

Good afternoon Chair of Council, Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Registrar, Provosts, Deans and Directors, Faculty members , Students and distinguished guests;

Permit me to congratulate the graduating classes represented here today. I recognize the honor accorded me, by this invitation to share my personal experiences, with the fresh graduates. A few years ago, in the last millennium, I was seated at the University's athletic oval, at my own graduation ceremony. It was a day of mix feelings – pride and a sense of accomplishment on the one hand and, trepidation on the other, as I considered the various options available to me - national service, law school, post graduate education, job hunting, and travelling abroad for greener pastures. Which option should supersede the other? You may be asking similar questions, but while I do not have a direct answer for you, I can share what has worked for me and hope that you give it some deep thought as you move on from here.

In my time I believed, albeit erroneously that, having obtained my degree, I was now poised for success and, all the niceties that a great education should come with.

The hard truth is that, while a degree is very important, it only places you on a level playing field with every other graduate seated here today. A lot more needs to be done to gain a competitive edge, to stand out among your peers and to remain relevant in your field of study. You will soon find out as I did, that holders of the best grades do not always get the best opportunities.

In my years after School it became clear that to beat the competition, I must continually engage in professional and skills development, build partnerships and strategic alliances and broaden my horizon and networks by venturing into areas outside my field of study. This led me into Banking, Corporate Governance Practice, institutional capacity strengthening and currently agriculture policy. Although these were not directly related to Law, which is my field of study, I was determined to fit in, make the best of the opportunity

and be indispensable. Many were the voices of discouragement and those who thought I had lost my focus in life. I got a lot of invaluable experiences and these opened many doors. I became more competitive on the job market and, was usually nominated as the preferred candidate for scholarships opportunities. The award of a full Chevening Scholarship from the British Government and my admission to the London School of Economics and Political Science are just 2 examples.

The period immediately after graduation is crucially important. What we do or do not do with our TIME has a huge bearing on our careers and what becomes of our lives.

I point this out because, TIME is a commodity that fresh graduates often have in relative abundance as they work their way into an internship, a job or a scholarship opportunity. And as you know TIME is one of those things that once gone cannot be recovered. When I look back I can see that I could have invested my TIME better in some respects, for example I could have squeezed time to include language classes in my schedule. I could have done a lot more voluntary work in the public health sector and by teaching at the

basic schools in my community. It has now become much harder for me to do these things as I get further ahead in my career. It is however not late for you and, I will entreat you to make some time to do these things now.

The paradox that change is an enduring constant is a reality we all live with. The world is continually changing. It is more competitive and cut throat than it was years back. This presents challenges, but there are opportunities for the few who have built additional capacities and are primed to take them up. The question for you is whether beyond your academic qualification you have what it takes, to beat the competition.

At my graduation, teaching was not part of my plan. After all, I had just earned an LLB and the next logical step for a law student was to do my national service, or an internship in a renowned law firm or a multinational corporation, while I await my admission to the Ghana School of Law. But as God will have it, a few weeks after graduating, I was invited back to the Law Faculty to assist with tutoring. Several nights of insomnia followed as I did not find the offer very attractive. I wrote declining the invitation but before delivering it, I informed

my Mother about my decision. Well, after some good counsel from her I changed my mind. She observed that, since I was not the top student in my graduating class, the Faculty must be looking for some other qualities and concluded that the invitation was more beneficial to me than it was to the Faculty. Needless to say my time as a teaching assistant was one of the most fulfilling. I applied myself diligently in the discharge of my duties; I was loyal to my Professors and gained the trust of all faculty members. This resulted in numerous benefits ranging from being the first to get all the campus gossip, flexibility in gaining access to the library, as well as getting the best guidance and references in my quest for higher academic pursuits. The point here is that some opportunities may seem undesirable or may be inconsistent with your future plans. Don't be hasty to discard them. Give yourself a chance, think through carefully, get counsel from the right people and do not be motivated by short term gratification or popular trends. So that when one day you tell your story, it shall be as Robert Frost said in his poem "The Road Not Taken" that, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference"

I would like to close with this passage from Psalms 1: 1-3

*“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers”*

Your fortunes will depend on the choices you make, the people you surround yourselves with and your relationship with the almighty God who has authority over all things.

I thank you for your time.