

Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike

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Vice Chancellor

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Office of the Vice-Chancellor

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A NEW YEAR (AD 2022) ADDRESS TO THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

I bring the staff, students and well-wishers of the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, greetings of blessings in the New Year. The Almighty God deserves all our praises for seeing us through the year AD 2021. That year was full of God's grace for us all. We had a successful leadership transition earlier in the year and we did all we could to carry on from where the administration of our 5th Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Francis Ogbonnaya Otunta (of Blessed Memory) stopped in February, 2021. I must pause here to once again pay tribute to our former Vice-Chancellor who contributed so much towards the development of our University, but was cut short soon after his tenure ended. We miss him so much, but we give the Lord God Almighty, the glory for granting him the grace to successfully finish his tenure, and smoothly hand-over.

The year 2021 was full of mixed feelings. It accommodated the good, the ugly and the bad. The University experienced a lot of slowing down due to low funding of our activities. It experienced slowing down due to adjustment of staff and students to the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic from which the whole world was coming out after losing the whole of AD 2020 to lockdown and quarantine activities.

The vacuum created by the Pandemic in University functions affected our speed in transiting from a former Administration to the current one. However, the Almighty God helped us in picking our pieces and frontally confronting the ugly situation we met at take-off. We were able to organize our 2019/2020 Session up to the end of it in August 2021 and driving on to engaging the 2020/2021 Session which we are completing its 1st Semester this January. We successfully hosted Visitation and Accreditation Panels as well as the 10th Convocation Ceremony. Through the Accreditation Exercise we are strengthening our programmes and recovering previously lost ones. We are hopeful of expanding our admission horizon in the coming admission year because of our successes in the Accreditation Exercises. Similarly, the successful Convocation Ceremony held late last year is attracting committed friends to the University. Many of our Honorary degree Awardees have started showing commitment through attracting incentives to the University. We are grateful to them.

We thank God for the courage to drive on in the midst of adverse conditions of lack of funds, inadequate infrastructure, low staff co-operation, continuous rising inflation, unnecessary and callous petitions from Contractors who try to stop our already slowed down development, sabotage by some staff over our programs and development efforts, and sabotage of our younger trainee staff who after enjoying University sponsorship break bonds and refuse to return to serve the University, and lack leadership/mentorship from our senior staff, who even go to the extent of absenting themselves from such meetings as

Senate Statutory meetings. The problems are many and varied, but we decided to forge ahead.

The last nine months of this Administration was used as a testing time to study our environment, programmes and personnel. Let me say that the testing period is over. We shall commence the implementation of our regulations and procedures to enable us gain more mileage and achieve our set objectives in the interest of the University. Let me reiterate my earlier statement that the welfare of staff and students shall be vigorously pursued through faithful and diligent implementation of provisions in appointment and promotion, regulations in the Conditions of Service and Student Handbook.

I therefore appeal to all our staff and students to wake up and brace up with our regulations, guidelines, procedures, programmes and core-values. We should appreciate our peculiarity with regards to location, history, environment, size etc. We need to be fair to the University and join hands to restore it to a status of viability.

My vision for the University has been stated and re-stated. We need to brace-up with our goals of development of environment and people sensitive technology to enhance the well-being of fairness; deliver well tested and technically optimized agricultural production, processing and preservation and be diligent and transparent in our actions. We must entrench the habit of punctuality to our business. The period of coming late to work of even being absent from work and waiting for alert from IPPIS is over. Henceforth, it is only those who work that shall be paid. We should henceforth show self-control in our dealings with our students and visitors by eschewing all manifestations of corruption and immoral living. Those who major in intimidating others and using devilish force to over-power others should know that such cannot be tolerated any more. University disciplinary guidelines are available to all and must be adhered to.

As I welcome all of us to this year, let me state that it is a year of high hopes in living up to University standards as staff and students. Academic staff must show the way. They should become more available at all levels and academically engaged for their personal benefit and the benefit of the University.

The Non-teaching staff should brace-up and make outstanding contributions at all levels of their engagement to assist in ensuring that the University competes favourably with other Universities across the country and the world. We also expect our students to show commitment and maturity in their daily engagement on campus. Students should ensure that their charges are promptly paid by their parents and sponsors and of course make good use of funds given to them by their parents. They should therefore promptly register for their courses within the stipulated period, to enable teaching, research and learning to commence timely for their own good.

Let me state categorically that the Administration is available to all, at all times. The Administration is doing all it can to entrench peace, forthrightness, diligence, openness, development of facilities and resources. It is out to restore the fortunes of the University through reaching out to government agencies and people. There is already a lot of goodwill, but we should do well to reciprocate such for a better tomorrow for our University.

I welcome all of us to the New Year and pray that at the end of the year, we shall have a lot to testify and celebrate. Thank you.

PROF. MADUEBIBISI OFO IWE, CFS
Vice-Chancellor
24th January, 2022