



# BLANTYRE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

## BIU STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 TO 2024

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*Excellence in Education that is uniquely BIU*

JANUARY 2015



## ***OUR VISION***

“To be a world class university of academic excellence.”

## ***OUR MISSION***

“To provide world class broad based educational programmes that promote enquiry, mastery and application of knowledge, concepts and skills while fostering ethical leadership and responsibility.”

## ***OUR CORE VALUES***

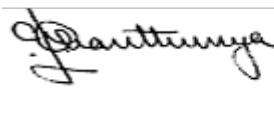
Excellence, Integrity, Diversity and Innovation.



## **MESSAGE FROM THE CHANCELLOR**

*We grew as an institution for six years from 1st June 2010, when the Government of Malawi recognized and accredited Blantyre International University and its programmes as a learning institution for purposes of higher education, recruitment and career advancement. This growth was brought to an abrupt end in November, 2016 when the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) disaccredited us on the grounds that we did not provide a conducive learning environment and that our programmes needed to be reviewed to make them comparable with national and international standards. We have suffered a precipitous decline in student enrolment from over 2,000 per semester in 2016 to about 200 now. As a wholly tuition fee-dependent institution this has had a severe toll on our finances, making it so challenging for the university to meet its payment obligations.*

*BIU has been implementing the NCHE-approved improvement plan. We have completed implementation of this plan and it is our fervent hope that NCHE will find our implementation of the plan satisfactory and that based on this will accredit us by June 2019, otherwise it will be extremely difficult for us to proceed to the next semester without accreditation. We are confident that we shall get this accreditation which will enable us to provide our students with an outstanding personal experience. With our sights set on becoming a national and regional centre of excellence in the academic and policy advisory fields, the years ahead hold much promise for all of us at BIU.*



*Professor Charles L. Chanthunya, B.Soc.Sc. (UNIMA); M.Phil. (Glasgow); PhD. (Wales, College of Cardiff)*

*(Chancellor and Founder)*



## *Executive Summary*

We have been living in darkness since November, 2016 when NCHE withdrew our accreditation. Life has been extremely difficult as we have had to do with our meagre financial resources as a result of a precipitous decline in student enrolment and at the same time having to complete the first phase of the construction of our own purpose-built campus.

Despite these debilitating impediments, we have forged ahead, inspired by our passionate desire to serve mankind by making a difference to people's lives through the provision of expanded access to higher education. We are determined to achieve our vision by continuing to provide world class university education. However, we cannot continue into the next semester without accreditation. Our priority is therefore regaining our accreditation status by June, this year. This is the immediate goal of our strategic plan over the next five years. The other goals that we must pursue over this period are: (1) Increased student enrolment. This is vital as we are a tuition fees wholly dependent university. (2) Embarking and completing the second phase of the construction of our campus. (3) Introduction of postgraduate programmes of masters and doctorate degrees.



## *Introduction*

On 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2010, Blantyre International University was recognized and accredited by the Government of the Republic of Malawi, based on recommendations by the then Evaluation and Accreditation Committee. This was a great day for us and we looked to the future with a sense of great hope and expectations. We saw our student enrollment rising from a low of 250 per semester to over 2,000 per semester by 2016. Our financial position strengthened and we improved which enabled us to meet payments obligations in pursuance of our objectives. We embarked on the construction of our own state-of-the art campus at Michiru, within the Blantyre Business District. We were confident to complete the construction of this campus by 2020 while growing our student enrollment.

This promising future came to an abrupt end on 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2016, when we received a letter from the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) dated 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2016 informing us that the NCHE Council at its 14<sup>th</sup> meeting had not approved accreditation of BIU and all its programmes on the grounds that we did not provide a satisfactory teaching and learning environment. The effects were immediate. Over 500 students immediately withdrew from BIU although we were about to commence the end-of-semester final examinations. Over half of those who sat for the examinations did not return to continue their studies with us in the following semester. Virtually no new students enrolled with us while those who had joined us earlier continued to leave us to join other universities which were accredited, in line with NCHE's advice which was widely publicized by the media that students should avoid studying and enrolling with unaccredited universities. These were our darkest hours. We became very depressed and almost gave up as we lost the zeal to forge ahead.

However, this notwithstanding and despite all of the darkness we saw ahead of us, we carved a tunnel of hope, realizing, as Confucius once said, that our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall. We were inspired by our mission and vision as well as by our ardent desire to make a difference in other people's lives by giving a chance to those students who otherwise would not access university education, the very basis of our existence. This gave us the strength, though subdued, to forge ahead, despite the dwindled student enrolment and the consequent deteriorating financial position. As a result, we take pride that we have managed to complete implementation of the NCHE-approved improvement plan for accreditation including completing the first phase of construction of our own campus. In any case, one fact is certain: we cannot continue into the next semester unaccredited.

We are confident that NCHE will find implementation of our improvement plan satisfactory and that we shall get accreditation by the middle of this year. We therefore now look to the future with renewed hope. As Pope John Paul advised, we should not consult our fears but our hopes and dreams. We should not think about our frustrations, but about our unfilled potential. We should not concern ourselves with what we tried and failed in, but with what is still possible for us to do. We therefore need to move boldly to achieve our vision and mission of providing a superior liberal education to undergraduate and graduate students, attending not only to their



intellectual growth but also to their development as adults committed to high ethical standards and full participation as leaders in their communities; to prepare future members of the learned professions for lives of skilled and ethical service by providing excellent graduate and professional education; to advance the frontiers of knowledge and contribute boldly to the international community of scholarship; to promote an intellectual environment built on a commitment to free and open inquiry; to provide wide ranging educational opportunities for traditional students, active professionals and life-long learners using the power of information technologies through our distance learning arrangement and related initiatives; and to promote a deep appreciation for the range of human difference and potential, a sense of the obligations and rewards of citizenship, and a commitment to learning, freedom and truth.

To enable us to do this, we need to first implement a number of programmes and activities in a few critical areas, hence, this strategic plan for the period 2019 to 2024. These critical areas are: regaining our accreditation status; increasing our student enrollment; embarking and completing the second phase of the construction of our campus; and, introducing postgraduate degree programmes, namely: masters and doctorate degrees.

## *Strategic Plan: 2019 – 2024*

Our strategic plan for 2019 to 2024 is based on four key directions that underlie all our goals and strategies:

***Regain Accreditation Status***

***Increase Student Enrolment***

***Complete Second Phase of Campus***

***Introduce Master and Doctorate Degrees Programmes***





## *Regain Accreditation Status*

The loss of accreditation status at the end of 2016 has been a traumatic event. Our student enrollment has dropped precipitously from over 2,000 per semester in 2016 to 230 per semester in 2019. The consequence has been devastating. As a wholly tuition fees-dependent institution, our finances have been seriously affected and it is challenging to meet our payment obligations. This situation cannot be allowed to continue, otherwise the university will be forced close down. It is therefore imperative that the University regains its accreditation status without any further delay.

To regain its accreditation status, the university is implementing the Improvement Plan approved in November 2018 by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) for accreditation. In this regard, BIU plans to complete the following activities by the middle of April, 2019 so that NCHE may examine implementation of our improvement plan by the end of April and accredit BIU by June 2019:

- a) Completion of the first phase of the construction of our own purpose-built campus at Michiru/Likhubula.
- b) Acquiring the latest e-Granary with multidisciplinary journals on it.
- c) Establishing a digital library of E-books.
- d) (Both the e-Granary and Digital libraries can be accessed by our students and staff locally (at our campus) as well as from anywhere through the internet via our website)
- e) Sourcing additional physical books for our library.
- f) Ordering a 40-foot container-load of about 22, 000 books from Books for Africa for our library which will increase our stock of library books to over 30 thousand.
- g) Ordering steel book shelves for the library.
- h) Purchasing an additional 53 computers for the computer laboratory and library.
- i) Reviewing the syllabi for all our degree programmes in consultation with various stakeholders.
- j) Developing all the required 26 policy documents such as gender, disability, HIV and AIDS, formative and summative assessment, internal and external moderation, qualifications framework, etc.
- k) Producing the second volume of our Journal of Commerce and Development Studies.
- l) Inviting selected experts to become BIU's external moderators of our degree programmes.

In addition, introducing enhanced distance learning to create a virtual platform for interaction between our lecturers and distance learners (E-learning). This system covers resource sharing, grading system and plagiarism checking through the use of Turnitin.

BIU will invite NCHE by the end of March, 2019 to assess implementation of its improvement plan by the end of April, 2019.



## *Increase Student Enrolment*

With accreditation, BIU forecasts that its student enrolment can increase by between 960 and 1200 students per semester. The challenges we face are the continued pressure that families and students are facing in affording higher education, and other market factors. We shall accomplish our enrolment targets by steadily increasing our intake of new students coupled with improved student retention.

We shall measure our success by evaluating achievement of these targets each year, with interim measures of progress measured on a more frequent basis.

Achievement of our goals for our student intake is at the heart of our strategic plan. Strategies to achieve them are embedded through all the goals and objectives in the plan. Some of the key initiatives we shall undertake in this regard include:

- 1) Increase our student applications and the number of students accepted for admission while maintaining or improving the quality of the incoming class through more effective marketing and recruitment, particularly using career guidance talks to students at various secondary schools throughout the country, social media, the web, TV and radio advertisements, magazines and newspapers.
- 2) Strengthen our focus on academic excellence. *Investment in constant improvement of the academic staff is the route to excellence in all that the University does.* This principle is the cornerstone of our strategic planning effort. It dictates that we strategically invest resources to build strength in our academic staff in every department. This will be achieved by:
  - a) Hiring. This is a keystone to improvement of the faculty. We will continue to hire and retain the best academic staff and support the efforts of every academic staff member to become the best scholar and teacher possible.
  - b) Providing the necessary support personnel with the expertise to assist academic staff members' efforts, especially in the incorporation of information technology into teaching and research.
  - c) Adding and keeping up-to-date the equipment and instrumentation necessary to support and strengthen our programmes.
  - d) Proper recognition and performance-based pay. With every decision to grant tenure, we will seek to improve the average quality of our academic staff, considering three areas of performance, namely: research, teaching, and service, in that order. Over the medium and long run, sustained vibrancy in scholarship, as measured by publication, review by peers, scholarly reputation and impact, is critical to continued effective teaching and training.
- 3) Strengthen our brand with student-focused and centralized support for academic



exploration, career services, experiential and service learning.

- 4) Continue to improve on academic preparation and career services leading to improved graduation rates and results for our students, not only in terms of the percentage of students who succeed in securing employment or graduate studies, but also in the quality of the jobs, salaries and graduate programmes that they report securing after graduation.
- 5) Improve the quality of our student experience on campus through enhanced space and facilities for student services and activities, stronger support for student groups and club sports, and improved weekend programming on and off-campus.
- 6) Refine our academic programme mix to make sure it meets market needs through consideration, planning and implementation of new programmes to attract new students from our primary markets and beyond, as well as through modification to or discontinuation of any programmes that are not able to sustain viable enrolments.
- 7) Introduce enhanced distance learning.
- 8) Establish new and renewed partnerships with other academic institutions, church and community organizations to increase flow of students into BIU and enhance opportunities upon graduation from BIU.
- 9) Start tracer studies to follow up with graduating students for feedback into our programmes.

## *Complete Second Phase of Campus*

Construction of its own purpose-built campus is a critical component of BIU's programme offerings. BIU has now completed the first construction phase, namely: a library and computer block, six classroom blocks of three classrooms each, four ablution blocks and two nursing stations. BIU is soon to embark on the second phase of construction of its campus. This comprises a cafeteria, two lecture theatres, a multi-purpose hall, four-storey administration block and a student's recreation centre. This will be followed by construction of two hostels, each accommodating 300 students. That will mark the completion of the construction of BIU's campus. However, it will not be the end, as BIU will undertake additional constructions in the light of emerging needs from time to time.

## *Introduce Masters and Doctorate Degrees*

The overdriving strategy for our academic programmes is to make the best possible use of distinctive BIU resources to address market demands and opportunities in growing sectors of the economy. Towards this end, the plan includes several new academic programme initiatives for



further consideration, development, approval and implementation over the course of the plan:

- Address market demand for business-oriented degree programmes by diversifying and introducing new programmes, especially masters and doctorate degree programmes in business, community development, economics, finance, journalism, information technology and law.
- Diversify our programmes with new specializations in high demand graduate fields.
- Continue to position BIU as a leader in business oriented degree programmes by forming partnerships with national, regional and international institutions.
- Introduce diploma programmes to enable students who otherwise would not be accepted in degree programmes to access post-secondary education.

## *Summary*

There can be no doubt that the coming five years will be a time of change, challenges and uncertainty for institutions of higher learning and for BIU in particular. In this context, it is vital for our strategic plan to:

- Have a clear and steady focus on our vision for the future, our business model and multi-year goals and objectives.
- Maintain the flexibility to adapt our strategies and actions in accordance with the available resources and with emerging challenges and opportunities.
- Measure our annual and multi-year progress through key performance indicators that reflect critical components of the plan.
- Be updated annually to reflect past experience and anticipated developments.

In pursuance of the above, our strategic plan for 2019 to 2024 is structured upon the following four goals:

- 1) BIU will be recognised for excellence in the quality of its academic programmes through the distinctive strengths of its faculties, the quality of the educational experience provided to its students, and the successful outcomes of its graduates.
- 2) BIU will become more nationally renowned for the excellence of the distinctive learning experience it offers through personalized guided education and engagement in the community, in keeping with our commitment to education that makes a difference.
- 3) BIU's vision and mission in support of BIU's values will be central to the life of the university, ensuring that now and in the future BIU students will experience and embrace

the values of the university.

- 4) Grounded in our common commitment to excellence, BIU will continue to become more effective as an institution, strengthening its fiscal stability through developing new resources and managing current resources effectively, being creative and inventive in finding new ways to improve, and being increasingly rigorous in assessing the outcomes of its efforts.

## *Conclusion*

This strategic plan has been developed taking into account our competitive advantages and constraints, our opportunities, and the internal and external environments in which we will operate, and predicting as best we can the trends that will affect us. Our overriding goal is to be among the small number of institutions that define what is best in higher education in Malawi and the region. The guiding principles, specific goals, and targeted actions articulated in this plan will help us achieve this broad objective.

To achieve and sustain the kind of leadership role that we envision for our University, we will build both a broader base of academic excellence and a strong, inclusive sense of community. We have the opportunity and responsibility to attain our goals and to reach beyond them.

We know that setting ambitious goals and realizing them are two different things. Achieving our goals will require committed leadership and toil; the best efforts of staff, students, and administrators; and the wisdom and support of the Board of Directors of the University and the many benefactors who share our vision. No plan is perfectly realized, and we will undoubtedly encounter unexpected challenges and opportunities. The general principles and specific goals set forth here will provide a framework that is both flexible and durable, allowing us to face the uncertain future with confidence. We look to the work ahead with a renewed understanding of our mission and how best to fulfill it as we strive to realize our vision of “a world class university of academic excellence.”