

AN ADDRESS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROFESSOR U.D. GOMWALK
ON THE OCCASION OF STUDENTS ORIENTATION
ON WEDNESDAY, 28TH OCTOBER, 1981

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I would like to formally welcome you all to the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, and to congratulate you on gaining admission into this University. By gaining admission here, you have gained a triple first; i.e., you have now become the first set of students of the first University of Technology in this country, and the first ever University to be established in Imo State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This triple first, therefore, has placed a tremendous responsibility on you, and it is up to you to prove to yourselves, the community in which you will be living for the next five years, and to the country as a whole, that you deserve this triple first.

The objectives of the University are clearly spelt out in your prospectus. Parts of these objectives read "This University therefore aims not only at imparting theoretical knowledge, but also at giving greater emphasis to practical experience in the field and the development of appropriate skills by the students. It seeks to make sure that it produces "finished products", who on graduation could be employed gainfully, within their fields of specialisation. To this end, the programmes of the University will provide for adequate practical experience on-campus, and reasonable periods of industrial attachments." Our aim is to fulfil these stated objectives in total, and more. That is why a lot of time is being devoted to planning in order to make sure that the right and proper academic, as well as administrative structures are established which will form a firm foundation upon which the philosophy

.../2



for fulfilling these objectives will be built and practicalised. It is therefore not surprising that this University will have its characteristic unique features. We should be proud of these features and regard them as a mark of evolution, striving to be something higher than what has existed. I must warn here. No evolutionary change is easy. No transitional period is comfortable. So is it going to be with you. You are like reptiles, leaving your ancestors behind 'in water', and striving for higher things 'on land' like mammals, and later on 'in the air' like birds. But do not forget, only reptiles which are determined to move further away from water, against all odds, succeed in evolving into mammals and birds. In this respect, if we want to succeed in establishing a truly technological University, to fulfil its stated objectives, the existing Universities in the country should cease to be our yardstick, both in terms of organisation and practice. We must therefore set our own standard, a very high one, which must be left behind as a yardstick for future similar institutions to use. This calls for concerted effort, hard work and determination on the part of both staff and students. For this reason, Ladies and Gentlemen, and in the light of all other constraints, visible and invisible, we would not promise you luxury, we would not promise you easy life in this young institution. But one thing we do promise ^{and that is} we feel committed to doing everything possible to keep you gainfully employed on the campus, such that at the end of your training period, we shall feel proud of you, and the nation will feel proud of you. For this reason, the academic and technical staff are being carefully selected, both in this country and from other parts of the world, who are

capable and sufficiently dedicated to the course of our objectives and goals. You must consider yourselves lucky to be the foundation members of this University.

You will soon be settling down to full student life, enjoying some measureable amount of freedom within the bounds of the University campus. You should take full advantage of all the privileges and rights granted within the laid down rules and regulations stated in your prospectus, and behaving at all times, within the code of human dignity. It is this that will earn you the respect of all people, which will also add to the uniqueness of the institution. There are laid down channels of communication which must be used at all times for mutual understanding and smooth running of all facets of the University. You must regard yourselves as part of the whole University community, working together for a common objective. You are expected therefore to play your own role fully in the welfare and social development of the University. It is therefore necessary that you organise your Students Union within the laid down procedures and regulations as soon as all the students admitted into the University are registered. You will also be given every encouragement to form such Clubs and Societies that will be of interest to you and which will lead on to projecting the image of the University. One of these will be sporting activities. I would like to assure you that every encouragement will be given to sports in the University. To this end, we are determine to send a contingent of sportsmen and women to participate in the N.U.G.A. games coming up in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in March next year. I hope that as many of you as possible will show your interest and prove your talents so that we shall be able to

come up with a sizeable team, for as many events as possible.

We had expected that lectures would start on the 2nd of November, 1981, but up to now, we have just about half of the students expected so far registered. If for this, and for some other reasons, we have to postpone starting of lectures to later date, you will be informed accordingly.

Ladies and Gentlemen, for about twenty three days, during this orientation period, you have been exposed to a variety of things; academic, technological, cultural and social. This should give you an insight into what a University life is. It is complete in itself, and you are expected to take full advantage of this. At the same time, you should not allow yourself to lose sight of your cardinal objective of coming to this University, which is to successfully complete your training in the University.

Finally, I had hoped that it would be possible for me to address all the three hundred students we are admitting at this time. Unfortunately this is not so. Over half of this number are not yet here. Their admission is still being processed through J.A.M.B. in Lagos. Senate, having carefully considered the implications of starting lectures without over half the number of students present, has decided to wait a little until we hear from our Admission Officers who are expected back from Lagos at the end of this week. Lectures would not therefore start on Monday, 2nd November, 1981, as scheduled until further notice. It is hoped that you will continue to be kept usefully busy. Staff are always around

for consultation. You now know them, and they know you.

I trust that you have found this orientation period useful and helpful.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

