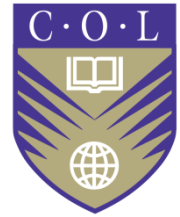


Presentation to the Academic Board of the University of Ghana of the Report of the Visitation Panel



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(Passages in italics are direct quotations from the Report with formal recommendations in bold)*

Sir John Daniel, 20 December 2007

Transcript

Members of the Academic Board, Colleagues:

It is a pleasure to be in Ghana once again and to present you with a summary of the Report of the Visitation Panel which I have had the honour to chair. Some of you heard my presentation to the University Council this morning. You will hear some of what you heard then again, but I shall take a bit more time with you and say more about our recommendations concerning Academic Operations and Infrastructure.

This Visitation Panel, which the Vice-Chancellor set up on behalf of Council almost a year ago, was a remarkable group of Ghanaian and international specialists whose collective expertise ranged over all aspects of higher education. Let me begin by naming them for you.

I have had the honour to chair the Panel. The Commonwealth of Learning, of which I am president, has donated my time for this task and supported the Panel's work in other ways.

Panel Membership

I was tremendously fortunate to have as my Vice-Chair your former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr, who is the Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities.

The other members, in alphabetical order are:

Prof. Marian Ewurama **Ady**, Retired Professor of Biochemistry from this University.

Prof. Emmanuel **Akyeampong**, an alumnus of the University and now Professor of History and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University in the USA.

Mr Ato Pobee **Ampiah**, Managing Director of Crystal Auto Ltd., Ghana.

Emeritus Professor E.Q. **Archampong**, former Dean of Medicine at this University.

Professor Uday B. **Desai**, Professor of Electrical Engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.

Professor A.O. **Falase**, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Professor Marlene **Hamilton**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of the West Indies.

Professor Bernard **King**, CBE, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Abertay Dundee, Scotland.

Mr. Robert Ahomka **Lindsay**, CEO, Ghana Investment Promotion Centre.

Emeritus Professor Daryl **Lund**, University of Wisconsin, USA.

Professor Joseph **Nellis**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Cranfield University, UK

Professor Michael **Shattock**, Visiting Professor at the University of London, UK.

Ms. Stamenka **Uvalić-Trumbić**, Chief of the Section for Reform, Innovation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education at UNESCO. Her time was donated by UNESCO, which also carried out some research for the Panel which enriched our report. and, finally, Emerita Professor Kathleen **Wicker**, of Scripps College, USA

It was a privilege for me to chair such a distinguished and diverse group of people. I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous support that we received from the first-rate Secretariat set up by the University and from a team of senior professors who facilitated our work.

Terms of Reference and Schedule of Work

The Terms of Reference which the University established for the Panel's work focused on three areas: Academic Programmes; Infrastructure and Resources, and the University's Administrative and Governance arrangements.

To carry out the work the Panel made two week-long visits to Accra, one in April and the second in August. These visits enabled us to meet the various constituencies of the University, which was invaluable. At our suggestion the University also commissioned an investigation into the Financial Administrative System, which took place in September.

We then wrote the Report by collaborating online in October and November using a very useful project management software called 'Basecamp'. Our terms of reference called for the Report to be submitted by the end of 2007 and I am pleased to say that copies arrived at the University on 6 December. I shall formally present a copy to the Chairman of Council in few minutes and copies will then be available for

Council. I understand that you will all receive the Executive Summary of the Report, which will also be available to the Academic Board when I make a presentation to its members this afternoon.

May I also thank the University for putting the excellent facilities of the Centre for African Wetlands at our disposal during our visits? This was a most congenial working environment.

Presentation of the Report

We have produced a substantial Report, which with its annexes runs to some 127 pages. Time only allows me to present highlights of it this afternoon but I shall focus particularly on matters of particular interest to the Academic Board.

A University with Great Potential

I shall not present Chapter 1, which gives background on the University of Ghana, except to draw your attention to this picture of the Great Hall and this quotation from a current professor who was a student here in the 1970s.

My point in showing these is to emphasise great aspirations that accompanied the creation of this University and the great memories that its early students took away from their time at Legon.

We were asked to form a Visitation Panel because Council perceived that the University was slipping in its fulfilment of those national aspirations and in its service to students. I want to say at the outset that all members of our Visitation Panel believe that the University can recover its pre-eminent role in the intellectual life of Ghana. Our efforts were directed to helping the University to achieve that.

It is in the nature of reports like ours to focus on areas of difficulty and give less space to positive findings. Let me stress that the strong commitment that the Panel brought to its work reflected our conviction that the University of Ghana can become a leader in higher education globally. Across the campus we found widespread allegiance to the academic ideal that knowledge is important, which is the best foundation for a successful future.

Chapter Two places the University of Ghana in its African and National Contexts and I shall not dwell on this either. The issues it addresses are issues for the Government as well as the University.

Instead I shall move straight to Chapter Three, which is the meat of our report. It is in three sections, each devoted to one of the themes in our terms of reference. First, we look at the University as a Corporate Body and issues of Governance, Management and Administration. Second, we examine the University as an Academic Institution. This is the core of the University's work and I shall take you through a summary of our recommendations. Finally we reviewed various issues of Infrastructure and Resources and I touch on some of those.

Governance, Management and Administration

So, I return to the section on Governance, Management and Administration and begin with the crucial issue of the Composition of Council.

Our main chapter is entitled 'Analysis, Conclusions and Recommendations'. As that implies we have tried to analyse the situations we found, draw our conclusions, and then articulate those in the form of recommendations. We have tried to make those recommendations as clear and precise as possible. We have also, in the text of the Report, given examples of practice in other countries where we thought it relevant.

In the slides that follow I have taken short verbatim quotes from our Report under the headings of analysis, conclusions and recommendations. I am doing it this way because I want to be completely faithful to Panel's Report rather than interpreting it in my own way.

Composition and Role of Council

Our first finding was the composition and role of the Council is seriously out of line with practice in other countries that you might use as comparators, such as South Africa, the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

The Panel concluded that *current good practice calls for a governing body of between 15 to 30 members, with a lay (external) majority of about two-thirds to one third, with a significant proportion of the lay majority brought on to the governing body through a nominations committee process to ensure that there is expertise in areas such as finance, property management, legal matters, and human resource management.*

Set against such practice and against the emerging consensus about university governance around the world,, the Council of the University of Ghana is unusual in three ways. First, at 15 members, it is smaller than the governing bodies of many universities of similar size, where a figure of around 25 might be more usual. Second, the Council membership is mostly nominated by external bodies or drawn from internal constituencies. Third, and most unusually, a majority of the membership is from these internal constituencies.

Two of our key recommendations are therefore that:

The membership of the Council should be expanded to over 20 members and its composition should be substantially changed to enable it to play an effective role as the governing body of the University.

And that

The Council should have committees for:

Audit

Finance and General Purposes;

Nominations;

Physical Development

This represents a different division of responsibilities between the Council and the Academic Board from what you have now but we believe change is essential. This is not just theory. I shall come later to the very serious problems that the University faces in its financial management.

The Panel believes that if, in recent years, the University of Ghana Council had had the role and composition that we recommend some of the problems that the University now faces, notably in its financial management, would have been avoided.

The Academic Board

I come now to the Academic Board structure.

The legal membership of the Board includes all associate and full professors, all heads of 92 departments and institutes, one elected member from each department and other elected members. Membership varies around a figure of 200 as senior lecturers become associate professors and new departments are created. Attendance at meetings is around 100. The Panel considers that an Academic Board of this size is simply too large and unwieldy to operate efficiently.

We conclude that the whole structure is overlarge, inert and indecisive, over concerned with formalities, not much concerned with the tasks of managing the University through very difficult times, and not at all concerned with strategy and thinking about the future. Its highly representative nature also means that it is defensive in character, responsive to events, and not proactive. These judgements should not be interpreted as indicating opposition to academics playing a significant role in university governance, but to make that role effective the University needs to run itself in a business-like way.

We have a number of recommendations to make here. Two of the most important are:

The membership of the Academic Board should be reduced to between 35 and 40, its composition comprising the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, the Provosts and deans and equal representation from faculty boards and schools on the basis of a balance in each representation between professors and non-professors.

We also recommend considerable change in the Academic Board Committees and that in particular:

The Academic Board Executive Committee should be revised to create a central Policy and Executive Committee for the University and should take over the functions of the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group... We recommend a composition for this committee.

Organisation of Management and Administration

I come now to the way that the University manages and administers the policies set by the Council and the Academic Board.

We found that the structures for managing the University, undermined by the managerial reforms introduced in 2003, have allowed the University, overwhelmed by student number expansion, to slide into a poor state of organisation and effectiveness.

We noted that in 2003 the then Vice-Chancellor introduced a new organisational structure...

Whatever the theoretical merits of this reorganisation it clearly has not worked. We conclude that the Vice-Chancellor needs what in some universities is called a Chief Operating Officer, a senior officer who integrates the management of the many services that are necessary to the running of the University...

This reorganisation is all the more necessary because there are serious operational problems in the management of the Finance Office and in the physical maintenance of the campus and its facilities.

The Panel recommends that the Council should give the Registrar the responsibilities of Chief Operating Officer with a mandate: (i) to integrate and professionalise the services necessary to the running of the University and make them work; (ii) to present a new administrative structure chart to Council and the Academic Board after consultation with the Vice-Chancellor and the (new) Policy and Executive Committee; (iii) to introduce modern human resources practices throughout the institution so that the operating units are empowered and supported in fulfilling their functions; and (iv) to implement an effective and transparent management information system.

Student Representation

The next issue we tackled was student representation.

We found that students are not well represented on the governance of the University particularly in areas where academic matters are discussed. They are not satisfied with the constitutional role of the Dean of Students and wish to represent themselves in discussions with the university authorities.

On this issue UNESCO kindly conducted some research amongst the universities of Europe from which we observed:

The almost universal Western practice of student involvement in University governance structures because they are universities' key stakeholders. As payment of tuition fees becomes more and more universal this pressure for taking account of students' views will only increase.

The major strategic committees of the University should not be dealing with detail of student examination results and staff promotions - agenda items which are sometimes cited as a reason for excluding students from these bodies

So the Panel recommends:

That the University introduces student representation on the Council, the Academic Board, the Faculty Boards and committees of these bodies as appropriate.

Improving Student Life

Our final section on Governance, Management and Administration deals with Improving Student Life and here we found some very worrisome issues.

Residential Accommodation

First on the matter of Residential Accommodation *the Panel found that the living conditions in some of the halls were unacceptable and a health hazard. A major problem is 'perching', whereby students who do not officially have rooms in a hall find their way past security and fill rooms to double their capacity.*

The Panel considers that as soon as the new student accommodation that is being built starts to come on stream, the University should centralise the management of all residences. It is essential for the academic culture of the University and the health of the student body to put an end to 'perching'

So we recommend that ***a new post of Director of Student Residences should be established, reporting to the Registrar, to take control of the management of the residences, including particularly their physical maintenance and upkeep...***

And, jumping ahead to the Infrastructure and Resources section of the Report that

The halls, particularly Commonwealth Hall, should be evacuated and rehabilitated before things degenerate further.

Thereafter, re-population of the halls should be done in a way that ensures there is no overcrowding and no 'perching.'

Dean of Students

The other issue we reviewed in relation to Improving Student Life is the role of the Dean of Students.

The Panel's analysis is that *The Dean of Students under the present remit is required to undertake responsibilities which involve inherent conflicts of interest: he is required to act in a disciplinary capacity, a welfare capacity and as an intermediary between the University and the Student Representative Council.*

We concluded that:

the Dean of Students should concentrate on the welfare role.

That a legally qualified officer be made responsible for discipline for major offences or for appeals against discipline administered in faculties or halls of residence.

And that formal communication between the University and the student body would be better handled by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

So our recommendations are:

The post of Dean of Students should be made full-time - possibly re-titled Director of Student Services ...

The office of Dean of Students should hand over its responsibilities for student discipline to a legally qualified officer...

To better represent the interests of students to the University students should be represented appropriately in the committee structure of the Council and the Academic Board and a Pro-Vice-Chancellor should be given responsibility for communication between the student body and the University administration.

The Academic Core

I shall now move to the section of the Report on the University of Ghana as an Academic Institution - what the University is here for.

The core obligation and defining feature of the University of Ghana will continue to be its commitment to the advancement of knowledge and the production of graduates who have developed critical thinking capacities, oral and written communication skills, an appreciation for the arts and the humanities, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

We looked at a number of issues. I shall give you the flavour of our thinking by referring you to the Executive Summary.

Enrolment Explosion

First, the main reason for the degradation of the University that led to the setting up of the Visitation Panel was and is an Enrolment Explosion.

The enrolment explosion is the cause of many of the University's problems. The Panel recommends reducing the intake of students; placing a limit on class size; balancing student numbers with physical infrastructure and faculty capacity; introducing stronger policy for gender parity; promoting distance learning to

Science and Technology

Second, the University needs to rebalance its enrolments between science and technology and the humanities:

The University does not produce adequate numbers of graduates competent in science and technology. To raise the quality of science teaching and create a better balance between Science and Technology and the Humanities, the Panel recommends: improving laboratories; including science and technology in university-wide courses for non-science majors; and granting advance credit for students from secondary schools that offer electives in the science.

Faculty

Third, the University must make the renewal of the Faculty a priority, since they are the engine that drives the University.

To strengthen the faculty, key recommendations are: to enforce the Ph.D. requirement for appointment to lectureships; to have a proactive policy to attract and retain qualified faculty through new incentives; special support for female faculty to complete terminal degrees; and to strengthen teaching and research in various ways such as orientation programmes, teaching innovation funds, start-up research grants, and mentoring young lecturers.

Curriculum

Fourth, the University is not renewing its Curriculum adequately.

We found that in some departments the curriculum had not been reviewed for many years. Recommendations include: departmental and curriculum reviews every five years; student evaluation of courses and instructors; new interdisciplinary courses; a course on Gender and Development for all students; and the internationalisation of student experience.

Academic Organisation

Fifth, in looking at Academic Organisation, we found a widespread belief that the University could solve its problems by moving to a college structure. The Panel does not think this is a solution and *urges that any move to a collegiate structure be postponed at least until the other recommendations in the Report have been implemented. These include: delegating greater power to the faculties for appointments and promotions; reviewing the semester and course/credit system and its associated examinations; allowing the flexibility to hold examinations only at the end of year for courses that are not yet properly modularised; expanding intranet and internet facilities; encouraging the use of audio-visual technology in teaching; and improving lines of accountability.*

Our recommendations include:

The idea of transferring faculties into a collegiate structure should be abandoned, at least until the recommendations of this Report have been implemented, and the College of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences should revert to its former faculty status.

If the University were to re-examine the collegiate model at some future date, then any restructuring should be guided by considerations related to the defined area or programme of research, the number of existing units to be included and their relatedness and sustainability. Other factors could be the advantages of the new structure (organisationally, financially, and in terms of efficient resource use, etc.), facilitation of inter- and multi-disciplinary work, synergy, and enhanced teaching and research.

Graduate Study

Sixth, the Panel considers that the University should develop Graduate Study as a priority.

We recommend: an urgent review of graduate programmes by departments for relevance and breadth of courses; more use of visiting professors and professionals from outside the University; strategic fundraising from industry for research; rethinking the graduate school administration; and creating more synergy between Institutes and Centres and academic units.

Examinations System

Seventh, the Examination System needs attention:

Since the examinations system has borne the brunt of the excessive expansion of student numbers the Panel recommends: an in-depth study of the semester-course/credit system with a focus on examinations; that the Academic Quality Assurance Unit carry out staff development to embed a culture of quality assurance and quality enhancement; and that faculty be given full responsibility of assessing and assigning grades for courses they teach.

Quality Assurance

Eighth, the Panel considers that attention to quality assurance needs beefing up considerably. We believe that one of the most useful things the Panel did was to initiate a process of departmental self-assessments after its April visit. Nearly 70 of the 82 departments responded: some responses were good, some were lamentable, but the University must build on what we started:

To mainstream elements of quality assurance the Panel recommends: strengthening the Academic Quality Assurance Unit, which should report to a new Academic Quality Curriculum, Quality and Staff Development Committee to be Chaired by a Pro-Vice Chancellor; departmental reviews every five years to be preceded by self-assessment exercises and quality audits; and annual exit surveys of the graduating class with periodic surveys of employers.

Infrastructure and Resources

Finally, I turn to our section on Infrastructure and Resources. We looked at 12 issues. I begin with the Financial Administrative System. As I noted earlier, the University set up a special Investigating Team into this at the Panel's suggestion. The Team's Report is reproduced in full in the Panel's Report and is an integral part of it.

We are sorry to find that the financial administrative system at the University of Ghana is in a very bad state, is not providing anything approaching the services needed by the University, and needs radical change.

The Team concluded that *the Finance Office needs new leadership as soon as possible. The current direction of the Office's work is wrong.*

But also that *the ITS financial software can be made to serve the University's needs, and probably serve them well, so should be retained.*

It urges that *Budgeting, reporting and accounting by the Finance Office has to be transformed by new practices, so that the University's financial position and prospects are understood at all levels of management.*

The Team's Report has a series of detailed recommendations about how to transform a bad situation. But there is some good news.

Most institutions with such weaknesses find they are in a financial hole; but the University of Ghana has significant unspent balances - which could be harnessed to the agenda for change.

Information and Communications Technology and Management Information Systems

Second we looked at the ICT and MIS systems. We recommend that:

The Management of MIS and ICT Directorates should be integrated and their equipment made compatible.

Extensive use of wireless technology should be made to leapfrog the use of ICT over the barrier of inadequate wired infrastructure and the lack of smart buildings.

ICT facilities should be provided to members of staff. This helps to reduce cost and by phasing out secretaries, reduces the salary bill.

Balme Library

Regarding the Balme Library:

Our overall findings indicate that the Library is in poor shape and the collection of books in the Library is inadequate for the scale at which the University operates and would like to operate. The Panel believes that the University Library requires a complete paradigm shift in its operations away from the current emphasis on books and towards e-books and online data access.

Our recommendations are that:

The University Library should make a major paradigm shift by moving its focus of operation from books to e-books and online data access. Facilities for these should be available University-wide since this will help to alleviate the space problem within the Library.

The operations of all the unit libraries should be integrated with the Balme Library, so as to avoid duplication and enhance efficiency.

Library staff should undergo continuous training, particularly in the use of e-learning.

Human Resources

Coming to Human Resources our analysis is:

The University of Ghana as an organisation does not have an up-to-date Staff Establishment; and most of the schedules of duties (job descriptions) are also out of date for staff at all levels. Performance management has therefore been compromised.

A look at the Staff Establishment showed that 75% of the human resources of the University are support staff and most of their functions are not directly related to the core business of the University. This obviously does not allow the University to allocate more resources to the teaching and research which are its primary functions.

We therefore recommend that:

The Manpower Audit now underway should be completed by July 2008. The ultimate aim of the University should be to have an efficient, cost-effective, slim personnel force equipped with modern facilities to perform their duties.

The University should negotiate with the Government the possibility of outsourcing some non-core services such as waste disposal, office cleaning, grounds and security...

The Government should make such savings available to the University to fund the expansion and modernisation of areas like the ICT, quality assurance, science laboratories, teaching aids etc.

Water, Electricity and Sewerage

I do not know whether the Academic Board is passionately interested in water, electricity and sewerage, but you should be because their availability significantly affects the University's planning. Here is our analysis:

Since the University budget does not contain allocations for payment for electricity and water consumption, there is a mistaken belief that the University does not pay for them.

New building developments in the University are planned and executed without due consideration for water and electricity supply.

Water available per day has been estimated at 14 litres per day - the average daily allocation of water per person in Africa is 47 litres .

On electricity, it has been reported that "a recent load monitoring exercise showed that 11 sub-stations are over-loaded.

We make appropriate recommendations .

This summary is getting rather long so I shall pass over our analysis and recommendations about Security and Health Services, but pause on Epidemics. Our analysis is:

The Panel was told that chicken pox occurs every first semester among students.

We were also concerned about overcrowding in the residential facilities because of the risk of cholera and the absence of any plan for dealing with a cholera epidemic, should one break out.

We make recommendations about dealing with this.

Gender Issues

The Panel took a close interest in Gender Issues. The University has made good progress in achieving gender balance in the student body, although further advances are needed. However, there is still a serious gender imbalance amongst the faculty. Among other things we recommend that the University:

Provide housing for new junior women faculty and women managers to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities more effectively. Flats attached to halls of residence could, for example, be set aside exclusively for female faculty and managers.

Establish a nursery and an after-school day care centre on campus, under private management but with the University providing the necessary environment for such an enterprise to succeed.

Academic Infrastructure

Finally, we make some simple recommendations on Academic Infrastructure.

Provide/maintain new/existing physical facilities to support teaching and learning.

Reduce the number of students to fit the facilities available.

Improve teaching infrastructure and introduce audio-visual aids, ICT facilities and public address systems especially in the large lecture halls.

Conclusion

Colleagues, there is much more in the Panel's Report than I have exposed today. However, we consider that the next step is for the Council to study the Report in detail and to make decisions on it. I hope that my rather long summary this afternoon will not discourage you from reading the Report carefully when it reaches you. As befits a Report on a university, our detailed analyses are more considered and tightly argued than the summary I have just given.

Let me end where I began. The Visitation Panel has been proud to serve the University in preparing this Report because it believes that the University of Ghana can and must recover its greatness so as to serve as the intellectual powerhouse of the nation and a beacon for its young people.

The Panel has asked me to thank you for the privilege of serving you and to express the willingness of all its members to be helpful in the future should the need arise. Finally, Vice-Chancellor, we express our warm thanks to you and to the Chairman of Council for your constant support and encouragement throughout the last nine months.

I was much encouraged by the positive reception our Report received at the Council session this morning and by the comments of the Minister of State for Tertiary Education, both at the session at a meeting in her office earlier this afternoon.

We wish every success to the University of Ghana. We have done what we could. Now it is up to you to make this a great University.