

interaction, the students have the privilege of discussing challenges confronting them in the university. There are regular prayer sessions every day in the morning, afternoon and evening for every denomination. Godfrey Okoye University is a praying university with intent to moulding the character of our students.

- **Competitive Scholarship Support for Intelligent but Indigent Students:** According to the Vice-Chancellor, Godfrey Okoye University recognizes that education is not the exclusive preserve of the rich. The social teaching of the Church emphasizes strongly the "option for the poor." Every institution of the Catholic Church works hard to serve both the poor and the rich. This explains why the university has continued to offer scholarships to indigent students from all parts of Nigeria after a competitive supervised examination. The university has offered over fifty scholarships to students since inception. To promote national unity and diversity, a scholarship was offered to one person from each of the nineteen (19) Northern States of Nigeria (Anieke, 2018).
- **Library Support Services:** The University management understands the relevance of well-equipped library. The books are current and the students are allowed to make use of the library even at night and weekends. The University e-library is equally functional and helpful in allowing students to have access to journals and textbooks' resources across the globe.
- **Existence of Mentors and Mentees:** It was Sir Isaac Newton who retorted that: "If I have seen further than people, it is because I stood on the

shoulders of giants." It is in support of this statement that the University thought it wise to establish mentors for every student (mentees). This cuts across the academic and non-academic staff who always stand in loco-parentis to these students assigned to them. This is different from known academic advisers prevalent in other universities. The mentors are there to guide the students both emotionally and academically.

- **Employment Service to Students while on Campus:** The University offers temporary employment to students who distinguished themselves in character, honesty and social etiquettes to encourage good role models and mannerism.
- **Compulsory Research Ethics for 300 level Students:** This is a support service to prepare them emotionally and mentally for research projects at 400L. Without this certification, no student is allowed to embark on any project work in the final year.
- **Town-and-Gown Assembly:** To express our sense of community service, the University had its first Town-and-Gown Assembly in May 2016 to underscore the symbolic relationship between the university and its community. The main objective was to get the industrialists, security officers, clergymen, media workers, bankers, technocrats of all categories, politicians, civil servants and all types of entrepreneurs to come to the university, discuss their expectations of university education and university graduates, new trends in their fields, all challenges they want the university to address in their research and training of students. The



employers of labour are encouraged by this interaction to open their door for practical or entrepreneurial experience and employment of the university graduates when they finish their studies (Anieke, 2014).

- ***Establishment of the Directorate of Ethics in affiliation with Globethics.net Geneva:*** One of the main duties of the directorate is to uphold ethical standards in the university curriculum. It equally ensures that ethical standards are maintained in lecturer/student and student/student relationships. All students at 100L do a course: Moral reasoning and ethics to shape their morality and enhance their appreciation for ethical values which will help them in taking decisions as per what is right or wrong.
- ***Summer School:*** This is one of the most significant of all the students support services in the university. It is all about teaching weak students during the summer holiday for them to understand the courses they did not do well under normal university session. They are taught by dedicated lecturers. At the end of the summer lectures examinations are set for them.
- ***Support for the Physically Challenged Students:*** The University has an elaborate support strategy for the physically challenged. Some of them are on the University Scholarships. Their fellow students are equally told to assist them as much as possible to cope within the campus.
- ***Beginning of Academic Sessions Retreat for Students and Staff:*** The University always organizes retreat for staff and students in a serene environment before the beginning of the academic

This is in tandem with the saying that: unless the Lord builds, every other effort comes to nought.

- ***The COHON – Council of Honour***

The University in establishing COHON wants the students to occupy leadership positions. The COHON is similar to the Student Union Government (SUG) in other universities. The students are taught to play politics by the rules without bitterness. The university management gives them free hand as future leaders to handle the affairs of COHON with the decorum required, under the able supervision of the Dean of Student Affairs. The COHON implements projects relevant to their welfare and support. The university management commissions these projects to endorse approval.

- ***Qualified Lecturers:*** What makes a University is not the high rising structures littered here and there but the human capital presence!. Godfrey Okoye University prides herself for having a quantum number of dedicated cerebral high academics in every faculty. The Vice-Chancellor stands out tall and majestic as an administrator when it comes to setting goals and achieving them. (GO University Update, 2015). For instance, in the 2015/16 academic year, the Vice-Chancellor listed many goals among the following:
  - i. Ensuring that 60 per cent of the academic staff would become computer literate.
  - ii. Achieving staff development
  - iii. Ensuring that all courses would blend face-to-face and with online learning.

- ***ADAPTI Training***

In the same 2015/16 academic year, the Advanced Digital Appreciation for Tertiary Institutions (ADAPTI) training programme was extended to the GO University through



the initiative of the then Director of Academic Planning, Rev. Father Dr Ikechukwu Ani. The programme is being organized by the Digital Bridge Institute (DBI), the training arm of the Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC). The objective of the training to ensure that academics and administrative staff of the University reached a proficiency in ICT level to enhance on the job productivity which in turn would rub off on the lecture delivery and improve learning capacity for students (GO University Update, 2015). The ADAPTI training has since 2015 remained a yearly capacity building programme of GO University.

- **Sports Facilities:** The University has enormous playgrounds for volleyball, badminton, basketball and a football pitch for students to use. For the University believes that all work and no play makes "Jacks and Janes dull personalities". There is equally the existence of first Saturday exercises under the auspices of the sports directorate.
- **Personal Tutoring:** The University has a programme for retaining the best students in each programme, by the offer of employment as graduate assistants (GAs). The GAs are attached to Professors to mentor them on the tenets of academic life. The GAs, on the other hand, assist weak students in their programme who face challenges in understanding courses taught in these programmes by way of personal tutoring to improve their understanding of those courses. This is a win-win support for the students and the University. The GAs on presenting their Master's Degrees' results are employed as assistant lecturers.

- **Security of students, lecturers' lives and property:** The University in conjunction with the Nigeria Police maintains 24-hour security services in and out of the campus. There is a divisional police office under the area command of Enugu State Police Command. The University has zero tolerance for cultism, drug and picketing.

### Benefits of Supporting Students Well Being by Universities

There is a significant connection between students' satisfaction cum success and universities' support services and welfare. The benefits are discussed briefly as follows:

- It accelerates students' completion rates in universities. Such support services like library, personal tutoring, pastoral care, etc.
- It encourages students to have positive experiences while on campus. Arguably, the students become good opinion leaders for their universities, attracting more students to enroll in such universities.
- It gives a different perspective on feedback. Staff who are focused on student success, and wellbeing have access to information that are not generally available to the university management, faculties and departments. Such feedback information is utilized as a strategy for improving support services and enhancing the public image of the university.
- Provision of adequate students' support services and welfare contribute immensely to the quality of students' learning experience and academic achievements. Research has shown that the most



influential factors in the provision of quality education are the quality of academic teaching, staff and support systems available to the students in Universities (Hill, Lomas and McGregor, 2003).

- Adequate students support services and well being stifle protests and restiveness in the campuses. This increases the academic ambience in the universities. For instance, Godfrey Okoye University has never witnessed any students protest or restiveness, in the ten years of her existence.
- As the competition among private universities is becoming fiercer good quality students support services could be used as a competitive tool to improve universities' image and attract more students for admission into the institutions.

### Recommendations

A good image or reputation through students support services will get a better appraisal for positive surprises and great marketing rewards. Therefore, the following suggestions are proffered:

- a) A radical reappraisal of the personal tutor system is urgently needed. Research has shown that students who withdraw in the middle of their programme do so on account of dissatisfaction from the perceived lack of collegiality in the way lectures are run. It is time private universities saw the role of personal tutor as an integral part of the academic and emotional support services for students.
- b) Training and engaging staff on students support services and wellbeing; university management

should continue to train and engage staff on support systems. This can be actualized through awareness that staff who are positive, helpful and focused on students' success play a critical role in ensuring that students are retained on campus.

- c) Feedback on student support services should be encouraged through a well-designed programme to enhance students' experience. This feedback should be compiled, acted on and then reported out in a "you said, and we did" session during the yearly retreats or congregational meetings.
- d) It is critical that universities take necessary action to provide staff with the tools, and information needed to enhance student support services and retention.
- e) Need for staff and top management blogs: In this era of information communication and technology, blogs can help as a student support tool for easy accessibility when desired.
- f) Universities should know the limits they could go in providing support services. No university can provide everything on campus for students. Students are like "Oliver Twists" always wanting some more. Staff too should equally know their limits of engaging students. There are people trained to help students with whatever their issue is. Refer them to such personnel.

### Conclusion

It is generally believed that many students prefer attending private Universities to public ones in order to achieve their academic aspirations and personal development on record time. Private universities must continuously invest in



students supporting services and welfare as a competitive advantage and image-enhancing competence. Consequently, top management of these universities should be proactive in supporting these services not only as a matter of principle and necessity but also to ensure that their students remain academically on equal pedestal with their counterparts in other universities. Thankfully, we live in the part of the country where learning matters and parents are going the extra mile to make sure that their children/wards get the best. After all, it is still the gateway to good jobs and prosperous life. Private Universities can't afford to disappoint these parents!

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# THE RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO HUMAN AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA



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