



DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY APPOINTS PROF JACINTA OPARA AS VICE CHANCELLOR



Professor Jacinta Opara has been appointed as second substantive Vice Chancellor of Dominican University, Ibadan-Nigeria. The appointment followed a stringent recruitment exercise carried out by a professional recruiting firm and topnotch academics, in line with best global practices in headhunting for strategic positions in higher education institutions. In an official statement by the Chairman, Board of Trustees of the University, Chief Anthony Idigbe(SAN), the Board, in the exercise of its powers conferred by Federal Government of Nigeria and the Universities Act at its meeting on Wednesday, March 7, 2024 considered the submission of the Joint Governing Council, Senate, Search/Selection Team and approved the appointment of Prof Opara as Vice Chancellor of the institution. The statement stated that the appointment is expected to usher in an era of innovation and academic eminence. It noted that a scholar of Prof Opara's status with a proven track record in higher education and a outstanding commitment to fostering learning and research, she is balanced to make a sustainable impact on the University and the broader academic community.

The Dominican University Ibadan(DUI) formerly known as Dominican Institute is the first university of the Order of Preachers on the African continent. Popularly called the Dominican Order, the Order of Preachers was founded by Spanish priest Dominic de Guzman in 1216 with the approval of Pope Innocent III. In her more than 800 years of existence, the Order has been actively involved in university education around the world. With the meeting of Vincent de Couesnongle, then Master of the Order of Preachers at the time and African Dominican friars in Ibadan., an umbrella body of Dominicans in Africa was established. Known as the Inter-African Order of Preachers (IAOP), it decided to establish the Dominican Institute in Ibadan as centre of philosophical studies for Dominicans in Africa. In 1993, the Dominican Institute became an affiliate school of the University of Ibadan. The DUI was granted license by Federal Government of Nigeria on November 22, 2016. That date marked the birth of the first university of the Order of Preachers in Africa. The university is accredited and recognized by National Universities Commission.

By her appointment, Prof Opara is first female Vice Chancellor of the institution for a term of 5 years. She is the Academic and Administrative Head, the Chief Executive of the institution and serves as the nerve centre of activities in areas of protocol, external relations and coordination of various internal organs. She reports to the Governing Council of the university.

As the Vice Chancellor, Prof Opara brings a holistic perspective to university governance with emphasis on the importance of fostering a dynamic learning environment and community engagement. Her vision for Dominican University is to promote a vibrant educational community where staff and students and other stakeholders are supported to serve God to achieve academic excellence. Prof Opara is deeply committed to student success, and her tenure is expected to usher in new opportunities for partnership, research funding, international collaborations, innovations and a strong emphasis on community outreach.

Born in Port Harcourt, Nigeria in 1976, Prof Jacinta A. Opara, a leading African environmental scholar, scientist, educator, health researcher, consultant and development activist with the combined power of management and human rights is President, African Association for Teaching and Learning and Chairman, Governing Council of the Institute of Policy Management Development. Prof Opara is a graduate of University of Ibadan and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She received postgraduate degrees from University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, University of Granada, Central University of Nicaragua, Akerhsus University (now Oslo Metropolitan University), Universidad Catolica San Antonio de Murcia(UCAM) and University of Chalco-Mexico.

Prof Opara began her career in 1997 as Science Teacher(Biology) at College of the Immaculate Conception(CIC), Enugu under the National Youths Service Corps and later worked as Program Officer at Nigerian Gender Action Network and as Research Fellow at Afro-Euro Centre for Development Studies, Accra-Ghana. Since the last 25 years, she has held teaching, research and consulting experiences across Africa, America, Europe and Asia. She rose through the ranks and was promoted to full Professor in 2016 at Kampala International University(KIU). She has held appointments at a number of private and public universities. These include: Avance International University(AIU), University of Maiduguri; Federal University, Kashere; Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe University(KOMU); Sule Lamido University(SLU); Nasarawa State University(NSUK) and Ahmadu Bello University(ABU), Zaria-Nigeria where she showcased excellence in her dedication to teaching, research and strong passion for educational development.

She has served as Visiting Scholar of Gender, Peace and Security at IISJ(Universidad de Basque County-UPV/EHU), Gipuzkoa-Spain; Visiting Professor at Kigali Independent University; Metropolitan International University; Mount Kenya University; Laikipia University; University of The Gambia; Nexus International University; Commonwealth University; Athens Institute of Education and Research; National University of Science and Technology(NUST), Bulawayo-Zimbabwe amongst others.

Her administrative experiences in higher education system are broad, deep and current having served in various capacities as Head of Department, Dean, Director and Deputy Vice Chancellor. Hence, she is very familiar with the local and international higher education landscape. She is a detribalized African possessing excellent skills of living with people of different cultures. She has a proven record of teaching, research and community services that had earned her respect of peers locally and globally. She possesses demonstrable strong interpersonal and team-building skills to build bridges between all relevant stakeholders across time and space in higher education and human capacity building.

Prof Opara is founding Co-Executive Director, Center for Environment and Community Development and serves on the Board/Governing Council of Metropolitan International University, Mediterranean Center for Social and Educational Research, Rome-Italy; African Institute of Management, Technology and Development Studies, Kigali-Rwanda; Association of Women Educationists; African Society for Scientific Research; Development Africa Consortium amongst other institutions including non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Through these assignments, he has established a broad network of contacts that can be leveraged to develop the University. Her wealth of experience and commitment to continuous professional development have made her a rallying point for many of her colleagues and students across various institutions. She is a Fellow of Institute of Management Consultants; Fellow of African Scientific Institute; Fellow of the Board of Quality Standards; Fellow

of the Institute of Chartered Professionals; Fellow of West African Postgraduate College of Environmental Health and Fellow of Chartered Institute of Administration.

Prof Opara has worked on a number of projects, partnership initiatives and human capacity-building initiatives with a wide range of stakeholders. She has organized several international conferences, seminars and workshops across the globe. She coordinated the Publication Project of the Nigeria's 50 Years Anniversary. She is Editor in Chief of Journal of Health and Environmental Studies; African Journal of Women Studies and Research; International Journal of Scientific Research in Education; Metropolitan Journal of Science and Technology and serves on the editorial board of over 40 international journals. She has received 23 awards, fellowships and grants including the Erasmus Mundus of the European Commission, Brussels-Belgium, the prestigious IATEL Award for Academic Excellence in 2015 and 2024 Distinguished Leadership Achievement Award.

Prof Opara has supervised to completion several PhD candidates and Masters Students. Her leadership, mentorship and research experience is enviable as she guides her team of postgraduate students through the research journey. She maintains consulting status with several agencies in the areas of environment, health, gender, human rights, peace and security, sexuality, education, human capacity building and community development. Prof Opara is a member of African Universities' Research Group on Health and Environment; IUCN Commission on Environmental Law(CEL); Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria(TRCN); Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World(OWSD); International Association for Scientific Knowledge(IASK); African Network on Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements (ANES); International Action Network on Small Arms(IANSA) and International Association for the Study of the Commons(IASC).

She is a Fellow of the African Sexuality Leadership Development funded by Ford Foundation and a Delegate/Resource Person/Consultant of the 2008 UN World Women's Day of the Women International League on Peace and Freedom(WILPF),Geneva-Switzerland; United Nations PANAFCON Summit on Water, Sanitation and Human Settlement, Addis Ababa-Ethiopia; 2004 UN World Habitat Day(UNHABITAT), Nairobi-Kenya; UNU-EHS Project on Environment, Forced Migration and Social Vulnerability, Bonn-Germany; UNU-WIDER Project on Country Role Models, Helsinki-Finland and the 2008 Women's World in Madrid-Spain. Prof Opara, a devout Christian of Catholic faith speaks two international languages (English and Spanish) and has visited over 30 countries. She has more than 200 publications (including over 130 academic journal articles and 15 books) and is married with children.