



*The Challenges and Joys of International Collaboration:*

## **A VIEW FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN IN NIGERIA**

*By Abel Idowu Olayinka*

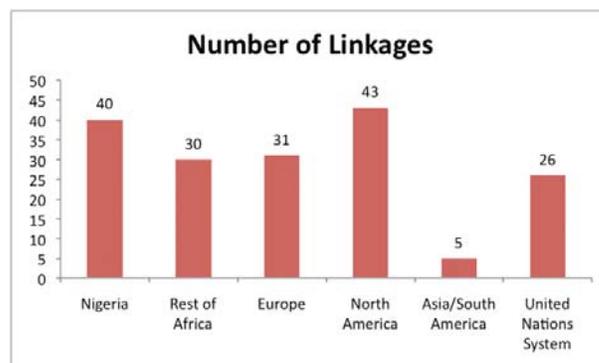


Established as a College of the University of London in 1948, and becoming an autonomous university in 1962, the University of Ibadan (UI) is the oldest university in Nigeria. The University currently has more than 26,000 students, almost 50% of whom are graduate students. Its graduate school is one of the largest in Sub-Saharan Africa, producing 200 PhDs every year. With more than 1,500 faculty members, it was the top-ranked university in Nigeria in 2013 according to the country's National Universities Commission. According to the latest UNESCO Science Report (Schneegans, 2010), Nigeria's scientific publications are top-ranked in Sub-Saharan Africa, second only to South Africa, with significant focus on clinical medicine and biomedical research. As an indicator of its role in the global research enterprise, Nigeria, together with South Africa and Kenya, had the largest number of internationally collaborative scientific publications in Sub-Saharan Africa. In terms of U.S. federal funding between 2009 – 2013, Nigerian institutions received more than 200 research grants totaling approximately \$130 million ([www.usaspending.gov](http://www.usaspending.gov)) and both the University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University are recipients of the European Union's Framework Programme Funding.

Like many state-funded universities around the world, the challenges of the Nigerian University System include inadequate funding due to tight government budgets; a shortage of modern teaching and research equipment; inadequate staff development and low staff morale; and increased demand for and cost of municipal services on the campuses. Despite this environment, the University of Ibadan has invested in new structures to enhance research management and technology transfer activities including the Research Management Office, Office of Inter-

national Programmes, the Research Foundation, Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer Office and the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

As part of the vision of the University of Ibadan is "to be a world-class institution for academic excellence geared towards meeting societal needs", the University signed Memoranda of Understanding with many institutions within Nigeria, the rest of Africa and other parts of the world (Figure 1). Elements of such collaboration typically include the following: exchange of undergraduate and graduate students; exchange of staff and training; exchange of academic material and information; development of internationalized curricula; setup of joint internships and practical field courses; credit transfer; development of joint degree programmes; development and implementation of joint research programmes.



*Figure 1: Linkages between the University of Ibadan and other institutions*

Substantial research funding has been received from the European Commission, Johns Hopkins University, Indiana University, the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), Wellcome Trust (UK), the World Health Organisation, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and the University of Stellenbosch (South Africa).

The University's curricula have benefitted from these international collaborations, and some have resulted in new academic programmes in the University:

- M.S. in Humanitarian and Refugees Studies
- Master in Information Science
- M.S. in Construction Project Management
- M.S. and Ph.D. in Petroleum, Energy Economics and Law
- M.S. in Child and Adolescent Mental Health
- M.S. in Disaster Risk Management
- A collaborative Ph.D. programme in Economics.

Nigeria is Africa's largest economy and most populous country. (World Bank).

200 [U.S. federal] grants totaling \$130 million

The university recently developed an *Intellectual Property (IP) Policy*. The IP Policy sets forth the rules to harmonize the conflicting interests of stakeholders relating to ownership of IP, distribution of income, marketing, commercialization and licensing of patents and intellectual property developed by University of Ibadan academic staff, administrative and support staff and students. With universities and individual faculty members under increased pressure to quantify research activities and output, the University of Ibadan has produced a *Policy on Authorship of Scholarly Publications* that serves as a framework for pre-empting contentious issues around authorship.

International collaborations between faculty and researchers at the University of Ibadan and their colleagues from other parts of the world have provided opportunities for us to increase our research output through more publications in peer-reviewed and indexed journals, a larger number of Ph.D. graduates, and more patent filings. In addition, our faculty members increasingly have the opportunity and the means to attend international conferences in their respective disciplines. However, a major challenge in the past 20 years that we have faced in international collaboration is the frequent disruption of the academic calendar due to industrial disputes between the university administration and the staff unions. It is hoped that the situation has now stabilized. In some cases, the collaborative linkages have been relatively dormant due to the lack of funds, though the agreements are in place.

The *Research Policy* of the University of Ibadan provides guidelines for research activities that will ensure excellence and integrity in the con-

duct of research. The *Ethics Policy* is part of the Research Policy of the institution produced with generous funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The University of Ibadan affirms that excellence in research, teaching and learning, professional conduct and services cannot be achieved without sound ethical standards. The aim of this policy is to strengthen the awareness of ethical principles and issues in the conduct of research, thereby specifying the obligations of researchers, sponsors and the beneficiaries of research.

The core values of ethics at the University of Ibadan are based on principles enshrined in the Nigerian constitution and the National Health Research Ethics Code (NRHEC). This policy covers ethical issues in research, teaching and learning as well as in professional conduct and services.

In order to adequately implement this policy, the University of Ibadan has created four new Research Ethics Committees (UIRECs):

Social Sciences and Humanities Ethics Committee (SSHREC)

Animal Care and Use Research Ethics Committee (ACUREC)

Plant Use and Conservation Research Ethics Committee (PUCREC)

Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee (STREC)

This is in addition to the existing Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC). In addition, the policy includes the Ethics of Teaching and Learning (ETL) and the Ethics of Professional Conduct (EPC).

Clearly, there remain obstacles to research in a developing country such as Nigeria such as the shortage of human, institutional and financial resources, the relatively low priority assigned to research, the current absence of a national research funding agency, and the impact of cultures, religion and norms that undermine ethical requirements such as informed consent. However, these challenges are not insurmountable as Nigeria is Africa's most populous state (170 million) and largest economy, and economic growth per annum has ranged between 6-8% over the past decade. Nigerian universities such as UI stand to gain in stature and standing as a relatively young population continues to demand more of its educational and research institutions and the country can increasingly afford to meet those demands. ■

## References

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The West African Research and Innovation Management Association (WARIMA) was inaugurated in Lagos, Nigeria, in November 2006. It is a professional body for research management staff in the West African sub-region. It operates at an institutional and international level, as well as across the research value chain, from research management through innovation to research commercialization. WARIMA is a member of the International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS), and it has held an annual Workshop and Conference with themes such as Fundamentals of Research Management, Accessing International Research Funds, Institutionalizing Research Management in the West African Sub-region, Enhancing Research Productivity in African Universities, and Contemporary Issues in Research and Innovation Management in Africa. The theme for the most recent conference in April 2014 was 'Networking: A Key to Advancing Research Management and Innovation in West Africa'. The 8th Annual Conference will be held at Elizade University in Ilara Mokin, Nigeria, in November 2014.



**Abel I. Olayinka, PhD**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. His responsibilities include coordinating all the academic and research functions in the University.

In addition, Abel is the Chairperson of WARIMA (West African Research and Innovation Management Association), which is the professional body for research management in the West Africa sub-region. The association shares best practices, increases the awareness of research and innovation issues in academic and public institutions, and promotes the advancement of science, technology and innovation in West Africa. He can be reached at [idowu.olayinka@ui.edu.ng](mailto:idowu.olayinka@ui.edu.ng)