**BEING A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE REGISTRAR, HAJIYA FATIMA BINTA MOHAMMED, FIICAN, MNIM, ON THE OCCASION OF SSANU WEEK HELD AT SSANU SECRETARIAT, OLD CAMPUS ON FRIDAY, 28TH JULY, 2017**

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir,

SSANU Chairman, Comrade Haruna Aliyu,

Other SSANU Officials,

Directors,

Deputy Registrars,

Principal Assistant Registrars,

Other Administrative Staff Here Present,

My Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I, first and foremost, congratulate SSANU, our mother body, on this occasion of celebrating yet another year of tremendous successes occasioned by dynamic and forthright leadership that is leaving no stone unturned in ensuring the welfare of its members and fighting for what truly and rightly belongs to its members. I have been monitoring the association very closely, and I have no doubt in my mind that the calibre of leadership of SSANU today deserves the commendation of one and all. More power to your elbow! And may you have a successful week!

I was requested to speak on “**The Role of Non-Teaching Staff in the Administration of Nigerian Universities**”. You see, I am not very good at making speeches. In fact, I dread a great deal when it comes to making a public speech. I believe I am not alone in this ‘difficult exercise’. You know what, I almost declined to accept this responsibility. However, as a member of SSANU and the Registrar of our great University, I thought I should not reject this rare honour of being invited to give a talk on the above topic. I thought it was a big challenge. I thank you.

I would like to begin my speech by saying that the foremost tasks of a university are teaching, research and community service. These are performed mainly by the academic staff with those in administration rendering supporting services. The concept of administration is generally applicable at various levels in the structure of a university. In Nigeria, the aims and objectives of university education are well documented in the National Policy on Education. **Both the academic and the non-teaching staff assigned to specific functions in the university structure are responsible for the realization of the aims and objectives**.

*Encarta Dictionaries* defines university as “an educational institution for higher learning that typically includes an undergraduate college and graduate schools in various disciplines, as well as medical and law schools and sometimes other professional schools”. A university education is a period of advanced study following the completion of secondary education. The duration of the study may be from four to seven years or more, depending on the features and intricacy of the programmes pursued.

When the basic course of study is successfully completed, usually at the end of three, four or five years – as the case may be – the graduate receives a bachelor’s degree. He or she may continue for a Master's degree, generally requiring an additional year or two, and then for a doctorate, which normally requires the candidate to submit a dissertation and to complete a minimum of three years of further studies. Higher education, which usually includes some general education, is a time for specialized study to meet the criteria for professional activity or for employment in higher positions in business, industry and government.

In other words, a university is an educational institution for higher learning that typically includes an undergraduate college and graduate schools in various disciplines, as well as medical and law schools and, sometimes, other professional schools. A university may yet be described as an establishment recognized for the purpose of acquisition, transmission and extension of knowledge.

Nigerian universities derive their authority for university governance and constitutional base from the **Visitor** who gives assent to the Ordinance, Bill, Law, Act or Decree establishing them as complex organizations. These documents provide the Universities their power to undertake their functions of teaching, research and community services, award certificates in recognition of completion of programmes and perform other activities that are supplementary to the given functions and objectives of the university system.

The statute of each university provides for the establishment of two executive authorities – the Governing Council and the Senate – to regulate the affairs of the university. The Council is the governing authority charged with the general control and management of the policy, finances and property of the university. The Senate, on the other hand, is the highest academic authority whose activities include the direction, the regulation and the promotion of teaching and research in addition to the control of examinations and the award of degrees.

Fellow colleagues, the administration of a Nigerian University is headed by a Vice Chancellor, with other Principal Officers. The roles and functions of Principal Officers of the university – such as the Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor(s), the Registrar, the Bursar and the Librarian – are well defined in the statute establishing the University. The actual process of governance is driven by a system of committees. University communities in Nigeria value this committee system highly. Indeed, they regard it as sacrosanct. The committee system, from Council to Senate, has gone a long way towards strengthening and making things much easier and encouraging transparency in the university administrative system.

Of course, in discussing university administration, one cannot but take a critical look at the constituent bodies of the university: the Council, the Senate, Congregation and Convocation. Each of these bodies has their roles, functions and significance in the university set-up. Other important areas include managing examinations and records, management of students’ affairs and human resource management in Nigerian universities.

Universities, therefore, rely on the efforts of faculty and staff members to achieve their objectives. Thus, the performance of the University depends on the collective productivity of individual employees.In other words, a University is acomplex organization relying on the knowledge and skills its employees bring to the workplace. If the work environment supports and encourages employees to utilize their knowledge and skills to achieve clear goals, the University may benefit from that part of employee performance that is discretionary.

**The professional administrator, who is referred to as a non-teaching staff in the university system, plays an indirect but a significant role in shaping and producing quality and employable graduates, thereby providing services that facilitate the smooth and efficient running of the system to enable it to achieve its fundamental goals of teaching, research and community services**. Administrators in Nigerian Universities implement policy decisions made by Council, Senate and other bodies. They also advise on all general administration matters as secretaries to the Council, the Senate and other committees in the system. This enables them to guide various organs of the university in policy formulation and implementation, hence creating an enabling environment for the production of employable graduates. By so doing, the professional administrator is in addition moulding the products to ensure strict observance of the prescribed practices and procedures thereby ensuring respect for the traditions and values, laws, rules and regulations of the university system.

**The university professional administrators also serve as role models to the graduates by promoting good corporate governance principles such as honesty, trust, integrity and openness, among others. They perform human resources management function as well, even upon the challenges of encroachment on their duty territorial space by others**.

As a non-teaching staff, my humble self, and having served the system for nearly two decades, I have come to realize the important role played by the non-teaching staff. That is why since my assumption of duty as Registrar I have, to some reasonable extent, come to adequately understand the various factors responsible for motivating employees towards peak performance, while equally being sensitive to contending issues that are likely to discourage non-teaching staff members. I believe if we communicate rightly, empower the staff appropriately and recognize efforts, treat all the same, train staff continuously, etc. we will be sure to catalyze motivation, and as a result see peak performance blossom in our universities. What is the Registry Department doing to achieve this objective, you may wish to ask? I shall discuss it later in this presentation.

Fellow colleagues, university administrators are responsible to the Registrar and their roles and functions flow from that of the Registrar or Registry. Indeed, the statute establishing the University provides that:

1. There shall be for each University a Registrar who shall be the Chief Administrative Officer of the University and shall be responsible to the Vice Chancellor for the day-to-day administrative work of the University except as regards matters for which the Bursar is responsible…
2. The person holding the office of the Registrar shall by virtue of that office be Secretary to Council, the Senate, Congregation and Convocation and their Committees for which **he/she may appoint officers to act on his/her behalf**.

This clearly means that the Registrar cannot be at different places at the same time. Delegated responsibility, therefore, becomes mandatory. Whenever this becomes necessary, the Registrar searches for competent hands to represent him/her in order to produce the desired result.

These statutory provisions, stated a short while ago, vest enormous responsibilities on the Registrar. In other words, the Registrar is required to provide services in planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and reporting in all the activities related to statutory organs – Council, Senate, Congregation, Convocation, Boards of Studies and Committees of Deans and Directors, other Committees and general administration, admissions, effective record keeping and staffing – to enable the University to produce qualified young men and women who are worthy in character and learning.

From this brief picture I have just painted about the responsibilities of the Registry Department and its team of non-teaching staff, one would be living in a fool’s paradise to think that non-teaching staff play second fiddle to academic staff with regard to the University System. No, this is not true. This is a false proposition. **Both teaching and non-teaching staff are equal partners** **in the running of the University system in this country**. Put differently; do not ever consider yourselves as **inferior**. What is important is mutual cooperation and respect for one another in the course of carrying out our responsibilities. You and I are non-teaching staff by choice, just as the other person is an academic staff by choice. We all have our various statutory roles to play in the development of the University. The respect or otherwise you have, as a non-teaching staff in the University system, depends on your personal approach to issues. The quality, the initiative, the commitment and the high sense of responsibility you bring to bear at your place of duty would go a long way towards attaining the needed respect by your colleagues. And this is whether you are an academic or a non-teaching staff.

Having said that, I would like to restate that **the role of non-teaching staff in the administration of Nigerian universities is immeasurable**. The Registrar, as the Chief Administrative Officer, leads a team of staff, the non-teaching staff, who are charged with the responsibility of providing services that facilitate the smooth, efficient and effective running of the University to enable it to achieve its fundamental goals of teaching, research and community service. Indeed, the Registrar represents the non-teaching staff and is charged with the responsibility of implementing details of policy decisions made by all the bodies to which he/she is the secretary.

In a nut shell, **the Registry is comprised of non-teaching staff members who are subdivided into administrative, non-administrative and technical staff**. They are involved in other functions outside teaching and research, which enables the university to achieve its purpose, mission and vision. These functions include admission processes, payment of salaries, provision of accommodation, appointments, information storage and retrievals, communications, health services, discipline, provision of maintenance of basic amenities for staff and students.

The Registry staff work in all Units, Divisions, Departments, Directorates and Faculties of the University, which function synergistically for the achievement of the objective of the University. The Registry staff members are found in every Department of the University. Indeed, **it is the largest Department in the Nigerian University System**.

The Registry Department, under my watch, made some considerable achievements last year by way of staff development, including the following:

1. Participating at a “Two-Day Training Workshop for Senior Assistant Registrars, Principal Assistant Registrars and Deputy Registrars in Nigerian Universities” held at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPPS), Koru, Jos, from Monday, 25th to Wednesday, 27th July, 2016;
2. Attending Book Launch entitled *The Professional University Administrator: A Handbook of Advanced Administrative Skills, Procedures and Best Practice* at the University of Benin on Wednesday, 9th November, 2016;
3. Participating at a four-day ANUPA National Conference/Annual General Meeting with the theme “Re-Engineering University Administration in an Era of Insecurity and Economic Recession” held in the Main Auditorium, University of Lagos, Akoka from 27th to 30th November, 2016.
4. Internal workshop: A three-day training workshop for administrative staff of tertiary institutions on “Enhancing the Capacity of Administrators of Tertiary Institutions in the 21st Century” was organized by the Registry Department and held at the Convocation Arena, Bayero University, Kano from 18th to 20th October, 2016. A good number of our administrative staff participated and seven (7) other universities and tertiary institutions were in attendance;
5. A five-day workshop for administrative staff on capacity building on the theme “Time Management for Lecturers and Administrators of Tertiary Institutions” held at Chesbury Hotel, Abuja from 21st to 25th November, 2016;
6. A five-day workshop on “Report and Minutes Writing Skills for Officers in Ministries, Departments and Parastatals” held at Administrative Staff College Of Nigeria (ASCON) From 3rd to 7th October, 2016;
7. A four-day course workshop on “Basic Computer/Office Equipment Management/Maintenance, Contingency and Data Processing Skills” held in the Conference Room 4, Excellent Hotel, Ogba, Lagos from 22nd to 25th November, 2016;
8. A four-day course workshop on “Basic Computer/Office Equipment Management/Maintenance, Contingency and Data Processing Skills” held in the Conference Room 4, Excellent Hotel, Ogba, Lagos from 6th to 9th December, 2016;
9. A two-day workshop on “Information Communication and Reporting in the Context of Labour” held at Modotel Hotel, Enugu on 22nd and 23rd November, 2016.
10. A number of Registry staff also attended various workshops at Ibadan and Kaduna during the period under review.
11. Sabbatical for Non-Teaching Staff: Again, last year, the Vice Chancellor, through the Committee of Deans and Directors (CDD), approved sabbatical leave for non-teaching staff of the University. This is, indeed, a milestone achievement for the Registry Department, as it would go a long way towards boosting the morale of the administrative staff of the University.

We are still working extraordinarily hard to ensure that we are not left behind in the scheme of things. And with the strong cooperation of SSANU and other bodies and, of course, the reciprocal rapport with the Management of the University, we shall grow from strength to strength to establish ourselves as inestimable partners in progress to move the University to greater heights.

Enjoy a successful SSANU WEEK.

I thank you for listening.