



Covenant University Newsflash

A weekly update of News and Events in Covenant University May 18-22, 2015

BIOTECHNOLOGY, ICT AND RENEWABLE ENERGY, CATALYST FOR AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT



Dr. Melaku Gedil representing Dr. Nteranya Sanginga, the Director General, International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan

With the aim of making innovative contributions towards value enhancement of the African Continent, experts at the just concluded 2nd Covenant University International Conference on African Development Issues (CU-ICADI), have agreed that Biotechnology, ICT and

Renewable Energy are the potential catalyst for the development of the continent.

The Director General, International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Dr. Nteranya Sanginga, in his presentation at the conference titled,

CLIMATE CHANGE, FOOD SECURITY: BIOTECHNOLOGY TO THE RESCUE

“Modern Biotechnology may help to offset the effect of climate change and increase food production”.

This was the submission of a Guest speaker and Deputy Dean School of Engineering, Covenant University professor, Ogbemi Omatete, in his presentation titled “Material Science and Engineering for African Development,” at the just

concluded Second International Conference on African Development Issues (ICADI) 2015.

In his presentation, Professor Omatete defined Biotechnology as the use of living systems and organisms to develop or make useful product, or any technological application that uses

biological systems, living organisms or derivatives thereof, to make or modify products or processes for specific use.

He highlighted the roles of Biotechnology for Material Science, which includes design, elaboration and integration of energy application. According to him, there should be considerations in Material Selection; these include functionality, cost aesthetics, consumers' satisfaction, and product retirement.

He stated further that inside every Continent is an available resource to address her challenges. He said, “It is imperative to engage in research in material science and engineering because it improves human development”. He also highlighted examples of materials in Material Science, which are metal, ceramics, polymers, composites and semi-conductors.

Professor Omatete brought to the fore the advantages of ceramics: strength, resistance to abrasive, to chemical corrosion and very high thermal stability. He added that gel casting is an invented

“Biotechnology as a Catalyst for Development in Africa”, said biotechnology offers tremendous opportunities for revolutionizing Africa's Agriculture.

Dr. Sanginga, who has over 21 years experience in agricultural research and development, further stated that there is an urgent need to enhance adoption and integration of biotechnology, geared towards the development of climate resilient, quality and productive agricultural products.

He recommended initiatives for training and urged scientists to continue the drive for change of crop improvement and methodologies, towards higher resolution and efficiency.

In his words, “A biotechnology centre of excellence is a platform envisaged for the provision of training and services with world class research in the areas of genomics, characterization and use of plant genetic Resources, bioinformatics, transgenic, diagnostics and tissue culture”.

Also speaking at the conference, Professor Andre Ware from the University of South Wales, United Kingdom, in his presentation titled “Enabling Development in Africa through research in ICT and Computing”, termed Africa as a Continent that has talented, but untrained individuals, with a relatively cost effective labour market.

According to him, there are attractions of pursuing research in ICT and computing through partnerships, which includes, knowledge transfer between collaborating partners, partners contributing in different ways i.e. cash, ideas, solutions, etc.

Professor Ware further highlighted the key points regarding partnership. In his words, “Collaborations need to be mutually beneficial if they are to be sustainable. Collaborations will evolve but should be based on a firm foundation. Collaborations can originate from any number of beginnings but will require commitment to become established”.

Concluding his presentation, Professor Ware, said collaboration between universities and industries must have a need to manage expectation, have clear objectives but be open-minded about possibilities and think of long term rather than short term.

Furthermore, the Managing Director, GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceutical Nigeria, Mr. Lekan Asuni in his presentation, “Biotechnology and Human Health in Africa:

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COVENANT UNIVERSITY, COMMITTED TO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Dr. Natasha Muller-Hirth from Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland, presenting her lecture

The Department of Sociology recently hosted a renowned lecturer of Sociology, Dr. Natasha Muller-Hirth and Mr. Jamie Hastings, the Regional Manager, International Office from Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland.

To foster communication, interaction and knowledge, a departmental lecture was held in which Dr. Natasha Muller-Hirth gave a lecture titled, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Development in South Africa: Socio- Economic Contexts and Contemporary Issues", at the Centre for Entrepreneurial Developmental Studies Multipurpose Hall.

In her presentation, the speaker described corporate social responsibility (CSR) as the direct and progressive activities that address issues that are environmental or social concerns and that benefit the company. Using South Africa as a case study for the importance of corporate social responsibility, Dr. Muller- Hirth stated that in South Africa, CSR is partly defined and motivated by the State.

Highlighting the challenges of South Africa's social economic development faced by most companies, she said, "Companies are unable to contribute towards social responsibility due to inequality, poverty, economy deeply

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patent process in forming ceramics, which has the minimal financial cost, and peer recognition, among others.

He also enumerated the rewards of successful research in material science and engineering, which include Nobel prize, recognition among others. He, therefore, advised that Africa should invest in this type of research because material possession facilitates human development, and successful research in Material Science Engineering leads to fame, fortune and peer recognition though it can be expensive.

Another Guest Speaker, Director, Engineering Material Development Institute (EMDI) Akure, Nigeria, Dr. Samuel Olusunle, in his presentation titled "Material technology for infrastructural development in Africa," noted that most of the resources in Africa have not been discovered and effectively utilized.

He advised that government policies must be well situated and directed toward sustainable industrialization, bearing in mind the critical role in technology.

In another presentation titled "Building Capacity for Materials Research in Africa," Professor Cleophas Loto, ably represented

by Professor Samuel Wara, stated that capacity building is much more than training and includes human resource development, organizational development, institutional and legal framework development.

According to Professor Loto, who is also the Dean, College of Engineering, Covenant University, human resource development is the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them perform effectively.

He also defined organizational development as the elaboration of management structures, processes or procedures, not only within organizations, but also the management of relationships between the different organizations and sectors (public, private and community), even nations of the African Continent.

Institutional and legal framework development is making legal and regulatory changes to enable organizations, institutions and agencies at all levels and in all sectors enlarge their capacities. "Whatever we have and do not engage does not help us," he concluded.

skewed, legacies of the past, and unevenness in terms of focus area".

Meanwhile, the Regional Manager, International Office, Robert Gordon University, Jamie Hastings said Covenant University is blessed with talented students. He said due to the nature of his job, he has also witnessed Covenant University graduates soaring in different endeavour, impacting the world.

Mr. Hastings, therefore, urged multinational companies in Nigeria to involve more of local personnel (graduates) than expatriate, in order to empower local institutions that can develop and further enhance CSR in the country.

While making his remarks, The Dean, College of Business and Social Sciences, Professor Oluranti Olurinola, said the visit of the Robert Gordon University officials was timely as Covenant University is always committed to teaching and corporate social responsibility.

In his words, "Covenant University has commenced a series of community development services aimed at impacting positively on the lives of people in its host community, Ota and its environs. The programme is part of deliberate efforts by the University to inculcate the spirit of leadership and responsible-citizenship skills in its students through the platform of community service," he added.

The Head, Department of Sociology, Dr Tayo George, giving the vote of thanks, termed the presentation as "food for thought" that will provoke further research and discussions towards a better CSR in Nigeria and Africa has a whole.

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the Issues", explained the key components of modern biotechnology that benefit human health care.

"Modern biotechnology deals more with the treatment of ailments and alteration of organisms to better human life. Biotechnology in healthcare offers more effective disease diagnosis, prevention and treatment. It also allows scientists to identify genes linked to particular diseases and allows researchers to develop genetic tests for a range of illnesses", he said

However, Mr. Lekan Asuni stated that poor infrastructure; low level of investment in human resource; limited funding, public awareness and acceptance of biotech products; as well as limited innovation and content, are some of the issues confronting healthcare biotechnology in the Continent that must be addressed.