

Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project Highlights

April 2019

Scholar Program 41

A WALK WITH PRESIDENT HANNAH!

Coming to Michigan State University for the first time as visiting scholars, we deplaned late on January 3rd 2019. The following morning, January 4th, was our first day at MSU. First thing in the morning we were picked up and whisked away to Morrill Hall of Agricultural to meet the “NAPP team”: Saweda Liverpool-Tasie, Oyinkan Tasie and Steve Longabaugh. We were warmly welcomed and given a short orientation course. After the orientation, we eagerly attacked our tasks for the day. Our first port of call was the Hannah Administration building. Here was where I met John Alfred Hannah, the building’s namesake.



We learned about this great man and how our MSU adventure related to his vision. It was Hannah’s initiative that started transforming MSU from a Michigan focused undergraduate college (Michigan State College) into a national and internationally

research institution (Michigan State University). He opened MSU’s doors to international students. He stimulated university departments to include international research, teaching and outreach into their portfolios. He envisioned that a college could be transformed into a great university. He made it so!

The impact of Hannah’s initiative is evident everywhere on campus. MSU is an international school! By coming to MSU, I have the privilege of meeting and studying with people from different parts of the world. Hannah has been credited with starting a revolution in American higher education. This is not an understatement.

Thanks to MSU, and to John Hannah, coming to East Lansing Michigan is like visiting the world. Such show of diverse cultures has made my mundane daily commute to class not mundane at all. It is interesting and even educational! Each time I ride, I guess the nationality of my fellow bus riders, but to no avail! In the end, the best that I can do is group them into Asians, Africans and Europeans. Such diversity of cultures can be seen everywhere on campus.

It has become quite a challenge, and in most cases intriguing, to understand what people with different accents are saying. In some cases, I have to wait for the professor to answer a question to be able to comprehend what the question was! At times I wonder how MSU professors cope with the different accents. (Don’t forget that MSU professors are not only Americans.) But the professors seem unfazed by accents. With a long history of international students at MSU, I believe the professors have had plenty of experience listening to and understanding their students!

In 2004 at the dedication of Hannah’s statue, MSU’s then-President, Peter McPherson, lauded Hannah saying;

“Hannah saw opportunity. And he built.
Hannah saw closed doors. And he opened them.
Hannah saw talent. And he recruited it.
Hannah saw what would work here. And he
internationalized it.”

Perhaps we could borrow a leaf from John Hannah’s vision: with our own Nigerian resources, find what will work and make it work!

By: Abubakar Sule Balaraba

This work is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Feed the Future initiative through the Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project, Associate Cooperative Agreement Number AJD-620-LA-15-00001. The contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Copyright © 2019, Michigan State University, and the International Food Policy Research Institute. All rights reserved. This material may be reproduced for personal and not-for-profit use without permission from but with acknowledgment to MSU, and IFPRI.

Published by the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, Justin S. Morrill Hall of Agriculture, 446 West Circle Dr., Room 202, East Lansing, Michigan 48824.