



Golden Years &

THE 35TH CONVOCATION
CEREMONY





National Anthem

Nigeria we hail thee,
Our own dear native land,
Though tribe and tongue may differ,
In brotherhood, we stand,
Nigerians all, and proud to serve
Our sovereign Motherland.

Our flag shall be a symbol
That truth and justice reign,
In peace or battle honour'd,
And this we count as gain,
To hand on to our children
A banner without stain.

O God of all creation,
Grant this our one request,
Help us to build a nation
Where no man is oppressed,
And so with peace and plenty
Nigeria may be blessed.

The University Anthem

On the green low lands and swampy planes
Of the new Calabar Rivers stand
The University of Port Harcourt
A citadel of learning and excellent education
A home of academic enthusiasts,
Searching, Searching for knowledge and wisdom.

Enlightenment and Self-reliance, our mission,
Our hope in the future is rooted in God alone;
The vision of our father shining in the stars,
Opportunities, unlimited and equal,
Our progenies citizens of the universe
From far and near, the pride of UNIPORT Echos

Unique, Unique, Unique UNIPORT
Unique, Unique, Unique UNIPORT



HIS EXCELLENCY
Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR
PRESIDENT, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE
ARMED FORCES FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
VISITOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT



Dr. Maruf Tunji Alausa
HONORABLE MINISTER OF EDUCATION
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA



HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
GEN. Muhammadu Iliyasu Bashar CFR, mni
EMIR OF GWANDU
CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT



Senator Mao Arukwe Oluabunwa
PRO-CHANCELLOR AND CHAIRMAN OF
17TH GOVERNING COUNCIL, UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT



Prof Owunari A. Georgewill
Vice Chancellor, UNIPORT
Chief Host

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS OF THE UNIVERSITY



PROF. CLIFFORD OFURUM
DVC ADMIN



Prof Kingsley Owete
DVC Academics



Prof. Iyeopu Siminialayi
Deputy Vice Chancellor Research & Development



Dr. Gloria Chindah
Registrar



Prof. Helen Emasealu
University Librarian



Dr. GodPower W. Obah
Bursar



PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES FOR UNIPORT@50

S/No	Day/Date	Activity	Venue	Time
1	Monday 21/7/2025	Press briefing by Vice-Chancellor Prof Owunari A. Georgewill	Council Chambers	9:00 am
		Opening ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Presentation and airing of documentary □ Remarks by current and past VCs □ Presentations by Provost and Deans □ Presentation by community representatives □ Awards □ Exhibition commences 	CBN Centre of Excellence	10:00 am
2	Tuesday 22/7/2025	Alumni homecoming	CBN Centre of Excellence	10:00 am
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Presentations by Alumni leadership and distinguished alumni □ Visit to and hosting of alumni by various faculties □ Alumni dinner/fundraising and awards □ Sale of memorabilia □ Music to be provided by Music Department 	College and Faculties	12:00 pm
			CBN Centre of Excellence Quadrangle	6:00 pm
3	Wednesday 23/7/2025	Cultural Events and Music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Performances by Host Communities □ Theatre Arts Department □ Music Department 	New Convocation Arena	3:00 pm
4	Thursday 24/7/2025	Pro-Chancellor's Dinner and Award night	CBN Centre of Excellence Quadrangle	6:00 pm
5	Friday 25/7/2025	Convocation, Convocation Lecture by HE Senator Douye Diri, Executive Governor of Bayelsa State Award of Bachelor's, PGD, MSc Degrees.	New Convocation Arena	10:00 am
6	Saturday 26/7/2025	Convocation 50th Anniversary Lecture by HE, Rt Hon Aminu Bello Masari CFR, Chairman Board of Trustees of TETFUND Award of PhDs and Honorary degrees	New Convocation Arena	10:00 am
7	Sunday 27/7/2025	Thanksgiving Service	New Convocation Arena	10:00 am

Chairman's Message on the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the University of Port Harcourt

As the University of Port Harcourt marks this remarkable milestone of fifty years, I am deeply honoured to address you at this historic moment so rich in meaning. This golden jubilee is not just a celebration; it is also a reminder of the importance, legacy, and limitless potential.

Fifty years ago, a group of visionary pioneers conceived the idea of creating an institution that would transform lives through education, research, and service. Today, we are proud to stand tall and testify to their vision, which has been extended by the brilliance of our community and the resilience of generations who have traversed these halls. To our founding fathers, I offer heartfelt gratitude for laying the cornerstones of greatness.

We commemorate not just our past, but also the individuals who shaped it. UniPort's commitment to excellence is reflected in the steadfast commitment of its dedicated academic and non-academic staff. The future is being shaped and challenged daily by our diverse and exceptional students. Their energy is the driving force behind our progress.

The 50th Anniversary celebration this year is even more remarkable because it coincides with the 35th Convocation Ceremony, a moment that connects legacy with promise. I extend my sincerest congratulations to the graduating class. You represent the torchbearers for UniPort's next phase. Your accomplishments demonstrate the sturdiness of our educational tradition and the limitless potential that awaits us. May courage, wisdom characterise your journey, and the spirit of excellence that defines this magnificent institution.

We are optimistic and eagerly anticipating the next fifty years. We envision a university that not only adapts to change but also drives it, with the goal of innovating across disciplines, forging global partnerships, and nurturing leaders who are equipped to uplift humanity. We will continue to be a beacon of scholarship, integrity, and impact.

This memorabilia is a symbol of our journey and a tribute to how far we've come. May it serve as a



reminder that excellence is not a destination, but a continuous upward journey.

I am deeply grateful to the Governing Council, led with distinction by Senator Mao Oluabunwa, and to the University Management under our esteemed Vice Chancellor, Professor Owunari Abraham Georgwill, for the confidence they have reposed in me. I am proud and honoured to be entrusted with the honour of chairing the committee that organised this historic celebration.

Let our story continue—undaunted, inspired, and united. I would like to conclude this message by quoting one of the most exceptional alumni our university has ever produced.

"I am proud to be associated with the University of Port Harcourt. Over the years, this institution has produced graduates who have contributed to nation-building in all facets of life." — Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." — Eleanor Roosevelt.

With hope rooted in vision,

Professor Clifford Obiyo Ofurum,

Chairman, 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee
University of Port Harcourt

UNIPORT AT 50 (1975–2025):

A Legacy of Innovation, Service, and Excellence

By Professor Atei Mark Okorobia

History and Diplomatic Studies Department, Faculty of Humanities, UNIPORT (31 May, 2025)

I. Introduction

From her humble beginnings as a University College affiliated with the University of Lagos in 1975, the University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT) has grown into a prestigious institution that has significantly impacted the Niger Delta region, Nigeria, and the global academic community. Surviving for five decades in the inclement Niger Delta and Nigeria is no small feat. As UNIPORT celebrates her golden jubilee, it is fitting to examine her foundational philosophy, contributions, challenges, and future prospects.

II. Philosophy, Vision, and Mission

UNIPORT was born with a distinct and unique vision. Prof. Donald U. Ekong, the university's pioneer Principal, and later, Vice-Chancellor, emphasized that the new institution would not blindly follow the traditions of older universities. Instead, it would determine its path based on first principles and the needs of its unique environment in the inclement Niger Delta and Nigeria. At its inception, UNIPORT introduced an innovative School System rather than the conventional Faculty structure. This bold decision was a testament to her commitment to creativity and independence. The university's philosophy centers on academic freedom, integrity, tolerance, and inclusivity, with a mission to serve community and humanity through excellence in teaching, research, and innovation.

III. Leadership Profile, 1975-2025

Nine substantive Vice-Chancellors and, a few acting Vice Chancellors have administered UNIPORT since her foundation, each contributing sacrificially to her evolution and consolidation into what is now a nationally and globally respected university. They include:

- **Prof. Donald U. Ekong (1975-1982):** Set the innovative tone for the “Unique UNIPORT” identity as he laid the institution's pristine foundation.
- **Prof. Sylvanus J. S. Cookey (1982-1990):** Expanded the academic offerings as he built on the foundation from many angles.
- **Prof. Kelsey Harrison (1990-1993):** Focused on infrastructure, professionalism and academic ethics.

- **Prof. Theo Vincent (1996-1999):** Strengthened infrastructure and attracted foreign aid.
- **Prof. Nimi D. Briggs (2000-2005):** Championed several reforms, modernization, and internationalization.
- **Prof. Don Baridam (2005-2010):** Promoted internal revenue generation, infrastructure and staff development.
- **Prof. Joseph Ajienka (2010-2015):** Promoted infrastructural development, advanced ICT and entrepreneurial education.
- **Prof. Ndowa Lale (2015-2020):** Promoted some infrastructural development, stabilized academic calendar and emphasized staff and students' discipline.
- **Prof. Owunari Georgewill (2021-Present):** Celebrated as the “Digital VC” as he leads UNIPORT into her next phase of multi-sectorial development.

IV. Contributions to the Niger Delta and Nigeria

UNIPORT's influence on its host communities and the broader Niger Delta is remarkable. From the 1970s, the university initiated outreach programs to promote access to higher education for indigenes. A large percentage of the early student population came from Rivers and Bayelsa States. The university also reserved jobs for locals and engaged communities through development-oriented projects. Again, Students are required to participate in Community Service Courses, applying their knowledge to solve local challenges—whether through adult literacy, environmental sanitation, or educational support. These efforts have reinforced UNIPORT's commitment to grassroots development. Furthermore, UNIPORT also contributes significantly to Nigeria's educational landscape nurturing younger and smaller institutions. Similarly, through the College of Continuing Education and Sandwich Programmes, the university has widened access to quality education for civil servants, professionals, and teachers. Lately, the university has upgraded her relationship with her host communities by operating joint businesses with them, like the Uniport & Choba Micro-Finance Bank established to enhance access to microcredit facilities.

V. National and Global Footprint

UNIPOINT has produced a notable cadre of alumni who have made their mark in politics, diplomacy, academia, and business. These include:

- **Dr. Goodluck E. Jonathan**, former President of Nigeria.
- **Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi** and **Chief Timipre Sylva**, former Governors.
- **Dr. Alex Otti**, Governor of Abia State.
- Several ambassadors, ministers, commissioners, captains of industry, vice-chancellors, and Nollywood icons, etc.
- In sports, the university has repeatedly emerged victorious at the NUGA and WAUG games, earning recognition as Nigeria's top sporting university for decades.

VI. Award, Honours, Endowments, and Recognitions

Over the years, UNIPOINT and her members have received numerous awards, honours and recognitions:

- **Prof. Ebiegberi J. Alagoa** – Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM).
- **Prof. Adewale Dosunmu** – Developer of OPTIWELL software, internationally recognized.
- **Prof. Chidi Maduka** – Fellow Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL)
- **Prof. Atei M. Okorobia** – Nigerian Merit Gold Award for Productivity.
- Scores of others have earned national and international awards, recognitions, and fellowships. In 2011 alone, the university received three major institutional awards:
- Best Security Conscious University,
- African Business Roundtable Award,
- African Students' Union Best University Award.

VII Research and Innovation Breakthroughs

UNIPOINT has lived up to its goal of producing knowledge for development. Notable research achievements include:

- **Prof. Marshall Enenajor** (Fine Arts) – Award-winning invention in paper-frame design.
- **Prof. Julian Osuji** – Biotech innovations in plantain and pineapple breeding.
- **Dr. Andrew Efisue** – Breakthrough in high-yield rice production; consultant to the National Rice Project.
- **Prof. Joseph Ebeniro** – Technique to locate bypassed oil, aiding petroleum production.
- Establishment of software and digital data centers for oil and gas.
- Construction of a paint and allied chemicals plant, supporting industrial research.

- UNIPOINT is also a Centre of Excellence in the Performing Arts, Petroleum Engineering, Music, Sickle Cell Research, Environmental Studies, and Niger Delta Studies.

VIII. Challenges and Limitations

Like many Nigerian institutions, UNIPOINT faces structural and systemic challenges:

- **Academic Constraints:** Shortage of teaching staff and research facilities. Many foreign scholars who once enriched the campus have left due to Nigeria's economic downturn.
- **Poor Welfare and Declining Funding:** These have weakened research output and productivity, and reduced staff morale.
- **Administrative Challenges:** Inadequate office spaces, strained logistics, and bureaucracy have impacted staff efficiency.
- **Societal Perception:** Despite producing high-performing graduates, UNIPOINT (and by extension, Nigerian universities) suffer from negative public perception, especially compared to foreign institutions. UNIPOINT therefore has to struggle harder to attract fruitful partnerships and develop its internal capacities.

IX. Looking Ahead to a Brighter Future

Despite her daunting challenges, UNIPOINT's future appears promising. The institution has demonstrated resilience, resourcefulness, and relevance over the years. Her embrace of entrepreneurial education, research commercialization, and community-centered learning positions her well for a brighter future. In the coming decades, UNIPOINT aims to produce not just graduates, but innovators—individuals equipped to create solutions, generate employment, and contribute to global conversations. The institution is determined to reposition herself as a global hub of marketable knowledge, embracing technology, innovation, and international collaboration.

X. Conclusion

As UNIPOINT turns 50, it has much to celebrate— an enduring legacy of academic excellence, impactful research, strong community ties, and national-cum-global relevance. From the heart of the Niger Delta, UNIPOINT has proven that meaningful education is not defined by age or geography, but by vision, commitment, and the ability to transform lives. The future of the University of Port Harcourt is not only secured, it is limitless and hope-inspiring.

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF IMPACT:
THE UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT,
AFRICA'S BEACON OF EXCELLENCE,
INNOVATION, AND TRANSFORMATION**

On this momentous occasion marking the 50th anniversary of the University of Port Harcourt, I extend my warmest congratulations to the entire UniPort community—students, academic and non-academic staff, alumni, stakeholders and our invaluable host communities.

Fifty years ago, UniPort began its journey with a bold vision: to be a center of excellence in education, research, and societal transformation. Today, it stands as a beacon of learning, innovation, and progress—not only in the Niger Delta but across Nigeria and Africa at large. This golden milestone is a testament to the unwavering commitment, resilience, and collaborative spirit that have propelled the university forward across decades of challenges and triumphs.

As Pro-Chancellor, I have had the privilege of witnessing the brilliance of UniPort's scholars, the ingenuity of its researchers, the passion of its students, and the steadfast dedication of its leaders. These qualities, woven into the very fabric of the university, have nurtured generations of professionals, thought leaders, and change-makers who continue to shape the world with distinction.

The golden jubilee is not merely a celebration of our past—it is a clarion call to chart an ambitious future. Let us deepen our investment in research and development, strengthen governance and infrastructure, and foster a globally competitive



academic environment. Together, we can transform UniPort into an even greater engine of enlightenment, equity, and empowerment. I salute all who have made this celebration possible—the Anniversary Planning Committee, the University Management, the Governing Council, our benefactors and partners, government leaders, alumni, students, and friends of UniPort. Your collective efforts embody the spirit of excellence that UniPort represents.

Congratulations, UniPort! May the next 50 years be even more groundbreaking, inclusive, and impactful. Long live the University of Port Harcourt. Long live our commitment to knowledge and national development.

Signed,

Senator Mao Oluabunwa

Pro-Chancellor & Chairman of Council
University of Port Harcourt

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF IMPACT:
THE UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT,
AFRICA'S BEACON OF EXCELLENCE,
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Distinguished members of the public, partners in academia, friends and stakeholders of the University of Port Harcourt, ladies and gentlemen across the globe, with a heart full of gratitude that I Prof. Owunari Abraham Georgewill, 9th Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt address you today as we prepare for a historic moment in the life of one of Africa's most illustrious institutions of higher learning; the University of Port Harcourt (UniPort) to commemorate fifty years of academic excellence, transformational leadership, groundbreaking research, and global impact. The University was founded in 1975, initially as a College and later attained full university status in 1977. Since then, UniPort has grown from her humble beginning into a world-class citadel of learning. It has become a university that is not only shaping minds but also shaping destinies in Nigeria, across Africa, and throughout the wider world.

Over the course of our fifty-year journey, the University of Port Harcourt has distinguished itself across multiple spheres of academic and societal advancement. Renowned for academic rigour, impactful research, and professional excellence, UniPort has consistently remained among the top-tier universities in Nigeria. Furthermore, it continues to expand its global reputation in specialized fields such as engineering, health sciences, and environmental studies, social sciences, humanities, agriculture science, management sciences, computing, Law, communication and media studies. Our Open and Distant Learning, Business School, School of Economics and Postgraduate Programmes are of international standard. According to Time Africa Magazine of 2023, The University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT) was ranked topmost in Nigeria and has continued to improve its ranking, currently it



is ranked at position 4 with 8 other Nigeria Universities in Africa by THE rankings 2025UniRank™ is the leading international higher education directory and search engine featuring reviews and rankings of over 13,900 officially recognized Universities and Colleges in 200 countries. Read more at Time Africa Magazine

<https://timeafricamagazine.com/latest-ranking-uniport-1st-in-nigeria-19th-in-africa/>

This recognition highlights the University's sustained performance in quality of teaching, research output, academic citations, and international outlook. Notably, in the THE Subject Rankings of 2022, UniPort was highly rated in clinical and health sciences as well as in engineering and technology disciplines. Equally important is UniPort's position as a continental leader in petroleum engineering and energy-related studies. The Institute of Petroleum Studies (IPS), operated in collaboration with IFP School, France, has been described by The Guardian Nigeria and the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) as "Africa's premier energy training hub." IPS graduates consistently record a near 100 per cent employment rate in top-tier oil and gas

companies across Africa and beyond [see The Guardian Nigeria (2021), NCDMB Reports]. Moreover, UniPort's World Bank-funded Africa Centre of Excellence in Oilfield Chemicals Research (ACE-CEFOP) has trained over 400 postgraduate researchers from more than fifteen African countries. This initiative contributes significantly to human capacity development and industry innovation throughout the continent [see World Bank ACE Impact Project Report 2022 –ace.aau.org].

In the fields of environmental and public health research, UniPort remains at the forefront. It is home to the Centre for Malaria Research and Phytomedicine, as well as the Centre for Health and Development (CHD). These centres have been instrumental in advancing sustainable development goals through community-based interventions and collaborative projects with international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Presently, UniPort comprises nineteen faculties, with more in development, and over one hundred academic departments, along with several postgraduate schools that offer world-class training and interdisciplinary research. It is essential to note that UniPort is also home to Nigeria's first UNESCO Chair in Bioethics, a recognition of its leadership in ethical science and global governance. Furthermore, the University houses specialized centres such as the Centre for Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Studies, which, along with the IPS and CHD, are nationally and internationally recognized for their relevance to industry needs. The Niger Delta Centre for Environmental Studies further amplifies our commitment to addressing regional environmental concerns while contributing valuable research to global sustainability discourse.

Over the past fifty years, the alumni of UniPort have emerged as some of the most outstanding leaders, thinkers, and changemakers in Nigeria and beyond. In the field of politics and governance, this excellence is exemplified by former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a

respected figure globally and a symbol of peaceful democratic transition in Africa. This Institution has also raised other political giants as Ministers, Governors, Lawmakers and those in the Judiciary. Furthermore, in academia and research, UniPort-trained scholars hold leadership positions in renowned universities across North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Similarly, in engineering, law, finance, and medicine, thousands of UniPort graduates contribute meaningfully to global development through their work in institutions such as the World Bank, United Nations, Chevron, Shell, and across numerous national projects within Nigeria.

In light of this rich legacy, one may ask: Why are we celebrating fifty years of vision and promise? The answer lies in our collective journey. The fiftieth anniversary is not merely a commemoration of the past, but rather a strategic inflexion point for our university. It is a moment to honour our heritage, reflect on our present, and boldly chart the path to the future. Our Golden Jubilee is anchored on the theme, Fifty Years of Excellence.. This celebration is dedicated to our students, who represent the hope of tomorrow, all members of staff, who serve as torchbearers of innovation, our strategic partners, who trust in education as a tool for peace and development, the Rivers State Government our dear host and treasure base of the Nation and most importantly, the Federal Government of Nigeria whose fortunes have been closely tied to the rise of UniPort. Moreover, as we look to the next fifty years, UniPort is firmly committed to leading Africa into the future through technology, entrepreneurship, and sustainability. To this end, a Digital Transformation Hub is being established, alongside an Innovation Lab and Startup Incubator, which will provide advanced training in artificial intelligence, robotics, financial technology, and green energy solutions. In addition, a new School of Climate and Sustainability is underway, aimed at tackling the pressing ecological challenges facing the Niger Delta and the continent at large.

Equally significant is the creation of Africa's Knowledge Grid, a collaborative digital research

platform that will enable inter-university cooperation across West Africa. In support of these initiatives, we are actively pursuing international partnerships, research grants, and industry linkages. Already, new agreements have been signed with institutions in the United Kingdom, France, South Africa, and the United States.

It is important to highlight that these achievements have been made possible through the goodwill and policy direction of His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, whose administration has prioritized educational reform. Under his leadership, there have been tangible improvements across federal and state universities and polytechnics. These include enhanced infrastructure, increased research support, and greater access to education. For example, the National Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) initiative now provides financial support to students, helping to reduce dropout rates and making higher education more accessible to all.

Additionally, UniPort was designated by the Federal Government as one of the national Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) conversion centres. This progressive initiative is designed to reduce transportation costs by promoting the use of alternative fuel sources. The presence of this centre at UniPort not only strengthens our sustainability credentials but also provides practical training opportunities for students and contributes to broader environmental conservation efforts.

Furthermore, for learners who are unable to attend classes in person, the University's Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Centre offers flexible, high-quality education. In line with our commitment to infrastructure development, a Solar Farm Project for uninterrupted power supply is currently underway. Through the efforts of the Rural Electrification Agency, a 10.7 megawatt solar hybrid power plant is being constructed to serve UniPort, the University Teaching Hospital, and surrounding communities. In a similar vein, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has pledged

to construct new hostel blocks and provide a 300 KVA solar inverter system, thereby significantly reducing diesel-related costs and promoting clean energy usage.

Naturally, the question arises: what truly makes UniPort great? It is not only the knowledge we impart, but also the values we uphold. We are a university of character and conscience, situated at the heart of Africa's oil-rich region, and standing as a model of resilience, diversity, and excellence. We do not merely build degrees. We build vision. We build values. We build viability for a world that increasingly demands all three.

Therefore, to our friends and allies across the globe, we extend an open invitation to celebrate with us a university that has never ceased to dream, never ceased to serve, and never ceased to rise. To our alumni: we call upon you to come home, to reconnect, and to give back. This legacy belongs to you. To our students: We urge you to dare to dream boldly, for the next fifty years are yours to define. As Vice-Chancellor, I reaffirm our unwavering commitment to being a university of global excellence with local relevance. The story of UniPort is not simply a Nigerian story. It is an African story. It is a global story; one that demonstrates what becomes possible when knowledge meets vision and when community meets courage. Let us, therefore, celebrate this golden jubilee not as a conclusion, but as a renewed promise to serve humanity through education, innovation, and unity.

I welcome you on the 26th of July, 2025 as we mark our golden Jubilee at the New Convocation Arena, University of Port Harcourt Park. Happy Fiftieth Anniversary to the University of Port Harcourt. From Port Harcourt to the world, our light shines brighter than ever.

Thank you.

Prof. Owuanri A. Georgewill,

KSC, FRSB (London), FFS, FIARSA,
FECRM, FWASOT, DFCIHTMA

Vice-Chancellor, University of Port Harcourt

Bridging Legacy and Promise:

Anniversary Reflections by

Professor S. J. S. Cookey

Recounting an Era of Growth (1982-1989)

I write this with a heart full of solemn gratitude to God for the opportunity to serve our unique university as Vice Chancellor. It is both humbling and fulfilling, so many years after my tenure, to see the enduring impact of a shared journey — a journey marked not by ease or abundance, but by unity, creativity, and unwavering commitment to the growth of the University of Port Harcourt.

When I assumed office as Vice-Chancellor in 1982, succeeding Professor Donald Ekong, I did so, acknowledging the foundations he had laid, but I also knew that the time had come for bold transformation. Together with my colleagues, we initiated a shift from the old 'School' system to a faculty-based structure — a change not just in form, but in substance.

On 1st October, 1982, the School of Educational Studies became the Faculty of Education, and within a few short years, that faculty would give rise to multiple academic departments, eventually expanding to six by 1987. The School of Engineering became the Faculty of Engineering and from three Departments, soon, it had six Departments with the help of a brilliant international scholar, Prof. Chi Ikoiku, whom we recruited from the United States. We moved the Teaching Hospital from the Emohua General Hospital which could not have passed the accreditation requirements of the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria, with the help of the State government, to the Port Harcourt General Hospital. We followed this a few years later by moving the clinical hostels to town so that medical students would live close to the hospital. Not surprisingly, both Engineering and Medicine won accreditation from their respective



professional regulatory bodies, COREN and MDCN. These changes were not just cosmetic, they were grounded in a desire to deepen our academic roots, to open new frontiers across the humanities, the sciences, and the professional disciplines, and to build a university that could stand tall among its peers.

But we did not stop there. We established the School of Graduate Studies, recognizing the need for a structured platform to coordinate postgraduate education. We pursued accreditation vigorously, seeking validation from the National Universities Commission for each department, knowing that without academic credibility, growth would be hollow. This reorganization laid the foundation for a more responsive and modern academic environment — one that would welcome scholars, researchers, and thinkers from everywhere in the world.

Yet, we must remember the context of those years. The mid-1980s in Nigeria were defined by harsh austerity. Oil revenues fell sharply, and university funding was strained to the limit. But it was in that adversity that the true spirit of Uniport emerged. Our Governing Council, Senate, faculty,

and students came together with remarkable resolve. We made every naira count. We appealed to alumni, sought international grants, and pioneered internal income-generating ventures.

One of our proudest innovations was the creation of Uniport Investments Limited — a quiet but powerful engine for university development. We complemented this with the establishment of the Consultancy, Research and Development Centre (CORDEC), strengthening our ties with industry and unlocking new streams of funding and relevance. Amid the financial constraints, we pressed forward with building projects. I still recall the joy when the new lecture halls and student hostels were completed, when our library — now bearing the name of Professor Ekong — rose as a beacon of knowledge. We paved roads, constructed the main gate and security post, and beautified the physical landscape with lawns, parks, and shade trees.

We invested in power — upgrading from 11 KVA to 33 KVA — and attracted NITEL to our campus, transforming our communication infrastructure. To solve the need of our staff for a quality secondary school to which they could send their children when they graduated from the University Demonstration Primary School, we started the University Demonstration Secondary School from abandoned government buildings in Aluu. That school trained not only the children of our staff but also children from as far away as Port Harcourt city. The College of Continuing Education started with the need to offer tertiary education to civil servants and other workers in the State who could not afford to attend regular schools on account of their work schedules. It turned out to be an especially important source of revenue for the university.

In the academic arena, we launched the University of Port Harcourt Press, giving voice to our scholars and supporting the publication of reputable journals. Our faculty's research output flourished—from historians to engineers, our academics found their way into global conversations. We signed international agreements that allowed our students to embark on study tours abroad and invited foreign scholars

to Choba. These partnerships, forged in modest times, continue to bear fruit today.

To our students, we gave more than lectures. We empowered their union, encouraged cultural festivals, and supported sporting excellence, and introduced health and scholarship initiatives that improved their welfare. I remain proud that we did not let the challenges of the time rob our students of dignity or hope. In every convocation speech, I reminded them to be pioneers of progress — ambassadors of our motto: “For Enlightenment and Self-Reliance.”

We established specialized academic support units: the Computer Centre, the Instructional Resources Centre, the Science and Engineering Workshop, and a museum that neared completion during my tenure. We even began plans to digitize university records — a forward-looking move that anticipated the demands of a digital age.

Our vision extended beyond campus boundaries. We introduced the Community Service Programme, encouraging students to contribute labor and skills to surrounding communities. We also championed environmental stewardship and initiated a national project to collect and archive theses and dissertations — preventing duplication and enriching academic heritage. We prioritized our people. During my tenure, the number of academic staff rose from 283 in 1982 to 404 in 1989.

Each of these milestones — whether academic, infrastructural, or administrative — was part of a broader story: the story of a university determined to rise, regardless of the odds.

Visioning 2075 and Beyond

Now, half a century beyond my tenure, I dare to dream aloud about what the University of Port Harcourt might be in the year 2075. In this vision, I remain grounded in the principles we espoused: that education is a public endeavour and a common good, as UNESCO reminds us. I foresee a university governed with foresight and flexibility: capable, for example, of leveraging data and digital platforms to make decisions and to deliver

instruction. Imagine a Council and administration that anticipate needs through technology—perhaps using artificial intelligence to optimize resource allocation or virtual reality to design new laboratories. In my vision, governance is transparent and participatory, with alumni and community voices woven into the university's mission.

Academically, the transformation will be profound. Just as we once moved from schools to faculties, so too will future generations adapt the university to new frontiers of knowledge. I picture laboratories that explore Nigeria's unique ecosystems with advanced tools, colleges of renewable energy that harvest power from our rivers, and institutes of marine science leveraging Nigeria's coastal advantage. The curriculum will evolve constantly: programming and biotechnology courses might be as fundamental as literature and history. Following UNESCO's call that education can “shape just and sustainable futures”, Uniport will prepare students for problems we can hardly imagine today – climate challenges, global health crises, or spaces yet to be discovered. Digital learning platforms will reach scholars who never set foot on Choba's campus, and our own students will learn alongside peers in Asia, Europe, and beyond. In these ways, we will keep “For Enlightenment and Self-Reliance” alive, urging each student toward wisdom and independence even as they connect globally.

The students of 2075 will look different too. I expect a broader mix of ages and backgrounds – lifelong learners returning for new skills, as well as traditional freshmen. Education will not end at graduation, so the University will offer continuing studies at scale. With widening access, we may see many more students from the Niger Delta, from rural areas, even from neighboring countries, drawn by Uniport's programs. Each cohort will demand new support systems, and I trust the institution will rise to the challenge: personalized mentoring through AI, expanded counseling services for mental wellness, and inclusive facilities for differently-abled students. Student life will remain vibrant, but transformed:

sports may harness virtual reality, cultural fests may blend with global festivals online, and governance via student councils will extend into networks across Africa and the world.

Nationally and globally, the University of Port Harcourt's role will have blossomed. I foresee it ranking among the world's centers of tropical and environmental research, its scholars advising on matters of national development and its alumni holding high office in science and government. Like the examples we set in my day, the 2075 campus will cultivate entrepreneurship and innovation. Graduates will launch enterprises in biotechnology and clean energy right here in Rivers State, while others will compete for international awards in peace, literature, and science. The bond between Uniport and Nigeria's progress will be unbreakable: as I have often said, a university's success is measured by the prosperity and enlightenment of its society.

In drawing these lines from past to future, I feel confident and hopeful. The legacy we built together – under trying circumstances – is a torch we pass onward. As I have noted with humility, I feel satisfied that our efforts have not faded in memory. And looking to tomorrow, I affirm that with wisdom, courage, and unwavering dedication to our motto, future stewards of Uniport will unlock potential beyond our current sight. May the next fifty years see this University thrive even more deeply in the service of knowledge, of our region, and of the world.

Making Unique UniPort more unique!

Professor Joseph A. Ajienka

Emmanuel Egbogah Chair/
Professor of Petroleum Engineering
7th Vice-Chancellor,
University of Port Harcourt (2010-2015)

The year 2025 is very significant in the history of our university. We are celebrating the golden jubilee of the University of Port Harcourt fondly described with the cheer slogan “unique UniPort”. Fifty years ago in 1975, the founding fathers laid a solid foundation for the University with a unique academic culture of the school system to promote flexible interdisciplinary studies. UniPort was the first to introduce community service programme to inculcate the values of community service and dignity of labour.

In the last 50 years the university made impressive progress and improved her profile in the comity of higher education institutions. We now have a vibrant Graduate School. We introduced a mature students programme and established the College of Continuing Education (CCE), School of Basic Studies, School of Science Laboratory Technology, new Faculties, Departments and Programmes. We also had CORDEC, the Consultancy, Research and Development Centre which failed the test of sustainability; we were the first in Nigeria to establish the Office of DVC R&D which influenced our focus on research and innovation with KPIs, research policies and research architecture such that in THE World University Ranking of 2015 placed the university in the 276-300 bracket globally, 6th in Africa and 1st in Nigeria in Research Influence; we competitively won two World Bank African Centres of Excellence (ACEs) (CEFOR, PUTOR); The University became a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in the Arts (with a galaxy of Nollywood Stars and producers); CoE in Petroleum & Energy Studies (IPES being the first of its kind in Africa); CoE in Sports (undisputed NUGA/WAUG/Swimming Champion and the establishment of a Sports Institute, the first of its kind Nigeria); foremost Medical School in the Niger Delta (introduced clinical clerking skills laboratory); We had a vibrant University



Advancement Centre (UAC), that helped to set up the UAC in Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife.

We were the first to set up a University Foundation to secure the future. There was a scholarly School of Thought in Social Science; TETFund Regional Innovation Centre and professional industry collaborative schools such as the IPES, EEI, CNES, CASG, INRES, METI, CELTRAS, CITE, IITD, INDES, COHSE, OTI. CPG, CGRP, ETI etc., most of them, first of their kind in Nigeria, some first of the kind Africa, that ran modular programmes on the basis of Triple Helix partnership; The Ashgrove A' Level School, Arts Village, University of PH Business School were the first in the Niger Delta. Several Professorial Chairs were secured. The University has graduated outstanding Alumni such as President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, Governors, Senators, VCs and clergy; outstanding scholars, National Merit Award winners and Professors Emeriti as well as valuable Friends of the University. There has been compilation of Complete Works of Ikoli Harcourt Whyte's Choral Music instigated by the University such that choral music in Igbo language can be played globally. This does Nigeria and indeed Africa proud; We plan to do the same of Rex

Lawson and Adam Fiberesima; A book on Ernest Ikoli that documents History of Journalism and Kings College was published by eminent professors of History; The university has Office of Research Management, Office of Technology Transfer and celebrates Innovation/Entrepreneurship Week; Innovation Competitions, etc. We deepened academic culture with new guidelines and policies, Senate Valedictory Session for retiring professors, installation of Vice-Chancellor, appointment of Professors Emeriti, appointment of Writers-in-Residence and Experts-in-Residence. We appointed a University Poet, the first in Nigeria. We even contributed to and participated in the celebration of Port Harcourt as the World Book Capital 2014.

In the past 50 years the world has undergone intense pressure enforcing change and transformation. Educators are reimagining universities that are anchored in inclusion, relevance and innovation. In today's rapidly changing hyperconnected world, it is clear that life-long learning is a right for all and so inclusion rather than exclusion and limited access to education will be a disservice to humanity. The onus of proof of relevance is on universities to show that as elite think-tanks of society they are providing solutions to the challenges militating against sustainable development in their localities. Universities are mindful of the fact that innovations must be guided by values. With initiatives like MOOCs, open educational resources such as MIT OpenCourseWare or UNESCO's push for open science, knowledge is democratized.

The concept of the classroom has changed. We now have open distance and e-learning (ODEL) systems. Students now learn in classrooms, community centres and cyberspaces. The concept of the library has changed. The ivory tower of the traditional university system has collapsed. Today's system has developed beyond the traditional university system. The new system is fluid, flexible, open and extensively collaborative.

Scholars are reimagining and reinventing the university of the future. But the future is here. In his powerful article in the World University News "Innovation is the future, but it must be guided by values", president and chief scientist for the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning (HETL) Association in the United States, Blessinger (2025), noted that we now live in a world where the boundaries between disciplines continue to blur, where students crave relevance and not just rigour, and where leadership must learn to transcend traditional managerial functions to become a transformative force in the world. The very paradigm of the university continues to shift in response to a rapidly changing world.

Blessinger warned that the myth of the isolated ivory tower has long crumbled. Today's campuses are intrinsically global with local roots; whether through international partnerships, virtual exchange programmes or collaborative research on planetary challenges, universities are part of a larger web of interdependence. At the same time, globalism without localism can lead to abstraction. A university's greatest strength lies in its rootedness. The university ensures that local relations need not be sacrificed for its global ambitions. The reimagined new university must become an organic entity where the interplay between the local and the global, the traditional and the emergent – leads to hybridity and fluidity that defy easy classification.

He advised that the hardest part of reimagining higher education is unlearning by questioning long-held traditions and conventions taken for granted. Like choices, these can be rethought and remade. For instance, the pandemic taught us flexibility and elasticity as institutions adapted to the realities of the times. We need the courage to adopt and carry forward what worked. He noted that college or university education at its best is a common good – a place where the future is imagined, explored and made. But it can fulfil that role only by restructuring and innovating. However, innovation without values is empty. Leadership without humility is fragile. Progress without inclusion is regression by any other name. To move forward, he advised we

embrace what he called ethical foresight – the ability to align innovation with our deepest human values. This view of education treats education as a living ecosystem of transformation, not merely a system of knowledge transmission. We must lead not only with our minds, but with our hearts. He concluded that in an interconnected world, the university must become a convener of difference, a catalyst for justice and a laboratory for planetary healing. That is the promise of reimagined higher education.

The new system is about students-centric experiential learning. Instead of passive recipients of instruction, students are now co-creators of knowledge who need to be guided by the experienced teacher. Today's students learn by doing, connecting, questioning, engaging with the world. It's not about substituting professors with platforms. It's about reframing faculty as facilitators, mentors and teacher-researchers in conversation with students. In some universities, every student completes a community-based capstone project before graduating; real-world, hands-on projects that inculcate civic responsibility, empathy and sustainability. Some universities have decolonized the curriculum to include indigenous knowledge systems and technologies. We need to adopt the successful indigenous apprenticeship and mentorship training models to impart knowledge skills, attitudes and values.

We are experiencing climate change and waves of digital transformation. We have experienced a global pandemic that forced a complete lock down but also brought about a new form of digital classroom that has influenced hybrid system of learning and work from home. We have gone from the 8 MDGs to the 17 SDGs. We are in the new knowledge society and knowledge economy.

We have experienced acceleration in industrial revolution. We have gone from the 3rd Industrial revolution to the 4th Industrial Revolution and now to the 5th Industrial revolution. When industry changes, when society changes,

education must change to be relevant. Thus, the educational landscape has evolved rapidly from Education 3.0 to Education 4.0 which is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) using digital technologies for life-long learning and now to Education 5.0 which aims at ethical humanization in the use of digital technologies for personalized education, precision technologies, personalized medicines. To achieve these, educators are redefining the role of university education. Educators are reimagining university education fit for the middle of the 21st century to ensure resilience and sustainability; reimagining the purpose, process, programmes of education require deep thinking. The world is exploring flexible modular approach of curriculum delivery for stackable modules and the acquisition of micro-credits leading learners to build up their personalized suite of credits for graduation at their own pace. And so, insisting that students must graduate in a particular duration is of the old as long as they register and satisfy laid down conditions of studentship. In some cases, students are awarded AGROTAT degrees if they do not meet all the conditions or awarded diplomas depending on the scope of coverage of their studies.

We have experienced the application of Triple helix of collaboration between Government, Academia and industry plus partnership with other strategic stakeholders to develop entrepreneurial universities that capitalize knowledge for regional economic development and contribute to the GDP of their countries. We have advocated a change of paradigm from publish or perish to patent, publish and produce new technologies, goods and services through creativity and innovation to ensure prosperity. Dr Michael M. Crow, President of Arizona State University had advocated the new American University with new design imperatives, initiatives and gold standards. He stated the following “My objective is to build a great university—a world-class institution—that will prove of lasting value to the state and nation in the centuries ahead. I envision a new American university based on four guiding principles.” These are (1) Teaching is our prime directive, (2)

Scholarship is the pathway to better teaching, (3) Creative expression in all forms is our highest goal, (4) Openness and access to our learning environment. Micael Crow envisions a new American university that embraces its cultural, socioeconomic, and physical setting; that must become a force, and not only a place; that is entrepreneurial and adopts the Pasteur's Principle of discovering new knowledge and transforming the knowledge through innovation for the benefit of society; that focuses on the individual and ensures intellectual fusion; social embeddedness and global engagement. This is creative and innovative thinking worthy of emulation and adaptation otherwise the system becomes stale and static using old gold standards for the new time.

Beyond reimagining during the transitional phase, the new university will be born in the turbulence of the collapse of the ivory tower. It must be rooted in the pursuit of the Truth in all disciplines of study and train human beings to acquire knowledge of the Will of God, acquire skills, attitudes and values to become upbuilding ones who serve the Truth in all endeavours. The new university is where human beings will be trained to become responsible, humble and free citizens; citizens who imbibe the spirit of honesty and self-reliance and strive for all that is good and noble; citizens who swinging in the Will of the Creator are happy and peace-loving; institution where the intuition leads the intellect and talents unfold for creativity and innovation, thus becoming more and more productive, fruitful and multiplying in gratitude to the Creator.

So, how do we make Unique UniPort, an Entrepreneurial University, in the hearth of Niger Delta, more unique?

Broadly as our fifth Vice-Chancellor Professor Nimi Briggs amplified, the purpose of higher education as the pursuit of Truth. I have advocated that this pursuit is better achieved through Nature Study of the Universe in every discipline wherein we observe the perfect fundamental Laws of Nature, the evergreen living Laws of Creation which bear the Will of God. This ultimately leads us to recognition of the Majesty, Magnitude and Might of the Creator and thus to

conviction and humble worship of God in spirit and in truth for His Eternal Goodness, Guidance and Grace. In this way the university system which developed through religious origins turns full cycle through the new Knowledge of Creation.

The world is now in the new Age of Sustainable Development when the countries of the world have adopted Agenda 2030, the global sustainable development goals (SDGs). The tone of the new age is going green in every aspect of existence. Our university must commit to finding solutions to the challenges that militate against the SDGs. Sustainable Development stands on four pillars of social sustainability, economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and cultural sustainability. Where one of these pillars is faulty, the structure cannot stand. At the core of sustainable development is leadership. Sustainability is driven by selfless and transformational leadership that stands under the Guidance and Grace of God as we could learn from the example of King Solomon, the wise Priest-King. In the compound word, Priest-King, long forgotten in antiquity, lies a beautiful hint. A true leader is first and foremost a Priest of the Will of God and then is he a king over his people. Only then can he lead the people to green pastures. There are examples of modern global icons of leadership.

Today, the world has entered the new Age of Knowledge. The Knowledge of the Will of God which in a very limited way we speak of the knowledge economy. The industrial revolution has accelerated from the 4th to the 5th and consequently we have moved from Education 4.0 to Education 5.0. Given the new Upbuilding of Society on the basis of the Knowledge of Truth, more technical discoveries will be made. The confluence of AI, Big Data and connectivity is creating new industries out of old industries as we have seen with FinTech and MedTech. Similarly, more educational advancements will be made leading rapidly to Education 7.0 as mankind approach Nature Study humbly in gratitude to the Magnitude of the Omnipotence of The Almighty.

So, what do I envision of the future of unique UniPort. What can make unique UniPort more unique. Let us look into the crystal ball. As I said at the beginning, the world is under Divine Pressure enforcing change. What must change drastically is man himself, the architect of all the decay, disease, disintegration and destruction so long as we fail to become true human beings that swing in the Will of our Creator. The Divine Command is: Everything must become new! The old intellectual way has brought the world unto this sorry state of hopelessness and despair. Now we face confusion, crisis and collapse. Therefore, we should strive to build a new entrepreneurial university on the foundation of Values Education, on the sound and solid foundation of the pursuit of Truth through Nature Study guided by true leadership. We must build the new unique UniPort on the basis of the new Knowledge of Creation so that our university will lead learners to green pastures. A university adapted to its environment, that develops indigenous knowledge, ensures resilient and inclusive growth and development. We need new insights and new commitments. As Nelson Mandela noted Education is the most powerful weapon which we can use to change the world. We need to reimagine and redesign the community service course to develop community engagement and outreach programmes to educate our people: through work with the primary and secondary schools to produce quality university students better prepared for the school certificate and JAMB examinations; work with the communities through comprehensive Heritage Centre projects to educate, enlighten, engage and empower; work with the NDDC on the Niger Delta environmental survey to generate databases of interconnected factors that impact on the communities to guide sustainable development; take our UniPort Theatre, Documentaries, Films and CCE programmes to the communities for life-long learning and adult education; work with community leaders and women to heal the communities through values education and become an influence for good as well as promote sustainable development.

We need to learn from global best practice to establish interdisciplinary research centres focused on grantsmanship, research, innovation, commercialization and entrepreneurship; establish new multidisciplinary institutes such as Institute for Climate Change, BioScience & Biotechnology Institute, Institute for Cybersecurity, Nanotechnology Institute, SJS Cookey Institute for West Africa and Diaspora Studies, Institute for Social Sciences, Institute of Biomedical Research, Institute for Professional Development to transform the Registry into a professional Registry working with CORNU and also train the junior staff who are members of 'Other Congregation', Institute for Public Policy, Institute for Leadership Development etc; Establish the Science Centre, organize innovative programmes such as Creative UniPort, Uniport Innovation, Digital UniPort with well developed technology park and Business Incubator to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

We need to strengthen R & D Architecture, professionalise technology transfer through Technology Transfer Companies; actualize mandatory registration of all graduate students and lecturers on Google Scholar and digital platforms; ensure all professors work in interdisciplinary research groups, research centres and labs; publish Annual Reports & Reviews to improve our web visibility; implement grantsmanship policy and the policy of at least one patent per PhD graduate, one startup per Department per annum. In the next 50 years the university would have had a DVC University Advancement to focus on fund raising to secure the future; set up Faculty Advancement Committees (Departmental Advancement officers of senior academics to cultivate their Alumni); set up a vibrant post-doctoral programme; improve research infrastructure: digital labs, research labs/workshops and set up Institute and Centre Advisory Boards.

We want to bequeath to learners the values and virtues of true humanity. The new Upbuilding the University of Port Harcourt must be based on interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary studies, our research must be

locally relevant, globally recognized; strategically sustainable and extensively collaborative to find solutions to the challenges of school and State. Learners must balance their studies in the sciences and the arts to be creative and innovative. We wish to secure the future on the solid foundation of true Upbuilding to the honour of God to make progress and achieve sustainable development and thus celebrate the new Convocation of a rich harvest of talents, creativity and innovation. As our university Anthem states, our hope in the future must be rooted in God alone. We wish to build a university that stands in His Honour and Glory! For this, we pray for the Guidance and Grace of God!

Happy Golden Jubilee Celebration of unique UniPort!

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Nomenclature

- **CoE**, Centre of Excellence
- **CASG**, Claude Ake School of Government
- **CNES**, Centre for Nuclear Energy Studies
- **CEFOP**, Centre for Oilfield Chemicals Research
- **CELTRAS**, Centre for Logistics and Transport Studies
- **CITE**, Centre for Information Technology Engineering
- **CGRP**, Centre for Gas, Refining and Petrochemicals
- **CPG**, Centre for Petroleum Geosciences
- **COHSE**, Centre for Occupational Health Safety and Environment
- **EEI**, Emerald Energy Institute
- **ETI**, Energy Technology Institute
- **IITD**, Institute of International Trade
- **INDES**, Institute of Niger Delta Studies
- **INRES**, Institute of Natural Resources and Sustainability
- **IPES**, Institute of Petroleum & Energy Studies
- **NDDC**, Niger Delta Development Commission
- **NUGA**, National Universities Games
- **METI**, Institute of Engineering Management and Technology Innovation
- **OTI**, Offshore Technology Institute
- **PUTOR**, Centre for Public Health and Toxicological Research
- **SDG**, Sustainable Development Goals
- **WAUG**, West African Universities Games

How University of Port Harcourt can Coast Successfully through the 21st Century By

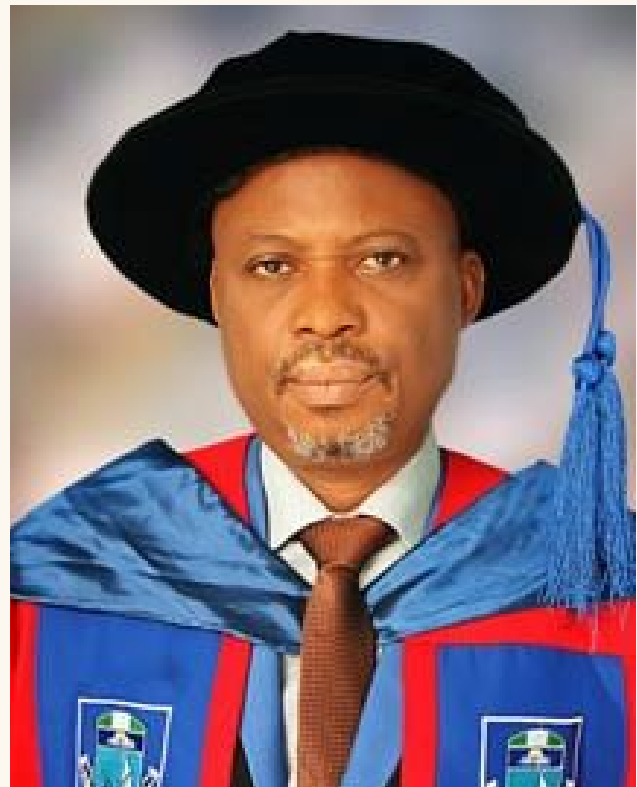
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Some of the challenges faced by Nigerian public universities include amongst other things - poor and erratic funding; multiple supervisory agencies; frequent truncation of academic activities by actions of university unions; poor salaries; leadership and governance inadequacies. The strategies proposed here for dealing with some of these in order to put University of Port Harcourt on the path of fulfilling its missions are in no way specific; they also apply to other public universities.

1. For any university, whether in Nigeria or elsewhere, to function smoothly and achieve its mission, the managers must administer it by the book; that is, all decisions must be based on the express provisions in the statute, and all actions must flow from the policies made by the Council and Senate and similar statutory bodies. Administering any organisation by the whims of the managers can create serious unintended consequences and thus stymie the possibilities of sustainable leadership and governance; frustrate the achievement of the mission and vision of the institution or any organisation for that matter. Running universities by the book ensures that decisions and actions of managers, particularly if they are based on the solid foundation of altruism and love for the institution they govern, will protect and secure both the managers and those they lead. This is how successive managers of some of our federal universities are running their institutions to bring about the commendable achievements being recorded. For instance, despite the enormous challenges being faced by the 297



universities (Abatta, 2025) – federal, state and private - operating in Nigeria, only three federal universities – University of Ibadan, University of Lagos and Ahmadu Bello University, made it to the list of the recent world ranking of universities by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), one of the most authentic and famous ranking bodies in the world. Although none of the three was in the top 1000 universities in the world, the result is an assurance that these institutions are on the path to attaining global recognition (Abatta, 2025). They achieved this, not only because they are in the elite group of tertiary education institutions (other universities of similar age did not make it there); they got there through altruistic, purpose-driven, transparent, accountable and focused leadership. Successive leaders of these institutions have committed themselves to a common goal: to make their universities globally recognised amongst the top-notch in Africa.

2. The institution must do all that is necessary to extricate itself from the stranglehold of politicians for the appointment of its

managers. The first obvious problem with appointments of its principal officers based on political patronage is that the loyalty of the managers is transferred to politicians located at the seat of power who are not members of the university community and who, therefore, will not be affected in any direct way by the consequences of whatever the installed managers do in the system. Truth be told, managers appointed through political patronage have a greater tendency to ride roughshod over those they are supposed to lead and govern knowing that the “big boys and girls” in Abuja have their back.

3. Governing councils make policies for and regulate the affairs of universities; they superintend over their resources and the overall governance of these institutions; but they ought not to get involved in the day-to-day administration of the university. Sadly, the appointment of the chairmen and external members of council, is well-entrenched as a reward for the role they played and will continue to play in the birthing and the consolidation of the government in power. There have been cases in some universities, at least, where these external members provide their oversight function in ways that are not consistent with the Act that established such institutions; neither are they consistent with the convention and culture of universities globally. This, in large part, is what has been responsible for some of the needless crises that have engulfed our universities at different times. Some chairmen take over the duties of the Vice-Chancellor and other principal officers; this approach culminates in the no-love-lost relationships that eventually develop into full-scale crises. Given their peculiarities, councils of universities are not suitable places to reward politicians for their roles and loyalty. The Federal Ministry of Education (FME) and NUC, the agencies that have oversight functions over universities, should interface with government and reengineer this aspect of their role.

4. It has also become apparent that subjecting universities to a multitude of supervisory agencies is a drain on the scarce resources of universities. For example, the stress of each university defending budgets and many other matters before committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate should be ceded to NUC to do on behalf of the universities; individual universities can then make their presentations to NUC.

5. It is quite clear that the federal government's capacity (or is it interest?) to adequately fund its universities is dwindling increasingly by the year. The introduction of nelfund, Nigerian Education Loan Fund, a loan scheme for students, is a clear indication of government's intention that universities must begin to charge appropriate fees for the different programmes offered in each institution. No university in the world can afford to offer good quality education to its citizens free of charge; by tradition, universities charge tuition and other fees to be able to keep the institutions open to students for learning. The call for the payment of fees has become more urgent in the face of our current realities.

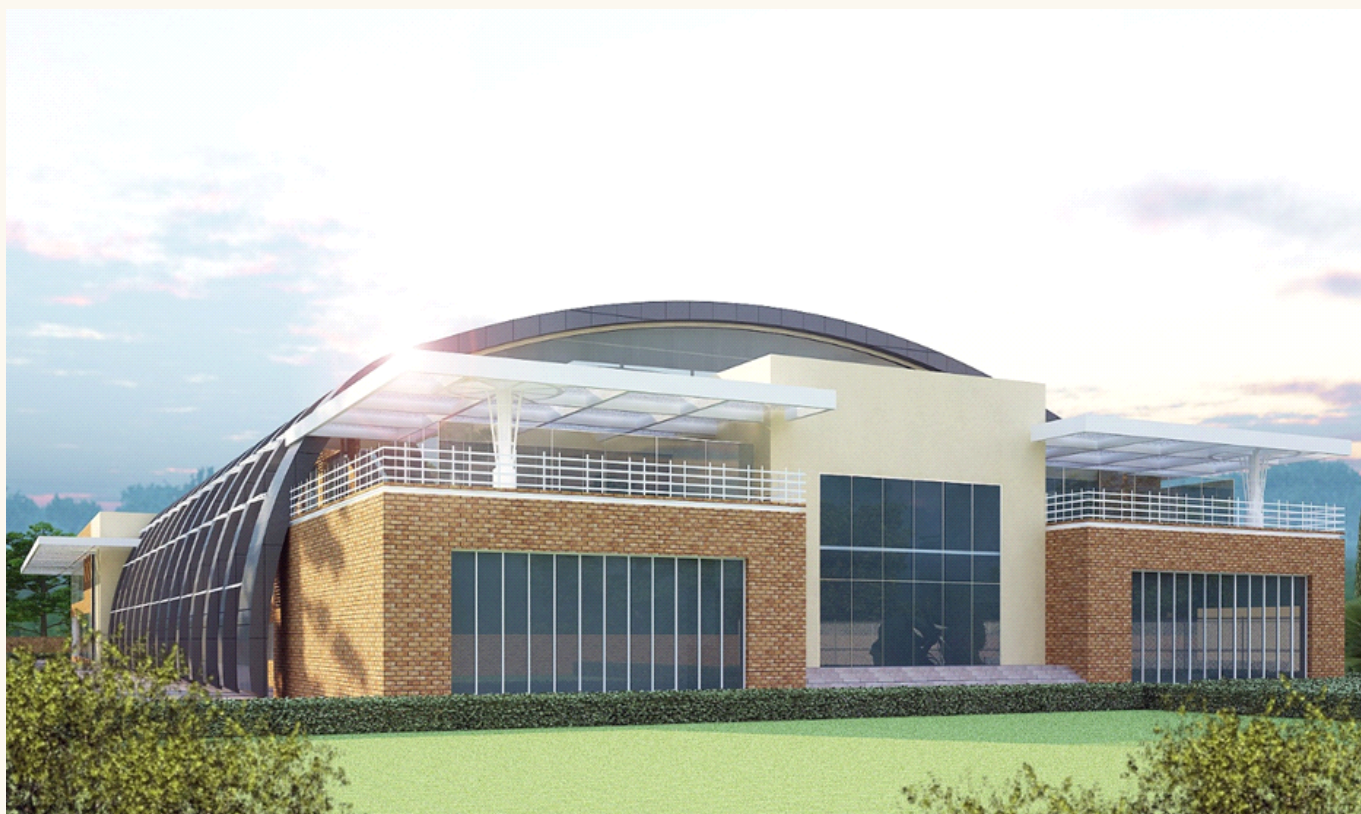
6. If University of Port Harcourt hopes to remain competitive in the comity of global higher education institutions, its managers must resuscitate it from deep slumber and reinstate discipline. No manager enjoys sanctioning erring staff, but it has to be done to protect the institution for the common good. Even at the level of families, it is well-known that families where parents abdicate their responsibility to discipline their children only live a life of regret in their adult age. This is what gave birth to the proverb “spare the rod and spoil the child” which takes its root in Proverbs 13.24. The lecturers who brainwash students in lecture halls and classrooms and preach that managers who sanction staff found guilty of various misconducts have poor employee relations are enemies of the University. Managers who adopt a laissez-faire style of leadership and abdicate the responsibility to discipline erring staff or who

abandon discipline as an integral part of total quality management must know that this is the fastest route to institutional or organisational ruin. Without discipline, every staff will work and act in ways that s/he thinks fit without regard to what the Act and clear policies of Council and Senate specify for both staff and students. It is application of sanctions against miscreant staff who are determined to pursue self-centred goals that safeguards the organisation and motivates loyal staff with demonstrable organisational citizenship to commit more to responsible and accountable work ethic. When sanction is treated as an anathema or a taboo, the managers unwittingly encourage wrongdoing that quickly spreads through the organisation like cells of a malignant tumour and ruin the system. Consequently, chaos that eventually metamorphoses into anarchy, becomes deeply entrenched as an institutional culture and obstructs the attainment of the organisational mission and vision.

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From Promise to Prominence:

Uniport at 50 and The Transformative

Power of Research and Development.

Professor Iyeopu M Siminialayi FWASP, FNAMed
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Development
(2021-2025)

"The new institution should not be a mere reproduction of the older universities but should take advantage of the opportunities offered in a new university institution to innovate and make a unique contribution to higher education in this country."

Prof DEU Ekong in his first formal meeting with his team of academic planners (Alagoa 2012).

Introduction & Personal Reflection

In 1984, the University of Port Harcourt was less than a decade old, a young institution full of promise, when I stepped onto its campus as an eager medical student, brimming with hope and curiosity. Seven years later, in 1991 (in those days Uniport was only one of two universities in Nigeria that required a medical student to first obtain a bachelor's degree that then qualified him for clinical medicine training), I graduated as a medical doctor, proud to have been nurtured by UniPort's ethos of Enlightenment and Self-Reliance. Today, as Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Development) and an enormously proud alumnus, I reflect on our 50-year journey with profound pleasure. I have witnessed firsthand how far our beloved university has come and how the relentless pursuit of research and innovation has shaped its fortunes. From the modest facilities and fledgling research culture of the 1980s, UniPort has transformed into a beacon of academic excellence and innovation on the national and global stage.

This personal journey from a young undergraduate walking the halls of our medical school to institutional leader driving research mirrors UniPort's own evolution. As we celebrate UniPort at 50, it is fitting to recount how research



and development (R&D) have been at the heart of this transformation. The story of UniPort's rise is, in many ways, the story of harnessing R&D to solve problems, generate new knowledge, and create opportunities. In this golden jubilee essay, I share reflections on our R&D journey, one of challenges overcome and milestones achieved. It is a testament to the power of vision, innovation, and collaboration in redefining a university's destiny.

Historical Evolution of R&D at UniPort

Research and Development at the University of Port Harcourt has a history of bold beginnings, trials, and resurgence. The Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Development) was first established in 2011, by the 7th Vice Chancellor, Prof Joseph Ajienka, signaling UniPort's commitment to organized research leadership. Professor Bene Willie-Abbey was appointed the pioneer DVC R&D, but her tenure was cut short in 2015 when a Presidential Visitation Panel recommended abolishing the office. Following this setback, the University pivoted by merging the Research and Development Board and the existing research management unit into a Centre

for Research Management and Development (CEREMAD) in August 2015. CEREMAD was tasked with coordinating research activities “till further notice,” effectively filling the gap for several years. During this interregnum, CEREMAD kept UniPort's research enterprise afloat, participating in academic collaborations and ensuring continuity in research management despite the absence of a DVC R&D at the helm.

After a few years in the doldrums following the abrogation of the DVC R&D post, a revival came with new leadership. The 9th Vice Chancellor, Professor Owunari Abraham Georgewill, acting on approval from the University's Visitor (the President of Nigeria), boldly reinstated the Office of the DVC R&D to fulfill his vision of an entrepreneurial UniPort. This decisive move in 2021 marked the rebirth of R&D at UniPort. I was elected by Senate and appointed by Council on August 19, 2021, as the 2nd DVC R&D, charged with injecting fresh impetus into the research ecosystem. The revitalized office inherited a clear mandate: to build an ecosystem that promotes innovation, intellectual property (IP) management, technology transfer, and entrepreneurship. This historical turning point transformed R&D from a sidelined function into a central pillar of the University's development agenda.

The challenges of the past, from the 2015 abolition to the resource constraints that followed, have only strengthened our resolve. Since its reinstatement, the DVC R&D office has been systematically implementing structures and policies to ensure research thrives. We have re-established coordination among all research centers and institutes, revitalized research ethics oversight, and set strategic targets for grants, innovation hubs, and partnerships. The journey of R&D at UniPort, from establishment through abolition and now resurgence, vividly demonstrates that with visionary leadership and persistence, a university can turn adversity into advantage. Today, the R&D office stands as a testament to resilience and foresight, driving a new era where research is not just an academic pursuit but a

strategic tool to transform UniPort's fortunes.

Defining Research and Development in UniPort's Context

At the University of Port Harcourt, Research and Development is defined not in abstract terms, but in tangible actions and outcomes that advance innovation and societal progress. R&D goes beyond publishing papers; it encompasses a cycle of creating knowledge, developing solutions, protecting inventions, and delivering innovations to the marketplace. In UniPort's context, this means focusing on innovation, commercialization, entrepreneurship, technology transfer, and intellectual property protection as core elements of our research mission. Simply put, research should not end in the laboratory or library; it must translate into real-world impact.

Innovation at UniPort involves using research to solve practical problems and improve the way we live. We encourage our scholars to view themselves as innovators – academic entrepreneurs – who not only create new knowledge but turn it into novel products, services, or processes that address societal needs. This innovative mindset is nurtured through workshops, innovation challenges, and an ecosystem that rewards creativity. Complementing innovation is commercialization, the process of moving ideas from campus to commerce. The University actively supports the journey from prototype to product, helping researchers and students license their inventions to industry and even launch start-ups. As our Vice Chancellor articulated, a truly prosperous university “relies on innovation, technology transfer and commercialization of research outcomes” by its staff and students. We measure success not just by academic citations, but by licenses, patents, and spin-off companies that emanate from campus.

Entrepreneurship is a key pillar of R&D at UniPort. We recognize that to fully realize innovation, we

need members of our community to take calculated risks and champion their ideas in the real world. Through entrepreneurship programs, incubators, and mentorship, UniPort fosters a culture where both faculty and graduates build enterprises around research-driven innovations. The Technology Transfer facet of R&D ensures that breakthroughs in our laboratories reach industry and society. The Office of the DVC R&D, working via our Intellectual Property & Technology Transfer Office (IPTTO), bridges the gap between academia and industry by securing intellectual property rights and brokering partnerships. We assist researchers in patent filings and match them with industry partners who can mass-produce or implement their solutions. Protecting intellectual property is paramount and so any research result with potential utility is assessed for patentability and protected, so that the creator and the University can benefit from its commercialization. This encourages a virtuous cycle: researchers are motivated to pursue problem-solving research when they know their inventions will be patented and possibly monetized.

In summary, R&D at UniPort is defined by an integrated approach: innovative research that leads to commercial products and services, cultivated by an entrepreneurial ethos, enabled through active technology transfer, and safeguarded by strong intellectual property management. This approach ensures that our scholarly work contributes directly to economic development and social wellbeing. It echoes our mantra that research is only as valuable as the real-life solutions and opportunities it creates. By clearly articulating R&D in this practical, impact-oriented way, UniPort is setting the standard for what research and development means in a Nigerian university context – a driver of innovation, a bridge to industry, and a pathway to prosperity.

Achievements and Impact of R&D at UniPort

In the past few years, the University of Port Harcourt's commitment to research and development has yielded remarkable achievements, elevating the University's standing

and impact. One of the most visible indicators of this progress is UniPort's rise in national and global rankings. In 2015, UniPort was ranked number one in Nigeria and number 6 in Africa for research influence in the reckoning of Times Higher Education. At the start of the current administration in 2021, UniPort was ranked 6th among Nigerian universities; by 2023 we had moved up to 5th, and today we proudly stand as the 3rd best university in Nigeria and 30th in Africa, according to Webometrics rankings. This steady climb in rankings reflects substantial improvements in research output, innovation, and academic reputation. It is a testament to focused leadership: the unwavering drive of the 9th Vice Chancellor, Prof. Owunari Georgewill, and the concerted efforts of the R&D office have set new benchmarks for excellence. Our improved metrics in impact, openness, and excellence signify that UniPort is now firmly on the map of leading research universities, not just in Nigeria but across Africa.

Such recognition is underpinned by strategic partnerships and infrastructural developments spearheaded by the R&D office. In line with our vision of an entrepreneurial university, UniPort has forged key strategic partnerships both locally and internationally. For example, we have partnered with Opolo Global Innovation Ltd. to establish a modern Innovation Hub on campus – a facility dedicated to nurturing startups and product development. We have also signed memoranda of understanding with overseas institutions, such as the University of Parma in Italy and others in Germany, Spain, the UK and the United States, to foster faculty and student exchanges and joint research in areas of mutual strength. These collaborations expand our global footprint and expose our community to international best practices. On the industry front, UniPort works closely with bodies like the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) to align research with industry needs. A notable initiative is the NCDMB/NLNG-funded Engineering Centre for Innovation, a five-faceted facility under development that will house a state-

of-the-art Fourth Industrial Revolution laboratory, an advanced power generation lab, and a refinery simulation centre. This project is poised to position UniPort as the engineering innovation and digitalization hub of Nigeria, equipping our graduates with industry-ready skills and providing a platform for cutting-edge engineering research and training.

Significant infrastructure to support research has also been put in place. The University has established a Technology Park and multiple Innovation Hubs to incubate ideas and support startups, ensuring that campus innovations can be prototyped and tested in a conducive environment. In 2023, we held the maiden UniPort Innovation Week, an annual showcase where researchers and students exhibit inventions and entrepreneurial projects. The inaugural Innovation Week, themed “Deepening the Foundations of Innovation and Entrepreneurship,” was a collaborative effort involving the R&D office, our Africa Centres of Excellence, the Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer Office (IPTTO), and the Entrepreneurship Centre. It featured workshops and exhibitions that highlighted the dynamic relationship between academic research and enterprise, reinforcing the idea that research-fueled innovation is key to societal development. The enthusiastic participation in Innovation Week 2023 confirmed that UniPort’s faculty and students are embracing this new innovation culture.

Our focus on R&D has also attracted major grants and endowments. UniPort researchers have won numerous competitive research grants, including several from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND)’s National Research Fund. In recognition of our progress, TETFUND offered in 2023 to renovate and equip a dedicated building as an Innovation Hub for the University, and additionally awarded a grant to construct a multidisciplinary Central Research Laboratory complex covering 3–4 hectares on our campus. This forthcoming Central Research Laboratories facility will provide world-class equipment for cutting-edge research in science, engineering, medicine,

and the arts – a game changer for our research capacity. Furthermore, in the past two years, UniPort secured the endowment of two professorial chairs that bolster research in key fields: the Godwin Igwe Professorial Chair in Gas, Refining & Petrochemicals Engineering (first occupied by the late Prof. Benson Evbuomwan but now occupied by Prof. Akuma Oji) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) Endowed Chair in ICT and Telecommunications (held by Prof. Bourdillon Omijeh). These chairs, supported by industry and eminent individuals, are not only great honors but also come with funding for research, scholarships, and infrastructure in their respective domains. They enable specialized research that directly connects with industry advances in oil & gas processing and telecommunications technology, reinforcing our university’s role in driving innovation in Nigeria’s critical economic sectors.

Crucially, UniPort’s R&D drive has led to strengthened global partnerships. We have active collaboration agreements with universities in Africa, Europe, and beyond – from a consortium of institutions in Portugal to the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in South Africa. Our staff and students benefit from exchange programs, joint research projects, and shared facilities through these partnerships. For instance, UniPort’s participation in international programs has enabled post-doctoral placements abroad (such as sending our PhD graduates to Morgan State University in the USA and research institutions in Brazil under the FARA/TETFUND program). These global linkages not only enhance our research output and visibility but also elevate the University’s profile as a hub for innovation in the Global South.

In summary, the impact of R&D at UniPort is evident in our rising rankings, expanded networks, and new physical and intellectual infrastructure. The University of Port Harcourt is increasingly seen as a center of innovation and excellence, delivering value through research-driven initiatives. Our achievements, from hosting international

conferences on sustainability, to creating innovation-supportive infrastructure, to winning prestigious grants, all underscore how a clear focus on research and development can rapidly transform a university's fortunes. UniPort's experience over the last few years serves as a model for how Nigerian universities can leverage R&D to achieve global competitiveness and drive national development.

Celebrated Success Stories in R&D

Nothing illustrates the success of UniPort's R&D agenda better than the stories of individual researchers and innovators who have brought laurels to the University. These trailblazers personify our institution's ideals, showing how research excellence translates into recognition, impact, and inspiration for the next generation. We celebrate a few of these outstanding success stories:

- Prof. Sotonye Fyनेface-Ogan – “Slingshot” Medical Innovation: Within the field of anesthesiology, Prof. Fyनेface-Ogan achieved a groundbreaking advance in 2023 by developing a pioneering method for epidural space localization, aptly nicknamed the “Slingshot Approach.” This novel technique revolutionizes a procedure that had long posed challenges to clinicians. The approach has garnered widespread acclaim in medical circles, and in recognition of this feat, Prof. Fyनेface-Ogan was honored as Innovator of the Year. His “Slingshot Approach” not only exemplifies innovation born from research, but also promises safer and more effective regional anesthesia for patients – a direct societal benefit.
- Prof. Anthony Onoja – EU Erasmus Mundus Grant Winner: In the realm of environmental economics and sustainability, Prof. Anthony Onoja has put UniPort on the global stage. He and his team secured a prestigious European Union Erasmus Mundus grant for a project called “Create Green Africa.” This international grant, won in 2023, is aimed at building the knowledge and skills of students, trainees, and faculty across Africa in climate change

adaptation and mitigation. It recognizes Prof. Onoja's leadership and the University's capacity in addressing climate challenges. As part of this project, UniPort collaborates with a consortium of European and African universities to develop curriculum and research that will empower communities to respond to climate change. The Erasmus Mundus award underscores UniPort's growing reputation as a hub for research on sustainable development and our commitment to solving global challenges.

- Dr. Obari Gomba – NLNG Prize for Literature: Dr. Obari Gomba, of our Faculty of Humanities, has demonstrated that research and creativity in the arts bring renown just as much as science and technology. A prolific poet and playwright, Dr. Gomba won the coveted NLNG Prize for Literature – one of Africa's most prestigious literary awards – clinching the 2022 prize with a work that impressed critics and readers alike. This award, which came with a \$100,000 prize, is a testament to his literary excellence. By winning the NLNG Prize for Literature, Dr. Gomba has not only brought honor to UniPort but has also highlighted the importance of the arts and humanities in national discourse. His success story inspires our creative scholars to strive for impact and reminds us that R&D encompasses all fields of inquiry, including literature and the social sciences.

- Prof. Vincent Idemyor – International Pharmacy Laureate: Our faculty's influence extends overseas through the work of scholars like Prof. Vincent Idemyor. A distinguished professor of pharmacy, Prof. Idemyor was honored with the Donald E. Francke Medal by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists – a highly respected international accolade. This medal was awarded for his outstanding contributions to advanced pharmacy practice. It highlights how research at UniPort is saving lives and improving healthcare practices beyond Nigeria's borders. Prof.

Idemiyor's achievement not only showcases individual excellence but also elevates UniPort's standing in the global pharmaceutical and health sciences community. It exemplifies our institutional ethos that impactful research can originate from anywhere and resonate everywhere.

- Prof. Peter Kpolovie – Global Science Award Winner: In the field of educational statistics and ICT, Prof. Peter James Kpolovie has consistently demonstrated global competitiveness. Notably, he was recognized as a 2022 Science/Nature/Environment Book Award finalist by three international bodies – a rare honor that underscores the interdisciplinary impact of his work. This recognition adds to Prof. Kpolovie's rich pedigree of winning international awards (from 2017 through 2025) for his contributions to science, research methodology, and information technology. His work on integrating ICT in education and filling knowledge gaps in research design has earned him a place among world-class researchers. Prof. Kpolovie's string of awards is a beacon to other academics: it shows that with dedication and innovation, our faculty can compete at the highest levels and consistently bring international accolades home to UniPort.

Endowed Professorial Chairs – Topline Innovative Pipeline Engineering, NCC & Godwin Igwe Chairs: A significant success story for UniPort's R&D enterprise is the endowment of high-profile professorial chairs that link academia with industry. The NCC Professorial Chair in ICT and Telecommunications, occupied by Prof. Bourdillon Omijeh, has been a source of cutting-edge research in telecommunications engineering and software applications. Prof. Omijeh, as the chair holder, also won a European Union Erasmus project grant in 2022 and was appointed National Coordinator of EU-Erasmus projects for Nigerian tertiary institutions – reinforcing the value such an endowed position brings in attracting opportunities. Similarly, the Godwin J. Igwe Professorial Chair in Gas, Refining & Petrochemicals Engineering, endowed by an illustrious former staff (Engr. Prof. Godwin Igwe)

and held by Prof. Akuma Oji, has invigorated research in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. Topline Engineering Ltd has endowed a Professorial Chair in Innovative Pipeline Solutions in the Department of Petroleum and Gas Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, for the purpose of promoting educational advancement and pursuit of academic excellence in the area of Pipeline Engineering through teaching, research and development of appropriate technologies. Activities of the Chair will center around the coordination of multidisciplinary studies to model and design real time pipeline surveillance system to prevent pipeline leaks caused by flow assurance challenges and corrosion as a result of normal production operations; pipeline vandalism; oil, gas and product theft that cause pollution and environmental degradation and loss of economic value. Apart from research and innovation, the Chair will also develop a Topline Oil and Gas Pipeline Laboratory to conduct training and capacity building for Nigerian Content Development in the Oil and Gas Industry

- These chairs fund research projects, support post-graduate training, and foster university-industry collaborations in their respective domains. The success here is two-fold: internationally recognized academics are leveraging these chairs to drive innovation, and the University benefits from sustained industry engagement and resource support. They illustrate how aligning research with industry needs – from telecoms to petrochemicals – can produce win-win outcomes: breakthroughs for the company and academic excellence for the university.

Each of these success stories – from individual awards to institutional partnerships – showcases the human face of R&D excellence at UniPort. They are celebrated not only for the prestige they bring, but for their cascading impact: Prof. Fyनेface-Ogan's innovation will improve clinical practice; Prof. Onoja's grant is training a new generation of climate experts; Dr. Gomba's literary prowess enriches cultural heritage; Prof. Idemiyor's work influences global health policies; Prof. Kpolovie's achievements inspire methodological rigor; and our endowed chairs continue to produce

technologies and knowledge for industry. Together, these stories affirm the transformational power of research and development. They serve as beacons of what is possible when talent meets opportunity in an enabling environment. As UniPort turns 50, these luminaries exemplify the University's motto of Enlightenment, showing that through research, our faculty and students light the way to a brighter future for our community, nation, and world.

Vision for the Next 50 Years

Standing at the half-century mark, the University of Port Harcourt looks ahead with a bold vision: to become a globally competitive, research-driven institution that leads innovation in Nigeria and propels sustainable development for the next 50 years. Our trajectory so far, especially the rapid gains of the past few years, convinces us that this vision is within reach. To achieve it, we are poised to focus on key strategic areas that will drive the University's growth in the coming decades.

First and foremost, innovation and sustainability will continue to anchor our strategy. We plan to prioritize breakthrough research across diverse domains including health, technology, energy, agriculture, education, and the creative industries. By embracing emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, biotechnology, renewable energy systems, and quantum computing, UniPort aims to remain at the cutting edge of discovery and application. Our goal is not just to keep up with global trends, but to set them, becoming a leader in generating solutions for challenges such as climate change, public health, and digital transformation. We envision an expansion of our innovation infrastructure: a fully functional Technology Park buzzing with startups, additional innovation hubs focusing on areas like fintech and biotechnology, and laboratories equipped with next-generation instruments. Through these efforts, we intend to be "first among equals" in research by all metrics in Nigeria, and a contender among Africa's top universities.

A key part of our 50-year vision is fostering a deeply interdisciplinary and collaborative research culture.

Complex real-world problems do not confine themselves to single disciplines, and neither will our solutions. We will encourage researchers from different faculties, engineers with medical scientists, artists with technologists, social scientists with data scientists, to work together on grand challenges. By breaking down academic silos and promoting knowledge sharing across domains, we anticipate a surge of creativity and accelerated discovery. Furthermore, we will strengthen global collaborations. In the next decades, UniPort will actively seek strategic alliances with leading universities and research institutes worldwide. Through such partnerships, we can leverage complementary expertise and gain access to new ideas and resources. We picture joint research centers established with international partners, more exchange programs for our students and staff, and a stronger presence in global research consortia addressing issues from malaria to material science. This outward-looking approach will broaden our impact and embed UniPort in the global knowledge network.

Another pillar of our future vision is industry integration and entrepreneurship. UniPort in 50 years will be an institution where the boundary between academia and industry is seamlessly porous. We will intensify engagement with industry stakeholders to ensure our research is aligned with societal needs and market opportunities. Mechanisms like industry sabbaticals for faculty, joint R&D labs with companies, and industry-funded research chairs will become more commonplace. Our curriculum will evolve to include more experiential and entrepreneurial training, so graduates leave not just with degrees but with the mindset and skills to create jobs and innovations. The dream is to see dozens of successful companies founded by UniPort alumni, thriving in our Tech Park or beyond, contributing to Nigeria's economy. We also see UniPort becoming a hub for policy-relevant research, providing evidence and innovation to inform government policies on energy, education, health, and technology. By doing so, our university will directly drive

sustainable development policy and practice in Nigeria and Africa.

Investing in human capital and infrastructure will underpin all these ambitions. Over the next decades, UniPort will recruit, train, and retain top talent, the best minds, to our faculty and research staff. We aim to dramatically increase the number of post-doctoral researchers and research fellows, as well as attract distinguished professors from around the world to spend sabbaticals or joint appointments with us. With support from funding bodies like TETFUND and others, we will continually modernize our laboratories, libraries, and ICT backbone to create an environment where innovation thrives. The vision includes a campus that is a “smart campus,” leveraging digital technology in teaching and research, and one that is environmentally sustainable, living out the values of the research we produce.

Ultimately, our 50-year vision positions UniPort as a pacesetter for national innovation and a catalyst for Africa's development. We see a future where the University of Port Harcourt is synonymous with solutions: where government and industry turn to our experts for answers, where international collaborators seek us out for partnerships, and where our discoveries improve the quality of life across communities. We aspire to produce not only employable graduates, but future CEOs, inventors, Nobel laureates, and public servants who will shape the next century. As lofty as this vision is, our journey so far, climbing from obscurity to the top tier of Nigerian academia, gives us confidence. With unwavering commitment to research and development, continuous innovation, and adherence to our core values, UniPort can transform from a local champion into a global champion of knowledge in the next 50 years.

Embracing the Research Mission

As we celebrate 50 years of academic excellence and chart our course for the future, this is a clarion call to all members of the University of Port Harcourt community – faculty, students, staff, alumni, and partners – to fully embrace and drive

our research mission. The achievements we herald today were made possible by individuals who dared to push boundaries; the greater milestones of tomorrow will require even broader participation and commitment.

To our esteemed faculty and researchers: Let us redouble our commitment to high-quality research and innovation. Every lecturer, professor, and research fellow should see themselves as an agent of change through inquiry. This means striving to publish our findings in high-impact journals and reputable outlets, thereby enhancing UniPort's global visibility and impact. More importantly, it means focusing on research that addresses real problems in our communities and industries. I urge you to pursue the kind of research that yields tangible solutions, whether a new drug candidate, an educational tool, a policy recommendation, or a technology prototype. And when you discover something novel, take that extra step: protect it and patent it. The University is ready to support you in securing intellectual property and bringing it to market. Remember, a patented innovation licensed to industry is a victory not just for you but for UniPort and Nigeria at large. We will continue to recognize and reward those who bring international recognition and commercial success to the University through research. Let the prospect of seeing your ideas in action – saving lives, creating jobs, influencing policy – be your motivation.

To our students and emerging scholars: You are the lifeblood of our next 50 years. Embrace the culture of curiosity and creativity that is taking root. Rather than seeing your projects and theses as mere academic requirements, consider them potential launch pads for startups or social enterprises. Take advantage of the opportunities the University has created – join the Innovation Clubs, participate in the next Innovation Week, pitch your ideas in competitions. We have new innovation hubs, incubators, and mentorship programs just for you. Some of the world's greatest companies started as student projects; your idea could be the next big breakthrough. Seek out mentors among our

faculty and alumni to guide you. And crucially, collaborate with your peers across disciplines – if you're a computer science student, link up with those in medicine or agriculture to solve interdisciplinary problems. UniPort's future Nobel Prize or tech unicorn might very well come from a student team that is forming today in our classrooms or labs.

To our alumni and industry partners: We call on you to remain engaged and invest in the University's research enterprise. Our alumni occupy influential positions in government, industry, and academia around the world; your experience and resources are invaluable. Consider establishing research grants or sponsoring professorial chairs in areas you are passionate about, as others have done. Partner with our faculties to offer internship opportunities, joint research projects, or to commercialize a promising technology developed at UniPort. When you involve yourself with the University's R&D initiatives – be it by mentoring a young researcher, donating equipment to a lab, or licensing a patent – you are directly contributing to our legacy of excellence. Industry leaders, we extend an open hand: collaborate with UniPort to solve your R&D challenges. Work with our scientists to develop the next oil spill remediation technique, the next fintech application, the next public health innovation. The triple helix of academia, industry, and government is key to national development, and we are eager to strengthen those links (as seen in our ongoing projects with NLNG, NCDMB, NCC, and others). Your support and collaboration not only benefit the University; they also ensure a pipeline of skilled talent and homegrown innovations for your organizations.

In moving forward, the University administration is committed to providing an enabling environment for all these efforts. We will continue to foster innovation and entrepreneurship, as the Vice Chancellor has emphasized, by investing in digital platforms, research infrastructure, and a culture that celebrates creative solutions. We are developing better mechanisms to identify

intellectual property in student and faculty research early and to assist with patenting and business incubation. We also intend to raise significant research funds, including through endowments and external grants, to reduce the financial barriers to high-quality research for our staff and students.

In closing, the 50th anniversary of the University of Port Harcourt is both a celebration and a call to action. The past five decades have proven that research and development can transform an institution's fortunes – turning UniPort into a nationally ranked, globally recognized university. The next five decades now depend on our collective resolve to deepen this transformation. Let us all commit to making UniPort a truly entrepreneurial, innovative, and research-intensive university in practice and in spirit. By doing so, we honor the legacy of those who built this great institution and fulfill our responsibility to future generations. Together – faculty, students, alumni, and partners – let us unleash the full power of research and development to drive progress, foster enlightenment, and secure the prosperity of the University of Port Harcourt for the next 50 years and beyond.

Happy 50th Anniversary, UniPort – and to many more decades of innovation and impact!



UNIPORT AT A GLANCE

University of Port Harcourt: Enlightenment and Self-Reliance

Established in 1975 as a College of the University of Lagos and becoming a full-fledged university in 1977, the University of Port Harcourt (Unique Uniport) has grown into a leading institution of higher learning in Nigeria and Africa.

The Entrepreneurial University

We are an entrepreneurial university that has identified partnership with Government and Industry (the triple helix paradigm) as a means of advancing knowledge, innovation, commercialization of technology to create wealth, ensure our sustainability as an institution, solve the problems of our society, create employment and complement the industrialization efforts of the Federal Government.

Institutional Affiliations and Partnerships

Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)

Member of this international university network that promotes and supports excellence in higher education.

Association of African Universities (AAU)

Active participant in this continental organization fostering cooperation among African institutions.

Regional Universities Forum (RUFORUM)

Member of this consortium focused on capacity building in agriculture across African universities.



Motto

Enlightenment and Self-Reliance

Vision

To be ranked amongst the best universities in Africa, renowned for its teaching, research, creativity and innovation.

Mission

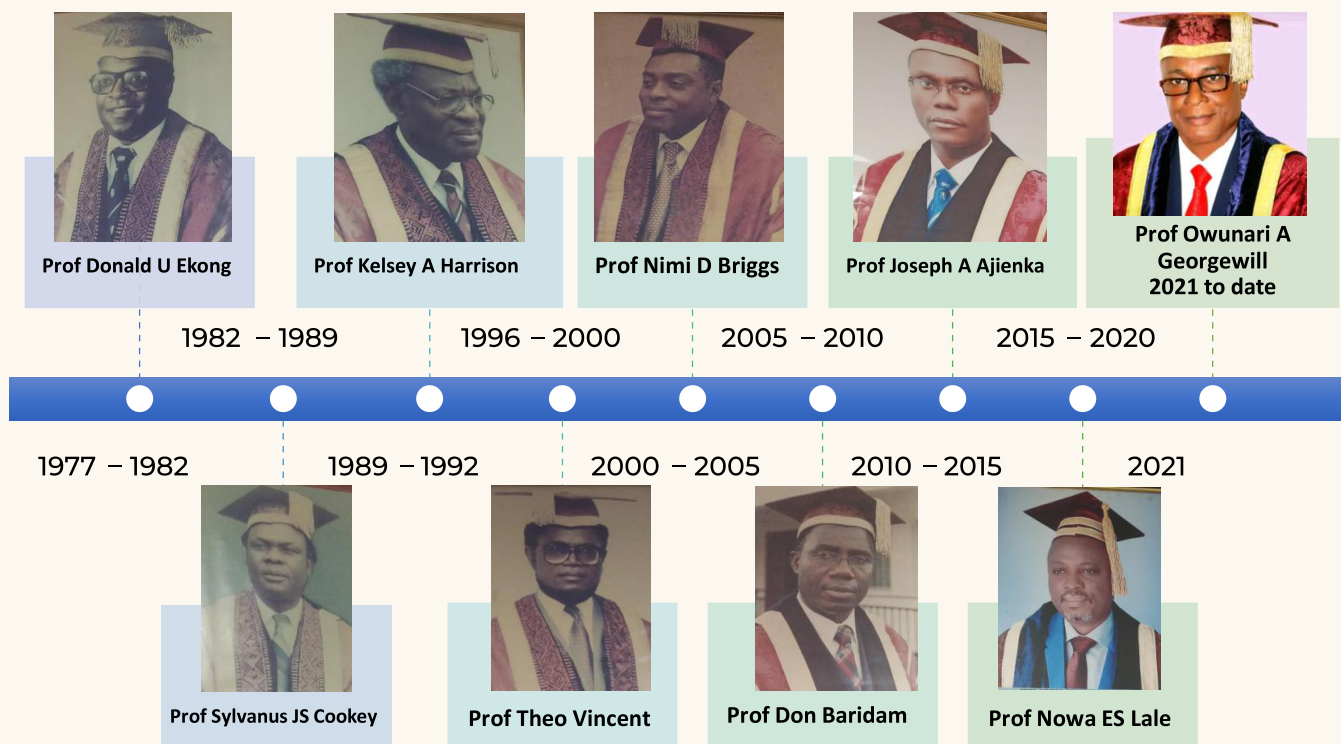
To pursue academic excellence, advancement of knowledge and community service through quality teaching, life-long learning, social inclusion, strengthening civil society and community-relevant research.

Philosophy

Commitment to academic freedom, tolerance, probity, equal opportunity and respect for cultural diversity.

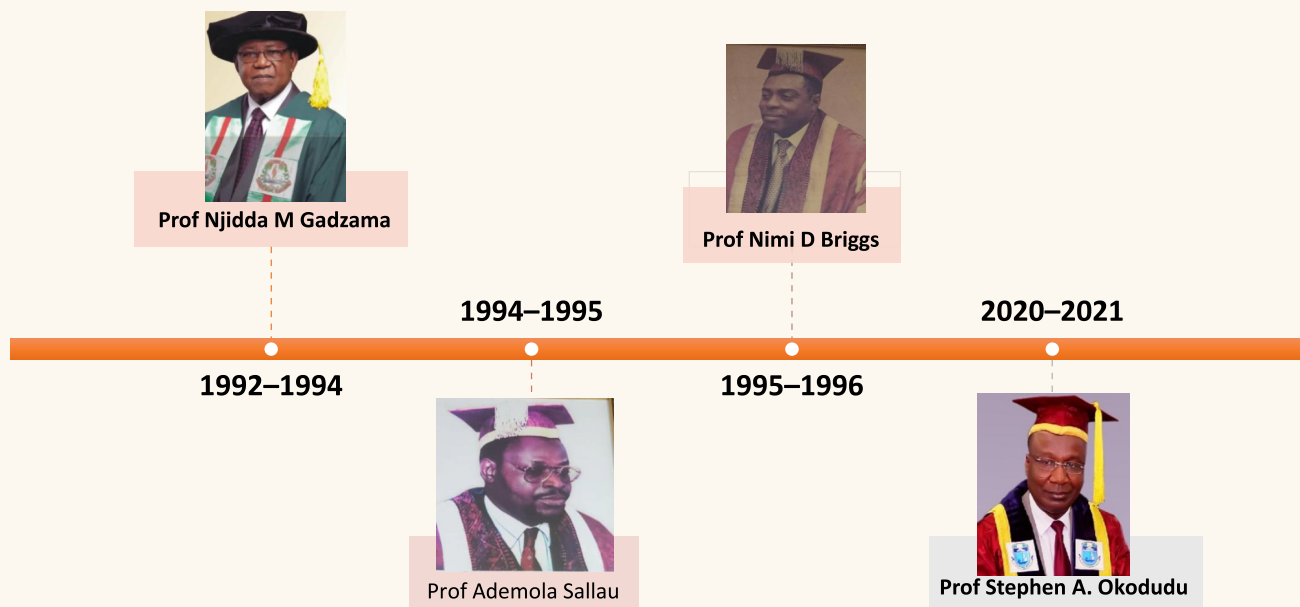
Leadership: Substantive Vice Chancellors

The University of Port Harcourt has been led by distinguished academics who have contributed significantly to its growth and development since inception.



Leadership: Acting Vice-Chancellors

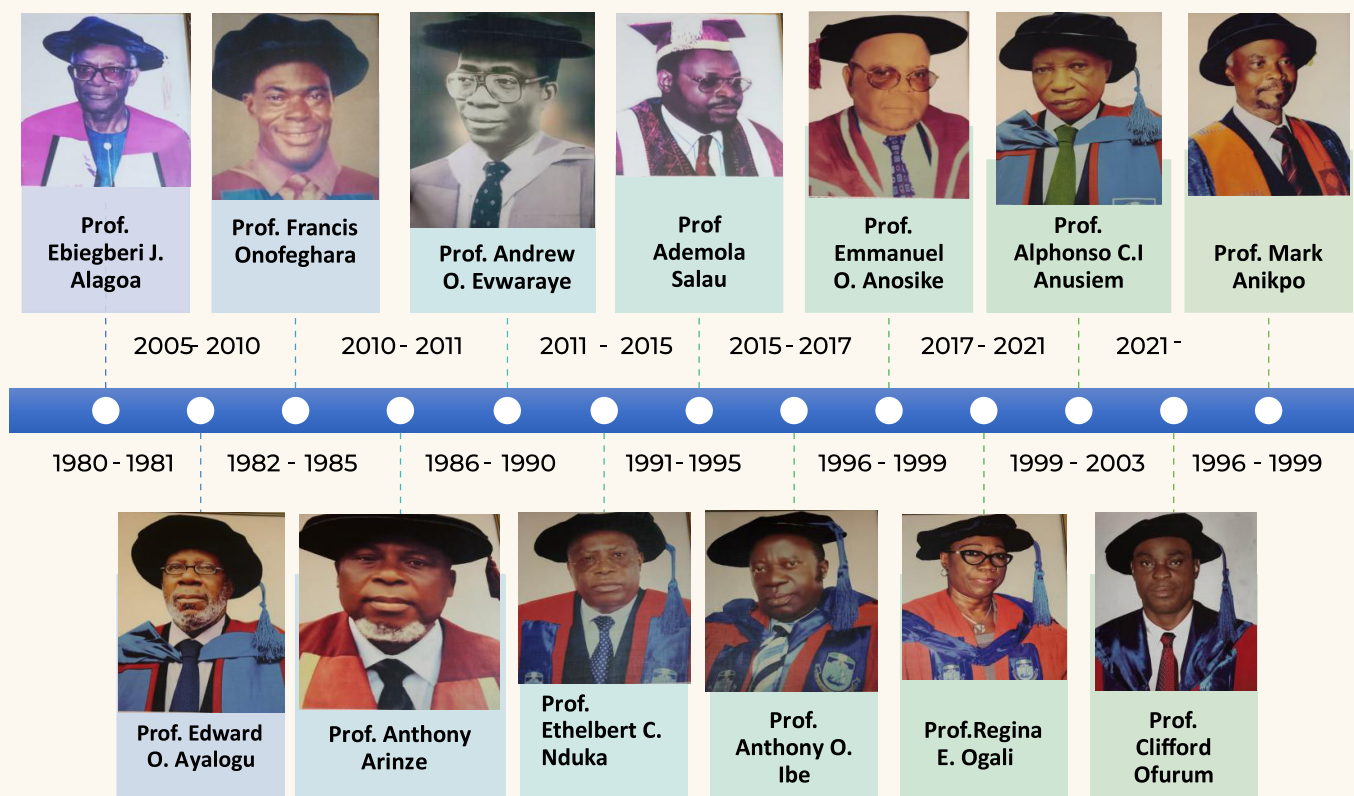
In addition to substantive Vice-Chancellors, several distinguished academics have served in acting capacity, providing leadership continuity during transition periods.



5

Deputy Vice Chancellors (Administration)

The Deputy Vice Chancellors for Administration have played crucial roles in the day-to-day management and administrative functions of the university.



Leadership: Deputy Vice Chancellors (Academic)

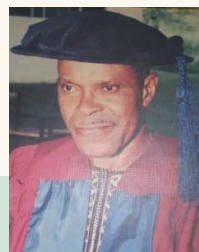
The Deputy Vice Chancellors for Academic Affairs have been instrumental in maintaining and enhancing the academic standards and educational quality of the university.



Prof. Joseph D. Okoh



Prof. Okpako Enaohwo



Prof. Samuel W. Ibodje



Prof. Bernard J.
Efiuvwevwere

2012 - 2016

2016 - 2020

2021 -

1998 - 2002

2002 - 2004

2005 - 2007

2007 - 2012



Prof. Andrew I. Joe



Prof. Hakeem B.
Fawehinmi



Prof. Kingsley I. Owete

Leadership: Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research and Development

The Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Development oversees the university's research initiatives, innovation programs, and development projects.



Prof. Bene W. Abbey



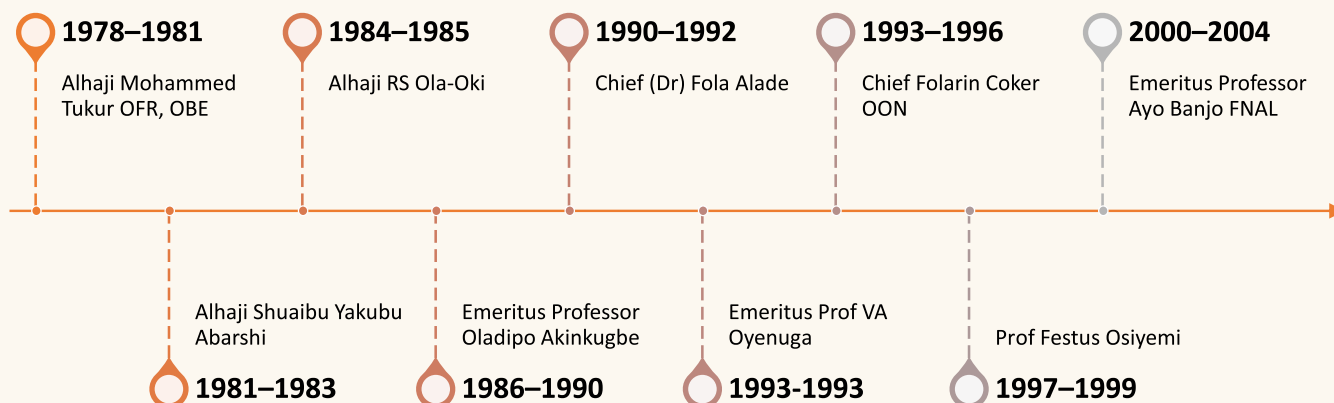
Prof. Iyeopu M. Siminialayi

2011-2015

2021 -

Pro-Chancellors (Part 1)

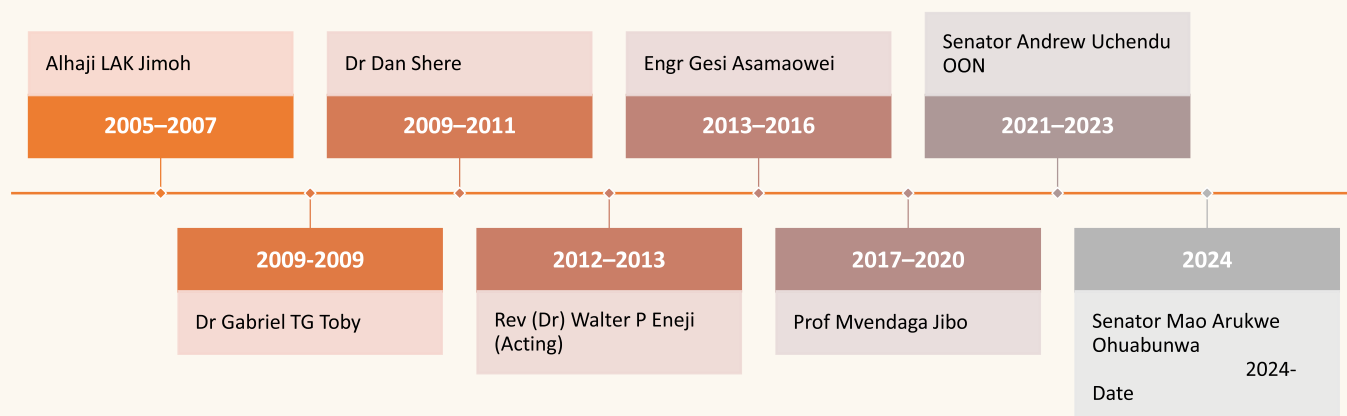
The Pro-Chancellors have provided governance leadership and served as chairpersons of the University's Governing Council, helping to shape institutional policies and direction.



9

Pro-Chancellors (Part 2)

The University of Port Harcourt has benefited from the wisdom and leadership of distinguished Pro-Chancellors who have contributed to its growth and development over the years.



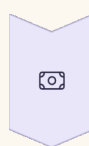


University Campus

The University of Port Harcourt campus features modern facilities, green spaces, and infrastructure designed to support teaching, learning, research, and community engagement.

Strategic Plan 2020-2025: Goal 1

University Governance & Financial Management



Cost Effectiveness

Structure every unit to be cost effective, efficient, and generate revenue with 10% annual improvement



Funding Sources

Broaden the funding sources for the University



Computerization

Implement computerized accounting systems throughout the University

Additional objectives include ensuring leadership skillsets meet global best practices and adherence to procurement guidelines.

Strategic Plan 2020-2025: Goal 2

Excellence in Teaching, Training and Research

Quality Improvement

Enhance the quality of teaching, research and learning

International Outlook

Improve the international outlook of the University

Library & IT Services

Upgrade existing library and information technology services

Centers of Excellence

Develop centers of excellence for Niger Delta Studies, Sports, Arts, Medical Sciences, Petroleum Engineering and Geosciences



The university aims to engage in internationally recognized and locally relevant research, creativity and innovation, with patents, publications, and research products for commercialization and entrepreneurship.

Strategic Plan 2020-2025: Goal 3

Upgrading of Infrastructure and Utility Services

- **Road Network**
Improvement of road network and access to all Units
- **Water Supply**
Water supply for a projected population of 100,000 by 2025
- **Power Supply**
Provision of uninterrupted power using gas, biomass and solar energy
- **Environmental Management**
Strengthening safety, waste management and general environmental beautification
- **Buildings**
Provision of suitable buildings for all academic units
- **Healthcare & Recreation**
Improvement of healthcare and recreational facilities
- **Accommodation**
Expansion of student and staff accommodation using various partnership options
- **ICT Infrastructure**
Provision of modern ICT infrastructure

Strategic Plan 2020-2025: Goal 4

Upgrading of Infrastructure and Utility Services

- ① **Enabling Environment**
Building enabling environment and encouraging partnership with stakeholders
- ② **Marketing Services**
Marketing our services to stakeholders and partners through the Technology Park, Art Village and Green Park
- ③ **Alumni Networking**
Encouraging the Alumni Association by developing programs that promote effective networking amongst its members
- ④ **Decision Making**
Increasing partnership of stakeholders in decision making



ISO Certification

Engaging national and international standards organizations for ISO Certification of the University



Staff Population and Attainments

1363

Academic Staff

Close to 90% possessing a PhD or equivalent

527

Full Professors

Females accounting for 29.19%

2,535

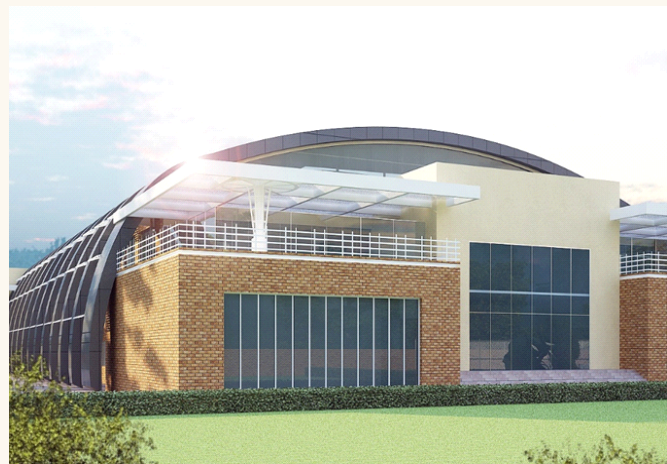
Non-Academic Staff

Females constitute 55%

3,898

Total Staff

As of November 2024



Notable Achievements

- Over 30 patents- Highest in Nigeria (NOTAP)
- 4 Nigeria National Order of Merit Award winners:
 - Claude Ake
 - Kelsey Harrison
 - Charles Nnolim
 - Ebiegberi Alagoa

Student Population

15,564

Regular Male Students
Undergraduate enrollment

927

Part - Time Male Students
Undergraduate enrollment

36,750

Regular Female Students
Undergraduate enrollment

926

Part - Time Female Students
Undergraduate enrollment

5394

Graduate Students

Distinguished Alumni

Political Leadership

- A former president of Nigeria
- Several governors including the immediate past and current governors of Rivers State
- Several ministers

Academic & Professional Excellence

- Brilliant physicians and Engineers plying their trade all over the world
- Vice -Chancellors of various universities

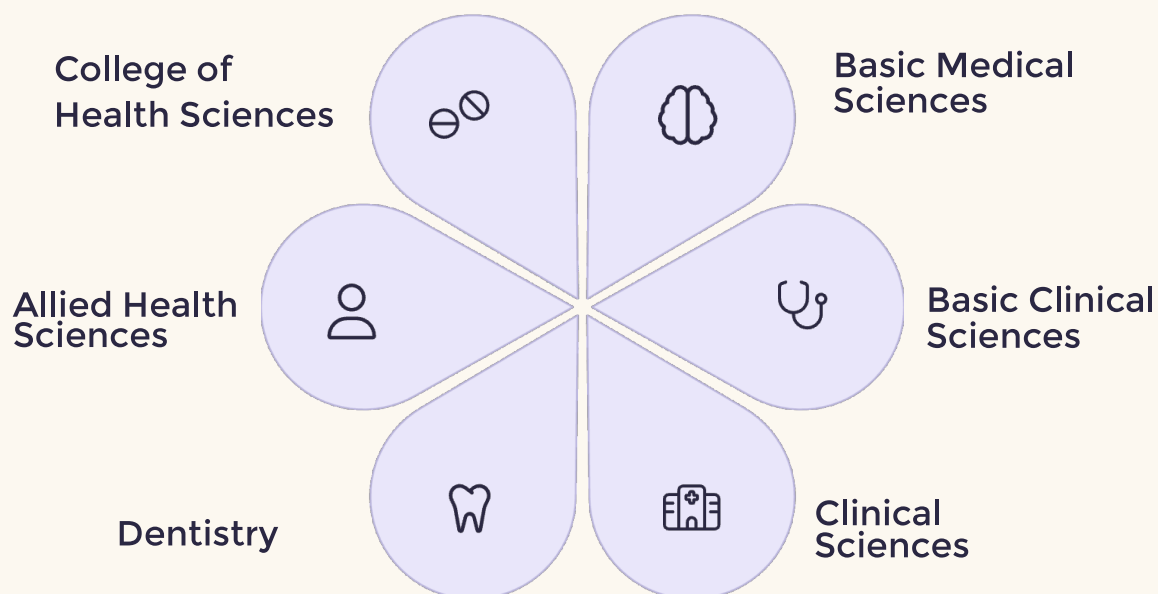
Academic Structure: Faculties

The university began with the Faculty of Humanities but in its 47 years, has grown into sixteen (17) Faculties, a School of Graduate Studies and a College of Health Sciences.

- Faculty of Humanities
- Faculty of Social Sciences
- Faculty of Education
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Management Sciences
- Faculty of Agriculture
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
- Faculty of Science
- Faculty of Computing



Academic Structure: College of Health Sciences



The College of Health Sciences comprises multiple faculties that provide comprehensive medical education and training.

Additional Faculties and School

Other Faculties

- **Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences**
Offering programs in pharmacy and pharmaceutical research
- **Faculty of Environmental Sciences**
Focusing on architecture, urban planning, and environmental management
- **Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences**
Providing foundational medical education



School of Graduate Studies

The School of Graduate Studies coordinates all postgraduate programs across the university, ensuring high standards of research and academic excellence. It offers Master's and Doctoral programs in various disciplines, contributing to advanced knowledge creation and professional development.



Academic Programs and Departments

100

Departments

Academic units across all faculties

149

Programs

Diverse academic offerings postgraduate levels

67

Centers & Institutes

Specialized research and training units

40

Endowed Chairs

Professorial positions funded by external donors

The University of Port Harcourt offers a comprehensive range of academic programs designed to meet the needs of students, industry, and society.

University of Port Harcourt: Looking to the Future



As the University of Port Harcourt continues to grow and evolve, it remains committed to its motto of "Enlightenment and Self research, and community service. Reliance," pursuing excellence in teaching,



UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT - THE REGISTRY

The University of Port Harcourt started as a College of the University of Lagos in 1975 and became a University in 1979, under Decree 34 of 28th September, 1979.

'The Registry, as old as the University'.

Under schedule 1, section 2 (2)-5(1), the decree stipulates that:

There shall be a Registrar, who shall be the Chief Administrative Officer of the University. The person holding the Office of Registrar shall, by virtue of that Office, be Secretary to the Council, the Senate, the Congregation, and the Convocation.

The Registrar, as the Chief Administrative Officer of the University, provides services to enable the University perform its tripartite function of **teaching, research and community service**. He/She ensures correct and proper implementation of policy decisions in the University. The Registry, therefore, represents the necessary bureaucracy for the co-ordination of activities in the University.

From the foregoing, it follows that the Registry Department has the Registrar, as the Chief Administrative head. The Registry Department operates to achieve the **primary aim** of establishing the University. It could be regarded as the "heart and soul", or "engine house" of the University, without which, the University cannot function. The law establishing the University of Port Harcourt defines its component units. It is the Registrar and his/her staff that make these component units, by providing administrative inputs so that the **Council, Senate, Congregation, Convocation, Colleges, Faculties, Departments, Institutes, Research Units**, etc, are properly managed. In other words, it is the Registry Department that is the custodian and interpreter of the **rules, regulations and policies** of the University. It is in this respect that staff of the Registry Department become very important and indispensable in the smooth running of the University.

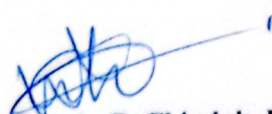
Based on the above, The Registry automatically becomes the engine house of the University, as follows:

1. Interpretation of rules, regulations and policies
2. Provision of guidance to teaching staff on policy matters
3. Processing of Students' admission
4. Registration of students

5. Generation of students' data
6. Records of students' performances
7. Management of staff
8. Management of students outside the classrooms
9. Management of staff, Visitors' welfare
10. Outside bodies, Governing Council etc.

The underlisted substantive Registrars served the University as follows:

1. Late Elder Meshack E. Akpe (1976-1984)
2. Late Chief Okogbule O. Wonodi (1984-1995)
3. Late Chief Emman N. Acheru (1995-2000)
4. Dr. Chris A. Tamuno (2000-2006)
5. Mr. Messiah N. Onyige (2006-2010)
6. Mrs. Matilda Nnodim (2010-2015)
7. Dr. Dorcas D. Otto (2016-2021)
8. Mrs. Gloria O. Chindah, PhD (2022-Date)



Mrs. Gloria O. Chindah, PhD

16th July, 2025

Membership of the Uniport @ 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Professor Clifford O. Ofurum | - Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration) and Chairman Local Organising Committee |
| 2. Prof. Kingsley Owete | - Deputy Vice-Chancellor [Academic] and Chairman, 35th Convocation |
| 3. Prof. Siminialayi Iyeopu | - Deputy Vice-Chancellor [Research and Development] and Alternate Chairman, LOC |
| 4. Mrs. Gloria O. Chindah (PhD) | - Registrar |
| 5. Dr. Godspower Obah | - Bursar |
| 6. Prof. Mrs. Helen Emasealu | - University Librarian |
| 7. Prof. Preye Owen Fiebai | - Rep. College of Health Sciences |
| 8. Prof. Francis Minimah | - Rep. Faculty of Humanities |
| 9. Prof. Olarenwaju Lawal | - Rep., Faculty of Social Sciences |
| 10. Prof. Uche Chukwu | - Rep, Faculty of Science |
| 11. Prof. U. J. Nwogu | - Rep. Faculty of Education |
| 12. Prof. Dennis Eme | - Rep. Faculty of Engineering |
| 13. Prof. Williams Olori | - Rep, Faculty of Management Sciences |
| 14. Prof. Vincent Idemiyor | - Rep. Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences |
| 15. Dr. C. C. Ifeanyi-Obi | - Rep. Faculty of Agriculture |
| 16. Dr. Mrs. Mercy Okey-Chindah | - Rep. Faculty of Law |
| 17. Dr. AKomah Ndimele Onyinyechi | - Rep, SSLT |
| 18. Prof. Bartholomew Eke | - Rep, Faculty of Computing |
| 19. Prof. Femi Shaka | - Rep. Faculty of Communication & Media Studies |
| 20. Prof. Chima Wokocha | - Dean, Student Affairs |
| 21. Prof. Nnenna Frank-Peterside | - Director, QAQC |
| 22. Prof. Eucharia Nwaiche | - Director, Academic Planning |
| 23. Mr. Goodnews Ijah | - Director, Academic Affairs |
| 24. Dr. Boniface Woko | - Director, Internal Audit |
| 25. Mr. Franklin Chinwo | - Deputy Bursar, Payrol |
| 26. Dean, Graduate School or His Representative | |
| 27. Director, College of Continuing Education or Representative | |
| 28. Director, ICTC or Representative | |
| 29. Director, University Printing Press or His Representative | |
| 30. Director, Health Services or His Representative | |
| 31. Director, Uniport Foundation or His Representative | |
| 32. Director, University of Port Harcourt Business School or His Representative | |
| 33. Director, Institute of Petroleum Studies or His Representative | |
| 34. Director, INRES or His Representative | |
| 35. Chief Security Officer or His Representative | |
| 36. Kpenu Samuel | - PRO, IPPR |
| 37. Dr. Ule Glad Williams | - National President, Uniport Alumni |
| 38. Mr. Lawrence Harmony | - President, Student Union |
| 39. Samuel N. Opi | - ACTU/ICPC |
| 40. Kwamina O. Orukotan | - Secretary, 50th Anniversary Committee |

Thank You Message

We the planning committee of the 50th anniversary of the unique University of Port Harcourt extend our profound gratitude to all who have contributed to making this golden jubilee celebration a resounding success.

To His Excellency, our Visitor and the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, we are deeply thankful for your continued support and visionary guidance in shaping the future of higher education in Nigeria.

To the Honourable Minister of Education, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory and other distinguished Ministers, and representatives of the Federal Government, thank you for your presence and for reaffirming the importance of research, innovation, and academic excellence in national development. We sincerely appreciate the Sole Administrator and government of Rivers State, as well as other governors and state representatives, for your unwavering commitment to education and your partnership with our university over the years.

To our Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor and the esteemed members of the Governing Council, your leadership and counsel have played a pivotal role in steering the university toward distinction.

To the University Management, academic and non-academic staff, your dedication, resilience,

and commitment to service have been the backbone of our progress. We salute your tireless efforts and enduring impact.

To our brilliant students, both past and present, and to our esteemed alumni, especially those who have become leaders and trailblazers across the globe, you are the pride and legacy of UniPort.

To our invaluable partners, benefactors, and collaborators, thank you for believing in our mission and for investing in our growth.

To our cherished host communities, your hospitality and harmony have provided a nurturing home for generations of learners and scholars. We are thankful for your support and solidarity.

And to the general public, friends of the university, and all who joined us in commemorating this milestone, we say thank you for walking this journey with us.

As we mark five decades of academic excellence, research, innovation and social impact, we stand committed to the next chapter of UniPort's evolution: one defined by deeper partnerships, bolder ideas and transformative leadership.

Thank you once again, for being part of the UniPort@50 celebration.

Orukotan Oluwasina Kwamina
Secretary



Digital Wallet

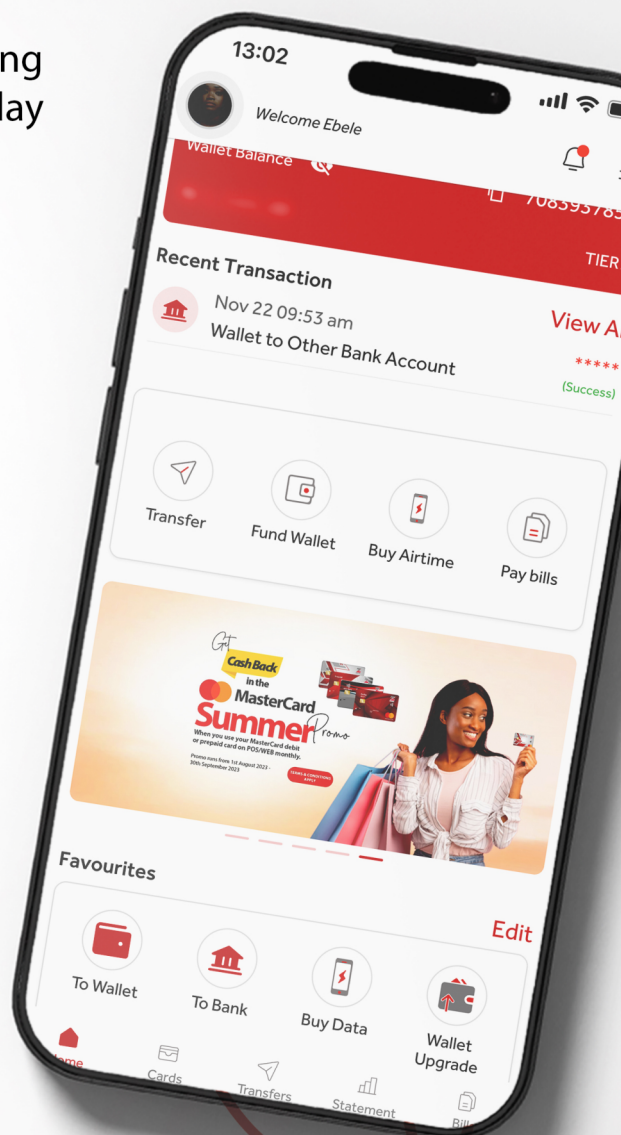
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