TSU Hosts International Conference on U.S. Foreign Policy and Africa

Scholars from Nigeria, Canada, and the United States met for an all-day conference on U.S. international relations with Africa at the TSU Avon Williams Campus on Friday, April 13. The conference included four academic panels with over twenty papers on topics ranging from democratization and political conflict to health, agriculture, and education. The program also featured a guest lecture by former Gambian Ambassador to the U.S. Neneh MacDouall-Gaye and a concluding keynote address by Dr. Toyin Falola, Frances Higginbotham Nalle Centennial Professor of History at the University of Texas at Austin.

Presentations and discussions at the conference reflected a remarkable diversity of opinions and viewpoints about African society and politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century and the role of the United States, with participants united less by a uniform judgments than by a commitment to the continent and to open and constructive dialogue. Common observations included a sober assessment of U.S. relations with African countries during the first term of Barack Obama's presidency – which has disappointed some hopes for a general change of course – and a recognition of the critical importance of forces and actors beyond the confines of traditional foreign policy. Reflecting on the panels in his keynote address Friday evening, Dr. Falola emphasized the role of individual scholars and other leaders in promoting the development of "a generation of pro-African citizens in the U.S."

TSU faculty members, administrators, and others at the conference recognized the hosting of an international academic conference as an extraordinary achievement for the College of Liberal Arts and for the Department of History, Political Science, Geography, and Africana Studies. Special commendation was given to Dr. Adebayo Oyebade of the TSU History faculty, who worked with Dr. Wosene Yefru from Africana Studies and other colleagues to organize the conference with limited resources. One conference guest, Dr. Ayoka Mopelola Olusakin, described Dr. Oyebade as "a knowledgeable intellectual whose tenacity of purpose attracted my journey all the way from the University of Lagos," adding that he hopes that the conference will become an annual event. Based the success of the conference and assurances of future support by TSU administrators, it seems possible that this may well be the case.