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Speaker 1 [00:00:04] Hi, everyone. I'm Emily. I'm the regional manager for sub-Saharan Africa.

Speaker 2 [00:00:09] Hi, everyone. My name is Ron Peter and I'm International Officer for the sub-Saharan region.

Speaker 3 [00:00:14] Hi, everyone. I'm Blessing. I'm the country manager for the University of Aberdeen, and I'm based in Nigeria.

Speaker 1 [00:00:20] Welcome to our University of Aberdeen West Africa podcast series. We're going to talk about lots of relevant and interesting topics, which we hope you find useful. Join us for this week's episode.

Speaker 3 [00:00:37] Hi everyone. Welcome to this week's episode of the University of Aberdeen West Africa podcast series. My name's Emily Findlay. I'm joined with my colleague Ron, and I'm very happy today to welcome Ifeanyi Enebeli [from Nigeria]. Welcome, Ifeanyi.

Speaker 4 [00:00:54] Thank you very much, Emily. Thank you Ron.

Speaker 1 [00:00:57] Thanks for being with us today. The aim of today's podcast is to talk about your journey to the University of Aberdeen, how you found it here. What you studied with us and what you're doing with your life now in Nigeria.

Speaker 4 [00:01:11] Yeah.

Speaker 1 [00:01:12] So how when did you decide to become a student? Aberdeen.

Speaker 4 [00:01:16] Um, so, I mean, I just just finished my, my first degree here in Nigeria at the time, and, you know, right before I finished, I was, I was already thinking, look, I think I need to, um, um, improve myself educational wise and get a master's degree. Um, because I just, I think I was still in the right frame of mind for, for going straight from study into study rather than having a break in between and then getting myself all together again. So I know I started my search. Um, I got to Aberdeen in 2008. Um, but I must have started my search very early in 2007, you know, looking around schools, um, and places to go through options. I'm not sure why I stopped with Aberdeen, but, um, maybe at the time I had, I had a few people I knew already in Aberdeen, and I think that just made the decision easier. Really. Um, picking Aberdeen.

Speaker 1 [00:02:30] And what did you come and study in the end? What was your subject called back then?

Speaker 1 [00:02:34] And energy futures at the time? Energy futures, Oil and Gas. Um. Um, so I know the way to energy futures cos one was energy futures renewable and, I did energy futures, oil and gas. I think the name has changed now, actually.

Speaker 1 [00:02:49] Okay, great. And you were coming just at the time when oil and gas was reaching a peak in Aberdeen as well. So that must have been a really interesting, interesting time to be in the city as well.

Speaker 4 [00:03:00] Yes, yes, yes. Um, I mean, my first degree was in geology, so you just seemed right, um, um, you know, continuing it, continuing in that in that line at the time. So. So, yeah.

Speaker 1 [00:03:14] Okay. Amazing. And do you remember how you felt before you made the journey from Nigeria to Aberdeen? Were you nervous or excited?

Speaker 4 [00:03:23] Yeah, I mean, I was very excited, actually. Um, I was excited about going away to study to further my education. I think I wasn't nervous at all. I think I was. I was excited. I mean, I've, I've, I schooled away from home, so I mean, initially my, my, my, my, my, my first degree I schooled away from home, so it wasn't new. Um, and I schooled in a little town away from, from where my family was in another state. So it wasn't new actually going, um, going away to, to, to, to fire wee Aberdeen and to study. I was actually gearing up and looking forward to looking forward to it, really.

Speaker 2 [00:04:09] And Ifeanyi How do you feel about the studies here? Being an international student?

Speaker 4 [00:04:14] Well, um, I don't know if it's my background, but I've always, um. I mean, the course I did, for instance, in geology, we had, we had numerous field trips and, and we had to go away from school to other places for, for field work. So maybe that helped me a bit because I was already used to, you know, going away from I mean, moving out of my comfort zone and going, going a way to to get things done. So. So for me, maybe maybe that helped. And coming into a bit been, um, I mean, first of all, I think that the major thing was always the way to, you know, where it coming from, from, from, um, um, hot sunny Lagos or so I mean between where school, but you know, coming from the, from Nigeria really and heading to Aberdeen I think the weather was the first, was the first shock for me you know, or I mean I came prepared, got my jackets all the way from Nigeria, came prepared. So I think I settled in, I settled in, um, really quickly. And I think because of the time, um, we had a number of, of Nigerians, you know, in, in, in Aberdeen at the time. It was easy to just right, right from the flights and going from Lagos. I mean when I got to because I flew from Lagos to heat, you and I had a connecting flight from Heathrow to Aberdeen, already met a chap who was, um, cause I mean in Nigerian Guy who was also going to Aberdeen. So we it's.

Speaker 1 [00:05:51] Amazing.

Speaker 1 [00:05:51] We already had a bit of a friendship, right from, um, right, from, from, from getting to get into the UK.

Speaker 1 [00:06:00] Well, so and when you speak about the weather, looking back, obviously sometimes we can say that either all four seasons in one day we do experience four seasons throughout the year. But did you enjoy experiencing the different types of weather that Aberdeen has to offer?

Speaker 4 [00:06:18] Yeah, I mean, I did, because I mean, I think that's all part of life at the end of the day, you know, um, understanding, I mean, diversity, you know, how people are, you know, different the way people choose. People do things in different ways. You know, the, the weather just gives you a feel of, of everything, you know. And like I said, coming from Nigeria, going down there was was first the weather was first was first uh, was the first shocker. But we time I mean, I think I coped coped really well with time. I

mean, we're experiencing is all part of life experience at the end of the day, you know. So yeah.

Speaker 2 [00:07:01] And what about your time at Aberdeen did you find most enjoyable?

Speaker 4 [00:07:06] Well, I think for me, I got I got a lot of support. You know, I'm doing doing my studies not just from having, you know, like I say, a lot of Nigerians, were in Aberdeen and I am sure lot of Nigerians are still in Aberdeen now, but not just from not just from from from from my friends and all that, but from direct access to to the lecturers. You know, it was it was easy to to there was a clear open door policy, you know, where you could, you could speak to a lecturer coming in from Nigeria wasn't he wasn't the same been you know be and this there was a difference with the way you approach a lecturer in Nigeria and universities um to to the way you approach your lecturers in Aberdeen for instance. So that was great for me because you could go to your lecturers in Newark. I'm not too sure how this went. I don't really understand this and you could get some, some more explanations for that. That was great. That was great for me, you know.

Speaker 1 [00:08:07] And when you arrived in Aberdeen, did you stay in student accommodation or private accommodation?

Speaker 4 [00:08:14] Yes, I stayed. I stayed in student accommodation. I stayed at Hillhead. Not sure its the same . I'm sure it's still there. Um. Yeah. So. So, yes, I stayed. I stayed up not cause and I think I think that was good really, because, um, I mean, I had been to the UK before, hadn't been to Aberdeen and it's a, it's a new, it's a, it's new to me. I mean, but you, if I felt like staying at the school accommodation, even if it was for the first six months, you know, um, was good because you, you, apart from the fact that it was an all inclusive service where you get your, I mean internet, heating and all the sort of things. So, you know, there's no other the structure of really trying to sort out some of those things. So so I think I liked it there and, and it also again helped me with some of the friends I have all my friends list today, you know, um, because a lot of Nigerians, I think I think more people stayed in school accommodation at the very initial stages, you know so so I, I think that helped really amazing.

Speaker 1 [00:09:23] And you've touched on meeting lots of other Nigerian students in your accommodation and that they're still your friends today. But did you also meet people from other nationalities and are you still friends with them?

Speaker 4 [00:09:35] Yes, definitely. Definitely. Um, people from India, uh, I mean the UK, people from from the UK still still friends on, on, on, on Facebook and then some other platforms, people from Ghana and nearby, you know, still friends. So it was, it was yeah, it wasn't just Nigeria, as I must say. It was a mixed really. I mean I know that my plus had a lot of Nigerians well, you had the Chinese there who made friends with it. But I mean, it was it was it was what you should be when you when you when it comes to to learning. I mean, we had no small group discussions or were paired with people from from from different other places and different ways of thinking. Um, so that gave you the opportunity to, to, to understand, um, um, the way people see it from various diverse backgrounds, you know, So, so yes, very, very, very, I mean, very many of the other people I saw and met, you know, and in a bit in as well.

Speaker 2 [00:10:39] And have you travelled to any of those turning regions of Scotland while you were in Aberdeen?

Speaker 4 [00:10:43] Yeah. I mean we went out, I mean first of all we had to know the city Aberdeen, first of all, what I know that I know that as part of my course we went, we went out of town and not too sure where we went to. No, I mean when, somewhere outside. Outside Aberdeen. Cant remembe The name of the place. Its a castle at the time.

Speaker 1 [00:11:04] Then maybe it was Dunnottar Castle.

Speaker 4 [00:11:06] I think that's the name, actually. Yeah.

Speaker 2 [00:11:09] Stonehaven?

Speaker 4 [00:11:09] Stonehaven. And that's. That's it. That's it? Yeah, that's it. You know, So, I mean, I went a few times to, to Glasgow, you know, to, to see a few friends who were actually schooled in, uh, in, in Glasgow at the time. So it was you first of all, I just took my time, you know, to understand the city in all nor places around the city centre, things like that before um, actually going, going, going to other places.

Speaker 1 [00:11:37] Amazing. And did you also try any Scottish food whilst you were here and did you manage to find the famous Jollof rice?

Speaker 4 [00:11:45] I don't know if I found Jollof rice. I made Jollof rice myself. I made Jollof rice.

Speaker 1 [00:11:51] Now there's lots of restaurants and restaurants. Yeah, there's tons now.

Speaker 4 [00:11:56] I mean, when I was when I was when I was there, not too sure of that. There were Nigerian restaurants, but we had the African shops, you know, somewhere on George Street. I think that's where a number of them where the time, you know, and I knew that there was a Nigerian bar that was, you know, I can remember where that was set up again at the time. What I I'm sure I'm sure you do. Like you said, there would be a lot I mean, Aberdeen would be a lot different than it was when I was when I was there. You know, I, I tried to I mean, I don't think I did a lot of, um, Scottish food. Scottish food per what I eat. It's a variety of other things, you know, um, various type of pies, um, various types of sauces, gravy and things like that. I, I didn't just stick to Nigeria. Then when I, when I first got in, I was, I was craving, you know, Nigerian food. What, after about two months, you know, I just thought you no, I can I can deal with all the things and and I think it was good, you know, trying I think that's that's that's what going away to other places um um and peace to you. You know, we try all the other dreams or the food meet different people. I think that's what it gives to you have, you know, amazing.

Speaker 1 [00:13:20] And never have you ever been back to Aberdeen since you left?

Speaker 4 [00:13:24] Once. Once. Um, 20, 2017. Maybe it was because I had. I had a classmate. Well, we studied together in Nigeria who went back to Aberdeen and to study, and I went visiting him in Aberdeen and see a few friends. I can remember what I came for. I came for maybe a business trip, but I also used opportunities to, to, to see a few friends. And I was surprised. I mean, when when I was in Aberdeen, they just started building that new library, you know, Um, but by the time I came back, it had actually been it was finished and I was studying and looking shiny and nice. You know, we, we didn't have the opportunity to use it, I think during that time, you know, so, so yeah, I came back, I went on campus, we would this chap friend of mine here.

Speaker 2 [00:14:15] And perhaps for the benefit of our listeners, could you please tell us about the role and title of your current job, Ifeanyi?

Speaker 4 [00:14:22] Um, so, so I'm right now I'm into my work as an environment and sustainability consultant and um, I've been doing this for, for the past 15, 13, 12, 12 years, Um, 11, 12, 12 years. And really, I mean, you know, sometimes you study and you're not, uh, you don't get the opportunity to, to put into play. I mean a lot of things that you studied, but with, with, with the course I did, it was it, it gave me a good spread. I must see, um, energy future. They looked at energy, looked at oil and gas. They had some geology elements and needed looked at power as well. So, um, working as a consultant, I think that has helped me because as a consultant, you, you should know what you're talking about. Really. Uh, if you're not, I mean, nobody will come back to you, you know? So I think the course has helped me because it was, it had a lot of. Different units and different courses. Um, models form from various areas, you know, um, which I believe is actually hold me. I started off, I mean, I started off as an environmental consultant but then moved on to drama and, and sustainability. Um, and yes, I think the courses helped me based on the fact that it covered, it covered a lot of topics and a lot of areas at the time.

Speaker 1 [00:16:04] And so for our students who are listening in right now, considering Aberdeen as a choice and maybe even students who are currently here, what piece of advice would you give to them so that they can go on to become successful like yourself afterwards?

Speaker 4 [00:16:20] What I think is just about I mean, for me, it's it's taking the opportunity, you know, seizing the opportunity. Um, I used to say to I mean, this part of the alumni here in Lagos, I speak to some prospective and the prospective students and even people who have just finished, you know, General, what I say to prospective students is it's for me, it's you take the opportunity and just put it at the back of your mind and just say it's it's really just nine months. I mean, if you're going for an amnesty, for instance, it's just nine months of full, full course, you know, that's really what it is, you know, And if you can do that, um, the sky. The sky is just the beginning. I mean, if you if you ask me because people get carried away, I think because it's a different lifestyle coming from Nigeria, for some people who love yoga and have not left home at all, um, may be called it could be destructive if you get what I mean, you could get there and just get carried away with the life, you know, enjoying yourself rather than focusing on on your book work. So I think that people I mean, students, prospective students, you know, that it's an opportunity that you need to seize and just give it your best in in those first key nine months. I know you have three months for dissertation and things like that, but if you give it your best, I think the sky, the sky will just be the beginning.

Speaker 1 [00:17:49] And obviously the students will hopefully go on to graduate. But that's not the end of their Aberdeen journey, is it? You are very much involved in the Nigeria chapter. Maybe you could tell us a little bit about what it is like to be an alumni?

Speaker 4 [00:18:03] Well, um, I mean, for me, I, I always I mean, I've said this a lot of times. I always believe in the strength in networking. I think that's that's the big that's the big thing. Big the big thing here, um, about the Lagos Lagos alumni, I mean we have seen within the, within the group where a recent graduates I mean I say recent because recent at the time uh, was able to get a job, get a proper very, very good job when through the interview processes process because he, he, he came to the alumni group and a one of, one of the guys in the group, um, was able to, you know, ask him to, to submit his CV for a

role and he went through the proper, you know, serious interview process and he came out tops and got the job. But I mean, maybe he would have done but I mean which, which somebody in sight and this is what this is what networking doors. I mean maybe you would never have known about that job. I mean, um, top level applying for it, you know, So, um, for me, we tried to, um, the alumni for me is a good networking point for, for everyone. And it would be good for people to, to fully participate in the alumni group.

Speaker 1 [00:19:28] Thank you so much .

Speaker 2 [00:19:29] Any and every asked here about what advice would you give to current and prospective students, but from your own experience, why students should consider University of Aberdeen as a study destination?

Speaker 2 [00:19:41] Well, I mean, Aberdeen is a great university to go to. I mean, the facilities, I mean, my time, the facilities were greased and and I know that there's been improvements 2008 to now is is what was it led I mean how many is that. That's a well so um they have been there have been a lot of improvements, you know, between between then and now. So um, the community, the support you get, um, from, from the lecturers, um, from, from the facilities in the school, um, the library. It's a great place to use, a great place to go to. Um, I think this just, this things make, make the university um, um, for me, make the university a good one for, for people, um, for, for prospective students to, to, to, to, to attend.

Speaker 1 [00:20:40] Great. Thank you so much. Ifeanyi. That's the end of today's podcast. We hope to catch up with you again very soon. And best of luck with all of your future endeavours.

Speaker 4 [00:20:51] Thank you. Very much.

Speaker 2 [00:20:52] And thank you for your time today. Ifeanyi.

Speaker 4 [00:20:54] Thank you very much. So many. Thank you, Ron. All right, take care, everyone. Okay then. Okay then. Thank you. Bye.