

***VISION 1:10:500
WHERE ARE WE?***

BY

***Prof. Wahab Egbewole, SAN
Vice Chancellor
University of Ilorin***

***At the 2nd Training of newly
appointed Deans, Directors
and HODs held on 2nd August,
2024***

Background

The present Administration came on board on 16th October, 2022 but effectively resumed on Monday, 17th October 2022 coinciding with the call off of the 8 months of ASUU strike, signaling the resumption of academic activities in our great University. In my inaugural address to the cross section of the University community and the other critical stakeholders, I unveiled the **vision 1:10:500** with the driving vehicle tagged SMART Agenda. The most potent of the driving part is Teamwork. It is our view that without a team spirit, the vision will remain unattainable and amputated.

To this end, the Administration set to engage the cross section of the Unilorin community to build a team around the vision and create a buy-in for all. This training session is part of the engagement of the critical segment of the University as here we have the Heads of various units and they are expected to drive the vision in their various units which will culminate in university wide participation.

Why the Vision?

Our University was ranked number one in Nigeria and maintained the position for a long time before we removed our eyes from the ball and that is why we are where we are now. In the build up to the commencement of this Administration, we had a clear position that our University should regain its *numero uno* space in Nigeria and improve our ranking in Africa and the world. We set to work and we have identified what we need to do to improve our ranking like increasing our visibility on scopus and google scholar, and upgrading our website. This administration appointed a ranking officer who has ensured that we moved from less than 1,000 scholars on google scholar to 1,200, similar situation with scopus and other ranking metrics. Presently, we are 6th from 7th in 2023 on the Times Higher Education ranking and 18th on the Webometrics ranking. This is not our goal; but what we have achieved so far in terms of improvement clearly indicates that our goal of 1:10:500 is achievable and realisable and must be achieved. We have been there; we can get back there. Never again will we remove our eyes from the ball. This can only be done with a collective resolve of us all. You are very instrumental to this goal and we therefore urge you to remain focused, committed and resilient in achieving this vision.

What have we done?

To get on the path of achieving the goal, we set to work on a number of innovative ideas and they include:

- **Internationalisation:** we have MOUs renewed, activated and repackaged; we entered into new MOUs; we renewed our visibility in international engagements;

we hold international conferences and opened our doors to the world through staff and students' exchange; visiting academic positions; collaboration in various aspects of university engagements and research opportunities improved

- **Automation:** in today's world, a university cannot compete favorably if it is not visible in the global space. As a follow up on our internationalisation, we are currently reviewing our website and bring it in line with best global practice, our portal has been repackaged with opportunity to provide all sorts of operations including students admission, registration and results, staff promotion and other incidental matters affecting staff work, Learning Management System, students election and much more. Today, we don't have to labour on good standing or production of results. All we need to do is for the lecturer upload his/her results and overall good standing will be generated. It is also expected that our transcript production will be more effective and efficient. No doubt, we have challenges, and this is understandable because the portal is being developed and used at the same time because we do not have the luxury of developing and testing before deployment. Let me appreciate the resilience of our staff and students in undergoing the challenging times. I also commend the staff of COMSIT for staying on course. It is my hope that by the time we start the next session all perceivable issues would have been resolved. However, we still have huge capacity issues in the University and the this is equally fueled by lackadaisical disposition on the part of a few staff members. This is further compounded by "cannot work" attitude of a few staff members. In some of our units, the position is half empty instead of half full. As a University, we can only achieve our goal if we see ourselves as one, work together and be ready to achieve our goals. For now, we will bend over backwards to accommodate all shades of opinions but will be deliberate in ensuring that nobody is allowed to slow us down. While everyone is important, no one is so important to singlehandedly pursue this goal or even a part thereof and be successful because a tree does not make a forest (*enikan ki je awa de*).
- **Infrastructural development:** For University of Ilorin to achieve its goal, there must be fundamental infrastructural development. What Administration did was to use our accreditation as our point of developmental program. For 2023 accreditation, the University provided materials that will ensure that our needs were addressed. Currently, the 2024 accreditation is guiding our procurement process. We provided new structures in Faculties of Law, Social Sciences, Agriculture and Arts. Currently we are addressing the deficit in College of Health Sciences, Social Sciences and Communication and Information Sciences. I am convinced that by the time these interventions are concluded, some of the infrastructural challenges would

have been addressed. Administration is equally addressing workshops, laboratories and smart classrooms. We are also working on provision of solar light to critical facilities in the University. Given the funding challenges, it is obvious we cannot get all we want or need but we can provide for our critical need while our luxuries will have to wait.

- **Deliberate steps in research and research activities:** It is a fact that a university that is not focused on research will not be in a position to favorably compete. To this end, Administration was deliberate in renewed research endeavours. We repackaged the Senate Research Grants (SRG) by budgeting more money as well as introduced SRG (Special Intervention). We also conducted training programs on how to access NRF and IBR funding of TETFUND and other grantsmanship endeavours. We equally supported research endeavours of staff members, encouraged inter disciplinary researches and improved on research collaboration through KU8, U6+ and AWAU. It is unfortunate that a great number of our academic staff have not properly keyed into these new initiatives as there is a lot of trust deficit. We supported 2 of our staff to attend D8 NPRI training in Pakistan, we supported the research that won us about N1.7B in food production and another Africa AgriFood Knowledge Transfer Partnership (AAKTP). We have supported our students in achieving feats in different fields and we will continue to take steps to improve on our current strides but Administration will not conduct research and directly access grants but rather provide enabling environment and that is where the Deans and Heads of Departments as well as the Directors are instrumental to the achievement of this goal. Let us come up with Plan of Action in line with our strategic plan to identify how much of grants we intend to attract at the Departmental and Faculty levels on an annual basis within the plan period. This will then add up to the amount of grants attracted by our University. In encouraging our staff who have published in high impact Journals, monetary reward or support is given to such academics. This may not meet our expectations but what is important is that your University recognizes that you have demonstrated competence and therefore there is need to appreciate and this we have done albeit within our funding.
- **Attitudinal re-orientation:** to whom much is given, much more is expected. I must emphasise that we still have a wide gap in the way we do our business in the University. As professionals, we are expected to proffer solutions to challenges and not to magnify problems. We are supposed to be critical thinkers but unfortunately a few of us still wait for Administration to “teach” us what to do to get result. Some Deans want Administration to run their Faculties for them, some Heads of Department/unit also want Administration to determine what to be done. There

cannot be development with this kind of attitude. Let us clean our corners and with that the entire university will be clean. Don't let us magnify problems, let us address challenges and then ensure that we play our parts because that is why we have been appointed in the first place to the various duties either as academics or administrators.

Where do we come in?

- Build capacity at the personal level and at the unit level. As the Dean, master the challenges that your colleagues are having, design strategies to overcome the challenges. Don't wait until Administration ask for results before you start collating results of your Faculties. Identify the existing training gaps and invite CREDIT to fix the gaps. Call on COMSIT to rescue the competency challenges in your Faculties. Let each HOD do the same. Don't just complain portal is not working, identify what needs to be done and take steps in conjunction with relevant units to sort it out.
- Improve our turn around on mails in your Departments and units. It is not acceptable that memos will last weeks and months on your table before they are attended to. It is absolutely unacceptable and it must stop.
- Create your vision 1:10:500 by striving to be the number one Department or Faculty in Nigeria among the best 10 in Africa and among the best 500 globally.
- Adapt what we have to deliver on our strategic plan. Collaborate in inter disciplinary researches. Also adapt the existing infrastructures to meet our aspirations. We should equally allow what we have to give what we want.
- Automation of processes be allowed to work for us.
- Environment is key to development but the way we manage our offices calls for serious concern. Let us all come up with strategies to ensure clean environment as this is a critical part of our vision
- Electricity is critical to development and Administration appreciates this and is taking necessary measures. Support the measures and also design your own strategies of ensuring that we exterminate wastages in the usage of electricity. Don't consume free lunch without acknowledging that someone is paying for it.

Conclusion

A bird can only fly with its two wings. There is no way the Administration can achieve the goal set for itself if we all stand aloof or work at cross purposes or feel unconcerned or undermine the vision. Everyone should find his/her place, play his/her part, call attention to what we are doing wrongly and suggest how we can do it better; be proactive and don't wait till things go wrong before we start

pontificating. Let our mantra be positive in all its ramifications and don't belong to "it can't work" group. Let us be optimistic that our University has all that it takes to claim our rightful and enviable place in the community of universities globally. This University belongs to all of us and it can only get better if we are willing, ready and able to change the narrative. It is ours to make and it is not theirs to do. Let us own this process and make it work for all by all.