

GCU RESTORATION PROJECT UPDATE BY FISHER EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRUST AT THE 2019 GCUOBA HOMECOMING IN UMUAHIA ON SATURDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, 2019.

Fellow Umuahians,

I greet you all. I will like to start by thanking everyone that made out time to come home despite your busy schedules and the long distances. It is indeed a thing of joy to re-unite with friends and brothers of the Umuahian family from all over. We shall once again seek to build on the progress of previous reunions.

We have arrived at this point in the College Restoration Agenda because of the dogged and indomitable spirit of the Umuahian. The sacrifices and contributions of many of you have been inspiring and is cause for great optimism. There are Umuahians that have worked silently, giving their all to ensure that our dear College is restored. In the past, we mentioned the commendable example of Umuahians like Barr. Lucius Nwosu SAN and others. Today, another name comes to mind, Engr. Emma Mbachu. At the Homecoming of January 24th, 2015, Engr. Mbachu was one of the first Umuahians to make financial commitment to see the school restored. He said then that he will give the sum of N1 Million every year for five years. I am happy to report that this year 2019, Emma Mbachu has completed his pledge of N5 Million. Time will not permit me to mention everyone that deserves commendation but in due course you will be properly and publicly acknowledged.

In the same regard, it would amount to an unfair oversight not to mention the immense sacrifices of the current National President, Barr. Uche Ihediwa. He has been a blessing and his passion for Government College Umuahia is never in doubt. I think he is the President we need at this time. I thank him and the other distinguished Umuahians serving in this current Abia State Government.

Considering the other programs at this Homecoming, please permit me to now focus my presentation on the current stage of activities in the GCU Restoration project. All the next steps have timelines attached to them which I will crave your indulgence to take note of.

COMMENCEMENT OF FACILITY RECONSTRUCTION PHASE IN GCU

We are at the cusp of starting the facility rehabilitation phase of the Restoration Project. By this, I am referring to when the first builders will be mobilizing to site beginning from this October. Fisher Trust has spent the last few weeks working with the Consultants, Project Management Team and the Committees to prepare the grounds for this to happen. The Trust has produced a timetable of construction activity to guide everyone. I will be reading out a summary of the Timetable which will be made available on your Class and Branch Whatsapp platforms as well as the Fisher Trust website. Before then, a few milestones.

This year 2019, Fisher Trust concluded the following:

- Hiring of renowned Educational Consultants, the BEL Group. Among them is an Old Boy of Eton College who also served as Principal of the same College for thirteen years. Of course you know Rev. Robert Fisher was of Eton and this College was patterned after that great institution. They started work in August and have made their inputs into the drawings and indeed all other aspects of the project.
- Creation of 5 Committees to deepen and facilitate the Restoration Project. They are the Infrastructure Committee, Academic Committee, Finance Committee, People (Human Resource) Committee and Development Committee. The Committees hold regular meetings with the Consultants and have developed templates and Roadmaps for implementation of the different areas. Members of these Committees are all Umuahians.
- Identified a reputable Recruitment Agency to work with the Consultants, the Trust and the People Committee to recruit the Principal, Vice Principal and key Departmental Heads.
- Have advanced the drawings from Concept drawings to Architectural and construction drawings.
- Have carried out a Soil test and Structural Integrity Test of all the standing buildings in GCU.
- Is pursuing a N5 Billion Naira bridge facility from the Capital Market to get the school ready for re-opening.
- Production of Bill of Quantities is ongoing and will be ready by the end of October.

PROJECT PHASING/PLANNING

For the facility upgrade proper, the Project has been planned in phases as follows:

See Page 1 of attached document.

The timelines for their execution are as follows:

See pages 2 & 3 of attached document

COST OF INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS.

The cost of each classroom block, dormitory and indeed every other facility will be published in batches on all Umuahian channels from October 28th, 2019 for interested classes and Old Boys to pick from.

AVAILABLE PROJECTS - The full list of available projects will be published on October 28th as well.

PROTOCOL FOR ADOPTION OF PROJECTS - Fisher Trust will publish the protocols for adoption of projects after the Board meeting of 26th of October, 2019. It is designed to be a transparent and clearly defined policy.

Expressions of Interest – The Trust has received several expressions of interest by individual Old Boys and class groups intent on adopting projects in GCU. We shall publish a full list of the classes and Old Boys who have shown strong interest along with available adoptable facilities and their costs at the end of the month.

Apart from Barr.Lucius Nwosu (SAN) who has donated \$50,000 towards adopting a project, no other class or Old Boy has backed his interest in concrete terms. However, Fisher Trust encourages the class groups to continue to contribute towards projects of their interest ahead of the publications. You can never be in danger of contributing too much.

CONTRACTOR PRE-QUALIFICATION - Bidding for the contracts shall be a very transparent process whose procedure shall be published on November 18th ahead of the bidding for Batch 1 projects, the classrooms. The Board will maintain strict oversight to ensure that recommended quality, competence and timelines are maintained. There will be a round of bidding for each batch of facilities that the costing is ready.

Fisher Trust will ensure that mobilization to site by contractors will be strictly adhered to by every successful bidder.

Timelines attached to each project is in line with professional standards and contracts will be awarded to only those who show capability and capacity to meet the deadlines.

Opening of school – This will be done in September 2020, a full year ahead of the originally agreed timetable with government. All the ingredients to make this possible is now present; the consultants are in place, a project team is in place, the academic curriculum is ready and a bridge facility to fund the project is being pursued with the banks. Umuahians need to redouble their efforts and commit necessary resources to achieve this target.

Security – has been a nightmare for a long time in GCU. A situation where a 90-hectare campus operates with one or two security men is a joke and has led to all kinds of unsavoury situations. This will be addressed during construction. It is already in the plans to build the walls at the same time as the classrooms. There is a plan for an integrated security architecture which among other things will include security fence, perimeter road round the college, motorized patrol, a police station, observation towers, CCTV, street lighting and electronic devices. There will be seen and unseen eyes. Every child and teacher in Government College should be provided a secure teaching and learning environment.

STATE OF THE SCHOOL - The state of the school at the present is a reflection of the deep malaise that convinced the Old Boys to intervene. It is beyond description. It is one that angers Umuahians. That anger was turned into positive action to take over and restore but enough of it is not reflected in the contributions. We need to do more. Obviously, Old Boys are shocked at scenes of unkempt and bushy surroundings, impassable roads and decrepit structures in the college. This has to change and the time is now. You cannot sit back and merely wish the school to be restored with the resources of other Umuahians. How about you? What have you contributed? Whatever you want to do, this is the time. We need it now. Fisher Trust is in an advanced state of readiness to start but we start and stop midway. That way you would have expended resources without having a school. What the College situation requires is an organized, disciplined and sustainable approach.

Once the Trust declares the campus a 'Construction Zone' from this quarter, a new system of disciplined maintenance of the grounds will be installed and sustained all the way. The Trust has tried as much as possible not to interfere in the running of the present school until formal takeover. Moreover, the Board needs to husband its lean resources for the greater task ahead. It is keeping a keen eye on all developments.

ENCROACHMENT - Encroachment into college land has been on for years, long before the Old Boys asked for the school. It was on such a scale that GCU lost altogether about 25 hectares of land. All buildings on the right side of the main gate up to the back of the Principal's house and the northern border are sitting illegally on GCU land. The Trust is investigating several new encroachments within the space covered by the Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) issued by the government. In a little while, these incidents will cease as the Board's steps in this regard shall be decisive and will be evident.

TEACHERS' QUARTERS - Teachers' Quarters redevelopment is adequately captured in the Phase 1 of the GCU Restoration Project. The Principal and Teachers that will lead GCU from September 2020 will have decent and secure accommodation to live in. The reconstruction of their quarters will proceed simultaneously with that of the classrooms.

FINANCE – As already mentioned, Fisher Trust is working to obtain a bridge facility from the banks in the region of N5 billion. The process has reached an advanced stage. Fisher Trust has successfully gone through all the levels of screening and provided every documentation required. The guaranteeing bank has since approved our submission and indicated their willingness to back the loan.

The Banks have come back to us to say that for any amount you request for, you should have in your accounts at least 30% of that to convince them of your ability to pay back. So for every naira contribution you make, you lessen our burden. In any case, we are hopeful of eventual success in the shortest possible time.

The balance in the Trust's accounts as at this month is as follows:

- a. Union Bank – N24,768,215.63
- b. Fidelity Bank – N16,718,035.77
- TOTAL – N41,486,251.4

- c. Access Bank (Domiciliary) - \$ 50,100

Let me assure you that this present Board has nothing to hide and we run an open door policy. Every process we engage in is reported and once the process is completed, the details are given to the Old Boys.

However, there is some bit of worry with what some of our Alumni do with the information released. Please do your bit by circulating within all your platforms; the Branches, classes etc. We have an each – one - tell - one policy. Every Umuahian has something to contribute. We encourage each and every one of us to be an ambassador of this Restoration project.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FISHER TRUST AND GCUOBA

I have found it very necessary to once more reiterate the true position of things. Fisher Trust is a creation of the Old Boys of Government College Umuahia. It was GCUOBA that approached the Government of Abia State led by the late former President, Chief Damian Nzenwa. Do not let any one create confusion around you for personal reasons.

At every NEC Meeting, Homecoming or AGM at home or abroad, Fisher Trust ensures that it gives a progress report. Why? Because it knows its mother. What qualifies I and others serving on the Board is that we are first and foremost Old Boys. Any one creating a contrary impression should please stop.

The first assignment is to focus and deliver a good school to convince stakeholders, the State Government and host communities that we can deliver on our promise. After that, it would be safe to do other things. Let us prioritise our objectives. You might be surprised by what you will get today if you unravel the FEDT constitution at this point. Times have changed, individuals and perceptions have also changed. Let us all be vigilant, protect what we have and be guided by Umuahian wisdom.

CLASS WHATSAPP GROUPS - This was a deliberate creation of Fisher Trust after due research and reflection. It was designed as a tool for unity, progress and mobilization of all Umuahians. It was never envisaged as a substitute to GCUOBA Branches. Infact, Fisher Trust in conjunction with GCUOBA advises that every member of a class platform must be an active member of a branch. The class platform is a veritable tool for progress if used the right way. So it is important that discipline, decency and respect for other Umuahians is maintained always.

NAMING RIGHTS – Beyond the traditional class, house or individual contributions, there are also a range of facilities that can be named after donors willing to go the extra mile to ensure Umuahian legacy is restored and sustained. Fisher Trust will also publish the list and rights in due course.

LEADERS WITHOUT TITLE - This is exactly what Umuahians need now; men who can plant trees along the roadside despite the fact they know they may not have the opportunity to shelter in its shed, but do things just to benefit humanity. That is what Umuahia was, that is what Umuahia is and that is the legacy of Rev. Robert Fisher.

FUND RAISING -

Finally Dear Umuahians, members of the Board of Fisher Trust consider it a sacred duty to be called upon to serve Umuahia in any capacity. We have all come a long road to this point and cannot let ourselves down. We must continue to pull in one direction in the same spirit as when we first set out. History, providence or both have chosen all of us as the generation to actualize the rebirth of GCU, to walk the Fisher walk of January 2019. What shall we spend this time doing? Arguing or facing the task before us?

Fisher calls you today, history beckons. May we continue to shine as one.

For & on behalf of Fisher Trust,

Dr. Okwesilieze Nwodo
Chairman.