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# THE GCUOBA RESTORATION COMMITTEE

C/o Udobi Ikeji (Chair)

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## Memo

**Date:** Nov. 22, 2014

**To:** Godswill Okoji, MD, President, GCUOBA-USA

**From:** Udobi Ikeji, Chairman, GCU Restoration Committee  
Onyema Nkele, Member  
Macaulay Onuigbo, Member  
Enyi Kanu, Member  
Obi Nwakanma, Member  
Emeka Aniagolu, Member

**Subject:** Completion of Report for the Restoration of the Government College Umuahia.

Attached, please find, a completion report of the feasibility study of the project for the restoration of the Government College Umuahia, our alma mater. We completed the task set out for us by the convention of the GCUOBA-USA inter alia: (a) to examine the feasibility of a Trust take over of the Government College Umuahia currently managed by the Abia State Government towards the full restoration of its original mission as a first rate boarding school for boys, and (b) to examine the ways and means such a public Trust might be constituted for the long term interest of the Government College Umuahia.

First, we examined and compared other Trust models from equivalent schools, chiefly Philips Andover Academy, The Groton School; Exeter College, Eton College, and the African Leadership Academy, South Africa. Second, we liaised and met with members of the GCUOBA (National) and the GCUOBA-UK on an expanded Restoration Committee that included Okey Eneleamah, Emeka Ifezulike, and Chuma Onwujiwe Nigerian National Committee for the GCU Restoration), and Anele Ebizie, Chike Onyekwuluje the UK committee.

Based on our various meetings and the information gathered and reviewed, we accomplished the following: (a) we recruited an expert Consultant to hammer out the operational details of GCUOBA restoration initiative; (b) we established a contact with the Government of Abia State and signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the cession of the College, and (c) A Trust was registered on behalf of the College for eventual take-over following signed agreements. We recommend that the actionable contents be immediately fully activated to give full effect to the project.

The following report(s) constitute the details of our final report to the GCUOBA. We thank you for the opportunity to work on this, and other future projects.

Feasibility / Technical Study for Restoration  
of the Government College Umuahia:  
A Completion Report

Prepared for: **GCUOBA-USA**  
Prepared by: Udobi Ikeji  
Onyema Nkele  
Macaulay Onuigbo  
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November 22, 2014

## **Abstract**

### **“Feasibility/Technical Study for Restoration of the Government College, Umuahia: A Completion Report.”**

**Prepared by:** Udobi Ikeji  
Onyema Nkele  
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At the annual convention of the GCUOBA-USA in New Jersey in 2013, the President and convention authorized a technical and feasibility study towards a full, strategic restoration of the values, operations, and foundational mission of the Government College Umuahia. In line with the long-held mission of the alumnus of the Government College, who have seen themselves as beneficiaries of the great opportunities of an educational program fostered on the highest standards of merit, to effect a restoration of both the material and abstract conditions that made the GCU possible, but which has since waned from long years of neglect and attrition, this committee was charged to examine and recommend a holistic program of intervention to be initiated by the alumnae. The result of the decline of the GCU has been not only the diminishing of the status and mission of a great school, but the limiting of both access and purpose to the educational opportunities which GCU once offered. We evaluated the implications, the opportunity costs, and the possible measures available for a rehabilitation program. Based on information gathered, and various strategic analyses, we arrived at the conclusion that the GCU would be best served if it were managed by a Public Trust. We recommended the services of a consultant to further evaluate and consider the various programs of action, and we arrived at the conclusion that activities set out in the following report will serve the purpose for which this committee was inaugurated.

**Keywords:** Restoration, Public Trust.

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## **Executive Summary**

The Government College Umuahia once prided itself as one of the finest, if not the finest of the British-type boarding school for boys in West Africa. Its reputation for high-caliber education was sustained by a star-studded list of alumni (the old boys) who over the years were leaders in politics, the professions, the academy and the military. Old “Umuahians” were so very present in Nigeria’s political and cultural life that Ikpeghare Aig-Imokhuede, a well-known newspaper columnist in Nigeria once described the Government College Umuahia as “the school for famous men.” In the course of the years however, the Government College Umuahia has experienced decline.

Starting particularly with the end of the civil war, to the years of government “austerity” that saw deep cuts in the funding of public schools of Umuahia’s stature, the Government College Umuahia’s facilities broke down progressively; very little investment was made in either replacement or upgrading of equipment, space for residential life, and general aesthetic and utilitarian upkeep of the school. The result is a collapse, not only of the learning environment, but also of the morale and quality of teaching. Teacher and Students recruitment once based on the highest merit was no longer tenable in Umuahia. The result was that the strategic replenishment of a talented, diverse students and academic population on which Umuahia built its reputation was lost. The future of the school therefore hangs, in the main, on a very narrow balance: future Umuahians will be from the pool of highly provincialized body of students, many of whom no longer could, even if they wanted, live in the school with the current state of boarding facilities.

The charge placed on this committee is to find ways and means to reverse the current trend of decline, and fashion and initiate strategic methods towards an actionable restoration program to be spearheaded by the GCUOBA. Our Committee met on various occasions both locally and internationally, and mostly by remote electronic means. We initiated wide-ranging contact with various stakeholders and interest groups. This committee understood that the project to rehabilitate and restore the Government College Umuahia will require close and wide partnership with various groups – alumni, government, financiers, and education consultants. In line with our general objective and frame of reference, we held meetings with the Governor and executive administration of Abia State, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Abia state Government, contracted an Education Consultant, Mr. Chinezi Chijoke, formerly of McKinsey, now of the African Leadership Academy, and oversaw the registration of the Management Trust for the Government College Umuahia. It is estimated that N1 billion initial deposits will be required to guarantee the Trust. For this reason we recommend that the GCUOBA-USA establish a Strategic Action Committee to liaise with the Nigerian and the UK groups to oversee the quick constitution of the Board of Trustees and create a realistic fundraising mechanism for both short-term and long term financing.

## Introduction

Following our goal to restore the Government College Umuahia to its pre-eminent status as a boarding school for boys, we commenced an analysis of the realistic options that might be suitable for our objective. Evaluation of the data collected in our various studies of alternative management and financing trajectories for the Government College Umuahia, indicate that a school of the stature of Umuahia given the current state of its depredation, requires a complete foundational overhaul. Such overhaul could, we noted, take place within the transformative agenda of a visionary government with a long view, which understood the importance, as well as the necessity of preserving quality schools like Umuahia as bastions of excellence. But in the light of the condition of Umuahia and the government's long-stated inability to realistically continue to fund places like Umuahia, it became imperative, we concluded, that we explore the Public Trust mechanism by which Umuahia could be managed by an endowed Trust.

Well-meaning Alumni at various times had floated different ideas on how best to restore the school, even as short term measures to avoid total collapse. Direct emergency infrastructural rehabilitation projects were undertaken by the USA chapter of GCUOBA as well as by Old Boys in Nigeria. These were no more than quick-fix solutions while the alumni of the school sought and reviewed various ideas for a longer term and more permanent solution. One such idea was the concept of a Public Trust proposed by Dr. Obi Nwakanma in 2008. After a few false starts, GCU Old Boys Associations at home and in the Diaspora finally came together to develop a strategic masterplan for the restoration of Government College Umuahia along those lines. At the 2013 GCUOBA-USA Convention in New Jersey, this committee was empanelled to pursue the restoration project and provide the GCUOBA-USA with an actionable road map to be reported by March 2014. The committee quickly established communication with the Nigerian National committee and brought in the UK chapter to participate in the deliberation. This report presents the work we have done in the Restoration Committee towards the second objective to wit: to engage with the Abia State Government with the aim of securing a cession of Umuahia to a Publicly registered Trust spearheaded by the GCUOBA, and following these contacts, establish and endow a Public Trust by which the Government College Umuahia will henceforth be managed in the public interest.

In view of our objective, this committee explored the pros and cons of a restored Government College run by a well established Trustee of distinguished former alumni (oldboys) and nominees from other sectors of society. In other words, we analyzed the selling points of the Government College Umuahia which ought to make it viable and profitable in the short and long run, and came to the following conclusions:

- A) The School has a weighty enough pedigree that confers it with distinction and name-recognition.
- B) The College has a vast stock value in land and property which makes it very bankable.
- C) A restored Government College Umuahia will serve a currently underserved region in need of first rate schools/education for its children.
- D) The Government College Umuahia attracts a very powerful sentimental value both with the alumni and outside for its historical value as a center of excellence.

This report thus places in context a broad view of this committee's detailed and programmatic work in line with the goals set out in its terms of reference.

## The Report

In this section, we present a report of the steps the committee has taken towards the restoration project. To accomplish the task of this committee we adopted the following methodology:

- \* Establishment of sub-committees
- \* Inter-chapter planning calls with Nigeria, USA, and UK sub-committees
- \* Over 10 interviews with respected Old Boys, including the Economic Adviser to the Governor of Abia State
- \* Multiple site visits to GCU.

The committee also approved and recruited reputable professional Education consultants to effectively meet its terms of reference, inter alia:

- \* Quantity Surveyor assessment of the current physical layout of the Government College Umuahia, and to determine restoration costs for current buildings.
- \* Architectural planning, starting with initial restoration concept,
- \* A study of peer schools in Nigeria and abroad undertaken to benchmark a strategic position for the school.
- \* An implementation plan, including financial implications, funding levels and sources.
- \* Submission of the vision to the Governor of the state for his input so the state's and related stakeholders' interests, and to request the Governor sign a memorandum of understanding so the Trust initiative can be implemented.
- \* We made the case that a restored GCU would benefit the state in terms of economic development, human capital development and higher/ improved visibility. The institution itself will benefit from better facilities, management, funding, academic results, stature and viability if restored to its past role as a center of excellence. A restored GCU will address the absence of high quality schools in the South East/South South region of Nigeria.

In August 2014, a formal meeting was held between the Oldboys of the Government College Umuahia and the Abia State government at the Governor's Lodge in Umuahia (see Appendix). Following the report submitted to the GCUOBA Executive to the Abia State government, the governor, Mr. T.A. Orji signed the memorandum of understanding with the GCUOABA (see Appendix). The GCUOBA-USA chapter sent Mr. Onyema Nkele as its representative to this meeting. A Board of Trustees has been registered with Nigeria's Corporate Affairs Commission with interim Trustees. The GCUOBA-USA is expected to nominate a Trustee to the board. The interim board also decided to extend the life of the expanded Restoration committee for another year to assist with interpretation and implementation of the transitional programs.

An important aspect of the agreements to cede the GCU to the Trustees is the commitment by the GCUOBA to raise the initial N1 Billion (US \$6.67 million) capitation fund. The question arose about what it involved and how the GCUOBA would meet this key obligation. Nkele who had the most recent contact with our colleagues in Nigeria gave a detailed response about the plans for a global Umuahia fundraising campaign using the multi-platform strategy to reach Umuahians everywhere. The Nigerian group met on September 10, following which the UK group, and the GCUOBA-USA annual convention in Houston in October. However, the committee arrived at the conclusion that Umuahians alone may not be able to administratively pursue the task of fund raising and may need to hire a fund raising professional. The committee discussed next steps which are specified in its closing reports (see Appendix) and it remains as relevant today.

**Conclusion**

We have learned that the Nigerian committee is considering a proposal to retain the consultant who put together the initial draft reports. However, we have not had the opportunity to discuss the mechanism of this in the expanded international committee meetings as we did in the past. We note albeit, the progress made at the Nigerian end, as well as the challenges, particularly in establishing strategic fundraising capabilities to meet the initial N1 Billion obligation to secure the Trust.

We commend the National President of the GCUOBA, Mr. Dan. Nzenwa of DANZ Surveys, for retrieving the survey plan of the Government College Umuahia, and urge that the signing of the deed of conveyance by the governor be pursued as soon as the board is inaugurated. This clause does not have any other prerequisites to it. The issue of next steps has been addressed in this document. It has also been addressed in a PowerPoint presentation put together by the Nigerian committee, and with the goal of having a common message to stake holders for fund raising purposes, as well as for keeping stakeholders informed. That presentation follows this document as an appendix.

## Recommendations

The draft report specified the following:

### A.) VISION:

We intend to restore GCU to the status of a world class institution, rooted in GCU's timeless tradition and values, but equipped with a 21st century education program/plan. We will cultivate talented and innovative young Nigerian students for visionary local and global leadership across a wide range of endeavors.

### B) STUDENTS

- Restoration of merit-based recruitment/admission to GCU
- Beyond the threshold of high standards, target a student pool with a national/global reach
- Keep local representation weighed on the following scale: (15% Umuahians, 30% Abians, 50% SE/SS, 75% Nigerians, 90% Africans)
- Target an initial total student population of 750 students (~125 students per class) and a full student population, long term of no more than 1000 in order to raise the quality of incoming students over a transitional 3-5 year period

### C.) CURRICULLUM

GCU should aim to provide a holistic educational program focused on developing leaders across all disciplines and sectors, with both [1] academic excellence and [2] personal excellence as its goal. It should offer the Cambridge (A-levels); WAEC and NECO by form 4/5 (to be discussed further with local education experts). Educational program designed to support students to identify and cultivate their talents across a wide range of pursuits: sciences, arts, technical fields, entrepreneurship; etc. Every student produces a seminal project before graduation.

### D) FACULTY/STAFF

- Hire a world-class management team
- Provide above-market compensation and benefits, e.g. renovated housing, competitive emolument for principal/Head of School, to attract the best teachers and administrators
- Appoint a three-person leadership team: Head of School, Academic Dean, Residential Dean
- Start hiring with school leadership team and 3-6 lead teachers/faculty
- Appoint key non-academic staff: Operations Manager, Residential Heads (or Housemasters), Career Guidance Counselors, Alumni Relations/ Development Office Heads
- Provide in-school professional development for all teachers, evolving into a continuing education program
- Review & retain any excellent teachers, with gradual transition for others over 3-5 years
- Provide mandatory Continuing Education requirements and programs for existing faculty

## E) TECHNOLOGY

Develop a technology plan for learning and administrative purposes:

- Learning: individualized skills practice (e.g. Khan Academy), research & writing, collaboration spaces, elective courses (e.g. computer programming, other languages), exams & grading
- Administrative: application and registration, financial management, parent communication, etc.
- Provide ICT manager (or lead teacher) for school and significant technical support for teachers
- Start with computer & internet access for students (laptop in price of admission); later expand blended learning programs and administrative tools/systems

## F) FACILITIES

Phase 1 priority (3-5 years): [1 ] Basic functionality of residential (houses & dining) and academic (classes, labs, library) facilities – renovate only those to be used in near term / close rest for safety; [2]

Develop a Master Plan to guide medium & long term development

Phase 2: Follow a Master Plan to raise quality of facilities and expand facilities as per master plan

Phase 3: Guided by Master Plan

## S4.7. SUSTAINABILITY

- Private funding model, managed by Trust, to unburden government from day to day financial responsibility for GCU
- Up-front restoration investment of ~N3.2bn (net of fees) over 5 years, funded by GCUOBA's fundraising
- Long term running costs through two primary sources:
  1. Student fees (80%): weighted to enable financial support for talented non-wealthy applicants
  2. Endowment (20%): cultivate alumni to build endowment; funding school off interest only
- Future facilities development: funded by combination of [1] student levies ???; [2] gifts; and [3] debt.

## G) FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Following aggregation of estimates from the quantities, projections of administrative, maintenance and staffing costs, we project a net restoration investment requirement of NGN N3.2 bn over 5 years.

Total estimated funding of N4.1 bn will be required over five years

Facilities Capital Expenditure	N 2.1 bn
Operating Expenses	N 2.1 bn
Student Fees	- N 0.9 bn
Net Investment to be Raised	N 3.2 bn

After restoration phase (i.e. post 2019): Student fees cover annual Operating expenses (N1.0-N1.5 bn) augmented by other endowment, GCUOB gifts, etc.

## H). UNDERWRITING

GCU Alumni are well positioned to support the institution through these efforts and stand ready to underwrite the finances to the tune of N1 Bn Initial commitment.

## I) KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

1. The kickoff event for the actualization of this plan is the signing of the MOU by the state governor. It may be advantageous to develop this document and present to the governor for signature instead of waiting for him to develop one and sign.
2. The Trust is registered. We must quickly elect the Trustees.
3. A vibrant, focused, and well-established board is the key to successful implementation of this project. GCU is expected to appoint trustees to the board who will work tirelessly alongside other members appointed to represent the interest of Abia State.
4. The board will work in relevant committees to accomplish the goals of stake holders and ensure good governance and best practices. Board development activities will include not just a study of key features of board structure and byelaws but also focus on the board internalizing the values, goals and strategies articulated above. Financial control cycles, internal and external auditing procedures are emphasized as key board responsibilities.
5. At inauguration, the transfer of administrative control is granted to the board.
6. Mechanism is put in place for search and selection of principal and key staff
7. Initial funds are placed in account to enable phase 1 restoration projects and detailed development of master plan to begin.
8. Continuous fund raising by GCUOBA worldwide to establish and sustain an endowment sufficient to provide the leverages required when debt may be required to finance new development. Board continues to report its progress actively to GCUOBA.