Inaugural Address

By Obinna Nwodim

There was an atmosphere of eager anticipation last Monday, as the 8th Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nwowa Lale, delivered his Inaugural Address to a packed Meeting of Congregation of the University of Port Harcourt that included three former Vice-Chancellors at the Ebitimi Banigo Auditorium.

Reading from a prepared text, the new Vice-Chancellor promised that his administration was determined to transform the University into a world-class institution that would be known for quality research, teaching and public service.

Professor Lale assured Staff and Students of the University that he would achieve his vision by running a transparent, fair and firm administration that would place premium on due process and strict adherence to the proper way of doing things.

The Vice-Chancellor promised to search out excellent managers, talented faculty and students to help him achieve the new vision. He also pledged to explore all available opportunities for aggressive mobilization of funds to meet the needs of a 21st century learning environment.

The new Chief Executive stated that he would build organizational citizenship amongst staff by adopting a bottom–top approach to policy formulation and implementation, adding that he would work assiduously to turn the scale through re-training and
By Oikor Samuel

A total of 33 graduates from the University of Port Harcourt School of Pharmaceutical Sciences were inducted into the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN) as the 4th Oath Taking/Induction Ceremony, which took place on Friday, July 3, 2015 at the Edithimi Banjo Auditorium. The new entrants into the profession received the Bachelor of Pharmacy degree (B.Pham) from the University and operational licenses from PCN.

Performing the colourful Induction Ceremony, Registrar of the Council, Mr. Elizabeth Okafor, congratulated the new Pharmacists for successfully completing their studies, pointing out that their graduation was the first phase of continuous pharmacy training, expressing satisfaction that the graduates were trained in UniPort which was accredited by both the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria for that purpose.

"The training of pharmacists statute requires that upon graduation, they should undergo a mandatory one-year post-basic training programme under the supervision of a recognized registered pharmacist (Preceptor) in an accredited Internship training facility. This is the second phase of pharmacy training," he said, advising them to embrace professional continuous education as part of their growth process.

The Registrar, who emphasized the need for the new pharmacists to get themselves acquainted with the codes of professional ethics which prescribes professional and moral responsibilities to their patients, colleagues, employers and the general public, disclosed that the Council has institutionalized a programme known as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to ensure continued relevance of Pharmacists in the health sector. He informed the new members of the Council that appropriate sanctions would be meted out on members who fail to carry out their professional responsibilities in the prescribed manner.

In his keynote address, former Professor of Pharmacy, Etienma Enikwen, stressed the need for multidisciplinary collaboration among the medical and allied medical disciplines to ensure quality productivity in the healthcare sector that is devoid of unnecessary duplication of services, cost inefficiency and rivalries that are alien in other parts of the world.

Professor Enikwen, who argued that inter-disciplinary collaboration would provide avenues for pharmacists to break new grounds in research for the overall well-being of the people, advised the Inductees to imbibe the academic culture of collaborating with their colleagues in allied disciplines to ensure effective service delivery to clients.

In his speech, the Immediate past Vice-Chancellor, Professor Joseph Akpabio, praised the Inductees, praising both teaching and non-teaching staff of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences for the quality training given the new Pharmacists, pledging that authorities of the University would continue to support the programme.

Earlier in his address, Dean of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Professor Oko Udosa, who recalled the various developmental stages in the Faculty from a proposal at the 24th Senate Meeting to the approval and appointment of the pioneer Dean, commended the 5th Vice-Chancellor, Emeritus Professor Nuala Duke, and the 6th and 7th Vice-Chancellors, Professors Onah Bassey and Akwa Ubong, for their good pioneering effort. They were presented with awards of excellence in recognition of their contributions to the establishment of the Pharmacy programme in the University.

In his goodwill message, Emeritus Professor Obinna advised the new Pharmacists to always be good ambassadors of the University. "As you leave the four walls of this University, you will be left with your conscience and so make good use of the knowledge you acquired in this University," the 5th Vice-Chancellor charged the graduates, praising the Dean, Professor Udosa for building a strong foundation for the Faculty.

Presenting her valedictory speech, the Best Graduating Student, Miss Vivian Igbene, expressed satisfaction with the quality of training they received while on the programme. She stated that "although we see a class of graduates, we are individuals, equipped to make independent decisions, choices and judgments."

At Last, UniPort, TMC Sign MoU on Mega Film Academy

By Mercy Ademiji and Oikor Samuel

At the University-Industry partnership continues to wax stronger on all fronts, authorities of the University and TMC Uduma Group have finally signed a much-anticipated Memorandum of Understanding to build a world-class film academy in the Institution.

Speaking at the signing ceremony held at the Vice-Chancellor’s Committee Room on Thursday, July 9, 2015, former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Joseph Akpabio, commended the Chief Executive Officer of TMC, Chief Uzoama Uduma, who was accompanied by a Senior Manager of the organization, Mr. Kalu Echenu, for choosing the University to host the project, disclosing that the Uduma Group has been partnering the University on the eagerly-awaited initiative for two years.

"We are glad that this media outfit plans to build a film academy where people would be trained and we believe that with your partnership with India-based Whistling Woods International, you will succeed in the lofty idea of establishing a thriving film academy of international repute in this University," Professor Akpabio said, adding that his successor would support the project.

The former Vice-Chancellor expressed satisfaction with the Uduma Group for endorsing two Professors Chairs in the University, one in Engineering called the Uduma Group Chair for Engineering Science and Technology and the other in Film Studies called the Uduma Group Chair for Film, Television and Media Studies. He thanked the Group for the growing institutional partnership with the University, stating that "we hope other business associates would emulate and collaborate with the University in like manner."

In his speech, President/Chief Executive Officer of Trend City TV, operators of Trend Television Satellite (TTS), Mr. Lister Upasari, said that from the first day the partnership began, it has been encouraging and "we believe that this Memorandum of Understanding will continue to bring us together as we join forces to realize the film project in this University. The University is the best place to sustain the economy, because we think that the biggest wealth is in our heads, whereas the biggest wealth in the world is in our heads and this would be the beginning of that engagement that would enable us to develop future talents for development."

"We can proudly say that this would be a template that others can replicate in Nigerian and African universities, so that businesses can begin to tap into the abundant resources available in our universities," Chief Uduma said, adding that "the group also has an agreement for a place of land that would enable us to build a physical centre that would house our studio." He expressed optimism that construction work would commence at the site of the facility in the next two years.

Others present at the signing were the Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Professor Igbo Ojo, Registrar, Mr. Audu Nnadi, Head of Department, Theatre and Film Studies, Professor Femi Shaka, Mr. Adelaja Onoighe, Mr. Fred Oshibie, Mr. Chinazonwu Akin, Legal Officer, Mr. Azubuike, including Mrs. Olofoby, Ghada and Babu Abiose, both of the Legal Unit.

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UniPort To Partner Embassy On French Language Dev

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The French delegation which was led by the Attaché for Cooperation in Education and Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of France in Nigeria, Daniel Rigaudit, also included the Director, Alliance Francaise, Port Harcourt, Helene Genuan-Okuator and Director of Studies, Alliance Francaise, Houston Michel.

Welcoming the delegation, former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Joseph Ajemba, recalled that the University had cultivated a strong relationship with France through its Embassy in Nigeria. He commended the subsiding collaboration between the University and France in the energy sector through a partnership between the Institute of Petroleum Studies and the IFP School, Paris. “We have over 10 years of relationship with France based on the exemplary IPS-IFP partnership. In addition to a dynamic Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures that is well-grounded in the teaching of the French language in the University of Port Harcourt.”

He also disclosed that the University was designated a High Performance Centre for Sports for athletes from Africa and beyond. “Some of the sports men and women who come to the Centre are from Francophone-speaking countries. This means that we need to develop a very strong French language component in this University for effective cross-cultural communication at the Centre. We will depend on the French Embassy and Alliance Francaise to assist us run the international sports centre that also caters for the interest of French-speaking West African countries that almost surround Nigeria,” Professor Ajemba told the delegation.

Stressing the need for a Language Translation Centre here, the former Vice-Chancellor called for more collaboration between the University and the French Embassy in Nigeria: “We have a lot to benefit from each other in the key areas of language, sports and engineering, including the strengthening of the French language programme in our thriving Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.” Professor Ajemba remarked, promising Management’s commitment to sustaining the excellent institutional relationship between the University and the French people through the Embassy.

Responding, Mr. Rigaudit, who commended the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures for the quality of its academic programmes and experienced teaching staff, praised the University for the collaborative initiative. Reiterating the Embassy’s willingness to work with the University in concert with Alliance Francaise to promote the French Language, Rigaudit disclosed plans to provide more training opportunities for staff of the Department and academic departments that would facilitate the study of the French language at the proposed Centre “This is a win-win situation for the programme and future generations as the programme would facilitate training of industry personnel for French-owned companies in Nigeria such as Total E&P,” he stated.

In her address, Acting Head of Department, Dr. Eugenia Mbaifele, described the development of the University and highlighted the need for the University to professionalize teaching and learning of French in the University. She also lauded the collaboration as a project that would contribute to the numerous achievements already recorded by the Department and the teaching of the French language in the University of Port Harcourt.

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Just minutes after delivering his inaugural Address to the Congregation of the University at the Ebiteini Baniga Auditorium last Monday, 8th Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ndoma-Egba, commenced an unscheduled familiarization tour of the various offices in the Senate Building at the University Park, where he met surprised staff in their offices.

The new Vice-Chancellor commenced the tour with a one-on-one interaction with staff at all levels with a view to hearing from and acquainting them with the direction of his new administration.

Areas visited included the offices of the two Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Professors Anthony Ibe and Igho Joe, where he solicited their support for his emergent administration. Professor Ibe also called on the University for his support for the crush of national Emergencies, coupled with the setting up of the Office of the University of Port Harcourt, where he interfaced with the Registrar, Mrs. Matilda Nwagiri, and Bursar, Mr. Vitalis Aliesi.

He also called at the Department of Physical Planning and Development (DPD), Council Division, Academic Affairs, Internal Audit and Information, Publications and Public Relations Unit, respectively. The tour had earlier taken the new honosman to the Clinical, NDDC, TETFund, Nursing and Nelson Mandela Hotels at the University Park.

The familiarization tour continued on Tuesday with visits to the Faculty of Education, College of Engineering, General Studies Unit and Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme, Student Affairs Department, Printing Press and some hostels in Choba Park. He also visited the Faculty of Management Sciences, Social Sciences and Agriculture on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively.

Speaking during his visit to the hostels where he interfaced with some students and Dean of the Student Affairs Department, Professor Andrew Efemini, the Vice-Chancellor directed the Student Affairs Department to submit a detailed proposal for comprehensive maintenance work on the hostels.

Professor Lale, who frowned at illegal alteration of land and structures on campus, also told him the University would$ partner with Department to protest the University for enhanced service delivery, assuring younger academics and student-teaching staff that he would stand by them to ensure they are not victimized by senior colleagues, just as he advised them to obey the hierarchy in the system.

"In my tenure to witness structured growth and increased visibility for the University. Our students should be able to receive a well-rounded education that would place them in good stead to create jobs for themselves and others on graduation. We want things to be done differently under my watch and I would need your individual and collective support to achieve the vision of my administration. The principles of leadership are basically the same all over the world. People are willing to follow an honest, transparent and accountable leadership. We must operate by the books to ensure that things are done properly in this University henceforth. Part of the reason for this tour is that leaders become better when they listen to honest advice from their subordinates, so, I am willing to listen to everybody as much as possible," he said.

Pleasing to be prudent with scarce resources, Lale promised to set attainable goals and put himself in front of the drive for results, also disclosed plans to urgently build public toilets at Choba and University Parks to meet the needs of staff, students and visitors to the University who may wish to ease themselves while here. He acknowledged the high expectations of his administration by staff and students, Professor Lale called for cooperation to enable him meet such expectations, even as he called for team spirit in the attainment of organizational goals.

V-C, Prof Lale (left) flanked by Genove-Okezie, Director of Studies, Michel, V-C, Prof Ajemba, Registrar, Mrs. Nwagiri, DVC (Acad.), Prof Ibo Joe (right) and other senior officers of the University and the French delegation on the tour of University facilities. Capt. K. Ochonowy (left) and Capt. K. Ochonowy (right)
UniPort Researchers Partner Mexican Centre On Rice Breeding Techniques

By Humphrey Ogu

Efforts aimed at strengthening the collaboration between a team of researchers in the Department of Crop and Soil Science and Mexico-based Generation Challenge Programme (GCP) on rice breeding, has received a major boost with recent visit by Dr. Muntal William of the Integrated Breeding Platform in Mexico.

The visit, which took place on Thursday, June 11, 2015, was aimed at assessing the progress so far recorded in the research partnership, with a view to tackling challenges faced in the implementation of the programme.

Briefing UniPort Weekly on the visit, Lead Scientist for GCP in UniPort, Dr. Andrew Eftime, who noted that the group was involved in the enhancement of plant breeding all over the world, said that West Africa in particular, had benefitted a lot from the evolving programme.

He explained that “UniPort has been benefiting since 2011 when the collaboration in rice breeding commenced. We nominated one of our scientists from the Department of Crop and Soil Science, Dr. Joseph Oruchukwu to proceed on a training programme on rice breeding. They sponsored him for three years in different countries where he learnt breeding techniques and some of the software that can enhance our programme here. The working visit to the University by the group was to ascertain what we have done so far in rice production,” Dr. Eftime told our Correspondent.

Eftime, who is a Plant Breeder with special emphasis on Rice, said: “We have released a new variety of rice in Port Harcourt and Dr. William came to assess the variety and ascertain problems associated with the breeding process that needed to be addressed. He also wanted to find out how we are using the platform and Breeding Analysis Software that was donated by GCP."

He disclosed that “Dr. William was also at Ibadan, where he visited the Institute of African Research and Training (IAR T) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), adding that “the visit will enable students benefit more from the software which can be used in data analysis. After we have perfected it, we will make it available for students for data analysis at all levels, especially at the Postgraduate level.”

Explaining his mission in the University, William said: “I came from the Breeding Management System of Integrated Breeding Platform, an organisation supported by the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation. The objective of the project is to develop tools that will be used in breeding and the project companies and university breeding groups to streamline the program by providing data base for available research effort.

“We have been collaborating with members of this group since 2011 and we invited them to our centre on how to use a particular software in different countries such as Spain and the Netherlands, amongst other countries. We want to be sure that they know how to make effective use of the system. The people here have been well trained and my role is to evaluate what they have done in the breeding programme and identify problems that we can help them solve,” he added.

Research: Times Higher Education Ranks UniPort Best In Nigeria

Judging by the quality of its research and how often papers are published by academics, the University of Port Harcourt has been rated the best in Nigeria and sixth in Africa! Using the same parameters, the University also ranks amongst the best 500 higher institution in the world. The ranking was announced by the renowned United Kingdom-based Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

The Times Higher Education published the latest ranking on its website at https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/sites/default/files/style/panopoly_image_original/public/magazines/151546-universities-by-research-influence-906752-large.jpg.

To arrive at the ranking, Times Higher Education created a top 15 table for Africa’s academics ahead of the inaugural THE African Summit stated for 30-31 July, 2015 at the University of Johannesburg, where the full league table containing the top 50 universities in the region will be revealed.

A build-up to the top rating of the University of Port Harcourt was the February 2015 Webometric Ranking which showed that the University gained a massive +32 points amongst nine major Nigerian universities during the period under review. While much of the other institutions recorded declines in their league ranking, only the University of Port Harcourt made consistent gains during the period.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings show that South African universities continue to dominate the league ranking of African higher institutions. For instance, the University of Cape Town placed first on the table, while University of The Witwatersrand came second. Apart from Makerere University in Uganda, Stellenbosch University and University of Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa dominated the top five places on the continent.

The ranking was formulated using Elsevier’s Scopus database to highlight some of the continent’s top performers in terms of how often papers are referred to and cited by other academics across the globe. The inaugural Summit will hold the maiden public consultation on proposals for full Times Higher Education (THE) Africa University Rankings to be based on the foundations of flagship THE World University Rankings based on the continent’s specific challenges.

THE ranking editor, Phil Baty, disclosed that “This is an experimental and preliminary ranking based solely on research, and only on one aspect of research—how many times research papers are cited by other academics. When we develop a full Africa University Ranking, we expect to add more indicators, examining things like university’s economic contribution, its civic engagement and, of course, its teaching.”

It would be recalled that the top 15 snapshot was calculated using the ratio of the citations received by an institution’s publication output between 2009 and 2013, including the total citations that would be expected based on the average of the subject field. To be included on the table, an institution must have published a minimum of 500 research papers in the five-year period assessed with, at least, 50 papers per year.
Senior Officers End Performance Evaluation W’kshop

By Otiko Samuel

 Barely eleven days after Governing Council of the University held a performance evaluation retreat for members of the Council and Management at the Intercontinental Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos, Management of the University has domesticated the training programmes for Senior Officers in the Registry, Bursary and Library Departments.

The training, which took place at the Old IPS Park in Delta Park of the University between Tuesday, 30th June and Thursday, 2nd July, was declared open by the Registrar, Mrs. Matilda Nnodim, who urged the participants to take the training seriously to enable them effectively key into the implementation process of the second strategic plan of the University.

The Registrar expressed optimism that the three-day programme would provide in-depth knowledge and an additional impetus towards efficiency in service delivery in University administration, emphasizing the need for regular training to keep staff abreast with new trends in managerial skills for effective service delivery.

Speaking on the sidelines of the training, Resource Person, Dr. Segun Ogunkola of the New Intech Consultants (NITECH), who also facilitated the Lagos retreat disclosed the theme of the training as “Advancing Institutional Growth, Change and Development.”

He stated that the training for the senior officers was important as they are crucial to the implementation process of the policies of the University.

“The most important thing is that those who will implement the policies are the Registry, Library and Bursary staff amongst others. So we need to really make them to be in the picture for them to be part of the entire implementation process. If they don’t understand what is going on at the top, it will be very difficult for them to carry it on further. We are looking forward to it and that is why the institutional advancement growth change management that we are working to attain will be of help to them as they drive the internal processes that would enable us attain the financial, academic and research goals of the University,” Dr. Ogunkola said, adding that the overall target of the training was to make UniPort a truly 21st century University for the benefit of all stakeholders.

CIB, UniPort Inaugurate New Board

By Ethel Timi-Johnson

 sequel to several consultations between the Faculty of Management Sciences and the Executive Board of the CIB, a six-member board has been inaugurated to manage the ACIB/B.Se Linkage programme jointly run by University of Port Harcourt and the Institute.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, which held on Thursday, June 4 at the Faculty Library, representative of the Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the Faculty of Management, Business and Trade in the College of Graduate Studies, Professor Chinelo Ezirim, commended the collaboration between the two institutions, expressing hope that the newly-inaugurated Board would improve the linkage programme in terms of quality service delivery to the growing clientele of the University.

Disclaiming that inauguration of the Board was part of the agreement contained in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the University and the Institute, Professor Ezirim noted that the membership profile of the programme has improved tremendously with a current enrolment figure of more than 200 students.

“This is a high level Board comprising of high profile academics and industry players. It is believed that their recom mendations would lift the standard of the programme and place us in a better position to deliver quality service to our clients,” he stated.

In their separate responses, the South South Zonal Director of the Institute, Chemekem Aphasenu and Co-ordinator of the ACIB programme in UniPort, Dr. Ebele Obiaku observed that the new Board would facilitate interaction between the Institute and the University, adding that “the key assignment of the Board is to liaise between the two institutions with a view to strengthening the collaboration in a mutually beneficial manner.”

In his address, Dean of the Faculty, Professor Emeka Okereke, thanked the Institute for supporting the programme, pledging that the Faculty would continue to support the partnership which he described as very helpful to the students. He commended the Institute for identifying with the University, promising to sustain the success story already recorded by the ACIB programme, including an increase in student membership.

Members of the newly-inaugurated Board include the Group Head, Membership Services/Finance and Corporate Services, Segun Shomudi; Group Head, Capacity Building and Certification/ Learning and Development, Akin Morkasho and Zonal Head South, Mr. Alphonso, Dean of the Faculty; Professor Okereke, Acting Head of Department of Finance and Banking, Dr. B Patterno Nnamdi and Coordinator of the ACIB programme in UniPort, Dr. Obiaku.

Principal Commends UISS Student

By Mercy Adeniji

The Principal of University of Port Harcourt International Secondary School, Mr. Ejima Okereh, has commended the impressive performance of a student of the school, Mr. Ifeanyichukwu Amaechi, who took second position in the 2015 edition of the Einstein Science Challenge Season 3 Competition for Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

A statement made available to UniPort Weekly by the Principal of the school which is managed by the College of Continuing Education (CCE), disclosed that the competition was organized by the GRA Rotary District 9140 of the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt in partnership with the Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA), Genesis Group and Africorps at the Holy Rosary Secondary School, Port Harcourt.

A total of 600 science students from different Secondary Schools in Rivers State participated in the competition that lasted for seven months.

“Amaechi Ifeanyichukwu has painstakingly committed himself to hard work in academics and this laudable achievement is the apparent result. By this tremendous achievement, Mr. Amaechi stands a chance of being awarded automatic scholarship to study in a foreign university recommended by RSSDA,” the Principal’s letter stated in part.
Lale Outlines New Vision

Cont'd from p6

intensive in-house training programme, seminars, conferences and workshops, etc. Addressing ecstatic staff that filled the auditorium to the rafters, Professor Lale disclosed plans to table a working paper before Senate on the possible revocation of the academic structure to which the College has been adhering, arguing that the new structure would be more efficient and result in less bureaucracy. He also announced plans to merge some existing Centre and Institutes with overlapping mandates, as well as rationalize others with a view to streamlining them to their mother departments for effective service delivery.

"I don’t think it is fair that experienced academics who should be providing effective leadership and mentorship to younger colleagues in the various departments now prefer to work towards their own Centre and Institutions that appear to guarantee them better rewards. In doing so, they have inadvertently left their teaching responsibilities, so as not to engage in unethical practices that are detrimental to the University’s hierarchy and undermine the system. Under my watch, this practice will not be allowed to continue," the new Vice-Chancellor said.

Professor Lale, who was a pioneer Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, also disclosed that his administration would pursue every possible avenue of raising funds and dedicating a substantial part of such funds to provide critically needed office accommodation, staff residential quarters on Campus and hostel accommodation, adding that "if we are to obtain favourable contractual terms from private developers, a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) plan would be put in place to complement the direct effort of the University in order to achieve these critical goals." Speaking on his administration's efforts at resource mobilization, the new helmsman stated that management of funds from government and private resources, consolidating all sources into a centralized accounting system, intensification of the efforts of the University of Port Harcourt Foundation, development of innovative ways of collecting statutory and non-statutory charges, contract resource mobilization, as well as cost-reduction strategies, would be the focal points of his emergent fiscal policy.

Lale, who identified a number of unnecessary factors that led to a decline in student subscription into the University, assured stakeholders of the readiness of his administration to tackle them head-on. He also disclosed that in a bid to improve the quality of entrants into the University, "we will seek a mandate from Senate to introduce the Direct Entry option as much as possible in all programmes." To deal with unethical practices under his watch, Professor Lale stated that the current punishment prescribed in the Statement of Academic Policy is outdated and needs to be strengthened to conform to present day realities," adding that "cases of plagiarism and unwholesome practices would be sternly punished through strict implementation of existing laws without minding whose ox is gored in the process." Professor Lale, who regretted the re-emergence of cult-related activities in the University, expressed confidence in the ability of the Security Department and the Nigeria Police to respond appropriately to the resurgent security challenges, calling on members of the University community to provide information to the Security Department, which on its part should professionally pursue any type of information.

The presentation marked Professor Lale’s first official engagement after he was formally installed as the 8th Vice-Chancellor of the University at an impressive ceremony at the Convocation Arena on Friday, July 10, 2015. Also present at the event were the 7th Vice-Chancellor, Emeritus Professor Nnamdi Beke, his successor, Professor Don Baridum and immediate past Vice-Chancellor, Professor Joseph Ajakwe.

Others included the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Professor Ibe I. Ako-Tamuno; former Registrar, Dr. Chris Tamuno and Emeritus Professor Samuel Okwu;

New V-C, Prof Lale addressing the Congregation last Monday

AVU To Launch ODEL Centre July 27

By Humphrey Ogu

Kenya-based African Virtual University (AVU) will, from Monday, July 27 to Thursday, July 30, 2015, launch its Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODEL) platform at the University of Port Harcourt Business School, located at Choba North Street, CRAS Phase II, Port Harcourt. The final commissioning of the Centre is the result of a commitment to the programme by authorities of the University under the just-ended tenure of Professor Joseph Ajakwe as the Acting Director of the Centre.

Briefing UnitPort Weekly on the event, newly-appointed Acting Director of the Centre, Dr. Barbor Vikoo, noted that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure available at the Centre were donated by AVU and funded by the African Development Bank to improve online learning on the continent, discrediting that AVU had donated modules that would cover courses in science education, physics, biology, chemistry and mathematics.

Highlighting the benefits of the emergent partnership, Vikoo observed that ODEL programmes increase access to learning by making education more accessible and affordable through the deployment of state-of-the-art ICT facilities. "The beauty of online learning is that students can access materials from the Internet anytime, anywhere and at their own convenience. The process eliminates the constraints of face-to-face student-teacher interaction and the burdens associated with transportation to and from distant lecture venues," he explained.

"ODEL adopts the blended mode of teaching, which is not 100 per cent online, but a mixed mode of instruction in which students are made to have limited face-to-face interaction with lecturers. Most examinations would be Computer-Based Tests and Assessments. Apart from the limited student lecturers are to contact them, the programme would be done online in conformity with global best practice," the Acting Director explained.

On the general perception in some quarters that Open and Distance Learning programmes are inferior to their conventional counterparts, Vikoo rejected the perception, noting that "enrollment into the programme is through the same admission requirements and the students are taught by the same set of lecturers, who also develop the course materials." He added that those who say that ODEL programmes are of inferior quality when compared to the regular programmes say so out of ignorance as they do not know the true operational structure of the programmes.

It would be recalled that the ODEL was established in UnitPort in 2013 with Professor Hyacinth Dike as pioneer Director, who also laid the foundation for the smooth take-off of the programme. Vikoo, who was also the Assistant Director, took over as Acting Director in May, 2015, following the retirement of Professor Dike.
My Tenure Was Successful—Dr Tse

By Mercy Adeniji

Heading the Department of Geology with a galaxy of accomplished Professors and other senior academics must be a true joy. In tenacity, willingness to listen and ability to be a dependable, team player Dr. Akasha Tse is the immediate past Acting Head of the Department of Geology in the Faculty of Physical Science and Information Technology, College of Health Sciences, University of Abuja. He was given the enormous responsibility of presiding over the Department in the past two years that tasked his capacity to cope with the stress of managing staff and students, including other stakeholders in the affairs of the Department.

When he sat down to share his experience with a Correspondent of Unifor Weekly, the accomplished Geologist understandably expressed relief that he finally completed his tour of duty on a high note. Dr. Tse described his two-year tenure which came to an end in March, 2015, as a successful one.

Exchanging views with our Correspondent on how he was able to record the numerous achievements on his watch, Wednesday, June 24, 2015, the immediate past Acting Head recalled that he assumed office with the stated objective of enlightening the Department to a greater height, saying that he took over from Professor Godwin Udorn, to whom he ironically returned the headship of the Department on his successor. “When I first assumed duty in 2013, there were 21 graduate students, however, eight additional staff joined the Department during my tenure and I am handing back the office to Professor Udorn, following his appointment as HoD for the second term,” he noted.

On this achievement, the immediate past Acting HoD, Dr. Tse disclosed that “following the list of equipment handed over to me as an initial step, it is gratifying to note that we were able to acquire additional laboratory and field equipment to fortify what we already have in the Department. They include two tea and research microscopes for Petrology and Isotopenartography which were purchased from the proceeds of the first phase of a Chevron Project as directed by the Project Management Committee. Also, during the 2014 accreditation exercise, additional equipment were purchased and in a bid to ease communication with the students, a web page on our department’s group on Facebook was created under my watch to give the Department a corporate identity and also facilitate communication with our numerous stakeholders, especially our colleagues. The Department has also received a number of books and journals, and we are currently in the process of purchasing more equipment.”

Tese added that “we are also working on the Department’s website to make it more user-friendly and accessible to all stakeholders.”

The immediate past Acting Head of Department revealed that there are some pending matters that were yet to be addressed, appealing to his successor to treat them and continue to raise the Department to higher heights. He expressed willingness to always work hand-in-hand with his successor to achieve the collective goal of repositioning the Department as one of the best in the country.

While I extend assurances of my highest regards and confidence in my successor to take the Department to a higher pedestal. I will be available and willing to assist Professor Udorn in the onerous task ahead,” he said. “I appeal to all the staff and students of the Department to give him all the support he would require, just as he received while in office.”

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MGT WEATHER OBSERVATORY

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<th>WIND DIRECTION</th>
<th>RAIN (mm)</th>
<th>SUNRISE AND SUNSET (hr, min)</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
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<td>SUNDAY, 19 JULY, 2015</td>
<td>25.8</td>
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<td>NE</td>
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<td>TUESDAY, 21 JULY, 2015</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<td>THURSDAY, 23 JULY, 2015</td>
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<td>FRIDAY, 24 JULY, 2015</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
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<td>SATURDAY, 25 JULY, 2015</td>
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<td>78</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>13.4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our stakeholders are also advised to take these forecasts into consideration in their daily activities. The Department of Geography and Environmental Management, Weather Observatory, University of Abuja is committed to providing accurate weather forecasts to its members.

Shiva To Deliver Rights Livelihood Lecture Wednesday

The 2015 Rights Livelihood Public Lecture holds on Wednesday, July 23 at the International Students’ Centre, University Park. The Lecture will be delivered by globally renowned environmentalist, Dr. Vandana Shiva, who is author of over 20 books. The Indian-born activist and scholar is expected to speak on the thought-provoking topic: “Soil, Not Oil”. The event will coincide with the United Nations Day of the Soil which is usually observed on July 23 each year.
First Day In Office

Prof Ndowa Lale’s first day in office as 8th Vice-Chancellor of UniPort on Monday, July 13, 2015

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