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Retreat for Professors: *Developing Strategies for Repositioning University Professors towards a Greater Future*. International Scholars Centre, FUNAAB, April 4, 2013





# INTRODUCTION

- FUNAAB was established 25 yrs ago
  - Research achievements have been modest
  - Academic Staff in Colleges & Research Institute / Centre conduct research with varying time allocations
- Nigeria spends << 0.1% of GDP on research, so, research funds are scarce
- Need to examine structure and effectiveness of Research Teams in FUNAAB to ensure optimal use of resources for greater effectiveness



#### **Research Team**

- Types of Research Teams
  - Formal
  - Informal
  - Loose
  - Rigid
  - Single Project
  - Long-term



- Objective
  - Set by individual or group
  - Institutional
  - National
  - Short, Medium & Long-term



- Composition
  - Disciplinary
  - Multi-Disciplinary
  - Student/Junior Researcher/Mid-Career
    Researcher/Senior Researcher mix
  - Inclusion based on Academic Qualifications & Track Record



- Leadership
  - Principal Investigator (PI) or Research Team Leader
  - By appointment or by concensus or by the Research Initiator



- Career Development
  - Through Seminars, Workshops & Conferences
  - Through Training in Writing of Grant-winning Proposals
  - Through Short-term Attachment to other Research Laboratories
  - Through Publications
  - Through Registration of Patents where appropriate
  - Through Mentoring by Senior Colleagues



- Problem identification
  - By Principal Investigator (PI)
  - Through Discussion
  - Through Experimentation



- Task allocation
  - Based on Rank
  - Based on Area of Specialization
  - In line with requirements for undergraduate or postgraduate studies



- Sourcing funds
- Facilities sharing
- Evaluation
- Seminars, workshops & conferences
- Publications
- Creating enabling



# Policy framework for research

- Goals
- Funding issues/Sustainability
- Assessment
- Recruitment issues
- Incentives/Motivation/Remuneration
- Competitiveness



#### Organizational/Administrative structure

- Funding bodies
  - Number
  - Level of funding
  - Frequency
- Regulatory bodies
  - Research Councils
  - Ministries
- Research Centres
  - Universities
  - Research Institutes



## **Research Performance Determinants**

- Leadership ability of Team Leader
  - Qualifications
  - Experience
  - Managerial Skill
- Quality of Team Members
- Availability of Research Facilities
- Level of Funding for Research
- Motivation



# Factors militating against formation or sustainability of vibrant research teams

- Inadequate research funding
- Inadequate research facilities
- Inadequate electricity and water supply
- Poor Research Team Leadership
- Inadequate incentives
- Limited training opportunities



#### **FUNAAB** Experience

- Research Teams usually formed for grant application purpose
- In some cases, the PI monopolises the application of funds without further reference to other 'Team Members' FUNAAB Experience
- In some other cases, the Team jointly carries out its assigned tasks to completion and every member is carried along and plays his or her role
  - (e.g. The Cassava Research Team instituted by IFSERAR)







#### **RESEARCH PROGRAMMES**

FSERAF

- ENERGY RESEARCH
- BIOSCIENCES RESEARCH
- ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES &
  CONSERVATION RESEARCH

#### VISION

IFSERAR

"To be the foremost Research Institute working towards the sustainable attainment of food security in Nigeria."

#### MISSION

To act as change-agent for the transformation of Nigerian Agriculture through scientific research and the development of improved agricultural technologies.

To fast-track improvements in rural livelihoods.

To contribute significantly towards the actualization of the Federal Government of Nigeria's Vision 2020 and the attainment of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by the year 2015.

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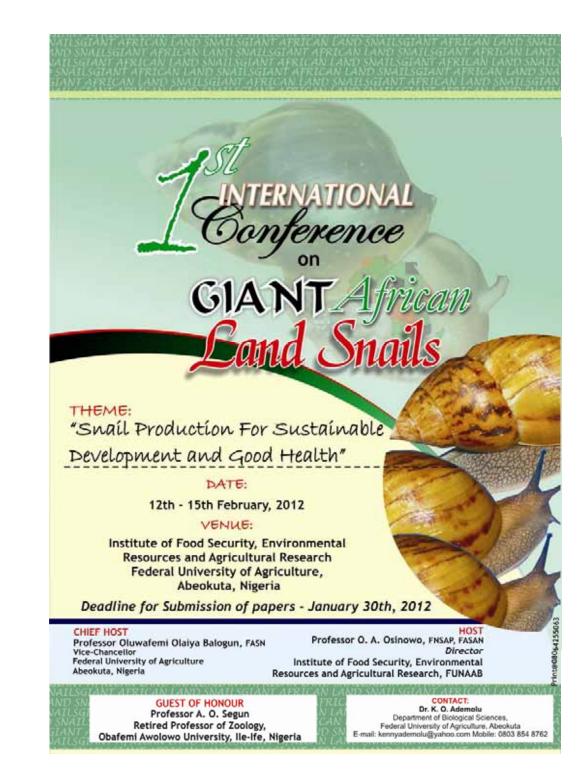
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#### FUNAAB Experience ... Contd.

- Some informal Research Teams have lasted for 10 years or more, e.g. The Snail Group and the Goat Research Group.
- Though their memberships keep changing as Student Members graduate and move away, the remaining Core Members ensure continuity and steady progress.
- The Snail Group has evolved into a Research Network while the Goat Group has the Kalahari Red Goat Project on-going at the IFSERAR Farm.
- Career-wise, members of both Groups have made steady progress.





#### FUNAAB Experience ... Contd.

- Several other informal Groups are either
  - in the formative stage (e.g. Cassava Group, Aquaculture Group, Biotechnology Group, Biochemistry Group, etc.) or
  - mature stage (e.g. Socio-economics Group, Food Science Group).
- The informal Groups often re-surface as formal Groups for Grant Application purposes but maintain their informal nature over the longer term.
- Successful Research Groups tend to have informal but knowledgeable, strong and well-respected leaders able to motivate others and actively engaged in mentoring younger colleagues.
  - They are also astute managers of human and material resources.





# Recommendations

- Formal recognition of Research Team Leaders based on
  - Quality of Research
  - Long-term Research Achievements
  - No. & quality of higher degree graduates supervised
  - Mentoring ability
- Provide support with longer-term funding (3-5 yrs)
- Develop Research Infrastructure & provide research facilities



### Recommendations ... Contd.

- Allow Team Leader greater say in recruitment
- Minimize bureaucratic bottlenecks
- Institute periodic review and evaluation process

Thank you.



