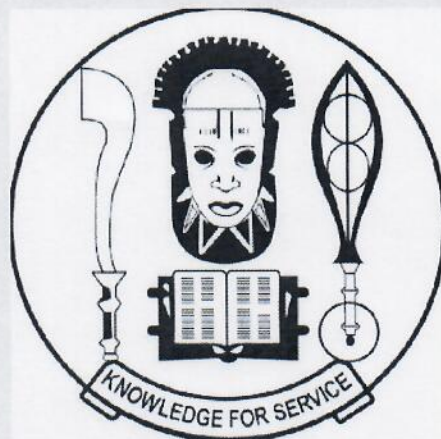


UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA



REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN- 2022-2027

DECEMBER 12, 2021

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present this first regional strategy of the University of Benin to the university community and its numerous national, regional and international stakeholders, partners, friends, and alumni. The strategy development followed a painstaking reflection on the future of the University of Benin in relations to the impact it can make in contributing to regional development. Given that the University has produced over 350,000 graduates in diverse fields over the 51 years of its existence, many of whom work in many countries around the world, it is important and critical that it should play a greater role in supporting overall development within the African region.

While the University has always drawn its staff and students from the international community, and given the fact that its foundational Vice-Chancellor was a British, it became worrisome that the intake of regional staff and students and its participation in regional educational and developmental platforms have declined over the most recent years. This is in part due to the declining national economy, which has made emigration of academics more attractive than immigration of students and scholars from other parts of the world. We also perceived it to be due to the lack of a purposeful approach by the University to attract regional attention and to break regional silos despite the national difficulties.

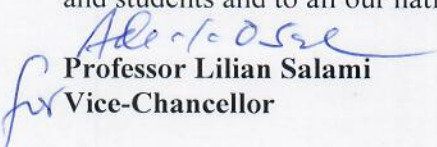
It is within this context that the Senate of the University of Benin has considered the development of a regional strategy to be critical to the future development of the University. The development of the strategy followed three steps. First, I constituted a University Impact Committee chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Administration to coordinate the process of developing the strategy. The committee met several times, and had sessions with various segments of the University, and then produced a draft report based on the identification of the major challenges that need to be addressed, and recommendations on methods of rectification.

In the second step, the report of the Impact Committee was considered by the University Management, and in the third step, the Senate considered and approved the report after making necessary revisions.

I believe that the collaborative process used in developing and approving the regional strategic plan will help the acceptance and the use of the plan over the coming years. The addition of a monitoring and evaluation framework to the plan will ensure the effective implementation of the plan, while eliminating any possible bottlenecks.

As Vice-Chancellor, I promise to bring this strategic plan to the attention of the Governing Council of the University, so as to safeguard the disbursement of appropriate annual budget for implementing the activities outlined in the strategy.

In sum, I believe that this regional strategic plan of the University of Benin stands the chance of enabling the University to play greater role in activating tertiary educational attainment and in supporting overall development within the African region. I recommend it strongly to all our staff and students and to all our national, regional, and international stakeholders.


for **Professor Lilian Salami**
Vice-Chancellor



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Benin was established in 1970 as one of Nigeria's first generation Universities. Since then it has emerged as one of the country's most pre-eminent Universities, sought after by staff and students. Given its leading role within Nigeria's tertiary educational system, it is important and critical that the University of Benin should extend its leadership capability to the rest of the African region. It is within this context that this strategic plan was conceived and is being designed to be implemented under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Professor Lilian Salami.

Methodology

The strategy was the outcome of several consultations and discussions with relevant groups within the body of staff, students and other stakeholders in the University. It consisted of a detailed SWOT analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the university to engage and implement regional engagement activities. This was then followed by the identification of the challenges that need to overcome to enable the implementation of the activities, and then the listing of the activities for remediating the challenges. The strategy was drafted by a committee appointed by the Vice-Chancellor that was chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Professor Adesuwa Osahon, and then reviewed by the University Management, and finally reviewed and approved by Senate of the University

Vision and Mission of the Regional Policy

The **Vision** of the policy is for the University of Benin to be a regional and global thought leader and hub for the 21st century higher education system in the African continent.

Our **Mission** is to be a University looking towards the future in working with national, regional, and international stakeholders in synthesising knowledge through research and high quality training for addressing various developmental challenges in the African sub-region.

Objectives of the Regional Policy

The specific objectives of the regional strategy are as follows:

1. To redirect the university's research orientation from the more generalist perspective to industry-related research designed to find a solution to real-life challenges both in Nigeria and in the context of the African continent.
2. To develop a strategy for attracting the best students and academic staff to the University of Benin from within Nigeria, Africa and beyond.
3. To strengthen the university exchange programmes, partnerships, and linkages to improve the visibility of the University in the global space and enhance the quality of the products through exposure and cross-fertilisation of knowledge.
4. To consolidate on blended teaching and learning to remain competitive in the post-covid 19 university education.
5. To encourage a high level of professional development of the students by partnering with professional institutions in the different fields across the faculties.



6. To enhance creativity and innovation by deploying information communication technology in knowledge delivery at the University of Benin.
7. To create an enabling environment that will facilitate teaching, learning, and the overall well-being of the staff and students at the University.

Key Components of the Strategy

Arising from this process, a 9-point strategy plan for increasing the visibility and performance of the University of Benin within Africa's regional landscape include the following:

1. Enhance University-wide leadership and management capacity on implementation of regional strategy.
2. Secure international accreditation for the University and its courses
3. Improve ICT capacity in the University.
4. Develop and implement composite strategic communication activities to increase the visibility of the University in Africa and internationally.
5. Leverage specific funding for activities related to the regional strategy
6. Review modes of learning and teaching, including online teaching methods.
7. Promote collaborative research through network formation in critical development areas.
8. Build university and community divide, and build relationships to help communities in need.
9. Partner with industry, embassies, regional planners and development agencies in
10. diverse fields.

Conclusion

The Regional Strategy of the University of Benin 2022-2027 is creative and purposefully designed to align with the vision for the University by the new Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin, Professor Lilian Salami. We believe that the strategy has the potentials to increase the performance and visibility of the University within regional and international landscapes enabling the University to attain increased ranking among global higher educational institutions.



BACKGROUND

The University of Benin occupies a central place in the comity of universities in Nigeria being one of the most prestigious and most sought-after universities in Nigeria. The University of Benin was established in 1970 and was given full-fledged university status by the National Universities Commission (NUC) on July 1, 1971. The University presently has fifteen faculties: agriculture, arts, basic medical sciences, education, social sciences, engineering, law, environmental sciences, life sciences, dentistry, management sciences, medicine, physical sciences, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine. The faculties offer both postgraduate and undergraduate courses.

With a student population of over forty-five thousand and a staff strength of eight thousand personnel, the University of Benin has provided exemplary leadership in the educational Development of the immediate region and Nigeria in general. To date, the University has graduated a conservative estimate of over three hundred and fifty thousand (350,000) students. Fifty-one years after its inception, it has become imperative for the University to broaden its horizon by developing a regional expansionary strategy to dominate and remain competitive in the African sub-region.

The development of the African subregion and the prosperity of the educational institutions with emphasis on the University of Benin is more of a congenial relationship to the extent that while the activities of the University will promote the growth and development of the region, and the development of the region, it will no doubt increase the visibility, sustainability, and the global competitiveness of the University.

While it is a global best practice for institutions to positively impact their host communities, extending the impact to regional frontiers will be highly transformational. It is against this backdrop that a regional strategy for the University of Benin has become highly inevitable.

SWOT ANALYSIS FOR REGIONAL IMPACT

The University has several Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) that need to be addressed to enable it develop and implement a regional strategy for achieving effectiveness and impact at scale in the African region.

STRENGTHS

Teaching capacity

Teaching and learning are the backbone of university education anywhere in the world. The attentiveness of the University of Benin to blended teaching and flexible learning through online, face-to-face and blended learning distinguishes the University from the conventional institutions glued to in-person teaching even in the global pandemic of COVID 19. The University of Benin has an academic staff strength of about 3000 well-experienced, innovative, and purpose-driven staff. Human capital development is central to the management of the University to ensure that



academic staff stay current and competitive in the comity of universities within the region and beyond

The University is committed to the students-lecturers ratios set by the National Universities Commission (NUC), responsible for regulating university activities in Nigeria. In addition, the University of Benin complies effectively well with standards and pronouncements issued by professional institutions within and outside Nigeria.

Research collaboration

To achieve the desired strategic regional dominance, the University of Benin has created international visibility through research in core challenges to the African subregion. Emphasis is directed at applied research that proffer solutions to industry and environmental-related challenges such as sustainability issues, climate change and global warming, artificial intelligence and robotic engineering, cloud computing, afforestation, population control, forensic accounting, international finance, and globalisation, etc.

Research collaboration at the University of Benin is achieved through scoping review of best practices, models, approaches and frameworks. Currently, the University is collaborating with:

- ***Center of Excellence in Reproductive Health (CERHI)***. The initiative is a World Bank support project at the University designed to implement high-quality training and applied research in reproductive health.
- ***The Centre for Global Eco-Innovation***. The Centre is the product of a collaboration with the University of Lancaster to develop applied research to drive environmentally sustainable, equitable economic growth and development.
- ***The National Centre for Energy and Environment***. The Centre is a focal point for energy research and a platform for developing a conceptual and operational policy framework for sustainable, renewable energy production and technology transfer.
- ***Centre of Excellence in Geosciences and Energy Transfer***. The Centre is a collaborative effort with Shell Petroleum Development Company for research and development in the geosciences and petroleum engineering,
- ***African Centre for Mushroom Research and Innovation Technology***. The Centre collaborates with the North Carolina A&T University in research into the development and cultivation of species of mushrooms at the University of Benin.

With these array of ongoing collaborations and some in the pipeline, the University of Benin is well-positioned to assume a leadership position in collaboration with governments, the organised private sector, and other stakeholders in developing the Nigerian national economy and, by extension, the African subregion.

Staff and students exchange program

The academic staff are the lynchpins of university operations and are indispensable in the strategic plan for regional dominance and international visibility for the University of Benin. The academic staff exchange programme is at the Centre of promoting inter-university cooperation through academic staff mobility to enhance global exposure and cross-fertilisation of knowledge.



At the University of Benin, different opportunities for staff exchange programmes are available, ranging from the annual sabbatical leave, research leave to the extended leave programme. Currently, we have academic and non-academic staff in different universities all over the world. For example, we have some academic staff at Essex University, United Kingdom, AMA International University Bahrain, Lagos Business School, Universities in Canada. The Department of Economics of the University of Benin has a subsisting exchange programme with the African Economic Research Consortium, Nairobi, Kenya, for a PhD programme in economics.

Partnerships

A partnership is geared towards allowing the universities to improve the quality of teaching and research, improve capacity building for collaborative activities, and internationalise the educational system.

The University of Benin has existing partnerships with the following bodies/institutions:

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) Nairobi, Kenya. The University of Benin has a collaborative PhD programme in economics with AERC in Kenya. The programme is designed to train a cadre of highly qualified teachers and researchers in economics as a subset of a broad programme designed to provide world-class training of Economists by African Universities for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Joint Universities Preliminary Examinations Board (JUPEB) Lagos, Nigeria. The University of Benin is in partnership with JUPEB, a new advanced level examination body recently established and coordinated by the University of Lagos, Nigeria. Candidates who successfully complete a one-year programme organised by JUPEB are given direct entry into 200 level degree programme in any university in Nigeria.

Mutual Cooperation Agreement with Tertiary Institutions. The University of Benin is in a strategic partnership with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria through the MCARTI programme to improve the quality of accounting education in Nigerian universities with the broad objective of benchmarking international best practices. The programme grants extended exemptions that allow accounting graduates of the University of Benin to proceed to the final level of the ICAN professional examination. This is comparable to what is obtainable in the United Kingdom with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Retail Development and Investment Company (RDIC). The University of Benin has a subsisting partnership agreement with RDIC, an information technology company aimed at digitalising, storing, and publishing data for the University through the publication engine of the university-www.iwemi.com. RDIC is primarily concerned with managing the University's digital assets, implementing the University's e-textbook programmes, providing library content platforms and services, and anchoring the content distribution of the University of Benin.

The University-based Poultry Revival programme. The University of Benin is in partnership with Unigold foods to establish a #50,000,000 broilers/chicken production, processing, and packaging initiative at the University of Benin, under the Central Bank university-based poultry revival initiative. Apart from benefitting the students in the area of knowledge and



skill acquisition, the facility helps in the development of career opportunities in the poultry industry.

The Lincoln University, USA Electronic Education Programme. The University of Benin is the first University in Nigeria to commence an e-learning programme by partnering with Lincoln University, the USA, with students drawn from the faculty of Agriculture and Botany in a direct lecture and interaction with lecturers at Lincoln University. The aim was to carve a synergy where schools can interact in real-time via cyber and virtual avenues.

The Schlumberger Technology Engagement Programme (STEP). STEP is in partnership with the University of Benin in deploying plug-in software operations to curb wastage and avoidable errors involved in the value chain in Nigeria's oil and gas industries.

Students recruitment and retention

The University of Benin is one of the most sought-after universities in sub-Saharan Africa. The University offers admission into several undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across fifteen (15) faculties. In addition, the University provides some foundation programmes in some selected disciplines.

As a general rule, UTME candidates are required to have five ordinary level credit passes, including English language and mathematics, at not more than two sittings in WASC/WAECSSCE/GCE/NECO or their recognised equivalents.

Faculty recruitment

The University of Benin attracts and select highly skilled, upwardly mobile, and research-oriented academic staff. The academic staff strength of the University is currently about two thousand personnel comprising of professorial cadre, Senior lecturers, and others. The staff have a correct blend of academic and professional qualifications across the different faculties of the University.

The University has a sound policy of human capital development achieved through conference sponsorship, training, study grants for doctoral studies, and study leave with or without pay. To sustain the current trend and improve the global visibility of the University of Benin, there is a need to improve the current level of exchange programme, research collaboration, and partnership. The University's current mix of foreign and indigenous academics is relatively low and requires significant improvement to achieve the desired regional strategy. The infrastructural facilities need a serious upgrade to meet the world-class standard. The current state of insecurity occasioned by kidnapping and banditry needs serious attention from the government to reverse the ugly trend of the shallow presence of foreign academics.

Digital teaching

Since the partnership agreement with the Lincoln University on electronic education, virtual and online teaching has received a severe boost in the University. The deployment of online instruction in the University was responsible for the non-cancellation of the 2020/2021 academic session at the University of Benin. In contrast, other universities could not sustain the same feat.



Digital teaching received a serious boost from the federal government by upgrading and upscaling the existing facilities by the Petroleum Training Development Fund (PTDF).

The University has a world standard ICT centre responsible for all online examinations and other related activities. In addition to serving the interest of the universities, other stakeholders (JAMB, JUPEB, etc.) have benefitted from the facilities at the Centre. Even though a considerable achievement has been achieved in this regard, there is still room for further improvement.

The current shift to online learning globally will require a strategic partnership with online learning service providers such as zoom to invigorate the University's existing virtual learning facilities and processes. The concept of virtual offices is gradually gaining popularity, and with time the universities may also become virtual and the best time to prepare for such eventuality is now.

Industry engagement

There is a robust interface between the University of Benin and the industrial sector in Nigeria, resulting in a series of partnership initiatives and research collaborations to solve industry challenges. The Schlumberger technology engagement programme and the shell development company Centre of excellence in geosciences and petroleum engineering have helped foster more significant ties between the University and the petroleum sector of the Nigerian economy. Graduates of the University have had an in-route into the leading oil companies in Nigeria through these initiatives.

The University of Benin industrial training scheme (UBIT) in the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Education teaching practice programme are hands-on programmes developed to equip the students with industry-relevant experience. The housemanship programme in the school of medicine and the law school programme of the Faculty of Law are all geared towards developing a robust interface between the university system and the industry to develop hands-on industry-relevant experiences that will help to strengthen the career prospects of the university graduates.

As a research-intensive educational institution, the University would profit more from commissioned industry-relevant research to either solve existing problems or advance new strategies for addressing current practices. A regional strategy is a university-wide initiative; hence, the industry experiences should not be restricted to some faculties within the university system. Efforts should be geared towards developing such initiatives across the faculties of the universities.

WEAKNESSES

Despite the visible strengths of the University of Benin, the University has several weaknesses that need to be addressed to enable it to engage more effectively with the African region. Some of these include the following:

1. Relatively low visibility of the University in the internet, in part due to the inadequate management of the website and related social media channels. Most of the forward-looking



activities of the University are currently not well captured in the internet, which limits its ability to engage with stakeholders in the African region, and globally.

2. Due to poor internet connectivity, the University's online learning platforms require major optimization. Although the University has a Distance Learning Centre (DLC), it has not began its operations due to the fact that it is yet to be approved by the National Universities Commission (NUC). With approval of the DLC, the University will be able to extend its learning and training to the wider African region
3. There is currently low representation of other African countries in the staffing at the University of Benin. This is partially due to the poor exchange rate of the Naira with international currencies, which makes working in the university unattractive to expatriates. Also, the University has only 5% of its students coming from other African countries despite that the fees paid by international students are low compared to fees paid by international students in other countries.
4. The low availability of scholarships, especially for postgraduate studies in the University is also a weakness that the University needs to overcome.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

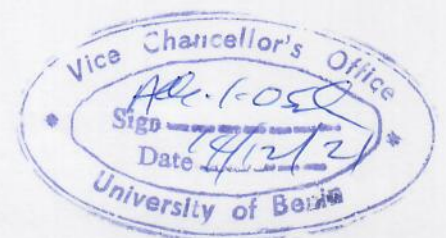
These include the following:

1. The current hosting of two World Bank funded projects – the Centre of Excellence in Reproductive Health Innovation (CERHI) and the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Procurement, Environmental, and Social Standards (SPESSE), at the University of Benin that emphasize regional engagement as essential outcomes, provides opportunity for the University to scale up activities related to regional engagement.
2. The recent election of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin, Professor Lilian Salami as the Vice-President of the Association of African Universities (AAU) provides opportunity for the University to partner with African Universities and students in implementing a laudable regional strategy.
3. The vision of the new Vice Chancellor of the University of Benin, Professor Lilian Salami to secure pre-eminence and excellence for the University in all fields of human endeavor ensuring that the University plays a greater role in the social and political economy of African countries provides a great impetus and oppornity for the University to develop and implement a regional strategy.

THREATS FACING REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The major threats to the University of Benin implementing a regional strategy include the following:

1. The increasing poor exchange rate of the national currency, the Naira against international currencies makes it difficult to attract high quality international academic staff to Nigerian Universities, including the University of Benin. However, the low value of the Naira may help attract international students, if even other issues are well addressed.
2. The low value of the Naira also makes it difficult for the University of Benin to purchase resources for attaining the highest standards in education, learning and research activities.
3. Limited funding of Universities, and the lack of allocation of resources in the annual budget of the University is also a challenge



4. Most importantly, the current security challenges in the country that oftentimes affect universities, makes the university relatively unattractive to regional staff and students.

THE REGIONAL STRATEGY

The University of Benin has a pivotal role to play in the development of the African subregion. To accomplish this role, the University of Benin Regional Strategy is anchored on a substructure that illuminates the role of the University of Benin in the development of the African subregion. The regional strategy for the University of Benin would be achieved by expanding the University's international visibility. The result of applied research to address industry and society-specific issues both at the national and international frontier will undoubtedly help position the University to achieve the desired leadership role in developing the African subregion. The pleasant nature of the relationship between educational institutions and regional development strategies presupposes that the product of the University would benefit from the regional strategy through exposure and international competitiveness, more integrative approach to teaching through the regional strategy will help in the area of formidable human capital development and skill acquisition to meet the demands of the Nigerian economy and the African region in general.

The vision of the University of Benin is “to establish a model institution of higher learning which ranks among the best in the world and responsive to the creative and innovative abilities of the Nigerian people”.

The mission of the University is “to develop the human mind to be creative, innovative, competent in areas of specialisation, knowledgeable in entrepreneurship and Dedicated Service”.

Within this university’s vision and mission statements, we have conceptualized the mission and vision statements of the University’s regional policy as shown below:

VISION of the REGIONAL STRATEGY of the University of Benin

To be a regional and global thought leader and hub for the 21st century higher educational system in the African continent.

The MISSION of the REGIONAL STRATEGY

To be a University looking towards the future in working with national, regional, and international stakeholders in synthesising knowledge through high quality research and training for addressing regional developmental challenges in the African sub-region.

Core Values of the Regional Strategy

Transparency, Accountability, and Trustworthiness
Equity and Inclusiveness
Gender Mainstreaming
Partnership Building
Excellence and Professionalism



Strategic Objectives

The specific objectives of the regional strategy are as follows:

1. To redirect the university's research orientation from the more generalist perspective to industry-related research designed to find a solution to real-life challenges both in Nigeria and in the context of the African continent.
2. To develop a strategy for attracting the best students and academic staff to the University of Benin from within Nigeria, Africa and beyond. The evolving digital landscape has made the recruitment of international students more challenging. This may be achieved through widespread publicity of research outputs and the appointment of global brand ambassadors, even though it comes with a cost.
3. To strengthen the university exchange programmes, partnerships, and linkages to improve the visibility of the University in the global space and enhance the quality of the products through exposure and cross-fertilisation of knowledge.
4. To consolidate on blended teaching and learning to remain competitive in the post-covid 19 university education. Apart from increased flexibility, blended teaching and learning allow for independent teaching and learning and students' engagement and innovation.
5. To encourage a high level of professional development of the students by partnering with professional institutions in the different fields across the faculties. The reality is that professionalism is the crux of success in any area of human development.
6. To enhance creativity and innovation by deploying information communication technology in knowledge delivery at the University of Benin.
7. To create an enabling environment that will facilitate teaching, learning, and the overall well-being of the staff and students at the University. The Provision of basic amenities, including the security of life and property, is central to effective learning and human development.

COMPONENTS OF THE REGIONAL STRATEGY

Arising from the specific objectives listed above, the following are the activities (components) that would be carried out by the University of Benin to achieve the objectives:

1. **Enhance University-wide leadership and management capacity on implementation of regional strategy.** Unless the leadership of the University – principal officers, Senate, and Council- understand the rationale behind the regional strategy and buy into it, nothing substantial can be achieved. As such, given that this strategy was developed with inputs from major internal stakeholders in the University, we will organize a series of capacity building workshops to initiate and galvanize the implementation of the workshop. Thereafter, the University will set up a **REGIONAL STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE** to ensure effective implementation of the strategy. The Committee would comprise staff from relevant units and departments of the University as well as key technical staff from key universities, government agencies and development partners from other parts of Africa. While the University-based members would meet frequently on face to face platforms, the others will join virtually from time to time.
2. **Secure international accreditation for the University and its courses.** While the University currently has some of its courses accredited by international accreditation bodies, as part of the regional strategy, we will pursue international accreditation for the University



as an institution, and also for many more of its courses. This would make the University more attractive to international and regional staff and students. Thus, the University of Benin will pursue with vigor its current interaction with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) based in the UK for its international accreditation.

3. **Improve ICT capacity in the University.** The University's ICT system has today not worked very well in ways to increase its visibility to the global community. As part of the implementation of the regional strategy, the University has commenced the improvement of its ICT component with higher bandwidth, increased coverage of all parts of the University, and development of open-access points. The University has also embarked on the improvement of its website – the inclusion of a page for each department and unit of the university, the development of an interactive session that engages staff and students from all parts of the world, and strategic communication information and branding activities of the University.
4. **Develop and implement composite strategic communication activities** to increase the visibility of the University in Africa and internationally. As part of the implementation of the regional strategy, the University will develop a strategic communication document that will epitomize ways in which the University will more actively engage with Africa's regional educational sectors. The strategy would include a detailed documentation of the contact details relevant stakeholders (including Universities) in tertiary education in all African countries, the addresses of educational planners and the leading regional development stakeholders such as the Association of African Universities, the ECOWAS, AAU, etc. Models for reaching them and sharing information about the University will be developed. We will also obtain information on about embassies of the African countries in Nigeria, and use them as points of contact for reaching their respective Ministries of Education and Universities. The communication strategy will also spell out the details of the information about the University that need to be shared in the website, and the management of the the website itself. As an example, information about all courses offered in the University, and the modes of admission into this courses. This will assist international students seeking admission to the University. The communication strategy will also include the enhancement of various media channels for use for branding and disseminating information about the University.
5. **Funding** – The University will leverage funding from multiple resources to increase research, teaching and service delivery in the University, to offer scholarships to international students, to attract academics from African universities to attend sabbatical and and other research and teaching assignments, and to build long-standing partnerships. The University will seek to include a budget line in its annual budget for implementing the regional strategy, and will also seek special funding from governments and the development sector, as well as through proposals that address related issues.
6. **Review modes of learning and teaching, including online teaching methods.** Given the experiences from COVID-19 pandemic, the University has now developed a new framework for teaching, which includes hybrid formats - face to face and online teaching. It is for this reason that the University is currently improving its Distance Learning Model to include new techniques. The University will use this platform to reach various constituencies in the African region, including staff and students. The online system will particularly enable academics from outside the country to deliver lectures and other activities for our students.



7. **Promote collaborative research through network formation in critical development areas** with leading African and international universities. The University will develop a new research policy based on intersectorial and interdisciplinary collaboration. The University will identify the research niches of various African Universities and develop networks and partnerships to focus on addressing regional developmental challenges through research.
8. **Build university and community divide – build relationships with communities** in need. We believe that the impact of the University will increase with wider engagement with local communities. We will include community engagement strategies as part of the University's research and service delivery components, and leverage experiences from other African Universities.
9. **Partner with industry, embassies, regional planners and development agencies** in diverse fields. The University will compile the contact details of major industries, embassies, regional educational planners and development agencies in Africa, and regularly share information about the University with them. We will also work out a mechanism for engaging them in the research, teaching, and service delivery activities of the University



SUMMARY MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Strategic component	Activities to be implemented	Time frame	Responsible Department/units/officials
Enhance University-wide leadership and management capacity on implementation of regional strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish implementation committee Conduct capacity building workshops for principal staff 	January –March 2022	Vice-Chancellor's Unit
Secure international accreditation for the University and its courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish implementation committee Conduct gap assessment Conduct international accreditation 	January- December 2022	Vice Chancellor's unit
Improve ICT capacity in the University.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve university internet connection Re-design and update website Re-train staff to manage website 	January 2022 – 2027	Vice-Chancellor's office University's ICT directorate University Webmaster
Develop and implement composite strategic communication activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a communication strategy for regional impact 	January 2022 – 2027	Vice-Chancellor's office Public Relations Department University Webmaster
Increase funding to optimize regional strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget inclusion Grant writing Special government intervention 	January 2022 – 2027	Vice-Chancellor's office University Bursar CERHI University Grants and Research Management Unit
Review modes of learning and teaching, including online teaching methods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve university's online learning platforms Improve University's Distance learning to include more courses 	January 2022-2027	Vice-Chancellor's office University's Distance Learning Centre University ICT Unit
Promote collaborative research through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new research strategy 	January 2022 – 2027	Vice-Chancellor's office. Directorate of Grants and



network formation in critical development areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for regional engagement • Policy and industry transfer policy • Field interdisciplinary and innovative research 		<p>research Administration CERHI Other University's Centres of Excellence University's Directorate of External linkages</p>
Build university and community divide – build relationships with communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify community challenges through a University-community liaison committee • Work with communities to identify solutions • Work with regional partners to provide solutions 	January 2022 to 2027	<p>University's Vice-Chancellor, Director of Grants and Research URPC University-community liaison committee.</p>
Partner with industry, embassies, regional planners and development agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify list and contacts of African embassies, agencies and partners • Develop a strategy for engaging them on the specific niche of the University • Build long-standing relationships 	January 2022 to 2027	<p>University's vice-chancellor's office Public Relations Department University's External Linkage Unit</p>



DELIVERABLES

A regional strategy for the University of Benin is expected to enhance capacity building, and digital transformation that will engender the Development of Nigeria and the African subregion in the area of sustainable regional economic development, social cohesion, equality of people, improved democracy and sustainable governance, human capital development, and civic and intercultural proficiency.

Against the above backdrop, a regional strategy for the University of Benin will produce the following outcomes:

1. Increased quality of teaching and research and higher quality education in Nigeria and the African region.
2. Development of workable initiatives through collaboration and partnership with the organised labour and private sector, and other stakeholders to proffer proactive solutions to the perennial problems of power, hunger, insecurity, diseases, corruption, illiteracy through a reinforced interaction between practice, research, and policy.
3. Improved social inclusion and equal opportunity for staff and students.
4. Through exchange programmes, the internationalisation of staff and students will enhance global competitiveness.
5. Enhance Provision of industry-related learning and research, which aligns effectively with the needs and opportunities available in the African subregion
6. Improved inter-university and transnational cooperation in education, training and research.
7. Provision of a professional database for experts across disciplines and institutions to facilitate regional cooperation, partnership, and collaboration.
8. Improved cross-cultural development initiatives and regional interactions will enhance sustainable development in the African subregion. Harmonisation of University curricula will engender uniformity in the university system and policy.

The above deliverables are achievable with prudent implementation of the regional strategy for the University. The development and strict implementation of a regional strategy for the University will not only enhance the development and the global visibility of the University as an entity but will also enhance the rapid growth and Development of Nigeria and the African subregion, given the pleasant nature of the relationship that exists between the University and the region. The deliverables would be regularly evaluated against global best practices. The development and implementation of a regional strategy for the University is within the purview of the Vice-Chancellor with inputs from the University Senate. The follow up on the process is the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor achievable through a standing committee for the regional strategy for the University.



PRIORITY COUNTRIES

For a regional strategy for the African subregion, the priority countries are Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, Gabon, and Egypt. The choice of the nations is premised on regional consideration: Ghana is chosen from the west of Africa, South Africa from the south, Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi representing East Africa, Gabon representing central Africa, and Egypt representing north Africa. These countries collectively estimate Africa as an entity.

PRIORITY INSTITUTIONS

University of Pretoria, South Africa
University of Cape Town, South Africa
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana.
Cairo University Egypt
Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania
Universite Omar Bongo
University of Ghana
University of Malawi

PRIORITY THEMES

Sustainable energy
Equality and governance diversity management
Sustainability issues, including climate change
Taxation of e-commerce and robotics in taxation
Artificial intelligence and neural networks
Maternal, Reproductive, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health
Sustainable Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards
Food safety and sustainable agriculture
Drug discovery and manufacture
Infectious disease research and vaccines development

While these themes are central to the regional strategy of the University based on competence and research focus, other research initiatives are likely to evolve to strengthen and complement the institutional research themes naturally.

PRIORITY NON-ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP

The quality of support staff is a requirement for the effective administration of any university system concerning the academic staff and the students at the University. In this regard, there is a need for:

- (a) Good research support services in managing a robust database for providing information on research opportunities and grants on a timely basis.
- (b) Provision of standard laboratories and other research facilities under competent, knowledgeable, and highly experienced Laboratory personnel.



- (c) The provision of world-class administrative services for students' documentation, registration, transcript system, examination report transmission to students and guardians, and other ancillary services.

To achieve the above, there is a need to strengthen the university academic planning unit, university bursary unit, student affairs division, and other allied administrative divisions of the University to deliver effectively and efficiently.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

There is a proposal for a complex within an existing building in the University to house the Directorate of the regional strategy for the University of Benin. The Director and other members of the Directorate are to be appointed by Vice-Chancellor. The Director must be a professor with experience in strategic matters, and other members should not be below the rank of a Senior Lecturer. The Directorate should be fully equipped with support staff drawn from the pool of staff of the University.

The Directorate for Regional Strategy for the University should be funded directly from the vote of the Vice-Chancellor to ensure that lack of funds does not create an impediment for the smooth operations of the unit. Where necessary, donations and financial assistance may be sort from wealthy individuals, Alumni, corporate entities and other stakeholders of the University. The Directorate must have online, real-time access to the global virtual space, video conferencing, and an uninterrupted power supply.

CONCLUSION

The Regional Strategy of the University of Benin 2022-2027 is creative and purposefully designed to align with the vision for the University by the new Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin, Professor Lilian Salami. We believe that the strategy has the potentials to increase the performance and visibility of the University within regional and international landscapes enabling the University to attain increased ranking among global higher educational institutions.

