

**REMARKS**

**BY**

**H.E. DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH**

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

**AND**

**VISITOR TO THE UNIVERSITY OF LIBERIA**

**MAIN CAMPUS**

**CAPITOL HILL**

**MONROVIA, LIBERIA**

**24 OCTOBER 2018**

**Dr. William E. Allen, Vice President for Academic Affairs of the University of Liberia and Head of the Management Team;**

**Members of the Faculty Senate;**

**Members of the UL Administration;**

**Professors and Instructors of the University of Liberia;**

**Officials of Government here present;**

**The Leadership of the University of Liberia Students Union;**

**The General Student Body;**

**Special Invitees;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**One of my duties as President of the Republic of Liberia, by law, is to serve as Visitor to the University of Liberia. This is an honor that I accept with deep humility. But it is also a responsibility that I take very seriously.**

**As Visitor, it is incumbent upon me to use my good offices as President to ensure that the Nation's highest institution of learning is well established, adequately funded through budgetary support from the Government, and properly managed by competent administrators.**

**It is given to me as my Presidential duty, to appoint the President and members of the Board of Trustees of the University, who, in turn, are mandated to engage professors and other members of the teaching staff who have earned high standards of academic qualifications, so that students enrolled at this University will receive quality education that will enable them to become productive in their chosen fields upon graduation.**

**Besides these official functions, I am personally concerned that the University should be run smoothly and efficiently, so that it is enabled to concentrate on its growth and development plans, and fulfill its ambition to become one of the best universities in Africa.**

**3**

**One such example of this concern is that, over the years, we have observed that students of the University of Liberia have suffered from standing in long queues, delays in the registration processes, lack of systems to effectively and efficiently manage students' records, and to adequately manage the University's Administration and its system in general.**

**With a student body of close to 40,000 students, it has been extremely difficult to efficiently manage the registration and administrative processes of the University on a manual basis.**

**As we are all aware, there have been many instances when the registration processes have ended in riots, conflicts and demonstrations on the campuses of the University.**

**In 2017, the UL Administration made a decision to digitize the University of Liberia. But up to the time I took Office in January of this year, the project had not yet been started.**

**Realizing the critical importance of digitization to the smooth and efficient running of the University, I gave the project maximum priority and budgetary support at the very beginning of my Administration.**

**4**

**It was my pleasure to visit your Fendall Campus on the 4<sup>th</sup> of this month, to dedicate the new digital system. It is now installed, and in use, providing not only ease of registration, but also vital internet access so critical for research and study.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**Last Monday, October 22, was the official commencement of classes for this new semester. As your Visitor, I would like to take this occasion to welcome the Administration, faculty and staff, and especially the students, back to school.**

**However, in my continuous dialogues and conversations with administrators as well as students, I have been made acutely aware of another major problem facing the student body.**

**Let me tell you a story:**

**Last Friday, I heard that students were chanting again in front of my Office. I asked, “What is happening?” I was told that it was the UL students, again. So, I sent for them.**

The students told me that the Administration had increased the tuition per credit hour. I was not happy about that, so, I sent to the University to speak with someone. Mr. Norris Tweah, Vice President for University Relations came and we spoke. Mr. Tweah communicated to me that the fees were not increased as mentioned by the students. According to him, the credit per hour is still the same US\$4.00 but due to the fluctuation of the LD to the USD, a fixed rate of LD150 to USD1.00 was established to avoid confusion.

During Mr. Norris' explanation about the students' condition, I was shocked when I was told that every semester about 20,000 students go through the billing process, yet only about 12,000 students attend and pay.

Furthermore, about 5,000 of the 12,000 students who are in attendance are dependent on some form of financial aid or scholarship. The rest of the students do not attend due to the lack of financial means.

Based upon our discussion, I called in the Finance Minister to find a solution to the problem.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**The inability of our young people to continue their education is very sad and troubling and has a direct impact on them, and their ability to make a positive contribution to the nation's growth and development.**

**By this time, it should be clear to all, that we will never be successful in achieving the goals of our Pro-Poor Agenda if we do not place more emphasis on the development of our human capital. And in so doing, we have to invest in quality education.**

**I believe in education. As the late Kofi Annan once said, and I quote:**

**“Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, and in every family.”**

**The increasing cost of education in Liberia, leading to non-enrollment, non-attendance, and frequent drop-outs, is becoming counter-productive to our development goals. I believe, therefore, that the time has come to take bold initiatives and make direct social interventions to address this problem.**

**7**

**There is a definite link between a well-educated citizenry and economic growth, and in recognition of that, my Government has decided to invest in our human capital in order to achieve sustained economic growth. Having a good education is important to one's success in life. Education is the key to success because it enables a person to think logically and communicate effectively.**

**I therefore wish to declare tuition-free for all undergraduate students at the University of Liberia as well as all other public universities in Liberia.**

**Now, make use of the opportunity given today to reach your full potential in your educational sojourn.**

**The details and modalities will be arranged and finalized between the Administration of the University and the relevant sectoral Ministries of Government.**

**But, to the students: Let me inform you that this will be a win-win partnership between you and Government, as you will still be expected to pay all other fees charged by the University.**

**8**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**By this intervention, my Government shows its commitment not only to invest in physical capital, such as roads, but in human capital, for the over-all growth of our citizens and our economy. We believe that no country can develop without investing in the education of its people. This policy will continue to form an integral part of our Pro-Poor Agenda for Development and Prosperity.**

**Now there is no need for you not to enroll in school, and for you not to attend your classes. There is also no reason now for you to drop out of school because of financial constraints.**

**According to Nelson Mandela, my hero, and I quote:**

**“Education is the greatest weapon that you can use to change the world.”**

**I am now giving you that weapon.**

**Go forth, and change Liberia!!!**

**May God bless the works of my Hands, and safe the State.**

**I thank you.**