

A SPEECH BY MR. WILLIAM ARTHUR, GUEST SPEAKER FOR THE CONGREGATION CEREMONY OF THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES AND THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA ON SATURDAY, 22ND JULY, 2017 AT THE GREAT HALL, UG, LEGON

Mr. Chairman

Vice-Chancellor

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Graduation Day is a special day in the life of any student; it is the crowning moment of all the hard work, frustrations and anxieties endured and for staying the course of academic life. I recall with fondness the overwhelming sense of excitement, accomplishment and high hopes that accompanied my own graduation day in this very magnificent edifice and symbol of higher learning. I daresay it is the best feeling for any student who has successfully gone through the full rigours of academia.

And so, Mr. Chairman, I am indeed greatly honored by the invitation to be the Guest Speaker of this year's congregation for two very special Colleges of this great University. I am grateful to the University Management for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts with graduands on this auspicious occasion and in the midst of renowned scholars and personalities from within and outside the University.

Mr. Chairman, I would also like to thank the families, friends, faculty as well as all whose sacrifices, resolve and determination have contributed in no small measure to making this day possible for our graduands. It is usually a refreshing moment for all who successfully see their wards clear this hurdle in life.

To our proud graduands, I say congratulations and well done for staying the course and finishing the "race"; you have earned the right to celebrate this important achievement and by all means do so in moderation. There is no doubt that having come this far, you have burnt thousands of the mid night candles; you have had to obediently follow instructions from your lecturers to complete your programmes, which span from four to six years, successfully. This is a moment every parent would want to witness and cherish in their quest to secure a brighter future for their wards.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure we have all been asked the question: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Well now you are grown up - at least by the fact of your graduation today. By virtue of what you have all chosen or forced to study you may have probably answered this question in part. It is okay if some of you are yet to figure out what you want to be - some require a longer time and their journey of discovery may take a while.

Whatever it is you have chosen to be, the transition from student to professional will mark a significant change in your lifestyle, goals and routine. And you have to quickly learn what it takes to make a successful transition to the world of professional work. Fortunately by virtue of the age we find ourselves in today - the information or knowledge age - you will be spoilt for choice with regards to the lessons and examples to learn from in making the transition.

For me the most important career lesson and one which in my view lays the foundation for career excellence is: Love what you have chosen to do, or choose what you love to do. This may require drastic adjustments to your expectations and original plans. But it is worth it. The words of the truly remarkable Steve Jobs - the founder of Apple - delivered over a decade ago, rings true in this regard: ***“I am convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You’ve got to find what you love. And that is true for your work as it is true for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle”.***

Ladies and gentlemen, you have been trained as healthcare professionals and educators. If this is what you have chosen to do, understand that you have chosen a profession that is regarded as a calling, with compassion, care and healing as cardinal ideals. I encourage you to carry out your duties with pride and humility. You should also recognize the fact that you are the people’s investment and that your service is to those whose taxes have contributed significantly to your training. But make no mistake; you cannot meet the ideals of your profession and make a mark if is not truly what you love.

The knowledge and skills you have acquired through such rigorous training as your course contents suggest, will come to naught if this is not what you want to be. But having come this far, I am sure this is what you really want to be. Otherwise I will encourage you to “nurture” love for the profession you have spent all these years training for. You should therefore go into the world as health care providers who truly care. Not those who are in the profession for the sake of money or fame but as those whose sense of caring is saturated with genuine love, selflessness and compassion.

Ladies and gentlemen, It is important to recognize that the end of formal education is definitely not the end of learning. This is especially true for the two professions that our graduands are stepping into from today, either as self-employed or employees. The developments in the health sciences are hard to keep up with. What was regarded as medical impossibilities a few years ago have become almost a routine part of modern healthcare. The same can be said of advances in learning and teaching methods. The key to keeping up is Continuous Professional Development. Never settle for less knowledge when you can have more. Truth be told today’s graduate stands a better chance of greater career advancement than those of yesteryears. Advances in technology provide you with boundless opportunities for leapfrogging.

Continuous Professional development is also a prerequisite for becoming innovative in your chosen profession. Innovation is the new normal in the world of business today; all businesses must innovate or die. Emerging trends in the world of business demand graduates who will do something different from the norm. They think outside the box and seek to improve on existing situations/products or innovate new concepts and solutions. The world is under constant change, and requires graduates who can respond to these changes in goodtime.

Mr. Chairman, I have so far been speaking about the qualities or attributes our graduands need to imbibe in order to make it in the world of work - the transition from student to professional. This presupposes that all will leave here straight into a waiting job. Given the nature of the professions they have trained for and their demand-versus-supply statistics, it is not far-fetched to understand why anyone would hold such a view. After all we all know the grim statistics about doctor-patient ratio, nurse-patient ratio, teacher-student ratio among other development indicators. So, it

used to be the case that right after graduation, health and education professionals were guaranteed employment by the Government. The hard truth is that times have changed and the reality is that it is no longer feasible for the government to offer all of you employment.

Surely all is not lost neither have your training been in vain. Without doubt the economy needs and has more room for doctors, nurses, teachers, educationists, pharmacists etc. What has changed really is who and how to employ these professionals beside Government. Nothing stops these professionals from becoming their own employers.

Indeed I believe that given the medium to long term prospects of the Ghanaian economy there are more opportunities to develop your own businesses. People are increasingly affirming the importance of education and are investing more of their household income in education to secure a better future. This is throwing up opportunities for opening up education and training centers as lucrative businesses. Similarly the health care industry is witnessing growth fueled by increasing education and health-consciousness among the populace.

People are prepared to spend more for quality healthcare and will flock to health centers that meet their aspirations. So for instance what stops our brilliant graduates from coming together to set up multi-disciplinary-one-stop health care business practice? As a matter of fact in this age of technology, one need not necessarily invest in brick and mortar to set up a healthcare facility. Imagine what a group of you coming together can do with technology to reach otherwise distant places. Imagine an on-line medical centre.

That said, Mr. Chairman, I am also not oblivious to the major obstacle of venturing into business in this part of our world. Access to finance has been cited by many a potential entrepreneur as a major barrier to turning dreams into reality. This is a truism insofar as traditional sources of financing is concerned. But there is good news. Through non-traditional and unorthodox mechanisms such as crowd funding and impact investing, it is possible to raise capital from all over the world from individual and institutional investors who are interested in funding projects and businesses that

have positive social impact. And there is nothing that makes more impact on society than health and education.

I know for sure some of you graduates nurture many brilliant business ideas but are unable to realize them due to fear of the unknown and of failure. But nobody ever achieved success with fear of failure. Indeed successful people and strong nations are resilient. They stay the course, remain focused and persevere in spite of setbacks and temporary failures. The field of medicine indeed provides us with practical demonstration of this principle. The profession has advanced through the accumulation of knowledge gained from past failures and is able to do complex heart transplants, kidney transplants and other surgeries quite routinely today. My own personal experience in business has taught me that persistence always pays. More often than not, success is right around the corner; we only need to hold out a little longer, turn all the kinks and curves and persist. And even if success doesn't always come our way, learning and growth can. And that my friends, in itself is another level of success.

Though your graduation will undoubtedly help address the scarcity of doctors, nurses and pharmacists in the healthcare delivery system in the country, I also believe that not only will you add up to the numbers but will contribute positively to help reverse the unfortunate declining trend in the health indices of the country. I therefore entreat you to be good team players wherever your services would be required. This will help advance the nation's quest to enhance primary health care and ensure that quality services are made accessible to deprived communities in the country.

I entreat you to go out there and contribute your quota in a manner that will help maintain confidence in the healthcare profession and bring relief and comfort to the vulnerable particularly, women, children and the aged.

To my proud graduands from the College of Education, I wish to reiterate the fact that teacher education lays the foundation for the development of the human capital of every nation without which social development and economic prosperity would be impossible. As teachers, you have the greatest contribution to build up the character of your students and help them to become ideal citizens for our country.

You have indeed been introduced to best practice in teaching and learning that will enable you tackle broader issues of education in Ghana. Giving your best to the professional practice would enhance the image of the teaching profession and accord it the valued status it deserves in the Ghanaian society.

It is my fervent hope that as you step out today to take your rightful place in the noble teaching profession, you are going to apply the knowledge and skills acquired to inspire others so that collectively you can address the image issues with the teaching profession. You are going to train the future managers of our dear country. They should be carefully and professionally handled to bring out the best in them. The concept of individual differences and personalized teaching hold the key to helping individuals discover their potential.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I urge you to lead an exemplary life that is worthy of emulation to reflect the status of the University from which you are graduating today. Abide by the tenets of your profession all the time to safeguard and protect its image. It is my hope that you will let the training you have received from this enviable University guide you in every decision or action; bearing in mind the motto of University of Ghana '*Integri Procedamus*'.

God bless us all.

Thank you.