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Special Release

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FACTS ABOUT THE STUDENTS' PROTEST OF MAY 29, 2017

The Management of the University of Ibadan wishes to inform members of the public the truths about the Students crisis of the 29th May, 2017 including events preceding it and subsequent actions of the Senate of the University.

Background to the Current Crisis

The Students' Union Executive and the Students' Representative Council for the 2016/2017 Session were sworn in at Trenchard Hall on Monday, 8 May, 2017. In delivering his acceptance speech, the new President left no one in doubt of his agenda of confrontation with the University Management, when he issued a directive to female students to start using unauthorized cooking appliances in the hostel, against the University rules and signed agreement governing residency in the Halls of residence. It is to be pointed out that the ceremony was presided over by the Vice-Chancellor with all the other Principal Officers, Dean of Students, the Deputy Dean of Students and other top university officials present.

Pursuant to his agenda, a 'Congress' was convened by the leadership of the Students' Union on Saturday, 27 May, 2017, at the Students' Union Building without due process which required that the Dean of Students be informed and his permission obtained. The resolutions at the 'Congress' were that:

- a. Two days ultimatum be given to the University Management to constitute the Students' Welfare Board;
- b. A fact finding committee be set up to look into the issue of the use of hot plates in Halls of Residence;
- c. 'No ID Card, no Examination';
- d. The scheduled programme of Oyo State Government at the International Conference Centre (ICC) to be chaired by the Governor of Oyo State, Senator Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi, be disrupted;
- e. The Ojoo/Agbowo/UI/ Sango Federal Highway be occupied and blocked.
- f. All Faculties, Lecture Rooms and the Centre for General Studies be locked.

Steps Taken by Management

In spite of the fact that the Students' Union did not follow due process before convening its

'Congress' nor officially communicate its resolutions to the University Management, the Vice Chancellor called an emergency meeting of Management and the Executives of the Students Union on Sunday 28 May 2017, at 4.00pm, and lasted till 7.00pm. The meeting was attended by all Principal Officers of the University, Deans of Faculties, Wardens of Halls of Residence, and some respected Professors of the University and representatives of the Students led by the President of the Students' Union. At the meeting, an appeal was made by Management that students should give peace a chance. It explained to students the challenges underpinning the delay in the production of the new chip-based smart students' Identity Cards which has multiple functions as it can be used, not only for identification, but also for access control, attendance system, library facility usage, login access to computers, payment for services, e-learning and medical information storage. Management further explained that new identity card will be used throughout the duration of study of each student, and that it would only have to be revalidated every session. The cost of 2000 Naira charged for identity card per student this session and which will be valid for the entire duration of the students' programme is also cheaper than the 650.00 Naira being paid per student each session. Indeed, two representatives of the students, namely the Speaker of the Students Representative Council, Ibrahim Asiwaju and House Secretary, Oluwatosin Osasona, were in attendance at the meeting of the Tenders' Board of the University where the contract for the production of the new identity card was awarded. The delivery date of the identity cards was communicated to all.

Management further explained to the executives of the Students Union that while students have a right to express their views, make their demands known to Management and even protest, as a last resort, these activities must be carried out in accordance with laid down rules and regulations and in ways that would not expose them to undue risks. The University Management went further to issue a release entitled **"Let us Give Peace a Chance"** to appeal to the Students to embrace dialogue and allow the examination scheduled to start on May 30, 2017, to go on without disruption. In the release, Management also noted that the Semester was already too protracted, and that we all needed to join hands to avoid further extension of the Semester.

On the issue of Students who were either rusticated or expelled, we wish to inform members of the public that in all the cases, due process was followed. The Students so affected were at liberty under the rule, to appeal to the University Governing Council. No case has ever been decided by the Committee unjustly.

Unfortunately, without giving Management any reasonable chance to take practical steps to address their demands, on Monday, 29 May 2017, a group of students led by Ojo Aderemi, President of the Students' Union, went round the halls of residence and faculties to mobilise students for demonstration. The Campus Security Service reported that during this process, demonstrating students led by their President, Ojo Aderemi, broke the glass door of a senior academic in the Department of Physics, Faculty of Science. The Lecturer, who was in the office at the time of the incidence, also alleged that he was harassed by the demonstrating students.

At about 10.00 hours, demonstrating students took off from the Students Union Building and went straight to the University main gate, got out of the University and subsequently blocked the UI-Ojoo-Oyo Road. The free flow of traffic was severely hindered for several hours. Commercial activities in the area were also grounded. The Oyo State Commissioner of Police arrived at the scene and took time to plead, all to no avail, with the students to vacate the highway. Indeed, the actions of students constituted a real threat to life and property and could have been hijacked by hoodlums and other miscreants from the neighbouring communities.

While the protest was on, the Vice-Chancellor tried to monitor the situation. He got in touch, on phone, with the Commissioner of Police who informed the Vice-Chancellor that the students insisted that they would only reconsider their blockade of the highway if the Vice-Chancellor would come to the scene of their protest at UI Gate/Agbowo to address them. He was, however, advised against doing so as the police could not guarantee his safety. As tension continued to mount with the refusal of students to return to the campus in spite of entreaties from the State Commissioner of Police and other concerned persons, the Vice-Chancellor considered it expedient, to go to the University Community Radio Station (Diamond FM) to, on behalf of the Senate, announce:

- The postponement of the First Semester Examinations for Undergraduate students.
- That undergraduate students resident in halls of residence should vacate their halls not later than 6.00 pm later that day.
- That Postgraduate students would continue with their lectures.

Observations and Decisions of Senate at the Emergency Meeting of 30 May 2017

The Vice Chancellor convened an emergency meeting of Senate on May 30 to brief Senate members on the unfortunate Students' protest of the 29th of May. At the meeting, members of Senate noted that:

1. The unruly behaviour and confrontational attitude of the President of the Students' Union, Aderemi Ojo, began with his acceptance speech at his swearing-in ceremony on Monday, 8 May, 2017 where he issued out orders to students not to obey extant university rules. This was unacceptable and a violation of his Matriculation Oath.
2. Rather than take advantage of laid down procedures and channels for communicating grievances and requests to University management, the leadership of the Students' Union in the University acted on the rather erroneous premise that they are not under any authority and that whatever decision they take is final.
3. The said protest was taken to Ojoo/Agbowo/UI/ Sango Federal Highway, despite pleas from various stakeholders with the President of the Students' Union Executive Council to allow the protest to be restricted to the campus. This plea was made out of concern for the safety of our students, to prevent unnecessary confrontation with the Police and the possibility of their protest being hijacked by miscreants.
4. There was an earlier engagement of the leadership of the Students' Union by the

Office of the Dean of Students where it was explained that request to use hotplates could not be granted as the prohibition of these devices is contained in the tenancy agreement signed by students in their various halls of residence. Reasons for this position include fire risks and the huge electricity bills incurred by the halls of residence.

5. The delay in the issuance of the identity cards was caused by the University's strict adherence with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act and the Vice-Chancellor employed every opportunity to explain to the President of the Students' Union Executive Council and his Council that for the First Semester Examinations of the 2016/2017 Academic Session, the course registration form which has photographs of students would be used for admittance into the examination rooms/halls pending the time the new cards would be produced and given to them. Indeed, a memo conveying this had been sent by Management to Deans of Faculties and Directors of Academic Institutes, one week before the crisis.
6. The new smart identity cards would be valid for the entire period of study of each student and would only be revalidated each session. Previously, students were required to apply for new identity cards every session. Furthermore, the new identity card is multi-purpose as it could be used for self-identification without any need for registration in each of the following units of the University: Kenneth Dike Library, University Health Centre, Faculty Library, Departmental Library, etc.
7. The Expanded Management of the University including the Principal Officers, Provost of the College of Medicine, Deans of Faculties, of The Postgraduate School, of Students, Internal Members of the University's Governing Council and other leaders of the institution met with the leadership of the Students' Union on Sunday, 28 May, 2017 from 4.00pm to 7.00pm.
8. The meeting was convened to urgently address the resolutions of the 'Congress' of the Students' Union which included the decision to disrupt the First Semester Examinations of 2016/2017 billed to commence on Monday, 29 May, 2017, if students were not provided with identity cards, the demand that University should constitute the Students' Welfare Board and that students in halls of residence be allowed to use prohibited cooking appliances in their halls of residence;
9. The 'Congress' convened by the leadership of the Students' Union and the Students' Representative Council on Saturday, 27 May 2017 did not follow the laid down procedure for calling a Congress;
10. The Vice-Chancellor, acting '*in loco parentis*', met with the President of the Students' Union from about midnight of Sunday, 28 May 2017 till about 2.00 am in the morning of Monday, 29 May, 2017 pleading with him to allow wise counsel to prevail and give Management reasonable time to take positive steps to address the requests of the

Union;

11. The Commissioner of Police, Oyo State Command, CP Abiodun Odude appealed to the students to sheath their swords and give peace a chance; and
12. That all entreaties to the students fell on deaf ears.

In view of the above, Senate, after an extensive deliberation, lasting two hours and twenty minutes, decided that:

- A. The activities of the Students' Union Executive Council (SUEC) and the Students' Representative Council (SRC) be suspended until further notice;
- B. That all undergraduate students should vacate the halls of residence unfailingly on Tuesday, 30 May, 2017. However, Postgraduate Students are not affected by this order and are expected to continue with their research activities;
- C. The processes and events that led the University to the current unpleasant situation should be investigated; and
- D. An Ad-Hoc Committee be set up with the following terms of reference (TORs):
 - i. Look into the remote and immediate cause(s) of the recent protest of the Students' Union Executive Council (SUEC) and the Students' Representative Council (SRC);
 - ii. Review the Union's Constitution and structures as well as those of Faculty Associations;
 - iii. Look into other areas that may be germane to its assignment; and
 - iv. Make recommendations and submit a report to Senate.

Membership of the committee comprises:

- (1) Prof A. Olatunbosun, Dean of Law- Chairman/Convener
- (2) Prof. A.T.P. Ajuwape, Dean of Students
- (3) Prof. A. Fagbola- Chairman, Senate Committee on Admissions
- (4) Prof. A.B. Ekanola- Dean, Faculty of Arts
- (5) Dr. O. Ajewole- Warden, Nnamdi Azikiwe Hall
- (6) Dr. Ruth Adio-Moses, Warden, Queen Idia Hall
- (7) Dr. Folashade A. Bello- Warden, Alexander Brown Hall
- (8) Six Students' representatives

Senate commended the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Abel Idowu Olayinka for his proactive action in averting serious crisis and noted the decency, maturity and professionalism displayed by CP Abiodun Odude, men and officers of the Nigeria Police, Oyo State Command despite

highest level of provocation by the students. Senate also commended the Director of the Department of State Services and his officers and other security agencies for their support during the crisis.

Other Steps Taken by Management

Since the 29th of May, 2017 when Undergraduate students were directed to vacate the University campus, the University Management has taken the following actions towards forestalling future occurrences:

1. The Ad-hoc Committee to investigate the processes and events that led the University to the current unpleasant situation was inaugurated by the Vice Chancellor at 3.00pm on Friday, 2 June 2017 at the University Senate Chamber. The committee is expected to submit its report to Management on the 23rd of June, and a Senate meeting convened a week later to consider the reports of the committee.
2. Further actions to fast track the production and distribution of students' identity card are also being taken.
3. The University Management has also finalised arrangement to hold a meeting of the Students' Welfare Board as soon as normalcy returns to the campus.

Conclusion

Management considers it rather unfortunate that the leadership of the Students Union did not give it any opportunity to address the issues raised at their 'Congress' before adopting the option of protest, which should be the very last resort. We entreat all stakeholders to cooperate with Management in finding a lasting solution to the present crisis. It was indeed painful that the examination which was to start on the 30th of May, had to be shifted as a result of the protest. We wish to assure our students that all efforts are being made to make learning more conducive even in the midst of very scarce resources.

Thank you.

MANAGEMENT