

**ADDRESS BY DR. ROSEMARY KEATLEY ON THE OCCASION OF THE JOINT CONGREGATION CEREMONY OF THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES (CHS) AND COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES (CBAS) TO BE HELD ON FRIDAY, 13<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2015 AT THE GREAT HALL, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON**

Good morning ,I would like to greet the members of this august body.

The Chairman and Members of Council of the University of Ghana,

The Vice-Chancellor,

Pro-Vice-Chancellors,

Provosts of College,

The Registrar,

Deans and Directors

The Chairmen and Members of the Advisory Boards of the College of Health Sciences  
and the College of Basic and Applied Sciences

Members of the Board of Trustees of the College of Health Sciences Postgraduate  
Endowment Fund,

Members of Convocation,

Graduating Students

Distinguished Invited Guests,

*Nananom, Neemei, Naamei,*

Parents and Guardians,

Members of the Media,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you today at the University of Ghana at Legon at this  
ceremony for graduating students who have successfully completed their courses of

study over the past few years. I would like thank the University for the honour done to me in asking me to serve on this occasion as the Guest Speaker.

The 2015 release by *The Times Higher Education World Rankings* names the University of Ghana as the best ranked university in Ghana and the 9th in Africa.<sup>1</sup> This is a highly commendable achievement for which I would like to congratulate the University. The University of Ghana is striding towards the ideals for which it was established, and is making efforts to become a world-class, research-intensive university. In order to achieve this, the university has recently embarked on several initiatives. It has restructured its governance system, paving the way for the creation of four new Colleges, of Health Sciences, Basic and Applied Sciences, Education and Humanities, that now make up the University. I understand that this ceremony is a joint one being held for students of the two science-based colleges in the university, namely the College of Health Sciences and the College of Basic and Applied Sciences.

Today we must celebrate the hard work of students as well as that of Management, lecturers and administrators, who have groomed these graduands into becoming what they are today. I know the pride your teachers have in you. At Medlab I get compliments on the quality, knowledge and competence of my staff from the external auditors who conduct our accreditation visits. I feel the same pride and I know that this is thanks to the great ground work that your teachers have laid as well as my own humble efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/new-faces-take-a-seat-at-extended-top-table>)

This day is also a moment to give thanks for the tremendous support of family, friends and benefactors who altogether, have made it possible for the students to make this remarkable journey through their schooling.

I would like to address the graduating class. This a time to celebrate your accomplishments, and to find inspiration for the life ahead. Commencement Day, as it is called in some parts of the world , truly marks for the graduating student, a moment where one door closes and another opens, as you enter into the world of work. For those of you with further degrees from the School of Graduate Studies, you have been through this transition before, and today marks yet another milestone in your academic career which will allow you to reposition yourselves as more mature persons and future leaders of whom much would be expected. Let me congratulate you all on your achievements as you conclude this important phase of your lives and start a new journey.

Let me share a few words and thoughts with you.

The focus of university training is not only the acquisition of knowledge, it is the development of analytical and problem-solving skills which will allow you to deal with the problems that you will encounter tomorrow. The end result of this training should be to acquire a resilience that should enable you to withstand the challenges that lie ahead . Certainly living a meaningful life is being able to have the versatility and creativity of mind to take appropriate control of your destiny and your environment.

It is important to remember that the degrees you are about to earn now and for which you are being celebrated today, are paper qualifications. Their real value will lie in

how you apply the training you have received. To succeed in life, you also require the personal and societal values which, if well applied, will perfect you into becoming the all rounded well-groomed responsible individuals that the nation needs. I am talking about values such as honesty, team spirit, commitment, resourcefulness, patriotism, respect for human dignity, patience, and humility. These values will eventually shape your attitude to life and empower you to become successful.

You must remember dear graduands, that you have been trained as a privileged elite, subsidised with the taxpayers' hard-earned money. This imposes an obligation on you and you must strive in all you do to be relevant and contribute to the progress of society. You have a responsibility to your communities, your country and to the world as a whole, no matter what your personal aspirations are. You must work hard with diligence and faithfulness in the service of your country. Whether you are in agriculture, public health or allied health sciences, you must not focus on selfish ideals, the quest for prestige, or aspirations of grandeur.

The challenge is to take these years of university education and the unique personal passions you have nurtured, to do something relevant and positive with them. The impact one person can make is enormous if you use your ingenuity, so do not decline postings to the rural or remote parts of the country. One British gap year student came to Ghana to work with street children. She later founded Afrikids and managed to persuade British Airways to donate coins collected from plane passengers. This became a huge fund to rehabilitate poor children in Ghana.

Your parents and guardians valued education so much that even when the means were very limited and competed with other equally important demands, it was your education that received priority. It was also with the help of people like your lecturers among many others, who dedicated themselves to teaching and other supporting services at this University that you have been able to make it this far. Some of you are here also because of help received from philanthropists who awarded you scholarships and other forms of support. It is therefore important to give your utmost, back to family, society, country and the world, and certainly, in the best way you can.

Almost all of you graduating today from the two colleges here, are professionals and many of you will be working in the health sector. As professionals you are expected to be highly skilled and well versed in the practice of your disciplines and to maintain your knowledge through continuous learning during your working life. Remain committed, responsible, and disciplined in the exercise of your duties, and observe professional ethics and the code of conduct of your profession.

Some of you will be working in public health and may find yourselves in the battle against global epidemics. In a previous century, it was the technical ingenuity and fact-based investigation by a medical doctor which helped to defeat cholera in Victorian England. Dr John Snow witnessed thousands dying of cholera in London in 1853, and identified the handle of a water pump in his neighbourhood of Broad Street as contaminated. He convinced officials to remove the handle, and successfully proved that contaminated water was the main agent spreading cholera - a discovery that helped to define the way to contain and defeat the epidemic.

In 2014 it was Ebola that caught the headlines. We celebrated the bravery of the many healthcare workers in the affected African countries who risked their lives and their health in order to contain the epidemic. Let us not forget that the world faces and will face many other epidemics, such as the resurgence of Ebola, cholera and avian flu, which will require resourcefulness, ingenuity, teamwork, and self-sacrifice to subdue. The Nigerian technologists used the techniques developed in polio-tracing epidemiology to contain Ebola in their country. In this electronic age, we should be able to use GPS-based systems to trace affected individuals and monitor their movements.

It is important that you work with a complete sense of professionalism, meaning that you work hard and at the top of your profession, and you apply all the rules and regulations to make your output of the highest quality.

It was that sense of professionalism that led me to return to my native land of Ghana after my training overseas, and to run Medlab Ghana Limited ('Medlab' for short). When I returned to Ghana in 1994, I was a US Board-certified physician with 10 years' experience in the US medical sector, and also a qualified physician in the UK where I had achieved my medical degree at Cambridge University. My original intention was to practise in Ghana as a physician, but I soon realised that the practice of medicine in this country was seriously impeded by the lack of properly functioning laboratories. A study performed by the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) at the time indicated that 80% of the labs in Ghana were producing unreliable results.

Medlab was founded to address this need and has always pursued the very highest quality in medical diagnostics. This was recognised in 2008 when Medlab became accredited to ISO-15189, the recognised standard in the world for medical laboratories. Indeed Medlab was the first laboratory in Ghana to achieve this accreditation.

To achieve this success at Medlab, I have drawn on all my medical knowledge, and at the same time it has required hard work, day-in day-out, a passion for excellence, and an unswerving commitment to maintain good service to our referring doctors and patients.

I have invested much time in ensuring that the foundations of Medlab are built on solid ground. This involves: continuous development of good laboratory practices, maintaining the highest quality standards, installing a laboratory information system, introducing the latest innovations in diagnostic techniques, and collaborating with centres of excellence, as shown by our recent merger with Synlab, the largest private medical laboratory group in Europe. These qualities have brought us successfully to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Medlab Ghana in 2015, and will sustain us for many years to come.

We have a strong commitment to medical education in our Corporate Social Responsibility programme. In that spirit, we donated a chemistry analyser to the School of Allied Health in recognition of their role in educating students who are now amongst our best workers, and, to aid in the training of the next generation.

Never be afraid to originate ideas. For a modern nation to succeed, it must be a knowledge-based economy. We need to develop the ability to manufacture innovative technology in Ghana. In the area of medical diagnostics, this could include production of reagents and X-ray equipment. I procured an X-ray system from a European provider and found out that my classmate in a large London Hospital had procured the same product at 30% below my cost. I approached the vendor and asked why poor Africans were to be charged more. I was informed that since we did not produce such systems, there was no competition to drive down prices!

Dear graduands, I would like to speak to you about entrepreneurship and the need for us to explore the vast unexplored potentials that we have in Ghana to build organisations. IFC, the private sector arm of the World Bank, has estimated that 50% of healthcare services in Africa are delivered by the private sector. Today in Ghana we have many privately run medical facilities and several schools of medicine, dentistry and public health that seek to render service to the nation. Help the private sector to help improve the health delivery system in the country. Do not miss this opportunity through a fear of job insecurity in the private sector.

The need for medical services and health professionals is increasing, and the public purse cannot meet all those demands. We must be ingenious and develop innovative ways to meet those needs. Examples of these solutions are tele-medicine and mobile MRI scanners.

To become more knowledgeable your quest must not end here but must continue with further training and constant learning. A Master's Degree should not become an



end in itself; it should be a reflection of your passion and curiosity. Some of you may also consider building a career in the world of academia in the universities that have nurtured you. You may therefore wish to give back to your alma mater in this and other ways.

In that spirit, Medlab has donated a prize for excellence in microbiology to be awarded to the top student at the College of Health Sciences. The prize includes a cash award and more importantly two books which we have selected. This year's winning student will receive a text book atlas as well as a copy of the book 'Guns, Germs and Steel' by Professor Jared Diamond of the University of California at Los Angeles. This thought-provoking book relates the discipline of applied technology and evolutionary biology to the study of human societies. It shows how the advances made by European societies in explosives and metal-working, as well as the immunities that they acquired to infectious diseases, allowed them to dominate the world until recently. Epidemics changed human history, an example is the Black Death (bubonic plague) which wiped out a quarter of the European population. There are interesting lessons in that for us in Ghana today.

I would like to end by congratulating each and every one of you who has gone through the University of Ghana. We know for a fact that your presence here is a testimony to your great efforts and a major milestone in each of your individual lives. It is all our sincere hope that you will prove to be worthy ambassadors of the University and that you will uphold the highest standards, the integrity and the values that the University has inculcated in you.

I wish you all the best as you journey into the world and pray that you will conquer the world.

Long live the College of Health Sciences and the College of Basic and Applied Sciences!

Long live the University of Ghana,

Long live Ghana.

Thank you for your attention.