An aerial photograph of a river delta, showing a wide, branching waterway with white rapids and green vegetation along the banks. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The title 'TURNING THE TIDE' is superimposed on the upper half of the image. 'TURNING' and 'TIDE' are in large, bold, orange 3D block letters. 'THE' is in a smaller, white, italicized serif font centered between the two larger words.

TURNING
THE
TIDE

Nimi D. Briggs

Through this faithful chronicle of the founding and the early development of the University of Port Harcourt and the intertwined narrative of his service to the university, Professor Nimi Briggs has presented to us in *Turning the Tide*, a cleverly conceived source book for the writing of the history of higher education and the establishment of its institutions in a developing country.

I warmly recommend *Turning the Tide* to all policy makers, academics, students, parents and everyone who is interested in higher education, its management and its development.

Professor Michael Omolewa

*Nigeria's Ambassador/Permanent Delegate to UNESCO
President of the 32nd Session of the General Conference of UNESCO.*

I dare say you have reason to be proud of your accomplishments at the helm of the university. One might say that the university was born again under your dynamic leadership, and my hope and prayer is that the momentum which has been generated will be maintained.

L. Ayo Banjo, Hon. D. Litt (Port Harcourt)

*Emeritus Professor of English (UI)
Formerly, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan and
Prochancellor of the University of Port Harcourt.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nimi Dimkpa Briggs is a professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. He graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of Lagos in 1969 with distinction in Obstetrics and Gynaecology and was the best student in Obstetrics and Gynaecology as well as in Paediatrics.



He is a fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the National Post Graduate Medical College of Nigeria, the West African College of Surgeons, the International College of Surgeons, and the Institute of Petroleum Studies.

Doctor of Medicine, A Knight of St. Christopher in the Anglican Faith, a Justice of the Peace in Rivers State of Nigeria, an Officer of the Order of the Niger of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Nimi is married to Data, a florist. They are blessed with three children and two grandchildren.



Spectrum Books Limited



TURNING THE TIDE

*An account of my services at the University of
Port Harcourt as its fifth Vice-Chancellor;
2000-2005*

TURNING THE TIDE

Nimi D. Briggs

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FOREWORD

Through this faithful chronicle of the founding and the early development of the University of Port Harcourt and the intertwined narrative of his service to the University, Professor Nimi Briggs has presented to us in *Turning the Tide*, a cleverly conceived source book for the writing of the history of higher education and the establishment of its institutions in a developing country. By tracing briefly the history of the coming of higher education to Nigeria and featuring in greater details his personal involvement with the evolution of his particular university, he has succeeded in presenting to us an insider's story of the complexities and difficulties of establishing and nurturing a university. He has, with great skill, revealed the pains and joys, the pitfalls as well as the moral rewards that come from deep commitment, courage and dedication, even in the face of sometimes vicious and wicked oppositions and obstacles.

His account is laced with a most informative narration of the process of the selection and appointment of the chief executive of the university, the politics of the appointment, and the challenges that the administration faced as it sought to build up the stature of the institution, ensure political support for its survival and growth, and secure the necessary funds for its functioning. The role of the administration in the building of bridges among all stakeholders in the institution is well chronicled - bridges between staff and students, between government and the institution, among parents and among the students. He has not shied away from exposing the difficulties and the impossible frustrations that sometimes seem to be an inherent part of the challenges of the running of higher education institutions.

The promotion of education and indeed higher education has been identified as one of the major priorities of UNESCO since its first General Conference in November 1946. Over the years, UNESCO has cooperated widely with Nigeria for the development

of higher education and the establishment of its institutions in the country. It was therefore with great pleasure that we welcomed Professor Briggs at Nigeria's Permanent Delegation to UNESCO and hopefully provided him with a suitable environment where he was deeply occupied with the finalisation of this book.

Professor Briggs is a man of many parts: the medical practitioner who diligently served his country during the civil war, a diplomat with proven negotiating skills, an educator devoted to innovation in curriculum development, a formidable administrator and a man of tremendous courage. Nimi Briggs spent perhaps the longest period so far as the head of the administration of the University of Port Harcourt. The quality and value of his stewardship is set out in this book as the testimony of a man who has given the best of himself.

I warmly commend *Turning the Tide* to all policy makers, academics, students, parents and everyone who is interested in higher education, its management and its development.

Professor Michael Omolewa

Nigeria Ambassador Permanent Delegate to UNESCO

President of 32nd Session of the General Conference of UNESCO

Paris, France

April 2006

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my profound gratitude to His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, for approving my appointment as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt in July, 2000. Without his approval and the appointment that followed, the circumstances that led eventually to the publication of this book would not have materialised. The same remarks apply to Professor Ladipo Ayo Banjo, Chairman of the Governing Council of the University of Port Harcourt from May 2000 to May 2004, whose Council graciously made the recommendation to the Visitor of the university. As for His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, so strong was his support and encouragement for me during my tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt and also in the exercise of writing this book during my stay in Paris, that it is doubtful if much would have been achieved without him. I am indebted in the same way to Chief (Dr.) O. B. Lulu-Briggs, OON, for his support for the publication of this book.

I made references to several persons for historical information:

Professors Sylvanus Cookey, Ebiegberi Alagoa and Tekena Tamuno, all renowned historians and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, respectively; Dr Elechi Arnadi who was the Commissioner of Education in Rivers State at the time of the establishment of the University of Port Harcourt; and King Alfred Diète Spiff. King Spiff (then Lieutenant Commander Alfred Diète Spiff) was in the late 1960s, the Military Governor of the newly created Rivers State, with General Yakubu Gowon as Head of State, when the issue of establishing a Federal Government-owned university in Port Harcourt was making the rounds among top government

functionaries. I hereby acknowledge their contributions with gratitude.

The Principal Officers and some senior officials of the University of Port Harcourt, who served with me as well as some who came after them, strongly supported the publication of this book. They availed me of their own recollection of events and produced relevant documents when I requested for them. The then Registrar, Dr. Chris Tamuno; the current Registrar, Mr. Messiah Onyige; the Bursar, Mr. Michael Ekeh; the Deputy Registrar and Academic Officer, Mrs. Bridget Nzimiro; the Deputy Registrar and Public Relations Officer of the University, Mr. Williams Wodi; and the Special Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal Assistant Registrar, Mr. Ejikeme Ichendu; deserve special mention. I also wish to express my profound gratitude to Mr. Abiodun Elias, my Personal Assistant at the National Hospital, Abuja, a young man with an obviously bright future; for the extraordinary sense of diligence he brought into the final stages of the production of this book.

His Excellency, Professor Michael Omolewa, Ambassador/ Permanent Delegate of Nigeria to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and President-of the 32nd Session of the General Conference of that body; Professor Peter Okebukola, the immediate past Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC); and Mrs. M. Y Katagun, the Secretary General of the Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO, were all instrumental in the then Honourable Minister of Education, Mrs. Chinwe Nora Obaji granting approval for me to spend my sabbatical leave, at the expiration of my tenure as Vice-Chancellor, with the Nigerian Delegation to UNESCO, in Paris. I wish to register my appreciation to all of them for their support. In addition, Professor Omolewa and his entire staff at the Nigerian Delegation ensured that my stay in Paris was comfortable. The comfort, coupled with the seclusion, loneliness and hibernation that were imposed by the winter months when I was in Paris and the

ambience of the UNESCO environment, fuelled the "ladder of ambition" and compelled a greater commitment to my earlier decision to write this book. His Excellency's acceptance to include a *Forward* to the book is therefore very welcome and I thank him most sincerely for it.

My appreciation goes to Spectrum Books, d1"C publishers, not just for making a fine job of the publication of this book; but equally importantly, for the comeradeship I enjoyed with the staff on my many visits to their headquarters in Ibadan in the course of publishing the book.

Finally, I thank the Almighty God for His inspiration and enablement to write this book.

ANTECEDENTS

The Early Years of the University

After the establishment of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria's premier university, in 1948, Lord Ashby' was commissioned to make recommendations on the future development of higher education in the country. The Commission, whose report was published in 1960, recommended:

that Nigeria should have at least four universities, one in each of the three regions and one in the Federal Territory of Lagos.

The Commission also recommended that:

the three branches of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, cited in Ibadan, Enugu and Zaria, which had been providing post-secondary education in each region, should be merged with the appropriate regional university.

Nigeria then consisted of three regions: northern, eastern and western. For eastern Nigeria, where the city of Port Harcourt is located, the slot for the establishment of a regional university was taken up by the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which also

incorporated the Enugu branch of the College of Arts, Science and Technology as a second campus. However, outside the issue of regional universities, there had been along standing demand from the people of the territory of the country - which is currently occupied by Rivers and Bayelsa States, where a critical mass of the intelligentsia had developed - for the establishment of a Federal Government-owned university in Port Harcourt. So, when on April 27, 1975, the Federal Military Government announced the establishment of five new universities and two university colleges simultaneously, with Port Harcourt as one of the two university colleges, government was acting partly in response to that demand. But the point must be made that the inclusion of Port Harcourt, even at the level of a college, did not come easily as there were some in the then Federal Executive Council who opposed it (Alfred Diete Spiff, Personal Communication, 2004).

That did not deter Professor Donald Ekong (now late), foundation principal of the College and later, foundation Vice-Chancellor of the university, as he set forth to ensure a sound beginning for the new institution. For indeed all who are conversant with the early years of the University of Port Harcourt, would accept that the institution "was born in a spirit of surging enthusiasm" and also in an atmosphere of "aspiration and confidence". Not much was left to chance as proper planning became the hallmark of the administration. In its determination to be innovative and to create a "unique University"

A helicopter ride was undertaken for an aerial view to delineate some thirty square kilometres of land which was to serve as the permanent site of the university (Elechi Amadi, Personal Communication, 2005). And it was not until the founding principles, objectives and values of the new institution had been clearly articulated over a period of one year of deliberations between October 1976 and September 1977, that the doors of the university

were opened to the first set of students on Monday, 27 October, 1977. The mandate of the university-

to contribute to national development, self reliance,
and unity through the advancement and propagation
of knowledge, and to use such knowledge for service
to the community and to humanity

was translated into the University Motto: "For Enlightenment and Self-Reliance".

The mandate and the motto were to provide the guiding principles for all subsequent developments and activities of the university which was to commit itself to the formulation of degree programmes that will produce persons who are well grounded in contemporary culture as well as having a sound knowledge of one branch of learning. The university is to provide research facilities to enable staff and students to undertake research that is relevant to the total development of Nigeria. Furthermore, provision is to be made for Continuing Education Programmes and also other programmes that should assist the community in which the university is situated.

In the academic area, the university adopted the "School System" as opposed to the traditional Faculty/Department System of many other universities as it was deemed to be economical in the use of manpower and also encouraged integrated interdisciplinary training. The Schools of Humanities, Social Sciences, Educational Studies, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences and Chemical Sciences were approved by Senate for a start and later on the Institute of Health Sciences, and the Faculties of Management Sciences and Business Administration were added. The university made good progress in most aspects of its operations, members of the community working together for a common goal.

In 1982, Professor Donald Ekong completed his tenure as Vice-Chancellor of the university and Professor Sylvanus J.S. Cooker was appointed the institution's Vice-Chancellor. Cooker embarked

upon his new assignment with the same zeal and passion to succeed as did his predecessor, The academic system of the university was reviewed and changed to the traditional Faculty /Department format. New academic structures, including a School of Graduate Studies and an Institute of Education were established. In order to reach out to the community, a College of Continuing Education was started in the city of Port Harcourt and a mature Students as well as a Basic Studies Programme was put in place to expand the opportunity for the acquisition of university education to a greater section of the population .As a commitment to self-reliance, efforts were made to enhance the revenue base of the university through the formation of a Consultancy, Research and Development Centre (CORDEC). The University Demonstration Secondary School (UDSS) which was established as a laboratory for teaching practice for students of the faculty of Education was regarded as one of the best Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt and attracted pupils from all over the city. Professor Sylvanus Cookey was reappointed after his first term of four years and in all, had a successful seven years in office during which the university, continued its progressive march, and the relationship among the staff was cordial.

Years of Instability

But all too soon, the university's steady growth and internal harmony appeared to flounder, first there was a problem with the utilities, especially electricity and water supply which then became flashpoints for mass discontent, especially from students.

Up to that point, the electricity supply to the university from the national grid came through an 11KV power supply facility which did not extend to the University Park. Even at that, the current was weak and so was unable to support home appliances like freezers let alone scientific equipment in the laboratories. In addition, it failed often. This meant that not only could members of staff not run

their homes satisfactorily, the other services that depended on electricity for effective functioning, like the pumping of water from boreholes, suffered immeasurably. Inadequate water supply was the next major problem as the quantity of water coming from the decrepit boreholes that were scattered in the three "parks" of the university with their dilapidated pumps which were powered by weak and epileptic electricity, proved to be insufficient to meet the needs of the community.

As for the students, the living conditions in their hostels had become of some concern as expansion in students admission had meant increased occupancy for each room. This situation had given rise to the emergence of a number of private hostels in the neighbourhood of the university in which students lived, with all the attendant problems of security. Furthermore, the issue of secret cult, a strange phenomenon which is characterised by ruthless violence, especially among rival groups, had taken root in the university, just as it had done in some of the other universities.

Nor did the signs of incipient unrest spare the staff. Factions that were not based on academic interests had made their debut and the staff had become polarised especially along ethnic lines. The once integrated community which was united in a single course for the pursuit of academic excellence, had lost cohesion and diversified its interest to less edifying concerns.

Kelsey Harrison, a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (now Emeritus Professor of the University of Port Harcourt), respected locally and internationally for his academic and professional achievements, who was appointed Vice-Chancellor after professor Sylvanus Cookey, responded to these problems with robust determination. He got his teeth firmly into the issue of electricity supply and was eventually able to bring in a new 33KV line all the way from the Rumuokoro junction in Port Harcourt into the university to supplement and eventually replace the weak 11 KV

line. The promise by the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) - as it then was, which did not materialise - had been for a dedicated line which was to run directly from the power station to the university. In the end, the university settled for the Rumuokoro line which passed through the airport and several adjoining villages and so suffered, and still does, not infrequently, from vandalism and bush fires, especially during the planting season. An ambitious plan of desalinating and obtaining potable water from the nearby Calabar River was hatched; the idea collapsed on the drawing board due largely to its financial implications. Students in secret cults were not allowed a hiding place as the administration fought them to a standstill. The most celebrated incidence was the "Abumog" encounter of 1990 when the administration, together with innocent students who could no longer put up with the disruptive activities by cultists, flushed out the undesirables from their midst.

Unfortunately, there were difficulties in the operations of the university which made the then Honourable Minister of Education, Professor Babs Fafunwa, dissolve the Governing Council of the institution which was then under the chairmanship of Chief Fola Alade, in October 1992. Professor Njidda Gadzama, an academic of repute from the University of Maiduguri, was appointed acting Vice-Chancellor shortly thereafter, to take over from Professor Harrison and thus began an interregnum of acting appointments with all its inherent instability and decline, from which the university suffered for a long time. Professor Harrison's success in bringing in the 33KV line into the university, which was not a mean task, is seen as a major contribution to the development of the institution and one for which the university has remained grateful till this day. He is also credited for completing and putting into use the gigantic multipurpose Ofirima building that now houses the faculty of Science and the College of Health Sciences.

My First Appointment as Acting Vice-Chancellor

The circumstances that led to my appointment as the acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt for the first time in January 1995 were melodramatic and bear recounting.

Professor Gadzama, as acting Vice-Chancellor, looked after the affairs of the university for over a year during which it could rightly be said, that he held the institution together and pulled-it from "the brink of disaster." He left after he was appointed the Vice-Chancellor, of his own University, the University of Maiduguri and from then on, the mantle leadership ,fell on Professor. Ademola Salau, an energetic young man who was a former Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Port Harcourt and at that time, Deputy Vice-Chancellor while the Governing Council, which was the under the chairmanship of Chief Folarin Coker, got on with the business of advertising, interviewing and recommendation a suitable candidate to the visitor for appointment as Vice-Chancellor. The exercise concluded, Council recommended Professor Theo Vincent, an academic of great standing and Professor of English at the University of Lagos, to fill the post.

But the events of the last couple of years had taken their toll on the psyche of a number of academics in the University including, I dare say, myself, as the then Provost of the University's College of Health Sciences. Furthermore, government had been tardy with the appointment of Professor Vincent after Council made the recommendation. So the University was practically rudderless and I was no longer sure that the University of Port Harcourt and environment was still a suitable place for me to continue the rest of my academic and professional career and for the upbringing of my children. I decided to relocate if I could find a good job and I found

one, as I was appointed Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Louisiana State University in New Orleans, United States of America. The appointment was tenured; the pay was good; the job description, fantastic and the environment - even though I was struck by the woeful plight of the blacks I saw when I visited - passable. My departure as I had planned it, was to be in phases starting with a sabbatical leave commencing in February, 1995, to test the waters in New Orleans, before relocating my family and, as I had hoped, getting done with my country, Nigeria. Ademola Salau as acting Vice-Chancellor graciously approved my request for sabbatical leave. I thanked him and confirmed my availability once more to New Orleans.

Then came the fateful day, 27 January 1995, on which the acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ademola Salau, was to address a press conference at the Ernest Ikoli Press Centre at Moscow Road, Port Harcourt, on the issue of secret cult activities, as I was made to understand. He had, on the previous day, obtained an assurance from me that I would attend but I arrived about fifteen minutes late having on that day gone to purchase my airline ticket to New Orleans. The ticket was in my pocket at the time I arrived at the Press Centre!

There was a cliffhanger situation at the venue which was characterised by an eerie silence and Ademola Salau was the only one I met outside the hall. We made contact and then came the bombshell. He said he was giving up the acting Vice-Chancellorship position that morning and was proceeding to New York to take up an appointment with a United Nation's agency; the day's press conference had actually been called for him to hand over the affairs of the university to me. I screamed in utter disbelief. "Why did you not tell me"? I asked. He replied in a rush that he had been to my residence at about 7 am that morning for that purpose but had been informed by my wife that I had left very early and she did not know my whereabouts. He then pleaded that we should go up quickly; the hall was full and everybody was waiting for him. I followed him

upstairs in a state of stupor, totally oblivious of the import of what was happening.

The "conference"; over, I returned to the university, to the Vice-Chancellor's office, collapsed on the sofa there and began to weep, partly because I saw the job as one for the undertaker and also, out of worry about the fate of my lucrative job at New Orleans. Then came a tap on the door and in came Mrs. Ukpong Kadana, the Vice-Chancellor's personal secretary. She appealed to me to stop weeping as it was just possible that God was working out his plan for me as a person and for the University of Port Harcourt as an institution. After her came Professor Alphonsus Anusiem, foundation Professor of Chemistry of the university and the foundation Dean of its School of Chemical Sciences, who reassured me also especially with the support of senior academics in the university. I soon bestirred myself, wiped my tears and requested Mr. E. N. Acheru, the then Registrar, to call an emergency meeting of Senate in two hours time for me to inform Senate of the momentous happenings of that day. I had reckoned that with the startling events of the day, the Federal Government would be jolted and would act on the recommendation before it with respect to the substantive appointment of a Vice-Chancellor for the University of Port Harcourt. And I would be off to my *el dorado* in New Orleans. .

A metamorphosis from having to stand in a queue in order to purchase an international airline ticket with which to flee one's country, to' having to chair the meeting of the Senate of a university, all within a space of about seven hours, will be too much for anyone, however audacious. I was no exception. The totally unpredictable nature of the circumstances I was handling put the butterflies in my stomach as I approached the Senate chamber with immense trepidation. That was the 197th meeting (extraordinary) of Senate which was held on 27 January 1995. But I found that I was intrepid and bold about it all as I gave a detailed and honest account of

what had transpired. In Senate's response, at the well-attended meeting, I was surprised that person after person who spoke, urged, Senate to give maximum support so that we could keep the university going until the substantive appointment of a Vice-Chancellor. Senate over, my next task was to contact the then, Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, Chief Folarin Coker.

But again as I got to the office, there was a telex message from him requesting me to report to Lagos as soon as possible to see him. I undertook the trip a few days thereafter and met Chief Coker for the first time, in his house. at Ikoyi; a fine gentleman. who was ageing gracefully, deeply religious and well organized. I also met his wife, Apinke, now late who, though clearly over 55 years-old, was hill, stunningly beautiful. After the usual pleasantries during which I briefly explained recent occurrences at the university, the Pro-Chancellor and-Chairman of Council handed over a letter with reference no. SU/12.D/Vol.1/41 from the Federal Ministry of Education dated 10th January,1995, which was addressed to me. The last paragraph of the letter, read

Accordingly, I have been directed to convey to you, your appointment by the Honorable Minister of Education, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, as the Acting Vice Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, with effect from today, Monday 30th of January, 1995, until further notice.

I was dumbfounded and completely overwhelmed with surprise; not least at the rapidity with which things has progressed within the past couple of days.

There I was, being formally given the mandate to run a system from which I had concluded arrangements to escape on account of its inefficiency. But with New Orleans still ringing in my ears, nothing else made much sense: Professor Theo Vincent would be appointed Vice-Chancellor very soon and I would take off; that was the only message I had for myself. Unfortunately, that expectation was not

soon to be as the hours rolled into days, the days, the weeks, the weeks into months and the months into a full year and beyond. For it was not until March 1996 that government acted on the recommendations before it and approved the appointment of Professor Theo Vincent as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt the fourth in the life of the institution. This was after I had served in acting capacity for about fourteen months and of course by that time, the job at New Orleans had lapsed!

The popular verdict when I left the Vice-Chancellor's office was that I gave the job my best shot. Many were sad to see me go but we were all pleased that we now had a leader as we looked forward eagerly to the much-needed stability in the University. I received several gifts and letters of congratulations from persons within and outside the university including the unions, for the services I rendered. The Governing council, in a tribute, thanked and congratulated me most warmly and wished me success in all my future endeavours. The relationship between the Chairman of Council, Chief Folarin Coker and I developed to become that of a father and a son. Happily, it has survived to this day.

One action of my administration during this period which drew a wide applause was the de-registration of several students who had used illegal means to secure admission into the university. But we also received security report to the effect that there was a plan by de-registered students to kill the acting Vice-Chancellor and/or Professor Emmanuel Anosike who was the chairman of the Committee that investigated the illegal admission issue during the matriculation event of that year. And although we took some precautions, in the end, no such thing happened as matriculation was conducted without any hitch. Rather, so exemplary was the action of the de-registration of those "students" considered to be, that attracted positive editorial comments from some national newspaper.

My Second Appointment as Acting Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Theo Vincnt, did his best to tackle the many problems that he was confronted with in the university. But he suffered a lot of distractions from the activities of the likes of one Professor Edward Ezewu, about whom much more will be said in the other sections of this book, who tormented the Vice-Chancellor and sued him at every turn, for allegations of "stealing", "murder", you name it, just as they had done with some of the other chief executives before that time, and were to continue even with those of the future. But the Vice-Chancellor meant well and buoyed by his strong character and personal discipline, was able to record a number of landmark achievements despite the distractions. His foresight in commencing work on an Information, Communication and Technology Centre (ICTC), as well as telephone services in the campus, which were to serve as the plank for the development of information technology services within the university, were, to my mind, significant contributions, let alone the development of the major access road into the permanent site of the university.

Unfortunately there was trouble again, this time, within the university system in the country. Towards the end of 1999, the Federal Government dissolved the Governing Councils of a number of universities and removed their corresponding Vice-Chancellors from office. Sadly the University of Port Harcourt was one of those so affected.

And following this development, the Federal

Government once again appointed me acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt with effect from 1 January, 2000, and until further notice in the same melodramatic manner as it did previously! I had no inkling whatsoever either of the dissolution of Council, or of my acting appointment, the whole event took me by storm once again.

This time around though, I reflected very deeply on the entire episode and repeatedly asked myself, "why is the University of Port Harcourt so prone to crises?" There and then I resolved that if I was given the opportunity, I would work assiduously and radically restructure the university in order to place it on a sustainable path of peace and growth in all aspects of its operations. In the process, I put my thoughts on paper in my first address to the Senate of the university in my new capacity, once again as acting Vice-Chancellor, on Wednesday, 12 January 2000. And because that address sets the scene for all that I subsequently did in the university both in the acting and substantive capacities as Vice-Chancellor, in a most lucid manner, it is hereby reproduced verbatim.

Dear Colleagues,

Once again our paths have crossed. In January 1995, as you will recollect, our University was engrossed in a deep crisis which threatened its very existence. I was retrieved from an advanced arrangement for a Sabbatical Leave in the United States of America and appointed acting Vice-Chancellor. Over a period of fourteen months, and with your support, we were able to rescue the University from total collapse. We established peace based on justice and the rule of law: scholarship thrived and confidence in the ability of the University to fulfil those aims and aspirations, on which its foundation was predicated, was restored. I wish, once again, to place on record my deep gratitude to Senate and Congregation for their comportment during those difficult days. January 2000 is seeing us in a similar pass and our paths are crossing once again. I have no doubt that Senate and Congregation shall once more live up to their responsibilities and we shall find them no less supportive than they were in 1995. But I wish to do much more this time around. Since this University appears to have a destiny with the month of January, I wish to use the opportunity offered by this new month, this New Year, this new decade, this new century and indeed this new

millennium to meditate on and revisited a number of issues that concern us and our University:

1. Why is the University of Port Harcourt crisis-prone? Is it not possible for a succession of administrations to establish peace based on fair play and the rule of law?
2. Why are the structures in the University so pedestrian after more than 70 years of its existence.
3. Why are we unable to provide utilities, especially those of potable water, energy supply and telecommunication that will meet the needs of the University?
4. Are we satisfied with the coverage of our current field of operations? The colleges, faculties, departments, schools and unit, are they sufficient to meet the yearnings of our catchments area?
5. If government today divests itself to a large extent from the running of our University and grants the much-desired University autonomy, how shall we use it?
6. How can we find funds to run this University in a proper manner?
7. How can we motivate staff at all levels to give of their best to this institution?
8. Why does security pose such an intractable problem in the University?
9. Our students: why do they engage in gross antisocial behaviours? why do many of them not take their studies seriously? when they graduate, can we truly say that they have found worthy in learning and character? How can we make their living conditions more hospitable and their learning environment more enabling, even at our current level of funding?

millennium to meditate on and revisited a number of issues that concern us and our University:

1. Why is the University of Port Harcourt crisis-prone? Is it not possible for a succession of administrations to establish peace based on fair play and the rule of law?
2. Why are the structures in the University so pedestrian after more than y one years of its existence.
3. Why are we unable to provide utilities, especially those of potable water, energy supply and telecommunication that will meet the needs of the University?
4. Are we satisfied with the coverage of our current field of operations? The colleges, faculties, departments, schools and unit, are they sufficient to meet the yearnings of our catchments area?
5. If government today divests itself to a large extent from the running of our University and grants the much-desired University autonomy, how shall we use it?
6. How can we find funds to run this University in a proper manner?
7. How can we motivate staff at all levels to give of their best to this institution?
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10. How can we reduce corruption in our University system: stealing University funds, cheating, sale of grades to students and other well-known vices?

11. How can we achieve a more amicable “town and gown” atmosphere, bearing in mind particularly, our present neighbourhood?

Judging from the moment of this occasion, in my view, history is giving us a unique chance to radically alter this University for the better and I hereby call on all of us to seize the opportunity. On my part, I want to say I am ready as I firmly believe that this University has the men and woman that can make it proud and give it its rightful place in this 21th century.

I have already inaugurated a Think Tank under the chairmanship of Professor Chi Ikoku which I wrested from a lucrative sabbatical and presented an expanded version of our deliberation today as their “Terms of Reference” I will present their recommendation to Senate and between us all we shall construct the template on which this University should be developed in the foreseeable future. Let me end by commending you all to the mercy and protection of Almighty God in this epoch making year.

January 2000

As for the Vice-Chancellor, professor Vincent, everybody in the University was pleased that he successfully fought the issue of his removal from the office. For, in truth, Theo Vincent is too decent a man to belong to the category of persons who had been removed from office for allegedly misappropriating public funds. He was able to convince the government of his innocence of all allegations that were made against him. So the directive for his removal from office was rescinded and all his rights and privileges were restored. The most welcome action by government gave the lie to claims by Edward Ezewu that Theo Vincent had been removed from office as a result of the mountain of protest letters, which he, Ezewu, had

written against the Vice-Chancellor, all of which were unsubstantiated, anyway.

Senate received my inaugural address on 10 January 2000, very well and once again, pledged its total support. I commenced work immediately with immense zeal, totally oblivious of the fact that I was an acting Vice-Chancellor. I was bolder than I had been previously and even much stronger. My reasoning was that irrespective of who eventually got the job on a substantive basis, it was possible for me, in a short space of time, to set up a structure that would ensure peace and sustain progress in the university; a kind of "road map" which anyone would be obliged to follow.

I recalled Professor Chi Ikoku, a quiet achiever, and a former Dean of the Faculty of Engineering - who is now late - from a lucrative sabbatical leave with the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in Warri and with the approval of Senate, charged him with the responsibility of undertaking a critical review of all aspects of the university's operations and to make recommendations that would enable the institution to achieve lasting peace and sustained development. As was expected, Chi Ikoku did a marvellous job and I placed his recommendations before Senate at its 243rd meeting (extraordinarily) on 6 September 2000. Senate accepted them but directed that a further distillation be carried out on the work, an assignment which I gave to Professor Samuel Okiwelu, a clean man and a meticulous academic, and members of a committee I inaugurated to work with him. This turned out to be the beginning of work on the Strategic plan of the University about which more will be said later.

My first encounter with Edward Ezewu was during my second appointment as Acting Vice-Chancellor. For some unknown reasons, I had miraculously escaped the venom of his pen the first time around.

Edward Ezewu had been removed as a member of staff of the University of Port Harcourt by the recently dissolved Governing.

Council which was led by Professor Festus Osiyemi on the orders of the Federal Government, for "the public good" as part of an overall rationalization exercise. Ezewu questioned his removal order and went to court to challenge it. But the matter had not been disposed of by the time the Council was dissolved. On my assumption of office as acting Vice-Chancellor by January, 2000, Ezewu approached me to say that the court had given a ruling ordering his immediate reinstatement. I crosschecked this information with the university's legal department which could not confirm it. I explained my predicament to Ezewu and informed him that his was a Council matter on which I could not act without reference to Council even though I was sympathetic to his cause. I promised to raise the matter with Council once one was put in place.

Edward Ezewu did not accept this position of the acting Vice-Chancellor and hoping to ride on the crest of an impending democratic rule in the country (Sani Abacha had died and Nigerians were clamouring for civilian democracy), he wrote to the Visitor of the University, at that time, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, requesting him to remove me from office forthwith because of my "inability to obey court orders". That was my baptism of fire and the first in a series of over twenty (I lost count after some time) letters of protest, reports, abuses, and insults I received from Edward Ezewu during the years I looked after the affairs of the University of Port Harcourt.

My Substantive Appointment as Vice-Chancellor

As the four-year tenure of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Theo Vincent, was drawing to an end, Council had placed an advertisement in the national newspapers by November, 1999, for the post which was to become vacant. I applied, but Council had not concluded action on the matter before it was dissolved in December, 1999. So, as there was no Council which would have continued the process

January 2000 when I was appointed acting Vice-Chancellor, it was difficult to tell how long the, acting appointment would last. However by May 2000, government announced new Governing Councils for federal universities and appointed Professor Ladipo Ayo Banjo as the Chairman of the Governing Council of the University of Port, Harcourt.

The appointment of Professor Banjo was received with great enthusiasm within the university and the state, Rivers State, where the University of Port Harcourt is located. People were of the opinion that with Ayo Banjo experience as a successful former Vice-Chancellor of Nigeria's premier university, the University of Ibadan, he was in a good position to change, for the better, the fortune of the University of Port Harcourt which had been a source of concern to many. Moreover, some notable individuals in the state had knowledge of Ayo Banjo as he had been to Port Harcourt on a number of occasions to confer the degrees of the University of Ibadan in his capacity then as the institution's Vice-Chancellor on graduates of the Rivers State College of Education, Rumuelumeni, an affiliate of the University of Ibadan.

As for me, I had not met Ayo Banjo, not having attended the University of Ibadan,.

But I knew his-elder brother, Dr. Bayo Banjo well, right from my medical student days at the University of Lagos.

He was a senior colleague who had specialised in Radiology and was for some time the President of the Nigeria Medical Association. However, no one would have been in the higher education sector in Nigeria at that time and would not have heard of Ayo Banjo. So, I had heard of him. I made contact with him short time through my colleagues and friends at Ibadan and we agreed on a date and time to meet at his residence at Ibadan.

A dark complexioned, tall and well built man, his sincerity and simplicity came through the moment I met him. From the portfolio of his vocabulary the clarity of his diction and his choice of sentences, one was left of his doubt of his calling a Professor of

The English Language. He his wife, an amiable and serene woman with an obvious motherly disposition, and their daughter, Yinka, who was never far from Daddy, welcomed me warmly to their home and so began a strong relationship, not just at the level of work but also at the level of the family that has endured with increasing intensity, till this day.

With pleasantries over, we settled down to some work and the very first time I placed before the new Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council was the case of Edward Ezewu, suggesting that Council, when it met, should have a think on the matter and recall Edward Ezewu to his post. Ayo. Banjo was skeptical and was not sure that was a good thing to do. But I pressed further, on the ground that the university needed to commence on a clean slate if the restructuring exercise it was embarking on was to succeed. Granting a pardon to Edward Ezewu, I argued, was an important step in that direction. The Chairman of Council eventually gave me the benefit of the doubt and indicated he would lend his support on the matter before Council. I thanked him profusely, But there were aspects which needed an input from the lawyer who was handling the matter on behalf of the university as the case was already in court. Chief B.O. Benson (SAN) the university lawyer, also had his reservations but like Banjo, he eventually acquiesced as I was rather adamant. Together we put up a case in Council which sailed through without problems. Edward Ezewu was pardoned and reinstated to his position in the university, In addition, he was paid all his outstanding financial entitlements which amounted to a very handsome sum of money.

Unfortunately, and shall I say understandably, the whole event did not go down well with many in the university who felt that the acting Vice-Chancellor was being overly indulgent. The University of Port Harcourt would be a much better place without Edward Ezewu many had, felt. But I had no regrets as I had thought that

peace was, and still is, an important prerequisite to progress. Edward Eizewu, I had surmised, would be contrite and confound his many critics by containing and confining himself only to those actions which were acceptable to a civilised environment of scholars.

At its initial set of meetings, Council concerned itself, after formal introductions, with setting the ground rules for its operations and assigning members to various committees and boards based on expertise. For example, members with experience in banking and financial management were appointed into the Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GPC) as well as the Choba-Uniporr Community Bank, while the academics in Council were appointed into A&PC (Academic) and the Board of the College of Continuing Education (CCE). Council members also undertook a familiarisation tour of the university and paid a courtesy call on His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State. These aside, Council took steps to fill the two important vacant positions in the university: those of the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar.

During the introductions, it became clear that both the internal and external members of Council were seasoned, mature and well-tested men and women who had had diverse experiences and that barring unforeseen circumstances, they were capable of turning the fortunes of the university round, in a positive manner. But first, the university's administration had to be properly constituted especially with the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor. And for this, the Ayo Banjo-led Council picked up from where the Festus Osiyemi-led one stopped; it invited candidates to an interview and made recommendations to the Visitor. And so it was that following the interview and recommendations, I was appointed the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, the fifth in the series, with effect from 10 July 2000, for a single term of five years, in accordance with Decree No. 25 of 21 August, 1996. What an odyssey, an example of Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk* to Freedom?

The antecedents that are reported here place the University of Port Harcourt in perspective at the turn of the millennium when I took charge of the affairs of the institution as its 5th Vice-Chancellor. They underpin some of the actions I took which constitute the bulk of the material for this book. The book itself, a record of some of the major events in the university over the period of five years when I served as the institution's chief executive, aims, among others, to identify causative factors for failures and successes in university administration. Taken along with *A History of The University of Port Harcourt 1977-1998*, a book, the production of which, with foresight, my predecessor, Professor Vincent had commissioned in 1998 under the distinguished editorship of Professor E. J. Alagoa and *Nimi D. Briggs: Thoughts on University Education in Nigeria*, edited by Williams Wodi, they elucidate the fortunes of the university, shy of the year 1999, defining the trajectory of the institution; its boom and burst, prosperity and adversity, want and plenty. To that extent, the book should serve as an interesting companion to students and researchers in the field of higher education as well as all those who operate within the orbit of the university environment, especially of its administrators.

GOVERNING COUNCIL

The Governing Council of the University was chaired by two persons during the five-years period I served as the institution's Vice Chancellor: Professor Ayo Banjo and Alhaji L. A. K. Jimoh. The Professor Ayo Banjo-led Council was constituted in May, 2000 for a period of four years, while the one of led by Alhaji L. A. K. Jimoh was constituted in April, 2005, also for a period of four years. The Professor Banjo-led Council completed its four-years tenure in May, 2004. That led by Alhaji Jimoh was still in place at the time I completed my assignment as Vice-Chancellor in July 2005. The bulk of my tenure therefore, was served with Ayo Banjo led Governing Council.

The Governing Council with Professor Banjo as Chairman

Composition

This Council consisted of eleven members and the chairman, who were appointed by the Federal Government; three ex-ooficio members, the Vice-Chancellor, two Deputy Vice-Chancellors; and six representatives of the University community- four from senate and two from Congregation. Convocation had no representative while the Registrar of the University served as Secretary to Council.

I. Those appointed by the Federal Government

1. Professor Ayo Banjo

A retired Professor Emeritus of English of the University of Ibadan, Professor Banjo is the consummate academic and quintessential University Administrator. He had served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor and also as a two-term Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan. Tolerant, soft-spoken and accommodating, he made members of Council feel sufficiently committed to airing their views freely on issues before them. This meant that Council was able to handle even very explosive matters without bitterness and rancour.

2. Alhaji Abubakar S. Aboki

A retired banker with a sharp analytical mind, who was not given to many words, Alhaji Aboki ensured that his contributions to Council's deliberations were always weighty. He was an invaluable asset on the Board of the Choba-Uniport Community Bank where he represented the interest of Council satisfactorily.

3. Professor Augustine Ahiauzu

A Professor of Management and a two-term former Vice-Chancellor of the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, Augustine Ahiauzu, a decent man, is a well-bred academic, who brought his wealth of experience in the academia to bear on the activities of Council. He was particularly useful in the university's Appointments and Promotions Committee (Academic), where he stood firm on the issue of standards, especially in the cases of promotion of academic staff to professorial ranks.

4. Dr. KW Bukar

An academic staff of the University of Maiduguri, Dr. Bukar brought a refreshing view to Council deliberations from the

point of view of a younger man. He was passionate about the University's College of Continuing Education (CCE) on which Board he represented Council in an able manner.

5. His Royal Highness Alhaji A. YE. Dirisu

The only surviving member of the Governing Council that functioned under Professor Festus Osiyerni, Alhaji Dirisu is a paramount ruler from Okpella, in Edo State of Nigeria. Royal and majestic in his bearing, His Royal Highness, as he was popularly called, served as a stabilising force all through the life of Council. Mature and with a deep understanding of human behaviour, it was to him that Council turned to arbitrate, when difficult decisions were to be taken. It was therefore no surprise that Council entrusted him with the chairmanship of the University's Senior Staff Disciplinary Committee, as well as the Peace and the Appeals Committees at various times. His Royal Highness executed these assignments to the complete satisfaction of Council.

6. Alhaji Idirisu Illo

An educationist of long standing, Alhaji Illo was patently transparent. He brought this quality to bear not only on his contributions to Council debates, but also on the floor of the meetings of the Appointments and Promotions Committee (A&PC) of the Senior Professional Administrative and Technical Staff (SPATS), where he represented Council.

7. Chief (Dr) Chima Nwafor/Chief Chijoke Uko

Chief Chima Nwafor was a medical doctor in private practice and a politician as well as being a member of the board of one of the leading banks in the country. Relaxed, jovial and amiable, it was he who led the resuscitation of the then comatose Choba-Uniport Community Bank which turned out

to be one of the best success stories of the administration. He was recalled 'after about a year to serve on the Governing Council of another university and was replaced by Chief Chijioke Uko. Chief Nwafor who later became the Deputy Governor of Imo State, unfortunately passed on in March 2006 just as this book was having its final revision before publication.

Chief Uko continued where his predecessor left. A young, intelligent banker and politician, he fitted in quite well into the life of Council and contributed immensely to the stability and growth of the Choba-Uniport Community Bank.

8,. Mrs.Sereba Agiobu-Kemmer Pearse

An accomplished journalist with wide exposure in several media organisations. Mrs.Agiobu-Kemmer Pearse's experience in the area of human relations served the purposes of the university well when she tactfully chaired a sub committee of A&PC SPATS and produced a new Career Structure for the senior non-teaching staff.

9. Mr.Anyebe Uji

Anyebe Uji was also a banker who rose to the pinnacle of his profession before retirement. A politician and a private businessman, Mr. Uji completed the tripod of Aboki, Nwafor/ Uko, that worked tirelessly at the Board of the Choba-Uniport Community Bank to convert a distressed bank into a success story!

10. Mrs.L.M.Okunnu

Mrs. Okunnu, a dignified and devoutly religious woman is a retired civil servant. She had served as the Deputy Governor of Lagos State and also as the Leader of a major political party in the country. Her motherly instincts were always in

the fore in her contributions to Council's deliberations as she spoke tirelessly for persons whom she considered weak and underprivileged. Yet she was firm, outspoken and unwavering on the issues of discipline and transparency, and, along with His Royal Highness, Alhaji Dirisu, made the Senior Staff Disciplinary Committee, of which she was a member, the formidable body that it was. Her passion for the welfare of students was strong and she elected to serve on the Student's Welfare Committee and the Board of the University Demonstration Secondary School.

11. Mrs. O. O. Euler-Ajayi/Mrs. E. O. Oga

Mrs. Euler-Ajayi represented the Honourable Minister of Education and so brought in the ministry's perspective into the deliberations of Council. A charming and well-informed civil servant, she also took the deliberations of Council to the Honourable Minister in order to keep him and his ministry abreast of events in the university. Mrs. Euler-Ajayi who was a renowned athlete in her student days at the University of Ibadan encouraged the development of sports at the University of Port Harcourt by donating a cup for competition by female students. She was later appointed the Principal of Queen's College, Lagos and was replaced by Mrs. E. O. Oga.

Mrs. Oga, like her predecessor, represented the Honourable Minister of Education. More light-hearted and sedate, she also carried out her responsibilities in a satisfactory manner and ensured that the relationship between the Ministry of Education and Council was cordial by briefing her ministry of events in Council and also updating Council on government's views on certain matters.

II Ex-Officio Members

Realising how complex the administration of the university had become, my predecessor had sought and obtained Council's approval

for the appointment of a second deputy Vice-Chancellor to complement the single position that existed prior to his time. So, as of the time I assumed office in July 2005, there were two deputy Vice-Chancellors, one for administrative and the other for academic matters.

1. Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration)

Professor Alphonsus Anusiem /Professor Mark Anikpo. Professor Anusiem, a first class honours degree holder in Chemistry of the University of Ibadan, was a foundation professor of the University of Port Harcourt and the foundation Dean of the institution's School of Chemical Sciences. These previous appointments more than qualified him for the office of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, an assignment which he carried out with distinction, under my predecessor as well as under me. He was mature, dedicated and reliable. He therefore functioned as a great pillar of strength for the administration, especially during times of crises. He performed better under pressure and threat, and did not flap even when everything appeared to be going wrong. He is widely accepted as a respected elder of the university community till this day. He served the maximum allowed period of four years and was succeeded thereafter, by Professor Mark Anikpo.

Professor Mark Anikpo, also a first class honours degree holder in Sociology of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, is younger, but had all the attributes that endeared his predecessor to the administration. In addition, he had relevant experience as he had served as the acting Vice-Chancellor of a sister university and also as a Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Port Harcourt. He was once the chairman of Academic Staff Union (ASUU) of the University of Port Harcourt branch. Tough, and not one to

shy away from debates, he convincingly made the case for the decisions that were taken by the administration, whenever the need arose. His handling of the affairs of NUGA 2004, about which more will be said later, as the Chairman of its Local Organising Committee, having succeeded Professor Michael Oti, was widely regarded as very impressive.

2. Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Professor Joseph Okoh/Professor John Enaowho.

Professor Joseph Okoh's loyalty to the person of the Vice-Chancellor was proverbial, first to Theo Vincent and then to me. This meant that he served as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) of the university with all his might and gave of his best at all times. A professor of Education, he was loved by many in the university on account of his simplicity, unassuming nature and strong religious background. I therefore had no problem when I sought Senate's approval, in the absence of a Governing Council, for him to oversee the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), following the appointment of his successor, Professor John Enaowho, as the Vice-Chancellor of the Delta State University, Abraka.

Not only was Professor John Enaowho, like Joseph Okoh, from the faculty of Education, he also shared with Okoh the same catholic faith, loyalty and profound dedication. A gregarious man and a good mixer who related well to students, senior as well as junior staff, John Enaowho took information on the activities of the administration to all and sundry in the university. He was sorely missed when he left in November 2004, to take up appointment as the Vice-Chancellor of Delta State University, Abraka.

III. **Persons Elected by the University**

1. **By Senate: For a renewable term of two years.**

Election of members from Senate as well as from Congregation to Council was for a period of four years, to coincide with the four year tenure of Council members who are appointed by government from outside the university. However, in 2000, while deliberating on the matter, Senate expressed disappointment with the actions of some persons it had elected into Council in 1997 and so it took the decision that elected members of Council from Senate must renew their mandates on a two-yearly basis.

a. **Professor Michael Oti**

Professor Oti studied Geology in Germany, from where, evidently, he acquired the German spirit of tenacity and hard work. Fair in complexion, he is also fair at heart and reflects that position in his dealings with others. This was the characteristic hallmark of his contributions at Council. Often sitting next to Mrs. Okunnu, they frequently found time to consult among themselves and between them, they brought balanced contributions to Council's deliberations. A self-respecting gentleman who was always impeccably dressed, Mike, as I call him, was well-regarded in the university community. It therefore came as no surprise that he was re-elected for another period of two years at the expiration of his first term.

b. **Professor Tunde Ojo / Professor W.J. Okowa.**

Professor Ojo, a very senior academic of the university, was an erstwhile Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences. His in-depth knowledge of the university, through its periods of peaks and troughs, meant that he was more reticent and

guarded in his comments and utterances than most others. He served as the Chairman of the Council Campus Security Committee and in that capacity, he did his best in getting the various security firms in the campus to do their work. Senate elected Professor William Okowa to replace Professor Ojo when his term at Council expired.

Willy Okowa, as he is popularly called, is known for his attribute of holding tenaciously to issues which he fiercely defends at every turn. Holder of a first class honours degree in Economics of the University of Lagos and a Development Economist of substance, William Okowa is the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences. A former acting Dean of Student Affairs, Willy was regarded by some in the campus as an implacable fighter for social justice and fair play. There was no doubt that Council's deliberations were enriched by his fiery comments which, more often than not, were made in good faith. He was re-elected by Senate after his first term of two years.

c. Professor Charles Nnolim/Professor S.W.J. Ibodje

An accomplished literary giant, Professor Nnolim had an immense oratorical ability which he used to great advantage. A former University orator, with a great sense of humour and a manageable frame, Charles Nnolim was a former Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. He usually convinced Council of his point of view through his oratory as Council often deferred to him.

The fact that Professor Ibodje served his stint at Council well is confirmed not only by his re-election by Senate for a second term, but also by his subsequent appointment as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), by the Alhaji Jimoh-led Council, to serve in the administration of Professor Don Baridam, who succeeded me as Vice-Chancellor. A professor

of Local Government Politics and Developmental Administration, Professor Ibodje was easily identified through his small, shrewd voice, an element which probably imposed on him, his amiable quality of gentleness.

d. Professor Don Baridam/Professor Bose Okoli

Probably one of the youngest in Council, Professor Baridam, a professor of Management Sciences and one time Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences was not quick to speak. He was gentle, at peace with himself and balanced in his remarks and it is possible that these were some of the attributes that the Alhaji Jimoh-led Council saw in Don Baridam during the selection exercise which informed its recommendation to the Visitor for his appointment as the Vice-Chancellor of the University, in July 2005. Senate elected Professor Bose Okoli, a Professor of Genetics and former Dean of the Faculty of Science to replace Professor Baridam at the expiration of his tenure in Council.

Also soft spoken, Bose Okoli is widely regarded as an honest and transparent man. He also holds strong views on issues but he was open to reasoning and often made balanced contributions at Council. Senate had no problem in re-electing him for a second term to Council after the expiration of his first tenure.

2. By Congregation: For a period of four years

a. Dr. Boma Lawson

Dr. Boma Lawson, a Chief Medical Officer with the Health Services Department of the university, is generally known as a good doctor who responds promptly to distress calls. As a member of Council, he always read his minutes very well and so, was able to make reasoned contributions to thorny issues. He took particular interest in matters that affected the non-

teaching staff of the university and was at pains to point out to Council, the contributions that are made by that category of staff to the smooth running and overall development of the institution. At the end of his tenure of four years, which coincided with the end of the Ayo Banjo-led Council, the Congregation of the university elected Mrs. Bridget Nzirniro to replace him.

b. Dr. (professor) Anthony Arinze

Dr. Anthony Arinze was a senior lecturer in Botany at the time he was elected into Council on the floor of Congregation. But he quickly earned his promotion and was uplifted to the status of Professor of Plant Pathology. Knowledgeable, vibrant and one-time chairman of ASUU, University of Port Harcourt branch, Tony, a stickler for rules and regulations, was not easily daunted nor persuaded to give up a point. At the completion of Tony's tenure, the Congregation elected Dr. Blessing Didia of the Department of Anatomy to replace him. Blessing Didia has since risen to become a Professor of Human Anatomy,

IV. Registrar and Secretary to Council

1. Dr. Chris A. Tamuno

Dr. Tamuno was serving in an acting capacity at the inception of the Ayo Banjo-led Council until she was eventually appointed the Registrar of the University. Humble, cultivated, Spartan, yet humane, she was singularly efficient, and her immense ability stood in sharp contrast to her modest frame. On account of the manner of her self-comportment, she was deeply respected by most persons she came in contact with especially those that operated within the university environment.

V. In Attendance

1. The Bursar/the Director of Physical Planning
Although these officers of the university are not normally regarded as Council members, they are always present at Council meetings as information is frequently required of them.
- a. Mr. Michael Ekeh, a Chartered Accountant and the Bursar of the university is an articulate and contented gentleman who keeps a close watch on the finances of the university, He had a sense of ingenuity which enabled the administration to identify prudent ways of carrying out its transactions. He was reappointed at the expiration of his first term of five years.
- b. Miss Jubiline David West, an architect, is the Director of Physical Planning of the university. Taciturn, cool, self-effacing, confident, reserved, yet effective and efficient, she bore the weight of the massive construction work that went on in the university during the period, together with the frequent comments they invoked, with admirable serenity.

These were the men and women that I had the good fortune of serving with in the Council of the university for the better part of my tenure as Vice-Chancellor. It was clear from the very beginning that except the unexpected happened, they were persons who would serve the purpose of the university, as members of its Governing Council, satisfactorily and that they would deliver,

The fact that Senate and Congregation were able to elect members to represent those two organs of the university in Council in 2000, Was very significant because that was the first time that such elections were held since 1997. On account of some difficulties in Council, the two bodies had not been able to exercise that right since 1997. For the better part of its life therefore, the Osiyemi-led

Council, functioned without representatives from Senate and Congregation.

The University of Port Harcourt Decree, Decree 84 of 1979, which set up the institution, also made provision for "one person appointed by Convocation from among the members of that body" to be a member of Council. But as will be reported later, up till the time I left as Vice-Chancellor, it had not been possible to constitute the Convocation of the University as stipulated by the decree. Furthermore, the Ayo Banjo-led Council in its formative days, discussed the desirability for a representative of the Alumni Association of the university to be a member of Council as had been the case sometime previously. This too, rather unfortunately, had not come to fruition as of the time my tenure expired.

Activities

The University of Port Harcourt Decree states that the Governing Council shall be charged with the responsibility of the "general control and superintendence of the policy, finances and property of the university, including its public relations". The activities of Council, in consonance with this decree, can be distilled into the areas of general governance, supervision of the university's finances, infrastructural development of the institution, and issues of discipline.

In all, Council held twenty-two meetings, out of which three were extraordinary. But the meetings were not evenly distributed over the four year period as circumstances that prevailed in the university at certain times, made the meetings of Council impossible. For instance, Council was able to meet on seven occasions each during the 2000-2001 and the 2001-2002 sessions. But it could only do so on three occasions in the 2002-2003 session as industrial actions by unions in the university virtually forced a close down of the institution, between 29 December 2002 and 19 May 2003.

Arrangements for Council meetings were usually made in such a manner that Council members who lived outside Port Harcourt, arrived in the city by a weekend and stayed for about a week. During that time, meetings of the various boards and committees of Council were held. The meetings of the Tenders Board, the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Council itself- these three were chaired by the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council himself - were usually fixed for Wednesday morning and afternoon and all day Thursday. At these meetings, the Chairman always started with a period of silent prayer. He never failed to commend the registry for the quality of the minutes which were almost invariably, well produced. Council also commended the Vice-Chancellor at many of its meetings. On one occasion, Council felt so strongly about the level of performance of the Vice-Chancellor, that it directed the Registrar and Secretary to Council, to extend Council's commendation in writing, to the Vice-Chancellor.

General Governance

The most pressing issues which Council had to deal with after its inauguration in the year 2000 were those of appointments to two key positions in the university: those of the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar. It decided to take them one after the other. With my appointment as the Vice-Chancellor on 10 July, 2000, the first hurdle was scaled and Council turned its attention to the other, the appointment of a Registrar for the University. Following an advertisement to which candidates had responded, a short list of suitable candidates was drawn up and an interview conducted. Dr. Chris Tamuno, a Deputy Registrar in the University who was acting on the post at the time, was appointed the Registrar of the University with effect from 24 October, 2000, for an initial term of five years. The other senior appointments which Council approved at various times included those of Professors Alphonsus Anusiem, Joseph

Okoh, John Enaowho and Mark Anikpo as Deputy Vice-Chancellors, and that of Mr. Michael Ekeh, as the Bursar of the university for a second term. These appointments were all made by Council following due selection processes.

Council also approved the appointment of Professor Obiozor Ayalogu, as the acting University Librarian, on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor, and that of *Messers Spirapolous, Adiele Okpara and Co.* as External Auditors of the University at the expiration of the tenure of *Messers S. I. Alele & Co.* Furthermore, it approved some important documents which were forwarded to it by various committees. Two of these had to do with the conditions for the appointments and promotions of academic staff and the career structure of the senior non-academic staff.

With its activities spread over three "Parks" (University, Delta and Choba Parks) - which are separated from one another by major public roads - security at the University of Port Harcourt had always been a problem. Choba Park is separated from University and Delta Parks by the East-West road, a very busy arterial connection between the oil producing states of Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross River on the one hand and those of Bayelsa, Delta and Edo on the other. While another one, Choba Road separates University Park from Delta Park. Unfortunately, since the voluntary retirement of Mr. Isaac Igbara as Chief Security Officer, it had not been possible to find a suitable candidate for his replacement; his deputy, Mr. Anthony Amabeoku, now late, had been serving as acting Chief Security Officer. Mr. Amabeoku, a diligent and conscientious worker, who had sustained some debilitating injuries in the course of his duty, was hard put to controlling the truancy of some of his staff. The security situation in the university deteriorated sharply, and the incidence of stealing from various sections of the university soared just as secret cult activities became a real menace. Alarmed by this state of affairs, my predecessor in office, had, with Council's approval, contracted out the security of "Delta Park", where the

central administration of the university is located, to a private security firm, [*Johnson and Johnson Security*] and with that, the security situation as it concerned "Delta Park", improved somewhat.

When the Ayo Banjo-led Council took charge of the affairs of the university, it reacted to this serious situation by setting up a council-Campus Security Committee under the chairmanship of Professor Tunde Ojo (later Professor Ibodje when Ojo's term in council expired). The committee was to monitor the security situation on campus and advise the Vice-Chancellor as well as reporting directly to Council. On my part, I decided to stage a multiple-pronged attack on the problem. I would fence the three Parks of the campus, appoint a new Chief Security Officer, contract out the security of the two remaining Parks and wage war on the secret cult perpetrators. Council approved my proposals and so, I set to work immediately.

The fencing of the three university parks was paramount for not only was the campus very porous, the borders of the university could not be properly defined. One could walk directly into Delta Park from several points on the East-West road without passing through any gate or being challenged by anyone. In Choba Park, so bad was the situation that some road-side mechanics and a public market were operating within the university premises and hawking occasionally took place in lecture halls! Furthermore, the Park and the adjoining Choba town merged imperceptibly into one another. University Park was a shade better as it was shielded from view and access to some extent, from the East-West road, by a thick intervening forest.

The fencing of Delta Park was completed very quickly. Taken along with the reasonable efficiency of *Johnson and Johnson Security* and at that time, the complete fencing of Delta Park meant that that part of the campus became reasonably secured, an action which was applauded by many in the university.

But we were not so lucky with our efforts at fencing the other two parks of the university. Firstly, our attempt at saving some money for the university, by relying on direct labour for the fencing of Choba Park, failed woefully as the Works and Services Department of the university was just not up to the mark. Eventually the job was contracted out, especially as security breaches in Choba Park increased tremendously resulting in some loss of lives. Even at that, parts of the wall collapsed on a number of occasions as a result of flooding from torrential rains and had to be reconstructed.

Nor did the fencing of University Park go through as smoothly as one would have wished. Indeed till this day, that job remains uncompleted, bedevilled by shortage of funds and difficulty in mapping out an acceptable track along which the fence should run so as not to disrupt a community shrine which is located somewhere in that area. But work was completed on the most vulnerable part of the University Park, the part that stretches from the University Demonstration Secondary School to the East-West Road. It was from that section of the campus that hoodlums gained access to the university premises in September 1993 and murdered a senior academic staff, who had even served as an Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, at the dead of night in his bedroom! The fencing of this part of the University Park also protected parts of the Demonstration Secondary School and the "Ali Carpe Verde" section of the university, which, prior to that time, were all open to the East-West as well as the Choba Roads. In addition, approval was given for a public park to be built in a section of the East West Road side of the University Park between Choba road and the main University Gate. This has also added to the protection of the University Park. Furthermore, it relieved the pressure of traffic at the junction between the Choba and East West Roads, which is popularly known as "Uniport Junction", where vehicles commonly did a U-turn.

On a happier note, I was able to get a good Chief Security Officer appointed. Mr. Amadi Wali, an indigene of Rumuekini, one of the host communities of the university, and an alumnus of the University of Port Harcourt, who had had experience working with a major federal government security agency, got the appointment. Strong, energetic and deeply committed, he sat firmly in the saddle and tackled the security problems of the university. Sometime ago he sustained some serious injury to his eyes, in the course of his work, which almost compromised his sight. I was glad he recovered completely with proper treatment.

I was often asked why I needed the services of a Chief Security Officer while still contracting out the security of the entire campus. The answer I gave was that I needed a single individual, preferably a staff of the university, who would take charge of the responsibility of the security of the university and report to me. The various security agents would report to him and be under his supervision. The current Chief Security Officer carried out that function satisfactorily when I was in charge of the affairs of the university.

There was still the unfinished business of contracting out the security of the two remaining Parks of the campus; and for this, Council engaged the services of *Demas Security* for the University Park and *Weli Security* for Choba Park, after scrutiny by the Council - Campus Security Committee. Demas Security started well but the quality of its work deteriorated over time. The leadership of the organisation was in disarray, many beats were left uncovered as truancy crept into the ranks of its workers. On the recommendation of the Chief Security Officer, and approval by Council, the contract with the company was abrogated and Johnson Security was given the mandate to extend its services to cover the University Park. As for Weli Security, its services fell short of expectation from inception. Even granting the fact that Choba Park was the most difficult of the three Parks to secure on account of its neighbourhood, it was clear that the company lacked the muscle power to do the job effectively.

So, once again on the advice of the chief security officer, Weli Security had its contract nullified. A new outfit, De Falcon Security, which would use security dogs and would patrol the park constantly, an which was taken on board after an exhaustive and elaborate search, was appointed to secure the park. As of the time I left office, De Falcon Security was holding its ground.

It must be stated that the experience with the private security firms fell far short of what one had expected. Some of them were not equipped for the job at all and they often fielded staff that were neither trained nor committed. A lot were young applicants or jambites who were scouting around for admission into universities and were only using the appointment in the security firm as a stop gap measure. Such persons fled from their duty posts at the first sign of any problem and therefore could not have constituted a source of deterrent to any intruder. It was therefore not surprising that even with their presence, the university suffered some losses from theft from time to time. For instance, in October 2003, thieves attacked the CUCB. The same burglary incidence occurred at the CCE in March 2005. On both occasions, the university lost sizable sums of money. In their defence, the security organisations complained of the financial value of their contracts with the university which they insisted determined the quality of staff they employed.

As was expected, contracting out security services in the university was fiercely resisted by the staff of the then Security Department despite firm assurances from the Vice-Chancellor and Council that none of them would suffer the loss of his job on account of redundancy. They argued that they were employed as security staff and therefore, should not be re-assigned to other units as was being planned. Moreover, they believed that they could do the job satisfactorily if only they were better equipped and remunerated. And that the money that was to be spent in hiring private security firms should rather be committed to such ends.

They went to court, attempted to disrupt Council meetings, as well as other important university meetings, and hauled insults at the administration. Now, with the benefit of hind sight, coupled with one's unpleasant experience with the private security firms, it is difficult to dismiss their position as being completely untenable.

The occurrence of fire was another source of insecurity on campus as there was no Fire Department in the university. The fires which occurred from time to time had destroyed a number of structures in the university including the temporary offices of the College of Health Sciences in Choba Park, sections of the Faculty of Engineering in Choba Park, and residential quarters in Ali Carpe Verde area of University Park. On such occasions the university had to run around calling for help and assistance from the neighbouring Wilbros Company, SPDC or the Rivers State Government. To prevent such actions in the future, the administration submitted a memorandum for the establishment of a Fire Department which Council approved and through the benevolence of the Executive Governor of Rivers State, His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, the state government gave a brand new fire fighting vehicle to the university. The government also undertook, to train the personnel for the Fire Department at the university.

Even at the time of its inauguration in Abuja, Council members regretted the absence of a University of Port Harcourt Liaison Office in the federal capital city of Abuja. The absence had compelled Council members to hold their initial familiarisation discussions in the hotel room of the Chairman, an action which the members considered as being improper. Furthermore, the importance of Abuja as a city for transacting university business had grown: it had become the seat of the Federal Government, its Ministry of Education and the NUC. So, early in its operations in Port Harcourt, Council approved the establishment of a Liaison Office for the university in Abuja and partly as a way of assuring the future of the Abuja office, Council paid for the purchase of a parcel of land in the

Asokoro district of the city, through the kind assistance of two of its members who negotiated the purchase from the land owners. The contention was that the Asokoro parcel of land would be used to construct a purpose-built University Liaison Office at a later date as well as for other purposes.

Regarding the war against secret cult activities, suffice it to say here that it was fought at many levels; a more detailed account is presented elsewhere. But, gladly, the war was won because as of the time I completed my tenure as Vice-Chancellor, secret cult activities had virtually been wiped out of the University of Port Harcourt.

Finance

Finances for running the affairs of the university were remitted to it by the Federal Government on instalmental basis, initially through the NUC, and later, directly. Recurrent grants, which were meant for the payment of staff salaries and emoluments as well as running the services of the institution, were remitted monthly, while capital grants, for new capital projects and the rehabilitation of old ones, were released quarterly. Furthermore, the value of the grants to individual universities differed; they were determined by a formula which was based on the age (generation) of the institution, the student population and the proportion that studied science oriented subjects. Ten per cent of the recurrent grant was to be set aside for the development of the University library, including the purchase of books.

The recurrent grant that we received in the university was not sufficient to pay the salaries and emoluments of staff, and running the services of the university. On the average, it catered for about seventy percent of the recurrent expenditure. In addition, it often arrived late, after the last date of the month for which it was meant to be used. The consequence of this was that the university resorted

to other sources, such as borrowing from banks and obtaining money from internally generated funds of the institution, in order to be able to pay staff salaries and emoluments and to run its services. As for the 10% for library development, it was not often honoured on account of shortage of funds. Capital grant also did not come in regularly; sometimes it was cancelled. In the year 2002, the university received a total recurrent grant of N1, 501,117,364 and had a recurrent expenditure of N2, 025,296,221, giving a deficit of N524, 178,857. The deficit arose from inadequate funding of staff salaries and emoluments despite salary adjustments as approved by the Federal Government during the year, while capital grant for the 2001 fiscal year was not received. The Table in pages 44-45, indicates the Grants received and Expenses for the period 2001 to 2004.

TABLE 2.1: UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT
GRANTS RECEIVED/EXPENSES FOR
THE YEARS ENDED 30TH JUNE 2001 TO 2004

YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE	2001		2002		2003		2004		ACCUMULATED SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) N'000
	N'000		N'000		N'000		N'000		
CAPITAL FUND									
Capital Received	74,348		100,645		-				
Special Capital	12,938		-		-				
Education Tax Fund	8,000		28,000		104,750		105,475		
<i>Sub-Total</i>	95,286		128,645		104,750		105,475		
Less Payments	56,688		207,527		130,308		378,446		
<i>Surplus/ (Deficit)</i>	38,598		(78,882)		(25,558)		(272,971)		(338,813)

RECURRENT FUND							
Personnel Cost Received	1,428,411	1,394,707	1,053,357	1,829,179			
Overhead Cost	-	91,259	21,395	38,015			
NUGA 2004 Grant	-	-	-	144,000			
Direct Teaching & Laboratory Cost	-	-	-	39,104			
Library Development Fund	145,763	10,822	-	-			
Research Grant	70,193	4,329	-	-			
<i>Sub-Total</i>	1,644,367	1,501,117	1,074,752	2,050,298			
Less Payments:							
Personnel Emoluments	1,286,934	1,620,904	1,089,906	1,907,711			
Goods and Services	186,750	287,605	272,762	427,454			
Purchase of Fixed Assets	29,200	116,787	42,030	35,442			
<i>Sub-Total</i>	1,502,884	2,025,296	1,404,698	2,370,607			
<i>Surplus (Deficit)</i>							(1,032,951)

Source: Extracts from Audited Accounts of University of Port Harcourt

As can be observed, in almost all the years, the university incurred deficits in Recurrent Expenditure. The deficits were cushioned with available internally generated funds which otherwise would have been used to accelerate the development of necessary infrastructure. The Recurrent Grant for Personnel Cost was less than the actual amount that was paid. Personnel Cost itself took more than 90% of total recurrent allocation. In the circumstance, the university relied completely on internally generated income to deal with Goods and Services. The deficits in Capital Grants were also attended to from internally generated funds especially for the years 2002, 2003 and 2004. The increased internally generated income for 2004 was as a result of donations that were received towards the NUGA 2004. The bulk of the Library Fund that was received in the year 2001 was applied to the completion of the Library Building Phase1.

These difficulties with funding existed despite the stringent measures that were taken by the Executive Secretary of the NUC, Professor Peter Okebukola, an active, highly resourceful and versatile young man, as well as by his predecessor, Professor Munzali Jibril, another effective administrator, to obtain funds early enough from the office of the Accountant General of the Federation for onward distribution to the universities. The situation contrasted with what obtained in 1995 when I served as the acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt. At that time, all remittances to the universities were sent quarterly. So, the University of Port Harcourt - like, I would imagine, many others - had at least two months salaries in the bank at any given time and could plan its financial expenditure. But in defence of government, one must say that whereas the monthly personnel cost for the University of Port Harcourt was about 11 million naira in 1995, it was over 100 million naira in 2004, there having been a substantial increase in the salaries of university workers. Nor should one forget the efforts which government has continued to make to improve the financial base of the universities. More recently government approved a Direct

Teaching and Laboratory Cost (DTLC) for its universities. This money was to go directly to Heads of Academic Departments who were to use it to cover the day to day running costs of teaching and laboratory work. To the credit of government, the fund assisted the university greatly as heads of departments operated it by themselves and retired it directly to the NUC through the Vice-Chancellor.

What all this meant was that finances for running the affairs of the university were always inadequate. The university had to devise means of cutting waste and generating funds from other sources. Prudent expenditure, reaching out to other sources for funds and promoting a positive image of the university in all possible ways, thus became an over arching commitment of Council and the Vice-Chancellor.

Through its Finance and General Purposes Committee, Council requested the administration to submit Quarterly Financial Reports to it. In addition, Council received a report on the state of the University at all its ordinary meetings, from the Vice-Chancellor. An Annual Report on the major activities in the university was also submitted to Council and Senate by the Vice-Chancellor. These reports enabled Council to keep abreast of and to monitor activities in the university. In particular, Council was able to keep track of the university's income and expenditure pattern and to advise the administration early to make appropriate adjustments. Accordingly, it allocated the resources of the university in an efficient and prudent manner. In doing so, Council gave overriding premium to regular payment of all staff salaries and emoluments and also the payment of the entitlement of all retirees.

Furthermore, Council ensured that External Auditors' Reports Were up to date and it is to Council's credit that annual external auditors' reports for the years 2000 to 2004 were ready by the end of 2005 when I was working on this book. These reports were forwarded to the Auditor-General of the Federation, the NUC and the Public Accounts Committees of the National Assembly.

Council took several other actions to ensure transparency and improvement in the management of the university's funds. Two of such actions which relate to the computerisation of the financial transactions of the university, and the establishment of a budget unit in the Bursary Department are reported here.

Computerisation was slow in coming to the University of Port Harcourt. But by 2001, judging by the complexities of the activities of the Bursary Department, it was clear that the manual operations of the department could no longer be sustained. So, the administration presented a memorandum to Council to make a case for the approval and the provision of funds for the complete computerisation of the operations of the Bursary Department. Council approved and provided the funds. Council also approved the formation of a budget unit which was to be separate from the general operations of the Bursary Department and appointed a very senior accountant to be in-charge of the unit under the general supervision of the Bursar. The department thus became the first in the university to have its operations computerised.

The administration also played its role in line with Council's desire for prudent and transparent management of the university's funds.

Right from the commencement of the administration, the Bursar and the Vice-Chancellor established a routine whereby they discussed the bank balances of the university on a weekly basis and then planned the week's expenditure. The Chief Internal Auditor was encouraged to be up-to-date with his market surveys to enable his department vet more accurately, purchases that were to be made on behalf of the university. But as time went on, I appointed a Purchasing Officer to be in charge of all purchases by the university. I also embarked on the resuscitation of an abandoned warehouse which was to be used for the storage of materials that were to be purchased in bulk for the university. But the idea was rebuffed by most departmental and unit heads. So, the university had to continue

with departmental and unit purchases, with the Internal Audit Department vetting the requests for purchases.

Next we turned our attention to the issue of internally generated funds to which my predecessors had also given considerations and had set up units that were expected to generate funds for the university as part of their overall activities. CORDEC and Uniport Investments Limited (UIL), were notable examples. Some of the units functioned well; most did not and constituted a further drain on the university's meagre resources. On Monday, 11 December, 2000, I inaugurated the Revenue Generation Committee with Professor Mark Anikpo as chairman and in a five-point Terms of Reference, charged the members with the responsibility of reviewing all existing revenue generating units of the university and recommending ways of maximising the institution's revenue generating potential. The committee did a good job and submitted their final report on 24 July, 2001, having suffered delays as a result of strike actions by unions within the university. The committee discovered, amongst others, that some of the units had become so dormant that they had been forgotten by the administration! For where the administration submitted thirteen as being the total number of revenue generating units, the committee discovered additional fifteen, making a total of twenty-eight. With the report of the committee, the administration was able to close some of the units, and streamlined others and so obtained improved returns, if marginal, from the Revenue Generating Units.

Development

Staff development or capacity building as well as infrastructural development had always been key areas of interest to the Governing Council of the university, being a young institution.

In line with this, during its formative years, the university adopted a policy by which it recruited young men and women at the level

of Graduate Assistants as academic staff or at comparable levels for the non-academic, and sent them for further training in institutions of higher learning mainly in Europe and North America. The policy was hailed as being progressive as many of those that benefited, returned to the university at the completion of their studies and pursued successful careers. However, a number abused the good intentions of the university and failed to return, especially in the later years of the programme, even after the successful completion of their courses. They unilaterally broke the bonds they had signed with the institution and took up appointments in Europe and America. This unfortunate trend, coupled with the fact that it was becoming increasingly difficult for the university to find the money with which to sustain the programme, dictated a rethink of the policy. Gradually the programme was allowed to die especially as the university had established its own School of Graduate Studies and was running its Graduate Programmes locally, with some success. There was also the issue of the image of the country, Nigeria, which had become a pariah state by the 1990s as a result of the immense political upheavals in the country which were disapproved of by many nations of the world.

So it was that at the turn of the millennium when I took charge of the affairs of the university, there were some staff, especially academic staff, who had had all their training from the primary school to the doctorate level, locally in the country; some within Port Harcourt and its environs. It was not that there was anything inherently wrong with the training of personnel locally, but with the state of affairs in the country then, especially with the run-down nature of many educational institutions, there was no doubt that such persons would have benefited from some outside exposure.

I decided to establish linkages with other universities outside the country as a means of opening up the University of Port Harcourt and fostering contact and interactions between the staff and their counterparts elsewhere. I set up the External Linkages Unit and

appointed Professor Mbuk Ebong, an organised and methodical man, from the Faculty of Engineering, to be in charge. This unit, which is probably one of the greatest contributions of my administration to the development of the university, with progressive tinkering and readjustments, became the University Advancement Centre (UAC), about which I will write more in the later sections of this book. But even at this point, let me say that the great success that UAC turned out to be, was brought about, in no small measure, by the international climate of opinion on Nigeria, which had changed for the better, with the advent of the civilian democratic regime of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, in May 1999. Most of the staff development during my tenure as Vice-Chancellor took place through the medium of the UAC and the Human Resource Development Unit (HURDU) of the Registry.

Infrastructural development of a university that is young must be a major preoccupation of any Council that is superintending over the affairs of an institution. But at the University of Port Harcourt, things were dire and this made many visitors to the institution question why the infrastructure of the university was so stunted as compared to those of other universities of the same vintage. There were only two buildings of substance that had been completed: the Faculty of Science block and the students' hostels at the University Park. Almost every other structure was temporary: the Administrative block, Senate chamber, the Library, Faculty buildings, the University Press, the Health Centre, as well as others. Nor were the utilities a source of joy. Water supply was from a number of bore-holes which were not reticulated but dotted all Over the three Parks of the university and regarding telecommunication, only the Vice-Chancellor's office could be reached through a radiophone!

Christened Ojirima Complex, the Faculty of Science block also SerVed as the administrative block of the College of Health Sciences and contained the only hall in the university that was big enough to

hold a capacity of about 500 persons. Its construction took over ten years to be completed from 25 March 1977, the date on which General Olusegun Obasanjo, then military Head of State and Visitor to the university, laid its foundation stone. Little wonder that the expenditure on that building became a source of friction and disagreement between top university functionaries at some stage of the institution's development.

But nothing in what has been written should be construed to mean that it was the successive Vice-Chancellors of the university that should be held accountable for this near total abandonment of the institution as such a position would be entirely incorrect. The problem was that the university was not adequately funded to carry on with its development, taking into account its peculiar circumstances. For unlike the other universities of comparable standing, the University of Port Harcourt started with nothing other than a disused Trade School. Furthermore, its location is in a marshy terrain in the Niger Delta which was far from the city of Port Harcourt and where construction work was difficult and expensive.

This precluded the university from sharing in the use of the utilities of the city of Port Harcourt and also meant that the institution needed more funds to execute a job of comparable status with its sister institutions. In fact, it is known that Sylvanus Cookey obtained the funds for the construction of the student hostels at the University Park from extra budgetary allocations, on account of his personal relationship with the then Honourable Minister of Finance, Dr. Chu Okongu, while Theo Vincent was able to persuade Chief Dan Etete, the then Honourable Minister of Petroleum Resources, to build the university's main access way and a female hostel at the University Park.

So, rather than indulging in a futile exercise of self-pity, Council set to work to ameliorate the situation it had met, to the best of its ability. And since it would have been too much to expect government funding with which to accomplish the type of construction work

that was required in the university, Council prepared a document titled Urgent Developmental Needs of the University of Port Harcourt, with which it was going to solicit for funds from organisations and public-spirited individuals. The impact of this action of Council and the success that Council recorded in altering the sky-line of the university, will be reported in the later sections of this book.

Issues of Discipline

Most of the issues of discipline and related matters that Council had to deal with were fairly routine. They mainly had to do with approval of the recommendations of the disciplinary committees of the university as they concerned the cases of some staff who had appealed against their dismissal by the Federal Government during the life of the Osiyemi-led Council, and some staff of the library department. But two incidents were important and so will be reported here in some details. These were some matters that concerned, rather unfortunately, Edward Ezewu, again, and a faceless "Preye Ambacks".

Some time after Ezewu had been pardoned and reinstated in the university, I received a letter from Professor Emmanuel Anosike, a former Deputy Vice-Chancellor and former Dean of the Faculty of Science, informing me that he had it on good information that Ezewu had taught in a federal government institution and was paid salaries during the time he filed the suit in which he objected to his removal from the university. Professor Anosike wished to know if it was proper for someone to receive salaries from two federal government institutions since the university had, by then, recalled Ezewu and paid him the backlog of his financial entitlements. As I was not sure of the facts of the matter, I referred the letter to Ezewu for his Comments; an action which I thought was a perfectly routine administrative procedure. Ezewu was angry and instead of Commenting on the letter, wrote straight to the Visitor of the

University, the President of the country to inform him that I was not a fit and proper person to serve as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt. He was gracious enough to send me a copy of the letter and I informed the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council about Ezewu's action.

The next issue also had to do with Ezewu. Shortly after I was appointed acting Vice-Chancellor, the second time around in January 2000, Professor Edward Ezewu met me with a complaint to the effect that Professor Joseph Okoh of his faculty and then Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), had awarded a PhD degree to a candidate that he Okoh had supervised; in improper circumstances. Despite the overwhelming volume of evidence that was available on the matter, their faculty - the Faculty of Education - and the erstwhile administration of Theo Vincent had refused to take appropriate actions, Ezewu further complained. He would like me to look speedily into the matter, cancel the degree that had been awarded and discipline Joseph Okoh appropriately. I promised to look dispassionately into the matter, which I did and found that Ezewu's complaint lacked merit and I told him so. After the inauguration of the Ayo Banjo-led Council and the recall of Ezewu to his post in the university, Ezewu reported the matter to Professor Banjo in his capacity as Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council and this time around, included me as having colluded in the case by refusing to apportion blame and punishment. I informed the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council that I had already looked into the matter and that Ezewu's case lacked merit. But the Pro-Chancellor wisely suggested that we should do something further as that might be the only way of getting Ezewu to give up his agitation. He requested me to appoint a team of two or three highly respected individuals in the university to look into the matter in detail and to submit a report. Edward Ezewu was very pleased with the position of the Chairman; a Daniel had come to judgment and the university was in the throes of genuine democratic governance,

he opined. Okoh, on the other hand, was, understandably, displeased and so were many in the university, blaming the Vice-Chancellor for bringing back a man whose irritancy had been effectively settled by the Osiyemi-led Governing Council.

Which ever way, there was no going back now on the Pro-Chancellor's directive. I appointed Professors Ebiegberi Alagoa, Robin Horton and the late Kay Williamson, three persons with impeccable records and unassailable character, who indeed would say it as they found it, no matter whose ox was gored. They took their time, much longer than was originally allotted, and submitted a comprehensive report to the effect that Ezewu's allegation lacked merit. In addition, they included a plea that Ezewu should be advised to be a little more circumspect with his outbursts and that he should check his facts before making his complaints. I then, on the advice of the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, communicated the outcome of the investigation, including the plea for some greater degree of circumspection, to Ezewu indicating that as far the university was concerned, that matter was completely closed. Ezewu was incensed by my letter and wrote back to inform me that he did not accept the findings of the panel, threatening that the university would be hearing more on the matter from appropriate quarters.

Unfortunately, Ezewu remained as recalcitrant as ever and just could not thaw. He carried on with all manner of actions that were totally inimical to the overall interest of the university. So much so that by early 2001, at its 84th meeting which was held on 8 February 2001, the Governing Council was left with no other option than to request the Registrar and Secretary to Council to write to Edward Ezewu, informing him that Council no longer needed his services at the University of Port Harcourt. The Bursar was also instructed to compute Professor Ezewu's financial entitlements and to pay him once he (Ezewu) left the university residential accommodation and office which he was occupying and handed over university property in his care, including Staff Identity and Health Services

Cards to the acting Head of his Department. Ezewu went back to court once more on the contents of this letter and eventually brought the Vice-Chancellor before another federal government agency, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC).

Determined to fight corruption in the country, especially by highly placed government officials, the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo set up the ICPC after it came into power in May 1999, to serve as a watchdog to which persons who were suspected of corrupt practices could be reported for appropriate investigation. Presumably exercising his right as a citizen of the country, Ezewu wrote to the Commission accusing me and the former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Theo Vincent, of some corrupt practices. For Theo Vincent, Ezewu's accusations included those of "murder" and "stealing", the same trash which he had canvassed before an earlier panel (Oputa), but could not substantiate. While I was accused of sacking him without due process, stealing, hiding criminals and corruptly using university funds to build a house at Nzimiro Street at Amadi flat area of Port Harcourt for Ayo Banjo, Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council of the University of Port Harcourt, so that he, Ayo Banjo, would appoint me the Vice-Chancellor of the university.

Theo Vincent who had returned to the University of Lagos after his tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, had his investigations in Lagos, while I had mine, in Port Harcourt. I reported several times, over a period of one week, at the written invitation of the visiting ICPC team at the SSS Headquarters in GRA Phase 1 Port Harcourt, which the ICPC team used as its base, with all manner of documents, to be interrogated. The team also visited the university and accessed various records. These were mainly financial records but the team also requested for and read through the Alagoa Panel Report, as Ezewu had made the Okoh's matter, one of the strong points of his accusations. The ICPC team eventually went back to Abuja after their investigations.

Now to the "Preye Ambacks" saga and the Insider Magazine publication.

On Wednesday, 15 May 2002, meetings of the Tenders Board and of the Finance and General Purposes Committee were held; council meeting was scheduled for the next day, Thursday, 16 May 2002. I closed from the office at about 9 pm and returned to the Vice-Chancellor's Lodge and after my usual heavy meal of pounded yam and okro soup with isam (periwinkle), I reclined on an easy chair to watch what was left of the 9 pm Nigerian Television News, when a call came through from the security gate that there was a police officer in mufti at the gate who wished to see me.

I was surprised considering the hour and instead of asking the security to let the gentleman in, I decided rather to meet him outside, on the grounds of the lodge. This was about 10 pm and every one else in the lodge had gone to bed. The officer politely introduced himself and informed me that that I was required at the Special Investigation Branch (SIB) of the Rivers State Police Command that night. He requested me to get ready so that the two of us could go together. I tried to find out what the matter was. Had any of my staff or students got into some trouble? But the officer was not prepared to let anything out. I immediately had an intuition that something ominous was about to happen. So, I called my special assistant on the cell phone (fortunately, cell phones were operating at the university at that time). Ejike Ichendu, bless his heart; God-sent; arrived quickly and joined me in trying to find out from the police officer what the matter was. As it became clear that the officer Was not going to yield ground, Ejike volunteered to go with him and to bring the information to the Vice-Chancellor, who would then get to the SIB, however late that night, if his attention was really required. The officer declined even this offer which made me uneasy. I then took a decision that under no circumstance would I follow the officer that night. The best I would do was to report at the station as early as would please the police officer the next morning

before the scheduled meeting of Council. I made my resolve clear to the officer who then pulled away from Ejike and I, to make some phone calls, probably to his superiors. On his return he accepted my proposal and we fixed 7 am the next morning.

My sleep that night was not unduly disturbed and I got up at the usual time of 4-4.30am, completed my morning routines, including a 30 minute session with BBC's Network Africa news and left for the SIB at about 6am with my orderly, the indomitable Chibuzor Wordu. Of course before I left, I informed my wife of the events of the previous night and where I was heading for that early in the morning and that I hoped to return before the commencement of Council meeting at 10am.

I arrived at the SIB fifteen minutes early as at that time of the morning, the roads were usually free, and met the same police officer and another gentleman. They were both nice and treated me with courtesy; neither was bellicose or belligerent. Then the interrogation started. How was the university? Fine I replied. Was I in the habit of traveling often? Yes I replied. Then came the most grotesque information I have ever heard in my life as the two men spoke together in an apparently rehearsed manner. They had it on good authority that I was an arms dealer. My frequent trips abroad were for the purposes of purchasing arms which I sold for remarkable profits in the black market. That I was in charge of the secret cult organisations in all Nigerian universities, not just as their Commander-in-Chief, but as a reliable supplier of the arms they used. That I had concluded plans to burn down the Rivers State Government Secretariat as well as Pamo Clinic, the private Hospital of His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, on the previous night.

The whole thing sounded like double Dutch to me as I sat bewildered and in complete consternation, listening to the two gentlemen. Then they stopped suddenly and called for my comments. You would have thought I would buckle or burst into tears from the

shear weight of the accusations before me. But somehow I did not. Rather I was seized and consumed by the power and strength of the innocent and I replied them quite simply :that I did not know anything of what they were talking about. In my life, I had only seen guns during the time I served as a Field Captain in the Nigerian Army during the nation's civil war, in 1969 and 1970 in the 3rd Division of the Nigerian Army, with the then General Olusegun Obasanjo as the General Officer Commanding (GOC) . I was then a medical doctor in the Nigerian Army and I treated wounded soldiers from both sides of the war. The guns I saw then were those that were brought in along with the wounded soldiers when they came for treatment in my surgery, as I was not a combatant. As for burning down His Excellency's hospital and the Rivers State Secretariat building, I did not see why I should do such a horrendous thing to my colleague, who, according to the Hippocratic Oath to which I swore as a doctor, is my brother. Moreover His Excellency, by his performance in office, was making all medical doctors, including me, proud. Burning down the Rivers State Government Buildings would be akin to shooting myself in the foot having been one of those who agitated strongly for the creation of the state, as a medical student, in 1966, in Lagos. I had never met nor made any. contact whatsoever with any secret cult organisation and I was neither their . captain nor their *capone*.

There was a period of silence and then one of them asked me if I suspected anyone who would have written such a petition against the. I replied that there were always such cantankerous human beings in every community who would engage in this type of pastime. They then shook hands with me and asked me to go.

However, I knew that what had happened was a very serious matter which should not be taken lightly at all. I called my wife, the Chairman of Council and the Registrar, in that order, and narrated to them what had happened. On arrival at the campus, I drove straight to the Pro-Chancellor's lodge and he requested that the

matter be tabled before Council which, fortunately, had a scheduled meeting that was to commence in less than one hour.

At Council, everyone was unhappy at what had transpired between the Vice-Chancellor and the police and decided that Council should see His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Rivers State at once to report the incident to him and to plead with him to use his best endeavours to persuade the police to investigate the matter thoroughly. The business of the day was suspended and Council members left to keep the appointment with His Excellency which Council was able to fix at such short notice through the help of one of its members, Professor Augustine Ahiauzu. The Governor too expressed his surprise but indicated that the police usually carried out such checks if the petition they had received bordered on state security. He promised to contact the police.

With that done, Council members returned to the university and deliberated further on the matter as well as taking on some other issues that were on the agenda for the day. It was fortuitous that the heated debate which Council had had on some thorny issues at its last meeting or two were not allowed to colour its position on this important matter. Accordingly, Council reaffirmed its "implicit confidence in the ability and character of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nimi Briggs".

A couple of weeks after Council members had departed, I received another communication from the police, this time a letter inviting me to come and respond formally to the contents of the petition that had been written against me. On the appointed day, as I was about to go into the police office to honour the invitation, my attention was drawn to a publication in that week's Insider Weekly Magazine, a weekly magazine that originates from Lagos, in which my photograph was on the front cover page with the caption Dirty Deals of the VC Uniport. The particular edition was issue no. 23 of 10 June 2002. It was clear the magazine publication had been timed to coincide with my encounter with the police and was designed to maximally embarrass the Vice-Chancellor.

When I got into the room to which I was directed, I met an officer who was helping himself to a good meal of hefty and overripe bananas with some good-looking and well-selected groundnuts while watching the English football league match between two clubs. He welcomed me but pleaded that I should let him finish watching the football match which was almost over. My agreeing to his proposal meant that he was also able to finish his obviously delicious meal of groundnuts and bananas. He then handed over the petition against me for me to study and comment in writing.

The petition was written by one "Preye Ambacks" without an address. It was clear it was hurriedly put together with a number of very weak and badly constructed sentences as well as innumerable spelling errors. The petitioner complained that although I was handsome, the handsomeness was deceitful as I was the *Capone* of secret cult organisations in Nigeria. I was a "gun runner" as I was in the habit of importing guns from Europe and America for sale in Nigeria. Finally, the petitioner alleged that I had concluded arrangements to burn down the Rivers State Secretariat Complex as well as Pamo Clinic which belongs to His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State.

In my write up, I stated that all the allegations were false, reiterating the statements I had made at SIB, this time in writing. A police officer was mandated to follow me to the Vice-Chancellor's lodge to verify my statement. In the end, after the police had concluded all its investigations, it wrote a letter to me confirming that the allegations were "baseless and unsubstantiated".

As for the publication by the Insider *Weekly Magazine*, Council directed that the magazine should be sued by the university as the publication contained many damaging statements on the characters of some officers of the university, especially the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, Professor Ayo Banjo, and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nimi Briggs. This decision was taken only after the university had drawn the attention of the publishers of

the magazine to the deliberate falsehood that was contained in the said publication and demanded an apology. The university even wrote an open letter to the Editor-In-Chief of the magazine in the *Guardian* Newspaper of Wednesday, 31 July, 2002 (page 62). None of these was heeded by the publishers of the magazine.

The Governing Council with Alhaji L. A. K. Jimoh as Chairman

As was reported earlier, this Council came into being in April 2005, when the count down on my administration had commenced; government had taken a full year to reconstitute Council after the expiration of the life of the one which was led by Ayo Banjo. So my interactions with the Council that is led by Alhaji Jimoh were very brief indeed. But still, some of the activities during this short period need to be reported.

First, I was struck by the similarity between Ayo Banjo, the former Chairman, and L. A. K. Jimoh, the current one. Coming from two completely different backgrounds - the one, Banjo, a seasoned academic and the other, Jimoh, an accomplished civil servant - they, none the less, shared the same intense passion for thoroughness and absolute transparency in all that they did. My next observation was on the persons that were appointed into the Governing Council of the university this time around by the federal government. Not only were they fewer in number, on the average, they were much younger.

I held just two meetings with Council which were mainly directed at introducing members to and familiarising them with the operations of the university; a process which I must say, they got the hang of rather quickly.

Like the Ayo Banjo-led Council, the L.A. K. Jimoh-led one was also faced with the issue of having to fill the positions of the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar and this time around, the University

Librarian, right from the time of its inception. I would finish my assignment as Vice-Chancellor on 9 July, 2005, and Dr. Chris Tamuno, the Registrar of the University, shortly thereafter. For although Chris Tamuno was entitled to be considered for reappointment for another five years, in accordance with the terms of her original appointment, she had opted for an early retirement from the services of the university and had indicated her wish not to be considered for reappointment as the Registrar of the University. The University Librarian position had been vacant for some time as earlier efforts that were made to fill the position had been unsuccessful.

Again like the Banjo-led Council, the Jimoh-led one took up the issues one after the other. They concluded work on the recommendations for the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor quite quickly, but government had not acted on Council's recommendations as at the time I left office on 9 July, 2005 and so, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Professor Mark Anikpo, was appointed by Council to act.

Two other matters of importance which occurred during this short period, had to do with the awards of the University's Honorary Degrees to Mr. Thierry Desmarest, the President and Chief Executive Officer of Total and also to Mr. Jeroen van der Veer, the President of Shell International, as part of the University's 21st Convocation Ceremony (Special).

The ceremony for the award of the honorary degree on Mr. Desmarest took place at the *Ecole de Petrole et des Moteurs (IFP School)*, Paris, on Monday, 20 June, 2005, while that of Mr. van der Veer was held at the International Headquarters of Shell at The Hague, on Friday, 8 July, 2005. On both occasions, Alhaji L. A. K. Jimoh, the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council led the university's delegations as the Chancellor had earlier on indicated his inability to attend. The delegations consisted of the Chairman of Council, the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar, the university orator and

representatives of Council and Senate. The two events were very impressive and masterfully conducted. The Nigerian ambassadors to France and the Netherlands graced the occasions: their Excellencies Ambassador Godfrey Preware in Paris and Ambassador Professor Mary Lar at The Hague.

My overall impression is that the jimoh-led Council will also do well. For one thing, it has a good Chairman who is also not completely green to Port Harcourt. I have since learnt that he was a member of the Board of the Eleme Petrochemical Company where he was held in high esteem as he had established a reputation for paying meticulous attention to details. Most good men and women that I know are simple; Alhaji Jimoh's simplicity is disarming. Furthermore, some members of the Banjo-led Council who were elected by Senate are still in Council: Willy Okowa, Bose Okoli and Sam Ibodje. Even the current Vice-Chancellor, Don Baridam was at some time, a member of that Council. This should help with the process of continuity as recall of events should be easier. Happily, they have been joined by the work horse, Bridget Nzimiro, the up and coming Blessing Didia, and the seasoned Levi Amajor. The youthfulness and vibrancy of most of the government appointees should also be an added advantage.

My relationship with the current Chairman, Alhaji Jimoh, has risen to the same level as those with the two previous Chairmen of Council that I have had the wonderful privilege of working with:

Chief Folarin Coker and Professor Ayo Banjo and I thank him for accepting me so readily and at such short encounter. I also thank him and members of Council for upholding the terms of my contract on appointment as Vice-Chancellor that I should proceed on a sabbatical leave at the successful completion of the five-year tenure. He has been in touch with me from time to time while I was in Paris to enquire how I was faring. With the riots that took place in France, especially in the suburbs of Paris - night after night for a fortnight during the month of November 2005, when several cars and

buildings were torched, coupled with the loneliness that was imposed by the winter months - it is not difficult to see why I found those calls reassuring and welcome. I wish him, the Vice-Chancellor, and members of Council, God's speed, as they all work in concert to take the university to loftier heights

SENATE, CONGREGATION AND CONVOCATION

Senate

The decree establishing the University of Port Harcourt (Decree No. 84 of 28th September 1979) provides for Senate, Congregation and Convocation as constituent bodies of the university and defines their composition and functions. The decree charges Senate, amongst others, with the responsibility of organising and controlling teaching in the university, the admission and discipline of students and the promotion of research. The Congregation shall be entitled to express, by resolution or otherwise, its opinion on all matters affecting the interest and welfare of the university. It shall also elect members to Council. Regarding Convocation, the decree states that its function shall be provided for by statute. It shall also appoint a member to Council. The Vice-Chancellor is the "Chief Executive Officer" of the university and in that capacity is the Chairman of Senate, Congregation and Convocation.

Statutorily, regular meetings of Senate were scheduled to hold on the last Wednesday of every month, extraordinary meetings were convened as the need arose. As much as possible the schedule for the regular meetings was kept except when the university was on official break or could not hold such meetings on account of

industrial actions by unions in the institution. In all, Senate held 64 meetings, 34 of which were extraordinary. Most of the meetings were attended and quorum was formed within 30 minutes the scheduled time of commencement of the meetings.

My inaugural address to Senate, this time as Vice-Chancellor (the 5th the university has had) on Wednesday 26 July 2000, took its queue from the one I delivered as acting Vice-Chancellor on the second occasion, on 12 January 2000, as the path for Senate had been cut as it were. I thanked Senate members for their support on the two occasions I had served as acting Vice-Chancellor of the university and reminded them that a greater commitment to the institution was required to enable us tackle the issues before us.

The report of the *Tbink Tank* Panel of the late Chi Ikoku to which reference had been made earlier, threw up a number of issues that needed to be addressed urgently by Senate. The report was critical of the ease with which unqualified persons found their way into the university through dishonest means and got registered as "students", sometimes with the connivance of some staff and also the lack of sufficient commitment which some academic staff exhibited towards their job. The panel was dissatisfied with the late commencement of academic activities (lectures, laboratory work, seminars, among others) by some academic staff, after the commencement of semesters. This situation, the panel observed, resulted in such academic staff not being able to satisfactorily deliver the academic content of the programmes for which they were responsible. There was also the problem of some comprehensive as well as degree examination results not being brought on time to Senate for consideration. The effect of this was that the release of such results was unduly delayed and occasionally the examination results got missing permanently! Furthermore, the panel observed that some lecturers, usually in a veiled manner, compelled students to purchase hand outs or "books" that were prepared or written by them.

Senate deliberated extensively on these matters and shared the" concern of the panel in all respects. It deprecated the action of those staff that colluded with students to perpetuate illegal admissions and condemned those that had such poor attitude to work. Senate observed that the unwholesome actions by a few staff had portrayed the university in bad light before the general public and decided to take immediate steps to stop them. It formed three committees: **The University of Port Harcourt Professional Ethics Committee, the Certificate Verification Committee and the Degree Results Verification Committee.** Senate requested the Vice-Chancellor to appoint suitable persons to serve in the committees and to provide appropriate terms of reference.

Two persons worked on the issues that were to be handled by the University of Port Harcourt Ethics Committee, first Professor Inya Eteng, of the Faculty of Social Sciences and then, Professor Enuvie Akpokoje, of the Faculty of Science. They were given wide ranging terms of reference to examine the issues of late commencement of teaching, sale of hand-outs and "books", as well as delay in the submission of results to Senate. The panels that they headed, conducted university-wide enquiries and submitted comprehensive reports which Senate accepted in essence. They recommended the banning of the sale of hand outs and the compulsion of students to purchase specified "books" by lecturers. Senate set up a panel which was to monitor the commencement of academic activities by departments at the beginning of each semester and "conference marking" of examination papers was recommended to faculties and departments as a means of correcting examination scripts quickly so as to be able to submit results to Senate on time.

To emphasise its seriousness, Senate approved that the Senate meeting that comes up immediately after semester or degree examinations should not hold so as to give academic staff the opportunity to concentrate on the grading of scripts. Rather, an extraordinary meeting of Senate should be called five weeks after

the end of such examinations solely for the purpose of considering results. Senate further decided that academic staff who fail to turn in their examination results for consideration by Senate on time should have their salaries stopped until those results were submitted to Senate. In addition, from the submission of the panels, Senate evolved a document titled *Code of Conduct for Staff and Students*, which contained the code of conduct for teaching staff, the code of conduct for non-teaching staff and the code of conduct for students as well as the overall goal and core values of the University of Port Harcourt. This document was widely circulated.

Professor Jeyisola Kosemani, now late, but then Dean, Faculty of Education, was appointed to chair the Degree Results Verification Committee. As was directed by Senate, all degree examination results were to be submitted, after compilation by departments and faculties, to this Committee which would scrutinise them scrupulously with respect to the accuracy of the degree classification for each successful student in addition to ensuring that each student had met the university's requirements for the award of a degree. Faculties and departments could only bring degree results to Senate after scrutiny by the Kosemani's committee. After Kosemani's death on 23 October 2002, Professor Reginald Ukwije who is also of the Faculty of Education, was appointed to chair that committee and later, the chairmanship changed to Dr Anthony Ibe, the acting Head of the Department of Electrical/Electronics Engineering.

Regarding the Certificate Verification Committee, Dr. T V Otokunefor, a senior lecturer in Microbiology in the Faculty of Science, was appointed to head it even though he, Dr. Otokunefor, was not a member of Senate as it was felt that his character and demeanour were best suited for such a difficult assignment. His Committee meticulously combed all admissions from 1996 (U96) and as of the time I left office, had gone up to the 1999 (U99) set. The committee reported its findings regularly to Senate for Consideration.

It is to Senate's credit that it took the decisions on these matters seriously and acted with firmness and resolve on the recommendations of the committees it had set up. The university benefited immensely from this bold stand of Senate despite all the pressures to alter its position.

Most lecturers complied with Senate's directives on these important decisions on academic issues even though students were not in the habit of resuming on schedule after vacation. For instance, on account of the activities of the Ethics Committee, lectures had commenced within the first two weeks of the beginning of every semester in all programmes that were offered by the university by 2004 as opposed to the average time of seven weeks that was the case before the setting up of the committee. Again by 2004, virtually all university examination results were published five weeks after the end of the examinations and the incidence of "missing results" had fallen drastically. Not only was this action very much appreciated by the students, it also cut down on the incidence of various forms of examination malpractices, including "sorting", and eventually enabled the university to be in the enviable position of being able to release certificates to graduates shortly after Convocation!

The Ethics Committee also identified and indicted some staff for aiding and abating various forms of malpractices by students. Two people, who were non-academic staff, were eventually found guilty and appropriately disciplined. The case against a third person, an academic staff, was being investigated when he suddenly died.

The scrutiny by the Degree Results Verification Committee meant that there were fewer errors and incorrect entries in the list of graduating students as contained in the Convocation Booklets. As for the Certificate Verification Committee, its activities were the most dreaded by students as it was incredibly thorough in its operations. By the time I left office, it had recommended to Senate, and Senate had de-registered, a total of 6,719 "students" who had got into the university through the back door. Of these, 746 were

from the U96 set, 1,916 from the U97 set, 2,200 from the U98 set and 1,857 from the U99 set. Since those who were so de-registered were given the right of appeal to Senate should they consider Senate's decision as being unjust, a handful did, leading to the reconsideration of valid cases. But the vast majority of those affected accepted Senate's position as being correct. A good number of them wrote to the "Vice-Chancellor confessing their actions and while commending his courage as well as Senate's steadfastness, pleaded that Senate should temper justice with mercy. They blamed some staff of the university, academic as well as non-academic, who had deceived them, usually for a fee, into believing that admission malpractice was an easy and certain way of gaining admission into the university. Rather unfortunately, they refused to mention the names of the staff that had so deceived them. None of them wrote anonymous letters of threat or made bogus telephone calls to the Vice-Chancellor wishing him ill. However, about ten persons whose appeals were turned down by Senate have headed for the courts. Their cases are still in court; it is expected that the university would defend its actions vigorously.

Some other related matters which occupied Senate's attention during the period had to do with the inability of some university programmes to attract sufficient number of students and the issue of students who were unable to conclude their courses of studies within the periods that were prescribed in the university's Statement of Academic Policies - six years for a four year degree programme and seven for a five year programme.

Over the years, Senate had observed, with dismay, the reluctance of students to apply to study certain subjects/programmes in the university. These included the core science subjects of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Botany; History in the Humanities; Geography in the Social Sciences; and all the programmes in the Faculty of Education. Whereas a lot of these courses were drastically undersubscribed by students, some others, especially the

Professional Programmes of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery), (MB BS) in the College of Health Sciences, Accounting in Management Sciences, the programmes in the Faculty of Engineering but especially, Electrical/Electronics Engineering and Geology in the Faculty of Science, were bursting at the seams with applicants. Senate discovered that a good number of the students who opted to study Anatomy or Physiology at the College of Health Sciences did so because they were of the opinion that they would eventually gain access to the MB BS programme through any course that was offered at the College of Health Sciences. Senate observed that this unfortunate trend was global in nature as some universities have been known to shut down some departments due to insufficient number of students.

Table 3.1: Repackaged Programmes in the University

OLD PROGRAMME	NEW PROGRAMME
History	History and Diplomatic Studies
Geography	Geography and Environmental Management
Botany	Plant Science and Biotechnology
Zoology	Animal and Environmental Biology
Linguistics	Linguistic and Communication
Religion	Religious and Cultural Studies
Physical and Health Education	Human Kinetics and Health Education

It was therefore not limited to the University of Port Harcourt. However, Senate decided to repackage some of the programmes in

the university, at undergraduate and graduate levels, that suffered this fate by improving their course contents and altering their names. the expectation was that the action would highlight tile potentials for prospective employment and job opportunities in the programmes that were so enhanced. Some of tile programmes and courses which were affected by this repacking exercise are as indicated in Table 3.1, on the previous page.

Senate also approved the change of names of some programmes in the Faculty of Engineering. But these changes were not occasioned by the dearth of prospective students. They were necessitated by the additional courses which Were taught within those programmes. Petroleum Engineering had commenced a degree course in Gas Engineering during the 2001/2002 academic year and so the department became known as Department of Petroleum and Gas Engineering. In the same vein, Civil Engineering, during the same academic year, had added on a degree course in Environmental Engineering. Accordingly, the department became known as Department of Civil Environmental Engineering.

A little more probably needs to be said about the Gas Engineering and Environmental Engineering Programmes which were established by Senate.

Ever since the discovery of petroleum crude oil in commercial quantities in Oloibiri - in the then Eastern Nigeria and present day Bayelsa State - in 1957, contributions from tile sale of oil and its associated products to the country's total foreign exchange earnings - with which the nation pays for its goods and services at home and abroad - has increased exponentially. In the past twenty years, proceeds from the sale of this natural resource has provided more than 90% of Nigeria's earnings thus making the economy of the country one that is virtually based on a single commodity. Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States together account for 75% of oil production and over 50% of gross government revenue. Since 1958, Nigeria has earned over 350 United States billion dollars

from this valuable resource (Commission For Africa Report, 2006). Although the country is striving hard to diversify its economic base especially through agriculture, tourism and manufacturing, it is unlikely that the situation will change appreciably in the near future.

Nigeria's current proven petroleum reserves stand at 33 billion barrels (bbls) of oil and 159 trillion standard cubic feet (tscf) of gas. Nigeria ranks as having the 6th largest oil reserves and the 9th largest gas reserves in the world. Nigeria's production capacity stands at about 2.5 million barrels of oil per day (bopd). The country plans to grow its petroleum reserves to 40 billion bbls of oil and about 200 tscf of gas and produce 4 million bopd by the year 2010. In establishing the degree programme in Gas Engineering at the undergraduate level therefore - which incidentally, was the first of such programmes to be established in the country, if not in the whole of West Africa - the Senate of the university, was putting in place, an important complement to petroleum engineering. Additionally, it was investing directly in the future development of the country by reacting in a proactive manner to the future manpower needs of the entire hydrocarbon industry. As for the programme in Environmental Engineering, its importance is underscored by the pride of place that is given to environmental issues not just in the Niger Delta region, the seat of the hydrocarbon industry in Nigeria, but also, globally.

Furthermore, and in keeping with the desire of Senate for the University of Port Harcourt to make an impact in all aspects of teaching and research in the subject matter of petroleum and gas, Senate approved the establishment of a Petroleum Museum which was charged with the responsibility of preserving and studying all objects of historical, artistic and scientific interest in the petroleum industry. The museum is to be fashioned after the Medical Museum at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, which the Vice-Chancellor had the privilege of visiting sometime in 2004 along with some other senior staff of the university.

Many other changes were effected by Senate in the academic composition and structure of the university. First, the College of Health Sciences.

Even at the time in 1980 that Senate approved the instrument for the establishment of a College of Health Sciences, it was envisaged that the College would consist of at least two faculties:

Basic Medical and Clinical Sciences. But this had not happened and the College, though labelled as such, had functioned essentially, as a single faculty. Senate took steps to correct this anomaly and formally established the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences and that of Clinical Sciences within the College in 2002. Professors Reginald Nwankwoala and Felicia Eke were elected Foundation Deans respectively. Senate's action was predicated on its desire to expand the opportunity for growth within the College so as to enable its staff to have better access to facilities that would enable them to maximize their professional and academic potentials.

In some related incidence, Senate approved the establishment of programmes that are allied to Medicine or were to be lodged within the College of Health Sciences. A department of Nursing was approved as part of the Faculty of Clinical Sciences, while a Faculty of Dentistry was established to be the third faculty in the College of Health Sciences. The university was fortunate in securing the services of Professor Frank Okoisor, formerly of the University of Lagos, a consultant to the World Health Organisation (WHO), to serve as the Foundation Dean of the Faculty. A Faculty of Pharmacy Was also established to run a D. Pharm. degree programme in Pharmacy. But the faculty was not to be part of the College of Health Sciences; it is to function as a separate faculty. Once again, the university was lucky in persuading Professor Oleka Udeala, a former, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, a serious-minded academic and a Pharmacist, to accept to shepherd the new faculty as its Foundation Dean.

Furthermore, Senate reviewed the MB BS curriculum in 2002 and approved an amendment to the effect that candidates who failed

at the part three examination (Obstetrics and Gynaecology and Paediatrics and Child Health) should no longer be required to withdraw from the MB BS programme. Senate also approved the establishment of a Malaria Research Laboratory at the College which was to be funded by the WHO and was to be run in collaboration with the University of Ibadan. Now to other university-wide issues.

Just as it did in the College of Health Sciences, Senate approved a number of other academic structures within the university. These included the Institute of Maternal and Child Health, the Centre for Ethnic and Conflict Studies (CENTECS), the Regional Centre for Bio-resources and Biotechnological Research, and the Distant Learning for Migrant Fishermen. It also approved a Memorandum of Understanding between the University and the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN) which would enable holders of the B.Sc degree in Finance and Banking of the university, to become Associates of the Institute, save that such persons would need to sit for and pass the Institute's examinations in Law relating to Banking, International Finance, and Practice of Banking.

The Institute of Maternal and Child Health was established to tackle the high maternal and perinatal deaths that are prevalent not just in Rivers State, where the university is situated, but also in the Niger Delta as well as the rest of the country. Its brief is to identify the causes of these deaths and how the university could impact the community with the aim of reducing the deaths. Professor Raphael Oruamabo, a Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health at the College of Health Sciences, and a committed academic, was appointed the Director of the Institute.

CENTECS is to address the issue of conflicts which had soared in the oil bearing parts of the country, including the Rivers State where the University of Port Harcourt is located. It is to explore diverse ways of conflict resolution so as to prevent armed conflicts on terms that would be equitable to all concerned. Professor Mark Anikpo of the Faculty of Social Sciences, an academic who takes his responsibilities seriously, was appointed Director of the Centre.

The Regional Centre for Bio-resources and Biotechnological Research was to study the rich flora and fauna in the university and from there expand its studies to the neighbourhood. Professor Bose Okoli, Professor of Genetics of the Faculty of Science, a diligent worker, was appointed its Director.

The Distant Learning for Migrant Fishermen is designed to be the counterpart of the Nomadic Education Scheme that operates in the northern parts of the country. In collaboration with the electronic media in Rivers State and environs, the programme is to produce educational materials and also to broadcast information to migrant fishermen using dedicated periods and frequencies. The idea is that the migratory workers, be they nomads or fishermen, should not lose out on basic education. Professor Benjamin Eheazu, one of the pillars of Education in Nigeria, was appointed the Director of the Centre.

These four outfits were established by the university to extend the reach of the institution to the community, the aim being to impact on the community positively through the medium of research and community based activities. Senate mandated the four bodies to reach out to and collaborate with similar organisations within and outside the country so as to make the impact of their activities felt at all levels especially at the national level.

Yet another important organ which was established by Senate during the five years that I served as its Chairman, was the Institute of Petroleum Studies (IPS), the concept of which arose during discussions within the ambit of the Friends of the University of Port Harcourt (see later). The Institute was established through the Joint Venture Partnership between the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and Total, then Total Fina Elf, as an expression of the Sustainable Development Policy of the later, through educational activities. Its mission is to meet the needs of the petroleum industry through a commitment to excellence in training, applied research, continuing education and capacity building. In its

academic structure as approved by Senate, the IPS operates independently, outside the university's Graduate School system but under the supervision of Senate. It collaborates very closely with IFP School Paris, from the point of selection of students, through curriculum formulation, delivery of lectures and right up to the conduct of degree examinations. This close collaboration enables the University of Port Harcourt and the IFP School Paris, to award the Institute's degree jointly, to successful candidates from the Institute.

Two bodies superintend over the affairs of the IPS: a Board of Trustees and a Governing Board. The Board of Trustees is chaired by the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council of the University of Port Harcourt. The Vice-Chancellor of the University, the Dean of the IFP School in Paris as well as representatives of industries, are also members. The Governing Board on the other hand, is chaired by Chief Emmanuel Chiejina, the Deputy Managing Director of Total Fina Elf. Representatives of the University of Port Harcourt as well as those from the IFP School Paris, also serve on the Governing Board. A Professor of Petroleum Engineering, Professor Joseph Ajenka, one of the finest gentlemen in the University of Port Harcourt, is the Director of the Institute.

The essence of the establishment of these academic and professional structures and programmes by Senate was, among others, to enhance the contribution of the university to sustainable national development and to diversify and uplift the level of academic activities in the university, while at the same time striving for excellence in a number of programmes.

In allowing students whose CGPA fell below the continuation CGPA of 1.0 to change their programmes, Senate sought to reduce wastage among weak students. But there was still the problem of a large number of students who had not been able to complete their programmes within the times that were stipulated in the Statement of Academic Policies and Programmes. Such students had become

a difficult group to deal with not only from their large numbers but also with respect to the ease with which they got into trouble and moved in and out of various programmes in the University. After lengthy debates at several meetings, Senate finally took a number of decisions on how the cases of such students should be handled, bearing in mind the times at which they had abandoned their programmes. Among the decisions that Senate took was that such students should not graduate, but they were to be given their academic transcripts. However, students who pursued their normal programmes but who were unable to pass all their carry-over courses at the end of the sixth or seventh year, should pass out or fail out depending on their cumulative grade point average (CGPA).

Congregation

Scheduled meetings, of Congregation were usually three each year but the meetings occasionally suffered disruptions as was explained in the case of Senate. Generally, Congregation meetings were poorly attended, especially by academic staff, and forming the quorum of fifty was often difficult. The only exceptions were the Congregation meetings that were called for the purposes of electing members into Council. In all, seven meetings of Congregation were held of which five were extraordinary. A register of attendance and minutes of proceedings were kept in compliance with the recommendation of the Visitation Panel to the University in 1999.

Most discussions at Congregation centred around security on campus, utilities and the issue of good neighbourliness. Congregation meetings were often convened whenever there was a serious breach of security - especially those that involved loss of lives - for general information and for recommendation on how to prevent future occurrences. The issue of motorbikes plying the campus in an unrestricted manner particularly at nights and the case of persons of dubious character, who were harboured in the service quarters

of some staff, were often discussed. Congregation supported management's decision to ban motorbikes from plying within the university campus as they were used as quick get-away vehicles by those who committed crimes.

Not infrequently, problems arose among staff that lived in campus accommodation on domestic issues; such matters were brought up at Congregation for discussion. One such matter that occupied the attention of Congregation for some time was the nuisance which was created by those rearing birds and animals within their premises for commercial purposes. These birds and animals strayed into other premises and fouled the environment. There was also the issue of some health hazards arising from large flock of birds and animals living so close to humans. Congregation set up a committee to examine the matter which in its submission, recommended that the university should ban the rearing of birds and animals within the campus for commercial purposes and that those still found in the campus after a given date should be destroyed. But the administration found it difficult to embark on a slaughtering spree of goats and chicken as some persons refused to comply. Rather, it relied on persuasion which, am afraid, did not work satisfactorily. I was fortunate that at that time, the prospect of bird flu disease arising from such close contacts with birds, which is currently occupying the attention of the global community, had not arisen.

At some other time, Congregation was very displeased with staff that put up new structures within their premises, sometimes with bricks and mortar, and often for commercial purposes, without clearance from the university. Such illegal structures not only destroyed the aesthetics of the university, but also posed a danger to others. The decision was taken that such structures should be demolished. However, not having university bulldozers, the administration found it rather odd to hire such heavy equipment from outside for the purposes of bulldozing structures in staff premises. So, once again, we had not acted on this as of the time I

left office. One only wished people had done the right thing and not placed others in the invidious position of having to carry out such objectionable actions that were sure to bring negative publicity to the university.

Convocation

It was rather unfortunate that Convocation, a body for which statutory provision was made in the decree that established the university as far back as 1979, had not started functioning even as late as July 2005, when I left office. The problem had been with the section of the decree which stipulates the payment of a fee as a precondition for the membership of Convocation. For up till the time I left office, only the Principal Officers and a handful of others accepted and had made such payment even though the administration had raised the issue repeatedly at Senate and Congregation. Fortunately, the matter now appears to be receiving better consideration as Congregation itself had given support to the plea by the administration. It decided that the sum of money payable for membership of Convocation should be five thousand naira only and it urged academic as well as non-academic staff to pay and to register for Convocation. It is my expectation that this plea will be heeded and that Convocation would be functional in the near future.

As would be expected, the "Preye Ambacks" saga was also reported to Senate and Congregation by the Vice-Chancellor and as was with Council, both bodies were outraged by the allegation. They urged the police to carry out a thorough investigation to identify who was behind such heinous accusations just as they reaffirmed their implicit confidence in the person, character and ability of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nimi Briggs.

The proper functioning of the statutory bodies of a university is crucial for the well-being of that institution. The Governing Council,

the Senate, and to some extent, the Congregation, adjudicate on issues that constitute the very essence of a university: general governance, finance, academics, learning, research. The extent, to which these issues are threatened and compromised, through inept leadership, misappropriation, irregular admissions, irresponsible student behaviour, fraudulent acquisition of degrees, indolent and unproductive staff, among others, is the extent to which the very existence of the university is also threatened and compromised. I am glad I had a good Council, Senate and Congregation.

ACADEMIC MATTERS

Since the major responsibility of Senate is the supervision of the academic activities of the university, a good portion of the story on academic matters has already been told in the section that dealt with) Senate. However, a number of interesting issues still remain which will now be reported upon.

In 1999, the Federal Government, through the NUC carried out an accreditation exercise of programmes and courses that were taught in various Nigerian universities. The purpose of the accreditation was to discover how the programmes and courses met the minimum standards and criteria that were set by government for academic programmes in Nigerian universities. At the end of the exercise, programmes/ courses were fully accredited, accredited in the interim, or denied accreditation. The results which were published in 2001 Were as follows for the University of Port Harcourt: nine of the programmes/ courses that were offered by the University received full accreditation, twenty-three were accredited in the interim while eleven were denied accreditation. The programmes/courses that were denied accreditation were to remedy the deficiencies that were identified satisfactorily within one year or were to stop admitting Students into those programmes/courses.

Senate deliberated on the report and decided to take urgent remedial actions on those programmes/ courses that were denied accreditation. Recruitment of qualified academic staff into those departments where unacceptable shortages existed, and some improvement in teaching facilities, which were the two main issues that the NUC team expressed grave concern about, were undertaken.

The NUC repeated the accreditation exercise in November 2002 and for the University of Port Harcourt, the reappraisal was limited to the eleven programmes/courses that were denied accreditation in 1999. The results of this reassessment exercise was published in July 2003. Of the eleven programmes/ courses, eight received full accreditation while three were accredited in the interim. By this performance, the University of Port Harcourt moved from its position of 25th in the ranking of the 36 Federal and State Government owned universities in the country in 1999, to a new position of **number one**, along with the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.

This spectacular result gave further impetus to the other efforts of the administration which were designed to enhance academic activities in the university. It was felt that the university should strive to admit the right calibre of students. Students who were prepared to falsify their records and cheat in other ways in order to gain admission into the university were unlikely to be good students. There was a need to streamline the admission process while those admitted should be made to understand that university education is a privilege which should be jealously guarded.

The administration resolved that admission of students shall be only through the body that is approved by the Senate of the university to carry out that function, that is, the Committee of Provost and Deans. The Vice-Chancellor on his own decided not to bring in cases for admission except with the express approval of the committee, a decision which was greatly appreciated by members of the committee. Matriculation, at which fresh students affirmed

their commitment to learning and their loyalty to the university, was to be made a more formal event in which students were to sign a Matriculation Register. The practice by which the university went round various institutions of higher education in and around Rivers State, a night or two before matriculation in order to hire academic gowns for matriculations, was discontinued as the university replenished its own stock through the purchase of about three thousand gowns. Similarly, the habit of students going round tailors' shops in and around Choba town and hiring all manner of cloths in the name of academic gowns was disallowed. Rather, students were encouraged to purchase university academic gowns for lifetime use and where this was not possible due to financial constraints, to hire them for use at the matriculation. Furthermore, registration of students by manually entering their records into various documents was discontinued as it was cumbersome, time consuming and prone to errors. It was replaced by an on-line registration system in which the students carried out their own registration by themselves from any part of the globe. Although this on-line registration system had not been perfected as of the time I concluded my tenure, it was functioning reasonably well.

Convocation as an important annual university event was also taken seriously. And in order to make the joy of convoking students fuller, the administration decided to explore the possibility of issuing certificates to graduands shortly after Convocation ceremonies. To do this, there was a need to clear a backlog of unsigned certificates which had accumulated over the years and also to keep pace with fresh ones as they were scripted by the registry. Accordingly, between 1 January 2000 and 30 June 2005, when the last count was taken, the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar - the two signatories to the university's certificates - had signed a total of 48,055 certificates! Of these: 3,098 were diplomas and Undergraduate certificates; 14,548 were first degrees in the Liberal Arts; 26,212 first degrees in the Sciences; 491 were Post Graduate

Diplomas; 3,537 were Master's Degrees and 169 were Doctorate Degrees. It thus became possible that from the Convocation of the year 2003, convoking students received their certificates shortly after the Convocation ceremony.

Furthermore, the administration reorganised the academic office of the university, arming it with stronger and more efficient hands. This made the process of obtaining academic transcripts by students a less harrowing experience. Obtaining their degree certificates and academic transcripts in the manner that has been described, and with such relative ease, made things better for those who were in the employment market as well as those who wished to embark on postgraduate work in other universities. Students and alumni lauded the administration greatly for these actions.

Delivery of Public Lectures and the mounting of public exhibitions were other ways by which tile academic tone of tile university was nudged upwards. Of these, the Professorial Inaugural Lecture at which an academic staff of the rank of Professor delivers a lecture on a topic of his choice, before tile university community and tile general public, is, without doubt, the most formidable. In the lecture, the candidate makes an exposition of what he professes as well as his accumulated body of knowledge over the years. Professorial Inaugural Lectures serve as a launch pad for new professors to join a University's Ivy League of Professors and they constitute an important academic culture of many distinguished universities.

The delivery of these lectures was a feature of the University of Port Harcourt right from its inception. Ebiegberi Alagoa, Professor of History and then Deputy Vice-Chancellor, delivered the first in tile university's series, in 1979, titled *The Python's Eye: the Past in the living Present*. But for some time, the number of persons who were willing to deliver these lectures' had dwindled. Not even the compilation of an agreed roster solved tile problem as some persons reneged and gave one excuse or another close to the time of the

lecture. It was clear the whole process was facing a threat which had to be stemmed. The administration took up the matter as a serious issue and made very strong appeals to the professors who had not delivered their inaugural lectures to do so. Fortunately, a number of them accepted and so, set the ball rolling. Soon a bandwagon effect was established and most of those that had not taken advantage of the opportunity came to show a strong desire to deliver their lectures. So it was that a total of seventeen Professorial Inaugural Lectures (two when I was acting) were delivered during the period; the largest number when compared with other corresponding periods. This exhilarating academic culture now appears firmly established in the University of Port Harcourt and it is unlikely that the institution will ever again suffer a shortage of persons who are qualified and willing to deliver Inaugural Lectures.

An aspect of inaugural lectures at the University of Port Harcourt that bears recounting is the social events that follow a lecture. First there is a cocktail party which is organised by the university at the Vice-Chancellor's office quadrangle. Attendance at this cocktail party is usually impressive and on occasions heavier than the attendance at the lecture itself! The atmosphere is very relaxed as many mix freely with one another and hold informal chats with the lecturer and members of his immediate and extended family, who are often present at the lecture. The Vice-Chancellor's address is usually light-hearted in keeping with the cheery atmosphere. Then follows an open house event which is declared by the lecturer, at which persons of all cadres troop to the lecturer's home in droves for lavish entertainment and merrymaking. This joyous occasion, not infrequently, extends to the early hours of the next morning and has become an integral part of inaugural lectures at the institution. Inaugural lectures at the University of Port Harcourt do not therefore only serve an academic function. They also provide a platform for social interaction and integration by all sections of the university

community, an action which no doubt reduces tension, curbs interpersonal animosities and helps to cement the cohesion and brotherhood that is critical in a community of scholars. As for the inaugural lecturer who provides the environment for the social interaction, the convention in the university is that his name is included in the unwritten list of the "conclave of elders" of the institution, at the "successful completion of the ceremonies" of his inaugural lecture. It is doubtful if there are many universities that have succeeded in evolving such a rich culture with respect to their inaugural lectures.

In a related matter, in 2002, the College of Health Sciences established a formal biennial lecture in honour of the late Professor Theodore Francis-Okirigi, the foundation Provost of the College, foundation Chief Medical Director of the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital and the foundation Professor of Medicine at the university. The first lecture titled *Guarding the Well-Spring of Life* was delivered on Tuesday 13 August 2002 by Professor Ayodele Falase, a Professor of Medicine and the then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, while Olorogun Dr. Sonny Kuku, joint Chairman of Eko Hospital Plc. and the then President of the West African College of Physicians, delivered the next in the series. Dr. Kuku's lecture was titled *Continuing Professional Education and Development - a Sine Qua Non*.

Apart from the public lectures that were delivered by staff of the university, individuals of good standing also delivered lectures in the university either by invitation or by arrangement through various organisations. Such lectures were always organised as part of the annual Convocation ceremonies and for this, the university invited notable persons who used the opportunity to address issues of national importance. Dr. Abel Guobadia, then the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), espoused the importance of properly-run elections in institutionalising democracy. Dr. Magnus Kpakol, then Chief Economic Adviser to Mr. President,

in developing the theme of global trend, innovation and economic development in Nigeria, used economic indices to show Nigerians that the national economy was improving. He affirmed that the economic policies of the present government with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as President, were working. In her own case, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, the then Honourable Minister of Finance, focused on the contributions that are expected of ordinary Nigerians by the present administration in its pursuit of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS). She addressed the issue of honesty and implored Nigerians to abhor corrupt practices in all their dealings. As for Dr. Edmund Daukoru, the then Special Adviser to Mr. President on Petroleum matters, his lecture was centred on the place of natural gas in the future development of Nigeria.

Two more lectures in the series deserve a mention: the one by Professor Mamood Mandani and the other by Professor Gabriel Oyibo.

Professor Mamood Mandani, a scholar with a tremendous international reputation, was formerly of the University of Dar-es-salam, where he had met the late Professor Claude Ake, who was one of the founding fathers of the University of Port Harcourt. His lecture titled *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* was delivered at the university at the instance of the institution's Muslim community, on 10 June 2004. Professor Mandani indicated that his presence at the University of Port Harcourt was partly to show respect to the late Professor Claude Ake, a man for whom he had great adoration and admiration. Professor Gabriel Oyibo, on the other hand, is a Nigerian who is resident in the United States of America and who had been nominated three times for the Noble Prize. Professor Oyibo was invited to Nigeria at the instance of the NUC for a lecture tour of a number of universities, including the University of Port Harcourt. His lecture titled *Theory of Everthing: $GIJ, J=0$, The God Almighty Grand Unifying Theory: GAGUT* was delivered at the University of Port Harcourt on 13 December, 2004.

As for the use of exhibitions as a means of promoting academic interactions, commendation must be given to the Department of Fine Arts and Designs of the Faculty of Humanities, for being in the fore front of this practical way of communication. Not only did the department mount exhibitions of Fine Arts, Ceramics and Textiles, arising from the works of its students and staff at all convocation ceremonies, it also mounted two special exhibitions which attracted participants from all over the country, in 2002 and 2004. The one on 5 November 2002, which was christened Blossom 2002, was in collaboration with the National Gallery of Arts, while that on 22 September 2004, was under the auspices of the Nigerian Association of Female Artists. Both events were magnificent, colourful, educative and well-attended.

Since academics constitute the *raison d'etre* of a university, all efforts must be made to accord it the highest priority in the scheme of things. In reacting with such determination and doggedness on academic issues, as we did, the administration was of the view that getting the academics of the institution right was an inescapable prelude to getting other things right. It would appear that subsequent events in the university vindicated this stand of the administration.

SECRET CULTS

So far, writing this book has been an exercise that has given me tremendous pleasure. But as I commence on the current chapter, I do so with sadness and with a heavy heart as I have to indicate the deaths and expulsion of students as a result of totally avoidable and unprofitable actions. However, in the end I regain some of my delight, as I report, with joy, that the situation has vastly improved at the University of Port Harcourt and that the institution has almost completely surmounted the monster called cultism in all its grotesque manifestations.

One will neither be drawn on the origin of secret cult activities in Nigerian Universities nor indeed what constitutes a cult group. In every human community there are bound to be nonconformists with eccentric characters whose actions, behaviour and beliefs fall well outside the main stream of acceptable societal norms. So long as such persons practice whatever calling it is that engages them, peacefully, lawfully and with due deference to the rights of others, they should constitute no problem to anybody. It is largely immaterial if these actions and beliefs are held for selfish or altruistic reasons. Indeed it could be argued that universities, by their very nature of not stifling dissent, are meant to be protective of such persons and to offer them a voice. But no rational being would equate this liberal

and accommodating leaning of universities to an open invitation to ruthless violence involving murder, hooliganism, barbarism, rape, stealing, blood-letting and the other atrocious actions by which the cult groups have come to be identified. It is these obnoxious actions that set secret cult groups apart from all others, as a group fit only for extirpation.

The distribution and ferocity of action of secret cult groups in Nigerian universities is skewed. They constitute a greater menace in the universities in Southern Nigeria and more specifically, in the institutions that are located in those parts of the south that served as theatres of the Nigerian civil war - essentially the whole of the former Eastern and Mid-West Regions of the country. This has led some to opine that the phenomenon of secret cult in Nigeria emanated as a throwback from the social upheavals that were associated with the civil war of the late 1960s when violence, as a means of survival, took centre-stage and civilised, orderly behaviour was jettisoned. But it must be stated that universities in the former Western Nigeria, including Lagos, are also hotspots for this malady.

On the whole, secret cult activities have done incalculable harm to Nigerian Universities. From the mayhem, death and destruction they cause to the apprehension, fear and state of insecurity they impose on campuses, the phenomenon has wrecked the lives of many a student and forced families to seek more conducive environments for the education of their children outside the country.

Their Activities

Sociology books are replete with information on the number and complexities of secret cult groups that operate in Nigerian Universities. In his book, *Dark Days in our Universities: the issue of Cultism and Secret Cults (A Sociological Evaluation)* which was published in 1999, Ikenna Nzimiro, a renowned sociologist, put their number at 43. But I understand that about ten of these were active at the

University of Port Harcourt of which, the *Vikings*, the *Black Axe*, the *Buccaneers Pirates and Eiy*e Confraternities, were the most cited, although some of them have argued that they are not secret cult organisations. There were also *Daughters of Jezebel* and *Black Brassier* which were said to be exclusively for females.

Security reports that reached us indicated that orientation time for fresh students was recruitment time for the cult groups as they shopped around and lured the ignorant and unsuspecting new students with invitation to spurious parties, unsolicited friendships,

Trojan gifts and outright intimidations. Once "captured", the would-be cultists were initiated at a most grotesque and revolting ceremony where extremely obscene and disgusting activities, which sometimes involved flogging, cutting up parts of the body, eating of fire and the consumption of human blood were carried out. These actions were carried out usually at the darkest hour of the night, and with an incredible element of surprise. The venues for these gory events were also as unconventional as the practices - in bushes, behind laboratories, and even cemeteries! So consuming was the horror and fright that was imposed by the entire monstrous exercise that the eaglet cultists became condemned to an existence of servitude and utter secrecy, ensnared in a life of crime. With time, they too matured to initiate others and inflict on them, the same devastating trauma, thus propagating the vicious circle of satanic brutality and Sworn concealment.

The targets of most cult activities were often persons in rival cult groups. The issues at stake were usually, vying for supremacy in the campus, the disruption of university examinations or some as feeble as assisting a fellow cultist to secure the love and affection of one of the opposite sex. Sometimes cultists attacked those they perceived as being in their way and who prevented them from having a free reign on campus. The frequent attacks of cultists on members of the Man O War fall into this category. Other than intimidating and terrorising their victims, the weapons used by cultists to effect

their devilish acts included acid, charms, machetes, axes, daggers and guns. Robbery of all descriptions, extortion of money at gunpoint, stealing of cell phones, car theft and organised gang-inspired armed robbery, were the regular events that brought in the cash that was required to oil the machinery of cult operations.

Their Triumph

The main desire of campus cult groups was the disruption of normal university activities. They did so through several avenues like causing a scare at lectures and examinations, and openly confronting one another with firearms in and around the university campus. In the pandemonium that ensues, people abandon whatever legitimate actions they are invoked in at the material time and flee in various directions. This confusion would then facilitate the exact scenario which the cultists require for their orgy of stealing and destruction. Occasionally, cultists hijacked legitimate protests by students and other groups and imposed on them the arson and destruction that constituted their hallmark. Student Union Week was a particularly dangerous time as cultists were in the habit of disguising as student union personnel and invading the city of Port Harcourt ransacking markets, shops and petrol stations.

But all this paled into relative insignificance when one considered the loss of lives that was occasioned by cult activities at the university. Not only did the cult boys themselves die from inter and intra cult clashes, but, sadly, the deaths also involved innocent persons who had nothing to do with the cult groups.

On 15 March 2000, a few days to the Convocation ceremony of that year, we got information to the effect that a student of the university had been killed at a restaurant in Choba following a skirmish that arose among some persons at a drinking party. On further enquiry, we gathered that most of the persons at the party were members of the *Vikings* Confraternity and that the student

that was killed was one of those who had responded to an earlier call by the university for cultists to openly renounce their membership.

In 2001, there were probably as many as Six cult related killings.

In April of that year, a problem between members of the *Viking* and the *Black Axe* at a drinking party in a "joint" in Choba at about 2:am, resulted in the death of one student, who we gathered, was a member of the *Viking*. In August of the same year, another clash

between the rival groups in front of Aminu Kano Hall in Choba Park resulted in the demise of two students, who were members of the *Viking*, as we were made to understand. November saw the death of three students, all from the *Viking* group, from inter cult squabbles between the *Viking* and the *Black Axe*.

In 2002, we reckoned there were three deaths from cult related activities: two in January and one in March. Again our information was that they were all from the *Viking* group and that the deaths occurred as a result of disagreements at drinking parties.

Deaths from these nefarious activities in 2003 were probably three. One, we were made to understand, was a retaliatory attack on members of the *Vikings* by the *Black Axe*. It was said that earlier in the week, the Vikings boys had participated in the killing of three students at the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Nkpolu, who belonged to the *Black Axe* Confraternity. One of the other deaths involved one *Monday Wite* who was employed by the university as a driver. Mr. Wite, a driver of one of the university's ambulances, was on duty on that fateful day at the Health Centre of the university when he was killed by the cultists, apparently, in error, as they must have mistaken him for someone belonging to the *Black Ax'e* group.

By 2004 when the university was feeling that the concerted efforts it had made, with the help of all sections of the community to eradicate cult groups was bearing fruit, the institution was struck by the greatest horror of all. On 11 June 200, when comprehensive

university examinations were going on, cult boys scaled tile perimeter, wall at Choba Park at about 12 midday and murdered two students of the university, *Emeka Amekwe and Othuke Erunufe*, who belonged to the Man O War organisation, in their hostel. Although the gloom and despair that this singular dare devil and horrific incidence cast on the university and especially on me, the institution's chief executive, was beyond description, the Chief Security Officer, along with some members of the Mao O War acted with incredible speed and combed the bush behind the perimeter fence wall through which the hooligans had gained access to the university premises. Their effort was richly rewarded as they apprehended two of the cult members whom they brought to the Delta Park of the university! It was with great difficulty that the Vice-Chancellor and the Commissioner of Police, Rivers State Command, who had arrived at tile campus on receiving news of the horrible incident, were able to prevent students from lynching the two cultists who had been apprehended. Students abandoned their examination halls and surged in large numbers, demanding to be allowed to kill the two cultists in the glare of everybody whom they easily identified, as ironically the cultists prayed for their lives to be spared. Fortunately, the students eventually agreed with the Vice-Chancellor that the cultists be handed over to the Police for appropriate action. That sad event was a watershed and it marked a turning point in cult activities at the University of Port Harcourt as there has been profound peace in the campus since that day.

Their Defeat

It will be totally incorrect to ascribe the peace which the University of Port Harcourt has enjoyed from sometime in 2004 up till July 2005 when I concluded my assignment as the Vice-Chancellor of the university and which I understand is still continuing, to efforts by my administration alone. Indeed it could be argued that previous

Administrations especially the one that was led by Professor Kelsey Harrison, put in more efforts at dealing a decisive blow on the cultists than was the case with my administration. The more appropriate position therefore will be that the current peace on campus is as a result of the cumulative efforts of my administration as well as those of tile Vice-Chancellors before me, which were directed at putting secret cult activities in check. However, something else happened in recent times which has made tile operations of the hooligans in the university, that much difficult: The university succeeded in cutting a better corporate image for itself. This, the institution achieved through its exploits in tile areas of academics, sports, improvement in infrastructure as well as utilities and purposeful governance. By 2004 therefore, many persons within and outside the university, and probably, including the cultists themselves, saw the University of Port Harcourt as a focused institution which was seriously engaged in its calling and where barbaric actions like cultism, were no longer in vogue.

Reference has already been made to some of tile bold measures which previous administrations took in their fight against the evil of cultism. The "ABUMOG", an acronym for "Abuja Monitoring Group", encounter of April 1990, in which non-cultic students along with the administration, took the bull by the horn and took the fight to the cultists, remains a milestone. In the balance of this chapter, I will recall some of the efforts that were made by my administration to complement those by my predecessors which have resulted in the drastic fall of cult-related activities at the University of Port Harcourt. And in doing so, I wish to commence by recording my profound gratitude to the *great students University of Port Harcourt* for refusing to allow a few bad eggs amongst them to destroy their university. They confronted the rascals head-on and gave Confidential information to the administration. Next I wish to single out members of the *Man O War* organisation for their tenacity even In the face of difficulties of monstrous proportions. At a time, they

were almost decimated by the ragamuffins, following the brutal murder of two of their colleagues. "Their heads though bloody were not bowed" as they remained undaunted and with their resolve unbroken; all they requested for, was support and re-enforcement from the parent Man O War organisation in the city of Port Harcourt as well as from the Training Centre, Aluu. May the souls of those two students, as well as those of all others who died as a result of the unfortunate actions of those mad boys and girls, rest in perfect peace. The Chief Security Officer of the university, Mr. Amadi Wali was God-sent. A strong and most capable man, he gave the cult boys the battle of their life. To him I say once again, very well done.

The measures that were taken by my administration to stem the menace of secret cult activities will be described in two parts. The first part will dwell on the actions that were aimed at effecting a general improvement in the university but which also had a knock-on effect on the problem of cultism. The second part will describe the specific measures that were directed at eradicating cultism from the university,

In the general measures, improving electricity and water supply was of utmost importance. With improvement in electricity supply it became possible to light up some of the dark corners of the university which hitherto had served as "sailing sites" for the cult boys and this reduced their operational arena, at least within the campus. Taken along with improvement in water supply through the Obasanjo water supply scheme, it meant that an important flashpoint for students' discontent and unrest was virtually eliminated. There were fewer demonstrations for cult boys to hijack. The de-registration of persons who had illegally found their way into the university as students, swept away a number of cultists and their collaborators. Correcting examination scripts directly after examinations and releasing results on time as directed by Senate meant that the opportunity for malpractice, bribing or intimidating lecturers by cult boys were drastically reduced. The "pass out or fail out"

policy that was instituted by Senate ensured that students, including cultists, could no longer hang around the university endlessly. The establishment of excellent sporting facilities which were used for NUGA 2()04 afforded recreational facilities for students, who could therefore engage in recreation rather than in unprofitable cult activities.

In the specific measures, efforts that were aimed at improving electricity supply and the electrification of the campus still have to be mentioned first. On my assumption of office in 2000, the Federal Government gave a sum of seven million naira to each Federal Government-owned university in the country to assist the institutions in their fight against cultism. The administration of our university decided to use part of this money to temporarily electrify the Aluu Drive, the main road that runs through the permanent site of the university, pending such a time when money would be available for a befitting permanent electrification. That road, as important as it is, was up till that time, totally devoid of any form of illumination at night. This made a trip from the Delta Park gate of the permanent site to Nelson Mandela Hall at "Abuja" at night an unsafe one and also encouraged students that were resident at Nelson Mlandela Hall to take advantage of the darkness that was provided by the unlit Aluu Drive, to foment trouble frequently, especially at nights. Fortuitously, the university received another large sum of money from the Education Tax Fund which the administration invested in the purchase of three 1000 KVA *Caterpillar* electricity generating plants from *Tractor and Equipment* and also synchronising panel and step-down transformer. Additionally the university constructed three large tanks for long-term storage of diesel. The university also at various times received three other generators as gifts - one of 800 KVA from the Rivers State Government, another of 500 KVA from the Bayelsa State Government and one of 20 KVA from ELF Nigeria Ltd. furthermore, the university solicited the assistance of NEPA to regard the institution as a special area for the supply of electricity

from the national grid. The organisation responded favourably to the request and drastically cut power outages to the university. In addition, NEPA responded more promptly to calls from the university for repair work when faults occurred in the system.

What all this meant was that electricity supply at the university improved steadily over the years and by 2004/2005, the improvement was quite substantial. Barring serious breakdowns in the system which came usually with the heavy storms at the beginning and end of the rainy season, Delta Park, the seat of the university's administration, virtually had 24 hours electricity supply. The situation was similar in the other parks of the university which, on the average, had about 21 hours supply everyday.

To my mind, the lighting up of the campus which was made possible partly by improved electricity supply, was the major blow to cult activities. The campus became rather unsafe for cult boys and girls to practise their acts at nights, their preferred time. They were, accordingly, pushed to the surrounding villages where they also found not much succour. Attrition took its toll with gradual dismemberment as the ultimate result.

In addition to temporarily illuminating the Aluu Drive at the University Park, the seven million naira that was provided by government for the fight against cultism was used for related purposes. The administration erected billboards on which it displayed appropriate warnings against the evils of cultism. It also purchased a Hillux Isuzu Patrol Van with which security agents patrolled all sections of the campus at night. That vehicle is still operational and is still being used as a Patrol Van at the time I left the office of the Vice-Chancellor. Some money was also given to the authorities of religious faiths in the campus to pursue the spiritual angle of salvaging the cultists from the stranglehold of the devil. Those that assisted tremendously in this regard were: The Chapel of Annunciation, Our Saviour's Chapel and members of the Muslim Community.

The role played by the Man O War organisation of the university in the fight against cultism must receive very strong commendation. Using covert and overt means, and at great personal risks to themselves, members of the organisation succeeded many times in frustrating the cult boys from their plans of violence, murder, arson and disruption of university activities. Being students themselves, it was easy for them to mingle with the cultists and to obtain vital information regarding their plans. The administration found such confidential information very useful.

Some time in 2000, the university made some very strong appeals to students to give up the evil of cultism and to openly renounce their activities. An open renunciation exercise was organised and was held at the Convocation Arena at the Permanent Site. The Vice-Chancellor and the Dean of Students' Affairs addressed the mammoth crowd of students appealing to them to reject cultism in its entirety. The response was unbelievable as many students made open confessions of the atrocities they had committed. Prayers were held by different faiths followed by a procession which was led by the Vice-Chancellor and accompanied by the band of the UDSS. The procession marched from the Convocation arena to Delta Park where the Vice-Chancellor again addressed the students before dispersal. One would have thought that that elaborate exercise would have put paid to cultism at the University of Port Harcourt. Unfortunately, it did not. Some of the students who renounced went back to their evil ways shortly thereafter. Others were hunted by the die-hard criminals who did not have the courage to renounce. Sadly, some of those who had renounced were killed in the manhunt by their estranged colleagues.

Next the Senate of the University must be highly commended for the firm actions it took once the names of confirmed cultists were brought to its attention. It expelled them forthwith and Published their names and photographs, if available, in national newspaper (see the *Punch* newspaper of Monday, 24 September.

2001, page 46; the *Guardian* newspaper of Thursday, 29 July, 2004 page 44).

The promulgation of the Bye law on Cultism by the Rivers State Government was another big step that signalled to the cultists that the game was up. By this bye law, cult matters were to be treated expeditiously and those found to be guilty:" were to receive very heavy jail sentences. The university's formal gratitude must be extended to the Rivers State Government and the law enforcement agencies, especially the Police and the State Security Services (SSS). Whenever the cult boys and girls turned on the heat on us, it was to these law enforcement agencies that the university first called for assistance.

The picture that has been painted in this chapter is grim. The kind of horrifying atrocities that were committed by young boys and girls, who were students in a university and popularly labelled as "leaders of tomorrow", are simply mind-boggling. These are no fictions; they happened, not just at the University of Port Harcourt, but across the university system and elsewhere, albeit, with varying ferocity. But one remains an implacable optimist that just as the University of Port Harcourt overcame this monster, the university system will also get on top of it, sooner than later. Improvement in the quality of education at the tertiary level is imperative so that students admitted into universities can see such institutions as environments for the actualisation of their dreams and not as theaters for the expression of animalistic behaviour.

INFRASTRUCTURE

One of the areas in which the Ayo Banjo-led Governing Council expressed grave concern when it took charge of the superintendence of the affairs of the University of Port Harcourt in May 2000, was the level of infrastructural underdevelopment which was prevalent at the institution. There were only three completed permanent buildings: the Of rima Complex and the male and female Students Hostels at the permanent site. The Central Administration, the University Library, Senate Chambers and all others, were housed in temporary structures. In addition, the utilities were grossly inadequate.

To ameliorate this dire situation, previous Governing Councils of the university had done their best to improve on the infrastructures of the institution. For example, the Osiyemi-led Council completed work on the main gate and access road of the University. It also commenced work on the construction of a building Which was to be used for the establishment of an Information and' Communication Technology Centre (ICTC) in the university. Furthermore, the Dan Etete Female Hostel at the University Park was built during the tenure of that Council. The Ayo Banjo-led Council also took up the challenge and regarded infrastructural development of the university as an area of utmost priority. It

prepared a document titled *Urgent Developmental Needs of the University of Port Harcourt* with which it was to solicit for funds as it reckoned that government alone would be unable to fund the developmental needs of the university. In the end, it could be said that Council succeeded to a good measure because as of the time it completed its tenure, there had been an appreciable improvement in the infrastructures of the university, as well as its landscape.

Utilities

Anyone who is conversant with the situation of things at the University of Port Harcourt at the turn of the century when my administration commenced, would accept that the most pressing developmental need of the institution at that time, was in the area of utilities and that the problem of electricity and water supply had to receive attention before other considerations. We acted in this vein and whereas sufficient coverage had already been given in the earlier sections of this book to the many efforts the university made to improve power supply to the institution, the story behind that of water supply which eventually led to the establishment of the *Water Supply Scheme* in the university, has not been told.

It all began with the thanksgiving service which the Vice-Chancellor organised on December 10, 2000, for his appointment. The Executive Governor of Rivers State, His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili attended this service and in his entourage was Chief Precious Ngelale, then Honourable Minister of State for Water Resources. In his address to the Church Congregation, His Excellency had stated that it was unacceptable that the university was having problems with water supply when one of us was in charge of water resources at the federal level. The Honourable Minister responded by promising to do his best to solve the water problems of the institution on a permanent basis. The University administration followed up very strongly on this promise with several communications and trips to

the office of the Honourable Minister at Abuja. Eventually the Federal Government awarded the contract and the work commenced in August 2002. The project, which is popularly known as the OBJ Water Supply Scheme, consists of a Pressed Still Tank capacity of 480 000 litres at a Tower Height of 30 metres with a borehole depth of 200 metres and a 6 km reticulation system. This was a scale down from the originally approved version which was a water tank with the capacity of 1 350 000 litres of water. At the time I left office, the water reticulation had not been extended to Choba Park which was therefore functioning with its original water supply system. The project was commissioned by Mr. President himself, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, who is also the Visitor to the University, on 16 April, 2004. With the *OBJ Water Supply Scheme* in place, water supply in the university improved remarkably and so, it no longer constituted a source of discontentment, especially among students. In addition, the large water tank at a height of 30 metres added some beauty to the skyline of the university.

Unfortunately, we were not so lucky with our efforts at installing telecommunication facilities in the university. By the end of 1999, the administration of my predecessor had succeeded in installing telephone services in Delta Park, one of the three parks of the university and the seat of the institution's administration. The plan for extension of the service to the other two parks had been kept on hold due to financial constraints. The system that was chosen was based on a radio link in which cards were installed for a group of numbers. The cards, which were expensive, sometimes got burnt during thunder storms and surges in electricity and so needed to be replaced, not infrequently. This made the system burdensome as it broke down from time to time. The installation of this system at the material time was decided upon because of the absence of a relay station which was sufficiently close to the university from which land line telephone connections could have been made to the institution.

We took up the installation from where my predecessor had stopped and with financial support from the Rivers State Government, the services were extended to the other two parks. But the breakdowns became worse, especially at the University and Choba Parks, causing frustration among many as it formed a topic for repeated debates at Senate meetings. We were informed that the connecting cables to individual telephones had been laid too superficially and so, were being eaten up by rodents! Not even the appointment of a very senior staff at the level of Director, to oversee the services, resulted in any degree of appreciable improvement. The money that was required for the rectification of the system which we understood was chosen initially by the university on account of its low cost was huge. This fact, coupled with the advent of mobile telephone services, first from MTN and later from GLOBACOM and MTEL, within the university, which, though more expensive, functioned reasonably well, weakened the appetite for further work on the system. Therefore, as of the time I left office as the Vice-Chancellor of the university, the telephone service that was installed by the institution, was working only in fits and starts.

The position of the administration was that instead of spending more money on that antiquated system, without any assurance of a satisfactory performance in the future, the university should pursue the issue of the installation of proper land line telephones. What was holding this up was the establishment of a relay station at Rumuokoro, a suburb of Port Harcourt.

Core University Buildings

University campuses are usually adorned with certain structures which not only serve collective functions, but also add to the beauty and corporate image of the institutions by their sizes and architectural designs. I am referring to structures such as the Senate building

central Administration, Library and Auditorium of a university. The Senate Building at the University of Lagos and the auditorium at the Obafemi Awolowo University-Ile Ife, are ready examples. At the University of Port Harcourt, prior to 2000, there was no auditorium and the Senate chamber, central administration and university library were housed in temporary makeshift structures which were badly dilapidated. There was a crying need for something to be done urgently about this unacceptable situation.

At the inception of the university in the mid seventies, the institution commenced work on the construction of a befitting structure which was to accommodate the university library, the central administration and the Senate chamber. Unfortunately, the work was abandoned several years ago due to lack of funds. Council decided to resuscitate construction work on this building and to use it as the university's library.

The renewed construction work on the abandoned library building as it was generally known was to be in two phases. Work on the first phase proceeded quickly and was about 90% complete when a misunderstanding arose between Council and the construction firm, *Giodiani Nigeria Limited*, which was handling the project. The misunderstanding had to do with an interpretation of the terms of an earlier agreement between the two parties regarding the source of funds for the completion of the balance of the job. The misunderstanding had not been settled at the time I left office. Construction work on the second phase had also suffered some setback. Work commenced in earnest after some delay following the award of the contract to *Megastar Nigeria Limited*. But it stalled after only about 30% of the work had been done because the money that was being used for the construction work was tied up in a bank that was unable to meet the terms of the Federal Government's new banks recapitalisation policy which was instituted in 2005. The work, I understand, is now awaiting the release of the trapped funds after necessary reorganisation of the banking system in the country as promised by government.

Construction work on a new Senate building which would also house the central administration of the university, to my great pleasure, had commenced and was at the excavation stage. So far the construction work is being funded exclusively from part of initial two million dollars (US) grant by the MacArthur Foundation of Chicago as support to the University of Port Harcourt.

With respect to the issue of a purpose-built auditorium, the *Ebiti Banigo Auditorium* (phase one), is already in use as construction work on it was virtually complete. The first phase of the building has provision for 1500 seats while on total completion, the building will have provision for 3500 seats. The building which is a gift to the university by Chief Ebitimi Banigo under the aegis of *Friends of the University of Port Harcourt* would have facilities for a bank, cafeteria and tuck shop.

Buildings to be used for Academic Purposes

One of the first "bad news" we received on assumption of office 2000 was to the effect that teaching in the Pathological Sciences at the College of Health Sciences - Anatomical Pathology, Chemical Pathology and Microbiology, had almost come to a halt as the roof of the laboratory at the Teaching Hospital in the city of Port Harcourt, where these subjects are taught, had collapsed. As the heavy rains of the rainy season were imminent, there was a need to act on the information without delay, more so as the building had suffered some structural damages from seepage of water over the years. Furthermore, the building also housed the Medical Library of the university. The university reconstructed the building and replaced the collapsed roof and this saved the situation.

One must take along with the construction of the Laboratory at the Teaching Hospital, the completion of work on the College of Continuing Education (CCE) building in far away Nkpolu-Port Harcourt. This is a building of some good size with an auditorium that would sit 500 persons and three lecture halls to accommodate.

200 persons each, in addition to offices, board room, cafeteria and

conveniences. My predecessor had started work on it as a means of putting the CCE on a firm footing. Its completion therefore saw the College expand its operations which came to include the establishment of a secondary school, the University International Secondary School (*UISS*), and an out post in Yenagoa. Also this is the point at which to mention the construction of a Computer Laboratory which was sponsored by Schlumberger Nigeria Limited for the Faculty of Engineering and that of an Information and Communication Technology Laboratory by the Internet Society of Nigeria for the Department of Electrical/Electronics Engineering.

The expansion in student intake which the university carried out in the 1980s had not been matched by a corresponding increase in academic facilities. In particular; there was an acute shortage of classrooms which made the scheduling of lectures and examinations difficult. With financial support from the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Education Tax Fund (ETF) , as it was then known, the university put up two classroom blocks at the permanent site, each of which is able to accommodate 500 students. Similarly the Basic Studies Unit, whose programmes had become very popular with those seeking admission into the university, was having difficulty with classrooms. In order to meet this pressing need, Council awarded a contract to *Ikurav Nigeria* Limited for the construction of a Basic Studies Unit block, consisting of a large auditorium, classrooms, library, offices and cafeteria with funds that were generated by the unit. Construction work on the building was about 70% completed at the time I left office. But the work should have been completed well before July 2005 but for the frequency with which the internally generated funds from the unit were used by the university for other purposes, especially for augmenting the payment of staff salaries and emoluments. This meant that the university was not able to meet up payment schedules to the contractor, as and when due.

There was also the Rotimi Amaechi Building, a project which was sponsored entirely by Chief Rotimi Amaechi, an alumnus of the university and currently, the Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly.

Chief Amaechi had taken up the execution of this project in response to the university's appeal for support from public-spirited individuals and also as a mark of gratitude to the Department of English Studies of the university from which he graduated in 1987. Consisting of offices, lecture rooms, seminar rooms, cafeteria, an auditorium and conveniences, the building which is located between the up-coming Basic Studies Unit and the Faculty of Humanities building, in the "new layout" of the permanent site, was about 85% complete when I left office.

Work commenced on the construction of a number of buildings during the period, which are to be used to strengilien teaching and research in Petroleum and Gas, an area in which the University of . Port Harcourt is determined to carve a niche for itself as the foremost institution in the continent of Africa. These were the IPS, the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) building for the Chair in Gas Engineering and the ETF Centre of Excellence for studies in Petroleum Engineering.

When the establishment of the IPS was approved by Senate in 2002, the university ceded a number of structures behind the Senior Staff Club at the Delta Park campus of the institution, which were being used then as temporary accommodation for staff, to the IPS for renovation and use as its temporary site. IPS renovated the structures and made a small beautifully fenced compound out of them, which, on account of its newly acquired aesthetics and the constant stream of "foreigners" who participate in its activities, was nicknamed "Foreign Exchange" by the university community. Construction work at the first phase of the IPS's permanent site also started almost immediately on a large parcel of land just outside the main gate of the university. The site was secured from the Choba community, the owners of the land, after a protracted negotiation

as it was preferred site by the total / Joint Venture Group, the sponsors of the project.. In addition to its many features, the IPS permanent building is to house the Petroleum Museum which had hitherto, received the approval of Senate for its establishment. At the time I left office, construction work on the foundation of the building was complete.

In a bid to promote research in crude oil and gas, the PTDF, an agency of the Federal Government, had established endowed chairs in six selected universities in the country, covering various aspects of studies on the subject matter. The agency's action was under the PTDF Endowment Programme for universities which was formally inaugurated at Abuja on Thursday, 15 August 2002 by Dr. Rilwan Lukman, the then Presidential Adviser on Petroleum and Energy. For the University of Port Harcourt, which was one of the beneficiaries of the endowment, the PTDF endowed a chair in Gas Engineering and together with the university, appointed the late Professor Chi Ikoku as the first occupant of the chair. In order to from up the research bases of the endowed chairs, PTDF constructed prototype research laboratories in the six universities. That for the University of Port Harcourt which was completed after a number of hitches, is located next to the OBJ Water Supply Tank at the permanent site, at the "new layout" of the university and at the time I left office, the occupant of the PTDF chair, Professor Mike Onyekonwu, who was appointed after the death of Professor Chi Ikoku, had commenced taking possession of the building.

Early in the life of my administration, we made a submission to the ETF for the establishment of a specialised Centre of Excellence for studies in Gas Engineering, taking advantage of the presence in our midst of the formidable Professor Chi Ikoku, one of the foremost Professors in that field in the country. The submission was approved by ETF under its Special Projects Scheme and part Of the funds was released for the construction of the building that would house the Centre of Excellence. Council awarded the contract

for construction of the building to *Somiete Nigeria Limited*. Unfortunately, the project suffered a number of setbacks right from the point of bush clearing. First there was a tussle on the real ownership of the land on which the project was to be sited, with youths from two contending communities harassing the contractor. Next it was discovered that the land was extremely marshy, far beyond what was suggested by the soil analysis, and so would be unable to support the foundation of the building as was originally designed. This necessitated a revisit of the structural drawings of the building. Then there was the issue of the competence of the contractor to handle such a project, which came to the fore as the university interacted more with the contractor. After sometime of hoping for an improvement in the level of performance by the contractor, Council had no other choice than to revoke the contract when the project was just at the foundation level. It then sought the approval of ETF to re-award the contract to a more competent contractor. The ETF, probably understandably, was unhappy at what it perceived as the sloppy handling of the project and at one time even suspected the university of diverting funds that were meant for this project, to the construction of the PTDF Centre for the chair in Gas Engineering. Although the Vice-Chancellor succeeded in disabusing the minds of the authorities of ETF regarding the alleged diversion of funds to other projects, it was difficult to win back their favour to consider the re-award of the contract. Eventually this was done and the contract was re-awarded to *Rozellini Nigeria Limited*. Unfortunately, still not much had been done at the time I left office.

The university also benefited from another scheme of the ETF during the period: that by which the organisation established computing facilities for the Faculties/Colleges of Medicine in universities in the country. For the University of Port Harcourt, a computing centre was built by the ETF for the University's College of Health Sciences at the permanent site of the University of Port

Harcourt Teaching Hospital. It was ready for occupation by July 2005.

Yet three other structures whose constructions added great beauty to the university campus were the Gates at Delta Park and the Ali Carpe Verde section of the University Park, as well as the Conoil Filling Station. The construction of the two modern Gates by Integrated Nigeria Limited and Trade Intestment Limited respectively, was funded by the Bayelsa State Government. While Conoil, a private organisation with which the university had come to some agreement, sponsored the building of the Filling Station which is located just after the first roundabout on the main access road of the university.

Recreational Facilities

The facilities that were put in place by my administration for sporting and recreational purposes will be described in some detail in the chapter that will deal with NUGA 2004. All that needs to be said here is that these facilities added greatly to the overall beauty and positive image of the campus. The beauty and attraction were even better appreciated when one flew over the university in an aircraft and took an aerial view of the campus. This information was given to me by no less a public figure than His Excellency, Chief Ayo Fayose, the Executive Governor of Ekiti State in Nigeria, in 2004, when I was introduced to him at the Government House, Port Harcourt, during his visit to His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State.

Other Buildings and Structures

A number of other buildings and structures were either put up or during the period to ameliorate the university's severe infrastructural deficiency and to improve on the architectural beauty

of the university's landscape. Probably the most important of these were the students' hostels and staff accommodation.

Outside the Federal Government, the proprietor of the university, the strongest support for the University of Port Harcourt during the five years I served as its Vice-Chancellor, came from the Government and People of Rivers State. Faced with the severe shortage of suitable accommodation for Clinical Students of the university which the administration brought to his attention, the Executive Governor of the State, His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, himself an accomplished medical doctor with specialisation in Public Health, reacted by approving the construction of two blocks of Clinical Students Hostels at the university, each of which is to accommodate two hundred and fifty rooms. The hostels are located just adjacent to the permanent site of the UPTH to which they will be connected via a walk way. At the time I left office, one block was virtually ready for occupation while the foundation of the other had been completed.

The frequent appeals of the university to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), also received some positive response. NDDC which is an agency of the Federal Government that was set up for the sole purpose of bringing development to the oil bearing parts of the country, has its capital in the city of Port Harcourt. The company approved the construction of a hostel at the University of Port Harcourt which would accommodate 1000 students. The facilities in the hostel were expected to be very modern and the hostel will have its own dedicated electricity generating plant and bore hole for water supply. As of the time I left office, the commission had awarded the contract, the ground had been secured through a fence and excavation work had commenced.

Those who are sufficiently familiar with the operations of a university will appreciate the advantage of its staff living on campus. A university's activities are highly integrated and some of its functions may cover a 24 hour time-span in a day. It is probably this

realisation that made the Federal Government exclude the universities from its current Staff Housing Policy in which Government is set to disengage from the provision of accommodation to its employees and as a corollary, is currently selling off many houses that were hitherto used for staff accommodation.

Accommodating its staff within the campus has always been the wish of the University of Port Harcourt and in pursuit of this desire, the university erected staff accommodation, as its finances permitted, from time to time. Sixteen of such housing units were erected during the period of my administration; of these, four were for junior staff and the rest for senior staff. One of those for senior staff was an old building which was abandoned at just over the foundation - Styled Professorial Building - it was completed and is now being used by me in my capacity as the immediate past Vice-Chancellor of the university. It is envisaged that the accommodation will serve that purpose for all subsequent Vice-Chancellors of the institution as they successfully conclude their five-year tenures in office. The new residential units except those for the junior staff, are all in the same area of the permanent site: on both sides of the right turn off the road. that leads from the Aluu Drive, opposite Our Saviour's Chapel into "Ghana Ama/Gambia Ama". The occupants seem to be maintaining the immediate surroundings of the houses and so, at least for now, the whole area presents a very lovely site. The buildings were all constructed through priority allocations by Council from ETF grants for that purpose.

Charity, they say, begins at home; it could be said that the administration applied this principle when early in its life it undertook an extensive rehabilitation of the Vice-Chancellor's lodge as well as the official residence of the Registrar. The Vice-Chancellor's lodge which was constructed in the late 1970s had been built without a conventional roof and so it leaked badly in a number of places. A new roof was put over it and the building

renovated. As for the official residence of the Registrar, it too had suffered remarkable wear and tear which had left it in pretty bad shape. It was also put right for the Registrar to stay in. In the same vein, a dedicated water supply system, borehole and fresh piping, were put in place for the Chancellor and Pro-Chancellor's residential complexes in order to solve, once and for all, the perennial water shortage in the place. This was long before the *OBJ Water Supply Scheme* came on board. Furthermore, the Guest Chalets for the Chancellor and Pro-Chancellor's lodges were renovated with funds that were provided by ELF Nigeria Ltd. Following the renovation, the chalets were used for accommodating Council members when they came to Port Harcourt for official university activities. This obviated the need to accommodate Council members in hotels. The Council members preferred the accommodation in the university while the university made some savings in accommodating them within the campus.

Even as an acting Vice-Chancellor in 1995/96, I had felt a strong need to do something about two illegal settlements that had developed within the university premises - a shanty town opposite Ali Carpe Verde and on the left hand side of the gate into the permanent site of the university from Delta Park and a collection of rickety houses behind Nelson Mandela Hostel, not far from the university's sports centre.

The shanty town was an all-purpose settlement containing residential accommodation, a market, shops and all manner of "Joints". But worse still it stole from the university's resources especially from its water and electricity supply, and served as a rallying point for criminals, including cultists. I had once been called up from sleep in 1996 at about 2 am, on account of a terrible incident that had taken place there. I had heeded the advice of some persons then not to attempt to take possession of the land as there were some powerful interests operating there, because of what I had perceived as my weak position as an acting Vice-Chancellor.

As that situation was no longer tenable with my substantive appointment as the Vice-Chancellor of the institution in 2000, I decided to do something about those two settlements, early in the course of my administration. After a couple of management meetings during which the administration mapped out a strategy, the responsibility of securing the two parcels of land for the university was given to the then Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration).

The recovery process did not pose as much problem as management had anticipated, despite threats and innuendos as the plan that management had hatched worked flawlessly and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Professor Alphonsus , Anusiem, refused to fall prey to intimidations. In any case no one would have mistaken the level of resolve of the administration. Today many would not remember that such a nest of criminals once existed with impunity right inside the campus as the university had used part of the land to build a Public motor Park which is currently serving a very useful function. The other part, a prime land indeed, from its location and size, is secured with a fence for use at a later date. Regarding the land behind Nelson Mandela Hostel, which hawkers and food sellers had occupied without clearance from anyone, it was used to construct some accommodation for junior staff who service the university's utilities.

Some mention has been made of the great role the University Advancement Centre (UAC) played in the affairs of my administration. It is therefore hard to believe that at its inception, In. 2000, I could not find an office for it. And so, Professor Mbuk Ebong, whom I had appointed the Director of the Centre, operated Without an appropriate office for sometime. But the rapid growth of the centre meant that something had to be done urgently to house It appropriately as it was beginning to attract important visitors to the university. The administration decided to convert an abandoned and disused building in Delta Park, which was not far from the Vice-Chancellor's office for this purpose. That building which was

constructed in the campus by Nigeria Telecommunication Limited (NITEL), was used for public telephone services by the organisation. But it had long been abandoned; the few telephones in it were all dead and had their parts ripped off; the electric bulbs in the building had all been removed and the doors and windows vandalised. The building had become a source of insecurity in the campus as criminals often gathered in it to plan and to carry out unwholesome activities. The administration found some money and with it commissioned a builder/architect, *Star Consultants Limited*, who did a marvellous job in converting that den into the modest structure which today houses the UAC. So impressive is the small structure that many visitors to the university think that it is the new office of the Vice-Chancellor and that the Chief Executive had relocated there.

Before one draws the curtain on this portion of this chapter, mention must be made of four more buildings: the Nurses Building at the permanent site of UPTH, the Information Communication and Technology Centre (ICTC) Building, which was popularly known as "High Tech Building", the Netxpress Building and the Churches.

The Nurses Building at the UPTH permanent site was a building which was put up in the early 1980s to house the proposed School of Nursing of the Teaching Hospital, when construction work at the permanent site of the hospital was progressing rapidly. Like the main blocks of the hospital, work on it stopped at the roofing stage when funds ran out. As the Teaching Hospital was thinking of relocating to its permanent site in the near future, the building was handed over to the College of Health Sciences of the university for the provision of offices for some staff of the College who serve as Consultants to the Teaching Hospital, more so as the idea of a Nursing School had been shelved, at least for the time being. The university completed the work on the building and renovated it satisfactorily. At the time I left office, movement of staff of the College of Health Sciences into the renovated building, had commenced.

The "High Tech Building" which was started by the previous administration, was designed to be the base of technological activities in the university. It was meant to take over the functions of the Nigerian Universities Network (NUNET), the Management Information System (MIS) and the former University Computing Centre. In establishing the Centre, it was envisaged that in addition to the above functions, it would establish Local Area Networks (LANs) within the three parks of the university as well as the College of Continuing Education in the city of Port Harcourt. Senior staff would also train at the centre in batches and become computer literate. The Ayo Banjo-led Council completed the construction work on the building while SPDC equipped it.

Netxpress, on the other hand, is a privately owned Information Technology Company which was established to provide fast and easy access to the internet for staff and students.

Two buildings have been erected by members of the Christian faith in the university campus. They are the Chapel of Annunciation by the Catholics and Our Saviour's Chapel by the Protestants. Although the construction of these churches started in 1995, they were brought to a point of near completion during the period of my administration. Taken along with their manicured environment, the two churches have added great worth to the beauty of the university campus.

There were a number of other little things which the administration did to beef up the university's infrastructure like the construction of two public toilets in each park, eateries for students and kiosks for commercial activities. Probably the most appreciated 111 this category was the changing of the floor tiles in the Senate/Council Chamber from the PVC tiles to glazed marble tiles. Senate as well as Council members appreciated the change immensely although the issue of inadequate space still persists.

Just as the hood does not make the monk, buildings do not make a university. Rather, it is the quantum of academic material that is

generated, processed, disseminated, stored and acknowledged by the scholars within the institution, more than any other considerations, that anchors a university in the global comity of scholars. But no one expects a university to be a drab and an uninteresting environment, not different from a primary school where just two or three rickety buildings are struggling to put up an appearance. Such an institution will not only be repulsive, it will be unable to carry out its statutory functions satisfactorily. A university campus is meant to be inviting and arresting with its scenic beauty and architectural complexities, conditions that partly put the mind in the pensive and meditative mood that channel it to the thinking process which after all, is the business of a university. The buildings that have sprung up at the University of Port Harcourt in recent times have changed the landscape of the institution for the better. Already a beautiful university quadrangle is becoming evident between the new library that is under construction and the Ebitimi Banigo Auditorium as well as the site that is being excavated for the Senate building. The university can even give it a name and declare it a vehicle-free zone as it will serve as the hub of the university's activities in the very near future.

I thank the Council for pursuing the infrastructural development of the University of Port Harcourt with the unflagging determination that it did. I am indebted to all those who assisted the institution in this process.

PARASTATALS

The parastatals of the university whose activities will be reported in this chapter are those of the:

1. University Demonstration Secondary School (UDSS)
2. College of Continuing Education (CCE)
3. Choba-Uniport Community Bank (CUCB)
4. University Investments Limited (UIL)
5. Consultancy Research and Development Centre (CORDEC)
6. Publishing House

These were established by the university at various times either to meet some specific needs of its immediate community or of the larger society. In addition, through their activities, the university expected to generate 'funds with which to supplement government's Subvention for the execution of its programmes. The two Tables (7.1 and 7.2) overleaf give some insight into their income and expenditure pattern for the years 2001 and 2002. The unaudited figures were extracted from the University's Annual Reports; Currency denomination is in naira.

Table 7. 1: (July 2000 to July 2001)

Parastatal	Income (Generated)	Expenditure (Incurred)	Surplus (Deficit)
CORDEC	16, 121,337	12, 124,902	3 996,436
CCE	59,216,049	35, 246, 723	23, 969, 326
UIL	5, 622, 099	5, 130, 636	491,463
UDSS	18,178,320	38, 293, 077	(20, 114 ,757)
Publishing House	7,417,300	5, 902, 000	1,515,300
TOTAL	106, 555, 105	96 ,697, 337	9, 857, 768

Table 7.2: July 2002 to July 2003

Parastatal	Income (Generated)	Expenditure	Surplus (Deficit)
CORDEC	3, 183, 994.75	13,971,037.94	(10,787,043. 19)
CCE	60,251,304 .00	49, 750, 496.00	10,500, 808. 00
UIL	9,376,424.00	10,578,849.00	(1, 202, 425.00)
Publishing House	6,917, 307.00	6, 446, 363 .00	470,94 4.00
CUCB	7, 697, 689.00	3, 544, 824.00	4, 152, 865.00
TOTAL	87,426,718.75	84, 291, 569.94	3, 135, 148.81

As can be seen, the funds that accrued from the activities of parastatals were not much and they were successful to varying degrees. Be that as it may, no one can deny the fact that collectively they contributed substantially to the community services that university rendered.

University Demonstration Secondary School (UDSS)

UDSS was established in the late 1970s to serve as a gold standard in secondary schools. It was to offer facilities as a laboratory for practice of the subject matter of "teaching practice" for the stude

of the Faculty of Education. In addition it was to provide secondary education, of a high quality, to children and wards of staff of the university as well as those from Port Harcourt and its environs. The fact that the school carried out these functions satisfactorily, at least in its early days, is evidenced by the quality of the graduates from the faculty of Education who used it as their teaching practice base and also the quality of the pupils who had their secondary school at the school. Many highly-placed individuals in the city of Port Harcourt and its environs sought to have their children and wards admitted at the school. The same was true of staff of the university as the school was generally regarded as one of the best secondary schools in Port Harcourt, winning many laurels in competitions amongst its peers. But even at that time, the school suffered from a number of deficiencies. It had no boarding facilities and its infrastructure (classrooms, laboratories, recreational facilities) was not strong. The school had apparently been buoyed by good management and the dedication of its staff.

Unfortunately, these two crucial elements began to wither and the school went into a spin, spiralling downwards. Parents, including university staff, withdrew their children and wards in large numbers as the school struggled to keep its doors open. Its performances at national examinations plummeted and some of its results were even withheld for alleged malpractices! There was a string of acting appointments for the headship of the place; the staff became restive and bickered among themselves. Payment of staff salaries and appointments which had been from funds that were generated by the School when government gave directives for universities to disengage from the operations of secondary schools became a problem. The Pupils themselves took to truancy and various forms of unwholesome behaviour. Indeed so bad was the situation when we came into office in 2000 that the Senate of the university even debated whether or not the school should be closed down. Happily, wise counsel prevailed and Senate, rather than closing the school

down, mandated the Vice-Chancellor to do everything in his power to resuscitate it. Dr. S. I. Ituen, a strict and adroit gentleman who was a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education was appointed, acting Principal of the school and for the two and half years that served in that capacity, he succeeded in preventing the school from sinking.

As the administration saw it, leadership was the major problem and so it took advantage of the period that Dr. Ituen served as acting Principal of the school, to mount a hunt for a suitable candidate to appoint as the Principal. The efforts of the administration were rewarded when, in April 2003, following due process, the Governing Council of the university approved the appointment of Mrs. Tosan U. Inko- Tariah as the Principal of institution. That lady, who until her appointment was the Deputy Headmistress at the Corona School, Lagos, together with the Board of UDSS, set to work to retrieve the lost glory of the school instill discipline among staff and students, an action, which, not unexpectedly, met with some resistance. But she was not deterred. She and the Board pursued the issue of boarding facilities at school, the establishment of which Council had earlier approved, with vigour and got ELF Nigeria Limited to construct two dormitories for that purpose. They retrieved a good portion of the large amount of debts that were owed to the school and this improved the financial position of the institution. In addition, they got support from other organisations, including the Rivers State Government which donated a 20-seater Toyota Haice Bus to the school. And in response to an important area of staff discontent in the school, the university accepted to bear the entitlements of staff at their retirement.

As of the time I left the office of Vice-Chancellor, the institution was gradually getting back on its feet. In 2003, 2004 and 2005 pupils from the school performed well in various competitions that were organised for secondary school students in the state by the Rivers

State Government, the British Council, Society of Petroleum Engineers and NAFDAC. Those who obtained five credits and above at the West African School Certificate Examinations had risen to between 51 and 61 % between 2003 and 2005 as compared to the abysmally low figures of 1999. However, problems of interpersonal relationships still exist and a lot more still needs to be done in order to get the school to where it should be.

College of Continuing Education (CCE)

The CCE is one of the outfits that was established by the Sylvanus Cookey administration in the early 1980s to enhance the university's reach to its neighbouring communities by providing the opportunity for acquiring university education on part-time bases, to persons who possess requisite qualifications for admission and who may be holding other full-time appointments. Since then the College has proven to be a very successful venture. For not only have many graduated with the degrees of the University of Port Harcourt through the programmes at the CCE, the College has been a major revenue earner for the institution. This is hardly surprising as except for the occasional hiccups now and again, there had really never been a time when the CCE was truly in the woods unlike the sinuous boom and burst of some of the university's other parastatals. Of course the stringent measures that were adopted by Senate in respect of academic activities at the university, which has been described earlier, were also rigorously applied to the programmes at the CCE as there was some concern that academic standards may have slackened over time at the College.

Commencing on a building at D-line in Port Harcourt which was loaned to the university by the Rivers State Government, the College quickly purchased a parcel of land at Nkpolu village in Diobu-Port Harcourt, for the purposes of erecting its permanent structures. The Osiyemi-led Council started construction work at the permanent Site which was completed by the Ayo Banjo-led Council. In addition,

the Ayo Banjo-led Council approved the installation of electricity generating plant along with its new cabling and the water supply system at the permanent site.

The facilities at the permanent site which are many include On-line services. But it was felt that they were generally underutilised and this prompted the university to make a proposal to Council for the establishment of a Secondary School, styled University International Secondary School (U1SS) at the CCE, which Council approved. The school has since been established and is running satisfactorily.

Still as a mark of its success, the CCE, in 2004, and with the approval of Senate, was able to extend its services to Yenagoa, the capital of Bayelsa State, where a branch of the College now exists and is offering part-time degree courses leading to the acquisition of the degrees of the University of Port Harcourt.

Choba-Uniport Community Bank (CUCB)

The transformation of Choba-Uniport Community Bank from a bankrupt and comatose business, which was fit only for liquidation, in 2000, to a healthy and vibrant organisation with all the prospects of a bright future, in 2004, was, to my mind, one of the greatest achievements of the Ayo Banjo-led Governing Council during the four years that it superintended over the affairs of the University of Port Harcourt. In retrospect, that result should have been anticipated judging from the calibre of the men that Council elected to represent it on the board of the bank.

Choba Community Bank as it was then known, was commenced by some public-spirited persons with an eye for commerce in Choba town, one of the communities that own the land on which the University of Port Harcourt is located, in the late 1970s. Its establishment was in response to the call by the Federal Government then, for communities to form banking associations which would

have the local communities as their major areas of operation especially with respect to the provision of credit facilities to small scale businesses. The ultimate objective was to grow the economic bases of local communities so as to improve the quality of the lives of those who dwell in those communities. A few years after it commenced operations, the bank ran into difficulties and became dysfunctional and insolvent. It was then that some members of its B'oard of Directors had the idea that the authorities of the University of port Harcourt should be approached to take over the operations of the bank as its major; share holder. The thinking behind the suggestion was that the university would not only bring in the much-needed capital but would also apply its traditional discipline on the operations of the bank. The then Vice-Chancellor, Professor Theo Vincent saw the offer as attractive and with all good intentions, committed the university by investing some funds in the bank. Unfortunately, the fortunes of the bank did not improve as rapidly as had been expected and the indications were that the bank would remain insolvent and that the university might have lost its investment.

This was the state of affairs with the bank when I took over as the Vice-Chancellor of the university and *ipso factor* as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the bank. After a number of management meetings at which the matter was discussed, we drafted a proposal to Council to the effect that the bank should be liquidated and the loss of the university's investment should be written off as bad business. Management position was based on its assessment of the chances of recovery of the bank which it considered slim, and also, the need to avoid further wastage of scarce resources on what management had thought was a moribund organisation.

At Council, members expressed a different view and did not agree with the administration that the bank was beyond salvage. Council rather formerly ratified the take over of the bank by the university and approved the

It then set to work to make the bank a viable organisation by appointing retired seasoned bankers who were members of Council to represent it on the board of the bank. It also approved the appointment of a supervisory bank over the Choba-Unipott Community Bank.

The new board of the bank worked assiduously recovering debts and putting out various attractive portfolios which brought income to the bank. It also ensured that adequate securities were provided before loans were offered to loan applicants. With time, the fortunes of the bank improved; it was able to pay back the money the university had deposited with it and even embarked on some expansion of its structure and staff. As of the time I left office, the bank had a fully paid up capital of N25,000,000 and had been registered by the Central Bank of Nigeria for operations as a Community Bank. No one would have wished for more. The commendation and the gratitude of the university go out to Council and members of the board but especially, the Manager of the bank, Mr. Paul Worlu.

Uniport Investment Limited (UIL)

Council's effort at reviving the UIL was not as successful as that of the community bank. But at least it could be said that the downward drift had been stopped and-Hopefully, from that point, the investment outfit would take a leap upwards.

As the name implies; this venture was established for investment purposes, again in the mid 1980s. But it had really never done well and at the time we came into office in 2000, it was all but extinct. Having had its activities whittled down to the collection of rents on the few university owned properties that were rented out and the reselling of reams of typing sheets that were purchased from surrounding markets. Writing on UIL, the University'S Visitation Panel in 1990 noted that:

Uniport Investment Ltd. which was established in 1983 has not been generating any funds for the University ...

There was no formal leadership and so the administration thought that appointing a Managing Director for the venture would see it come out of its cocoon and be up and about. Council approved the appointment of Mr. Isaiah Enoch who until his appointment had been a Manager with a marketing outfit in Lagos.

Under Mr. Enoch, the venture submitted what could be described as an impressive plan of action to its board for approval. The board did approve and even helped secure a loan from CUCB for the execution of some aspects of the plan. But not much had been seen, although the debut of a "Uniport Water" brand of bottled water from UIL did not go unnoticed by members of the university community.

Consultancy Research and Development Centre (CORDEC)

This centre was established to tap into the huge market of consultancy, research and project development that exists in the city of Port Harcourt, especially in the area of the oil and gas industry and from which even university staff in their private capacities, are reaping a harvest. Accordingly, CORDEC had been involved in Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and various forms of analyses for companies in the hydrocarbon industry. But it had complained repeatedly about not having the right equipment and purpose-built laboratory for tests and analysis of samples which would enable it to compete favourably with its peers in the market.

CORDEC is also involved in the educational sector and organises conferences and seminars on topical issues. In February 2003, it Organised a summit for stake holders in the Niger Delta. The purpose of the summit was to create a unique regional forum for all the major stake holders in the Niger Delta to promote and build partnership through genuine interactions, dialogue, knowledge

sharing and integration of the key stake holders' perspective on all sustainable community development policies, plans and actions.

In 2004, CORDEC was moved to a more conducive environment at the ICT Centre with better facilities for interaction with would-be clients. It is envisaged that the new environment will enhance the operational efficiency of CORDEC.

Publishing House

At the time we took over the administration of the university, the Publishing House whose printing equipment was purchased almost at the commencement of the university, was bogged down virtually to the point of total inactivity by obsolete equipment. The priority then was to invest some money so that publishing activities could go on. We did but our efforts did not amount to much in comparison to the magnitude of the problem and so we sought outside assistance. Luckily, the Shell Petroleum Development Company came to our rescue and supplied the Publishing House with computers and a "cord printing machine" which it was no longer using but which was still in a reasonable working condition. With these additions the Publishing House was in business.

Its other need which had not been met as of the time I left office was the provision of a dedicated electricity generating plant which would enable it offer a 24 hour service. However, the fact that the electricity supply in campus had improved with time, meant that the Publishing House could get by without the dedicated electricity generating plant.

Although the financial returns from the Publishing House were not much, it nevertheless, served important university functions. From some point in my administration, it commenced the printing of inaugural lecture texts. and the Order of Proceedings for Convocations, jobs, which prior to that time, were contracted out. Furthermore, the Publishing House printed seminar papers and some publications for academic staff.

The parastatals of the university constitute an important arm of the university's operations. The services they render are communal in nature and the revenue they bring in helps the university to meet some of its various financial obligations. The problem usually is that the university is unable to raise sufficient capital to invest in them so as to establish them properly. Because they are compromised in this way, they more often than not, operate sub-optimally and thereby incur harsh criticisms from members of the university community. One wonders if this argument makes the case for universities limiting their operations to what they know best: knowledge, its acquisition and dissemination.

REACHING OUT

In an earlier section of this book, I have reported that faced with the daunting problems of the university, especially in the area of infrastructural inadequacies, the Ayo Banjo-led Governing Council at its inception decided to adopt *a process of reaching* out to governments, public-spirited individuals and philanthropic organisations for support in its quest to improve on the facilities in the institution. This process of reaching out to others, which was also the view of a large section of the university community, thus became the main plank of my administration.

The essence was to put across to everyone, within and outside the university, in actions, words and deeds, and in a particularly determined manner, a more positive and goal-oriented image of the institution and thereby erase the negative impression of a lacklustre university, where cultism, examination malpractices, fraudulent admissions and other forms of unwholesome activities thrived. In the view of the university, that was the surest way of placing the institution in a position to attract help and assistance from others.

For the process to succeed, it must include and indeed commence from within the university and be led by the institution's Chief

Executive, the Vice-Chancellor himself, and his Principal Officers. It must encourage staff and students to give of their best to the institution. The university community must be made, through the reaching out process, to believe once again in its ability to collectively run a good institution, live together amicably, and strive to do things properly. As for the outside world, the process, were it to succeed, must make the institution to be seen by people as a good and focused organisation that is devoid of unnecessary rancour and a fit and proper institution for them to identify with and be willing to commit their resources.

As can be seen from the previous chapters, most of the measures that were taken by Council and Senate were designed to place the 'university on this high pedestal. I am referring to the improvement in the university's infrastructure, the streamlining of academic matters, including students' admissions, and the instillation of discipline, especially through the curtailment of secret cult activities. What will be reported in this chapter therefore are the other specific actions which the Council and the administration took in order to enhance the process of reaching out. These actions which called for the absolute dedication of Council as well as that of the Chief Executive were executed through the following channels:

1. Communications
2. Visits
3. Presentation of Corporate Souvenirs
4. Special Considerations
5. Public Engagements

Communications

In every organisation, the prompt dissemination of information, and quick responses to correspondence and enquires contribute to the public perception of the quality of the leadership of that Organisation. During the period of my stewardship, the Vice-

Chancellor and the Principal Officers of the university took this aspect of their responsibility very seriously.. Relevant information was disseminated through appropriate channels to those that should have it without delay. The university's *Newsletter* which Was published fortnightly by' the Information Protocol and Public Relation Unit of the Registry and circulated widely within and outside the university was a veritable source of accurate information on the activities of the institution. Furthermore, as much as possible, all mails were treated on the same day as they were received. This meant that the Vice-Chancellor, the Principal Officers along with their support staff, as well as some others in the university, most times, worked beyond normal official hours, including working sometimes at weekends and public holidays. Correspondence for destinations that were outside the university was speedily dispatched through the most appropriate and secure means. This prompt treatment of correspondences meant that the university's administrative machinery functioned without undue delay and those that made enquires from outside the institution, received appropriate replies early. Similarly, copies of the University's Annual Reports - which were yearly summaries of the major events that occurred in the university, prepared by the Vice-Chancellor - were distributed to all members of Council, Senate, the Federal Ministry of Education, the National Universities Commission, the major benefactors and stake-holders of the university and the President of the country who is also the Visitor to the institution.

Whenever important appointments were made which were considered to be of relevance to the university at the Federal level or in the Rivers State, where the university is located, the Vice-Chancellor wrote personal letters of congratulations to the appointees. It was in this vein that the Vice-Chancellor wrote to Mr. President, the Vice President of the Federal Republic, all the Ministers, the Senate President, the Chairmen of the Education Committee of Senate and the House, the Chairmen of the Senate.

committee on the Niger Delta, Petroleum as well as Health, on their elections or appointments to serve the country in 2003. He also wrote to Dr. Kofi Annan and *All the Ambassadors* that were appointed by Mr. President to Nigerian Missions abroad. Similarly, he wrote to congratulate the Executive Governors of the nine states. in the Niger Delta, and all Commissioners and Special Advisers in the Rivers State, following their re-elections or appointments in 2003. More recently, he wrote to Mr. Basil Omiyi who was appointed the first Nigerian Managing Director of SPDC and also to Mr. President when he was able to secure substantial debt relief from Nigeria'S foreign creditors and on the occasion of Mr. President's 68th birthday anniversary, to congratulate them.

The Vice-Chancellor received replies to a number of this correspondence in which he was congratulated on the progress the university was making; some of them contained a declaration of support for the developmental efforts of the institution. Mr. President himself replied to the 68th birthday anniversary congratulatory message from the Vice-Chancellor through a letter dated May 16, 2005 (PRES/132) and which was signed personally by him. In that letter of acknowledgement, Mr. President described the Vice-Chancellor as "patriotic Nigerians like you".

These correspondences did a lot to uplift the profile of the university as some of them, along with their replies, found their way to the print and electronic media. A number of the Ambassadors whom the Vice-Chancellor had congratulated, indicated that it was the first time ever that they were receiving such letters from the Vice-Chancellor of a university. In related incidences, sometime in 2005 and early 2006, Professor Nimi Briggs met some of the Ambassadors with whom he had been in correspondence when he Was Vice-Chancellor, a few of whom he had not met in person:

Ambassador Professor Mary Lar (The Hague), Ambassador Biodun Owoseni (Austria), Ambassador Godfrey Preware (France), Ambassador Olusegun Akansanya (Ethiopia), Ambassador

Professor Tunde Aderuran (Germany) and Ambassador Chief O. Coker (China) at The Hague, Vienna, Paris, Addis Ababa and Berlin respectively. They recalled, with great affection and admiration, the Vice-Chancellor's congratulatory messages to them and spoke glowingly of the University of Port Harcourt.

There were several other examples of the way the Vice-Chancellor exploited the power of effective communication for the good of the university: For instance, the Vice-Chancellor was able to attract sponsorship with which the university carried out live coverage of two convocation ceremonies by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). His ability to write and sign over 3000 personal letters to all staff of the University of Port Harcourt, senior as well as junior, soliciting for their individual contributions towards the University's Endowment Fund, was regarded by many as unprecedented. A number of the staff informed him that they heeded the appeal because of that personal effort.

Visits

Members of Council, the Vice-Chancellor and the Principal Officers of the university undertook visits to various persons and organisations which were designed to establish good relationships between the persons or organisations and the university.

As has been reported, one of the first assignments which members of Council undertook on their arrival in Port Harcourt after their inauguration in May 2000 was to pay a courtesy call on His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State. At that visit, Council members extended their appreciation through the Governor to Mr. President for their appointment and promised to do their best in the execution of their duties as members of the Council of the University of Port Harcourt. His Excellency welcomed them to the state and gave his assurance that they would have maximum cooperation from the Government and People of

Rivers State, as they carried out their onerous responsibilities. Council members again visited His Excellency towards the end of their tenure in May 2004 to congratulate him on his re-election as the Executive Governor of Rivers State and also to take leave of him. The then Chairman of Council, Professor Ayo Banjo, commended His Excellency, very strongly, for honouring his promise. He thanked the Governor for the exceptional support and encouragement which the University of Port Harcourt had received from him during the past four years he (Ayo Banjo) and members of his team had served as the Council of the University. In his response, the Governor extended his personal appreciation and that of the Government and People of Rivers State to the Council members for the excellent work they had done which had brought the University of Port Harcourt to the limelight in all aspects of its operations. When the Alhaji Jimoh-led Council was inaugurated in April, 2005, members also undertook a courtesy call on the Governor, similar to the one by the Banjo-led Council. These interactions between the Council of the University and the Governor of the State where the university is domiciled, ensured a very good working relationship between the authorities of the institution and the Government of Rivers State which was no doubt contributory to the tremendous assistance the university received from the Governor and his government during the years I served as the Vice-Chancellor of the university.

In 2003, Council also visited His Royal Majesty, King Edward William Asimini Dappa Pepple, Perekule the XI, the Amoyanabo of Grand Bonny in Council at his home in Bonny. King Edward Asimini Is Currendy the Chairman of the State's Council of Traditional Rulers. The visit by Council was to enable it pay its respect to the King and to thank him for accepting to serve as the Grand Patron of NUGA 2004.

Outside these visits by Council, the administration, led by the Vice-Chancellor was also very active in this direction. Shortly after the Vice-Chancellor was appointed in July 2000, he and his

management team undertook two important sets of visits. One Was to some of the Governors of the "catchment areas" of the university in order to acquaint them with the problems of the institution, and the other, which was a university-wide tour, was to see things for themselves and for the Vice-Chancellor to encourage the staff of the university, right at their places of work.

The visits to some of the Governors of the catchment areas of the university, took the Vice-Chancellor and his team to the Governors of Bayelsa, Imo, Abia and Delta States. Visit to the Rivers State Governor was not included at that time because the Governing Council itself had just undertaken one. However, the Vice-Chancellor visited His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State during his tenure on a total of ten occasions to discuss various problems in the university. At all times, His Excellency went out of his way to help the Vice-Chancellor to find solutions to the problems.

In the visits to some of the Governors of the catchment areas, in addition to the Vice-Chancellor and members of the management team, some members of staff as well as some students from the particular state that was being visited, were selected to join the delegation. After congratulating the Governors on their election into office, the Vice-Chancellor placed the problems of the university before their Excellencies soliciting for their assistance in the efforts of the university to tackle the problems. The Governors, who were all pleased with the visits, promised various forms of assistance to the university. Unfortunately, up till the time I left office, outside the Rivers State Governor, only the then Bayelsa^a State Governor, His Excellency Chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, assisted tile institution in finding solutions to some of its problems.

The university-wide tour took the Vice-Chancellor and his team to all sections of the institution except the Registry with which he was already well familiar. The purpose of the visit was not only to enable the Vice-Chancellor and his team to see things for themselves

at the levels of the faculties, departments and units, but also for them to be able to meet with the staff of the university at the various locations in which they worked. The team saw the dilapidation of various sections of the university and the difficulties faced by staff in their places of work. The Vice-Chancellor promised to do something about the deficiencies. He then discussed with the staff the philosophy of his administration and its dreams for the university. He exhorted the staff to put in their best at all times even with the difficulties that they faced. The visit was an eye opener as after it, the Vice-Chancellor and members of his team had a detailed and intimate knowledge of the problems of the institution.

The Vice-Chancellor also led delegations from the university to two monarchs in the state who were installed during the time he was in charge of the affairs of the university, for the institution to pay its homage. These were, the one in July 2003 to HRM King Princewill Amachree X1, the Amayanabo of Kalabari, in Buguma, and the other, in February 2004, to HRM King Dandeson Douglas Jaja, the Amayanabo of Opobo, in Opobo. King Princewill Amachree is a retired member of staff of the University of Port Harcourt, who as Professor Theophilus J. T. Princewill, as he was then known, had served the university well in several capacities including membership of its Governing Council, Deanship of its Faculty of Science, Deanship of its Students Affairs Department and Headship of its Microbiology Department.

Furthermore, the Vice-Chancellor maintained close contact with the chiefs and elders of the university's host communities and visited them occasionally on his own. This action of the Vice-Chancellor ensured that no major problems developed between the university and the host communities during the period he was in charge of the affairs of the institution. In the process, a close friendship developed between the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nimi Briggs and Eze B. O. O. Oriebe, the paramount ruler of Akpor kingdom which has survived till this day. Eze Oriebe, a graduate in Microbiology of

the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), is a fine gentleman but an unapologetic stickler for traditions.

There was an international component to the visits. Aside from ensuring that the University of Port Harcourt was a fully paid-up member of the Association of African Universities (AAU) and an Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the Vice-Chancellor undertook three trips to South Africa to visit various universities there. From those visits a number of Exchange Programmes were established with the South African university], which were beneficial to staff of the University of Port Harcourt. In the process, I, as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt became personally known to the Vice-Chancellors of Universities of Witwatersrand (Johannesburg), Pretoria (Pretoria) Natal (Natal), Cape Town (Cape Town) and the Rector of North Western University (Potchurstrum). Some of the Vice-Chancellors of these universities are still in communication with me till day. I also visited several universities and colleges in the United Kingdom, United States of America and France including the Southern University System Louisiana, IFP School Paris, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen.

In 2003, the Vice-Chancellor attended the General Assembly Meetings of AAU in Mauritius and ACU in Ireland. While in 2000 the Vice-Chancellor in his capacity as the Chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian universities led a delegation of 42 Vice-Chancellors from Nigerian universities to the General Assembly of AAU in Cape Town, South Africa, and also attended the Executive Council Meeting of ACU in Kerala, India. At the AAU meeting in Cape Town, so strong was the impact of the Nigerian Delegation which was led by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, that a Nigerian, the Vice-Chancellor "of the University of Ilorin, Professor Shamsudeen Amali, was elected the Vice President of the Association. The attendance of the meetings of AAU and ACU were approved by Council as conveyed

the Vice-Chancellor's letter of appointment. It is possible that Council saw the attendance by the Vice-Chancellor to those meetings as an avenue for the propagation of the image of the university.

Presentation of Corporate Souvenirs

Although the university normally prepared souvenirs for distribution to certain categories of persons who were invited to grace its Convocations, my administration realised the additional need for the production of small corporate souvenirs which would have on them the inscriptions of the university's logo and name, for distribution to important personalities with whom the university would interact, outside Convocations. Accordingly the university prepared and adopted as official souvenirs, Pins, Ties, Scarves, Pens, Shields and the University of Port Harcourt Cloth which had been prepared by the University of Port Harcourt Women's Association (UPWA. See chapter 17). Although the university had imported some of these items as corporate gifts in the past, the practice had been discontinued probably as a cost saving measure. The fact that we were able to identify local producers of the items ensured that the souvenirs were not expensive. Their use added value to occasions when the university received important visitors or met with such persons outside the university campus. For example when Mr. President, His Excellency Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, visited the university on 16 April, 2004 to commission the OBJ Water Supply Scheme the university gave him the university cloth as a present. And in his characteristic manner, Mr. President immediately got hold of the cloth and tied it round his waist. The cameramen went wild with their shots. Again in November 2004 when Her Excellency, the late Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, then First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, came to the university to declare NUGA 2004 open, in her capacity as the Grand Custodian of NUGA 2004, she was Sporting the University of Port Harcourt scarf. Jeroen van der Veer, the Chief Executive Officer and President of Shell International, a

man who was described in the Cable Network News (CNN) of January 2006 as "very respected", put on the University of Port Harcourt tie which he was given as a souvenir, with great pride soon after the Investiture Ceremony at The Hague at which he received an Honorary Degree of the University of Port Harcourt.

There could have been no better advertisement for the University of Port Harcourt than seeing Mr. President and his wife adorned with the cloth and scarf of the university at different times and a different locations and for Dr. Van der Veer who is listed among the world's top ten entrepreneurs, to be putting on the tie of the University with pride, I understand that the photographs of Dr. Van der Veer in the university's academic gown and tie are posted on the SPDC website.

A word or two more still need to be said about the university pins, ties, scarves and cloth as over the years these items have gained wide acceptance within the university, The pins, ties and scarves are now commonly used by staff and students as every day wears and by the university as special wears for certain occasions. For instance, during the opening and closing ceremonies of NUGA 2004 members of the University Choir which performed on both occasions, all had them on, the ties on males and the scarves on females, Many had the university pins on their dresses, As for the University of Port Harcourt cloth, a number of persons in the university have made shirts, blouses and cloths for tying out of them. Several groups, particularly UPWA, use them for ceremonial occasions.

Special Consideration

Special considerations were given by Council to members of the university's host communities on a number of issues as a way of reaching out to them in line with Council's desire for the university to live in peace with the communities. Shortly after the inauguration, Council expressed its wish to have a dialogue with the host

communities on issues of mutual interest. This culminated in a visit to council in 2000 by the members of the executive branch of Ogbakor Ikwerre, an umbrella sociocultural body under which all members of the Ikwerre ethnic nationality operate. Among the many issues that were ventilated at that meeting, was the question of payment of compensation for the land that was acquired for the establishment of the university by the Federal Government, Both sides agreed to pursue the matter together, Subsequently, Council handled a number of other issues of importance to the immediate communities that surround the university, Probably the most important on this score was the ceding of part of the land at Choba Park to the Choba community,

The land at Choba Park, along with others, was given to the Federal Government by the host communities for the purposes of establishing the University of Port Harcourt. A Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) on the land was issued by the Rivers State Government. The university had used part of the land in establishing various structures including students' hostels, temporary structures for the Institute of Agricultural Research and Development (IARD), the Faculties of Education and Engineering as well as the College of Health Sciences block which was destroyed by fire in 1987, Other than the part that was being used by the IAR as its farm, a good portion of the land was fallow, The chiefs of Choba contacted Council to cede that unused portion to them for the construction of buildings for a Girls Secondary School which Wiburros Compa!}, Which is also operating in Choba town, had promised the community, Council gave due consideration to the matter and accepted to cede the land back to the Choba community on the condition that the parcel of land is given to the community on loan for an indefinite duration and therefore the transaction should not involve any alterations on the C of O that had already been issued to the university since, technically, the land still belongs to the University of Port Harcourt. The deal had since been effected and construction work at the site had commenced.

The other areas of special considerations which Council extended, to members of the university's host communities were in the area; of employment and scholarship awards to their children. In 2001 Council approved the preferential employment of two qualified persons from 'each of the university's host communities and three scholarship awards for their children who gain admission into UDSS. Some of the staff who were employed under this preferential employment scheme are holding their own very well in their service to the institution and have proved to be high flyers. In addition, the chiefs from the communities always received special recognition at major university functions like Convocation.

These actions by Council and the close rapport that evolved, between the Vice-Chancellor and the chiefs in the communities ensured a very harmonious relationship between the university and its surrounding villages. Members of the host communities assist, the university in fighting crimes such as cultism and burglary and on the whole, were willing to be associated with the progress of the institution.

Public Engagements

The business of running a university could be so demanding that it! may leave one with little or no time for other engagements especially those that require some measure of preparations; the delivery of public lectures outside the university premises, is a good example. On the contrary, the Vice-Chancellor saw in these public 'engagements, an opportunity to project the image of the University of Port Harcourt of which he was the Chief Executive, especially if he carried out the public engagements satisfactorily. Consequently, I accepted and carried out a number of public engagements while serving as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt. These included the following:

1. On 6 September, 2001 by invitation, I delivered a lecture at the Marshal National Workshop on Public Health at the University of Benin. The title of my lecture was *The HIV/AIDS War: Will We Win?*

2. On 10 April, 2001 by invitation, I delivered a keynote address at a seminar organised by the Centre for the promotion of Tourism, Arts and Culture in Nigeria. The title of my lecture was Towards a Culture of Peace in Rivers State.

3. On 2 November, 2001 by invitation from the Alumni Association of the Ahmadu Bello University, Rivers State Chapter, I delivered the keynote address at their 2001 Annual Lecture Series which was held at the auditorium of the Rivers State University of Science and Technology. The title of my lecture was SI"Ourges in our Universities: What role for Alumni Associations.

4. On 6 June, 2002 by an invitation from the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, I delivered a lecture to the participants of the Institute's Senior Executive Course No. 24. The title of my lecture was The Nigerian Child and the Health Care Delivery System. I delivered the same lecture the following year, on 8 May 2003 to the participants at the Institute's Executive Course No. 25.

5. On 21 November, 2001 by an invitation from the College of Medicine of the University of Lagos, I delivered the First Felix Dosekun Memorial Lecture at the Great Hall of the College of Medicine of the University of Lagos. The title of my lecture was Human Cloning: *What would Felix Doseeun have said about it?*

6. On 26 November, 2003 by an invitation from the Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SaGaN), I delivered the John Lawson Memorial Lecture at the Society's 2003 Annual Conference which was held at the Presidential Hotel Port Harcourt. The title of my lecture was *Life Depends on Birth weight.*

7. On 26 April, 2004 by an invitation from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the College of Medicine of

the University of Lagos, I delivered a lecture to commemorate the 80th birthday anniversary of Professor Oladele Akinla at the same Great Hall of the College of Medicine of the University of Lagos. The title of my lecture was The Contributions of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology of the College of Medicine of the University of Lagos and the Lagos University Teaching Hospital to Health Care Delivery in Nigeria and West Africa.

8. At the death of Professor Olikoye Ransome Kuti, Nigeria's former Minister of Health, I wrote an article in his honour which was published by the Guardian Newspaper on 13 August 2003. The title was A Tribute to My Teacher Olikoye Ransome Kuti.
9. I was a member of the National Political Reform Conference which was convened between 21 February 2005 and 24 July 2005 by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, to deliberate on some national issues and to make recommendations to government. I was one of six persons who represented the academics from the country's institutions of Higher Education, at the National Conference, at which two of us were from the nation's university system.
10. I served as Chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of all Nigerian Universities between August 2004 and July 2005 which at the time, had a membership of 64.
11. On 13 October 2004, by an invitation from the National Universities Commission (NUC), I delivered the maiden edition of the Commission's Special Lectures Series. The title of my lecture was *Internationalization of Higher Education in Africa: University of Port Harcourt as a Case Study*.
12. I attended academic events of sister universities like Convocations and Public Lectures.
13. I attended social functions that affected staff, sometimes outside Port Harcourt.

14. I attended several government functions.

On all these occasions I was introduced as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, thereby promoting the profile of the university. The same was true of Professor Ayo Banjo when he was Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the university's Governing council. He delivered several public lectures, including University convocation Lectures. He also served as the Chairman of the Committee of Pro chancellors of all Nigerian Universities. He was the Chairman of the Federal Government's negotiating team which had several protracted sessions with the unions in the university system with respect to their trade dispute with government. His introductions while carrying out these activities, indicated he was the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council of the University of Port Harcourt; again, another plus for the image of the university.

The entire content of this chapter can be captured under the caption of *Public Relations* and it appears to make the case for those who posit that the Vice-Chancellor is the university's Image Maker or Chief Public Relations Officer. Indeed so important is the element of Public Relations in the functions of a Chief Executive, that I understand, some universities in the United States of America, use it as one of the major criteria on which the selection of the University's President (Vice-Chancellor) is based. The ability of the candidate to use his *Public Relations* to attract funds from public and private sources into the university is carefully appraised, even if such a candidate were found outside the university environment. I am glad that in our own case, the Governing Council of the university took the lead while the Vice-Chancellor and members of the administration followed. It can rightly be said that most of the successes of our administration can be put down to the good Public Relations posture of the Governing Council and the component parts of the university, including the Vice-Chancellor.

**SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS, UNIVERSITY
STRATEGIC PLAN AND ENDOWMENT FUND**

The common thread that runs through these three items is that they had a common inception, having been launched in the same week, the week commencing Monday, 5 December 2003. But their dates of conception and periods of gestation differed. They also varied to some extent, in their objectives. Whereas the Silver Jubilee Celebrations constituted a period of reflection on what we, as an institution, had been able to achieve during the first twenty-five years of our existence, the Endowment Fund was a straightforward exercise in fund raising, designed to support the development of the university. While the University Strategic Plan was a preparation for the future, a document that should prevent desultory movements of the institution. However, when taken together, they represent part of the bold steps which the University of Port Harcourt took at the turn of the .tnillennium, to invigorate and energise itself and to assure its future as a foremost tertiary educational institution not just in Nigeria but also in the continent of Africa

Silver Jubilee Celebrations

Two dates, April, 1975 on which an announcement for the establishment of a University College Port Harcourt was made, and October, 1977, on which that College acquired the status of a full-fledged university, are always in contention whenever efforts are made to situate the commencement date of the University of Port Harcourt. Happily that debate had been settled by my predecessors who chose the October 1977 date, bearing in mind that it was at that time that the university opened its doors to the first batch of 382 students who registered, out of the 422 that had been offered admissions. So, by December 2003, when the Silver Jubilee Celebrations were held, the university had just gone past 25 years. But it was felt that the celebrations should still hold especially as they were going to coincide with the 20th Convocation of the university.

Next, the question may be asked, why a university should have celebrated mere 25 years of its existence when it is meant to have a perpetual life; some have been in existence for over 700 years. To this we answer that "just as the morning foretells the day, we see our future in our present and that future is likely to be bright." We crowded on account of the "many hopeful signs that are evident for a great future for the university." We celebrated because of the "new Vista that has opened in the academic horizon of the University" and also on account of our wish to thank all those who had supported the institution along that path of excellence, while assuring them of "our unflinching determination to keep the impressive effort, even as we look forward towards our Golden Jubilee."

The Silver Jubilee Celebrations which were combined with the 20th Convocation Ceremony of the university, commenced on Monday, 5 December 2003 and ended on Saturday 13 December 003. The major activities that were used to commemorate the Occasion were: a Press Briefmg, an HIV / AIDS Awareness Campalgn,

a Safety Rally for Campus Transporters and the Silver Jubilee Anniversary Merit Award.

The press briefing was well attended and also well reported' the national newspapers. The Vice-Chancellor who addressed members of the press did so from a prepared text before fielding questions. He traced the history of the institution and highlighted the developments that had taken place in the university and also pointed out the difficulties the university had encountered especially in the area of funding for its activities and developments. Newsmen were informed that, the university had prepared a structured Ten-Year Development Plan of the institution which is known as *the Strategic Plan* and which envisages an orderly development of the university in the areas of academics, buildings and supporting facilities. The Vice-Chancellor indicated that The Strategic Plan Document would be launched at the 20th Convocation ceremony, to which he invited the members of the Press. In order to raise the funds that would be needed to support the Strategic Plan, the university was also going to launch a 30 billion naira Endowment Fund at the same occasion. He then drew the attention of every one that was present at the occasion to the various events and invited them all to attend the Silver Jubilee Merit Award Ceremony at which ten deserving staff of the university who had served the institution with distinction would be publicly recognised.

In an organisation where the preponderance of persons is made up of those in the age group that is most susceptible to contracting the HIV infection, like students in a university, any opportunity that presents itself for advocacy on the disease, must be seized. The university was not going to let the golden opportunity, such the one that was offered by the Silver Jubilee Celebrations, slip by. The university's HIV / AIDS Committee, which was led by a member of Council, Dr. Boma Lawson, organised an awareness campaign on 9 December 2003 at the Convocation Arena of the institution. Students of the university, pupils from UDSS, members of UPWA

and others from within and outside the university, attended the occasion at which the point was made that abstinence, the use of condom, as well as having a mutually faithful sexual relationship were the major preventive measures against the acquisition of the infection.

The Safety Rally for Campus Transporters was organised by the Alumni Association of the university, The event which was held prior to the decision by the Congregation of the university to ban motorbike operators on campus was targeted against all commercial vehicular operators and especially those that operated motorbikes. This was so because the greatest number of accident cases, especially the serious ones that involved head injuries and fractures, resulted from the operations of motorbikes. The rally itself stressed the importance of safety measures that could save lives in the event of accidents. Such measures it was emphasised would also ensure orderly operations of vehicles on campus. The operators of various vehicles, including those of motorbikes, assured the organisers of the rally that they found the event useful and that they would strive to put into practice what they had learnt at the rally.

Silver Jubilee Merit Award

This was one of the highpoints of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations as it accorded open recognition to ten members of staff who, in the opinion of various sections of the university, were the best staff of the institution.

About two months to the commencement of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations, the Vice-Chancellor invited Rev. Fr. Professor Sylvanus Udoidem, a man of dedication, character and conviction, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and the resident Chaplain of the Chapel of Annunciation (Catholic Chaplaincy) of the University of Port Harcourt and charged him with the responsibility of identifying the best ten staff of the university for recognition at the Silver Jubilee Celebrations. Professor Udoidem was to form his own

1. MR. CHIBUZOR WORDU

Mr. Wordu was described as a rare human being with an exceptionally endearing temperament which had made it possible for him to have satisfactorily served six Vice-Chancellors of the university in succession as Orderly and Security Officer with the same intensity and dedication despite all the temporary differences and idiosyncratic preferences of the Vice-Chancellors.

2. PROFESSOR KAY WILLIAMSON

Kay, now late, was presented as the mother and grandmother of the university of Port Harcourt who had single-handedly nurtured, mothered, modelled and encouraged future intellectual giants for the University of Port Harcourt from the undergraduate to terminal degree levels. Kay Williamson, the audience was informed, had spent her own money to buy books to establish a special research centre in the University which was open to all staff and students.

3. MISS VICTORIA MATHEW

Miss Mathew, a Cleaner in the Bursary Department, was described as being very honest and dedicated and one who worked cheerfully for long hours without seeking special rewards or remunerations. It was reported that Victoria was always willing to take on additional responsibilities even in difficult circumstances.

4. PROFESSOR MBUK BENEDICT EBONG

Mbuk Ebong, the Director of UAC, was described as an honest man who had not fallen prey to looting university funds which had come his way as a result of his interactions with major oil prospecting companies like Schlumberger, Chevron, Elf and Shell on behalf of the University.

5. MR. SAMUEL NDAH

The team was profuse in their description of the good qualities of Samuel Ndah, a Carpenter in the Works and Services Department of the university. He was cited as being creative ingenious, dedicated, honest, reliable, dexterous and hutnble~ The citation revealed an instance when Mr. Ndah returned some unspent money at the completion of a job that had been assigned to him.

6. MRS. FRANEBI OKOKO

The citation on Mrs. Okoko, the Secretary of the College of Health Science, described her as being very diligent, honest and consistent in the way she rendered her services to the university. The audience was informed that 90% of the nominations that came from the university's College of Health Sciences, from junior and senior academic as well as non-academic staff, nominated Mrs. Okoko.

7. DR. ELIJAH IYAGBA

Dr. Iyagba, the acting Director of the Basic Studies Unit of the university, as his citation indicated, was singled out for this honour because he was "doing an ordinary job in an extraordinary way". Dr. Iyagba with his personable personality, had cleaned out the operations of the Basic Studies Unit of the university in such a manner that it was no longer associated with the bad name which it had brought to the institution prior to his taking up the appointment.

8. MR. MICHA AARON

The citation on Aaron, as he is popularly known, who is a Higher Works Superintendent (Electrical) in the Works and Services Department, recalled an incident of a fire outbreak in the university in July 2001 at Nos. 10 and 11 Ali Carre

Verde residential area of the University. On that occasion, without undue concern for his own personal safety, Aaron had exhibited an incredible act of bravery which led to the extinguishing of the fire. Micha Aaron was also described by his colleagues as being "more dependable than other staff in the department."

9. CLINTON UTONG

Clinton's level of honesty and dedication to duty were described as "incomparable;". His citation revealed that he returned a substantial balance of some money that was given to him to purchase an item in an emergency for the university. On a number of occasions he had used his personal money to purchase correction fluid (tip-ex) for use when the office ran out of stock. He had also sacrificed a number of his weekends to enable him produce papers for Senate meetings even when his supervising officer had not requested him to do so. Clinton Utong was a Chief Typist in the Registry Department of the university.

10. DR. TOSAN VINCENT OTUKENEFOR

Dr. Otukenefor's citation was brief but it was one that said it all. He was simply described as being the Chairman of a Committee which was meant only for the strong-hearted and strong-willed and that he had carried out his duties as Chairman of that Committee without succumbing to pressures and temptations of bribery and corrupt practices. Dr. T. V Otokunefor was the Chairman of the Certificate Verification Committee of the Senate of the university.

Each of the awardees received a shield as well as a cash donation. the late Professor Kay Williamson who responded on behalf of the awardees thanked the university for the recognition accorded

them. She promised that they would all strive to work even harder so that the new positive image of the university that was then emerging would be sustained.

The Silver Jubilee Award exercise was hailed by many within and outside the university as timely and thoughtful. The administration received many congratulatory messages on it. But it suffered one important and relevant criticism. There were some who felt, and in my view correctly, that the event would have been richer if it had been made to include former staff of the university as well as those who might have merited the award post-humously. Unfortunately, that wider context of the celebration did not suggest itself to the administration at the planning stage of the event.

University Strategic Plan

The preparation of a Strategic Plan for the university was through a distinctly participatory and open process. Its origins are rooted in the early 2000 activities of the Senate when, as acting Vice-Chancellor, I posed a number of questions to that apex supervisory body of the academic functions of the university, regarding which direction the university should go. The document itself stemmed from the submissions of the Think Tank Committee which was headed by the late Professor Chinyere Ikoku. Its comprehensiveness and perfect finish are a glowing tribute to the diligence and characteristic thoroughness of the man who was saddled with responsibility of putting it together, Professor Samuel N. Okiwelu. By the late 1990s, drawing from the experience of its first decade of existence, the need was felt for a review of the development plan of the university in order to enable the institution meet existing realities and to face future challenges. The recommendations of the Ikoku's Think Tank Committee which was instituted to forge a new direction for the university contained the essential elements of the Plan Development plan.

The University was to aggressively address the issue of infrastructural inadequacies and decay and source-for funds to carry out its legitimate business. The outlook of the institution must change from that of an insular, local university which is preoccupied with, mundane issues, to one of a forward-looking and dynamic institution which is seriously engaged in its calling and is reaching out to its local as well as the international communities. Staff and students must shun trifles and irrelevances and embrace discipline and scholarship.

However, even with all tills, the university decided on a wider participation and consultation as part of the information gathering process and so formally charged Professor Samuel N. Okiwelu, a man with an eye for perfection, to produce a Strategic Plan for the university. This decision by the university happily coincided with the advent of the John D and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation into the life of the institution. MacArthur Foundation, a philanthropic organisation with its headquarters in Chicago in the United States of America had identified the University of Port Harcourt as one of four such institutions in Nigeria, for which the organisation was willing to offer long-term support in its developmental efforts. A grant from that organisation for the University of Port Harcourt to formulate a *Strategic Plan*, coupled with a similar one from the NUC assured the execution of the project in which contributions were received from all sections of the university community, including the students.

The plan itself, titled *Building the Future* and which covers a span of ten years, 2003-2013, is published in a 101-paged book with a blue glossy cover. It contains the Mission, Philosophy, Vision, as well as the ten Goals and Objectives of the university, ranging from the Upgrading of infrastructure and utilities, through the extension of educational opportunity to the wider society, to the promotion Of the mission of the university. The plan sets down fifteen key responsibilities to which the university must commit itself, including the building of a strong institutional culture that respects free and

open debate 011 all matters that concern the university. The plan concluded by estimating a total sum of about thirty billion naira as what would be required for its execution, on a yearly average of three billion naira.

The Strategic Plan document which was formally launched at the 20th Convocation Ceremony on Saturday, 13 December 2003 has been distributed to major stakeholders of the institution and is being implemented by the university.

20th Convocation Ceremony /Endowment Fund

In order to save cost and for ease of logistics, the Silver Jubilee Celebrations, the launching of the Strategic Plan Document as well as that of the Endowment Fund, were all made to coincide with the events of the 20th Convocation Ceremony, which were concluded on Saturday, 13 December 2003. For the launching of the Strategic Plan, the architect of the document, Professor Samuel Okiwelu was called upon to address the Convocation and thereafter the document was launched by the Chairman of the occasion, Alhaji Yinka Iyanda Folawiyo, the *Baba Adini* of Nigeria who was represented by Chief Akinbiyi.

Regarding the Endowment Fund, compliments must be paid to Professor Sylvanus Cookey as being the first Vice-Chancellor of the institution to have launched such a fund. On the one that was conducted by my administration, the letters of appeal to members of the university community, were sent out well before the launching date. The state of the Endowment Fund as at 31 March 2005 was as follows:

	Naira
Contributions from Individuals and Agencies	53,058,00.00
Contributions from University Staff	2,700,805.00
Total	55,758,805.00

Source: Bursary Department, 27 May 2005

One can say that the sum of money so far collected is small in comparison to the 30 billion naira that is required for the implementation of the Strategic Plan. But the collection is a start and it is very reassuring that members of the University Community gave so much. Happily Council intends to harness the funds wisely so as to ensure a multiplier effect and handsome returns.

As with other Convocations the 20th Convocation, of the university was preceded by the Convocation Lecture which was delivered by Dr. Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the then Honourable Minister of Finance. In her lecture which was titled, *We must reform our values too*, the Honourable Minister stated that for the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) of the present government which is led by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, to succeed, the nation must also reform its values. Nigerians must shun corrupt practices in all their dealings and be transparent and honest.

As for the Convocation itself, it was like any other in the university except that the Honorary Degree Awardees were called Silver Jubilee Honorary Degree Awardees. In addition, a Silver Jubilee cake was cut to commemorate the occasion.

The four persons who received the university's Honorary Degrees on that occasion, were:

1. His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State
2. Olorogun Alex Ibru, Publisher of the Guardian Newspaper
3. Ambassador Joe Iyalla, Nigeria'S former Representative to the United Nations
4. Dr. Mrs. Ndi Okereke-Onyiuke Director General of the Nigerian Stock Exchange. "

As can be seen, the Silver Jubilee Honorary Degree Awardees were carefully selected. Dr. Peter Odili, had won several accolades

for running a people-oriented government in Rivers State and by all estimates, had associated himself more than any other, with the developmental efforts of the university since his assumption of office as the Executive Governor of Rivers State. Two men Ambassador Joe Iyalla and Olorogun Alex Ibru, even at great peril to their lives, had insisted on a better Nigeria, "where no man would be oppressed", in the conduct of their lives. And, Dr. Mrs. Ndi Okereke-Onyiuke, a woman of substance, was holding her own in a male-dominated profession.

The introduction of the Endowment Cake was an innovation which was accepted after some debate. But all would agree that it ultimately added some colour to the event. It was jointly cut by the Silver Jubilee Honorary Degree Awardees together with some of the other dignitaries that were present at the occasion including the Pro-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor.

The 20th Convocation Ceremony events of Saturday, 15 December 2003 were carried live by the Nigerian Television Authority as well as the African Independent Television (AIT) and beamed to Nigerians not only in their homes and offices but to many others in different parts of the world. The events made an audacious statement by the University of Port Harcourt of its determination to pull itself up by its boots traps so as "to be ranked among the best universities in Africa, renowned for its teaching, research, innovation and knowledge transfer". The Silver Jubilee Celebrations reviewed the path of the institution, identified areas of Success and failure and drew lessons for the future. No organisation that is worth its salt would compromise on such self evaluation and rejuvenation. As the Strategic Plan delineated clearly the processes and blocks for "building the future" of the institution, the Endowment fund is to raise the resources that will be needed. What is subsequently required then is for "the University to be faithful with this plan".

MACARTHUR FOUNDATION AND FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

MacArthur Foundation brought more than "grants" to the University of Port Harcourt. It also, in the words of the Foundation's President, Dr. Jonathan Fanton, brought "friendship" and this was the commencement of the concept of the renewed "Friends of the University of Port Harcourt" which has served the purposes of the university so well.

The foundation was established in 1978 by John D. MacArthur (1897- 1978), who developed and owned Bankers Life and Casualty Company and other businesses, as well as considerable property in Florida and New York. His wife Catherine (1909-1981) held Positions in many of these companies and served as a Director of the Foundation. One of the ten largest foundations in the United States of America, MacArthur Foundation with its headquarters in Chicago, Illinois, has assets worth \$4.2 billion (US). It is a private, independent, "not-for-profit", grant-making institution which is dedicated to "helping groups and individuals foster lasting Improvement in human conditions". The foundation makes grants totaling approximately \$180 million (US) annually.

For over ten years, the foundation has maintained an office in Nigeria and imTested \$14 million (US) in support of individuals and

organisations working to improve the country. The foundation's interest in the nation's higher education is based upon the belief that strong universities and intellectual freedom are essential to developing and sustaining healthy democratic societies. The office of the foundation in Nigeria is located in Abuja and is manned by Dr. Kole Shettima, a charming, urbane and very efficient young man.

The first contact between the University of Port Harcourt and the foundation was sometime in late 2000 when the President of the Foundation led a team of experts that consisted of former Presidents (Vice-Chancellors) of American universities, former Ambassadors and serving academics in American and Canadian universities to look at some universities in Nigeria and to hold discussions with their chief executives. The purpose of the team's visit was to identify four universities in the country, "with strong leadership", whose developmental efforts the Foundation could support on a long-term basis.

The day the team visited the University of Port Harcourt, was a particularly eventful one, for as the team was discussing with the university's administration in the Vice-Chancellor's Committee Room, some problem was brewing just outside the door of the room of the venue of the meeting.

Some students had gathered to protest the non-arrival of their National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Call-Up letters and a crisis of sorts was festering. Not even the entreaty that the Vice-Chancellor was busy with some visitors from abroad and that he would address them after the departure of the visitors, could dissuade the students; they had insisted that the Vice-Chancellor must leave whatever he was doing then in order to address them immediately. Reports of the students' increasing restiveness kept coming to the Vice-Chancellor in the Committee Room even as he struggled to keep pace with the two events at the same time. From the palpable consternation on the face of the Vice-Chancellor, it soon became

clear to the visitors that all was not well and that they should probably terminate their visit at that point. Coming from them, the suggestion was most welcome and the Vice-Chancellor uttered a couple of completely incoherent sentences which were barely audible even to him let alone to the others in the room, by way of an apology. What was left was for the Vice-Chancellor to then summon the courage and bravery that were required to lead his visitors out of the door into their respective vehicles, in the glare of the restive students. But as most often happens at such tense and unpredictable moments, the Vice-Chancellor and the visitors walked past the irate students without a stir.

Just before the visitors got into their cars, the Vice-Chancellor made a private and stronger apology to Dr. Fanton, the leader of the delegation who, being a former University President (Vice-Chancellor) himself might not have been unfamiliar with such actions by students. The leader of the team responded by assuring the Vice-Chancellor that the incident was not going to count against the university. But even with that assurance, the Vice-Chancellor was quite disappointed with the behaviour of the students believing that the university had blown its chance. *Murphy's Law*, he had opined, could not have operated at a worse possible time.

In the end, quite on the contrary, as the university was to learn at a later date -when the foundation had decided on the four universities as those of Ibadan, Port Harcourt, Bayero, Kano and Ahmadu Bello, Zaria - that the incident counted in its favour. The team was impressed by how they saw the authorities of the University of Port Harcourt handle a live situation which was not only difficult but potentially dangerous. The foundation was of the view that the events at the University of Port Harcourt on that day were not strange, given the difficulties that were being faced by universities in Nigeria. And that it was the elimination of such tensions in institutions of higher education through the provision of a favourable environment for scholarship that constituted the

main mission of the foundation in the educational sector. Happily, the Vice-Chancellor was able to sort out the issue of the NYSC Call-Up letters which was the source of the student's grievance.

With the selection process over, MacArthur Foundation invited the Vice-Chancellors of the four universities it had identified to rounds of meetings in Chicago and London in April 2001 in order to advance discussions on various issues. After the last meeting in London, Dr. Fanton arranged yet another private meeting between himself, Mr. Alan Detheridge - the Vice-President EP, External Affairs, Shell International, London - and 1. At that meeting, the President of MacArthur Foundation drew the attention of the Vice-President of Shell International to the unacceptable state of affairs at the University of Port Harcourt. Dr. Fanton pleaded with Mr. Detheridge that since the university is located in the same city as the headquarters of the company's operations in Nigeria, Shell, being a major oil prospecting company in the country, should take the lead in bringing succour to the institution. Alan Detheridge accepted the plea from Jonathan Fanton as reasonable and promised to do something about the matter.

On my return to Nigeria, contact was made with the authorities of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and from that point things moved fairly rapidly. The then Deputy Managing Director of SPDC, Mr. Egbert Imomoh accepted that his company would serve as the arrowhead for the formation of a group to be known as "The Friends of the University of Port Harcourt" which would strive to respond to the needs of the institution. The first meeting which was by invitation was arranged to coincide with the visit of Dr. Jonathan Fanton. It took place at the Aristohouse, off Abacha Road, Port Harcourt, on 1 February, 2002.

The meeting was very well attended by those invited as other than the team from MacArthur Foundation, several individuals and representatives of various companies including those of: Chevron, Texaco, Schlumberger, AGip, AllStates Group, NDDC, TOTAL, FINA\ELF, Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Ltd., KLIFCO Nig.

Ltd., ADAMAC Group of Companies and Standard Trust Bank. The Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the University's Governing council was also there.

The atmosphere was very relaxing as there was plenty to eat and drink encouraging the gathering of about 60 people to mix freely. Thereafter, the Vice-Chancellor was called upon to address the gathering, which he did in two parts: power point and oral presentations. He traced the early years of the university and the enthusiasm that greeted the establishment of the institution. He then went on to show how the expectations of the university had been dashed, on account of poor funding and how badly this had affected infrastructural development in the institution. It was his opinion that most of the ills of the institution: cultism, examination malpractices and admission racketeering, arose as a result of the inability of the institution to provide an appropriate environment to support scholarship. He concluded by assuring everybody that there was then, a strong determination in the university, ranging from the Governing Council to the smallest junior staff, to change things for the better, if only the institution could have some suppmpt for its well-articulated plan of self rejuvenation.

So passionate and poignant was the presentation by the Vice-Chancellor that reactions to it were swift. Dr. Jonathan Fanton, the President of MacArthur Foundation was the first to react. He advised Nigerians that investment in education was probably one of the best forms of investments a nation could make because in doing so, such a nation was investing directly in its own future. He reminded the house that there were few countries in the world with Weak and ineffective educational system where democracy and the rule of law thrive. He then announced a handsome grant from his organisation as an initial step in its commitment of support for the University's immediate and long-term developmental needs. The grant was to be used for in-campus .intranet networking as well as Internet connectivity, staff development, library support and project

administration. The huge ovation that greeted his announcement had hardly died down when others felt sufficiently motivated to make their own contributions.

SPDC promised to keep alive the forum of "Friends of the University of Port Harcourt" and to come forth in more concrete terms after consultations. Total Fina Elf, as the company was then known, committed itself to collaborating with the university in setting up an Institute of Petroleum Studies with comparable standards with the best in the world. Schlumberger announced the donation of a well-equipped computer laboratory to the University's Faculty of Engineering. It also, subsequently, donated the very expensive Petrel Software to the university's Institute of Petroleum Studies as well as to its Faculties of Engineering and Science. Those who were not able to make firm commitments on that occasion indicated they would get back to the university and on the whole, the evening was time well-spent,

SPDC hosted another round of get-together for the "Friends of the University of Port Harcourt" in January, 2003, this time, at the Vice-Chancellor's lodge in the university campus. The attendance was poor and representation in most cases was at a much lower level; even the meal did not stand up to expectation. But this did not appear to have diminished interest in the group of the "Friends of the University of Port Harcourt".

SPDC in addition to its leadership role in the affairs of "Friends of the University of Port Harcourt" financed the university's much needed Information and Communication Technology Centre (ICTC). The company completed the construction work and furnishing at the site and provided communication equipment including computers and VSAT. Chris Finlayson, then Managing Director of the company was at hand to ensure that the ceremony to declare the Centre open in November 2003, met with his company's standards.

The funding of the ICTC by SPDC freed the section of the grant which had earlier been made by MacArthur Foundation for that purpose. A befitting Senate Building is now under construction financed by that portion of the MacArthur Foundation grant. In addition, the foundation in July 2004 awarded a grant to support the purchase of general science laboratory equipment for the Faculty of Science.

MacArthur Foundation under the programme for the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, also collaborates with the consortium of Ford Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the WK Kellogg Foundation. The main focus of the consortium is to support ICT and library development, including capacity building, in universities in Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Ghana. The partnership currently supports the provision of bandwidth to the University of Port Harcourt as well as five other universities in Nigeria.

Other forms of support which have come the way of the university through the forum of the "Friends of the University of Port Harcourt" include the magnificent Ebitimi Banigo Auditorium which was constructed for the university by Chief Ebitimi Banigo and the All States Group. Chief O. B. Lulu Briggs and Moni Pulo also delivered computers and other ICT equipment to the university as well as a sizeable sum of money with which the university was able to register a company, *Uniport Petroleum Ltd.*

During one of his many interactions with the staff and students of the university, Jonathan Fanton, President of MacArthur Foundation, indicated that the foundation was in the University of Port Harcourt "for the long haul". No doubt, during that long haul, the foundation will disburse many grants to the university for the execution of various projects. However, to my mind, none of these grants would be greater in value than the "grant" which the organisation had already made to the university by way of the

manifest friendship and unsurpassed goodwill which its President, Jonathan Fanton; brought into the university

In chapter eight, I have indicated that much of the successes of the university when I was in charge of its affairs could be put down to the affirmative public relations posture of the Governing Council and the Officers of the institution, led by the Vice-Chancellor. The MacArthur Foundation, through Jonathan Fanton, brought to this posture its own dimension of amity and camaraderie and it was the synergistic and multiplier effect of this tripod of Council, Administration and Foundation that propelled the university to the heights that it was able to attain.

Imposingly charismatic, alluringly amiable and with a well-built frame, the Board of Governors of MacArthur Foundation obviously made the right choice in Jonathan Fanton as its President. His insistence on strong University-Industry Partnership is obviously the right way for universities to go in order to revive themselves and to engage in development-oriented research projects. His call for strong universities as prerequisites and vehicles for the promotion of national democratic ideals are borne out by historical precepts. His advocacy for staff update as well as staff/students exchanges is to expand the horizons of knowledge acquisition and his preference for technology is a pointer to its role in the contemporary knowledge industry.

These convictions encouraged Jonathan Fanton to write on behalf of the University of Port Harcourt and also to lead and accompany its officials not just to the SPDC but indeed to many of the persons and organisations who constitute the "Friends of the University of Port Harcourt." As for the group itself, so vital are its contributions to the well being of the institution now that Dr. Jeroen van der Veer, the president of Shell International, acknowledged the group in his response on the occasion at University of Port Harcourt honoured him with an honorary degree in July 2005. In a feature article titled *The Giant Strides of Friends of Uniport* by Mr. Williams Wodi

which was published in the Nigerian Guardian newspaper of Friday, 13 August 2004 (page 56), the writer concluded by stating that "MacArthur Foundation should take pride in its catalytic role; friends of Uniport should be encouraged by the results of their giant strides". There can be no better way of concluding this chapter than to agree with the spirit and letter of that statement.

PRESIDENTIAL VISITATION EXERCISE

Section 13 (2) of the University of Port Harcourt Act (Decree No 84 of 1979) states that:

'The visitor shall as often as the circumstances may required, not being less than once every five years, conduct a Visitation of the university or direct such a visitation to be conducted by such persons as the Visitor may deem fit and in respect of any of the affairs of the University.

Under this provision, the University of Port Harcourt has had three 'visitations, the last one, in 2004, being the subject matter of this chapter. However, more than a year after the report had been submitted to government, the report and the government's White Paper on it have still not been made public!

It 'was on August 19, 2004, that government constituted and inaugurated 'visitation panels to Federal Government owned universities, including the University of Port Harcourt. Members of the team for the University of Port Harcourt were as follows:

1. Amb-assador Ladan Abdullahi Shuni Chairman
2. Professor E. E. Osim Member

- 3. Chief Cletus Opata Member
- 4. Alhaji Mahammadu Lamin Member
- 5. Pastor S. O. Okunala Member

The Terms of Reference of the Visitation Panel were as follows:

1. Determine the relationship between the institution and the various statutory bodies it interacts with, for the purposes of supervision, planning, finance, discipline and guidance, etc. Such bodies include the Governing Council, the supervising agency (National Universities Commission) and the Federal Ministry of Education as well as the Visitor.
2. Looking into the leadership -quality of the institution in terms of the roles of the Governing Council, the Vice-Chancellor and at her Principal Officers.
3. Looking into the financial management of the institution over the recommended period and determine whether it was in compliance with appropriate regulations.
4. Investigate the application of funds, particularly the special grants and loans meant for special projects in order to determine the status of such projects and their relevance for further funding.
5. Examine the "Law" establishing the institution and see in what ways the law has been observed, in all its ramifications, by the component authorities and also suggest any necessary modification to the law in order to enable the institution to achieve its objectives better.
6. Study the general atmosphere of the institution over the period in question. In particular, comment on the general conduct and comportment of all the p-erson:nci of the institution, especially the students, staff and managers and advise as to whether the correct training is being given and haw necessary corrections may be made. This shorild include the .relationship

between the institution and the host community over the period in question.

7. Examine all the academic programmes, policies and practices as *well* as the *total* academic and physical development, performance and direction of the institution and advise as to whether the desired targets have been met and how modifications may be made to achieve maximum academic productivity, excellence and service to the nation.

8. Study in detail the management structure and performance of the institution including fiscal and administrative, personnel and welfare policies, and advise on ways to cut on costs, reduce waste and continue to develop, if necessary by adaptation, rather than by expansion in the face of dwindling resources.

9. Advise on any and all other aspects of the institution that you consider should be of interest to both the Visitor and the *Public*, and to the attainment of the objectives for which the institution was set up.

The panel was given 30 days to complete the assignment and the 'visitation period was 1999-2003. Happily, the responsibility of the university in a visitation exercise is also spelt out in Section 13 (3) (a) and (b) of Decree 84 as follows:

to make available to the Visitor, and to any other persons conducting a visitation in pursuance of this section, such facilities and assistance as he or they may reasonably require for the purposes of a visitation; ...

to give effect to any instructions consistent with the provisions of this Decree which may be given by the Visitor in consequence of a visitation.

All that the university did therefore was to lay appropriate documents before members of the panel and to provide all necessary facilities for their work and comfort. In addition, all staff and

students, including members of the administration were advised to be ready to clarify issues when called upon by members of the panel.

When the team was doing its work at the university, which involved an extensive review of various documents, interviews with individuals and visits to virtually all sections of the institution, two things happened that bear reporting. There was a letter that was written to the panel by Mr. Brown Amadi, then Chairman of the Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU), University of Port Harcourt branch, and the appearance of Professor Edward Ezewu before members of the panel.

Mr. Brown Amadi had written to the panel accusing the administration of some very serious crimes. He indicated that he had heard from usually "reliable sources" that the Vice-Chancellor had embezzled a sum of money which had been sent to the university as a grant by MacArthur Foundation for the purchase of science equipment for the Faculty of Science. He stated that he was concerned because if the foundation got to know that funds sent for projects in the university were embezzled by the Vice-Chancellor, it would no longer be interested in supporting the developmental needs of the university. The second issue which Mr. Brown Amadi raised in his letter to the panel was that he had also been reliably informed that Professor Michael Oti who had served initially as the Chairman of the Local Organising Committee (LOC) for the NUGA 2004 Games, had resigned his appointment because money was being embezzled by the Vice-Chancellor and his cronies (see chapter on NUGA 2004). The panel, he had requested, should invite Professor Oti to indicate the amount of money that the Vice-Chancellor had stolen and that if he, Oti, refused to cooperate, the panel should threaten him with appropriate sanctions and that he was sure that at that point, Professor Oti would offer his cooperation. Mr. Brown Amadi's letter was handed over to me to study and to comment on before the panel during its afternoon sitting of that day.

I invited Professor Oti, Mr Michael Ekeh, the Bursar of the university, who keeps custody of all the funds of the institution and Professor Mbuk Ebong, the Director of the University Advancement Centre (UAC), who directly related with MacArthur Foundation on grants, and of course Mr. Brown Amadi himself to the afternoon session of the sitting of the panel where I was to react to the issues raised by Mr. Brown Amadi. Unfortunately, I could not reach Professor Bose Okoli, then Dean of the Faculty of Science. It was Professor Okoli's presentation on the state of affairs in the laboratories of the Faculty of Science, during one of the many interactions that members of the university community had with Dr. Jonathan Fanton, Chairman of MacArthur Foundation, that motivated Dr. Fanton to make a promise of a grant for the specific purpose of purchasing laboratory equipment for the Faculty of Science. The utilisation of the grant and the process of accounting for it would also be the responsibility of the Dean of Science.

At the meeting, I expressed my disappointment that a member of staff who was supposed to be a responsible union leader could write such blatant falsehood about the Chief Executive of the university. I indicated that although MacArthur Foundation had approved in principle to make such a grant to the university, the foundation was yet to release the money. Both the Bursar and Professor Ebong corroborated my statement. As for Professor Oti's resignation as the Chairman of the LOC, it was untrue that he did so because funds were being embezzled. To the best of my knowledge, he had resigned because of personal reasons. Professor Oti also corroborated my statement before the panel.

Panel members were astonished and upset with the actions of Mr. Brown Amadi and requested him to render an unreserved apology to the Vice-Chancellor. Mr. Amadi walked up to the Vice-Chancellor, knelt down before him, held the Vice-Chancellor's knees and apologised profusely.

As for Edward Ezewu who had put up a personal appearance before the panel, his presentation, to which I was invited to react, was his usual load of trash. The Vice-Chancellor, he had said, had stolen all the money in the university including a sum of 11million naira which the university had invested in the Choba-Uniport Community Bank. Professor Joseph Okoh had falsely awarded a PhD degree to a student in the Faculty of Education; Professor Emmanuel Anosike had stolen money from the School of Graduate Studies and the Vice-Chancellor had refused to discipline them. The former Vice-Chancellor had killed his son while the present one had built a house for the Chairman of Council with university money so that he the Chairman, could appoint him the Vice-Chancellor. And that because he, Edward Ezewu, had drawn the attention of members of the university community as well as the general public to these facts, the Vice-Chancellor had terminated his appointment with the university without due process.

Whereas Edward Ezewu had made his presentation to the panel in my absence, I pleaded with members to invite him to be present for my reactions. They accepted, invited him and he was present. I began by drawing the attention of the panel to the fact that in my introduction of various issues in the university to them at the commencement of their assignment, I had deliberately avoided any mention of the likes of Edward Ezewu as I was confident that he, Ezewu would not spare them the drudgery and would act true to type by knocking on their door, sooner, rather than later. His action had proved me right.

I informed the panel that the matters which Ezewu had brought before them were the very issues which he had canvassed and shopped around with remorselessly but without any success before various courts, the Federal Ministry of Education, the Federal Ministry of Finance, the NUC, the Presidency, a number of junk tabloids, Human Rights Violation and Investigation Commission

(a.k.a. Oputa Panel), the Nigeria Police Force, the State Security

Service (SSS), the previous Visitation Panel to the university, and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). This had been so, I indicated, because more often than not, the issues he raises were minor events which he had blown out of proportion or fabrications that were solely designed to tarnish the image of the university as well as those of its officials.

Edward Ezewu, I pointed out to the panel, started his academic career as a member of staff of the University of Ibadan. He had requested for his services at that university to be transferred to the University of Port Harcourt, to which he had come on as a visiting appointment. But the University of Ibadan had refused to grant his request.

I then addressed each of the issues which Ezewu had raised before the panel one after the other and for each, I showed the extent of fabrication or outright falsehood which Ezewu had introduced into the matter. I also pointed out to the members of the panel the number of security agents, courts, and investigative panels that had sat on the matters following Ezewu's complaints, I further informed the panel that without one exception, these investigative bodies had returned verdicts which indicated that Ezewu's positions on the matters before them were not supported by available facts: verdicts which Ezewu had refused to accept on all occasions. As for the issue of the Vice-Chancellor terminating his appointment without due process, I affirmed that this was again untenable as it was the Governing Council that wrote to him, Ezewu, indicating that it no longer required his services.

I must have spoken for the better part of two hours during which time everyone listened with rapt attention, including, surprising, Edward Ezewu; no one attempted to interrupt me. At the end of my address Ezewu was asked if he had any further contributions to make. He mumbled a few sentences to the effect that all the Vice-Chancellor had said was false. Seeing that he was completely defenseless in all the allegations he had brought before them, the

Chairman of the Panel counselled Ezewu regarding his behaviour. In the university painting out to him that as someone that senior in age and status, a better course of action was expected of him. The Chairman then requested Ezewu to rise up from his seat, go to the Vice-Chancellor and render his apology. Ezewu did; he walked up to me and stretched forth his right hand for me to shake him. Of course I shook him warmly and he returned to his seat.

The next morning Ezewu wrote to the Vice-Chancellor, requesting that following what he described as "reconciliation" that had taken place the previous day, the Vice-Chancellor should withdraw "the purported letter of termination and recall him to his post. I caused a letter to be written to him to the effect that his issue was a Council matter in which the Vice-Chancellor did not have superseding powers. Never able to change his spots just like a leopard, Ezewu wrote back an receipt of my letter informing me that he had withdrawn the one he wrote earlier which he described as "reconciliation".

Other than these two. "interesting issues", the work of the panel went well and the visitation was finally rounded off on Tuesday 21 September, 2004, with a cocktail party. But before this, the panel paid a courtesy call on His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, to thank him for his numerous financial and logistic assistance to the university. The panel similarly paid a Courtesy call on His Royal Majesty, Eze (Dr.) Frank Eke, the Eze Gbaka Gbaka of Ewo kingdom at his palace in Woji town and held a Press Conference on Monday, 20 September 2004 at which it briefed members of the media on the purpose of the visitation to the university.

With the type of comprehensive Terms of Reference that is given to them, everyone would agree that periodic visitations are good for universities. They would ensure that universities are run in line with the laws that established them and also draw the attention of university proprietors to some serious issues in their universities. A

visitation should therefore give rise to certain outcomes to which both the university and its proprietors are expected to react for the overall improvement of the institution. So, the situations whereby the reports of visitation and government's reactions on them are not made public more than one year after the visitations, defeat the purpose for which the exercises were carried out.

THE 20TH NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES GAMES (NUGA2004)

The Nigerian Universities Games Association (NUGA) was set up in the early 1960s to promote "true friendship through games" among Nigerian university students. The games of the association are organised biennially in rotation among Nigerian universities by the NUGA Council under the supervision of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors(CVC). The first set of games, at which five universities participated, was held in 1966 at the University of Ibadan. The University of Port Harcourt hosted the 12th edition of the games in 1988. And so one key difficulty which I knew I would be confronted with when the idea of hosting the games again presented itself to me in July 2000, was the issue of obtaining the consent of my colleagues at the CVC, as there were a number of Universities that had not their first chance.

Following my appointment as Vice-Chancellor in July 2000, my mind was engaged in deep thoughts in search of major events which would showcase the University of Port Harcourt and at the same time serve as templates for me to solicit for funds and assistance from any legitimate source with which to improve the facilities in the University. Hosting the NUGA Games readily came to mind.

- My reckoning was that under the platform of preparing my university to host the games, which would be for all students in Nigerian universities, I could ask for any form of assistance from anybody ranging from the donation of horticultural equipment, to the construction of sporting facilities, and even to the construction of students' hostels. It was my opinion that many persons and organization would give me a hearing knowing that the facilities I was seeking to put in place would be of benefit to all Nigerian students. But these facilities would be left behind at the University of Port Harcourt after the games and would then serve the purposes of the institution. Furthermore, I had some other strong points which I knew would ensure a successful hosting *if* only I could obtain my colleagues consent. His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of my state of origin, Rivers State, had been wonderful to me as a person and I was sure that he would throw his enormous weight behind the university if it was challenged with the offer of hosting the games. In addition, I had two persons in the university with vast experience in university sporting activities: .Professor Michael Oti, a close personal friend who had served as an executive member of FISU, the world universities sports federation and Dr. Ken Anugweje, one of the most adroit and transparent human beings I have ever met. Dr. Anugweje who is the Director of Health Services of the University of Port Harcourt is also a member of the NUGA Executive Council.

The issue then was how to obtain the consent of CVC which takes the final decision regarding hosting rights for the games, knowing that the University of Port Harcourt had once had the opportunity while some others, of the same vintage, had not. In the end, following the very passionate pleas I had made and the report of the inspection team that visited the various universities that had indicated their willingness to host the games, CVC approved that after the 2000 Games, the 18th in the series, for which preparations were at an advanced stage at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

the University of Ibadan should host the 2002 Games, the 19th in the series, while the University of Port Harcourt should host that of 2004, the 20th in the series. CVC also decided that thereafter, no university would be given the opportunity for a repeat performance until the event had gone round all other universities that are willing to play host to the games.

This indeed was a major victory for the University of Port Harcourt and I for one, immediately saw in it a great opportunity which every one in the institution should exploit to improve the fortunes of the university. From that point on in late 2000, the activities that followed which eventually ensured that the 20th edition of the Nigerian Universities Games, NUGA 2004, was the phenomenal success that it was, were complex and tedious. I shall report them under the subtitles of Preparation, Sourcing for Funds, the Games :themselves and the After Effect, in order to do some justice to the entire event.

Preparation

The first step I took was to secure the support of Mike Oti and Ken Anugweje whom I appointed the Chairman and Secretary of the Local Organising Committee (LOC) respectively for NUGA 2004 and then I formerly reported the development to Council, Senate and Congregation,

The Chairman and Secretary set to work and after widespread consultations, produced a list of eleven subcommittees which would make up the LOC. In order to ensure the inclusion of persons with the appropriate experience and expertise for such a specialized assignment, some members of the LOC were drawn from outside the University. For instance, some notable persons in the state were included in the Finance and Fund Raising as well as the Ceremonial, Protocol and Entertainment, Subcommittees. Security officers, from the Police Force and the State Security Service were incorporated to the Security subcommittee while Media men were drafted into

the Publicity as well as Documentation and NUGA Forum subcommittees. The eleven subcommittees were:

1. Technical Facilities and Venues.
2. Accommodation and Welfare.
3. Finance and Fund Raising.
4. Security.
5. Medical and Sanitation.
6. Publicity.
7. Beautification.
8. Transport,
9. Documentation.
10. NUGA Forum.
11. Ceremonial, Protocol and Entertainment.

I approved the list of the members of the subcommittees together with their chairmen; the Chairman of the LOC was the leader of the Technical Facilities and Venues subcommittee while the Vice-Chancellor was to lead that of Finance and Fund Raising. The number of persons in each subcommittee varied, ranging from four to ten and only the leaders of subcommittees were members of the LOC. I inaugurated the LOC on 25 May 2001 at which meeting a number of important decisions were taken, including the following:

1. To pay a courtesy call on his Excellency Dr Peter Odili to inform him formally that the University of Port Harcourt had been given the hosting rights for the 20th NUGA Games in 2004 and to solicit his support.
2. To visit the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and the University of Lagos-two universities that had successfully hosted the games in recent times in order to learn from their experiences.
3. To prepare an estimated budget for the games.
4. To commence work on the production of the Games Mascot and Logo.

5. That the games should commence on 27 November and close on 4 December 2004, in order to take advantage of the window of dry spell that usually occurred during that period as the city of Port Harcourt is notorious for its rains even during the so-called dry season. The commencement of the games should be preceded by a four-day period of accreditation by the NUGA Accreditation team.

The courtesy call on His Excellency and the visits to the two universities were very successful. His Excellency was pleased that the university was given the hosting rights for the games. He immediately advanced a handsome sum of money which he described as "seed money" to enable the LOC commence preparatory work. He promised to give the university massive support to ensure that NUGA 2004 would turn out to be the best ever staged by any university. Specifically, he promised that he would construct the stadium and the Grandstands. In addition, he would instruct the Rivers State Ministry of Works to liaise regularly with the university in order to do whatever was needed to ensure that the venues for the various events were ready before the commencement of the games. No one would have wished for more. It was clear that the courtesy call was a defining moment and that the "seed" for the success of NUGA 2004 was planted at that meeting with His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, as far back as June 2001.

The authorities of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and the University of Lagos, received members of our visiting team which comprised twenty-five persons very well. We learnt some lessons on fund-raising and the composition and functions of the committees. We were also advised on how to handle some unions which might wish to frustrate the university by making all manner of difficult demands. The two universities were lavishly hospitable to us.

A provisional comprehensive budget was prepared and it was felt that a sum of N5 billion would be needed to develop the world-class infrastructure that the university expected to use for NUGA, 2004.

The games mascot and logo were conceptualised by members of the LOC and then designed and produced by Mr. Marshal Enenanjo of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts of the University of Port Harcourt. The mascot was a vibrant shark fish which was code named *Ofirima*. Sharks are mainly carnivores that live in oceans and coastal waters throughout the world such as those found in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The logo was an imaginative arrangement of a sailing boat on which the university crest and the NUGA torch are mounted. The torch was supported by an energetic sportsman, symbolising the zeal of the athletes to compete and win medals.

Sailing boats are common features of the riverine environment of Nigeria, of which Port Harcourt, the location of the university, is part. They are normally used for fishing, transportation and recreational activities. The Games Mascot and Logo were launched at the National Stadium, Surulere, Lagos by the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, Professor Ayo Banjo, on 26 November 2003, at a ceremony which was widely reported in the electronic and print media. This event heralded the kickoff of full activities, including publicity, for NUGA 2004.

Although the university had hosted the 12th NUGA Games in 1988, the infrastructure that was used then had fallen into disrepair for the most part. The facilities had also become outdated and would have been grossly inadequate for hosting the type of modern games that the university was anticipating NUGA 2004 would be. There was therefore a need for the university to embark on the construction of several new facilities in order to meet the challenges that the NUGA 2004 would pose. A sports stadium, consisting of a football field, athletics arena and grandstands, a modern swimming pool, a gymnasium - outdoor pitches for cricket, hockey, tennis, volley

ball, handball, all with proper lighting facilities, were some of the areas of serious concern. However, banking on the assurance the university had received from His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili the LOC felt confident and so it pressed on.

The contract for the construction of the Grand Stands was awarded to Genpro,gelti Nig. Lld. It consisted of renovating, extending and roofing the old Grand Stand that was in existence and building two new ones, one of which was also to be roofed. By the time the games commenced in late November 2004, work on the old Grand Stand had been satisfactorily concluded. The renovation work was good and the university, through *Epic Dynamics Plc*, provided the extra seats that were required to make it a truly VIP Grand Stand. This stand also led to a number of facilities behind it which were used as VIP rooms, media centre, medical centre and rooms for general relaxation. Construction work on the other two Grand Stands had also been completed by the commencement of the games but roofing on the one of them had not been done. The three Grand Stands proved adequate for the games and the roofing of the third stand was carried out in 2005. As he had promised, His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, financed the construction of the Grand Stands.

The construction of the Synthetic Running Tracks and Throwing Surfaces proved to be a difficult assignment. *Jaroba and Majorob Consortium*, the construction firm that won the contract, carried out the work with its German Partners in two phases. The first phase consisted of the preparation of a base that would carry the track and filling that base with different kinds of hard materials. While carrying out this aspect of the work, the construction firm deviated from specifications to the annoyance of the university authorities, an action which the firm insisted was superior and was dictated by the poor quality of the sub soil. In the end the university was able to corroborate the company's statement but declined to pay the additional sum of money that was demanded by the company

because it did not obtain clearance from the university before altering the specification. The actual laying of the synthetic fibre on the prepared track was the trickiest part of all. Both the spreading of the adhesive gel material on the prepared surface and the subsequent sprinkling and dispersal of the synthetic fibres had to be done with absolute precision. Worse still the technology demanded a dry spell of sunshine of at least one week!

The German partners of *Jaroba and Majorob* that did this part of the work sent only one man, a German to the core, with a whole load of equipment, including a small electric generator, to do the work. For almost ten days this man worked from 8 am to 6 pm each day without a break with such meticulous dexterity that each day a crowd gathered to watch him. And the heavens also assisted; the sunshine was there, even in waterlogged Port Harcourt! In the end, so impressed was everybody with the quality and style of the work of the German that the LOC held a lunch in his honour and the university gave him a Certificate of Commendation. Again as he promised, His Excellency Governor Peter Odili paid up the expenses for tile construction of the track.

The construction of the Olympic-size Swimming Pool was another Herculean task and even at tills point, acknowledgement must be given to *VAST Int Company Ltd.* tile Nigerian company that won the contract for the construction of the pool, for its tenacity and dedication which made it possible for the swimming pool to be used for the games. For if there was an area where many expressed some reservations regarding the completion of work before the games, it was with the swimming pool. The work commenced only in June 2004; the terrain was exceedingly marshy; the rains were pouring incessantly; the time was very short and the money with which to pay the contractor, as and when due, was not there. It was an incredible combination of circumstances. In the end however and to the amazement of everybody, the university pulled through and the Olympic-Size Swimming Pool, "the pearl of the NUGA

2004 Sports Complex', was there and was used for the games. What an astounding victory over the forces of despair and despondency,

11ST International, like Jaroba and Majorob, worked with some foreign partners, but this time, from Italy. Whereas VAST International concentrated on the various excavations and the construction of the facilities: Stands, Offices, Changing Rooms, Restaurant and Conveniences, the Italians built the actual Swimming pool and installed the heavy filtration equipment and complex lighting system. The amount of excavation that had to be done for the main and baby swimming pools, the various facilities and the enclosure for the filtration equipment, which were to be installed several feet underground, was immense. The work was made even more difficult by the soggy environment and the incessant heavy rains of the month of June in Rivers State which hampered the movement of heavy construction machines.

With the excavation completed, work commenced on the actual construction. All the parts of the swimming pool and filtration machines were imported. They were massive and were, all made of stainless steel. If the single German who worked on the synthetic track did so each day for several hours without break, the five Italians who built the swimming pool and installed the filtration equipment, worked even at night. It was amazing to watch them piece together, using the *Myrtha Technology* intricate instruments and equipment, some minutely small and delicate, until the huge filtration plants were in position and the Olympic-size swimming pool emerged on a parcel of land which, hitherto, was virtually condemned to nothingness by its sogginess. For its completion: and in order to obtain the desired kind of smoothness in the pool, a *helicopter plastering* using the power trolley machine, was carried out.

Then came the problem of filling this enormous capacity "Container" with water in order to convert it from a mere hollow receptacle into a swimming pool which would be used for recreation and competition. The exclusive water supply system which had been

put in place for the NUGA, Village found this task a bit too much. The water was trickling in at such a speed that it would have taken more than a week to fill the pool. Neither the Italians who had to wait to ensure all was well before their departure, nor the LOC which had to kick start NUGA 2004 in three days from then, could afford such a luxury. In addition the water pump flashed and there were underground leakages, all causing very serious concern regarding whether the swimming pool would actually be used for the games. Happily the duo of Engineer Vincent Ekwedikwe, the Director of Works, and Architect Jubiline David-West, the Director of the Physical Planning Unit, came together in a manner never done before and pooled their technical resources and know-how and together with other persons with technical expertise in the LOC, the problem was solved. Water gushed into the "receptacle" and the 53 metres long and 24 metres wide, 10-lane Pool was filled with 1,500,000 litres of water in two days, just one day to the commencement of NUGA 2004. An additional 1,000,000 litres of water had also been delivered to the balance tanks, bringing the total quantity of water that had been pumped, to 2,500,000 litres. We had escaped by the whisker; members of the LOC parted each other on their backs; I for one, was moved beyond words.

The construction of the facilities for the swimming pool went on at the same time as that of the pool itself, suffering the same fate of inclement weather and a waterlogged environment. But the building went up quickly in a determined effort of the contractor to convince the university of his ability and sincerity of purpose. For although construction on the building had not been concluded at the commencement of the games, the stands and the pavilion had been built which accommodated spectators for the "Various events which took place at the swimming pool.

The funds for the construction of the swimming pool and its facilities came largely from the money the university reserved from the Federal Government as assistance towards the hosting of NUGA

2004 and the university's internally generated funds. The fact that this was money well spent can be adduced from the words of the foreign technical partners of VAST International who confirmed that so far, they had built only eight of the kind of pool that Uniport has in the world. Furthermore, they confirmed, that on account of the standard nature of tile swimming pool,

any record set in the Uniport Pool will be internationally recognised by the relevant body in charge of international swimming.

The gymnasium which the university used in hosting the 12th edition of the NUGA Games in 1988 which was still standing was in a reasonably good shape. But it was small and its stands were considered to be weak and inadequate. So the need was felt to rehabilitate and expand it and here the university was lucky to have obtained the support of the Education Tax Fund (ETF), which provided the funds. Fortunately also, the contractor, *Benjaj Int. Ltd.* did a good job, even though he too was not spared the ravage of the Port Harcourt June/July rains. The building was expanded to twice its former size and its roof was lifted four feet high. It was modernised through the construction of several columns, stands, offices, conveniences as well as other facilities. This new facility had provision for 2500 spectators. The firm of *Choice Leisure Ltd.* supplied and installed the movable multipurpose wooden floor and Basket Ball Uprights. The university paid for this portion of the Work.

The university also engaged the services of *Conduit Resources Ltd* for the construction of Lawn Tennis, Volley Ball, Hand Ball and Basket Ball courts, while the Ministry of Works of the Rivers State Government, constructed the roads around the courts and also Installed the chain link protection around the Athletic Field.

In addition to the major works, extensive rehabilitation was carried out at the student hostels. Broken windows, doors, toilet seats,

damaged mosquito proofing were replaced and the hostels were repainted, some for the first time since they were built, over 20 years before!

Regrettably, Professor Michael Oti resigned his appointment as the Chairman of the LOC in June 2004 for personal reasons. The Vice-Chancellor accepted his resignation and thanked him for his services to the university as Chairman of the LOC of NUGA 2004 and then appointed Professor Mark Anikpo as the new Chairman of the LOC. Professor Anikpo immediately came to grips with the workings of the LOC and was exceptionally effective as its Chairman.

The meetings of the LOC which were held monthly before the hunching of the games mascot and logo changed to being held weekly thereafter. Reports from the leaders of the various subcommittees were received and debated at the meetings, members also went on inspection tours of the various facilities that were being constructed for the games. Although the major thrust of activities was to get the infrastructure and facilities ready in time for the games, a number of other important actions took place simultaneously.

The reaccommodation and Welfare subcommittee worked out an intricate array of entertainments and side shows which would occupy members of the NUGrI family for the entire period they would be at the University of Port Harcourt. The campus was divided into zones for security purposes and each zone was allocated to a special unit of the Security subcommittee depending on the type of security breaches that were anticipated there. The Medical and Sanitation subcommittee raised the level of hygiene and sanitation awareness of the university community. They encouraged proper waste disposal by placing several huge green coloured bins with lids and with the inscription of NUGA 2004 on them at strategic places in the university. They ensured that the bins were regularly emptied. Information was distributed on HIV/AIDS and also on how to

handle some other communicable diseases like gastroenteritis which could break out when large numbers of persons are clustered together as was expected at the NUGA Games. Furthermore, the subcommittee liaised with the ECO Bank Plc and the National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA) with respect to the setting up of the Youth Friendly Centre (see later in this chapter).

As for the Beautification subcommittee, its activities commenced in 2000 once it was made known that the university was to host the games as the ornamental trees and flowers that were needed to beautify the campus would require several rounds of heavy rainfall to attain appreciable growth. The subcommittee combined its activities with those of the preexisting Campus Environmental Beautification and Sanitation unit (CEBAS), which was headed by Dr. Edith Elenwo, a most energetic, faithful and diligent worker, responsible for the cleanliness of the campus. Members travelled to the Nigerian Institute for Oil Palm Research (NIFOR) in Benin City and obtained several ornamental plants for planting in the campus. These plants and flowers were planted in many places but especially along the main entrance to the university, the Convocation Roundabout, and the World Bank Library Road. A rock garden was placed around the first roundabout of the university and an artificial lake was created within the Games Village where a fibre glass boat with paddle was provided for use in the lake. This lake could not be used for recreation as had been envisaged because we could not fill it with water. The subcommittee installed huge water tanks at strategic sites in the university for the storage of water with which to water the plants which they tended assiduously. Eventually their efforts paid off as by the time the games commenced, the campus was looking beautiful with well-tended gardens especially at the major roundabout close to the Convocation Arena.

Not only did the Publicity subcommittee keep up regular publications in the print and electronic media, it also organised debates and various discussions which served to promote the ideals

of the games. Furthermore, it opened a website. www.uniportnuga2004.com for posting and accessing information about the games. In the same vein, the Transport subcommittee held discussions with the drivers of commercial vehicles which had been licensed to operate in the university campus on what was expected of them during the NUGA Games. Additionally, the subcommittee placed appropriate traffic signs on all roads in the three parks of the campus and used every opportunity to get drivers to learn to obey the road signs.

As the deliberations of the LOC continued, it took a number of other important decisions which included the following:

1. That consultants should be appointed to assist with the marketing of the games and the boosting of its image. Following a selection process, *Triple Communication Ltd.* and *Strategic Initiatives Ltd.* were appointed to carry out these functions.
2. That the following persons should be respectfully requested, to serve in the capacities indicated:
 - i. Her Excellency Chief Mrs. Stella Obasanjo (now late)
Grand Custodian
 - ii HRM King Edward Asimini William Dappa-Pepple
Grand Patron
 - iii His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili
Foremost Benefactor

The requests were made and fortunately the persons concerned all accepted and served as indicated.

Other than the work of the LOC in preparing for and promoting the games, the administration felt the need to mobilise the entire staff and students of the university. This, it was considered, would prevent critics from dismissing the games as being the handiwork of a few persons. It would also guarantee mass support and participation, elements that were crucial for the overall success

the games. The administration did this by keeping all sections of the university, including the Governing Council, the Senate, the congregation, the various Staff Unions, the Alumni Association and the Students Union abreast of all matters concerning the games, pleading with them to show sufficient interest in what was going on. In return, the administration received assurances of support from all groups. Council approved the various requests that were brought before it in respect of the games by the Vice-Chancellor. Senate adjusted the university's academic calendar in such a manner that the university would be on its first semester break at the time of the games in order to free the bulk of the accommodation in the student hostels for use by visiting athletes. Several volunteers also came forward from various sections of the university to offer their services. It was in this process that arrangements were made to fine-tune the large contingent of the University of Port Harcourt choir which performed so admirably during the games. When the idea of hosting NUGA first came to my mind in July 2000, the thought of "hosting to win" was not an issue. My only concern was a platform from which to make appeals for funds with which to develop the University of Port Harcourt. But the performances of Team Uniport at the 18th NUGA Games which were held at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in late 2000 as well as those of the 19th NUGA Games which were held at the University of Ibadan in late 2002, changed all that. Team Uniport is the official name of the contingent that represents the University of Port Harcourt at various sporting activities.

I had visited and had a discussion with the team shortly after their arrival in Zaria. The focus of my discussion was on their behaviour. I had counselled that with the new image which we were out to cut for the University of Port Harcourt, it was important that every member of the team behaved well at all times. The games were instituted, more for the cultivation of friendship than for any other reasons. Decisions of referees were to be obeyed and not

challenged openly irrespective of how wrong they might have seemed to be. Members of Team Uniport were not to be involved in any form of violent activities. However, I threw in a word or two about each member of the team putting up his or her best performance and so struggling to win laurels for the university. At the end of the games, the University of Port Harcourt placed second on the overall medals list, having been beaten to that position by the hosting university, the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Furthermore, there was no report of violence or rudeness to officials of the games involving any member of *Team Uniport*.

That performance by *Team Uniport* was a marked departure from the university's previous experiences when it was hardly listed among the first five at inter university sporting activities. I gathered from Dr. Ken Anugweje, the acting Director of Sports of the university, who had led the team to the games, that members 'had been fired up and encouraged by the visit of the Vice-Chancellor and the content of the discussion he held with them. But, for me at that point, I did not read much meaning into the spectacular performance of the athletes. My joy mainly stemmed from the fact that the athletes were not involved in any untoward actions and so I did not have to write any letter of apology on behalf of the university to anyone.

Then came the 19th NUGA Games which were held at the University of Ibadan in late 2002. Again I visited Team Uniport at Ibadan and held a one-on-one discussion with members of the team. However, so intense were the difficulties that were encountered the opening ceremony of the games, that it became doubtful if would continue. Nevertheless, due to the unflagging resolve of authorities of the University of Ibadan, the games did go on to conclusion and a Medals List was drawn up. Again, the University of Port Harcourt placed second having been beaten to that position as was the case in the previous year, by the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Additionally, there was no report that any member of the University of Port Harcourt team was involved in any way, in any

of the problems that bedevilled the games that year. It became clear to everyone that the sterling performances of *Team Uniport* were not flukes; members of the team behave well; they could be trained to become the best athletic team in the Nigerian university system.

It was at this point that the mission for NUGA 2004 changed. It was not only to serve as a vehicle for appeals, it was also to show off the University of Port Harcourt as having the best athletes in the Nigerian university system. The university would be "hosting to win" the NUGA 2004 Games and so, would support *Team Uniport* so that it would play its own part in this new mission,

Accordingly, the trainers embarked on very serious training of members of the team and the university met the needs of the athletes by way of taking care of their welfare and providing training materials to the extent that available funds permitted. And as if to test the level of preparedness of *Team Uniport*, the West African Universities Games (WAUG) came up in late 2003, at the University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The University of Port Harcourt was one of 32 such institutions that sent contingents for participation at the games. At the end of the competition, the University of Port Harcourt topped the Medals List beating all the other participating universities, including the University of Ouagadougou that hosted the games!

So it was that the preparation of *Team Uniport* for its dazzling performance at the NUGA 2004 Games commenced fortuitously in 2000 and was pursued with conscious and strong determination in 2003. In the end, the team did not disappoint; it delivered and did so in a grand style.

Sourcing for Funds

The point had been made that the preliminary budget estimate which was put together by the LOC indicated that up to N5 billion was probably going to be required by the University of Port Harcourt Or It to be able to host NUGA 2004 at the level the institution had

envisaged. The money was required for putting up the infrastructure the purchase of sporting equipment, the rehabilitation of facilities in the university and for the actual running of the games. Raising such an amount of money over such a short period of time was not going to be easy and so the university decided to draw on all the goodwill it could muster. In the end, although it did not raise N5 billion, the university raised sufficient amount in cash and kind, from within and outside the university, to have enabled it to achieve most of what was needful to run NUGA 2004 in the excellent manner that it did. The university's gratitude reaches out to all those who enabled it to achieve this wonderful dream, especially His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, as well as the Government and People of Rivers State.

First, mention must be made of Her Excellency, the late Chief Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, then First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. For, although she must have been precluded from actually contributing to the NUGA 2004 funds by the constraints of her position, the fact that she served as the Grand Custodian of the games, thereby taking ultimate responsibility for its success or failure, must have provided the requisite assurance for many to associate themselves with the games.

As for His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, of him it must be said that NUGA 2004 would not have been what it was without his benevolence and goodwill and that of the government which he led, as well as those of the wonderful people of Rivers State. The LOC's fund raising exercise started with him and he immediately released "seed money" which grew into the "tree" that it became. He and his government subsequently went on to build the three Grand Stands (one was all old one which was renovated and expanded), the Synthetic Running and Throwing Tracks, Roads and Chain links. Indeed he truly lived up to the billing of a "foremost benefactor".

The Grand Patron of NUGA 2004, The Amayanabo of Grand Bonny who was also the Chairman of the Rivers State Council of Traditional Rulers, HRH King Edward Asimini William Dappa-Peple, sourced for funds for the games with his remarkable personality. The combination of the then First lady, Her Excellency, the late Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, and HRH King Edward Asimini William Dappa Peple as the people that were behind NUGA 2004 encouraged a lot of people to support the university and the LOC was willing to receive the support in cash or kind. What was left then, was to make the process of fund raising more formal and to pursue it with zeal and determination knowing that the success of the games would hinge to a large extent on how much funds we were able to bring into the university for the various things the institution wished to do.

It was at this point that the consultants to the games, *Tripple Commimication Ltd.* and *Strategic initiative Ltd.* connected the university to Platinum Bank (*now PlatinumHabib Bank*) who accepted to serve as the official bankers of NUGA 2004. The bank would support the games with a sum of N20 million which was to be credited to the games account which had been opened at the bank, in two instalments, while the university on its part, was to execute all financial transactions of the games (lodgment and withdrawals), only through the bank. Thereafter, the donations started coming.

The university received:

N

1. From the Federal Government (special grant)	192,000,000
(a sum of 300,000,000 was appropriated)	
2. From Rivers State Government	266,000,000
3. From Bayelsa State Government	3,000,000
4. From Akwa Ibom State Government	1,000,000
5. From ETF	85,000,000
6. From other donor/sundry sources	94,000,000

7. Internally generated fund 254,699,395

In the Group of other donors/sundry sources, there were a number of major players which included:

1. Standard Trust Bank (now UBA)	N3, 500,000
2. Nigerian Port Authority	N2, 000,000
3. Platinum Bank (platinumHabib Bank)	N20,000,000
4. NDDC	N10,000,000
5. Rockson Engineering Co.	N25,000,000
6. Nigerian Agip Oil Co.	N1,000,000
7. Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas	N1,000,000

In the same vein, there were some individuals who contributed' significantly from their own personal resources to the NUGA funds:

They included:

1. Mrs. Betty J Apiafi.
2. Mr. Clement Ekeh.
3. Mr. Ezekiel Nwaeke.
4. Eng. Mrs. F. O. Ovai.
5. Hon. Bar. Mike E. Enwukwe.
6. Eng. Tele Ikuru.
7. Mr. Moses Aduma.
8. Dr. Mrs. Rose Kenya.
9. Chief G. Oweredaba.
10. Princess Ajudua.
11. Mr. Williams Wodi.
12. Professor Nimi D. Briggs.

There were other donations that were made in kind including:

1. Bags of cement from Eagle Cement Nig. Ltd.

2. Bars of Iron rods from Genprogetti Nig. Ltd.
3. Bags of Crushed Rock from Crushed Rock Industries Ltd.
4. Several Sporting Equipment from Nordic Sport AB.

The details of the finances have been documented and submitted to the Governing Council of the university.

The Games Proper

No one would have believed that the 20th NUGA Games, as intricate and complex as they were to be, would have been held at the University of Port Harcourt, without any major incident. But so well did everything go that Professor Fabian Osuji, the then Honourable Minister of Education, while addressing the NUGA family at the closing ceremony of the games on 4 December 2004, commended the authorities of the University of Port Harcourt for organising an event of such magnitude without incidents, describing NUGA 2004 as the best NUGA Games ever put up in the country. He then advised other universities which might wish to host the games in the future to emulate the "tremendous organisational capacity of the University of Port Harcourt."

Several factors were responsible for that breathtaking success of NUGA 2004. First, the array of formidable persons that were behind the games virtually ensured that they could not fail. Partly on account of those persons, there was abundant goodwill towards the games and the university received assistance from a number of quarters. Also important was the fact that the university was able to establish a close working relationship between members of the LOC and the NUGA Council. This ensured that areas of disagreement and doubts were smoothed out before the actual commencement of the games thus avoiding the disruptive bickering and cancellation of some events which had characterised a few previous NUGA Games. Furthermore, the preparation of the venues for the various events was very well done by the LOC, led by its capable Chairmen, Mike

Oti and later on, Mark Anikpo. So, except for a few games whose venues were shifted, there were no clashes on account of shortage of venues. The Stands at the main athletic bowl, the swimming pool and the gymnasium enabled large crowds to cheer their favourite teams during competitions. Yet another factor was that sufficient awareness of the games was created by the consultants, *Tripple Communications and Strategic Initiatives* and the LOc. The games received the support of the general public as well Cs members of the university community. On the whole, people were polite to one another and volunteered to assist in whatever ways they could. All sections of the University of Port Harcourt were involved in the games including its Demonstration Primary and Secondary Schools. And even the skies were in support as there were no rains during the period of the games.

Then there was the Peter Odili Feeding Centre where accredited participants were fed all meals free of charge! The centre was sponsored entirely by the Rivers State Governor, His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili. The NUGA secretariat was involved in determining the composition, quantity and quality of the meals that were served at the centre. It was therefore not surprising that no cases of food or water-borne diseases were reported throughout the duration of the games. When one realises that over 8,000 persons were accredited from the 45 universities that registered for the games, one immediately appreciates the contribution that was made by that centre to the overall success of the games. The athletes did not have to seek out "Joints" and Eateries at which to have their meals let alone the savings they made. Additionally, the centre served as a meeting point for athletes from various teams where "true friendship", the very essence of the NUGA Games, was fostered.

Understandably, the participants poured their gratitude and praises on the person who made all this possible, Dr. Odili, when he appeared suddenly at the centre mid way during the games to see how things were and to take part in a meal with them. Only the

quick intervention of his Security details prevented the crowd from lifting him sky high. As for *Team Uniport*, the hosting team as it were its discipline and friendly disposition, helped concretise the brotherliness that pervaded the enure atmosphere throughout the duration of the games.

The original plan was to usher in the Opening Ceremony of the Games with fireworks but security experts advised against this. The fireworks, they had suggested, might scare persons in the surrounding villages or might be high jacked by miscreants. But its absence did not diminish the glamour of the Opening Ceremony; the array of dignitaries was more than enough compensation. The then First Lady of the Federation, Her Excellency Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, the Grand Custodian of the Games was there in person contrary to the expectation of many that she would send someone to represent her. She even came with a large contingent from Abuja. Not only was His Excellency, Governor Peter Odili, the Foremost Benefactor of NUGA 2004 also present, his wife, Her Excellency, Hon. Justice Mary Odili, Justice of the Court of Appeal, was there too. His Excellency in addition came along with a number of his political associates and some members of the Rivers. State Executive Council. The then Honourable Minister of Education, Professor Fabian Osuji was there together with his Directors. So also was the Honourable Minister of Transport, Dr. Abiye Sekibo, another firm Supporter of the University of Port Harcourt. And of course, the *Amayanabo* of Grand Bonny, and the Grand Patron of the Games, HRH King Edward Asimini William Dappa-Pepple (now CON) as there with a large number of other traditional rulers from the Bonny kingdom and from other parts of Rivers State whose presence also added colour and glamour to the games. Additionally, all members of the NUGA Executive Council, members of the LOC, and a cross-section of the staff and students of the University of port Harcourt were present. NUGA had never been such a high profile event in recorded history.

On arrival at the campus of the university for the Opening Ceremony on 27 November 2004, the first task which Her Excellency, the then First Lady undertook, was to commission the *Student Friendly Centre* located at the Delta Park of the university. The venture, the very first of its kind in the Nigerian university system, was a tripartite collaborative effort between the National Action Committee against AIDS (NACA), the United Nations Funds for Population Activities (UNFPA) and ECOBANK. The Centre was established in order to enable health personnel to reach out to students who would go there to transact business. The facilities at the Centre include a Cash Point, Cyber Cafe, HIV / AIDS Counselling Room and a Fast Food Joint.

That done Her Excellency returned to a tumultuous welcome by everybody in the Sports Arena, the venue for the activities of the Opening Ceremony event as the University of Port Harcourt Choir sang the National Anthem heralding the commencement of events. Every thing that followed bore the marks of thorough preparation and meticulous rehearsal. Ranging from the callisthenic displays by the pupils of the University Demonstration Primary School, to the special renditions by the Choir of the University and the march past by the contingents from the 45 universities that participated in the games, everything was done with precision. The oath taking was solemn; the indomitable Awoba Gogo-Peters, the Captain *Team Uniport* took the oath on behalf of all the athletes, while Mr. B. S. Dakoru, the university athletic Coach, did so on behalf of all the officials.

It was at this point that the Games Torch arrived at the arena and what a magnificent sight it was. Brought in by Mr. Benson Ormaviran of the University of Ibadan, the institution that last hosted the games, the torch was handed over to Dr. George Ogan, one of Nigeria's foremost sprinters who had represented the country in international competitions and had also served as a member of the Governing Council of the University of Port Harcourt. Dr. Ogan

raced with the torch for a couple of yards and then handed it over to Miss Obia Inyengiyikabo, probably the best university student swimmer in the country, who has had the honour of winning medals for the country in international swimming competitions. On account of her swimming prowess, obia attracted a lot of attention from admirers wherever she went; she was generally known as the "Uniport Fish". A 300-level student of the University of Port Harcourt in Human Kinetics and Health Education, Obia had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of climbing the forty feet tower to light the games flame which was produced and installed by the Science and Engineering Workshop of the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Port Harcourt. As she did so, people held their breath and eventually exploded into a deafening applause when she successfully completed the assignment and the games flame burst into a brilliant glow.

Then came the series of addresses from the Chairman of the LOC, the Chairman of NUGA Executive Council, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, and His Excellency Governor Peter Odili. Most of the addresses eulogised the place of sports in nation building and encouraged the participants to put in their best performance at the Games. Governor Peter Odili praised the authorities of the University of Port Harcourt for the very impressive manner in which they had prepared the institution for the games. He promised to continue his support for the NUGA Games wherever they might be held subsequently. The Grand custodian of the Games, the then First Lady, the late Mrs. Stella Obasanjo was the last to speak. She expressed her delight at being in the Garden City (a popular name for Port Harcourt) to flag-off the Nigerian Universities Games, NUGA 2004". She drew the attention of the participants to the issue of HIV / AIDS which she indicated was not uncommon among young persons. She was pleased that at the University of Port Harcourt was taking steps to combat the spread of the HIV / AIDS pandemic in a variety of ways including

the enunciation of an HIV / AIDS Policy and the establishment of a *Youth Friendly Centre* in collaboration with others, the plaque of which she had earlier had the pleasure of unveiling. She then recognised the many sponsors who had assisted the University of Port Harcourt in its preparation for the games. Her final actions were to:

1. Launch the University of Port Harcourt HIV / AIDS policy document.
2. Launch the University of Port Harcourt Code of Conduct document and
3. Declare the 20th edition of the Nigerian Universities Games "NUGA UNIPORT 2004" open.

The competitions that followed after the weekend of merry making in the fifteen games as approved by the NUGA Council were so peaceful that they were almost routine. They were keenly competed for and offered tremendous relaxation to spectators.

Track and Field events were held at the University of Port Harcourt stadium. "BSW-Regupol" synthetic running, throwing and jumping surfaces were used for all events; so also were International Olympic Committee-certified track and field equipment. The equipment was donated to the university by Nordic Sport AB Sweden and Nordic Sport AB West Africa through the kind solicitations Dr. Ken Anugweje. While some preliminary games in badminton and basketball were played at some outside venues in order to reduce congestion, the major games as well as the finals in these two sports were played at the newly constructed gymnasium of the university with its customised synthetic maple wooden court. The games drew large crowds which enthusiastically cheered the athletes. Chess which is a game in mental rather than physical exercise needed a quiet environment to enable the players to think. So the venue for the game was removed from the sports complex altogether. The game

of chess was held in the Vice-Chancellor's committee room at the administrative building of the university.

If there was one instance in which the soggy and waterlogged environment in which parts of the Sports Complex was built had the upper hand on the university, it was in the preparation of the grounds for the cricket and hockey tournaments. Despite all that was done, drainage of the pitch for these two games was not adequate and so the grounds could not be made strong enough for the matches. Therefore, the cricket completion was moved to the Cricket Oval at the Shell Club, Rumuokwurusi, Port Harcourt while that of Hockey was shifted to the Leadership and Citizenship Training Centre in Aluu, Port Harcourt. Handball was played at the new Handball court at the University of Port Harcourt Sports Complex while Judo, Table Tennis and Taekwando competitions were held at the Permanent Site (PS) Hall of the university. The facilities and equipment for these games were described by the judges as being excellent. Eight Standard International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) Tibhar (Smash) Table Tennis boards, ten Tibhar Scoreboards and a hundred enclosure stands were procured by the university for use during the games. Squash was played at the renovated twin courts at Delta Park while Tennis was played at the six newly constructed hard-surface courts, the line markings of which were done by Nigeria Tennis Federation-certified technicians. Both the new volleyball court that was constructed for NUGA 2004 and the former one close to the Convocation Arena served as the venues for volleyball tournaments.

Swimming and football have special places in Uniport and NUGA. Swimming is obviously the best sport of the University of Port Harcourt and the university excels in it at most competitions. This is hardly surprising judging from the location of the university which is in a part of the country where streams and rivers abound. A good number of the prospective students of the institution therefore, are persons who had learnt the art of swimming right from their youth

in the local streams and rivers that are found just at their backyards. Miss Obia Inyerigiyikabo, the popular *Uniport fish* hails from. "Okirika"; a well-known riverine community in Nigeria. Similarly, many of her colleagues in the Uniport swimming squad came from typical Ijaw land of Nigeria where swimming is a popular pastime for children right from the age of five. The University of Port Harcourt therefore expected to reap a rich harvest of gold medals from the swimming competitions at NUGA 2004 and of course it did; and in a big way too.

The swimming competitions were all held at the pearl of NUGA 2004, the "Olympic-standard-one of eight in the world-Myrtha technology" swimming pool. Large crowds watched the events that were conducted there, partly to admire the swimming pool, or to see the Uniport fish whenever she performed, or to cheer athletes from their respective institutions. This was in spite of the fact that the facilities there were not completely ready.

As for football, not only is it the number one sport of Nigeria, it is so also in NUGA. So popular is the game of football, even in NUGA, that it is looked upon by fans as if it were a separate game from all the other events of the competition. People want to know who comes top on the medals list and who wins the football competition. This is why the final football match is usually played on the last day, just before the closing ceremonies. No other sport is accorded that privilege as it is intended that all athletes, officials and dignitaries that come for the closing ceremony, should witness it. One can then imagine what a promotional event it is for the two universities whose teams lock horns at the NUGA final football match.

Two football fields were used for the football competitions: the field in Choba Park and the one at the main bowl of the sports complex at the University Park, where the final match was played.

An important aspect of the NUGA Games was the issue of record keeping and accurate documentation. This is an aspect that

can quite easily be overlooked or not treated with the seriousness it deserves, in the euphoria and merry making as well as the melancholy and disappointment that are normally associated with winning and losing at major sporting activities. So, someone must ensure that record keeping and accurate documentation of all events were being carried out at all times. Not only will such records be required for future evaluation of the games, they also serve a research function.

My ability to write the current chapter of this book stems partly from the fact that NUGA 2004 was well-documented. And here commendation must go to Mr. Williams Wodi, Deputy Registrar Information, Protocol and Public Relations Unit in the Vice-Chancellor's Office, who also served as the Chairman of the Publicity subcommittee, for seeing to it that this aspect of the games was properly handled. Right from the preparatory stage, his subcommittee mounted several promotional publications in the internal university bulletin termed Uniport 2004 NUGA News, where some sequential recording of events as they happened, commenced. I have already reported on the creation of a website by the subcommittee where updates on the medals table, live events and other noteworthy events were posted several times daily to the delight of journalists who could not attend the occasion. The pre-games advertisement for the games was recorded on CD-ROM and played on both radio and television stations across the country. Furthermore, there were several appearances on the popular Kakaaki programme on AIT Global Satellite Network and Port Harcourt Stations, Rhythm 93.7, Radio Rivers FIV Station and Raypower as well as NTA Abuja and Lagos .. An accurate recording of the NUGA forum and reports of the various sporting events as they were completed was also made. This was put out as a daily Uniport 2004 NUGA Special Publication to keep people informed on the games.

Just as all good things come to an end, Saturday 4 December, 2004 on which date NUGA 2004 was to be rounded off, did come. But before a comment or two on the closing ceremony itself, a

statement or two are required on the final match of the football competition and the final medals table.

The final match of the football competition was played between the University of Port Harcourt and Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma, about two hours before the commencement of the official closing ceremony on Saturday, 4 December 2004. The match ended with a score of 2-1 in favour of the University of Port Harcourt. At the sound of the whistle for the end of the match, spectators, athletes, officials, students, teachers, from most of the participating institutions, including the University of Port Harcourt, all poured into the field; singing, dancing, jubilating, hugging one another that NUGA 2004 had ended on such an inspiring note. What a magnificent sight it was to behold!

With the football match, the last game of the competitions over, it became possible to compile the final medals list.

Table 12.1: NUGA 2004 Final Medals List

	INSTITUTION	G	S	B
1 st	University of Port Harcourt	42	25	20
2nd	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife	16	19	19
3rd	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	13	7	21
4th	University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos	10	10	13
5th	University of Benin, Benin-City	6	10	7
6th	Delta State University, Abraka	6	6	6
7th	University of Ibadan, Ibadan	6	5	12
8th	Enugu State University of Tech.	6	0	5
9th	Ladoke Akintola University of Tech.	4	2	5
10th	University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri	4	1	1

I have indicated the rankings of the first ten universities out of the 33 that won medals at NUGA 2004. Twelve other universities out of the total of 45 that participated in the games did not win any medal.

The University of Port Harcourt came too on the medals list by a wide margin. In addition, the university won the football competition and came first in athletics, basketball (women), basketball (men), judo (+100KG male), Judo (-100KG male), Judo (-90KG male) and Judo (-63KG women). In swimming, Uniport won 21 gold, 8 silver and 6 bronze medals as compared to the University of Lagos which came next with 3 gold, 5 silver and no bronze medal.

So intense was the merrymaking and jubilation, at the end of the match, that it was difficult to stop the fun in order to commence the closing ceremony. But the arrival of Professor Fabian Osuji, the then Honourable Minister of Education through a delayed flight from Abuja meant that people had to be urged very strongly to return to their seats and stands so that the ceremony could be on its way. Eventually some calm was restored and the closing ceremony began.

The ceremony itself- colourful as it was - was brief and simple involving a march-past by the participating universities, lowering of the games flag, extinguishing of the games flame and an address by the Honourable Minister of Education, who, declaring the games closed, thanked all the participants for their comportsment and profusely praised the University of Port Harcourt for organising what he described as "the best NUGA Games ever in the Nigerian University System".

The After Effect

There are some persons who are of the view that it was wrong for the University of Port Harcourt to have spent so much money in putting up facilities for and running a set of sporting activities for Students when There were other messing needs before the institution

such as staff accommodation and faculty buildings. Whereas no one would fail to appreciate the importance of faculty buildings and staff accommodation in the development of the university, it is essential to put the issues in perspective. For one thing the university neither had nor did it spend the N 5 billion it had envisaged. The event eventually cost just over N1 billion, excluding the donations that were made in kind which were not costed and even then, only a fraction of that amount came from the coffers of the institution. The rest were donations, in cash from well-meaning persons and organisations, which would not have been made had the university not presented a case as strong as the preparation for the NUGA Games, an event which would involve **all** the students from Nigerian universities. In addition the contracts that were awarded through the university were awarded at very competitive prices as the then Chairman of the LOC, Professor Michael Oti, bargained very strongly with the contractors before the approval of the contract sum. Happily, the vast majority were pleased that the hosting right was ceded to the University of Port Harcourt and that the institution seized the opportunity with both hands and made good its circumstances. The university now has a much better environment and it is possible that its current scenic beauty coupled with the vast opportunity it now offers for recreation and relaxation is contributing, in no small measure, to the tremendous peace and tranquillity that now exists in the institution. For when one recalls the volatility that was prevalent just a couple of years ago, one would recommend any issue, however tenuous, that has contributed to the current peaceful atmosphere in the institution.

It will be correct to say that the University of Port Harcourt got most of what it envisaged from NUGA 2004. In seeking to host the NUGA Games at the turn of the millennium in early 2000, the university had clearly stated objectives. It was in search of a major event that would serve as a platform for it to use in soliciting for funds with which to improve the facilities in the institution. Such

an event must also showcase the university, boost its image and change people's negative perception of the university as an institution where nothing good happens except cultism, examination malpractices and so on. At a later date the university added to these two objectives, the desire to beat all other universities at the NUGA Games.

Right from the time the announcement was made that the University of Port Harcourt would host the 20th edition of the NUGA Games in 2004, money started coming into the university. At the very first visit of the LOC to Governor Peter Odili, he advanced some money for the university to commence work and then subsequently went on to commit so much funds in the development of structures within the university. However benevolent His Excellency must have been, he would not have handed such large sums of money to the university to spend as it wished except for the fact that he was convinced of the rightness of the course the university was pursuing. And the funds came from many other sources: private individuals, organisations, the federal government and its parastatals. Pulling all these together, the university was able to lift the profile of its landscape with many imposing structures. These structures give the university a sense of beauty and permanence and could be used for academic, recreational as well as professional purposes: sports medicine, research, recreation, receptions and competitions, among others. Comparing the physical structures of the university before and after NUGA 2004, is like comparing chalk and cheese.

Showcasing the university in a good light was the second objective; and here it can be said that no other single event had showed up the University of Port Harcourt in a better light than NUGA 2004. Not many would have believed that it was possible to have staged an event of that magnitude with students coming from all over Nigeria at the University of Port Harcourt without everybody shooting at and stabbing everybody else; without one major scandal or the other; with fairly regular power supply; with enough water for thousands of people to use and with acceptable sanitary conditions. But the

university overcame all these, organised and hosted the "best NUGA Games" so far in the Nigerian university system. Little wonder that the university received praises and accolades from all sections of the Nigerian community, especially the print and electronic media.

But it must be remembered that NUGA 2004 came on the heels of a number of restructuring measures which the university had already embarked upon through its Governing Council and Senate: stringent financial management, resuscitation of ailing parastatals, de-registration of fake students, the internationalisation of the operations of the university and the enforcement of proper academic culture, among others. These restructuring measures were well received within and outside the university and the public's perception of the corporate image of the institution was beginning to change. NUGA 2004 confirmed that the process of re-inventing itself which the university had embarked upon was succeeding to a large measure.

The third and final component of the clearly stated objectives for hosting the NUGA Games was to beat all other universities and to win the games. This objective, again, was achieved in a most convincing manner. The University of Port Harcourt topped the medals table with a wide margin, beating all other universities that participated in the competitions. But once more, it must be recalled that the excellent performance of Team Uniport at NUGA 2004 was in keeping with a tradition of winning that had emerged. The team placed second at the 2000 NUGA Games in Zaria, second at the 2002 NUGA Games in Ibadan and first at the 2003 WAUG Games in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. But there were the sceptics who could not see this progression in the university's sporting prowess and could only recall the days when the university was always crawling for a place at the bottom at such competitions. They needed convincing and so Team Uniport convinced them in a most spectacular manner, confirming that their winning was not a fluke. That astonishing victory did not come only because of the team's

rued by some persons. For should one take away the 21 gold medals that the team won from the swimming competitions, the University of Port Harcourt still had a very comfortable lead of 21 gold medals as against the 16 of its closest rival, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ileife.

And just as we were about to go press, something additional happened. We received information to the effect that the findings of a study which was undertaken during NUGA 2004 on *HIV Peer Education and VCT Intervention at the 2004 Nigerian University Games in Port Harcourt Nigeria* by Babatunde S., Wowo S., Lawson B., Ikimalo J" and Briggs No, had, been accepted for presentation at XVI International AIDS Conference which is scheduled to take place in Toronto, Canada from the 13th to 18th of August, 2006. The conference is the most reputable international HIV / AIDS meeting on the globe.

Before drawing the curtain on this thrilling chapter it will be pertinent to examine the impact of the Nigerian Universities Games on the performance of the country in international athletic events.

Athletes, who win laurels for their countries in international competitions like the Olympics more often than not, come from tertiary educational institutions. One would have expected that by now, the biennial NUGA competitions should have thrown up good athletes of international standard who would do the same for Nigeria. Unfortunately this has not been so and the country's performances in international athletic competitions have remained unimpressive. One only hopes that if the excellent sporting facilities that now exist at the University of Port Harcourt can be replicated in many other universities, Nigerian students would have a more standard environment in which to practise. Their performances should improve and this should give them a more competitive edge in international competitions.

By way of summarising, the University of Port Harcourt must express its heavy indebtedness to a long list of persons not just for

assisting it with its stunning showing at NUGA 2004, but indeed for their understanding since the turn of the millennium when the university decided to take its destiny in its own hands, So long is this list that space precludes its publication in a book like this, But even at that, mention must be made of the three remarkable pillars which stood on behalf of the University of Port Harcourt for NUGA 2004: HRH King Edward Asimini William Dappa Pepple, now CON, the Amayanabo of Grand Bonny, the Chairman of the Rivers State Council of Traditional Rulers and the Grand Patron of NUGA ' 2004; His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State and the Foremost Benefactor of NUGA 2004 and Her Excellency, the late Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, the then First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Grand Custodian of NUGA 2004, When the games were concluded, the university was in touch with each of them to express its gratitude and to submit copies of the Narrative and Financial Reports of the games. They all got back, thanking and congratulating the university. On her part, the then First Lady, caused a letter to be written to the Vice-Chancellor in which she expressed her satisfaction with the "brilliant organisation of NUGA 2004", describing the games as "a huge success". The letter went on to state that the First Lady was "particularly impressed with the transparent manner finances for the games were mobilised and applied". It was this type of endearing attitude, among many others, that made her sudden death a big blow for the University Port Harcourt and I wrote to her husband, Mr. President, Chfi, Olusegun Obasanjo, to say so. Not surprisingly, and in his characteristic manner, he replied in a letter which he personally signed, to acknowledge receipt of my letter and to thank me. Let me therefore end this chapter by praying that the Almighty God grants the soul of Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, the *Grand Custodian of NUGA 2004*, eternal rest.



*Governing Council
University of Port Harcourt
2000-2004*



*Board of Governors
Institute of Petroleum Studies
University of Port Harcourt
2000-2004*



*Mr. President and Visitor,
Commissioning the "OBJ Water Project"
April 2004*



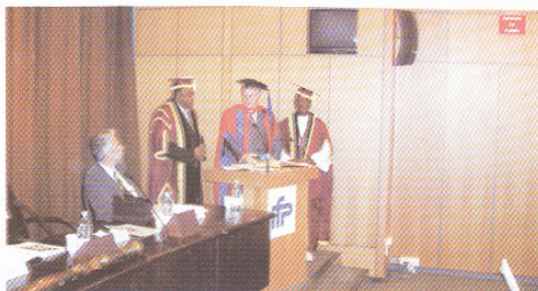
*NUGA 2004
Opening Ceremony
November 2004*



*NUGA 2004
Callisthenics and Team Uniport
November 2004*



Uniport Choir
2004



Some Honorary degree awardees



The "Ariah" dance" at one of the commemoration ceremonies

UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT CENTRE

The University Advancement Centre (UAC) shares something in common with NUGA 2004. They were the two most important ideas that occurred to me in early 2000 when I was giving consideration to all manner of thoughts on how to elevate the status of the University of Port Harcourt in the global comity of institutions of higher education and to enhance its ability to contribute to sustainable national development. They also share the fact that, both turned out to be phenomenally successful entities which have uplifted the University of Port Harcourt to great heights.

UAC had its origin in a very humble beginning. By the turn of the millennium, Nigeria was in transition, and was emerging from a chain of military dictatorships which had drawn the ire of the international community, resulting in the ostracisation of the nation. The image of the country had plunged and Nigerians were often treated with suspicion in their dealings with outsiders. This unfortunate situation coupled with the structural adjustment programmes which some of the military governments had instituted, had impoverished the nation and badly affected all facets of life in the country, including higher education. Nigerian universities which, before then, were known for the high quality of their academic activities had become badly run down in most aspects of their

operations. Staff and students had little or no academic and professional contacts with colleagues outside their universities especially with those outside the country.

My initial wish in establishing the UAC, which at the time I named the External Linkage Programme Unit (EU)U), therefore, was to expose staff and students of the University of Port Harcourt to their counterparts in other universities, especially those outside Nigeria. The exposure, I had wished, would involve the:

1. Movement and exchange of staff and students.
2. Establishment of international linkages.
3. Initiation of shared research projects.
4. Building of partnerships and possibly,
5. Award of joint degrees through shared curricula with other universities,

I appointed Professor Mbuk Ebong, a professor of Surveying at the Faculty of Engineering, a determined and intrepid academic, as the Director of the new unit and gave him these rather complex goals and objectives to work on. So successful was the unit in carrying out this assignment that the idea of charging it with the additional responsibility of advancing the course of the university in such a manner as would secure the future of the institution, then suggested itself to me. Accordingly, I changed the name of the unit to the University Advancement Centre (UAC) which is to carry out fund-raising exercises in addition to its role of establishing exchanges and linkages, after consultations with its Director. To carry out these now very complex assignments properly, the unit had to be fitted adequately. So, we got a proper office for it by renovating an abandoned and disused NITEL building as has been earlier reported, and furnished it with suitable soft and hard wares. The staff working there were also carefully selected. Only those whose temperament and demeanour were judged to be appropriate

to interface with important personalities from other universities and from industry were selected. In addition, such persons received further training within and outside the country. In the end, so well appointed did UAC become that it was often mistaken as the new office of the Vice-Chancellor. First time visitors to the university, who were in search of the Vice-Chancellor's office, often reported there in error before being appropriately directed.

Not only did the physical environment of UAC change, its corporate mission, including its vision, goals and activities also changed. From being a centre that concerned itself essentially with issues of staff development through the coordination and facilitation of partnership and collaboration between the University of Port Harcourt and various organisations, industries, agencies and universities within and outside Nigeria, to one with an expanded mission; UAC now serves as the catalyst for the development, promotion of partnership, scholarship and internationalisation of the University of Port Harcourt. In this role, it would ensure the current and future viability of the university, create an environment that fosters philanthropy, strengthen life-long relationship of the alumni with the university and support the academic and developmental priorities of the institution. It was expected to carry out these functions through the establishment of linkages and relationships with donor agencies, industries, governments and universities as well as conducting fund raising exercises. A major factor that enabled the UAC to have contributed so impressively to the fortunes of the university has been the relationship that evolved between the University of Port Harcourt and the MacArthur Foundation to which some reference has already been made

UAC and the MacArthur Foundation

Once MacArthur Foundation decided on the four universities in Nigeria whose long-term development it would support, it requested the Vice-Chancellors of the institutions to appoint Programme/Grant officers who would have the responsibilities of executing the MacArthur programme and grants. This action, the foundation felt, was necessary since Vice-Chancellors are very busy officers who might not have sufficient time to scrutinise the execution of the programme and grants. But of course the Programme/Grant Officers were to operate under the overall supervision of and clearance with the Vice-Chancellors as the Chief Executives of the institutions. Once again I requested Professor Mbuk Ebong to fill the position and I made the UAC, then ELPU, the Programme/Grants Office. This arrangement has worked out very well as the Director and staff of the UAC have learnt a lot from their association with the foundation not just on programme and grant supervision and execution but also on Proposal Writing as well as how to conduct the affairs of an Advancement Centre. Some of the staff have even had training abroad under the aegis of the Consortium for Higher Education Programme for Africa which includes the MacArthur Foundation. Furthermore, a good portion of the foundation's grant was to be spent on staff development which was already under the purview of the UAC.

Establishment of Linkages with Higher Educational Institutions

It is not surprising that this is the area in which UAC has made its greatest impact so far since it constituted its first term of reference. Through the activities of the UAC, the University of Port Harcourt, between 2000 and 2005, was able to establish linkage programmes with universities and higher educational institutions in Africa, Europe, Asia and North America.

In Africa, our linkage programme with the *Universite National du Benin* enables students of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature of the university to spend their one year abroad' immersion course in French in Benin Republic. Five staff from the" College of Health Science, three from the Faculty of Engineering, one from the Faculty of Education, and two from Library Department of the University of Port Harcourt, have had advanced professional training at the, Universities of Witwatersrand, Natal and Cape Town, all in South Africa.

In Europe, one reports with tremendous gladness that it was the UAC that represented the University of Port Harcourt in the long negotiations between the university, the then TOTAL FINA ELF and the *Ecole du Petrole et des Moteurs (IFP School)*, Paris, France, that resulted in the establishment of the *Institute Of Petroleum Studies (IPS)* of the University of Port Harcourt, which awards the joint Master's degree of the university and the IFP School. Although some reference had already been made to the IPS, much more will be said about the institute later.

As for universities in North America, many proposals are still in the offing. But some have matured and the process of exchange of staff and students has commenced. Those in this category from which the University of Port Harcourt and the corresponding North American universities have benefited, include the University of Iowa, where there has been several two-way movements of staff for educational and professional purposes; Pittsburg State University which had sent a senior academic to teach some courses at the University of Port Harcourt and had also received some students from Port Harcourt into its Civil Engineering Department; University of Toronto which currently shares collaborative research programmes with the University of Port Harcourt.

Establishment of Linkages with Industries

Mention has already been made of the close relationship between the university and a number of industries and companies under the auspices of the "Friends of the University of Port Harcourt". These industries and companies include the SPDC and Schlumberger. Mention has also been made of the role that was played in the establishment and running of IPS by ELF Nigeria Ltd. Furthermore, the university established a linkage with the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Ltd (NLNG) for the long Industrial Training Course for some students of the university. And just before I concluded my tenure as Vice-Chancellor, the institution had embarked on a discussion with Chevron Nigeria Ltd to secure its involvement in the establishment of the university's Faculty of Agriculture.

Miscellaneous

So successful had the UAC been that it even extended its activities into other areas of assistance to staff and students of the university. It counsels students who would wish to embark on graduate studies abroad and assists them with visa arrangements. It makes members of the university community aware of scholarships and financial supports that are available globally for academic activities in universities. In 2004, the centre instituted monthly *Lunch-time Lectures* on issues that are of common interest to members of the university community. The first in the series on NEPAD and the *Africa Renaissance* was delivered on 10 March 2004 by Professor Mark Anikpo, Professor of Sociology at the University of Port Harcourt, while the second, which was on The Idea of a University was delivered by Rev. Fr. D. E. Nwigwe of the university's Philosophy Department.

The Future

It is gratifying to see one's thought blossom into such an organisation that the UAC has become. At the time I was working on this book in Paris, I was informed that the Governing Council of the university, under the Chairmanship of Alhaji L. A. K. Jimoh, was planning to launch a Capital Campaign that would last for five years, using the UAC. The purpose of the campaign, I was told, was to raise a sum of N6 billion (six billion naira) with which to execute some aspects of the Strategic Plan of the university. That information immediately puts in context, the current level of development of the UAC, when one recalls the extent of work and logistics that are required of a Capital Campaign. I reminded myself that that would be the very first occasion that any university in Nigeria would be embarking on a such a project. I thank and congratulate the Governing Council of the University of Port Harcourt for its foresight. I wish the Campaign every success and implore all men of goodwill to associate themselves with it.

The actions of the UAC if sustained and improved upon will give the university some degree of financial autonomy which is critical for the academic autonomy which many universities seek. Herein lies the difference between universities in developing Countries like Nigeria and those in developed countries where the endowment of some universities are bigger than the annual budgets of some developing countries.

The University of Port Harcourt must be aware of the good it has done itself in establishing the UAC and so must grow and tend it carefully. The ultimate that I see for that unit, is for it to convert to the *University of Port Harcourt Foundation (Uniport Foundation)* with the perpetual responsibility of securing the financial future of the institution.

INSTITUTE OF PETROLEUM STUDIES

All over the globe, those who know Nigeria recall it as a major oil producing nation and one that is good in the game of football. Nigeria is listed as the largest producer of crude oil in black Africa and the 6th largest in the world. It is said to supply about one fifth of the demands of the United States of America which consumes about one quarter of the world's oil production. Nigeria is the dominant nation in the Gulf of Guinea whose importance in global oil dynamics is on the increase following prolonged and protracted political instability in the Persian Gulf. A Nigerian, Dr. Edmund Daukoru, is currently the chairman of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), an intergovernmental body currently consisting of eleven nations, with the objective of coordinating and unifying petroleum policies among member countries, and one that has become a major player in the global oil dynamics. Furthermore, a Nigerian has held this position on a previous occasion. To this day, the economy of Nigeria remains largely dependent on petroleum oil, the sale of which in the international market, fetches over 80% of the nation's foreign earnings with which the country pays for its goods and services. Oil production activities in Nigeria are totally confined to the Niger Delta region of the country where the commodity has been

found so far in commercial quantities. Port Harcourt, the location of the University of Port Harcourt, with a population of about three million cosmopolitan inhabitants, an intricate connection of roads that link it to the rest of the country, a rail terminus, a seaport and an international airport, is the leading city in the region. Port Harcourt also serves as the seat of the Rivers State Government as well as that of a number of local governments which extend to its immediate environs. Furthermore, all the principal oil prospecting companies in the country either have their headquarters in the city or have major branches there which take care of their interests. Little wonder the nickname of the city is gradually changing from Garden City to Oil City.

It is this strategic importance of the city of Port Harcourt and its environs to the corporate existence of Nigeria as a nation that most probably informed the decision of the late General Murtala Mohammed's government in the early 1970s, to develop Port Harcourt, along with the city of Kaduna, in the then northern region, as a "special area for the Federal Government". That plan, unfortunately, never materialised.

A university that is discerning and forward-looking which is located in the city of Port Harcourt must therefore see the hydrocarbon industry as one important area in which it can contribute substantially to the nation's sustainable development through its educational and professional activities. The University of Port Harcourt was aware of this burden of responsibility right from the time of its inception. It established a Faculty of Engineering with two foundation programmes in Petroleum as well as Electrical Engineering. Then followed programmes in Chemical, Civil as well as Mechanical Engineering. These programmes produced manpower that serviced the extractive industry in the country. And when in 2000 it decided to carve a niche for itself in Petroleum Engineering, It expanded the programme in Petroleum Engineering to include Gas Engineering and thus became a Centre of Excellence for studies

in Gas Engineering as well as the first university in Nigeria where an undergraduate programme leading to a degree in Gas Engineering was available. However, the university did not at the time envisage the establishment of an Institute of Petroleum Studies. So, the founding of the Institute of Petroleum Studies (IPS) at the University of Port Harcourt was at best, fortuitous.

The initiative for the establishment of the IPS came from Elf Petroleum Nigeria Ltd. (EPNL) which was dissatisfied with the professional competence of some of the graduates from Nigerian universities that were under its employment. It decided therefore to fund the establishment of a training school under its "Sustainable Development Programme" and along the lines of the one that had been established in Warri by the SPDC, where graduates from universities would be better prepared for the industry. But unlike what obtains in Warri, EPNL decided that the training should be more formal and should be anchored by one of the Nigerian universities jointly with an institution of repute in Europe. Again the company decided that since it had a long standing relationship with the *Ecole du Petrol et des Moteurs (IFP School)*, Paris - an institution of immense standing which had trained a good number of the persons who were occupying the higher echelons of the petroleum industry in France and Nigeria - that school should serve as the European partner in the envisaged arrangement. Then came the problem of selecting the Nigerian university that would partner with the IFP School, Paris, on the venture. And in order to be able to do this, EPNL needed the nod of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), the senior partner in the company's Nigerian Joint Venture Partnership arrangement. When the university got wind of this situation, it placed before the NNPC the credentials of the University of Port Harcourt, its Faculty of Engineering and its Department of Petroleum and Gas Engineering. Eventually the university was selected and EPNL was given the mandate it required to do business with the University of Port

Harcourt and to establish the Institute of Petroleum Studies. commendation must be given to the Director of the UAC of the University of Port Harcourt, Professor Mbuk Ebong for the role he played during the protracted discussions with the NNPC. On its part, the Governing Council approved the arrangement and the Senate of the university worked quickly and produced the academic content of what was to be taught at the institute. Senate also approved the structure of the Institute as well as its relationship with the other arms of the university. Furthermore, when at a later date Senate approved the establishment of a Petroleum Museum at the university, it directed that the museum should be housed at the IPS.

Structure and Current Academic Programme of IPS As was approved by the Governing Council and the Senate of the University of Port Harcourt, IPS is to function as a separate entity outside the School of Graduate Studies of the university. It is to be administered through two major bodies: a Board of Trustees and a Governing Board. The Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council of the University of Port Harcourt, should be the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt and the Dean of the IFP School, Paris, should also be members. The Governing Board should be chaired by the Deputy Managing Director (Corporate) of EPNL and the Director of the Institute should be a member. There should also be an academic committee which should be chaired by the Director of the Institute who should be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor. Courses at the Institute should be taught by staff of the University of Port Harcourt, staff of the IFP School, Paris, and selected persons from industry as well as visiting professors.

The academic programme that Senate approved was a 12-month course of studies involving didactic lectures and hands-on-experience to be presented in six modules leading to a Master's

Degree in Petroleum Engineering and Project Development. Academic work at the Institute was to be jointly conducted with the IFP School, Paris, including the admission of students, delivery of lectures and conduct of examinations. The Master's of Science degree was to be jointly awarded to the successful students of the Institute by the University of Port Harcourt and the IFP School, Paris.

With all this in place, I appointed Professor Joseph Ajiienka Professor of Petroleum Engineering at the University of Port Harcourt, a quiet, polished, dignified and civilised man with candour, to be the Director of the IPS and ceded to the Institute, a number of buildings with which to commence activities as its temporary site. The first batch of twenty students who were selected following rigorous tests and interviews have graduated from different universities in the country. They commenced classes at the IPS on 15 November, 2003.

Achievements So Far

IPS has successfully turned out two batches of students; the second batch, consisting of eighteen rust degree holders from six Nigerian universities was inducted on 17 November 2005 into the petroleum engineering profession after successfully going through the course at IPS. They all readily found employment with leading oil companies in the country who have expressed satisfaction with their performances. The Institute has kept strictly to the 12-month calendar for the Master's Degree programme, a feat which many other programmes had not been able to achieve. The Institute publishes an IPS News Bulletin, awards fellowships to deserving persons, and has instituted an IPS annual lecture series. Furthermore, it keeps track of all its alumni.

Construction work at the permanent site of the Institute which is located just outside the university's main gate is progressing

satisfactorily and should be complete by the end of 2006. This should enable the Institute to move to its permanent site.

programmes for the Future

IPS has concluded plans to offer a number of other courses in the future including:

1. Petroleum Geosciences and Reservoir Engineering.
2. Mining Engineering.
3. Gas Engineering.
4. Offshore Engineering.
5. Geomatic Engineering.
6. Refining and Petrochemical Engineering.
7. Petroleum Economics.
8. Petroleum Policy
9. Engineering Management.
10. Petroleum Law
11. Information and Communication Engineering.
12. Environmental Engineering.

As it is with the current programme on Petroleum Engineering, the arrangement is to run these Master's Programmes with other institutions within and outside the country.

Difficulties

The main difficulty facing the IPS is to find organisations that would sponsor its programmes. ENPL founded the Institute and along with its Joint Venture partner, the NNPC, has been responsible for the Institute's upkeep so far, including the construction of its permanent site. It is unlikely that the organisation will be able to keep pace with that extent of funding, especially for the other programmes which IPS intends to run. Before my tenure as the Vice-Chancellor (of the university was concluded, we made overtures to a number

of organisations to get them interested in the work that was going on at the IPS. They were all very impressed and promised to give the university's proposals further considerations. It is possible that by the time of writing this book, something more concrete may have emerged in that direction.

The IPS, as currently run, is a perfect example of industry-university cooperation which is of benefit to the two organisations and of course, the nation. The industry benefits from the high quality professionals whom the programme turns out and who are then available for employment. This obviates the need for industry to import such specialised hands from abroad as they are now available locally. By offering them employment, industry can improve on its output and so enhance its profit margin. Furthermore, it is able to meet the stipulation by government regarding the percentage of industry's workforce which must be persons from the country, the so-called "local content" component. On its part, the university profits from the field experience of those who participate in the programme from industry and also has its facilities in the university developed with funds from the industry. The nation itself benefits from the conservation of foreign exchange in the in-country training of high quality professionals and also on the expenditure in importing them were they not to have been available locally. This then is a, true example of sustainable national development which should be supported by government and the industries.

UNIONS

Trade unions are important in organisations as they serve as effective liaisons between the management and the groups they represent. They ensure that managers do not wield undue authoritarian influences on their employees and that the welfare of workers is appropriately protected. But for their continued relevance, trade union activities must be predicated on the transmission of accurate information to its members so as to enable them to take decisions that are based on facts. Furthermore, they should be structured to meet the needs of the particular organisations or industries in which they operate. Whereas frequent militancy may be accommodated or overlooked at a shop floor in a merchandising outfit, dialogue, reasoning, restraint and all those reticent attributes of man which enable him to exercise his thought processes rather than his physical traits, should be the hallmark of university trade unionism. As one commences the writing of this chapter, what comes most readily to one's mind are the repetitive strike actions by unions in the Nigerian university system, the University of Port Harcourt inclusive, between 2000 and 2003, which almost completely crippled the establishment. While a plea is made to university unions for the abhorrence of disruptive actions, proprietors of higher educational institutions themselves should be dependable and should show due deference

to agreements, once these agreements are freely negotiated. They should be equitable and even-handed with all staff and they should at all times, weigh the implications of the agreements they initial with unions for the immediate and long survival of their institutions. All efforts must be made to ensure that in the process of conflict resolution with unions, government does not take actions that are in conflict with the laws that set up the institutions. Nothing must be done through a fire brigade approach or to shift a predicament from the centre to the periphery as such actions only compound matters for tomorrow.

The trade unions that I had dealings with as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt were:

1. The Students Union, which always preferred to call itself Students Union Government.
2. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).
3. The Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU).
4. The Non Academic Staff Union (NASU) and
5. The Association of University Technologists of Nigeria (ASUTON).

These unions were present in most Nigerian universities and operated as local branches of their corresponding national bodies called National Executive Council (NEC) which had their headquarters in various Nigerian cities. The universities operated a voluntary check-off system through which the activities of the local as well as the national bodies were funded and so well organised were the national bodies that at least one of them had full-time employees to look after its operations. Furthermore, so subservient were the local branches to the national bodies that the local branches insisted that directives from their national bodies took precedence over and above instructions from their employers in the university!

NASU contested the legal position of SSANU from time to time stating that it (NASU) was the only lawful body with the mandate to look after the welfare of all non-academic staff in the universities. I was unable to ascertain the truth on this matter. For one thing, NASU only held that extreme position when it suited it as on occasions, it would team up with the other unions, including SSANU to form the *Joint Action Committee (JAC)* in order to have a more robust body to bargain with management. Furthermore, I received several copies of authentic documents containing genuine agreements between government, which is in a position to be better informed on such a matter than any other and SSANU. The unions insisted that they were different bodies and so the Vice-Chancellor must deal with them differently even on issues that were of common interest to all staff of the university. But paradoxically, they did not expect the Vice-Chancellor to deny them audience when they came on the common platform of JAC, when it was convenient for the unions.

On the whole, dealing with the unions proved to be a trying time not only for their numbers or the disproportionate time that was spent attending to union matters, but also for the fact that on a number of instances, the Vice-Chancellor neither had the authority nor the resources to accede to their requests. Furthermore, and rather unfortunately, the unions, not unfrequently, drew inferences or even arrived at decisions which were not based on factual information. I will treat my interactions with the Students Union first before taking together, those with the staff unions.

My interactions with the Students Union

In the early part of my administration, the impression one had was that the success of a Student Union Executive was determined by the level of its militancy, the number of times it was able to call out Students on the rampage and the number of rude letters it wrote to members of the university administration. Happily, by 2004, as

indeed happened in the many facets of the life of the University of Port Harcourt, such actions had mellowed down remarkably. As was mentioned earlier, students used to protest frequently on account of the absence of water and power supply but by 2004, these no longer became issues for students' protests. The students themselves had evolved ways and means by which only responsible persons were elected into their executive bodies as evidenced by the student union presidency of Pastor Chris Anele who was able to interact positively with Mr. President when the latter came to the university to commission the OBJ Water Supply Scheme on 16 April 2004. It was heart warming therefore that the Students Union came to be run by rational members who were elected into the executive.

In the difficult days, there were flash points, other than the issue of light and water, which the Vice-Chancellor had to watch. These included Students Union Elections, Students Union Week and university examination periods.

The Statement of Academic Policies and Programmes of the University of Port Harcourt states that only students whose Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) was not below 3.0 can contest students' union elections. This was not so prior to 2003. The Senate of the university took the decision in order to preclude weak students from taking up the rigorous assignment of serving in the executive of the students union - a service which they might find difficult to combine with their academic work. It is precisely for this reason that students union executives are obliged to take the year off academic activities in some institutions of higher education. Some students protested this decision of Senate and did everything to circumvent the regulation. Some of them lied with respect to their CGPAs, others had access to their academic records in the departments and faculties, which they altered. There was the other issue of screening all prospective candidates for students union elections to ensure their non-involvement in cult activities, which was carried out by the university and the State Security Services

(SSS). Disqualified of students on any of these grounds usually led to enormous protests which occasionally turned violent. In all these, credit must be given to the then acting Dean of Student Affairs, Dr. Charles C. Oyegun, who ensured that students who aspired to offices in the student union executive, obeyed the decisions of Senate.

Another area in which students often found themselves at loggerheads with Senate position, was in the conduct of the activities of the *Students Week*. Senate approves a Students Week each year which is lecture-free and which is meant to be used by students for merry-making and cultural activities. The week usually ended up with a Rag Day during which students dressed in unconventional ways and solicited funds from the general public with which, ostensibly, they were to embark on some public-spirited activities. Drawing from the experience of previous years during which students invaded the city of Port Harcourt and disrupted normal activities of the inhabitants of the city, Senate had directed that students should no longer extend any aspect of their activities during the Students Week celebrations, to the city of Port Harcourt. Some students did not like this. In addition, they often started before and extended the Students Union Week celebrations beyond one week.

We also had difficulties with students' union executives accepting the dates of university comprehensive examinations. Usually no complaints would be received regarding the unsuitability of the dates after the publication of the examination time-table but complaints would pour in within one or two weeks to the commencement of the examinations. On one or two occasions, Senate acquiesced as it felt that the demands were legitimate. But students took advantage of this and Senate realising that the demands of the students had become antics, directed that examination time-tables, once published, should not be altered. Students and staff must comply with them.

Students everywhere are known to resist any form of increase in the fees they pay to educational institutions however justified this

may be. In 2003, the Governing Council approved an Acceptance Fee of N12,000.00 (twelve thousand naira) which was to be paid by all fresh entrants into the university. It was a once only payment which was not to be made by students who were already in the university and before Council's approval, the students union executive was thoroughly briefed on the need for the payment. However, once the announcement was made, the students union executives mobilised the students to stage a violent protest on the matter and despite all efforts to explain issues, calm could not be restored. Unfortunately it became necessary to close down the institution for a period of one week at the end of which normalcy was re-established. The new students paid the Acceptance Fee and normal academic activities resumed in the university.

. Also in 2003, a rather unfortunate event occurred, which though not masterminded by the main student union executives, brought a lot of bad publicity to the university. Some students acting under the umbrella of the Rivers State Student Union invaded and blockaded the section of the East-West Road - between the main university gate and the junction of the East-West Road and Aluu Road - and confiscated all vehicles that belonged to the Rivers State Government as indicated by their registration numbers, which plied the road. They then drove such vehicles into the university campus, deflated their tyres and chased away their drivers. In all, about 30 vehicles were impounded in this manner. We were to understand later that the students took their actions to protest the alleged inability of the Rivers State Government to pay their bursary awards, a position which we were able to confirm was totally untrue as the government had paid up-to-date the bursary awards of all *bona fide* students from the state. The Vice-Chancellor and some of the other principal officers of the university were away on a very important university assignment on the day of the event. On their return, they were able to retrieve the vehicles from the students, reflat their tyres and returned them to the state government.

Understandably, the state government was displeased with the action of the students as it had been based on incorrect information. The Vice-Chancellor wrote to apologise to the Rivers State Government on behalf of the students while the Senate of the university warned all students to desist from such irresponsible actions. This appears to be an appropriate point at which to report the experience of the university with the convention of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS). This annual convention is so dreaded on account of the violence that it is associated with, that institutions often reject NANS's request to hold the convention on their campuses. The University of Port Harcourt accepted to host the 2002 convention which after some initial hiccups eventually kicked off on 14 March 2002. About 6000 students from 32 universities, polytechnics and colleges of education attended the convention. Nothing concrete could be achieved as various factions staged open warfares against one another in the campus. At one stage the university learnt of a plot to assassinate the national president of the association. So the university dressed him up in female attire and kept him safe in one of the female hostels in Delta Park for the night. The next morning the university smuggled him out of the campus and on that very day, six days after the commencement of the convention, got the police to send all the NANS delegates out of the campus as nothing tangible had been achieved. It was a harrowing experience for members of the university community who had to put up with the chaos and shootings at nights. It was also a dreadful encounter with the inhabitants of the city of Port Harcourt as they were held hostage for six days by those attending the convention.

Other than these encounters, the university maintained a cordial relation with the Students Union and brought members of the executive, as much as possible, into decisions that affected the Student body. The university sponsored members of the executive to attend meetings of the national body in various parts of the

country and provided a bus for use by members of the executive. On the 27th of June 2004 the university suffered a major setback with the death of the then President of the Student Union, Mr. Godspower Akpovire, in a fatal car accident while he was on his way to attend a student union meeting at the Usmanu Dan Fodio University, Sokoto. Following the death of Mr. Akpovire, Miss Adaugo Ejiogu, who was the vice-president to the late Mr. Akpovire was sworn in as the new president of the student union, in accordance with the constitution of the union. Miss Ejiogu was to serve out the balance of the one year presidency of the deceased president who had died just three weeks after he was sworn in as president. She thus became the first female president of the Students Union at the University of Port Harcourt and probably so in the Nigerian university system. Not gifted with a big frame, she nevertheless survived the macho taunting and bullying tactics of her male officers on the executive of the students union who thought she had secured the presidency through an unusual avenue. In the end, she ran a caring and responsible student union administration, which was appreciated by all, including the students themselves.

Reference had already been made to the complementary role of the Man O War in the maintenance of peace and the protection of lives and property on campus. They served another useful purpose at times of student crises which deserves a mention here. At such perilous times when officers of the university went out to address irate students, members of the Man O War would form a protective ring around such officers thereby preventing angry students from making physical contacts with the officers.

Yet another very positive action that the students took was when a number of them, mainly from the Faculty of Engineering, came together and founded a radio station which they christened Radio FM Uniport. Located in one of the service quarters in Choba Park, the station was an instant success as it broadcast fine music

information on campus. I visited the station on one occasion and sent good will messages and felicitations to all staff and students. Unfortunately, the uni"crsity could not sustain the station as it did not have what was needed in human and material resources to make the station a permanent feature.

My interactions with the Staff Unions

In the earlier chapters of this book I reported on how I had received commendations, many in writing, on the services I rendered to the University of Port Harcourt as its acting Vice-Chancellor for about fourteen months, commencing January 1995, from many segments of the institution, including the staff unions. On my return as the university's Vice-Chancellor in July 2000, I noticed that that camaraderie with the unions was not quite there any more. Rather, there was some disquiet in the system arising from the interpretation of, or the non-compliance with all manner of agreements which government had signed with the unions, not collectively, but with the individual unions. Essentially, in the case of ASUU, this had to do with the perceived reluctance of government to return to the negotiating table with the union for a review of previous agreements as had been mutually decided upon. SSANU's grouse was mainly with the entry point differential on the salary scale which government had granted to academic staff to the exclusion of their non-academic counterparts. As for NASU, its position was that its members, the junior staff of the universities, should have a greater say in the affairs of the institutions as they carried out most of the odd jobs in the universities.

This festering unease smoldered on and stoked by other issues of probably lesser importance, snowballed into strike actions from time to time. These strike actions, from their frequencies, unfortunately, became the face of the universities by which the general public defined the system. On the whole, the public came to loathe the system and many persons wrote profusely against it in

the national dailies. The rightness or otherwise of going on strike was no longer the issue as many felt that university staff were behaving irresponsibly by keeping educational institutions closed for so long, an action which in their opinion could not be justified under any circumstance. Many who could afford it, withdrew their children and wards from Nigerian universities and sent them abroad including to neighbouring Ghana which reaped a harvest from the tragedy that befell the Nigerian university system at that time. Advertisements from universities abroad, mainly from the United Kingdom, calling for applications from prospective students, made their debut in Nigerian local newspapers; some of the universities held interviews in Nigeria for placement of students abroad!

By my records, the University of Port Harcourt branches of the staff unions were on strike during the following periods:

1. ASUU 01/02/2001 to 08/02/2001
 09/04/2001 to 30/06/2001
 29/10/2001 to 02/11/2001
2. SSANU 05/02/2001 to 12/02/2001
 02/04/2001 to 10/05/2001
 17/10/2001 to 24/10/2001
 24/11/2001 to 30/11/2001
3. NASU 09/04/2001 to 10/05/2001
 27/11/2001 to 04/12/2001
 26/01/2005 to 28/01 2005

But all these paled into insignificance when the mother of all strikes, the 2002/2003 strike action, which lasted for six months in the case of some universities, was undertaken by all three unions acting in concert. The strike action affected virtually all Nigerian universities and made many students lose one academic year in

addition to the losses they had suffered as a result of previous strike actions. Facilities in the universities deteriorated from lack of use, members of the public were incensed by their children and wards sitting at home doing nothing for a whole academic year and they lost patience with the university staff. The strike action did incalculable harm to the Nigerian university system and was officially called off by ASUU NEC which spearheaded it, only when the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) to which government had referred the matter, directed both sides in the dispute, the government and the unions, to return to the *status quo ante*.

At the University of Port Harcourt, the strike commenced on 29 December 2002. ASUU approved that its members from the university's College of Health Sciences who were honorary consultants to the university's teaching hospital should continue to render clinical services. The other two unions only made some concessions when there was a fire outbreak in campus a few days after the commencement of the strike which badly affected their members. The two unions then allowed staff of the Fire Services Unit and those responsible for some utilities, to render skeletal services to the university and in order to ensure that all others complied, strike monitoring team as they were known, went round the offices intimidating and occasionally manhandling persons who desired to work. Some locked up university offices with union padlocks and took away the keys. Such indeed was the level of disorder that existed.

On its part, the administration tried several times to get the unions to call off the strike action but to no avail especially as government had made it clear it would withhold subventions from universities which were on strike. On a number of occasions, the administration called Senate meetings to take decisions that would jump-start academic activities but its efforts were frustrated by ASUU strike watchers who lobbied Senate members not to attend so that a quorum could not be formed. However, on Monday 19 May 2003,

a properly constituted Senate of the university gave directives that academic activities at the University of Port Harcourt should commence without further delay and that began the closing of a horrible chapter in history of the university.

Slowly, other universities also announced their resumption dates but it was not until June 2003 when the LAP gave the order, that normalcy returned in full to the system. Following resumption by all universities the Federal Government evoked its extant law of "No Work, No Pay" and withheld the wages of the striking workers in Federal universities, the University of Port Harcourt inclusive till this day.

Unfortunately, NASU Uniport branch officials led out their members on a strike which turned violent, between 26 and 28 January, 2005 after all had thought that the issue of strikes was then completely over. The NASU members were protesting against what they described as their "two and half months withheld salaries". They blocked all the roads within the Delta Park of the university and paraded a coffin which they finally deposited at the Vice-Chancellor's car park. The demonstrators pasted the photographs of the Vice-Chancellor on the coffin.

ASUTON, on the whole, was not combative and did not engage in any strike action during the years that I was in charge of the affairs of the university. Rather, they used dialogue to put their demands across to the university.

However, it would be far too incorrect to conclude from what has been written that university staff unions existed for the sole purpose of organising strike actions. While some would argue that the strike actions that they embarked upon were justifiable to some extent, it was their frequency and duration that got people exasperated. Staff unions contributed immensely to the overall progress which the University of Port Harcourt noticed in all facets of its life during the years under consideration by admonishing their members to take their responsibilities to the university seriously,

for example, ASUU University of Port Harcourt branch, wrote a letter to all its members in March 2001, titled *Let's Change our Attitude* in which it pleaded with members to earn their pay and to do their work satisfactorily. SSANU also wrote in a similar vein to its members through a memorandum dated 21 Mar 2001.

On its part, the administration reciprocated by paying adequate attention to the welfare of all staff of the university. It ensured that staff salaries and emoluments were paid as at when due even when the subvention that was sent by government was 'not enough to do so. It placed priority on the construction of on-campus staff accommodation and sponsored the executive members of some of the unions to attend the meetings of their national bodies. In addition, the administration purchased buses for each of the union-which were to be used to alleviate the transport difficulties experienced by their members. Furthermore, the administration apportioned land to each union, at its request, to build its Secretariat. ASUU commenced construction work by direct labour but unfortunately, the building collapsed after the decking stage and has remained in that derelict state since then.

Since June 2003 when the 2002/2003 strike action ended, there has not been another major strike action in any university in Nigeria, the University of Port Harcourt inclusive. Everyone must be pleased at this happy turn of events which all would wish should persist. For in truth, the process of learning and scholarship, the main business of a university and the critical engine for developing a nation, cannot be switched on and off like the production process in a manufacturing plant. While there are those who are of the opinion that this joyful state of affairs has come about as a result of a more sober reflection on the part of university unions on the Consequences of their actions, especially the unintended ones, others opine that it was the enforcement of the "No Work, No Pay" regulation by the Federal Government that compelled the reordering

of strategy. Like is the case in many instances, the truth probably lies somewhere in between.

Every encouragement must be given to the unions to see the prevailing peace in the nation's universities as being in their Own short and long term interests and one which they must seek to safeguard and preserve. Government on its part must not consider the present state as a reflection of the subjugation of the militant unions and so rest on its oars as far as the universities are concerned. Rather, it must continue with the reform processes which it is currently carrying out in the universities, which are impacting positively on the system. Government must remind itself that some of its major achievements in the higher educational sector for which it had been lauded, for instance, the establishment of the Education Tax Fund (ETF), were issues that were initially canvassed and recommended by the unions. It must be stated categorically that in a democratic dispensation, the government and the unions need one another to produce those universities that will be the repositories of the kind of knowledge which will migrate the country to its rightful place in the global comity of nations in the very near future. Indeed, the universities that will make it, sooner, rather than later, to the league of the "world's best 200 universities."

RETIRED STAFF AND ALUMNI

Persons who have retired following their services to the University of Port Harcourt and those who trained in it at one time or the other are major stakeholders of the institution. The wellbeing of the retirees to some extent and the public assessment of the worth of the certificates that were obtained by the alumni, depend partly on the health of the university. A university that is unable to carry out its statutory responsibilities of manpower production and quality research as well as ensuring the welfare of its workforce, will most probably be unable to cater for the well-being of its retirees. In the same vein, certificates from a university which is poorly rated as a higher educational institution in public perception may not be accorded the value that is its worth. It is these reasons, among many others, that persuade retired staff and alumni to maintain long-term interests in their previous establishments and to seek after their common good. The university on its part must continue to interest itself in the wellbeing of its retirees and also nurture a healthy relationship with its alumni. Discussions on the Retired Staff and Alumni of the University of Port Harcourt in this chapter will therefore be written under the subtitles of Pension Matters and Alumni Relations.

Pension Matters

Having only recently celebrated its silver jubilee, the University of Port Harcourt can rightly be considered as a relatively young institution as the lives of higher educational institutions go. The population of its retired staff is therefore not yet in the thousands as is the case with a number of the older institutions of higher education in Nigeria. The university currently has 504 retired staff and they operate under an umbrella body known as the University of Port Harcourt branch of the Association of Nigerian Universities Pensioners, with Mr. Uche Nwakor as its chairman. A pension scheme which was anchored with NICON Insurance Corporation was expected to provide funds for the payment of pensions and gratuities to pensioners. But the remittance to the university from the insurance company was slow, irregular and insufficient, reflecting government's sporadic and inadequate contribution to the scheme. In order to ensure the good health and survival of its retired staff, the University of Port Harcourt made good the short falls so that pensioners, by and large, received their pensions and gratuities when they were due. This action by the University of Port Harcourt is greatly appreciated by the pensioners.

Furthermore, the university has a free health service scheme for its retired staff and holds workshops for them from time to time. On 25 and 26 May 2004 the university had a pre-retirement workshop for its staff who were about to retire as well as those that had retired. Several papers were delivered by resource persons who were drawn from the Presidency, Nicon Insurance Company, and the Association of Nigerian Universities Pensioners. The topics that were discussed were wide-ranging and included: *Preparing yourself for Retirement; investment Ideas for Retirees and those approaching Retirement; funding and Pension and Disbursement; Life in Retirement*. So useful did the participants find the event that they requested it should be all annual event.

Alumni Relations

Founded in 1983 with the then Dr. Steve Orupabo (now Tarnuno) as its Foundation National President who, *ipso facto*, served as a member of the Governing Council of the university then, the university of Port Harcourt Alumni Association ought to have come of age. Unfortunately, up till the time I concluded my assignment as the Vice-Chancellor of the institution, the association had not been able to get its act together so as to form a formidable body, just as is the case with the alumni associations of many universities of its vintage, that would have a strong influence in the affairs of the institution. On the contrary, the association had lurked from one crisis to another which had greatly eclipsed its usefulness and denied it a strong voice in the operations of the university. For although some alumni of the university had played highly commendable roles in their individual capacities in the development of the university, the association, as a body, has not been able to live up to the expectation of many in that regard. Realising the important contributions that well organised and properly functioning alumni associations could make to the fortunes of an educational institution, I decided, as a matter of deliberate policy to do everything in my power to resuscitate the University of Port Harcourt Alumni Association and to place it on firm grounds when I became the Vice-Chancellor of the institution in July 2000. At that time, the association was in limbo and the then executive body of the association which was led by Mr. Stanley Lawson, was accused of being too aloof and of having convened only one national convention for over a period of ten years. I found in one of the alumni who came around to express his dismay at the state of affairs with the association, Mr. P. C. Nwabuzor, the zeal and desire to help. With his assistance, we were able to summon a meeting which was well attended by many including Mr. Stanley Lawson, whose work station was in Lagos. It was agreed at that meeting that a caretaker committee should be formed with Mr. Nwabuzor in

charge and that the association should be revived immediately. I was pleased and immediately made it easy for the new officials to function by providing a secretariat, some staff and computer soft and hardware and left them to sort issues out by themselves.

Subsequently, they did a number of commendable things. For instance, they commenced the construction of a 60-room female hostel at the University Park, opened a website and had plans to construct a Guest House and an Alumni Secretariat. Mr. Nwabuzo was always close to the administration to assist the university in defusing tension when things became difficult with students or staff unions; an action which was greatly appreciated by the Vice-Chancellor.

With these hopeful signs the Vice-Chancellor encouraged the members of the executive further and got them to participate in many university functions, especially the Silver Jubilee Celebrations. But I still did not see the emergence of the formidable body I was envisaging. Most of what I saw appeared flimsy and uncoordinated and not bearing the marks of having been organised by a recognised body. It was then that I gathered that there was still a big problem in the association and that Mr. Nwabuzo was being accused of the very same issues as had been levied earlier against Mr. Lawson; the association, such as there was, had broken into factions. Still in an effort to get things to an even keel, I requested Professor Kimse Okoko, a senior academic in the university, who was later appointed the Prochancellor and Chairman of Council of the Niger Delta University, to wade into the matter, reconcile the various factions and get the association functional. He did so, and a document of reconciliation, containing a six-point agreement was produced. But still the problem persisted. As I was later made to understand, all my last day in office as Vice-Chancellor, the association called a national convention which was badly disrupted. So much was the extent of disorder that the university had to set up a panel under the chairmanship of Dr. Mrs. A. I. Spiff to investigate what happened on that day.

The university must continue to carry its retired staff along especially with respect to their pensions and gratuities. That way the university will be in a position to absorb the annual increases in the number of retired staff which come not in large figures. For once the institution defaults on the entitlement of the retirees, the overall bill will mount up rapidly and overwhelm the university. As for the alumni association, one expects that they will still pull together and form a virile body' which the current trend of events in the university calls for. The fact that Alumni Relations now constitutes a brief for the UAC might just prove to be the tonic that is required to cure the malady that has been present in that association for so long a time. For it is difficult to see the University of Port Harcourt going very far without the backing of a strong and committed alumni association.

UNIPOINT WOMEN ASSOCIATION

In my interactions with women over the years in the course of looking after their health, I have come to develop a deep respect for them. Women, constitute an important force for development, progress and positive changes wherever they are unfettered and are given their rightful places and due recognition. They persevere longer and are transparent. Their persuasive and nonbelligerent approach to issues is inviting and their abiding faith in their ability to overcome impediments, reassuring. These qualities, I find, are innate in all women and are probably conferred on them by divine providence as a consequence of their consecrated role in the sanctified process of child bearing. It is not surprising that women of the University of Port Harcourt have made UPWA a success story.

The University of Port Harcourt Women's Association which is known as Uniport Women .Association (*UPWA*) with its motto of "friendship and service" came into being in the early days of the university under Donald Ekong's Vice-Chancellorship. The idea was for women of all persuasions and calling, academics, administrators, teachers, health workers, staffs' wives and so on, who were connected with the university in one way or the other, to come together voluntarily and establish friendship among themselves. They were then to use that friendship as a platform for service to the University

of Port Harcourt. And in order, as it were, to secure the goodwill of the administration, it was decided that the President of UPWA should be the wife of an incumbent Vice-Chancellor, The association is an affiliate member of the National Council of Woman's Societies (NCWS) and also, a member of the *National and International Grassroots Association of Nigeria (NIGAN)*.

So it is that UPWA has associated itself with the growth of the university since its inception. In the five years that I served as the university's Vice-Chancellor, the association was particularly supportive of the programmes of the administration and also executed some of its own. Never was there a major university function in which UPWA was not present in its colourful outfit, throwing in, where necessary, the UPWA slogan of *UPWA-Uniport*. I must therefore commence this chapter with an expression of my sincere gratitude to all those great UPWA women, especially their President, Lady Data N. Briggs, for their splendid support for the administration that I led.

UPWA had a number of activities which were carried out rather routinely. They consisted of: parades, counselling first year students, undertaking excursion tours, undertaking physical training exercises, organising send-off parties, and the Vice-Chancellor's Children Christmas party. They also participated on specific occasions in the uni"ersity and in the city of Port Harcourt under the umbrella of the NCWS and NIGAN.

Parades were organised annually, at times twice in a year. Apart from the fun they provided of seeing middle-aged mothers and grandmothers of different shapes and sizes, dressed like youngsters, struggling to obey the command of a parade leader and to react appropriately to the rhythm of an accompanying marching band, the events were used to draw attention to important national issues as well as those that affected students, especially, female students. Thus, lectures on issues such as Dignity of Youths, HIV / AIDS, Examination Malpractice, Cultism and Prostitution were held over

the years. Further more, the association met with fresh female students in groups during the orientation week and counselled them. It also had some prizes which it awarded to the best graduating female students each year

Excursion tours were undertaken for recreational purposes. In 2004 UPWA members had a whole day out at *Ellah Lakes*, a fish rearing establishment which is located in a farm about 100 km away from the university. Members, I was told, had real fun including enjoying a lecture that was delivered on the occasion by one Pharmacist Boro, on the use of herbs in a home.

UPWA took its physical fitness programme seriously. With the help of the university's athletic Coach, Mr. S. B. Dakoru, the association organised physical fitness programmes for its interested members, two times a week. Those who lived in the university campus had their programmes on Saturday evenings while Tuesday evenings were reserved for those who lived outside the campus.

The Vice-Chancellor's Children Christmas Party was an important event on the university's calendar. Not only did it serve as an end of year get-together, it was an event which the children, whose parents were staff of the university, looked forward to with great expectations. The Vice-Chancellor usually attended the party and cracked all manner of jokes with the children to their great delight. The event was normally very rowdy which made crowd control difficult. But such was the zeal, passion, fun and pleasure which the children derived from it, that doing without it was out of the question.

Being a voluntary association, the activities of UPWA were financed through voluntary fund-raising exercises, and payment of dues. Whenever members who were in good financial standing with the association had to leave the environment of the university permanently, which would make it difficult for them to continue their participation in the affairs of the association, they were sent off in a proper manner. At these send-off parties, in addition to the

merrymaking, pep talks on issues which were considered to be of value to women, such as home making, keeping fit, preparing a home for retirement, were often held. The celebrated case of a send-off exercise by the association was the one which was held in 2004 where, in addition to the gifts that they were presented with, Lady Leticia U. Ogali and Hon. Lady Mercy G. Alagoa, were made Life Associate Members of UPWA. Not only were the two persons foundation members of the association, they had also sought after the good of the association as well as that of the university in many ways.

Probably one of the most important contributions that was made by UPWA to the life of the university during the time under consideration, was the introduction of the "UPWA wrapper" and scarves. Prior to that time the association only had an *Akwette* material which it used for ceremonies. The new "UPWA wrapper", which was made of cotton print, was much more colourful than the original one. It was also customised to the University of Port Harcourt. It therefore became a material which was easily identified with the university and one which served as a good corporate souvenir from the institution to its important visitors. It will be recalled that the university presented Mr. President, Chief Olusegun . Obasanjo with one of these new wrappers when he visited the institution in April 2004. Mr. President immediately tied it round his waist, a moment which photographers from the core of the nation's newspapers, did not let slip by. Reference has also been made to the use the university put the UPWA wrapper during NUGA 2004. The appearance of the 100 man Uniport choir in this outfit at the opening and closing ceremonies of the games constituted a Very impressive sight.

Outside these activities by which the association livened up the university community, and offered recreational opportunities to its members, UPWA was anxious to be associated with something tangible with which it could contribute to the development of the

university It decided to establish a Children Resource Centre which was to consist of a Resources Unit, a Day Care/Nursery Unit and a Multipurpose Hall.

It was under the late Lady Gladys Cooke)", the wife of Professor Sylvanus J. S. Cookey; who was the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, between 1982 to 1989, that UPWA embarked on the Children Resource Centre project. It acquired a parcel of land from the university at its permanent site on the Aluu drive and constructed a building with which it commenced Day Care and Nursery services. Not much else happened until 2003 when UPWA decided to revisit the project because the association saw it as a worthwhile venture which would be of benefit to the university as well as the wider community. And in order to immortalise the name of Gladys Cookey for her foresight in initiating the project, the association sought and obtained the approval of the Senate of the university to name the project after her as Gladys Cookey Resource Centre.

Her Excellency, the then Justice Mary Odili, now Justice (Dr.) Mary Odili, *Justice of the Court of Appeal (ICA)*, was the Chief Guest of Honour at an event which was held to launch the new name of the centre and to raise funds for its construction. Her Excellency pledged a sum of N5, 000, 000.00 for the project and added a rider . The rider was that if the Vice-Chancellor went himself to collect the cheque and spoke nicely to the Governor, it was possible he would return with a bigger cheque. Of course the Vice-Chancellor did go himself to collect the cheque and did speak nicely to His Excellency the Executive Governor and did return with a cheque of N10, 000,000.00. With this and the other smaller amounts that came in at the launching, the association set to work. It renovated and extended the former building with the addition of a six classroom block, built the Resource Unit, constructed a perimeter fence round its immediate vicinity, inserted a Gate House and inscribed character drawings on its fence. The renovation that was carried out on the

old building included the changing of all wooden shutters to louvre glasses, the changing of wooden doors to metal doors, the replacement of stolen fans, the provision of vitrified ceramic tiles on the floor. In addition a number of items such as bedding, tables, chairs, television and toys were purchased for the Nursery unit and a new children's library which was named *Lady Mercy Alagoa's Children library* was established even though it had not been equipped.

When on 23 August 2004 the lot again fell on Her Excellency, the then Justice Mary Odili JCA, to commission the project, Her Excellency praised the executives of the association for how effectively they had utilised the money that had been raised for the project.

The Gladys Coockey Resource Centre now stands as an important landmark in the University of Port Harcourt even though its Multipurpose Hall has not yet been built. At the close of 2004, its Nursery Unit was caring for 194 kids and its Resources Unit was open to children not just from within the university but also those from the neighbouring towns and village so No amount of gratitude can be too much for a voluntary association whose members have contributed so much to the university.

RESPONSES, CONFERENCES,
VISITORS AND GIFTS

In a way, this book can be looked upon as consisting of four parts, albeit of unequal number of chapters:

The first part, the section on Antecedent (chapter 1), places the University of Port Harcourt in context by the year 2000 when I took over the administration of the institution. That part, in essence, tells of how, having had an initial spate of rapid development, in the words of a popular writer, Ebiegberi Alagoa, the university had almost come to "the brink of disaster". It depicts the terrible reverses the institution suffered as a result of the instability in its administration and the consequences of these reverses as manifested in the issues of cultism, improper admissions and poor academic culture.

The second part, (chapters 2-17) describes in some fair amount of details, the strong determination of the university, in the face of these terrible reverses and their consequences, to *turn the tide* through the actions of its Governing Council and Senate. The university would be firm and focused in all its dealings. It would reorder and streamline its academic activities as well as address the poor state of its infrastructures. Accordingly, the university launched a ten-year strategic plan of a properly structured and orderly development to direct its course, established a University Advancement Centre to

secure its future, initiated new academic instruments to enhance its contributions to national development and evolved a code of conduct for staff and students to regulate their behavior. Furthermore, it cultivated goodwill and attracted funds through a gregarious public relations posture with which it improved utilities in the university and commenced construction work on vital infrastructures. The second part ends by indicating how with all these measures, the University of Port Harcourt had become a better environment. It concluded by presenting the institution as one that had become more suited for academic pursuits; a university with an enhanced corporate image and one whose popularity within and outside the country, had soared.

In the third part, which this current chapter will address, the writer will show how the university had commenced reaping from the investments it had made in the process of re-inventing itself, which had succeeded to a good measure. The university is being rewarded through the volume of the Responses it had obtained by way of positive comments, commendations and the performances of its staff and students; the surge in the number of Conferences that it had hosted; the class of *visitor* it had attracted; and the quality of *Gifts* it had received.

The last part, the chapters on *Lessons and Epilogue*, will be on reflections on the wider implications of the experiences of the University of Port Harcourt, and those of the author.

These four parts do not stand in isolation as is indeed true of all organisations that are operated by human societies. The trend is discernible as the four parts dovetail and merge, though sometimes imperceptibly into one another as they depict the central message of this book: the inevitability of ultimate success through team Work.

Responses

The outpouring of goodwill to the administration of the University of Port Harcourt at the turn of the millennium commenced right from the time it was constituted by gm-crnmcnt. Many considered the announcement of the name of Professor Ladipo Ayo Banjo as the Chairman of the Governing Council of the university as a good omen and publicly said so in many fora. Others, realising the qualities and track record of the persons who had been assembled to run the affairs of the university along with Ayo Banjo, were more demonstrative and wrote, in the many letters of congratulations that were received, to offer their support in whatever form the university may need it. His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, who had already aligned himself with the university even in the days I was still serving as acting Vice-Chancellor, threw the doors of his government open to Council and was, at all times, in the forefront of the vanguard of those men and women who contributed in an immeasurable manner, to the transformation that the university experienced.

Even as early as the later part of the year 2000 when the John D. and Catherine T. Mac Arthur Foundation interacted with the authorities of twelve Nigerian universities in order to identify four of them "with strong leadership", whose development plans it would support, the foundation had no problem in recognising the University of Port Harcourt as one of the four. Following that recognition, the MacArthur Foundation has awarded grants and committed itself to an enduring partnership with the university with respect to its long-term developmental activities,

As time went on the tempo of the crescendo of the well-wishes, commendations and recognitions increased and took more concrete forms. In 1999, the Federal Government, through the NUC carried out an Accreditation Exercise of programmes and courses that were taught in various Nigerian universities. The purpose of the accreditation was to discover how the programmes and courses had

met the minimum standards and criteria that were set by government for academic programmes in Nigerian universities. At the end of the exercise, programmes/courses were either fully accredited, accredited in the interim, or denied accreditation. The results which were published in 2001 showed that for the University of Port Harcourt, nine of its programmes/courses received full accreditation, twenty-three were accredited in the interim while eleven were denied accreditation. The university was to satisfactorily remedy the deficiencies that were identified in the courses/programmes that were denied accreditation within one year or was to stop admitting students into them. The Senate of the institution deliberated on the matter and took remedial actions on those programmes/ courses that were denied accreditation. The NUC repeated the exercise in November 2002, confining its assessment only to those programmes/ courses that had been denied accreditation during the 1999 exercise (eleven in the case of the University of Port Harcourt) and the element under scrutiny was the quality of the academic content of first degree programmes. The result of the repeat exercise was published in July 2003. All the eleven programmes/courses of the University of Port Harcourt which had been denied accreditation during the 1999 exercise were fully accredited except three which received interim accreditation. By that performance, the University of Port Harcourt moved from its position of 25th in the then ranking of the 36 Federal and State Government owned universities in the country, to a new position of **Number One**, alongside the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, a development which all stakeholders of the institution received with tremendous joy. I understand that the University of Port Harcourt has maintained this enviable record as it was one of the 24 universities out of the 75 that are currently in the country, which had **all** their programmes/ courses accredited (full as well as interim accreditation) in the latest exercise which was conducted in late 2005 just after I had concluded my assignment as the Vice-Chancellor of the university.

Again the NUC commenced the appraisal of the performances of Governing Councils and Vice-Chancellors in 2002 under the Nigerian University System Annual Merit Award (NUSAMA). For the Governing Councils the criteria that were used for the appraisal included the ability to introduce innovative strategies into university governance and the maintenance of good relationship between Council and management. While that for the Vice-Chancellors took into consideration the ability of the candidate to establish efficient working relationship with various sections of the university community and also the ability to maintain excellent public relations for the university as a corporate organisation. The results of the 2003 appraisals were announced in 2004 and the Governing Council of the University of Port Harcourt was declared the **Best Governing Council while its Vice-Chancellor was declared the Second Best Vice-Chancellor**. The University of Port Harcourt was the only university whose Governing Council as well as Vice-Chancellor, made the first three in the rankings of each category. In addition to the public recognition, the Governing Council and the Vice-Chancellor received cash awards of N1,000,000 (one million naira) and N100,000 (one hundred thousand naira) respectively from the NUC which both parties agreed to put into the endowment fund of the university.

In 2002 and 2004 Professor Ladipo Ayo Banjo, the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council and Professor Nimi Briggs, the Vice-Chancellor, were honoured with the national honors of the Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON) and the Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) respectively by the Federal Government. While it is not being suggested that the awards were made in recognition of their services to the University of port Harcourt, it is difficult also to aver that their services to the institution did not in any way contribute to the recognition that they received. As for Professor Nimi Briggs, the Vice-Chancellor, the point must

be made that his award marked one of the few instances in which incumbent Vice-Chancellors had been so recognised. The stunning performances of the students of the university at the NUGA Games of 2000, 2002 and 2001 as well as the WAUG Games of 2003, as opposed to their lackluster outings in sporting activities prior to those times, have already been mentioned. Students of the university also performed well in competitive academic events with their peers. For three years, at the 25th (2001), 26th (2002) and 27th (2003), *Nigeria Annual International Conference and Exhibition (NAICE)* meetings of the *Society of Petroleum Engineering (SPE)* Students Technical Paper Contests, students of the University of Port Harcourt placed first. A student of the university also placed 2nd at the 27th NAICE meeting at which event the University of Port Harcourt, in addition, won the *Egbert Imomoh Prize* for the best SPE Student Chapter. In 2002 and 2003, Michael Chukwuonye and Patrick Udo, both students of the University of Port Harcourt, represented Nigeria at the SPE International Students Paper Contests in Denver, Colorado, USA and San Antonio, Texas, USA respectively. Michael Chukwuonye placed second at the competition among five regional representatives from USA, Brazil, Mexico, Russia and Nigeria. What all this meant was that the University of Port Harcourt had taken giant strides and propelled itself upwards. It was always being mentioned along with the first generation universities, which had had more time than itself for their development.

On a lighter note, the report must be made of Miss Agbani Darego, a student of the University of Port Harcourt, who in 2002, Won the Miss World Beauty Pageant in Johannesburg, South Africa. That victory of Miss Darego was the first time ever that the beauty crown had been won by anyone from the continent of Africa.

As important as these responses, commendations and returns were, the greatest return which, to my mind, the University of Port Harcourt had on its investment in good governance at the turn of

the millennium, was peace. This is so because I consider peace as an indispensable prerequisite for any establishment, including the University of Port Harcourt, to thrive and to make progress. The absence of peace which was so evident at the University of Port Harcourt in the late 1990s as well as the early part of my administration, emanated from the actions of staff and students. Students would protest because there was no light for them to watch a football match or to prepare for a forthcoming examination. They would pour out onto the streets of the university because there was no water with which they could flush their toilets which had become brim-full with human waste. They would cause disruption because an examination time-table did not suit them and of course secret cult boys would cause mayhem, fear, apprehension and insecurity because they were "sailing". But as the actions that were taken by the Governing Council and the Senate of the university gradually took effect, which included the streamlining of the academic activities of the university, the improvement in electricity and water supply, and the mounting of effective security, the level of students discontent diminished. So, by 2004 and beyond, it had become something of a rarity to hear of student unrest at the University of Port Harcourt.

Staff contributions to the absence of peace in the campus stemmed mainly from the national strike actions that were organised by the staff unions and again in the circumstances that I had described, the number of such strike actions fell drastically after 2003. There was also the absence of peace which emanated from intra-campus tensions associated with group loyalties. The presence of peace therefore meant the elimination of such tensions, polarisations and group allegiances which gave rise to conspiratorial nocturnal meetings at which positions were taken on important university issues that were not necessarily based on the overall interest of the university and the nation, but often on sectional and less edifying premises. Rather issues were now ventilated in the

open and everyone spoke his or her mind without looking backwards to see who was there and not minding recriminations or castigations from interest groups. It is my prayer that the pervading peace at the University of Port Harcourt lasts. No one with my level of commitment to that institution would wish it less as I firmly believe that this was my greatest contribution to the University of Port Harcourt as an individual during the years I served as its Vice-Chancellor.

Conferences

Other than the botched 2002 Convention of the National Association of Nigerian Students, the only other conferences of note which were held at the University of Port Harcourt, between 2000 and 2003, were the 18th Conference of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Federal Universities (CVC) and the 2002 Annual Conference of the Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL).

Styled *Port Harcourt 2000*, the CVC conference which had as its theme *University Education, Democracy and Development* was held at the Presidential Hotel Port Harcourt, under the auspices of the University of Port Harcourt between the 13th and 17th November, 2000. The hotel was chosen as the venue of the conference because at that time there was no hall that was big and decent enough at the University of Port Harcourt campus where such an event could be held. The conference went very well and the Vice-Chancellors had the opportunity of visiting the Shell terminus at the island of Bonny in Rivers State from where a large portion of the nation's crude oil is exported. They also visited the facilities of the liquefied natural gas plant at Finima near Bonny. The 2002 NAL conference also went well. It was held at the *Moshood Abiola Resource Centre* at the University of Port Harcourt and it drew the creme de la creme of the liberal Arts in the country, including Tekena

Tamuno and Ayo Banjo. The keynote address was delivered by Professor Godwin Tasie, formerly of the University of Jos. . However, by 2004, a number of things had happened which enhanced the number of conferences that were subsequently held at the University of Port Harcourt. For one thing, the perception of the university in the eyes of the general public and in the Nigerian university system had improved and the university was receiving positive press reports in the national dailies on account of the good things that were happening in it. Secondly, the supply of electricity and water, two commodities which are important for the hosting of conferences, had also improved. Furthermore, there was by that time, a purpose-built Conference Centre, the *Ebitimi Balligo Auditorium*, which though not yet complete, was ready enough to be used. Many academic and professional societies and organisations were therefore encouraged to choose the University of Port Harcourt as the venues for their conferences. Between late 2003 and July 2005 when I concluded my assignment as the Vice-Chancellor of the university, several conferences were held at the University of Port Harcourt. They included: the conference of Nigerian Federation of Catholic Students, the conference of the Nigerian Drying Society, the conference of Nigerian Association of Education Media and Technology, the conference of the Nigerian Universities French Teachers Association, the 18th conference of the Nigerian Academy of Education, the 3rd Annual Scientific Conference of the Anatomical Society of Eastern Nigeria, the Annual Conference of Pathologists of Nigeria, the conference of Corrosion Association of Nigeria, the conference of Directors of Academic Planning of Nigerian Universities, the conference of Bursars of Nigerian Universities and the conference of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria.

Conferences are important means of disseminating educational information. They afford people in the hosting environment the opportunity of meeting with notable persons who may attend the

conferences to deliver papers. In addition, they serve as media for social interactions between colleagues and friends. It is a good thing the university has now put itself in the position in which it could attract several conferences to be held in its premises.

Visitors

Before 2004, the last time that the nation's number one citizen visited the University of Port Harcourt was on 25 March 1977 when the then General Olusegun Obasanjo was at the university to lay the foundation stone of the Ofirima Complex. Since then the university had not succeeded in getting a serving President or Head of State to visit the institution in any capacity. But on 16 April 2004, the university did. That was the day on which His Excellency Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, visited the university in order to commission the *OBJ Water Supply Project*. As the university was still savouring the visit of Mr. President, his wife, Her Excellency, the late Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, visited on 24 November 2004, to declare the NUGA 2004 Games open. Mr. President and the then first lady did not visit for social reasons. They did so because there were issues of sufficient importance to require their attention. One was to commission a water project which would be of benefit to the staff and students while the other, was to declare a set of games open at which representatives of all universities in Nigeria would participate. The visits of Mr. President and the then First Lady were indicative of the class of visitors which the University of Port Harcourt welcomed in the years I served as the institution's Vice-Chancellor.

His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State visited ten times while his wife, Her Excellency Dr. Mary Odili JCA, visited on six occasions. Their visits were mainly to take charge of official events and occasionally to grace social events. Being major benefactors of the institution, they were always received

enthusiastically by the staff and students of the university. His Excellency was in the entourage of Mr. President when he visited the university while Her Excellency was in the entourage of the First Lady. On a number of visits to the university, His Excellency was accompanied by the Deputy Governor of Rivers State, His Excellency, Sir Gabriel Toby, a dignified, serene and venerable gentleman.

Three other state governors visited the university during the period under consideration: the then Governor of Bayelsa State, His Excellency Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, His Excellency Adamu Mu'azu the Executive Governor of Bauchi State and His Excellency Governor Abdullahi Adamu, the Executive Governor of Nassarawa State. The then Governor Alamieyeseigha was on the campus to receive an honorary doctorate degree and also to participate in official functions while Governors Mu'azu and Adamu were in the campus in solidarity with His Excellency Governor Peter Odili when the university honoured him with an honorary doctorate degree.

Legislators of the Federal House of Assembly, Honorable Ministers, Special Advisers, as well as important government personalities also visited. They included Chief Austin Opara, the Deputy Speaker of House of Representatives and a close friend of the university; Honorable Chibudum Nwuche, then Deputy Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives and a close friend of the university; Dr. Abiye Sekibo, the Honorable Minister of Transport, another friend of the university; Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, the then Honorable Minister of Finance, to deliver a Convocation Lecture; Professor Tunde Adeniran, then Honorable Minister of Education, to conduct various official functions; Professor Fabian Osuji then Honorable Minister of Education, to conduct various official functions; Dr Babalola Borishade, then Honorable Minister of Education, to conduct official functions; Chief Precious Ngelale then Minister of State for Water Resources, in the entourage of His Excellency the Rivers State Governor; Dr. Edmund Daukoru, then

special Adviser to Mr. President on Petroleum, to deliver a Convocation Lecture; Dr. Magnus Kpakol, then Economic Adviser to Mr. President to deliver a Convocation Lecture; Ambassador Godfrey Preware, to represent the Visitor of the university at Convocation; Dr. Abel Guobadia, the then Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, to deliver a Convocation Lecture; Dr. Alex Kadiri and other members of the Senate Committee on Education and Honorable West Idahosa and other members of the House Committee on Petroleum. The university also played host to a number of important traditional rulers and chiefs. They included HRH King Edward Asimini William Dappa Pepple, now CON, the Amayanabo of Grand Bonny; HRH King Alfred Diete Spiff the Amayanabo of Twon Brass HRH Eze Chukumela Nnam-Obi II the Oba of Ogba land; HRH Eze Robinson O. Robinson, Eze Ekpeye Logbo; HRH Eze B.O.O Oriebe, the paramount ruler of Akpor; HRH Eze Dr. Frank Eke, Eze Gbaka Gbaka, Eze Oba Evo II of Evo Kingdom and Nyeweli Choba.

A number of academics, professionals and members of the diplomatic corps also visited the university. Among them were: Professor Peter Okebukola, the Executive Secretary of the NUC; Professors Oye Ibidapo Obe, Ivara Esu, Dele Falase, Abdullahi Mahadi, Jude Njoku, tIusa Abdullahi, Vice-Chancellor of the Universities of Lagos, Calabar and Ibadan, Ahrnadu Bello, Zaria, Owerri, Bayero Kano respectively; Professor Godwin Tasie, Chairman, ARISE, Rivers State; Mr. Simon Kay of the British Council Lagos; Members of the Petroleum Technology Development Fund; Representatives of the IFP School, Paris; Professor Uzo Mokwunyc from the United Nations University, Tokyo; Professor Charles Lock of the University of Copenhagen, Denmark; Professor Jon Young of the North Texas University; Hakim Belo Osagie, then Managing Director of United Bank of Africa with a large contingent of top management staff of the bank;

Engineer. Godwin Omene, then Managing Director of the NDDC Representatives of KPMG Accounting Firm from their New York office; team from the John D. and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation, led by its President, Dr. Jonathan Fanton; Chief Ebitimi Banigo, then Managing Director of All States Trust Group; members of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria; Brigadier General Anthony Ukpo (rtd) , former Military Governor of Rivers State; Professors Julius Okojie and Placid Njoku both of the NUC; Dr. Frederick Humphries, then President of the National Association for Equal Opportunities in Higher Education (NAFEO), USA; the Consulate General of the United States of America in Nigeria; David Angell, the Canadian Ambassador to Nigeria; Researchers from the University of Toronto Canada; the Council for Registered Engineers of Nigeria (COREN); Engineer Arurneni Johnson of Rockson Engineering; Officers of the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria; Professor Gabriel Oyibo, Col. Oki of the NYSC; Professor Mamood Mandani; Chief Emmanuel Chiejina and the management team from Elf; Archbishop Nklass; Bishop Makoski; Bishop Ignatius Kartey.

The fact that the university hosted this large number of important visitors is beneficial. They brought goodwill from their respective organisations and in turn, went away with positive impressions on the efforts that were being made by the institution to fulfill its mission.

Gifts

The financial gifts and support that the university received were many. Some have been reported upon in the other sections of this book. Others, like the financial support which the university received from the Ford Foundation on two separate occasions for staff of the institution to undertake some important trips abroad, as well as that from the British Council to enable the Vice-Chancellor of the university to attend the Oxford Round Table at St. Anthony's College at the University of Oxford in 2003, have not been reported.

However, the emphasis in the current chapter is on the non-financial gifts which the university received as it is felt that sufficient information has been provided on the financial donations.

Even at that, mention has already been made of a number of the gifts which the university received in the years I was in charge of its affairs. The purpose of bringing them together here in one or two paragraphs is for effect: to use the information to buttress the point that is being made on the general direction of things in the institution during the period under consideration.

As it was with the financial supports, so it was also with the other forms of gifts to the university, that His Excellency, Dr. Peter Odili, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, remained the greatest benefactor of the University of Port Harcourt.

In 2001, the university received gifts of a 64-seater IVECO bus and a Fire Fighting Vehicle from Governor Peter Odili. The IVECO bus has proved to be very useful to the university as it has been the only reliable vehicle which the university has used for its long-distance trips. For instance, it was the vehicle which the university used in its travel to the Ahmadu Bello .University, Zaria in 2001, to understudy that university in its efforts to plan for the NUGA 2004 Games. Again it was that bus that transported members of Team Uniport from Port Harcourt all the way to Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, where it beat all other competitors from universities in West Africa and so, topped the Medals List. AS for the Fire Fighting Vehicle, it was its presence that enabled the university to establish a fire fighting Department, which, despite all its shortcomings, has served the purposes of the university to a reasonable extent.

Once more in 2002, His Excellency made a gift of an 800 KVA Caterpillar electricity generating plant to the university. That plant is now stationed at the Delta Park of the university and provides the much-needed stable electricity supply to the administration of the institution.

From a historical and an archeological perspective, the gift of a fossil SHELL to the University of Port Harcourt by Dr. Jeroen van

der Veer, the President of Shell International in July 2005, on the occasion on which the university honoured him with an honorary doctorate degree at The Hague, constitutes a very important event. Dr. Van Der Veer had given the gift on behalf of the international conglomerate of Shell in appreciation of the honour done him by the university. The specimen which is certified to be *17 Million years Old* was obtained from the coast of the Netherlands. It comes from the genus *Pecten elegans*, a mollusc, which is from the *Bivalvia* family, a family that is known to contain some of the few animal species which have endured throughout the course of paleontological history. The SHELL derives its fame from the fact that it is used as the emblem of the huge international conglomerate of companies known as Shell. The emblem is the one thing remaining from the time that the firm did not deal in oil products but in pearl shells from the Sunda Islands. This gift is highly treasured by the university. It is now in safe custody and would form part of the Petroleum Museum, the establishment of which the Senate of the university had already approved. Dr. van der Veer indicated that he will deliver a lecture at the University of Port Harcourt during his next visit to Nigeria. Computing hard and soft wares were favourite gifts to the university from many persons and organisations. This was hardly surprising when one realises the fact that the University of Port Harcourt was slow in the development of its technological base and also, the place of technology in the knowledge-based societies of tomorrow. In this respect the university received the following:

1. From His Excellency Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, then Deputy Governor, an Alumnus of the university who is now the Executive Governor of the State Bayelsa State.
Computers, Freezers and Air conditioners for the Faculty of Science.
2. From Chief O. B. Lulu the Managing Director of Moni pula Nig. Ltd.

5 No. complete set of Computer units model no Intel AS 1570
2 No. Laser Jet Printer
1 No. Overhead Projector PI' 50 IE
1 No. Automatic Voltage Regulator
1 No. Canon Copier NP 6416

3. From Dr. Atei Mark Okoroabia, former Commissioner of Education, Bayelsa State.
A set of multimedia computer system
One photocopier
Materials for interior decorations
4. From Dr.(Mrs.) O.M.O. Etebu, former Commissioner of Public Utilities, Bayelsa State, who refurbished Professor Ikoku's Seminar Room.
5. From the Japanese Embassy in Nigeria.
Several books and manuscripts on the Japanese culture.
From the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Company
Two sets of Computers
6. From STATO IL.
Several Geological equipment
7. From Citi Bank.
8. From SPDC.
Printing Press Machine GT052 x 365m52 and spare parts
5 No. Computers
Chemicals for Laboratory experiments
9. From Schlumberger Oil Fields Services.
6 No. Computers
16 No. Port Hubs
6 No. UPS System
1 No. Laser Jet Printer
2 No. Air Conditioners
7 No. Computer Tables

10. From Boyelafa Dabekeme, then Speaker Bayelsa State House of Assembly.
 - Computing facilities
 - 1 No. 110 Electricity Generating Plant
11. From Alliance Franciase-Port Harcourt branch.
 - Satellite Dish
 - Video Recorder
12. From late Nelson Aziboliari, an alumnus.
 - Computing Equipment
13. From Graduate Students in Department of Curriculum Studies.
 - Computing Equipment.

14. From Students of Electrical/Electronics Department (2002).
 - 4 No. Computers
 - 1 No. Printer

There are those who have argued that some of these gifts are flimsy and so do not contribute much to the fortunes of an organisation as big and complex as a university. Not only is this position a disservice to the university, it also smacks of ingratitude to those who have tasked themselves to be able to make such gifts. However, the point must be made that it is not only the size, value or quality of the gift which is given that interests the university. The university is enthralled, and probably more so, by that inner element of satisfaction in the giver about those things that the university is doing right, which motivated the spirit of giving. It recognises the fact that in most instances of giving and commitment to a cause, the initial steps are often small and feeble. The man that gives a single laptop today for use by the University of Port Harcourt has already been primed and if sufficiently cultivated, may give an aircraft tomorrow for use by the institution should his circumstances change for the better. But there is a proviso which is that the university must continue to earn her respect, love and admiration. The university does this by continuing to be relevant in the scheme of things so that good people would want to be associated with it.

The University of Port Harcourt must capitalise and build on the gains it has made over the years through good governance and an abhorrence of those practices which seek to set it against itself. That way the university will continue its appeal to the small donor of radar to become the big donor of tomorrow. That is the way' many successful universities the world over have made it; that can also be our lot too.

COMMITTEE OF VICE-CHANCELLORS

Even the fact that I was selected by my colleagues, the Vice-Chancellors of the twenty six universities that were owned by the Federal Government in August 2004, to be their chairman, was to some extent, a reflection of the enhanced respectability which the University of Port Harcourt was accorded at that time. Since the practice of deciding on who should be the chairman of CVC involved a process of electing one person from among those Vice-Chancellors with the longest tenures at the time the position became vacant, it was unlikely that I would have been so elected if the university I was heading was a cult infested, never-do-well institution that was labouring under a heavy load of unaccredited programmes. The general feeling would have been that my hands were full and that I already had too much on my plate. I thank my colleague for finding me worthy of their leadership; I thank the University of Port Harcourt for putting me in that enviable position. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Federal Universities (CVC) was formed in the 1960s after the other first generation . universities joined the University of Ibadan and became the few universities in the country. The purpose of the establishment of the committee was for the Chief Executives of the universities to meet under a single forum, forge common ties among themselves

and ventilate issues of common interest, Since at that time there were no state universities, the single name of CVC sufficed. However, with the formation of State and Private Universities, a common association with the name of the Association of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (AVCNU), which serves as the umbrella body under which the Vice-Chancellors of all 75 five universities that currently operate in the country, meet. But the Vice-Chancellors of Federal Government-owned universities (CVC) still meet on their own outside the meetings of AVCNU. By virtue of their age, they are the best organised of the three components of AVCNU and have the best structures for the running of an association.

CVC chooses its chairman through a simple and well established tradition on a rotational basis. The appointment is never held beyond one year. When the position is about to become vacant, a list of the names of the longest serving Vice-Chancellors, the balance of whose tenures in their respective universities is not beyond one year, is drawn up and from that list, members elect one whom they feel is most suited for the office. I was so elected by CVC to be its chairman on 4 August 2004 and baring unforeseen circumstances, I was to serve in the office until 9 July 2005, the day on which my appointment as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, which was my primary assignment, would be ending. At that time AVCNU was still having a debate on how the appointment of its chairman should be decided. In the interim, AVCNU approved that the Chairman of CVC should automatically serve as the Chairman of AVCNU until the debate on that matter was concluded. I therefore served as the Chairman of CVC as well as the Chairman of AVCNU for the eleven months that I was in office as the matter was still under discussion as of the time I concluded my assignment.

A number of problems were confronting the CVC and the AVCNU at the time I took charge of the affairs of the two associations. Of these, the most important was that for the CVC, the administrative

machinery had lost steam. Saddled with a secretariat that was functioning from Abuja and Lagos, its operations had become inefficient, wasteful and expensive. For the AVCNU, members of its component groups were unable to define what should constitute a healthy relationship between them and the *modus operandi* for selecting a chairman for the group. There were some other matters which dealt with finance and logistics in the two associations which also needed attention. I decided to take them one after the other but to tackle the big ones with all seriousness. Of course, all these were outside the run-of-the-mill matters like unrest in university campuses arising from cult activities and strike actions by staff unions which constantly faced the Vice-Chancellors.

When CVC commenced its operations on Victoria Island Lagos in the early 1960s, it quickly set up a good administration which coordinated its activities. That administration was later on to serve the AVCNU also and the Committee of Prochancellors of Nigerian universities (CPNU) when that committee was founded. The Secretary-General was responsible to the CVC through its Chairman.

The CVC acquired a huge property, part of which was used as its offices and the other, rented out. When the seat of the Federal Government relocated to Abuja, the CVC also relocated. It was eventually able to acquire another building which then served as the Abuja office of the association and from then on, the meetings of CVC, AVCNU and CPNU were held in Abuja. But the Secretary-General and other senior administrative staff except one person, who serviced these meetings, did so from Lagos. They travelled with their files and books all the way from Lagos to Abuja by air and flew back after the meetings. This arrangement was cumbersome, inefficient and expensive. It ensured that not much work was done at the Lagos office while the Abuja office remained dormant. The reason for this unhelpful duplication was that there was difficulty obtaining accommodation in Abuja for the staff of CVC. The Vice-Chancellors decided that the situation had to change and as CVC

had made part payments for various accommodations at Abuja we took steps to effect balances of those payments, completed construction work on the buildings and got the affected staff relocated from Lagos to Abuja.

At about the same time, the term of office of the then Secretary-General, Professor G. Umezurike was to expire, he having served in the position for two terms of four years each. We advertised the position and following due process, appointed Professor Musa Abdullahi, himself a former CVC Chairman, and the immediate past Vice-Chancellor of the Bayero University Kano.

By the time Professor Musa Abdullahi assumed office and the balance of the staff transferred from the Lagos office to Abuja, the administration was running satisfactorily and CVC had overcome one of its most pressing problems at the time. With the new administration in place, CVC established a good rapport with the National Assembly and was able to get a sum of N25 million appropriated for it in the 2005 budget. This money, it was envisaged, would be used to commence construction work on the permanent CVC secretariat on the parcel of land which is located directly behind the present office block. Furthermore, CVC established links with MacArthur Foundation, a philanthropic organisation which is working with a number of universities in the country, and obtained funding for the establishment of Information, Communication and Technological facilities at the secretariat which have boosted the operations of CVC in no small measure.

Two other areas in which we expended some time was in revalidating the Right of Occupancy on a parcel of land in the Wuse District of Abuja and also in trying to get government to take over the recurrent expenditure of the CVC on personnel costs.

As for the AVCNU, our most important concern was how to make the groups within feel and work like members of a single association. After several weeks of deliberation on the matter, it was felt that a constitution should be drawn up which would take care of the

interests of the various groups while still forging a single association out of all of them. In the end, it was decided that the document which had been prepared on the matter should be referred to Professor Ilochi Okafor, the Vice-Chancellor of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), for further appraisal. It was at that level that the matter was when my assignment as the AVCNU Chairman was concluded.

Most times our discussions at CVC meetings centred on crises management arising from the various strike actions by the staff unions. We would review how information was put across by one union in a university to its Vice-Chancellor on how a particular crisis was averted in another university because the Vice-Chancellor had paid a particular allowance. More often than not, such information proved to be incorrect, the unions just played one institution against the other to see who would blink first. Happily, the spate of strike actions by unions had reduced dramatically across all the Federal Universities at the time I assumed the chairmanship of the committee for the reasons that I have already stated. But there was still the problem of insufficiency of funds with which to run universities which remained at the core of our discussions. And in this respect, we must register our collective appreciation to the Executive Secretary of the NUC, Professor Peter Okebukola, for his tireless efforts in ensuring that the universities got their allocations from the Accountant General's office. He also briefed the Vice-Chancellors at a number of our meetings on relevant government policies and actions. Later on, the policy of sending money to universities through the NUC changed and government credited the accounts of individual universities with their subventions. On our part, we made several representations to the House Committee on Education to discuss issues on appropriation for universities; on one occasion, Mr. President himself granted us audience.

I came away with the impression that government was not utilising the resource that is available at the CVC/AVCNU well by not tapping into those two bodies for advice and contributions on important educational policies. On their part CVC and AVCNU would have to enhance their relevance by debating and taking publicly known positions on issues that border on education in the country. When over fifty Vice-Chancellors with varied backgrounds gather to deliberate, the proceedings of that deliberation should transcend union strike actions. They should incorporate concrete contributions such as manpower requirements and their distributions, national research priorities for development and the modalities for the cultivation of a knowledge-based economy. Perhaps the time has come for CVC to establish a research division that would enable it to examine some of these issues with a more analytical mind.

LESSONS

In the chapter on NUGA 2004, I commented on the significance of record keeping and accurate documentation of events in the life of an organisation. I made the point that such documentations are important for future evaluations of the activities of the organisation and for the purposes of research. It was this principle that drove the preparation of the tremendous volumes of records that were kept by the university not just on the events of NUGA 2004, but on all aspects of its life, when I served as its Vice-Chancellor. These records and reports included the Annual Reports of the university the Quarterly Reports on the state of the university; the Annual External Auditor's Reports; the Quarterly Financial Reports; the Narrative and Financial Report of NUGA2004 the Silver Jubilee Anniversary Report; the Silver Jubilee Endowment Fund Report and many others.

This book, *Turning the Tide*, is also, to some extent, a thematic documentation of the major events at the institution as seen from the eyes of its chief executive, Nimi Briggs. It has drawn from the multitude of records and reports that exist in the university for the period, explaining, annotating and commenting on them as appropriate. In the process, the book has telescoped the essentials in those reports and records under a single cover, However, as

important as this accomplishment may prove to be, it is in the reflection on its contents and the wider application of the lessons learnt from the experiences of the University of Port Harcourt and its chief executive, the Vice-Chancellor, that this book should find greater relevance. The last two chapters of the book espouse this viewpoint.

Role of Leadership

History is replete with information on the tremendous impact that strong, dynamic and inspirational leadership makes on the output of every human organisation. Such leadership is usually focused, motivational and transparent. It seeks to build a team which it leads by example and on whose members it is fair, humane, evenhanded and equitable. True leadership is ethical, consistent in character and arouses people to translate vision into reality. In the university system, leadership is structured in a pyramidal manner commencing from the Governing Council or Board of Trustees to the Senate, the Administration, Deans of Faculties, Heads of Academic Departments and the Heads of Non-Teaching Units. The Governing Council or Board of Trustees defines the vision, lays the principles and sources for the funds with which the university operates, while the Senate leads the university in all its academic activities. The Administration, with the Vice-Chancellor as its head, is in charge of all operations of the university except those of the Governing Council or Board of Trustees. Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments and Units pilot the affairs of their respective divisions. The Vice-Chancellor or President as the Chief Executive, coordinates the activities of all organs of the university and is responsible to a good measure, for the performance of the institution. For the university to perform satisfactorily therefore, it is essential that these leadership positions, especially those of the Governing Council and that of the Vice-Chancellor, be filled with persons having the appropriate qualities.

Founded in a "spirit of surging enthusiasm" and with a stable administration which was manned by visionary leaders, the University of Port Harcourt had a spate of rapid development in its early years. Following a period of careful planning during which the guiding principles of the institution were enunciated, the university established degree programmes into which undergraduate and graduate students were admitted. There was peace which was conducive to learning and the university commenced developmental work at its permanent site, All too quickly instability crept into the affairs of the institution. It suffered the unfortunate fate of the premature dissolution of some of its Governing Councils as well as frequent changes in its Vice-Chancellors. This unstable leadership, coupled with other equally important factors, shook the basis for continued planning and progress resulting in the stalling of the development of the institution. Peace eluded the university as aberrant staff and student behaviour emanating, among others, from the inability of the university to provide the basic necessities for a community of scholars, became a major problem to contend with.

This, in essence, was the state of affairs at the turn of the millennium when a new Governing Council was put in place by government. Led by a man with sterling qualities and blessed with the presence of other accomplished men and women, the Council set to work to restructure the priorities of the university. Over a period of four years during which it served out its lifespan, the Council gave the university the quality leadership that enabled it to surmount a number of its most pressing problems. Determined to work as a team, it took on the responsibility of assembling the other members of the team, with whom it was to administer the affairs of the university, early in the course of its operations. It recommended to the Visitor a candidate for appointment as the Vice-Chancellor and appointed the other Principal Officers. Deriving from the quality and ability of those it recommended and appointed, and with a Senate that was alive to its responsibilities, the scene was then set

for the university to receive a purposeful leadership from a team that led more by examples than by precept. Working together, they streamlined the academic activities of the university and addressed the poor state of its infrastructure. They initiated steps to secure the future of the institution and put in place structures that would accelerate the contribution of the university to national development. Peace returned eventually to the university; it regained its progressive march and on the whole, its approval rating, soared. A new Governing Council, which was instituted at the expiration of the life of the one at the turn of the millennium, has since taken charge of the affairs of the university. Led, happily, by a man of equally impressive credentials as his predecessor, the new team has continued the process of taking the university along its progressive pathway.

Place of Good Governance

Recognised universally for its liberal tradition of not stifling dissent, good governance in a university should be based on the provisions of the legal instrument by which it was established and also on democratic principles. This was the case at the University of Port Harcourt during the period under review.

The Governing Council was punctual at all its meetings. It carried out an equitable distribution of the income of the university and reviewed the reports on the financial transactions of the institution from internal as well as external auditors thereby ensuring transparency. It kept abreast with developments in the university through the regular reports it received from the Vice-Chancellor. Furthermore, it worked assiduously to improve electricity and water supply as well as the availability of ICT facilities in the campus and also to initiate construction work on a number of projects in the university. It resuscitated some of the institution's ailing parastatals and approved the commencement of a number of establishments which were to further the ability of the university to contribute to

national development. Above all, it maintained excellent relationship with the administration and the Senate of the university

On its part, Senate was bold and firm in its determination to re-order the academic profile of the university. It regulated the behaviour of staff and students with respect to academic work and expelled fake students as well as those whose actions were not in keeping with the demands of a civilised academic environment, It fashioned out new academic and professional programmes to advance the contribution of the university to sustainable national development.

As for the administration, the life style of self-conquest and total commitment to the cause of the university was probably its greatest contribution to good governance at the university during the period under review. Led by the Vice-Chancellor and bound by mutual respect for one another as well as a shared vision for the institution, members of the administration worked like a closely-knit team which served as the driving force for virtually all operations of the university. They were always punctual and worked exceedingly hard including doing so at some weekends and public holidays, They held weekly management meetings, attended to correspondences without delay and signed over 30,000 certificates, an act which placed the university in the enviable position of delivering certificates to graduates shortly' after graduation ceremonies. On account of their strong persuasive ability and the thoroughness with which members pursued their individual responsibilities, the administration was able to carry along with it, most sections of the university, including the Council, Senate, Congregation and the Committee of Provost and Deans, along with it in its determination to change the fortunes of the university for the better,

Importance of Clearly Stated Objectives

No single administration can hope to solve all the problems of an organisation during its life time especially one as complex as a

university: As much as possible therefore, administrative decisions and actions should be characterised by continuity in which one picks up from where the other had ended, the whole exercise being a relay and not a marathon race. However, an incoming administration should, in addition to a commitment to continuing along the trajectory of its predecessor, have clearly stated and achievable objectives to which it will obligate itself during the time allotted to it to be in office. Such an act sets standards by which an administration can judge itself and prevents disorderly and uncoordinated set of actions. The ten-year Strategic Plan of the university which was launched by the institution at its 20th Convocation Ceremony in December 2003, serves this purpose precisely. It contains information on the importance of each goal, indicates a time frame for its realisation and the resources for its attainment. Because it is a document of tremendous importance, its preparation was not rushed as all sections of the university, including the Governing Council and Senate but especially, its students, made weighty contributions, even though the essential ingredients that were required for its formulation were the very materials that were placed before the Senate of the university by the then acting Vice-Chancellor, as far back as January 2000. It is therefore not surprising that its implementation started in 2000, when Senate adopted the document and the proposals therein. The fact that this Administration came into office with such clearly defined objectives, is one important reason why so much was achieved during the period under review

Furthermore, and as much as it is possible, individual actions within the larger framework should also have their own clearly stated objectives which should be equally achievable. The conduct, operations and outcome of NUGA 2004 at the University of Port Harcourt is a case in point. The objectives for requesting to host the sporting event were clearly stated by the Vice-Chancellor and understood by the university's management team. They were feasible

and so everyone worked towards the goal of their achievement, It was therefore not surprising that in the end, the objectives were achieved

Finance

Only very few organisations that depend on external sources of funding can boast of sufficient funds to run their services and carry out their development plans. Federal Government owned universities, like the University of Port Harcourt, depend on government subventions to pay staff salaries and emoluments, pay for goods and services and also, to carry out capital and rehabilitative works. As was stated in the text, although government subventions to the universities, the University of Port Harcourt inclusive, had been increased substantially in recent times, the bulk of the increase had been taken up by recurrent expenditure, a disproportionately small amount having gone into capital constructions. Additionally there had been the problem of the marshy terrain of Rivers State where the University of Port Harcourt is located, which makes the unit cost of construction work much more expensive than is the case in most other parts of the country. The net effect of all this had been that infrastructural development at the University of Port Harcourt had been very slow indeed.

Faced with this dismal state of affairs at its inception in 2000, the Governing Council debated several options for raising funds with which to carry out development projects in the university, realising that the huge funding that was required for such a purpose, could not reasonably be expected to come from government alone. In this respect, its first action was to bring about a more prudent expenditure pattern of the university's funds. It then caused the preparation of a document titled *Urgent Developmental Needs of the university of Port Harcourt* which it used in soliciting for funds from public-spirited individuals and organisations. Additionally it established an Endowment Fund and reached out to many

governments, organisations and private individuals. Council also resuscitated some of the ailing parastatals of the university which then became profit making.

On its part, the administration threw its weight behind the measures that were taken by Council. In addition, it showcased the university in positive light on many occasions such that many well-meaning persons became willing to associate with it.

Cult Problem in Universities

In the main text, I have indicated my strong belief that the nation's universities would one day overcome this evil phenomenon of cultism just as the University of Port Harcourt had done. I am still strong in that conviction for *in all situations, good ultimately overcomes evil*.

Our findings at the University of Port Harcourt were that this heinous crime was more commonly perpetuated by students who were weak in their academic work and whose parents, usually rich, had been indulgent; more often than not, the students had found their way into the university through improper means. The general and specific methods which the university used in getting on top of this monster had been described in the text. Two of the specific measures, among those taken by the Senate of the university, call for further comments. The weeding out of more than 6,000 "students" from the university who had illegally found their way into the institution, dealt a profound blow on the cult movement as a whole as a good number of its members were caught in that web. Senate followed this action up with the tightening of the loopholes through which illegal students continued to hang around the university even when they had been expelled. Registration for courses and programmes by fresh students was then to be done on-line and unless one's credentials were genuine one would find it difficult to access the relevant documents that were web-based. All examination results were published within five weeks of the

conclusion of the examinations. That meant that cult boys no longer had the long time lag that they needed to negotiate, intimidate and coerce lecturers to alter their grades to those that would enable them to continue to stay in the university or even graduate with the university's degrees. And as if all these were not stringent enough, Senate still had a committee that carried out a last and thorough check on final year results before degrees were awarded. The other measure was the prompt expulsion order which Senate gave once cultists were correctly identified and to signal its resolve, Senate requested that the names and photographs of such students be published in leading national daily newspapers.

A number of the parents of the expelled students came to protest the seeming innocence of their children, threatening to take legal actions. The university patiently explained; in the end they did nothing, thus further confirming the justification of the university's actions.

Dealing with Issues of Discipline as well as Discontent

The Student Handbook as well as The Statement of Academic Polities and Programmes which are handed over to students at orientation programmes for fresh students, contain information on the rules and regulations of the university which if infringed upon by students would call for disciplinary action. Students may be disciplined by the Dean of Student Affairs or the Vice-Chancellor, but the university made provision for students who may consider their punishment to be unfair, to make appeals to Senate. In the same vein, the document on *Conditions of Service* contains the regulations by which the university expects staff to abide. However, in order to ensure absolute transparency on issues of staff discipline, Council instituted the Junior and Senior Staff Disciplinary Committees. Furthermore, Senate produced a document on the *Code of Conduct for Staff and Students in 2004*. The document contains information

on the ethos of a civilised university environment which if infringed, would attract penalties.

Regarding discontent, efforts were constantly made to attend to those issues which were likely to cause disaffection among staff and students pre-emptively. Electricity and water supply as well as the payment of staff salaries and emoluments as and when due, were usually the sticking points. Provision of electricity and portable water were taken as cardinal priorities on which the university worked until a reasonable level of supply was achieved. If for any reason there was going to be a prolonged interruption of any of these utilities, prior information was made available to those that would be affected. The chairman of Council whenever he was in Port Harcourt was pleased to receive union leaders to discuss welfare matters as well as any other that may be of concern to them. Union leaders were also free to see the Vice-Chancellor; he also called on them whenever he had important information that dealt with the welfare of their members.

Protection of the Corporate Image and Interest of the University

At the end of my tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, I asked myself on a number of occasions if there were some issues, which, if I was given the opportunity once again of serving in that capacity, I would, with the benefit of hindsight, handle somewhat differently,

In the earlier sections of this book, I had already reflected on the merits and demerits of contracting out the security services of the university in the way that we did. Obviously this would be one area that would call for a more careful appraisal before an action is taken, were such an opportunity to present itself once again. My other area of concern has to do with the manner I initially handled the matter of Edward Ezewu and his likes as it now appears to me that

in taking the position that I took initially, I did not sufficiently protect the image and interest of the corporate institution. I had canvassed forgiveness for Edward Ezewu before the Ayo Banjo-led Governing Council of the university on the ground that such an action would bring peace to the university which was an important prerequisite for the success of the plans I had for the rejuvenation of the institution.

I should have clarified the terms of the forgiveness to Ezewu and obtained from him a firm commitment that if he was given a reprieve, he would not return to those despicable actions of his which everybody loathed and which had brought him to the state in which he was at the time I came into office. Unfortunately, I did not do this, expecting that Ezewu would be remorseful enough. Sadly, Ezewu did not act in that vein but rather took the university through the same rigmorole which had brought him and the institution to the unfortunate pass; an action for which the institution had to go into unnecessary rounds of expenses on legal matters with Ezewu and his cohorts.

The lesson here is clear. In taking decisions on issues that affect an organisation, the Chief Executive must seek to protect the image and interest of the corporate organisation of which he is in charge, taking into consideration the unpredictable nature of human behaviour.

Establishment of a Reward System

Rewarding people when they have performed their tasks satisfactorily is a very inspirational and motivational action. The reward could be to an individual or to persons executing a group function. It could range from mere verbal recognition and the expression of gratitude to gifts. The chairmen of Council were always at pains to commend the Registry for the minutes that were well recorded and with minimal errors. Council commended the Vice-Chancellor several times and on one occasion, requested the Registrar

and Secretary to Council to write, on its behalf, to the Vice-Chancellor to commend him for the able manner he was running the affairs of the university, At the Silver Jubilee Celebrations, it was the Chairman of Council himself who handed over the gifts from a grateful university to the awardees. Even recently, the Chairman of Council commended the administration for ensuring that external audited accounts of the university up to 2004 were already ready by 2005. He commented that such an achievement was rare in many other organisations. As for the Vice-Chancellor, he paid complements to his colleagues in the administration, at all meetings he chaired including Senate and the Committee of Provost and Deans, as many times as he thought they merited it. Soon the practice was imbibed by many and almost became a culture.

A number of other lessons can be drawn from the events at the University of Port Harcourt during the period under review. For one thing the experience of the institution sets in context, the place of pre-eminence of the Governing Council and that of the Vice-Chancellor. This is obvious when one compares the performances of the institution when its administrative team was led by a Council together with a substantive Vice-Chancellor with the situation when this was not the case. Council directs the affairs of the institution and ensures strict adherence to the provisions of the law of the university. It also supports the Vice-Chancellor in the crucial functions of executing Council's decisions and promoting good governance. The Vice-Chancellor and members of the administration that he leads must not let themselves to be distracted. They must serve as the constant think-tank of the institution and must seek to generate winning ideas that will advance the course of the university. It was that type of original thinking by the administration of the University of Port Harcourt, that brought about the formation of the UAC and obtained the hosting right of NUGA 2004 for the institution, among others. Because the university community felt that the Vice-Chancellor was giving them that quality leadership

the Governing Council, Senate and Congregation stood resolutely by him and vouched for his character when he was falsely accused. Proprietors of universities should endeavour not to leave a vacuum in the appointments of these vital components of the university team, Nothing precludes individual members of Council serving out their stints at different times and so leaving in rotation rather than the wholesale replacement of everybody at a given time, And time should also be of the essence in dealing with university matters. It took more than a year for government to act on the recommendation of the Folarin Coker-led Council on the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor for the University of Port Harcourt; about the same time it took for a Council to be constituted at the expiration of the life of the one that was led by Ayo Banjo. More than one year after the reports of the Visitations to Federal Government-owned universities, the University of Port Harcourt inclusive, were submitted, the *white Papers* on them have not been made public. Thus, denying the institutions and the Visitor, the opportunity for the corrective actions which the findings of the visitations were meant to effect. Furthermore, in the choice or selection of the men and women to fill these positions, proprietors must be circumspect and take due care bearing in mind the crucial roles that are expected to be played by the appointees in the operations of the university.

In the face of severe shortage of funds for running their services efficiently, universities in Nigeria have resorted to various forms of revenue generating activities. They have succeeded to varying degrees and within the individual universities some activities have succeeded while others have proved to be drainpipes and net-losers, thus worsening the very situations they were meant to ameliorate. The experience at the University of Port Harcourt would suggest that it is the ones that combine revenue generation with educational components that prosper best. For other than the proceeds from the rejuvenated Choba-Uniport Community Bank, it is from the

educational outfits like the College of Continuing Education, the Basic Studies Unit, and the Sandwich Programme that the university has had appreciable reward on its investment. This is hardly surprising since education is *the business* of a university and to my mind, the experience makes the case for universities to stick essentially to the education sector and to leave merchandising to others. Universities should establish endowments such as the Capital Campaign that the University of Port Harcourt is currently pursuing and get alumni and organisations to make endowments which the university should then invest. Outside this, universities should exploit their *unique selling proposition (usp)*, education, to raise the funds that they need but not in an exploitative manner.

There is yet another area of fund-raising which universities in Nigeria are not harnessing to any appreciable degree. I am referring here to the issue of *patents and commissioned research*. Somehow the industries are unwilling to trust us with this vital aspect of University-Industry relationship. We, on our part, badly compromised by an absence of research culture in many institutions, lack the temerity to venture. But research constitutes the nourisher of universities from which ideas emanate for teaching as well as for national development. The nation's universities must therefore pay better attention to this aspect of their mission, meaningful research that bears on the furtherance of the cause of the nation, improves the quality of life of its people and stabilises its polity, is the best way of capturing that autonomy and ability to take care of its activities which universities in Nigeria have been clamouring for.

The argument could be made and probably correctly too, that nothing that has been said above is new So no one that is involved in management should feign ignorance that these items constitute some of the essential elements for success in any human organisation. But applying them could prove to be quite a different matter as the discipline, self-denial and focus that are required of

the leaders, may not be readily available, In its case, the University of Port Harcourt was fortunate to have had a Senate with a strong headship and Governing Council which was led by two persons at different times, who were able to apply these principles.

EPILOGUE

As the clock finally struck 12 midnight on 9 July, 2005, signaling the end of my tenure of office as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt and I began to reflect on my life, it was clear to me that it had been led by Providence.

One point came vividly home to me that if things had gone my way, I would never have been appointed the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt. As I had previously indicated, towards the end of 1994, I took a major decision in my life to relocate, along with members of my family, to the United States of America and leave the shores of Nigeria for good. Despite the fact that I had been offered a good job at the Louisiana State University in New Orleans and that I had actually purchased the ticket for my trip, the plan collapsed at the tail-end and I was instead detained as the "acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt". Was this not the hand of Providence, and if I had gone to New Orleans and was still there by the time hurricane Katrina arrived, how would members of my family and I have fared? These questions keep bothering me..

Again on 7 November 1996, I did everything that I possibly could to be on board the ill-fated ADC flight from Port Harcourt to Lagos that crashed with the loss of everyone on board, including Africa's

renowned political theorist, Professor Claude Ake. If I had succeeded in boarding the plane, I would not have lived long enough to have been appointed the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt.

On yet another consideration, one observes that to have been appointed the acting Vice-Chancellor of the same university on two separate occasions by the federal Government itself, is unprecedented; to have gone on to be eventually appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of that university, as was the case in my own situation is very rare.

While I was in office, a number of things happened that confirmed the abiding grace of God with the university and with me. For as Mrs. Lateefat Okunnu said in her letter of 14 July, 2005, (see later), "it is not all the time that efforts are rewarded with such success." First there was the issue of the quality and calibre of the men and women at the Council, Senate and Administration whom circumstances had brought together to look after the affairs of the institution. To a large measure, these were persons who shared a common vision of the university which they were desperate to translate into action. It was as if there was an equinox, a type in which the sun was shining directly and perpetually over the University of Port Harcourt. It came as no surprise therefore that the institution and I found favour with a lot of persons and organisations but especially with the government and good people of the Rivers State of Nigeria, led by His Excellency Dr. Peter Odili, whose benevolence, we cannot repay for even when evil men dared to stand in the way of the institution as was the case in the "Preye Ambaks" saga, the Good Lord delivered the university and me ..And as if to consolidate this deliverance, as we were about to go to press for the publishing of this book, judgment was given on the Insider *Weekly Magazine* case (see chapter 2). On 2 May, 2006, the Honourable Justice J. O. K. Oyewole sitting at the High Court of Lagos State in the Ikeja Judicial Division, "found the defendants

liable for libel against the claimant". Accordingly, His Lordship entered judgment in my favour. He awarded "the sum of N10, 000,000 (ten million naira) against them jointly and severally in favour of the claimant" for defaming my character. He also awarded the sum of N50, 000 (fifty thousand naira) in my favour against the defendants "as cost of the action inclusive of out of pocket expenses."

Then there was the matter of my strength and health as well as the support that I received from members of my family. Speaking at a referendum of sorts which was held at the University of Port Harcourt about May/June 2000 by a group in order to identify a popular candidate whom it would support for appointment as the institution's Vice-Chancellor, I had indicated that I was strong and in good health and that all the university would incur by way of medical expenses for the treatment, of its Vice-Chancellor, should I be so appointed, would most probably be the cost of treating no more than one episode of malaria for each of the five years of the appointment.

Many in the university system recognise that the Vice-Chancellor's job is very strenuous, especially for one who may wish to do it at a heightened pace. I was seized of this knowledge having served in the post in acting capacities. Fortunately, my strength held and I went through the five years without much strain even when I acted in the multiple capacities of Vice-Chancellor, University of Port Harcourt; Chairman, CVC as well as AVCNU; and member, National Constitution Review Conference, Abuja. My health also remained good as I had only two episodes of malaria instead of the five I had envisaged although one was fairly severe and needed intravenous fluid replacement in order to rapidly combat the moderately severe dehydration that arose from repeated episodes of vomiting. But I also had tooth extractions on two occasions which I had not anticipated and which unfortunately, the university had to pay for. As for the support from members of my family, I can only say that

it could not have been better. And this support was in addition to the chairmanship of UPWA, that wonderful Uniport Women's organisation, which my wife, Lady Data Briggs, had to assume for the five years of my tenure. She kept the home front quiet and shared in the occasional pains of such a high-profile job. My children gave their support by not being troublesome. My parents, brothers and sisters and members of *Kenkema Mina Ogbo*, sustained me with their prayers. In appreciation, by 12, midnight, July 9, 2005, I sent sms messages to as many persons whose paths crossed mine, to thank them for their support.

So many people wrote letters of congratulations and sent me gifts on my appointment; many more did so at the conclusion of the assignment. I enjoyed doing the job despite all its trial and tribulations and I cannot thank all my well-wishers sufficiently. A few of the letters that I received at the end of the assignment bear reproduction.

Dear Nimi,

Now that you have come to the hugely successful, even glorious, end of your tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, I write with great pleasure and satisfaction to congratulate you most warmly. I dare say you have reason to be proud of your accomplishments at the helm of the university. One might say that the university was born again under your dynamic leadership, and my hope and prayer is that the momentum which has been generated will be maintained. I am glad, in that connection, you have handed over to an insider, not only of the university, but also of the last Council...

L. Ayo Banjo, Hon.D.Litt (Port Harcourt)

Emeritus Professor of English (UI)

22 July 2005

Professor Nimi Briggs

Uniport

I received with great joy the announcement of the end of your stewardship as the Vice-Chancellor of Uniport this afternoon. I must confess that I spontaneously thanked God for you and felt a sense of relief that you are leaving when indeed the ovation is loudest. Yours indeed has been a very eventful tenure with definite evidence of Divine Guidance and Grace for it is not all the time that efforts are rewarded with such success. In my view your life is an embodiment of sincerity, brains, hard work, high integrity and above all amazing humility. Such combination of virtues is very rare and I consider myself very fortunate to know you and be able to pick some valuable lessons from the encounter. Thank you for all the courtesies, the kindness and genuine~ affection you extended to me and my husband while I was on the council of the university, I will never forget you.

Alhaja Lateefa M. Okunnu

Former Deputy Governor, Lagos State of Nigeria

On time Chairman National party of Nigeria

14 July 2005

Professor Nimi Briggs

I am delighted that the warmth, enthusiasm and goodwill that greeted your maiden speech as substantive Vice-Chancellor at Senate in July 2000 reverberated at your valedictory address in July 2005, a clear indication of a very successful tenure.

Samuel N. Okiwelu

Professor of Zoology

Former Dean Faculty of

Science Uniport

01 July 2005

Professor Nimi Briggs
Outgoing Chairman CVC

LETTER OF APPRECIATION

I write, first to congratulate you on the successful completion of your tenure as Vice-Chancellor University of Port Harcourt, Chairman Committee of Vice-Chancellors on Nigerian Federal Universities (CVC) and Chairman Association of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (AVCNU).

Secondly, I wish on behalf of both CVC and AVCNU to express our profound appreciation for the able manner in which you piloted the affairs of the two organisations including the injection of new life into the activities and operations of the CVC Secretariat.

You have no doubt, through your quality leadership and selfless service bridged the gap among the diverse components of the Nigerian University System (federal, state and private), Your departure from CVC at this time has left a vacuum which will take sometime to fill. Your colleagues will surely miss you but our prayer is that God should continue to lead and guide you aright in your future endeavours

Professor Musa Abdullahi
Secretary General CVC

Several communities in the university - including the Registry, the Bursary and the Works and Services department - held various ceremonies to mark my successful completion of the Vice-Chancellorship appointment. One that was organised by a "Committee of Friends" was a week-long carnival that featured a whole week of dances and masquerade displays from the various

communities of the Rivers and Bayelsa States. *Team Uniport* gave me a gift of a football on which the names of all the members of the team were inscribed while the Palm wine Drinker's Club, *The Kegites*, donated their hat to me.

The Senate of the university gave me a standing ovation after my last address as its chairman at its 303rd meeting which was held on Friday 01 July 2005 and sang the song "*for he is a jolly good fellow and so say all of us*". I was greatly touched. The Choba- Uniport Community Bank held a dinner for me and gave me a huge "Grand father's Clock" as a gift.

The Governing Council of the University organised a send-off and gave me a gift of a gold wrist watch. In addition, it revalidated the approval that had been given earlier by the Ayo Banjo-led Council that I proceed on a sabbatical leave in Paris at the end of my tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of the university and approved a handsome purse for my upkeep during the period. Furthermore, Council gave me an Award Of Honour which was inscribed on a most beautiful glass plaque and which read:

To

Professor Nimi D. Briggs. OON, JP

In appreciation of his outstanding achievements as
THE 5th VICE-CHANCELLOR UNIVERSITY OF
PORTHARCOURT 2000-2005

Presented by
THE GOVERNING COUNCIL, STAFF AND
STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF PORT
HARCOURT

I remain exceedingly in debt of Council for these actions.

On its part, the NUC wrote an eloquent account of my services to the University of Port Harcourt in particular and the Nigerian university system in general, in its *Monday Memos* of July 2005. It also gave me a gift of the state-of-the-art *Toshiba* laptop. I am grateful to that purposeful organisation, especially its Executive Secretary, the indefatigable Professor Peter Okebukola.

Tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria have come a long way from the days of their initial establishment at the Yaba College of Technology and the University College Ibadan. No one doubts the tremendous contributions they have made to national development especially in the provision of the human resources that are critical for the advancement of the country. However, available evidence indicates that they were better able to carry out their functions, at least from the point of view of the quality of their products, when their numbers were fewer.

In recent times, tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria have noticed a massive increase in their numbers, which some argue, have led to a deterioration in the quality of their output as well as a distortion of the roles that their various components are expected to play in national development. Whereas the demand for polytechnic education, where ideally, the technocrats needed for national development should be produced, has fallen, that for university education which should seek after excellence, knowledge generation and creativity, has risen sharply. No university anywhere is worthy of its calling unless quality, in all aspects of its operations, is of its essence.

The Nigerian university system must address the issues that their rapid expansion and the desire of many to obtain university education have thrown up: issues of quality assurance, finance, infrastructure and discipline among others. They must at all times, remind themselves of their responsibility to the nation: producing the men and women who would initiate and advance the thinking process that will lead the country on a path of sustained development. For

as countries such as India, Singapore, Malaysia and China, countries which only yesterday were classified along with Nigeria as underdeveloped, are beginning to show, the great powers of tomorrow, will spring up from knowledge-based economies and not necessarily from the natural mineral-endowed ones. The National Universities Commission must continue to set the broad outlines for quality assurance in the universities especially now that their numbers are large; their proprietors, varied; their orientations, diverse; and their constraints, dissimilar. But it is up to the universities themselves to set, inculcate and institutionalise those core values that will enable them to create intellects of world standard in appreciable numbers without compromising quality. For it is only in doing so that Nigerian universities will ensure their competitiveness in the global academic arena, especially in this age of globalisation of knowledge.

As for the University of Port Harcourt, what is required is for it to seize on the momentum it has generated over the years and continue on its path of progress. Its break with those issues that set it back in the past must be total and it must continue to exploit and explore as well as take advantage of that which it has now been able to demonstrate: the inevitability of ultimate success through teamwork.

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