

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS AT MATRICULATION: SATURDAY OCTOBER 8, 2016

SALUTATION

Chairman and Members of the University Council;
Pro-Vice Chancellors;
Acting Registrar;
Provosts, Deans and Directors;
Heads of Department and Heads of Hall;
Senior Tutors;
Members of Convocation;
Freshmen and Women;
Parents and Guardians;
Distinguished Invited Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

INTRODUCTION

As we commence another academic year in the life of the University of Ghana, it is my delight to welcome you all to the premier University and also to this year's matriculation ceremony. This is the first matriculation ceremony I am presiding over since I took office as Vice-Chancellor on 1st August 2016, so in a sense it is my matriculation as well. Most of you must be wondering what matriculation is all about.

The matriculation ceremony marks the formal admission of students into the University. It is also the occasion during which matriculants pledge their allegiance to the authority of the University and are enjoined, through the administration of the oath, to be obedient to the Vice-Chancellor, the Chief Disciplinarian of the University, as well as all other officers of the University. In pledging to be of good behaviour, the freshmen and women are committing themselves to be disciplined and worthy ambassadors of the University. Every student who enrolls for a University of Ghana undergraduate or postgraduate degree is required to take the matriculation oath. It is my hope that matriculants will take this ceremony seriously and will also endeavour to live in accordance with the rules and regulations of the University while pursuing their programmes. We need the support, loyalty, commitment and cooperation of both students and staff to make this University a world-class institution of higher learning.

The day you as freshers have been waiting for is finally here and we congratulate you on officially becoming students of this highly esteemed institution. Your presence here is a clear indication that you believe in the system of higher education being offered at the University of Ghana, and are ready for an exciting academic adventure here. We greatly appreciate your confidence in us.

ADMISSIONS

Admissions into the University of Ghana continue to be very competitive. For the sixth year running, the University made it possible for students who completed their WASSCE in May this year, to enter the University in the same year of writing the examinations. Again, the University took up the additional challenge of admitting students in the West African sub-region who wrote their final senior high school examinations in May 2016. I salute the teams who worked hard to make this a reality.

The University continues to receive large numbers of applications for admission each year. However, due to limited facilities and human resources, we are forced to once again turn down the applications of many otherwise qualified applicants.

For the **2016/2017** academic year, the University received a total of **40,435** applications made up of **32,843** undergraduate applications and **7,592** graduate applications.

The University admitted students into programmes on the Main Campus, the Korle Bu Campus, the Accra City Campus and Distance Learning and was able to offer admission to a total of **24,312** applicants made up of **20,621** undergraduate and **3,691** graduate students. Out of the number offered admission, **10,551** have registered, made up of **7,611** undergraduate students and **2,940** graduate students. The **7,611** registered undergraduate students are made up of **3,841** males and **3,770** females. For the **2,940** registered graduate students, **1,702** are males and **1,238** are females.

The University continued with its policy of giving the opportunity of university education to applicants from Less Endowed Schools and applicants with disability on concessionary basis.

For the third year running, the University also offered admission to talented sportsmen and women based on their sporting abilities, under the policy on the Admission of Student Athletes. Students admitted under this policy must first satisfy the general entry requirements of the University, and also show proof of athletic ability. The first two batches of students admitted under this programme are excelling both academically and in their sporting activities. We welcome the third batch of students admitted under the policy, and trust that you will work hard to effectively combine your participation in sports with your academic work.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The University of Ghana continues to attach great importance to the cross-cultural experience that is made possible by the presence of international students on our campuses. For the 2016/2017 academic year, **1,909** undergraduate and 1,946 graduate international applications were received. Out of this number, **761** undergraduate and **229** graduate students of various nationalities were admitted into our programmes as regular, as well as special admission students. **222** undergraduate and **77** graduate international students have registered. These students come mainly from other African countries, China, India, Italy, Germany, France, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Netherlands, Pakistan, Sweden and the United States of America. There are also students on exchange programmes from our partner institutions in the United States of America, Canada and Asia. I am very pleased to welcome all international students to the University of Ghana and urge them to enjoy their stay in Ghana, feel at home and make use of the services offered by the International Programmes Office. All students are encouraged to engage with our international students in order to explore the rich diversity of cultures from all these countries represented at the University of Ghana.

NEW PROGRAMMES

Undergraduate Level

The 2016/2017 admissions saw the re-introduction of the Bachelor of Arts in Administration programmes in the College of Humanities. This is in line with offering students the ability to combine business related subjects with other subjects in the humanities. Students were also admitted into new programmes in the College of Education.

- Bachelor of Arts in Education (Teaching and Non-Teaching) options; and
- Bachelor of Science in Education (Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics) options.

With the facing out of Diploma programmes from the main and City campuses at the end of the 2015/2016 academic year, the College of Education has taken up the challenge of running selected Diploma programmes in some of its Regional Learning Centres from the beginning of this academic year.

Postgraduate Level

At the postgraduate level, the following new programmes were introduced;

Sandwich Programmes

- M. A. Organizational Leadership and Governance;
- MSc. Accounting and Finance;
- MSc. Financial Risk Management;
- M. A. Educational Leadership and Management;

Regular Programmes

- MPhil. Educational Leadership and Management;
- MPhil. Sustainability Science;
- MPhil. Environmental Sanitation Studies;
- MSc. /MPhil. Hydrogeology Geology;
- MSc. /MPhil. Economic Geology;
- MSc. /MPhil. Applied Geochemistry;
- MSc. /MPhil. Applied Geophysics;
- MSc. Geoinformation;
- MSc. Geology;
- MEng/MPhil/PHD. Biomedical Engineering;
- MEng/MPhil/PHD. Material Science Engineering;
- MPhil. Seed Science and Technology.

FINANCIAL AID TO STUDENTS

In 2005, the University instituted a process to assist students to significantly reduce or eliminate financial barriers that might limit their access to education here.

Through the Students Financial Aid Office, financial assistance is provided to qualified students who, without such assistance, may not be able to meet their educational expenses at Legon.

This aid is available in the form of scholarships, either in full or in part. About 120 students are sponsored each year through the benevolence of individuals and corporate bodies. I would like to acknowledge sponsors for the 2015/2016 academic year and to encourage others to come on board. Students facing financial challenges are encouraged to apply for consideration for the various support schemes when they are advertised. The Students Financial Aid Office is located at Bungalow Number 11, East Legon (adjacent to Akuafo Hall Annex A).

Financial assistance is also available to undergraduate students who need it from the Students' Loan Trust Fund (SLTF). You can contact the Students Loan Trust Fund to initiate the process of applying for the Students' Loan. Their contact details can be found in your admission letters. You can also visit any of their 14 zonal offices across the country for assistance.

Being sensitive to the plight of students, the University has made provision for students to pay 70% of their fees at the beginning of the first semester, and the remaining, before the beginning of the second semester.

EXCELLENCE AND DISCIPLINE

Education comes with responsibility. To those of you, who have been admitted to study at the University of Ghana, you have an obligation to use your education for the benefit of others. I challenge each of you to be an active citizen of this community and every community that you will inhabit in the future.

As you begin your studies at the University of Ghana, I want to encourage you to strive for excellence. I encourage you freshmen and women to take inspiration from those who have gone ahead of you and also work hard to attain laurels for yourselves, for the University and for the nation at large. Excellence does not come from spending 24 hours a day in the library. Neither does it come from spending 12 hours a day in prayer meetings and all night sessions. Spending all your time on entertainment by devoting all your energies to organizing hall week and other events is not going to lead to excellence.

In an institution like ours, students achieve excellence by having the right balance. The amount of time you spend on your books has to be balanced with social engagements and other forms of social learning.

You must know how to develop critical thinking and be analytical, not simply repeating what your lecturers say. While you must question received wisdom, this must be done in a refined way.

You cannot strive for excellence if you are not disciplined. We live in a civilized society and civility and decency must reflect in all our actions. The University is governed by rules and regulations and there are procedures for engaging in various activities. I therefore urge all students to carefully read the regulations which you have been given and follow the procedures accordingly. I assure you that if you do this, your days in the University shall be happy and fruitful. Guard against anti-social activities such as occultism and the peddling and usage of narcotic drugs and study diligently and you will be well on the way towards achieving excellence.

CONCLUSION

As I conclude my speech, I would like to remind all matriculants that your primary aim for coming to this University is to study hard, go through your chosen academic programme and graduate with flying colours. You should therefore begin with the end in mind and channel your energies in that direction. Remember that you were admitted as an individual and you will graduate as an individual. You are therefore solely responsible for all your actions. You are adults now, and we shall treat you as such. There is no more rising bell, no 'prep' and no dining time. Enjoy your freedom but use it responsibly. Being at the University is special for many different reasons. For many of you, this is the first time in your life that you will be truly living independently. This is an opportunity to grow and learn as a person, and to discover who you are.

You have been prepared well for this day by your parents, family and teachers. Many of your loved ones have sacrificed so much so that you may enjoy the privilege of a University education. Honour their sacrifice by behaving responsibly and making the most of this wonderful opportunity.

Make time for social activities like scholarly lectures, sports and religious activities if you are so inclined, but do not allow these to make you lose sight of the main reason why you are here.

No doubt, some of you are entering the University with a good idea of what you want to do with your lives. I am also sure that the vast majority of you do not have a clue what you want to do with the education that you will go through here. My advice to you is that there is no need to worry. You have at least four years to figure this out. Always keep an open mind, as you may discover your passion in unexpected places.

In the course of time, you will encounter new experiences. New relationships are going to be formed, some of which may be life-long. By all means enjoy them but remain focused.

Life in the University can be very exciting both intellectually and socially. My dear freshmen and women let me advise you to make time to read University notices and pay attention to University rules and regulations. The University's Careers and Counselling Centre is available to offer assistance if required. Listen to Radio Unvers on 105.7FM and regularly visit the University's website www.ug.edu.gh since important information will be communicated to you through these media. We shall be available to guide you, so long as you are willing to be guided. We will give you the support necessary, but only if you use the legitimate means to seek such support.

On behalf of the Council of the University, Members of Convocation and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate you on your admission and welcome you once again to the University of Ghana. On our part, we will do all that is humanly possible to make your stay here as pleasant as possible.

Enjoy your stay here; take advantage of every facility that is offered to develop yourself and to prepare for your future careers and lives. I wish you well.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Professor Ebenezer Owusu Oduro
Vice-Chancellor