

**ADDRESS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROFESSOR SOLA AKINRINADE, TO THE
INAUGURAL MEETING OF UNIVERSITY SENATE,
MONDAY 5TH NOVEMBER, 2007**

Distinguished Members of Senate:

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the inaugural meeting of the Senate of Osun State University. I welcome in particular those of our members who have joined us from other universities in visiting capacity. I wish you a most pleasant stay with us.

While the main purpose of today's meeting is to formally approve the take-off academic programmes in our various Departments and Colleges, our gathering is also symbolic as it confirms that academic activities have really taken off in our University. Away from the public glare, we can begin to put effect to all the planning of the past several months and start building on the foundations laid for the University by both the Planning and Implementation Committees. In a way, today's meeting should set the tone of future academic exertions in this potentially great university, in the years to come.

Osun State University has started big, both literally and metaphorically. The University enjoys great visibility in the public mind not only in Osun State but virtually all over the country. I can declare without any fear of contradiction that many out there are waiting for what the University is going to do and I dare say, many are waiting for us to fail. Much is expected of us not only from the students but also from their proud parents. Much is expected of us from the public, as well as from the members of the defunct Planning and Implementation Committees whose members have sacrificed time, energy and various resources to chart a worthwhile path for this University. And, of course, much is expected of us from the proprietors of this University, the Osun State Government, particularly the chief executive of the state, His Excellency, the Executive Governor, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola. It is clear we cannot afford to fail. Herein lies the challenge before this august body; i.e., the challenge of leading the university community in building a university with a difference, a university that would respond to the yearning and aspirations of all the categories of people listed above. Whatever standards we set here today should serve as reference points for the future.

As I pointed out in my Welcome Address at the ceremony marking the flag off of academic activities in the University on 21 September, the tertiary education sector in this country currently stands in crisis at a pivotal point in its development. Rising graduate unemployment, inadequate performance on the job and weak research production combine to bring the relevance of universities in the country under growing scrutiny. Changes in the operational environment of universities, nationally and internationally, make necessary a reassessment and redefinition of goals and aspirations particularly in the face of contemporary challenges. Some of the challenges include:

1. The emergence of global markets at the international level which has created a competitive world economic system characterised by rapid knowledge production and technological innovation. These changes affect local labour markets and the types of skills they require and they raise questions about the relevance of extant curricular in most of the disciplines offered in Nigerian universities today.
2. Nationally, high population growth rates and increased access to education at the lower levels which together have boosted the social demand for higher education. The consequence is a phenomenal rise in student enrolment without a matching increase in infrastructure and funding and the apparent decline in educational quality;
3. The considerable expansion in recent years of the higher education sector in Nigeria with the proliferation of tertiary institutions including private and new generation state universities, private polytechnics, colleges of technology and colleges of education.
4. Funding challenges and the high costs of university training;

5. Management challenges and the emerging dynamics of relationship with the supervisory authorities; and,
6. The challenge of attracting and retaining talented staff particularly in the face of declining value of wages and emoluments, and generally deteriorating working conditions.

These developments present opportunities and challenges to which we, as a new university must respond if we are to become relevant in the provision of higher education in the 21st century and build a workforce that are relevant to national needs. As a public sector institution, it is imperative that we respond to these developments and position ourselves such as to benefit from the opportunities presented. Herein lies the challenge confronting Osun State University and this august body, the pioneer University Senate. Our task is to build a University not only for now but also for the future. On your behalf and on behalf of the pioneer management team, I have promised, indeed, pledged to work assiduously towards realising in the shortest possible time the goals of building UNIOSUN into a first rate, world class institution which is the dream of the founding fathers. I am sure I have not pledged wrongly.

As I have had cause to state on various occasions: UNIOSUN is NOT just another university. It is a university with a difference. We may be the 30th state university and 80th university overall in the country, but our goal is to be the leader in the provision of quality tertiary education in this country. If we are going to achieve this goal, we cannot afford to do things the way they have always been done in other Nigerian university. This is because if we do, we can only get the same unsatisfactory results. I have pledged on your behalf that we are going to do things differently.

The Committee system has been established as an indispensable feature of the administrative system of most Nigerian universities. Indeed, I know that the committee system can be a veritable instrument of management and administration. But I also know that the committee system can be a clog in the wheel of progress particularly if you need to respond rapidly to changing dynamics in an institution. Thus, while taking advantage of the best that the system can offer, it is our intention that the committee system of Osun State University would not degenerate in any form to a bottleneck in moving the institution forward in critical moments.

As is clear to all of us, UNIOSUN is not yet a finished product and I am certain that the process of building would continue for some time to come, most probably outlasting this present administration. But whatever we can build on the foundation that has been laid can only go into the record books. I am pretty certain that history would be recorded in our favour.

Today's meeting is not expected to be a long one. The arrangements have not been perfect; this is due to circumstances over which we had little control. But I can assure you that things would be positively different in subsequent months. I thank you all for your attention.