

2008 University Leaders' Forum

22-25 November 2008

Communiqué

At the second meeting of the University Leaders' Forum, Vice-Chancellors and colleagues from eighteen African universities met in Accra, Ghana to discuss the development and retention of the next generation of academics. The issue was clearly and comprehensively discussed and analysed from multiple perspectives. African universities were challenged to address the nurturing of the next generation of academics within the context of well led, well funded, and internally and externally networked institutions responding creatively and robustly to their respective local environments.

Among the major observations of the Vice-Chancellors were the following:

- In January 2007 the Heads of State and Government of the African Union committed themselves to the complete revitalization of higher education in Africa. They called for a new social contract between African higher education institutions and African states. Such a collaborative partnership is welcome because it is necessary to support the fullest expression of the mission of higher education: teaching, research and public service.
- The varied and complex challenges of development call for well-conceived differentiated higher education systems in Africa. These would see networks of centres of excellence spanning institutional types.
- Responsive and innovative higher education funding models are needed to support a differentiated system of higher education and to ensure that the higher education plays its full part in the attainment of national goals.
- The emergent and increasingly vibrant African private sector is a potential driver of technology and innovation. To promote this, African higher education needs to forge new collaborative ties with Africa's entrepreneurs and provide training that will enable graduates to find productive work in the private sector.
- There is much that universities can do for themselves. Strong leadership can bring about sustainable, institutional conditions to develop and support quality teaching and research vital for developing the next generation of scholars.
- A technology-enabled environment is a key requirement for ensuring higher research productivity and a high retention of talented academic staff. Such an environment builds research networks and supports multidisciplinary curricula necessary for contemporary scientific pursuits.
- A vibrant contemporary system of higher education requires that comprehensive higher education management and information systems be set up Africa-wide to support both institutional and national planning and decision-making.
- Lastly, African universities need to do more to link and collaborate with one another if they are to develop an agenda for collaboration with global partners in ways that are focused on the needs of Africa.

To build on these understandings and to maintain the momentum surrounding the Next Generation of Academics, the university leaders below agree to:

- Assess faculty needs, set priorities with due attention to national goals, and on that basis, develop institutional staffing plans in universities where they do not exist;
- Develop better institutional data on staffing and priorities that can feed into a more complete national picture. Preliminary institutional profiles are available to build upon;
- Implement more effective strategies for academic staff development and retention in line with equity goals by drawing on the efforts of other African universities, such as those shared at the Forum;
- Collaborate at the national and regional levels to shape the debates on system differentiation and higher education financing models;
- Harmonize policies at the regional level to support cross-border training and the development of centres of excellence;
- Use existing structures such as national tertiary councils, Vice-Chancellor organizations, the Southern Africa, Regional University Association (SARUA), the AAU, and the media to advance national and regional policy dialogue on the range of issues that affect the development and nurturing of the Next Generation of Academics in Africa.

Njabulo S. Ndebele, *President, Association of African Universities*

Goolam Mohamedbhai, *Secretary-General, Association of African Universities*

Akilagpa Sawyerr, *former Secretary-General, Association of African Universities*

Clifford N. B. Tagoe, *Vice-Chancellor, University of Ghana (Ghana)*

Akwasi Asabere-Ameyaw, *Vice-Chancellor, University of Education, Winneba (Ghana)*

Olive Mugenda, *Vice-Chancellor, Kenyatta University (Kenya)*

Wilson Adolphe Rajerison, *former Président, University of Antananarivo (Madagascar)*

Fr. Alberto Ferreira, *Rector, Catholic University of Mozambique (Mozambique)*

Olufemi A. Bamiro, *Vice-Chancellor, University of Ibadan (Nigeria)*

Patricia Lar, *Director, University of Jos (Nigeria)*

Shehu Usman Abdullahi, *Vice-Chancellor, Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria)*

Attahiru Muhammadu Jega, *Vice-Chancellor, Bayero University, Kano (Nigeria)*

Michael Oladimeji Faborode, *Vice-Chancellor, Obafemi Awolowo University (Nigeria)*

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Saleem Badat, *Vice-Chancellor, Rhodes University (South Africa)*

Russel Botman, *Vice-Chancellor, Stellenbosch University (South Africa)*

Brian O'Connell, *Vice-Chancellor, University of the Western Cape (South Africa)*

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