

**Media P.A.S.S. (Plan for Achieving Strategic Success)****“Accessing, Adapting and Advancing Higher Education in a New Norm”****5<sup>th</sup> November 2020, 10 a.m. (Virtual via ZOOM)****Remarks by Dr. Rodney D. Smith**

Good morning.

I would like to begin by thanking Dr. K. Jonathan Rodgers, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, for providing continued service and leadership to the University of The Bahamas.

I would also like to thank and recognize the Office of University Relations, led by Mrs. Tameka Lundy, within the Office of Institutional Advancement, headed by Vice President Dino Hernandez. Mrs. Lundy is truly a professional of the highest caliber. We do not know what we would do without her. It is largely due to her leadership in OUR, that we are having this necessary and informative event for our friends in media.

I think we can all agree that the Covid-19 pandemic has considerably changed our world. It has changed the ways in which we interact with each other – this virtual media day for example; it has changed the ways in which we do business; and it has changed the ways in which we access education.

At University of The Bahamas, I am exceedingly proud of our team and the speed at which we were able to pivot from 100% face to face classes, to 90% virtual classes. In addition to classes, our Administrative Services and Business Office have also adjusted how we serve our customers to ensure safety during the pandemic.

We quickly established a Covid-19 Task Force, Co-Chaired by Dr. Marcella Elliott-Ferguson and Mr. Ronnie Stevenson, to ensure that every aspect of our operations during this pandemic adheres to the Emergency Orders, and allows for safe operations on campus for those who must be on campus. This task force has been instrumental in keeping us operational through the many changes over the last nine months.

At UB we have a hard-working team of senior administrators who have stayed the course. I thank them for taking on extra responsibilities and doing

whatever must be done to maintain operations and accessibility at our national university, University of The Bahamas.

I would like to recognize recent promotions at the University within the senior administration. First, Mrs. Vernice Williams, as Acting Vice President and Chief Information Officer; next, Ms. Ingrid Culmer, previously UB's Financial Controller, now Vice President for Finance and Business Enterprises; and, Dr. Maria Oriakhi, previously Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, now Vice President for Academic Affairs. All three of these women have worked extremely hard during this time to ensure that there is no break in our service.

We are expecting that as travel restrictions are lifted, Dr. Sarim Al-Zubaidy, former President of University of Trinidad and Tobago, will join us as Executive Vice President.

There are two terms that define valued principles within higher education. One is “**Academic Freedom**” and the other is “**Shared Governance**”. Every institution of higher education is obligated to protect these at all costs. They define the very foundation of academic excellence and institutional distinction. The Faculty, through the Academic Senate will always protect academic freedom. All constituent groups within the student body, the faculty, the staff, the unions, the administration and the Trustees, are obligated to both expand and protect shared governance in every sense.

During this pandemic, both academic freedom and shared governance have been essential in UB's ability to pivot and remain a functioning tertiary level institution. Essential to all of our success is the faculty and staff at UB who took on so many other duties and responsibilities. I thank them for being innovative in the use of technology, and working so enthusiastically with students, making sure that the high quality education for which UB is renowned, is delivered timely and accurately.

I want to recognize our students, through the Student Government Association, led by Mr. Mackenson Charles. UB's student leaders are collaborative partners in the process of developing and building the University, and they have been more than helpful during this time of change and adaptation. With them as partners, we have been able to respond to student concerns and communicate more effectively with our student body. I thank the SGA for understanding their importance and working with us.

I wish to recognize the University's Academic Senate, led by Dr. Faith Butler. The Academic Senate has been working very hard, having not only completed and passed the Senate By-laws, but also establishing several working committees and task forces, all for the purpose of moving the University to the next level of academic excellence. We owe the Senate a debt of gratitude for their review and approval of several new and/or expanded degree programmes, including a series of new graduate programmes. In addition to new master's degrees, I believe we will be hearing very soon about the University's first doctorate degree programme.

Finally, I wish to recognize and thank a group of men and woman who came to know and appreciate the strength and endurance of this great institution. This group of highly talented professionals is our Board of Trustees, led by Dr. Jonathan Rodgers as Chair, and Mrs. Alessandra Holowesko, as Deputy Chair. The Board has approved By-laws and several working Board committees, each led by a Trustee, but compiled of representation from various constituent groups. By the way, these individuals will be recognized in history as the founding Board members of University of the Bahamas.

These trustees work very hard because they know that the future of the University, and to a great extent, the country, depends on them. In October 2019, the Board approved its first five-year strategic plan. This is a significant and historic move for the university. The Administration, with responsibility for its implementation, annually sets operational goals and engages in budget planning, based on the strategic plan. This will ensure that we stay on track with our plans and can measure their success.

As you know, University of The Bahamas strives to work collaboratively with the bargaining units which represent the faculty and staff of the University. These are the Union of Tertiary Educators of The Bahamas led by President Daniel Thompson; the Public Managers Union, led by President Cassandra Lewis; and, the Bahamas Public Services Union, led by President Kimsley Ferguson. I am pleased that these individuals and their executive teams have worked and worked well with us.

Despite the setbacks of Hurricane Dorian and the pandemic, the University continues to make great strides toward becoming globally recognized through the advanced use of technology, academic excellence, and collaborative research efforts.

As you are aware, long lines for students transacting business, ended in early 2019. Because of the significant progress made in accommodating access to online advisement, registration and the financial transactions, University of The Bahamas was one of six tertiary institutions, globally, to have won the Ellucian 2020 Impact Award this past September. Ellucian Banner is the world's most advanced data management system and is used by colleges and universities in over 50 countries around the world.

This overview was just an introduction to what my colleagues will elaborate on in their presentations, including more information regarding the Universities most innovative uses of technologies. I hope you find the presentations informative and eye-opening. Thank you.