

**ADDRESS BY THE GUEST SPEAKER AT THE GRADUAND GRADUATION,  
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

**20<sup>TH</sup>JULY, 2019 – DR. (MRS.) IRENE STELLA AGYENIM-BOATENG**

Member of Council representing the Chancellor

Members of the University Council

Vice Chancellor,

Pro-Vice Chancellors

Registrar

Chairman & members of College of Humanities Advisory Board

Members of Convocation

Alumni and friends of the University

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Graduands

It is indeed a great pleasure and a rare opportunity to be honoured as the Guest Speaker for such an august ceremony.

Since I left campus several years ago, I have had the opportunity to come around for one reason or the other; but today the nostalgia is obviously different. I still remember the day of my graduation and the good feeling associated with it.

Indeed, I salute and pay tribute to my lecturers who selflessly imparted knowledge and whose effort have contributed to my wellbeing. I believe it is not out of place to mention but a few of them; Professor Bill Puplampu, Professor Quame Aboagye, Dr. Ohene

Konadu, Dr. Onumah, Dr. Clement Hammah, Dr. Ansah Ofei (of blessed memory) and a host of others. I salute you Sirs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we must celebrate the hard work of Faculty and all members of the University Community and other stakeholders including Government and families who have supported these graduands to realise their dreams and aspirations.

Just like it was for me, this glorious and glamorous occasion must have been a dream to graduands. I am sure that when you first stepped your feet on this campus, you least expected that this day will come so fast. We thank God for seeing you through and helping you enjoy the moments.

Even as you bask in excitement, I'm sure you will still permit me to share a few thoughts with you – nuggets to carry along as you journey through the next phase of life – career or otherwise.

Dear graduands, after today, your curriculum vitae and academic profiles will be amended to make room for new titles and letters after your names. As you enjoy the moment, pause to think of this statement in William Shakespeare's Macbeth: "To be Thus is nothing but to be safely Thus" ... As an individual, quite apart from the Scriptures, I have been so guided by this statement because it is not enough to parade your

academic achievements in the face of people but to be sure that you have a holistic view of life that makes you secure and relevant in whatever you pursue. You have gone through thick and thin, defying all odds to be here today to be celebrated but then “To be thus is nothing but to be safely thus”.

Clearly, one should not and must not celebrate whatever is described as “enough” because that is not a feast to be celebrated. “Enough” is only the starter, not the finish line. Having gone through such rigorous academic regime at the Premier University must have already prepared you to know that what differentiates a successful person from the not so successful, is not necessarily the brain power but what use each of them makes of their latent abilities and the extent of hunger to achieve more. The magical route to success is when opportunity comes into contact with appropriate and adequate preparation supported by strategic positioning. Success is not a product of parading a cup of emptiness soliciting for drops of sympathy; for those who drop in the sympathy tend to exact their pound of flesh when you least expect it.

I have no iota of doubt that the preparation you have received in this University has been both appropriate and adequate but how you position yourself to take advantage of opportunities in your environment must not be under-estimated. Striking the right balance between your Ability and Willingness must well be a light unto your career aspiration and a lamp unto the leadership profile you build for yourself. Organisations today are looking for people who have the right mix of Ability and Willingness. What is

the use of a person who has all the abilities but lacks the willingness and attitude to apply same to put their Organisation and society on a better pedestal?

Ladies and Gentlemen, expectant graduands,

Even if you have all the knowledge required for success and everyone can aptly describe you as a walking encyclopedia of information, with the best education and experience but lack integrity, leadership and strategic direction, all the attributes ascribed to you will be of little or no use for society and will only be dumped in the bin of “good – for – nothings.”

It is not an exaggeration to say that Growth and Comfort cannot be bedfellows. Growth is associated with executive maturity, pressure from several angles, thinking on your feet, going the extra mile sometimes making unpopular but needed decisions and building your personal brand for glorious and timeless outcomes.

On the other hand, when you continue to live in your comfort zone, to celebrate “enough”, you will sow complacency and harvest extinction. The decision becomes yours; Growth or Comfort? Step out, be agile and stand out in your career and society, not as a sore thumb but as a beacon of hope for all. For as Charles Darwin, a Naturalist, puts it, “It is not the strongest of the species that survive nor the most intelligent, but rather the one most adaptable to change”. There are many who have similar or even

better profiles as you do so until you cultivate the attitude of positive visibility and readiness to adapt to change, you may not go far.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Being adaptable to change in my honest view is deciding not to live in your past glories, trumpeting your actions of yesteryears. Those who have gone that path have built their future Castles in the air and only God knows what ladder can support them to enjoy those illusive Castles. After your degrees and titles have been conferred on you today, they soon will join the myriad of past glories you may have in your closets; what will matter to yourself and society at large will be the application of these academic laurels and titles so conferred on you to the realities of life more meaningfully. Afterall, your history will never be written without your titles, but your best story should be the unending one, telling how youhave impacted society.

Though in recent times, the cliché “Thinking outside the box” has become the way to go, I daresay that your sense of creativity and innovation should not confine you to only focus on finding all answers outside the box – sometimes it pays to think both within and outside the box. In essence, it is important that in taking your career and life decisions you explore all possibilities and potential influencers before arriving at conclusions without ignoring what at first instance may not present itself in a manner that seems to meet expectation.Sometimes the solutions to our challenges lie within us.However more often than not we are quick to look for solutions where they do not exist for the sake of

“thinking outside the box”. Nobody has the responsibility to make you relevant but yourself, so create your relevance. The truth is that what you intensely think about consciously or unconsciously becomes what you get as your reality. Absorb your environment as much as a sponge would if it came into contact with water so you can have command over your circumstances.

After acquiring academic laurels, everyone feverishly seeks for what is termed “big positions”. Unfortunately, in their quest to seek for whatever these “big positions” are they do not realise that no such position is like a fruit hanging on a tree ready to be plucked by passers-by, but it is the totality of humble beginnings of diligent and efficient execution of little jobs that propels a person to occupy the so called “big position”. It cannot be attained by sudden flight. Your readiness to learn at the feet of the “big position” holders you admire will give you a sound footing to achieve your dream. Luckily, you are blessed to be surrounded by many of such big position holders. Ask them and they will tell you that you can never be a serious competitor to anyone for a job if your mantra is “this is not in my job description.”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you hit the job market, some of you will have initial difficulties securing jobs. As university graduates, you have been trained to be innovative, have business acumen, be independent and self-sufficient. Therefore, start thinking of how you can set up your own businesses by falling back on the knowledge you have acquired here. If half of you

here are able to create your own businesses and employ others, you will reduce the graduate unemployment figures in the country by several hundreds.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I take my seat, I want our Graduandsto also remember this: the race will not always be for the swift but for those with positive and openminds.

However, any attempt or effort by one to open another person's closed mind will yield no gains. The only person who holds the key to the door of the closed mind is the owner of that mind. Have an open mind and do away with puffed up ego, parochial thinking and the deceptive imagination that you have a weakness that cannot be corrected. Let the occasion today be the key to open that closed mind.

I wish you all the best as the next phase of your lives unfold.

Thank you very much for your attention.