

16 APRIL 2007

Vol 2 No. 16

ISSN 0795-3089

Executive Secretary Interacts with the Director, Goethe Institut

Goethe-Institut, Lagos and Accessure Educational in a media partnership with NTA 2, Lagos organized a one-day Education Roundtable on *University-Industry Relationship: Building New Partnerships* on Tuesday, 3 April 2007 at the Goethe-Institut, Lagos. The Minister of Education, Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili who had been invited as a Guest of Honour was represented by the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission, Professor Julius A. Okojie.

Professor David Ker, a visiting Professor at the NUC, made a presentation at the Roundtable highlighting the efforts of the Commission with respect to university-industry partnership. The contribution of NUC in the area of Research and Science Fairs to which industries are invited was commended. While NUC was advised to make the Fair an annual event, universities were encouraged to reach out to industry and spread the outcome of their research efforts beyond the confines of the ivory towers.

The Executive Secretary took advantage of the event to pay a courtesy call on the Director of the institute, Mr. Arne Schneider. They were joined by Mr. Bayo Olupohunda, Project Director and Miss Nkechi Okoh, Programmes Director both of Accessure Educational - an indigenous educational advocacy non-governmental organization.

The Executive Secretary informed his host that NUC had over the years been strongly involved in fostering the development of research in Nigerian Universities. Appreciating the primal place of research in a nation's development, Professor Okojie added that the Federal Government had graciously approved the restoration of Teaching and Research Equipment Grant to federal universities in addition to NUC's efforts at sourcing donor (local and international) interventions. He further stated that the National Universities Commission also showcased the research potentials of Nigerian universities by organizing the first Nigerian Universities Research and Development Fair (NURESDEF) in November 2004. A second edition was organized in December 2005. In an effort to drive the intended objectives of NURESDEF, NUC organized a one-day Colloquium with the theme: "Research and Development in Nigerian Universities and Partnership with Industry" in December 2006.

NUC is also collaborating with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) to run a research-based weekly TV documentary series – “Voyage of Discovery”.

On another note, Professor Okojie also informed that NUC had received a ministerial approval to carry out an audit of all academic programmes in Nigerian universities. He intimated that a consolidation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities would help the System function more effectively by easing the system of unwarranted programmes proliferation. He hoped for an NUC-Goethe-Institut collaboration in the near future to complement the effort of government in university development.

In his response, the Director of the Goethe-Institut promised that his organization was willing to create a platform for linkages between Nigeria and International institutions. He emphasized the need to move away from the issue of funding to mutually beneficial relationship between educational institutions and donor agencies.

Federal Universities’ First Quarter 2007 Capital Project Meeting

At the instance of Madam Minister, the National Universities Commission convened the first Quarter 2007 Capital Budget Review meeting. The meeting which held on 3 March 2007 had officials of Universities, Inter-University Centres, Federal Ministry of Education, National Universities Commission and other Parastatals in attendance.

Madam Minister, Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili *OFR* in her opening remarks informed the gathering that the meeting was a follow-up to previous meetings and that it was intended to take stock of achievements on the consensus reached at an earlier meeting of 12 January, 2007. She noted that the Ministry had received submissions from some Universities on 2006 Capital Budget Implementation, Schedule of 2007 Capital projects and few cases of virement proposals. She informed that the ministry was working on the submissions. She added that the forum would be an interactive session with a focus to resolving outstanding issues on the Capital Budget report at the Federal Executive Council Meeting scheduled for 18 April, 2007.

Some achievements on the level of implementation of Capital Budget of 2007 were highlighted as follows:

- i. Percentage implementation of releases against appropriation was about 98%. The University of Port Harcourt had an outstanding Due Process Review report while University of Jos had two outstanding Certificates.
- ii. 25% Material Advance Payment on all certified projects had been cash-backed. It was reported that the Ministry was making effort to warehouse the balance of 75%. However, the Minister requested the Universities to work hard to utilize the balance that would be warehoused. The meeting noted the delay in receiving cash backing for the approved 25% which was reported to have affected the performance on projects.
- iii. Over 40% of Federal Universities had commenced the pre-qualification stages of the projects under 2007 Appropriation Act. The meeting advised the Universities to work

hard so as to commit at least 70% of 2007 Capital Budget Appropriation by the end of May, 2007.

Best wishes for the week.