

SPEECH BY CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL AT SEND-OFF DINNER FOR PROF ARYEETAY

29TH JULY 2016

The University of Ghana has been lucky to have a succession of excellent Vice-Chancellors. They have all contributed, in their own particular ways, to the advancement of this great institution and to the progress of education in Ghana. The founding Principal of the University College of the Gold Coast, the famous Balme, felicitously expressed his vision of the University that his successors have all endeavoured to implement. When inaugurating Legon Hall in 1953, he said:

“This University must be part of the country’s growth, growing with it, responding to its needs, reflecting the development of its genius.”

In 2010, it became the turn of Professor Ernest Aryeetey to implement this vision. And, implement it he has, with aplomb. Professor Aryeetey has been an outstanding Vice-Chancellor. His performance has been stellar, in my humble view. The excellence of his output can be observed in several aspects of the University’s life. To use the categories he himself formulated in his speech at his induction six years ago, these include:

- 1. the promotion of academic excellence through expanded and relevant research and extension work;**
- 2. the promotion of academic excellence through enhanced teaching, learning and leadership training;**
- 3. the expansion and upgrading of the infrastructure of the University;**
- 4. the overhaul of the University’s governance arrangements;**

- 5. better management of the University's assets and facilities;**
- 6. mainstreaming and enforcement of structures and processes for the monitoring and evaluation of the University's activities; and finally**
- 7. enhanced fund-raising.**

All these aspects of the University's life were integral parts of the vision highlighted by Professor Aryeetey in his speech during his induction. The quintessence of his vision was the transformation of Legon into a world class University within a decade. During his six years in charge of the University, he has achieved outstanding milestones in translating his vision into reality, which should make both the University and himself proud.

For instance, expanded research in the University has been a hallmark of Professor Aryeetey's administration. The University is in the process of being transformed into a research University which will ultimately produce as many postgraduate degree holders as first degree holders. Furthermore, with the backing of Council, he has secured the President's approval for this radical vision for the University. Under his tenure, there has been a steady increase in Postgraduate Student numbers. There has also been a programme to assist senior members without terminal research degrees to obtain them. This expanded research ambition of the University is embedded in the UG's Strategic Plan. The expanded research strategy includes the creation of 4 research centres for:

1. Malaria research;
2. Enhancing Food Production and Food Processing;
3. Trans-disciplinary research into Climate Change Adaptation; and
4. Development Policy and Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation.

The University has established Working Groups in these areas to facilitate the achievement of multidisciplinary research outcomes.

Regarding the promotion of academic excellence through enhanced teaching, learning and leadership training, among the achievements chalked up under his leadership are the improved new structure of the Doctor of Philosophy programmes, the publication of the University of Ghana Readers, the largest publication project of UG thus far, procurement of science equipment; the upgrading of the ICT infrastructure on campus; and several others.

The most radical transformation of the University's governance arrangements since its establishment has taken place under his watch. This is the introduction of the collegiate structure of government and the decentralization of the University's administration. This will be one of his major legacies.

Also prominent and visible is the expansion in the infrastructure of the University. In this connection, the Africa Integra and Legon City Projects are worthy of mention. The Africa Integra Build-Operate-Transfer project will make a lasting impression on the physical space of the University. When concluded, it will have expanded the physical space for academic work more than ever, since the initial construction of the University. The Legon City Project will in turn enable a mixed use real estate development of the University's land in the Okponglo area, thus protecting it from encroachers and ensuring a revenue flow from it for the advancement of the University's purposes. Clearly, both will be visible legacies of his tenure.

Already the asphalt roads give the impression of progress and purpose in the University. Both the refurbished roads and the new academic and residential facilities are integral parts of Professor Aryeetey's vision of better management of the University's assets and facilities

highlighted in his induction speech six years ago. Another visible asset that he is leaving in a better shape is the Vice-Chancellor's lodge. The new Gazebo there provides a relaxing ambience for the V.C.'s entertainment which many of us have enjoyed.

Among the skills he has brought to bear on his Vice-Chancellorship are his outstanding representational ability which has helped to project an enviable image for the University. He has been the face of the University in many fora both abroad and here in Ghana. His eloquence has helped this role. This attribute has been manifest at University lectures that he has chaired. His knack for identifying the cardinal issues in a lecture and waxing lyrical on them in his closing remarks are legendary and I am sure will endure in the memories of many who have seen him perform. His excellent representational ability and eloquence combined to make him a powerful advocate for the causes of the University. Though a strong advocate for his views and the causes of the University, he has also been a good team player.

Professor Kwapong, in his recently launched Memoir, quotes Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, the first substantive Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, as addressing the following words to the Academic Board:

“Speaking pragmatically, a university in any large sense of the word cannot flourish in conditions of extra-academic surveillance and interference, and the defence of academic freedom in that sense is a necessity of university life. If academic freedom in that sense were ever to be assailed here, it should be my duty as Vice-Chancellor to defend it by all the means in my power and I should do it.”

Professor Aryeetey clearly agrees with this because, in spite of initial internal opposition, he succeeded in securing Council's approval for

naming the main approach road to the University “Academic Freedom Road.” This will be a reminder to succeeding Vice-Chancellors of the merit in holding fast to this value laid down for us by this University’s earlier leaders.

On behalf of Council and, I am sure, the whole Legon Community, and indeed the whole nation, I wish to express my gratitude to you, Professor Aryeetey, for your outstanding stewardship and to wish you well in your life after the Vice-Chancellorship. I am sure that you will continue to excel.

It would be remiss of me to conclude this speech without thanking Ellen, your loving wife, for her partnership with you that has produced such outstanding results for Legon. It is not for nothing that she herself is a distinguished academic. Our thanks are thus to both of you for providing leadership to the Legon Community over the past six years. May God be with you in the years ahead.