

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY NIGERIAN STUDENTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

The University of Hull played host to the 3rd Annual International Conference of Nigerian Students/Youths in Diaspora (ICONS 2009) which recently took place on the 3rd to 5th April, 2009. Over 200 Nigerian students attended the prestigious event that was opened by Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Bill Bruce, and Leader of Hull City Council, Councillor Carl Minns. The event, organised in conjunction with the Xn Foundation, was led by Mr Matthew Hornshaw of the University of Hull International Office. Matthew has been working extensively in West Africa for over 4 years and he confirmed that this was arguably the highest profile event of its kind ever in the UK.

The theme of this conference was “Networking for Development”. There were many high-profile speakers and professors from different academic backgrounds and works of life who came from the UK and Nigeria to make their presentations. To mention but few are Dr Alistair Soyode, CEO BEN TV and trustee NIDOE; James Richardson, Director University of Hull International Office; Prof Mike Elliot, Director, Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies, University of Hull; Dr Mark Abani, Chair, Central Association of Nigerians in UK and Senior Civil Servant in HM Revenue and Customs, UK; **Dr. Lawrence Ezemonye**, - Associate Professor of Ecotoxicology, University of Benin, Nigeria - Seasoned Environmentalist; Mr. Roy Ovbiagele, - Vice President, OCEANIC CAPITAL; Foluke Ipinyomi and lot of others. The conference was an epoch making event in the history of Nigerian Students in the UK.

Newcastle University through the international office showed the Nigerian students an unalloyed support by sponsoring upto one third of the cost required for the first ten students that indicated interest to attend this conference up to the tune of three hundred and fifty pounds (£350.00) despite the short notice given to them. The support we received from the school gave us a good sense of belonging and we have no doubt to forecast that in the nearest future, Newcastle University may take over the hosting of the ICON events from the University of Hull, whom by knowing the benefit have hosted the ICON two consecutive times.

The sponsorship we receive from the school through the international office is one of the numerous invaluable hospitality measures and supports the school shows in general to her international students. It is worthy of note that the Newcastle University offers the best atmosphere where any international student can relax and study with all facilities already put in place. From our experience ever since we started our programs in Newcastle University, we can boldly testify that the schools offers the best academic environment in the UK and there is perfect cordial relationship between the academic staff and the students which makes it very easy for a new student to adapt shortly after arrival. Newcastle University is indeed a home away from home.

Attending this conference made us feel at home and equally afforded us the opportunity to participate in the plenary presentations bordering on a diversity of topics like how to study in the U.K and the new Points Based System, Self-induced empowerment, making the most of the current global crisis and the emerging environmental industry in Nigeria.

There was an opportunity for student delegates to present business initiatives and companies to advertise their products and ideas. Also recruitment agencies like Africa Recruit, Business in Africa were on ground to collect CVs for potential job openings.

Just like Herbert Spenser put it, “a well-informed mind is the best security against the contagion of folly and vices. The vacant mind is ever on the watch for relief, and ready to plunge into error, to escape from the languor of idleness. The great aim of education is not knowledge but action” Indeed, we were heavily informed, equipped and motivated after listening and interacting with the professional speakers during this conference.

The conference served as a rare opportunity for Nigerian students across the United Kingdom to meet, interact and network. It is still the only successfully organised gathering of Nigerian students in the UK. There were also different sessions that availed the participants the opportunity to interact with the speakers and other scholars from different institutions within the UK on different pressing issues. Indeed the event was actually a conglomerate of networking opportunities.

The experience was a once in a lifetime opportunity. It served as an eye-opener to available career opportunities available and business initiatives that could be garnered upon for those looking into establishing their enterprises. It served as an avenue to network with youths who have the same singular aim to bring about a positive change in the coming generations. A vast majority of students from other universities across the UK have been fully sponsored by their international offices which have served as a point of referral to Nigerian students considering studying in the UK. We are indeed grateful to the International Office Newcastle University for the part sponsorship provided and would gladly appreciate further sponsorship of such in future.

Uchenna Egwu
Secretary General,
Nigerian Society, Newcastle University