



Text of the Address Delivered by

His Excellency

Mr. Biodun Oyebanji

Governor, Ekiti State, & Visitor to the Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria
at

**THE 27TH CONVOCATION AND AWARD OF DEGREES CEREMONY OF
THE EKITI STATE UNIVERSITY, ADO-EKITI.**

Ado-Ekiti | Thursday | April 20 | 2023.

Protocols:

1. It gives me great delight to be here today to be part of the 27th convocation ceremony of Ekiti State University as the Visitor. Today is particularly historic for me because of the fact I am by the grace of God the first alumnus to be Visitor to the University on a day like this.
2. My relationship with Ekiti State University is an unending one and my love and commitment to this great institution of learning is also an enduring one. Indeed, when William Wordsworth, in his 1802 poem, *My Hearts Leaps Up*, says the child is the father of the man, he had me in mind. It is without saying that I am what I am today, partly, because of this institution's genetic codes that I bear.
3. I have had the rare privilege of being a student here when it was Ondo State University. I have also had the honour of starting my career here as an academic in the Department of Political Science where I had the fortune of being under the tutelage of great minds such as Prof. Arinze Agbogu, Dr. Ademola Adebo, Prof. Dipo Kolawole, Prof. Gboyega Isijola Late Dr. Theo Adebawale (Theocracy), Prof. Olufemi Mimiko, among others, and of course, Prof. Fola Ebisemiju who was then, the dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences. It must be noted that the current Chairman of



the Governing Council, Prof. Akin Oyebode was the Vice-Chancellor who employed me as a staffer then.

4. Even though I left the academic for greener pastures in the banking sector shortly after, I have never left EKSU and EKSU has never left me. My wife worked as a lecturer here before transferring to the University of Ibadan, and as Secretary to Ekiti State Government, I have served as a member of the Governing Council. Today is therefore a joyous day for me personally for its fulfilling significance in my life and that of the University as a whole.
5. Pro-Chancellor Sir, We are gathered here today to celebrate the academic accomplishments of our graduating students who have been found worthy in learning and character. This ceremony is also an opportunity for the University to celebrate excellence, character, endurance and scholarship, especially for those graduating with distinction and special recognitions. Today is also a harvest exhibition for the University where it has the opportunity to present its latest products, research and accomplishments to the world.
6. World over, convocation ceremony is an important occasion for the University to bring the Town and the Gown together to celebrate their success in human development and advancement of knowledge. It is a ceremony that demonstrates the fulfillment of a major mandate of the ivory tower as a citadel of learning, center of innovation and creativity. Whatever we have seen in the world today is a product of knowledge, innovation and creativity. I am therefore glad that we are part of this global intellectual ecosystem that is producing manpower for human advancement and societal transformation.
7. As a Government, our administration places an immense importance on human capital development. Our Government is irreducibly committed to job creation, youths and human capital development. To underscore this, out of the Six Pillars of our Administration, youth empowerment and human capital development, occupy number two and three respectively.
8. To achieve this, we are pursuing a multi-pronged policy actions that will make our schools from the primary to tertiary responsive to the demands of



today. We are investing in infrastructure and digital tools that will make the learning environment more conducive, accommodating and interesting.

- 9.** As part of efforts to achieve this, I recently launched the Ekiti Digital Skill Academy (EDSA) in February this year with the distribution of laptops to one hundred youths as part of our moves to upscale digital education for job creation. The programme targets five hundred youths to be given laptops and other devices to facilitate their learning experience. It is an initiative designed to provide our youths with the digital technology and soft skills needed to access local and global job market with a view to reducing unemployment among them.
- 10.** Similarly, we just secured the Federal Government's approval for Ekiti Knowledge Zone (EKZ) to become a Free Trade Zone (FTZ). This is a critical requirement for the zone to get the needed investment inflow for the development of the Zone. For us, EKZ is a major infrastructural milestone for the Ekiti shared prosperity agenda. The EKZ is conceived to be a digital innovation, technology and creativity hub. An idea and innovation ecosystem where our highly talented young lads can unleash their bubbling energy in productive enterprise.
- 11.** Beyond this, our Government has sustained the provision of bursaries and scholarships through the Ekiti State Scholarship Board. We give bursary support to all qualified undergraduates and postgraduate students of Ekiti origin. Last year alone, the government gave out a sum of N22.3 million in scholarships to Law School students of Ekiti State origin. We will continue to do our best to ensure our young ones have a meaningful future through access to affordable education and a platform for self-expression.
- 12.** Meanwhile, I want to express my appreciation to the Vice-Chancellor, the management and Senate for staying on course in spite of obvious odds. I am proud to say that EKSU parades a faculty of erudite scholars. The culture of learning and scholarship in the University remains high, just as its record in research is commendable.
- 13.** Nonetheless, while the University has tried to keep to the tripartite function of teaching, research and community service as its core mandate, the



academic world is transiting from these three mandates to the era of a new mandate. Today, universities are now celebrated for their contribution to innovation, the solution to human problems and registered patents. The strength of a University is measured in terms of alumni achievement globally. I, therefore, want to challenge the University management and the stakeholders to provide a fertile ground for the incubation of innovative and creative solutions. The traditional measure of academic achievement alone may have proved inadequate for the world of today.

- 14.** I therefore, want to urge the Council and Management that EKSU must go beyond research for research sake, if we must be relevant in the global academic arena of today. Research outcomes in our University must address our basic problems. The adaptation and utilization of such research do not have to depend on the Government to flourish or become profitable; rather, the University's Ventures should be in the business of selling research outputs to end-users or collaborating with investors on how to industrialize and commoditize research outcomes.

- 15.** I emphasized this much about a week ago when I inaugurated the new Chairman and members of the Governing Council of this University and on Tuesday when I met with the representatives of the Alumni Association. I told them that the University should lead in wealth creation. As an institution of learning and a leader in the knowledge industry, a University should not be helpless in how to meet its needs. The subvention that Government gives to help subsidize the education of indigent students, should not be the main source of funding for the Universities. Subvention should never be the all and only means of funding a University, it should be supplementary.

- 16.** This is even more so in the face of the economic realities of the moment which calls for a concerted effort from all stakeholders. Government continues to face economic challenges that impact its capacity to meet its basic responsibility to the poorest of the poor in our society. In spite of this, we remain committed to our electoral contract with our people. The evidence speaks for itself in various construction works and welfare programmes going on in the State. While we continue to devise creative



ways to meet our obligations to the University, we urge the Management to also come up with solutions to overhead and emolument cost challenges.

- 17.** As your Visitor, and more importantly your alumnus and ex-staff, I am irrevocably committed to the growth and development of this institution. I will do everything possible to ensure the banner of this institution fly high in comity of universities.
- 18.** May I use this opportunity to call on all stakeholders in the University system, academic and administrative staff, parents and students, alumni and wider society to support the University to attain a new height. There have been too many instabilities in the calendar of the University occasioned by incessant strikes and students' protests, we need to have a new direction and academic culture.
- 19.** The reputation of the University is at stake and we must all halt this culture of belligerent activism. I am sure some of the issues can be amicably resolved with cooperation, consultation and mutual understanding. My recent interactions with some of the labour unions in the University have provided me the opportunity to better understand the issues from a broader perspective and there is no doubt that things don't have to degenerate before we agree. We therefore need more robust engagements in addressing welfare issues because each time the University is shut down, it is its economy and capacity to meet basic obligations that are shut down. I appeal to the various unions in the University community to cooperate with the Council and Management in resolving disagreements.
- 20.** I must commend the Alumni Association for its untiring efforts at ensuring the development of our Alma mater. As a proud member of this distinguished body, I promise my full support to the Association. Thank you for being the conscience of our University.
- 21.** Finally, to the graduands and their families, kindly accept my warm congratulations on the success of today's convocation. Today is definitely a great day and a major milestone in your life's journey. You deserve all the



joy of today and the pomp that is associated with it, for you have indeed worked to be found worthy in learning and character to earn this award.

- 22.** While this lasts, however, you must begin to reflect on the new miles in the journey. I urge you to take advantage of the training and learning that you have acquired here to contribute your quota to humanity. I like you to self-inspire yourselves and not to self-indulge. I urge you never to feel entitled to anything but to strive to attain success on the basis of character, honour, competence and integrity.
- 23.** As you go, be a good ambassador of this Great University. Show gratitude to your parents, your teachers, your schools and the Ekiti State Government which subsidized the cost of your university education. Do everything to give back and never forget all your benefactors.
- 24.** I wish you a successful career in whatever you decide to venture into in future. More importantly, always remember there are no many jobs outside there, and that the few ones available are very competitive. So, be the job creator if you can and be prepared to be the best.
- 25.** I once again rejoice with you and your parents, the University community and our special guests. God bless you all.
- 26.** Thank you all for listening.

Biodun Oyebanji
Governor and Visitor to the University.