

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS AT THE 13TH CONVOCATION CEREMONY OF FOUNTAIN UNIVERSITY, OSOGBO

Delivered on 14th January 2024/2nd Rajab 1445 AH

All praise is due to Allah, the Most Beneficent, and the most Merciful, who has sustained our existence till this moment. May His peace and blessings be upon the noblest of mankind, Muhammad (SAW), his household, his companions and all Muslims till the end of time. Amin.
As-Salam alykum wa-rahmatu llāhi wa-barakatuhu.

Your Excellency, Senator Ademola Jackson Nurudeen Adeleke, The Executive Governor of Osun State,

Your Excellency, Mai Mala Buni, The Executive Governor of Yobe State ably represented by the His Excellency, Alhaji Idi Barde Gubana, The Deputy Governor of Yobe State, the Chairman of the Convocation Lecture.

The Convocation Guest Lecturer, Prof. Abdul-Rasheed Na'llah, Vice- Chancellor of University of Abuja ably represented by Professor Aisha Sai Maikudi, DVC Academics, University of Abuja

Chairman, Board of Trustees, NASFAT,

National President, NASFAT,

Chairman, Council of Elders, NASFAT,

Chief Missioner, NASFAT,

Immediate Past Chairman, Board of Trustees, Fountain University,

Chairman of the newly inaugurated Board of Trustees, Fountain University, Mallam Olaolu Yusuf Alli SAN

Chancellor,

Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council,

Royal Fathers & Spiritual Leaders,

Honorary Graduands,

The Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission,

The Registrar, Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board,

Special Advisers and Other Top Government Functionaries,

Visiting Chancellors, Pro-Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors and Registrars,

Heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies,

Members of BOT, Fountain University,

Members of Governing Council, Fountain University,

Principal Officers of Fountain University,

Members of Senate of Fountain University,

Members of Staff

Parents/Guardians and Friends of the University

Graduands,
Students of Fountain University,
Security Personnel,
Distinguished Guests,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Governing Council, Management, Senate, Congregation, Staff, and Students, I extend a warm welcome to everyone gathered here for the 13th Convocation Ceremony of Fountain University, Osogbo—the University of the Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatih Society (NASFAT). It is with great honour and enthusiasm that I stand before you on this momentous occasion, marking my first convocation ceremony as the fourth substantive Vice-Chancellor of this esteemed institution.

I would like to express a special welcome to all our distinguished guests who have graciously spared their valuable time to join us physically and virtually in celebrating this auspicious and memorable event. Your attendance adds immense significance to the joy and pride we feel today.

We are conferring a total of 252 degrees, comprising 217 First Degrees, 8 Higher Degrees, and 27 Diplomas in Arabic, Islamic, and International Studies. Among the First Degree recipients, 9 will be awarded First-Class Honours, 90 will receive Second Class Honours (Upper Division), 99 and 18 will graduate in the Second Class Honours (Lower) and Third-Class categories respectively, with 1 in the Pass category. We also have the privilege of honouring two distinguished individuals, Alhaji Adeyinka Abdulwaheed Adeola and Dr. Bolanle Olawale Babalakin SAN, as Honorary doctorate degree recipients. Congratulations on this well-deserved honour, and we express our gratitude for your valuable contributions to society.

Congratulations to all the graduands that are successful to witness today's glory. Your success at Fountain University is the primary reason for this joyous gathering. As I am thanking God on your behalf, I am confident that you are well-clothed in the apparels of glory, worthy of the University degrees about to be conferred upon you. And I strongly hope that you will ever be the good ambassadors of this great University. Your success is the result of a process – a process that became a reality due to your tenacity. In the glorious Quran 11:88 (Surah Hud): "And my success is only through Allah. Upon Him, I have relied, and to Him, I return." In the words of Walt Disney, "all our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them." Your courageous pursuit of success has culminated in the realization of your dreams. You have, with courage, moved towards today's success, and it has come to fruition. It is my belief that the success shall be enduring. With your graduation today, life has just begun. This institution holds a distinguished reputation as a prestigious Islamic faith-based centre of higher education because of its commitment to nurturing competitive and resourceful graduates with exemplary moral and

spiritual standards. We have, therefore, equipped you with the intellectual, moral and spiritual requisites with which to navigate life that is characterised by vicissitudes of various dimensions. We are therefore doubtless that you will all live impactful lives. As you are graduating today, your dreams and expectations, and that of you parents and society at large, are definitely very high. It is my belief that you will not let yourself, or your parents and society, down. Do not betray the trust we have reposed in you having certified you worthy in character and learning. Make a distinction in whatever you do and wherever you find yourself. I wish you the very best of life.

Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me to use this auspicious occasion to highlight key achievements since the last convocation. Our strategy for transformation, reformation, and restoration, supported by our proprietor, board of trustees, council, and the commitment of our staff and students, has led to significant success, reflected in our positive scorecard metrics. We appreciate this collective effort that propels the University forward.

I am pleased to announce the stability of our academic calendar without disruptions. The National Universities Commission (NUC) approved eleven new undergraduate and six postgraduate programmes for the University in 2023. These include the establishment of the College of Arts with programmes in English Language, Linguistics, History and International Studies, Arabic, Islamic Studies, and French. Additional programmes approved are Bachelor of Science in Criminology and Security Studies, Electronics and Computer System, Electronics and Communication, Political Science, and Public Administration. The Diploma in Arabic, Islamic, and International Studies was also endorsed by the National Board of Arabic and Islamic and International Studies (NBAIS).

Top of Form

All our academic programmes have achieved full accreditation status from the NUC, affirming their recognition and adherence to established standards. Professional Councils for relevant programmes, such as Nursing Science, Medical Laboratory Science, Legal Education, and ICAN, have visited our facilities and acknowledged our academic and professional standards.

To further emphasize our dedication to academic excellence, the University is expanding the Department of Nursing Science into the College of Nursing Science. Additionally, plans are underway for the establishment of the College of Education and the introduction of more demand-driven courses.

The University is experiencing an increase in student enrolment, and this is attributed to the introduction of new programmes and improvements in existing ones. Furthermore, the institution has started implementing the Core Curriculum for Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in

the new academic session, as directed by the NUC.

The University is committed to enhancing educational accessibility by securing full tuition fee payments for indigent yet brilliant students. Through the Alhaja (Dr.) Mosun Belo-Olusoga Foundation, 14 and 11 students benefited full scholarships for the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic sessions in four months. We also received N50 Million Admiral (Dr.) Jubrilia Ayinla Scholarship for brilliant students, the Pro-Chancellor's full scholarship for the first 20 students admitted in Arabic and Islamic Studies for the programmes, and an extra N10 Million for financial support to indigent students, generously supported by Alhaji Sheriff Yussuf.

Ladies and gentlemen, our commitment to creating a distinctive university has led to significant improvements in the overall serenity of campus environment thereby enhancing its distinctiveness for learning and research. Various infrastructural projects have been successfully completed since the last convocation. These include the Public Health and Environmental Science Laboratories and Museum, the College of Arts building (donated by five anonymous philanthropists), and the Jubrilia Ayinla 292-bed spaces (donated by Former Pro-Chancellor) commissioned in October 2023. The Histopathology Laboratory now features a luxury seat-out donated by Dr (Mrs) Ojo-Opeewe, USA. Additionally, Olympic-sized Basketball and Tennis Courts (donated by NASFAT Youth Wing) have been established to enhance our sporting facilities, and an Animal House (donated by Dr Rahmat Adisa, former National Education Secretary, NASFAT) supports animal-based research activities.

To provide a very conducive work environment, a new staff office complex has been completed and furnished. The campus has been beautified and greened through the newly created Parks and Garden Unit and the Greening and Beautification project. The National Communication Commission (NCC) donated a broadband facility and supported our computer-based hall with 100 new laptops. The Parents Forum contributed 100 units of solar security lights to enhance campus safety. The University Library underwent renovation, and its collection was augmented with additional books and journals. We received over 2000 titles of library materials from the State of Qatar, French Village, Lagos and National Institute of Security Studies, Abuja. Some lecture rooms have been equipped with interactive boards to facilitate modern teaching methods. Another milestone for the year is the launch of a bakery operation, providing enhanced food services and vocational training opportunities.

I am pleased to convey that our research endeavours have gained recognition, inspiring us to elevate our productivity. In March 2023, Fountain University achieved a significant milestone with the establishment of the FUO Centre for Research, Innovation, and Technology (FUCRIT). This dedicated centre aims to enhance research capacity, create a conducive environment, and facilitate FUO's growth in research. In line with our commitment to academic excellence, the NASFAT-FUO Research Resource Unit was established to coordinate and provide research

grants, supporting diverse and multidisciplinary research on NASFAT and its affiliates. Notably, three tiers of 3 million naira research grants were awarded for the 2022/2023 session.

Prof. Nusirah Afolabi-Balogun of the Department of Chemical Sciences (Biochemistry & Nutrition Unit) with Dr. Sara Pensa from the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom secured a grant of £15,595 from the Cambridge-Africa Programme for early Cervical Cancer diagnosis in Nigeria. Dr. Simiat Modupe Ogunbode, also from the Department of Chemical Sciences, as a co-investigator, successfully obtained a TETFund National Research Fund grant of ₦25.6 Million for a project on Microbial valorization of keratinous wastes. Furthermore, Dr. Rasheed Adebiyi from the Department of Mass Communication received a \$2,000 grant for Solution Journalism Network, New York, USA, while Dr. Ridwan Kolawole, also from the same department, earned a \$10,000 grant from Next Generation Social Science Research Council (Next-Gen-SSRC) Doctoral Dissertation Completion Fellowship, USA, for his Ph.D. programme, among various other grants.

In addition, Dr. Adebiyi completed a 6-month post-doctoral attachment with Opolo Global Innovation Limited, Lagos, playing a crucial role in leading the Branding and Strategic Communication in the research for Innovation, Commercialization, and Enterprise (RICE) team. This experience not only enhances our research capabilities but also reinforces our commitment to bridging the gap between academia and industry. Prof. Abdulazeez Tunbosun Lawal, Department of Chemical Sciences, is recognized among the top 2% of world researchers for 2023. This highlights the significant impact of the university's research on a global scale.

Central to our success is a strong commitment to fostering collaboration and strategic linkages with global institutions and organizations. In the 2022/2023 academic session, we signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Nigerian Air Force Headquarters, Al Hikmah University, Ilorin, INTI University, Malaysia, and Teaching Research in Natural Sciences for Development in Africa, United Kingdom (Trend-in Africa). This collaboration brought equipment worth over N148 million, strengthening our Molecular Biology and Genetic Diversity Laboratory. Additionally, we signed a three-year MoU with Value Female Network, Nigeria, aligning with the Department of Public Health's requirements and community service. The MOU with the Islamic International University, Malaysia, was revitalized.

We continue to invest in making the University more visible through improved web patronage and enhanced networking through the OIC-COMSTECH-moderated Alliance of Islamic Universities in Africa (AIUA). Fountain University is now a member of the Alliance with bright prospects for extensive benefits, including collaborations, partnerships, joint research, and staff/student exchange in Africa and Asia.

Our commitment to staff development persists, offering support for the acquisition of higher degrees and certificates. Seven staff obtained Ph.D. degrees while four acquired Master Degrees

in addition to other professional certificates in 2023. Numerous staff received sponsorship for conferences, seminars, and workshops, both nationally and internationally, reinforcing the university's dedication to its staff's professional advancement.

Furthermore, the establishment of the Centre for Development and In-House Training (CDIT) emphasizes the additional importance placed on staff development. In four months, CDIT conducted training for the management, newly recruited academic staff, groundkeepers, and facilities service personnel, supporting their professional growth and skill enhancement.

A 35% salary increment for staff was successfully implemented, effective from October 2023. This adjustment demonstrates our commitment to the well-being and satisfaction of our valued faculty and administrative team. We extend our gratitude to the Council for approving this initiative.

Fountain University is dedicated to cultivating academically proficient and entrepreneurial graduates. We have strengthened the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Skills Acquisition; ensuring that students acquire practical knowledge through mandatory entrepreneurial training across all programmes. In 2023, the University attained full membership in the African Speakers Bureau for Entrepreneurship, UK, providing students with online training opportunities in entrepreneurial skills and access to a growth hub. Notably, one of our graduands, Mr. Ahmad Awelenje, secured the second position at the Wema Bank Start-up grant competition during the Kwara State NYSC camp for Batch C 2023.

The University emphasizes the vital intersection of intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions in individuals. To foster spiritual growth, various platforms are utilized, including the madrasah (Quran Learning School). The University recently hosted its inaugural Walimat Quran, where fourteen students graduated in Quran Proficiency and Literacy. Additionally, the University in collaboration with the NASFST Missionary Initiative (NMI) conducted a Train-the-Trainer course in Dawah and Dialogue for the final year students to further enrich the spiritual development of our students.

The University fulfils Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSRs), cultivating compassionate leaders for positive community impact. Our CSR initiatives for the year include cervical cancer tests for 180 women at NASFAT Osogbo Branch in collaboration with Turner Wright Biosciences Ltd. The Law Clinic, introduced by the College of Law, offers legal assistance and practical experience for students. Additionally, the College of Basic Medical and Health Sciences conducted community lectures and a blood donation project, fostering health awareness and contributing to community well-being.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to outline the University's needs to enhance our standing in learning, character building, and service to humanity. We aim to establish the Colleges of

Education and Nursing, construct additional state-of-the-art College buildings, and expand Halls of Residence to accommodate the growing student enrolment. Our Senate/Administrative building requires an upgrade, and we aspire to build a new one. Similarly, we wish to construct the University main gate to symbolize the excellence we stand for. Your support in realizing these goals is highly appreciated. The construction of a three-story ultra-modern Student Centre and Hostel by our Pro-Chancellor and Council Chairman, Dr. AWA Ibrahim, will commence soon.

In conclusion, I express heartfelt gratitude to our benefactors for the year. Special appreciation goes to all arms of NASFAT, FUPAC, FUDC, the University BOT, the Governing Council, OSFUDEF, Parents Forum, and Alumni for their unwavering support and inspiration.

I extend gratitude to individual and corporate benefactors, including Admiral Dr. Jubrila Ayinla GCON, the five anonymous donors committed to five projects in five years, Alhaja Dr. Olusoga Belo, Chief Kola Karim, Senator Fatai Buhari, Alhaji Tunde Badmus, Dr Opo-ewe Ojo, and others. A special recognition is given to, His Royal Majesty Oba Jimoh Abidemi Oyetunji Olaonipekun, Larooye II, the Ata-ojo of Osogboland and respectively to His Excellency, Senator Nurudeen Jackson Adeleke, The Executive Governor of Osun State.

Congratulations to all our graduating students, parents, and guardians. I appreciate the continuous support from the government and people of the State of Osun, especially our immediate community, the Isale and Oke Osun communities, our dedicated staff, students, and well-wishers.

Once again, distinguished guests, your presence and participation in the 13th convocation ceremony of the university are sincerely appreciated.

Fountain Leads, Other Follow.

Thank you. Jazakumullah Khaeran.

Prof. Olayinka Ramota Karim
Vice-Chancellor