

Opening remarks by the Vice-Chancellor of Coal City University Enugu at the Maiden Distinguished Speaker Series of the University

Protocol

Welcome

On behalf of the Chancellor, the University Governing Council, Management, Staff and students of Coal City University (CCU), I wish to warmly welcome our Distinguished Guest Speaker, Her Excellency Claire Ireland, Australian High Commissioner to Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Niger, The Gambia and ECOWAS.

She will speak to us this morning on **Globalisation, Higher Education and National Development: Experiences and Lessons from Australia**. We are immensely delighted to have her speak to us this morning. Let me take this opportunity to also congratulate her Excellency for being chosen to deliver the maiden lecture of **Coal City University Distinguished Speaker Series**.

The Coal City University Distinguished Speaker Series aims to bring eminent speakers to Coal City University from the realm of politics, academics and range of industries to promote the discussion of important issues of public interest. It will provide an opportunity for the University community to listen to some of the world's greatest minds discuss critical issues of public interest.

Focus of the Lecture

This maiden lecture will focus on internationalisation which is a key aspect of the strategic direction of the University. In an increasingly globalised world, there is a wide spread acceptance of the importance of "internationalising" higher education and providing students and members of staff the skills to enable them to operate effectively across national boundaries. One way of dealing with this issue is by providing students and members of staff with opportunities to participate in international collaborations and exchange programmes.

The University's growing reputation has allowed for the forging of academic partnership with many prestigious universities abroad to provide good academic exchange opportunities and enable our students to develop international experience and a future-centric mind-set.

We are currently working with a number of prestigious universities abroad- in the United Kingdom and United States- to develop a dual degree programme that will provide opportunity for our interested students to be awarded a degree from Coal City University and degree from our partner university on successful completion of their programme.

We have also introduced an International Visiting Fellowship Programme to harness the skills and experiences of world class academics in prestigious universities abroad. In that direction, we inducted 55 Visiting Professors and Fellows on Monday 7th September, 2020. As I mentioned during the induction

programme, these highly accomplished and globally recognized scholars will collaborate with their CCU colleagues on joint projects, research, teaching, integrating experiences, competencies, principles and practices primed on delivering outstanding learning experiences to students. Consequently, during each semester, our students will have world class professors teach them in class and remotely.

In our internationalisation efforts, we want to expand our global network of partner institutions. *We aspire to be Nigeria's global university.* Coal City University is very interested in forging a strong link with Universities in Australia. Just about 0.3% of the world population live in Australia but the country is home to 5% of the top five hundred globally ranked Universities based on innovative teaching, impactful research, knowledge transfer and international outlook. Undoubtedly, the strength of Australian university system has played a significant role in Australia's economic growth and the wellbeing of the people. At the Coal City University, we benchmark only against the best institutions around the world. We have identified Australia as a higher education exemplar and we believe there are valuable lessons to be learnt from the success of Australian Higher Education System.

Personally, I fell in love with Australia in 2004. That was when my late father was serving as the Nigerian High Commissioner to Australia and New Zealand. On my various visits to Australia I was greatly impressed by the quality of Australian universities, the diversity of staff and the students' body and the broader impact they made in the society. I should also mention that I enjoyed my various visits to Australia that I decided to leave my base in England to have my wedding in Australia. I believe that the more students and researchers we have travelling abroad, crossing paths with different people, absorbing and understanding different cultures, the stronger our global civil society will be. I also believe that the partnership between Coal City University and Australian Universities will particularly raise awareness and foot print of Australian Universities in Nigeria which will lead to international students' enrolment, increase in the number of students participating in exchange programme with Australian universities and ultimately will produce empowered global citizens.

Conclusion

In ending this opening remarks, let me thank the Prof Chidi Onyia led Strategic Advisory Board of Coal City University for securing the presence of HE Ms Claire Ireland, and for the role the Board played in successfully organising this virtual lecture. I am very delighted that the High Commissioner will provide insights about the Australian Higher Education System for the benefit of our staff and students. I invite everyone to reflect and engage in this conversation in a constructive manner to enable us generate ideas which will help us in our journey of becoming a world class university in Nigeria. On this note, it is my honour to declare this maiden Coal City University Distinguished Speaker Series officially open, to the glory of God and for the benefit of our staff, students and friends of the University. Thank you for your attention and may God bless us all.