

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS AT CONGREGATION:
COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES: JULY 2015

Your Excellency John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana;
Your Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Chancellor of University of Ghana;
Your Lordship Justice Samuel Kofi Date-Bah, Chairman of University Council;
Honourable Ministers of State and Members of Parliament;
Pro-Vice Chancellors;
Registrar;
Guest Speaker,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Colleague Vice Chancellors;
Members of University Council and Members of Convocation;
Members of the Advisory Board of College of Basic and Applied Sciences
Niimej, Naamej, Nananom;
Graduating Students;
Parents and Guardians;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Welcome

On behalf of University management I welcome you all to today's congregation ceremony, the first for the 2014/2015 academic year.

Four ceremonies are being held over two days, with a total of 3,514 students graduating. Another set of graduation ceremonies will be held in November. This morning's ceremony will see 960 students of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences graduating with the degrees due them. This ceremony also marks the first graduation of students from the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine programme, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the students, faculty and staff who have worked so hard to make this possible.

Governance

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the University of Ghana officially inaugurated the collegiate system of governance at the start of the 2014/2015 academic year. The system has been running for almost one calendar year, and

I think now would be a good time to examine what has been achieved over the last year and do a brief assessment of what we set out to accomplish, and how far we have come towards reaching our targets.

The introduction of the collegiate system was meant to decentralize decision-making and thereby reduce bureaucracy and free officers at the centre, particularly the Vice Chancellor, Registrar and Administrative Director from some administrative duties, while creating more room for innovation at the school and college levels. Colleges have become semi-autonomous and able to take more decisions on their academic programmes and administration.

As part of the process, the University's statutes were amended to allow for the establishment of the new Colleges, and for the amendment of the structure of the College of Health Sciences.

Officers of the colleges have been appointed, and administrative structures have been put in place. I am glad to say that the Colleges have all started well, and are working towards meeting the objectives for which they were established.

Advisory Boards for all the Colleges have been established and inaugurated, and are working with college administrations to guide the Colleges in developing strategies; fostering effective links between the College and external communities; and helping to maintain and enhance the image and reputation of the Colleges.

The University's strategic plan was completed and launched in December last year, for the period 2014 to 2024, and is expected to provide strategic direction to the University for the next decade.

The colleges are working on their individual strategic plans; with a new focus on research. Other areas of interest are; Teaching and Learning; Strengthening Linkages with Industry; Information, Communication and Technology; Student, faculty and staff recruitment, retention and development; Asset acquisition and management; Financial planning and process management; Gender and

Diversity; Internal and external stakeholders and Monitoring and evaluation. The individual plans all dovetail into the University's plan, and are expected to contribute towards transforming the University into a world class university which has research at the core of its functions.

The Colleges have done significant work on the rationalization of programmes and courses; the introduction of new programmes and the revision of existing ones.

Most colleges are doing well in the area of research productivity and visibility, and are taking advantage of new opportunities and funding available, to carry out groundbreaking research with collaboration from local and international partners. The colleges are also all involved in fund-raising.

As the colleges enter their second year of operation, we shall all continue to work hard to ensure that they meet their targets of increasing efficiency and reducing bureaucracy. A thorough review of the collegiate system will take place after the system has been in operation for three years.

Academic Affairs

Your Excellencies, for the 2014/2015 academic year, the University received a total of 37, 326, applications for admission, made up of 30, 083 undergraduate and 7, 243 graduate applications.

The University admitted a total of 11, 944 undergraduate applicants and 2, 939 graduate applicants into programmes on the Main, Korle Bu, and Accra City campuses, and into the Distance Education programme. The University has intensified efforts to achieve gender parity in the admission of students, and the percentages of females admitted to all programmes continues to rise.

The University of Ghana Policy on Admission for Athlete Students (UG-PAAS) was introduced at the start of the 2014/2015 academic year. The policy is expected to promote the growth and development of students' performance in sports, thereby creating a sustainable relationship between sports and academic performance. The policy allows for the admission of talented sports

men and women whose grades qualify them to enter the university but are not competitive enough for them to be gain admission ordinarily. 32 students were admitted under the policy last year, and all indications are that they are doing well. One of these students won the Ghana Universities Sports Associations (GUSA) cross country event, and four others came within the first ten competitors.

346 foreign students enrolled in programmes in the University in the 2014/2015 academic year, a sharp decrease from previous years. It is obvious that this decline was mainly occasioned by the spread of the Ebola pandemic in the sub-region. We hope that with the end of the pandemic, enrolment figures will go up significantly. The University is in the process of engaging Recruitment Officers to assist the Office of International Programmes achieve international enrolment targets set by the University; and proactively recruit students in the face of increasing global competition. A review of internationalization in the University, which was recently conducted, made very useful recommendations regarding improving student experience and mobility, teaching to international standards, attitudes and perceptions.

Enhancing Skills of Students

To make our students more competitive in the job market, efforts are being made to sharpen their critical skills. This effort is being spearheaded by the Counseling and Placement Centre through various programmes such as leadership training, peer counseling and career week events.

Academic Prizes

The University has approved 18 new academic prizes with a value of over 150 thousand Ghana cedis, making a total of 61 university-wide prizes. More than 80,000 Ghana cedis has been received in the current academic year from individuals and corporate organizations towards the sponsorship of awards.

I encourage all staff members, corporate organizations and other stakeholders to consider sponsoring awards.

Financial Aid for Students

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the 2014/2015 academic year ended with a total donation inflow from both local and foreign donors of GH¢639,912.09 towards financial aid for students. I am proud to note that the University contributed GH¢103,932.00 of this amount from its internally generated funds. Additionally, the University and General Electric, have signed a memorandum of understanding covering a US\$100,000 scholarship package for needy brilliant students of University of Ghana. Under the agreement, one hundred students will have their tuition and residential fees fully paid until they complete their studies.

We salute all our donors and encourage other corporate sponsors and individuals to assist us to fund the education of students who would otherwise have to interrupt or terminate their studies.

Physical Developments

In March 2011, President John Evans Atta Mills, cut the sod at the University for the commencement of work for the relocation of the College of Health Sciences from the Korle Bu campus to Legon. That same year, a loan facility was secured by GoG from an Israeli Bank for the construction of a 617-bed Teaching Hospital for the University of Ghana at a total cost of US\$217 million. This project is an integral part of the 'Medical Village' concept that is to enable the University produce world-class health educators, experts and researchers in all sub-specialties to make health delivery in Ghana independent, sustainable and progressive.

The Hospital will have state-of-the-art facilities for trauma and emergency services, heart surgery, medical imaging, and a heliport, and will eventually be expanded into a 1,300 bed facility to provide effective teaching, learning and patient care. Future construction will cover a Cancer Centre and a Rehabilitation Building.

When completed, the University of Ghana Medical Centre will place the University of Ghana as one of the most advanced medical training institutions in West Africa.

As part of the project package about 80 Ghanaian personnel will undergo training at the Sheba Medical Centre in Israel.

20 Senior Specialists and Consultants have already started their training in Israel; nurses, administrators, biomedical engineers, and pharmacists will also receive training in the coming weeks.

It is expected that the Hospital will start working by March 2016.

The University of Ghana has entered into a landmark US\$64million project agreement with Africa Integras, a company that invests early-risk capital to develop education infrastructure. The partnership involves Africa Integras helping the University achieve a financially sustainable structure to address its infrastructure expansion needs. The project, which is structured as a 25-year Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT), is the first of its kind with a public university in Africa.

The project will involve the construction of an expanded facility for the College of Humanities, a new College of Education, a new dedicated facility for the College of Basic and Applied Sciences and the Institute of Applied Science and Technology, as well as a new facility for the College of Health Sciences, to be located near the new teaching hospital. 1,000 new student hostel beds will be provided under the project, to be divided between undergraduate and graduate students mostly to serve the College of Health Sciences.

Construction is expected to commence by September, 2015 with a targeted completion date of September 2017.

Research, Innovation and Development

Chancellor, you recently called on universities to invest in research if they are to have an impact on the African continent and stay relevant to the needs of the global market place.

I am proud to announce that the four centres of excellence established in the University have been allocated Gh¢1 million each as seed money to develop research areas in Climate Change Adaptation; Malaria Research; Food

Production and Processing; and Development Policy and Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation to address key developmental issues in Ghana and beyond. The University has earmarked US\$5 million for refurbishment of laboratories and the replacement of obsolete scientific equipment. Through the Chinese phase II ICT project, the University is now in a position to house large datasets for research and also do more computing research than before. I think we can safely conclude that our investment in research is paying off.

At the end of the review process for the 8th call for proposals for UG Research Grants, 31 grants with a total value of GHC 996,723 were awarded in the three grant categories.

39 applications for UG Conference Grants with a total value of GHC 187,990 have been approved for funding so far in the 2014/2015 academic year. A final review session for the academic year will take place later this month

A total of GHC 284,538 was awarded as faculty development grants this academic year. Since the inception of this scheme in the 2008/2009 academic year, a total of GHC 1,083,250 has been awarded to 85 faculty members. Of this number, as many as 31 have successfully obtained their PhDs or other terminal degrees, and returned to active teaching and research duties at the university. We are also exploring alternative faculty development schemes such as a UG postdoctoral research fellowship scheme.

Faculty and students of the University continue to benefit from a number of capacity building grants. Some of these are CAPREx; where faculty members spend up to 6 months at the University of Cambridge to work on a research topic with a Cambridge based collaborator; the Climate Impact Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement (CIRCLE) Programme, which offers one-year fellowships to support early career researchers on the impact of climate change in Africa; the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan; and the ACU STARS (*Structured Training for African Researchers*) Project.

Others are the Trans-Disciplinary Training for Resource Efficiency and Climate Change Adaptation in Africa – Phase 2); ARISE (Africa Regional International

Staff/Student Exchange); Food Security and Sustainable Human Wellbeing Project); P4PHT(Partnering for Health Professional Training in African Universities); CSAA (Inter-University Cooperation to Train Crop Scientists for Enhancing Agriculture in Africa) ; One Health (Enhancing Community of Practice in One Health for Infectious Diseases through Postgraduate Training)

External Grant Applications and Overview of Research Funding

Since the beginning of the 2014/ 2015 academic year, 37 research grant agreements with a combined total value of USD 9,579,086 have been signed, while 76 research proposals have been submitted to various sponsors/funders. The total value of proposals submitted for the period under review is \$124,060,123, with 24 proposals so far approved with a total value of \$21,221,754.74

2015 Aggrey-Fraser-Guggisberg Memorial Lectures

The 2015 Aggrey-Fraser-Guggisberg Memorial Lectures were delivered by Professor Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an Indian Literary Theorist, Philosopher and University Professor at Columbia University, and recipient of the 2012 Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy. The topic for the lectures was “Humanities: Asia, the West, Africa”. On the final day of the lectures a special congregation was held, at which Professor Spivak received an Honorary Degree from University of Ghana. The Aggrey-Fraser-Guggisberg Lectures are sponsored by Unibank Ghana Limited.

Rankings

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, permit me to touch briefly on the issue of the University’s rankings. Rankings are very important, as they help influence among others, the choice of students to attend particular institutions, funding from donor agencies, research affiliations, and indeed, also grant institutions the chance to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and put in place remedial measures. The latest university rankings compiled by Thomson Reuters places the University of Ghana in the 10th position among African universities. This is the best position we have ever attained in any rankings, and it is exciting to observe that our placement in the rankings has

consistently improved across all the major ranking organizations. The Times Higher Education list of the top 15 Universities in Africa places the University of Ghana at number 12. In the Webometrics ranking for Africa, the University of Ghana moved from number 52 in 2009 to 19 at the beginning of 2015. In the QS ranking, we remain one of only four universities from Sub-Saharan Africa listed for the first time ever in 2015. The University of Ghana has therefore become the highest ranked university in West Africa across all the different tables, and I applaud all colleagues, students and stakeholders of the University who have enabled us attain this feat. We will definitely not rest on our laurels, but will work even harder to ensure that our rankings go even higher both on the continent and internationally.

Well Wishes to Graduands

Now to our graduating students:

Seeing you all here, at the threshold of starting the next phase of your lives, brings back memories of my own graduation ceremonies from various educational institutions, many years ago, and reminds me of the excitement, the trepidation about what the future might hold, and the zeal I had to go out and change the world. No doubt, most of you gathered here are going through similar feelings and thoughts. Today's world offers young graduates so many opportunities, yet so many challenges; so many potential positive outcomes yet so many pitfalls along the way. I challenge you all to go out into the world, and do the very best you can wherever you find yourself. Work hard, dream big, plan ahead, be ethical and honest in all your dealings, and you will be well on the way towards success. The future may not be given, but you have a clean slate. Go out there, write on your slate in bold characters and make your mark! I wish you all the very best.

Thank you and God bless.

Professor Ernest Aryeetey
July 24, 2015