouraged the pursuit of excellence in Nigerian universities were categorized into 2- those internal to the university and others external to the university or societal. Among factors internal to the university, the following were listed:

- a) Student numbers outstripping available infrastructure,
- b) Rising provincialism in the outlook of the university. By this is meant the fact of the university seeing itself as supposed to cater only for the interest of its geopolitical location, in staffing and student admissions.
- c) Inadequate funding for the critical needs of the university.
- d) Inadequate and ill-trained and at times mediocre staff.
- e) Low quality of instruction and lectures for students.
- e) Relegation of merit in student admissions and staff appointments and promotion.
- f) Relegation of the role of the senate and its committees in university management.
- g) Interference in the direct administration of the university by stakeholders in Governing Councils and Board of Trustees.

i) Overbearing influence of the Unions (students and staff).

These so-called internal factors play out in the midst of the following external Ones to retard the pursuit of excellence:

I) A largely anti-intellectual tradition and culture in the larger society which question or trample upon the core values and mandate of a university.

II) Society's penchant for celebrating mediocrity.

III) Much of the elite have their sights focused on permanent or semi- permanent residence overseas and are thus uninterested in working to achieve excellence here.

IV) A culture of debilitating accumulation of stuff, that is to say, extreme materialism, which hardly reckons with the fact that intellectual capital, is critical for society's development. In other climes, wealthy people endow foundations that give grants for research towards enhancing intellectual capital, but in our society, wealthy people invest their wealth in building houses around the globe; acquiring private jets; land grabbing, Politics etc.

With these factors playing themselves out, within and outside the university; little wonder then that the pursuit of excellence is hardly taken seriously. Godfrey Okoye University must dare to be different in this regard.

### **Why Excellence is Obligatory in a Nigeria University**

Knowledge is now widely recognized as a critical factor in the enhancement of a society's development. Since the search for and dissemination of knowledge are the hallmark and major currency of a university, societies that are anxious to develop are necessarily showing more interest in their universities' affairs.

Inevitably in a globalizing world, with heightened competitiveness, universities now strive, within national and international boundaries, to secure the recognition of a worldwide audience, through a demonstration of excellence in their operations. (See Ogwo (2012); Drucker (1994). Other reasons why universities try to push for excellence, as pointed out by the World Bank (2008) and by Salmi (2008) include:

i) Heightened competition in university sponsorship, due to the involvement of private organizations and individuals, including the advent of distance learning institutes.

ii) Rise in the influence of market forces in the decisions within the university system.

iii) Emergence of a global market for personnel of universities.

iv) A recognition that excellence is quite closely correlated to productivity. It has been shown that products of universities which offer high quality cognitive, technical, communication and team skills to their students are better at assimilating and putting into effect new technology and would thus be more productive.

v) Universities that are equipped to impart high quality education are better able to establish and maintain linkages with governmental agencies, industry and alumni.

vi) Graduates of high quality tertiary institutions are more likely to get employment as well as participate in life-long learning. ,`

For these and other reasons, it would have become clear that a Nigerian university, if it is to survive and thrive, in a globalized world, where the university system has become intensely competitive, must of necessity make the pursuit of excellence a deliberate policy.

#### **Unbundling Excellence in a University.**

Even as a university may want to pursue excellence as a deliberate policy and as many university administrators imagine that they instinctively understand what is involved in the pursuit of excellence, experience suggests that there is a fair amount of ambiguity amongst universities as to what constitutes excellence.

There is thus a need to try to unbundle what the concept means for the university. According to Unicef (2000) and Unesco (2005), themselves more concerned with non-tertiary education, excellence or quality in education is determined by the following factors:

- I) Learner characteristics
- II) Context, that is the learning environment.
- III) Content, that is enabling inputs.
- IV) Processes, that is teaching and learning and
- V) Outcomes. ,

However, Altbach (2004) and Niland (2007), more concerned with universities, are of the opinion that excellence is brought about by the consistent interplay of the following factors:

- a) High quality faculty
- b) Excellence in research
- c) High quality teaching.
- d) High levels of funding from all sources

- e) International and highly talented students
- f) Academic freedom
- g) Well-defined autonomous governance structures and
- h) Well-equipped facilities for teaching, researching, administration and student life. '

There is need to point out that the issue of excellence in universities has of late been given undue prominence and publicity by the existence of an 'industry' whose preoccupation is the ranking of universities according to their perception of quality or excellence. For many, this idea of ranking of universities has become an issue of institutional or national pride. Not surprisingly the suspicion now exists that many universities now 'work' to achieve a respectable ranking. It remains to be said however that objective criteria exist for the ranking of universities based on perceived excellence in operation. Some of the more popular ranking agencies include: Times Higher Education Supplement (THES); Shanghai Jiao tong University (SJTU); and Webometrics. THES owned by the reputable London newspaper, Times of London, ranks universities based on:

- i) Performance in teaching- 30%.
- ii) research- 30%
- iii) Citations, that is research influence- 30%
- iv) International outlook- 7.5% ~
- v) Industry income- 2.5%

SJTU on the other hand, ranks universities based on some of these factors:

- a) Academic and research performance of faculty, alumni and other staff and
- b) Publications, citations and awards like the Nobel Prize of faculty.

Webometrics, produced by the Cybermetrics Laboratory, a unit of the National Research Council in Spain, ranks universities based on their visibility on the internet.

Attempting to come to terms with this array of factors that determine excellence, Salmi (2009), condensed them into 3 as follows:

1. TALENT- students, teaching staff, researchers and internationalization.
2. GOVERNANCE- supportive regulatory framework, autonomy, academic freedom, leadership with strategic vision, and culture of excellence.
3. RESOURCES- budget resources, endowment revenue, tuition fees and research grants.

Salmi is of the opinion that the interplay of these composite factors in a university would lead to the production of highly sought after graduates, leading-edge research and technology transfer- results that would ultimately be noticed and felt by society.

So, how would all these apply to Godfrey University in her pursuit of excellence?

### **The Pursuit of Excellence in Godfrey Okoye University: A Charge.**

The pursuit of excellence in Godfrey Okoye University must be viewed in the light of what has been written in the preceding paragraphs. What has been said thus far provides a guide of sorts in assisting Nigeria University for excellence. This guide consists of a robust attempt to adapt the THES criteria and adding on what we have described as 'overlapping influentials', to come up with a modified roadmap for the pursuit of excellence in this university.

The adapted criteria include:

1. Teaching
2. Income from non-university Sources
3. Research Output.
4. Citations and
5. International Outlook

The Overlapping Influentials consist of:

- a. Handling pervasive materialism
- b. Encroachments on university autonomy
- c. Relegation of the role of University Senate in university administration.

We shall be elaborating on each of these criteria as well as the overlapping influentials. However before getting on to that, we need to emphasize the fact that in doing what we ought to do in our pursuit of excellence, we need to recognize that it is the almighty God that prospers our doings. We must begin therefore by: **committing our way unto the Lord; trusting also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass, (Psalm 37: 5)**. We should note also that only **righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14: 34)**. Our quest for excellence should be guided by what Apostle Paul told the brethren in Philippi **finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are**

**just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue; and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4: 8).**

With the foregoing as a necessary background, we shall now proceed to offer suggestions as to how Nigeria University can progress along the adapted roadmap in her pursuit of excellence. We shall be expanding on each of the outlined 5 criteria and thereafter discuss each of the 3 stated overlapping influentials:

#### TEACHING:

Teaching is a significant component of a university's tasks, executed by staff referred to as academics or lecturers. Teaching is arranged and offered from departments and faculties or colleges, depending on the chosen administrative structure. Beyond the specialized or designated courses from which a student seeks to take a degree, the observation made by the management expert, Peter F.

Drucker, nearly 40 years ago, must be re-emphasized, for it is a great factor in the pursuit of excellence. This is to the effect that our students are not often taught the skills of "EFFECTIVENESS in life and their living. According to Drucker (1994).

Since people have to live and work in society with others, they ought to be taught how to do so effectively. This according to him would involve:

- i. Teaching people how to present ideas orally and in writing, briefly, simply and clearly.
- ii. Teaching people how to work with others.
- iii. Teaching people how to shape and direct their own work or contributions or career.
- iv. Teaching people how to make the organization they work for a tool for realizing their aspirations, goals and values.

A major point in all this talk about effectiveness is the realization, captured by the latin expression: *non scholased vita discimus*, that is, "we learn not for school but for life".

Beyond the coaching for effectiveness, which we think should be generally taught to all students and staff, the following other suggestions are made to guide the individual lecturer in Godfrey University:

#each course taught must have well-prepared course content for each year the course is offered. The course content in departmental/university/ NUC brochures should be viewed as only a minimum.

# a list of recommended texts- book and journal articles as well as other source materials should be provided and regularly updated.

# regularity and punctuality at lectures by lecturers and students are imperative.

# Lecturers must always demonstrate a deep mastery of their subject/course.

# Lecture notes should be comprehensive and regularly updated. The lecturer should remember to acknowledge all sources used. Over time these notes could mature into publishable text books.

# Each lecturer should indicate days and hours, outside the courses' lecture hours, when they would be available to interact with and counsel students.

### **Income from Non-University Sources.**

In a season of financial uncertainty, a university that seeks to pursue excellence in her operations must make deliberate effort to earn extra income without being distracted from its core mandate and functions. Some of the areas for seeking extra income include:

@ conscious and deliberate steps to secure consultancies in areas of strength,

@ grants from Foundations and other philanthropic organizations should be actively pursued.

@ alumni subscriptions and donations should be sought. This effort will be facilitated by an actively updated data base of all alumni. It may be appropriate to designate incentives for generous alumni.

@ Guest houses, event centers, housing estates could be veritable sources of income.

@ The university could also consider setting up a Dedicated Wealth Fund, fed from deductions from students' fees, reimbursable staff contributions, and levies from contractors, etc.

Beyond money making ventures, it ought to be emphasized that prudence in managing available funds, is a great contributor in the pursuit of excellence. For example, going practically paperless could save the university money and time. So also will the exercise of stricter control on the number and duration of meetings.

### **Research Output.**

The quality of a university is often gauged by the quality and quantity of the research being carried out by its staff and postgraduate and other students.

Godfrey University, in its pursuit of excellence may want to consider the following:



\*\* The university and all academics must actively seek out research grants. Since

TETfund research grants are, for now, not accessible by staff in private universities, staff here can sign on with their colleagues in public universities for collaborative research projects and conferences.

\*\* to encourage academic staff to get more serious in their research endeavors, they should be expected to provide, during annual appraisals, evidence of ongoing and completed research works.

\*\*Staff should strive to publish only in properly refereed journals, with known credibility. ELSEVIER's SCOPUS has a listing of over 20,000 credible journals in various fields.

\*\* Academics should be encouraged to attend credible conferences, locally and internationally, striving also to present papers at such conferences.

\*\* Departments in liaison with their faculties should publish rosters for internal seminar/workshops, indicating when lecturers and post-graduate students, where applicable, would present papers on their ongoing research projects.

\*\* Collaborative researches with academics in top overseas universities should be encouraged and rewarded.

Finally in this section, Godfrey Okoye University must immediately acquire, if it has not already done so, any of the reliable softwares for screening against plagiarism. As we probably already know, the plagiarism virus can damage the reputation of not just the individual academic but also the standing of the institution to which the academic is affiliated.

### **Citations.**

This captures the depth of the research influence of the university. With this, a university like Renaissance would want to show how the publications of the academics affiliated to her are being cited or quoted by other researchers and academics across the world, in their own write-ups. Thus, academics here in Renaissance must seek out credible outlets to publish their papers in. We have already mentioned ELSEVIER's SCOPUS and the 20,000 journals in their stable. Credible journals are also published by EMERALD and SAGE amongst other reputable publishers.

Serious minded academics must avoid publishing in outlets that are now referred to as **PREDATORY JOURNALS**. These are fairly easily recognizable as they are all over the internet and often come into our mailboxes unsolicited, requesting papers for publication, almost overnight

and for a fee. The hallmark of these predatory publishers is that hardly any refereeing is done before the 'cash and carry' publications publish their journals. Authors beware.

### **International Outlook.**

The nature of the university system is universalistic; therefore those universities that are serious with the pursuit of excellence must of necessity be serious in projecting an international outlook in their operations. Generally, this parameter as a measure of excellence is interested in determining the extent to which a university exudes an international aura through its students, staff and research exertions. A university's international outlook could be measured through:

- \* ratio between domestic and non-Nigerian students and staff.
- \*the extent to which the university collaborates with non-Nigerian universities.
- \* ratio of staff with qualifications obtained from non- Nigerian universities.

Some of the steps that Renaissance University may want to take to enhance her international outlook could include:

- \*\* Establishing an admission quota for other African (especially West African) students. Later other parts of the world may be considered. An 'amenity' hostel could be constructed for such students.
- \*\* The university should explore opportunities for staff and student exchanges with overseas universities. As it concerns staff exchanges, we could start off with some of our colleagues who relocated overseas who may still want to assist.
- \*\* The university may collaborate with overseas universities and agencies in organizing conferences and or mounting various academic programmes.

### **Overlapping Influentials.**

Having now concluded the discussion of the 5 criteria helpful in the push for excellence in a university, we are now set to look at the other category we referred to as overlapping influentials. This, you would recall, consists of: the issue of pervasive materialism; encroachments on university autonomy; and relegation of the role of the university Senate in university administration.

It is now generally agreed that an academic's extreme pursuit of material wealth, as seen in the forced sales of handouts and textbooks to students with other related unethical conduct, have the effect of curtailing the academic's commitment to intellectual work as well as reducing his

intellectual vitality. In such circumstances, merit would be compromised and excellence hindered.

The second factor which overlaps with others in the pursuit of excellence in the university is the encroachment on university autonomy by those who are not supposed to be directly involved in the day-to-day management of university affairs. Such interference no matter how well intended, often has the effect of short-circuiting proper means of communication, diluting the official authority of the appropriate officer and reducing morale. In extreme cases such interference or encroachment, may affect discipline and good order in the university. In all, the pursuit of excellence will be obstructed.

The third overlapping factor is the issue of the relegation of the role of Senate in the administration of the university. This is somewhat related to the second factor discussed above. The Senate of a University is its watchdog for ensuring excellence. Afigbo (2003), has well said that, "the Senate occupies and mans the headquarters province of the university...and its presence, what it does or does not do...determines whether an institution is a university or something else." He goes on to say that, "if Nigerian Universities have been in the doldrums, it is because of what their Senate did or failed to do in their legally designated province..." It follows therefore that the Senate, with its committees and subsidiary units, like the departments and faculties, is a critical organ in the university's quest for excellence. Each academic should thoroughly read what the statutes of the university, state as the role of the Senate. The regularity of Senate meetings, along with those of its many committees, fed from the regular meetings of departmental and Faculty boards should be held sacrosanct. The major business of a university is academic. And it is only in Senate or through

Senate that academic matters can PROPERLY be thrashed out. Any other way would not be right and would therefore be a departure from excellence. The key stakeholders in Godfrey Okoye University, since I know they mean well for the university, must trust the academics to manage the Senate of the university in ways that will ensure excellence and as the statutes of the university have clearly stated. The academics of the Senate, on their parts, need wisdom, caution and courage to do what is right always.

Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

### **Summary and Conclusion.**

This paper has sought to show the primacy of a tradition of excellence in operations in determining the success of a university and thus charges the Godfrey Okoye University to pursue excellence with all diligence in all its activities; Having unbundled the concept of

excellence in a university, as consisting of seeking quality and optimum performance in: teaching; research output; income from non-university sources; citations and international outlook, along with 3 other factors referred to as overlapping influentials, the paper goes on to suggest how Godfrey Okoye University can push for excellence along the identified criteria and factors. As was emphasized, the pursuit of excellence in and by a university, is a time-consuming and resource- gulping endeavor which requires great commitment from all stakeholders.

While the paper acknowledges that the pursuit of excellence can be tasking, a case is made for Godfrey Okoye University to commit this worthy vision and mission into God's care, resting on the assurance that with God, nothing shall be impossible.

Thank God and thank you for the honour of your attention.

**Most Rev. Dr. E.O Chukwuma (OON)**  
**The Archbishop and Bishop of Enugu**  
**Anglican Communion**

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