PROFESSORS AS LEADERS AND MENTORS

By

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Introduction

- The theme of the Retreat "Developing Strategies to Reposition University Professors towards a Greater Future" is quite apt.

- FUNAAB WEBOMETRICS ranking 2nd University in Nigeria, 29th in Africa and the 1st University of Agriculture in Africa is a very remarkable feat which has etched our name boldly in the history of excellence.

- With the benefit of reminiscence, we are asking "What factors brought us this far?

- Are we at our best yet?

Introduction cont'd

- Recognizing that Professors are the pillars of our citadel of learning, can we then make the Professors better and more importantly, can we transfer some of the "leadership and academic genes" of these Professors to our up and coming leaders?

- Are we yet at our best?

- What are we doing that we need to do better?

- Or modify to push us up the ladder of Excellence

Who is a Professor?

- According to Wikipedia (2013) A professor is a scholarly [teacher](); the precise meaning of the term varies by country.

- Literally, *professor* derives from [Latin]() as a "person who professes" being usually an [expert]() in arts or sciences, a teacher of high rank.

- A professor is a highly accomplished and recognized academic, and the title is in most cases awarded only after decades of scholarly work to senior academics.

- This is also the scenario in FUNAAB, since we are all moderated by global standards.

Academic Staff by Rank and Gender as at September, 2012

RANK	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professor	76	13	89
Reader	36	7	43
Senior Lecturer	71	30	101
Lecturer I	96	35	131
Lecturer II	60	26	86
Assistant Lecturer	28	20	48
Others	22	12	34
TOTAL	389	143	532

Pyramidal Structure of Academic Staff as at September, 2012

Professor/Reader
25%

Senior Lecturer
19%

Lecturer I and Below
56%

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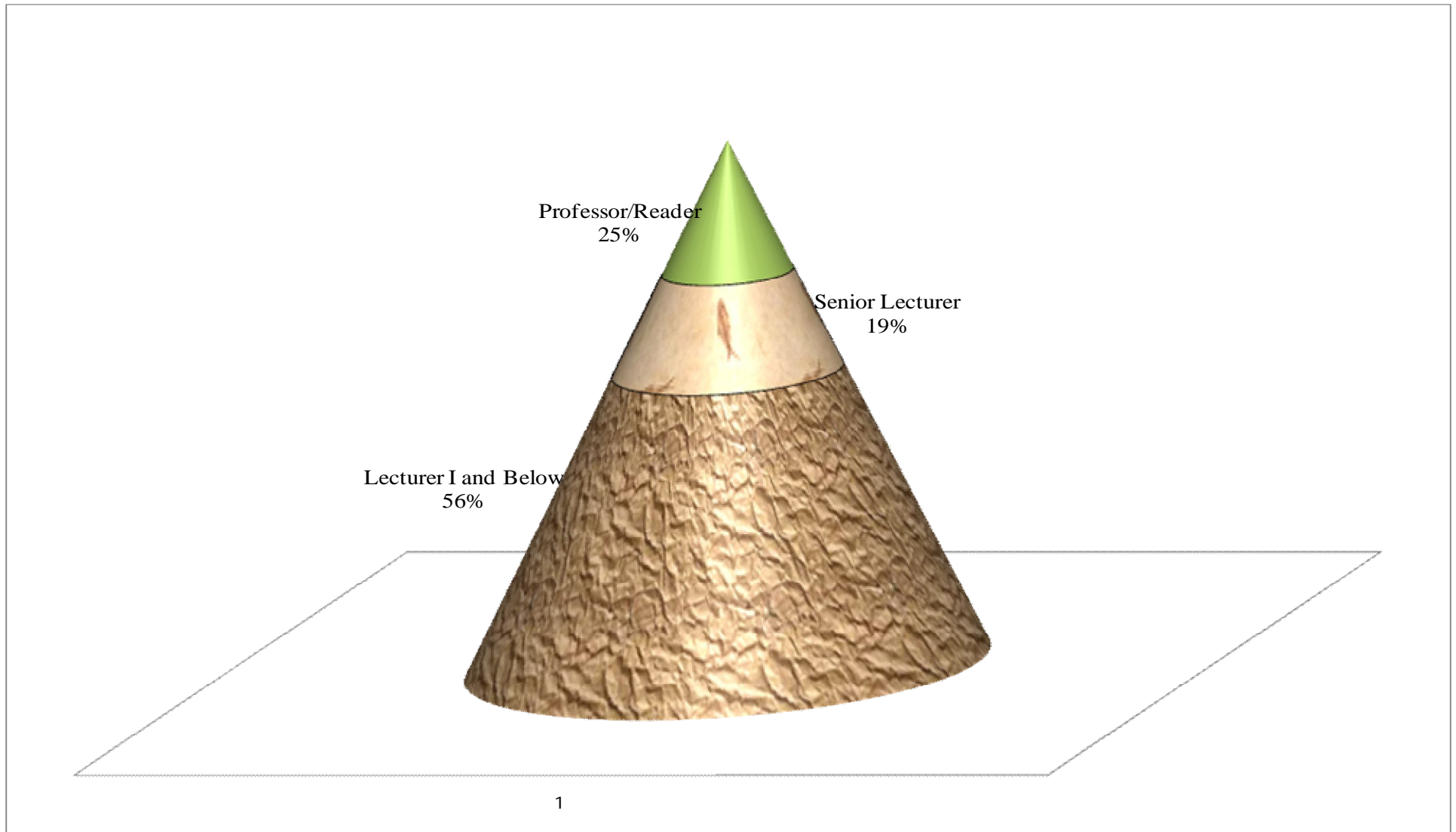
NUC Recommended Ratio – 20% Professor: 35% Senior Lecturer: 45% Lecturer I and Below

Leadership

- Leadership may be defined as the ability to inspire, influence and guide people towards an intended goal.

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- Today, effective leadership is much more than just technical proficiency. It also encompasses good communication skills, team spirit, accepting diversity, motivating professionals and possessing problem solving skills.

Leadership

- To grow a business or enhance a career, one must master certain basic skills in management and leadership.

Leadership cont'd....

- The basic skills include planning, meeting management, delegation, communications, decision making and problem tackling skills.

- Effective teamwork is another essential aspect in today's world of leadership abilities.

- Most importantly, leaders must also have a sixth sense for subtly resolving issues commonly referred to as 'tactical proficiency'.

- These include taking responsibility, real time decision-making, meeting commitments and understanding team-working strengths and weaknesses.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DISCIPLINE

- What really do we need to do it right?

- Just LEADERSHIP and LEADERSHIP and LEADERSHIP;

For, if the head of a fish is rotten, the fish is gone.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DISCIPLINE

- So, we need leadership – good, focused, skilled, directional, disciplined, forward planning and forward looking leadership, etc.

- This is where the issue of GOOD GOVERNANCE comes in. We really cannot divorce this from the sectoral problems in Nigeria.

Discipline

- According to John Maxwell (2002) no matter how gifted a leader is, his gifts will never reach their maximum potential without the application of self discipline.

- If we lack discipline, we may be in the habit of 'having dessert before eating our vegetables'.

- We may need to remove rewards until the job is done; and that is the message to pass down to the next generation – and even our own generation

Discipline

•Discipline should embrace how we prioritize and work; these are very key to a leader's success and constitute the legacy to pass on to colleagues and mentees.

•Efficiency is foundation for survival. Effectiveness is the foundation for success.

TRUST

•As leaders, we need to develop trust.

•Trust is the foundation of Leadership. We must learn to tolerate honest mistakes, but when trust is violated we hardly can regain the confidence of the followers.

TRUST

- Leadership roles of Professors in FUNAAB:

- Empowering

- Attitude

- Succession

- Legacy

- Ethos

MENTORING

- Mentor is derived from Greek mythology. Example – Odyssey Odysseus entrusted the care and guidance of his son Telemachus to friend Mentor.

- The goddess Athena assumed mentor's appearance and took it upon herself to guide Telemachus in his time of difficulty.

- Mentoring is a developmental relationship between a more experienced mentor and a less experienced partner referred to as a protégé, mentoree or mentee.

MENTORING....

- In mentoring, there is no short cut to development.

- True mentoring is a slow, tedious, and constant process that is not to be confused with the yes – boys who believe that they can get by through eye service and peddling of rumours and gossips

Types of mentors

- Physical and virtual Mentors

- Proximal and distant

- E-mentorship

- The will and the way

Purposes of Mentoring

- Through mentoring, the University seeks to facilitate excellence and innovation in teaching and learning, research and research training, and community engagement for all academic staff.

- The purpose of a mentoring policy is to provide a common framework, based upon best practice principles, to support the design of new, and the continuing development of existing, mentoring arrangements in the University.

Elements of Mentoring

These are basically:

- Time -frame, formality, Reciprocity – relationship may be substantially in place to benefit the mentee, frutually beneficial & power – free.

- Intensity - Participants may meet occasionally or regularly according to prescribed schedule.

Elements of Mentoring

- **Agenda - Primarily focused on professional matters or more holistic to include other facts of life.**

- **Medium - Face-to-face, electronic. These days we talk of e-mentoring**

The Benefits of Mentoring

Benefits of mentoring have been identified for institutions, mentors and mentees as follows:

For the institution the benefits include:

- the possibility of greater staff productivity,

- improved communication between staff,

- greater collegiality among staff, and reduced staff turnover.

For the mentor, the benefits identified include the following:

- the satisfaction of being able to transfer knowledge and skills accumulated through extensive professional practice;
- the opportunity to re-examine one's own practices, attitudes and values;
- refining the development of observation, listening and questioning skills;
- the opportunity to discuss professional issues; and
- v. professional interaction in teaching and learning, scholarly and/or research projects.

3. For the mentee, the identified benefits have been found to include:

i.   receiving accumulated organisational wisdom;

ii.   access to new professional networks;

iii   advice and support around specific professional situations;

iv.   new insights into professional practices and current institutional parameters;

v.   guidance and support in meeting criteria set for probation;

vi.   improved promotion opportunities;

vii.   fine-tuning of knowledge, skills and understandings; and

viii.   enhanced opportunity to achieve professional potential.

Unaab's Mentoring Committee in 2009

Recognizing the above-listed advantages, a Mentoring Committee was set up in 2009 in response to a proposal submitted to the University for patronage by Chronus Corporation, an expert in the generation and marketing of software packages as well as linkages in mentoring. This was to have been followed by a memorandum of understanding and the reaching of an agreement accordingly with Chronus Corporation. This was also to have its huge financial implication.

Membership

The Committee was made up of:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)   (Chairman)

Director, RESDEC

Dean, Student Affairs Unit

Director, Academic Planning

Chaplain, UNAAB

Director, GRECC

Director, Linkages & Partnership

Coordinator, WEBOMETRICS

Director, ICTREC

Chief Imam, UNAAB

College Officer, COLAMRUD (Secretary)

The Terms of Reference

1.   To assess the present level of mentoring in UNAAB.

2.   To identify the different forms of mentoring as employed by other institutions at home and abroad.

3.   To develop workable implementation strategies like seminars, workshops etc.

4   To recommend immediate and short term rectification of observed snags that could mitigate against the University's desire to enhance effective mentoring.

5.   To make any other recommendation as may be deemed necessary for the University to join the league of mentoring-enhanced Universities.

FUNAAB has come of age and we may therefore need to put in place a Central Mentoring Committee. A University–wide Policy will also need to be drafted and perfected

Formulating Policy on Mentoring

Considering the key role mentoring plays in the life of an institution, it is desirable to come up with a policy on Mentoring.

The specific objectives of such a policy would do the following:

• identify mentoring as a valuable and valued element of the staff development framework;

• emphasise that mentoring is a relationship that is entered into and developed voluntarily;

• ensure that mentoring, particularly in support of individual development and career advancement, is neither confused with nor substituted for supervisory responsibilities arising from the University's Academic Staff Performance Review and Planning Program;

- establish that mentoring relationships, in whatever form, are governed by the University's Code of Conduct and existing policies on quality, equity and equal opportunity, inclusiveness and privacy;

- support and encourage the growth of more strategically managed mentoring activities within individual organisational units and across the University as a whole;

- provide structured support to assist individual staff to define their own learning experience so that they can improve their performance and develop their capacity to contribute effectively to their discipline, position, career advancement and the University;

- benefit the mentor by providing an opportunity to develop his/her leadership capacity when undertaking the role of a mentor; and

- contribute to the enhancement of the University's performance.

Mentoring cont'd.....

•While traditionally, mentoring has been understood as a more experienced person guiding and sponsoring a less experienced person, there are now a variety of definitions of mentoring.

•However, there is agreement that it involves the following elements.

. a collaborative engagement,

. voluntary,

. centred around an agreed expectation(s),

. mutually valuable.

Recognition of Mentoring as a Valued Element in Staff Development

•It is an expectation of all staff that those with greater experience, as a normal part of their duties and responsibilities, freely provide appropriate support and guidance to less experienced colleagues on request and, particularly, in regard to the institutional knowledge required for the latter to perform their duties effectively.

•Heads of Departments units and supervisors are encouraged to recognise specifically the value of mentoring skills by:

. planning for staff, who act or will act as mentors, to participate in appropriate training and receive adequate support as and when required;

. taking account of workload implications when planning the contributions of individuals as mentors or as mentoring program coordinators; and

. acknowledging significant individual contributions and good practice as a mentor as a component of service in performance review and reward for academic staff.

Relationship of Mentoring to Staff Appraisal and Performance Management

College Deans, Heads of Departments and Institutes, and other academic supervisors have responsibility to:

•organise tasks and workload for their staff,

•define roles and priorities,

•provide appraisal and a development plan,

•and address performance related issues in order to meet the University's objectives (Academic Staff Performance Review and Planning Program).

•Additionally, they have an important role as well as responsibility for nurturing the staff reporting to them.

Key characteristics distinguishing the role of a mentor from that of a supervisor are that:

• the mentor has no supervisory responsibility or authority over the mentee;

• mentors have no role in dealing with issues of non-compliance or under-performance;

• the mentoring relationship provides a confidential, non-judgemental, non-directive and supportive environment;

• mutual learning is an integral aspect of the mentoring relationship;

• the overall developmental needs of the mentee are the main focus within the mentoring relationship.

The Mentoring Relationship

•In arranged mentoring relationships, the concept varies according to the context and purpose of establishing those relationships.

Mentoring is commonly used as a method of:

•transferring specific skills,

•knowledge and norms to staff as a component of induction,

•professional development and diversity management programs.

In a staff development framework that emphasises self-managed learning, best practice indicates the need for mentoring that encourages mutual learning within the relationship as well as the desire for development in support of organisational goals.

Record has it that—"*At 27 years of age, Barack begins law school. 1989 Summer—Barack returns to Chicago as an intern at a law firm. He meets Michelle Robinson, his future wife, who is assigned as his mentor. She graduated from Harvard Law School in 1988*". (Price, 2008)

Disagreement between mentors and mentees

•Occasionally the relationship between the mentor and the mentee may not be as productive as one party or either party may wish.

•Sometimes, this is inevitable especially since probationers and other new colleagues will have been allocated a mentor on the basis of limited information.

•Neither the mentor nor the person being mentored should feel obliged to continue with such an unproductive relationship.

•However, should a complaint be raised by the person being mentored about the quality and nature of the mentoring being received, this should be reviewed.

•*Sometimes the ability to move from "nothing to something" comes from having people believe in you and give you a chance to prove yourself. Even though this is a capitalist society often times people of a low financial background aren't afforded the same opportunities as those who are more financially stable. A lack of money can affect your ability to be successful.*

Critical steps for success in mentoring

- Exposure of our budding scientists

- Project meetings

- Conferences

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, undoubtedly, FUNAAB is blessed with a large crop of staff in the professorial cadre of academic development. Their role in offering academic and administrative leadership is unparalled nationally. They also play active roles as mentors. As we gather momentum to move the university to the next level, it behoves us to expand our roles so that we can compete adequately, worldwide, and improve our rating in the comity of universities

APPRECIATION

It has been a worthwhile opportunity to share with us all.

I thank you for listening.

Chryss F.I. Onwuka

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Abeokuta