

GUEST SPEAKER AT JULY 2019 AT THE CONGREGATION CEREMONY AT THE COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA LEGON

19TH JULY 2019 AT 1:30AM
GREAT HALL, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

(Sharing Life experiences, to inspire hard work and excellence in chosen professions)

Harnessing Your Future Today for A Brighter One Ahead

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana
The Provost of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences
Members of Convocation
Graduates of this Congregation
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour to be the guest speaker at this Congregation of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences... And I want to thank the Provost of the College, Professor Daniel Asiedu and, of course, the College for this opportunity.

I would also like to congratulate all the young men and women graduating today. CONGRATULATIONS.

Before I get on with my few remarks, may I kindly request the GRADUATES to stand up. Please turn and look around – who do you see? Your parents? families? mentors? friends? lecturers? and administrators? etc.... You may please sit down. THEY ALL made it possible for this major milestone in your life, WE OWE THEM A DEBT OF GRATITUDE... all of them have contributed one way or the other to build you up and usher you onto a secure platform, where you can now take off into a wonderful and moved off campus to find my own accommodation and moved off campus to find my own accommodation future. Please let's show our APPRECIATION with a round of APPLAUSE! ... THANK YOU. But that is not all! It is a debt that ought to be honoured; and you honour this debt by living up to what each one of them saw in you – your potential – and therefore did not give up on you. You honour this debt when you live up to this college's mission, which is "to create a diverse and vibrant community dedicated to discovery, to make knowledge matter, and to develop all its members to their utmost potential". In honouring this debt, you build for yourself an ideal future from now.

I am sure as you graduate today, top on your minds like many youths today, is what the future holds for you and what opportunities come along with it; 'Am I going to have a decent and fulling job?', "will I be able to enjoy the comforts of life, take care of a future family etc.". These are FEARS that you may have. I had them too. But DO NOT be discouraged. You will find your place in that future you crave for, that future you worry about. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "*The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.*"

The foundation of that future begun and has been nurtured through your parents, families,

teachers, mentors, and all the different support systems you have. This is the time for you to grow it stronger by expanding it into a network of support systems. Especially, at this time when you are ready to begin the next phase of your life journey, you can have a brighter one ahead.

Let me share with you, my personal experience. Growing up as a young boy I had dreams, some of which changed or stayed because of different life experiences. But one that always stayed with me was for me to be in a position where I could have the opportunity to change things and make them better for myself, community, and country. There were three things which over the course of time gradually molded this leadership dream into reality. (1) an incident that happened while I was in secondary school, (2) Family, and (3) secular work. In all these life experiences, I seized opportunities, I took some risks, I made hard decisions and took responsibility for those decisions. In doing all these, I used the support systems around me.

At Opoku Ware, I had the privilege of being a dormitory prefect. Two junior students came up to me one morning, and asked for permission, with a reason which I felt was genuine, they wanted to defer tidying up the dormitory, so they could go write their exams. If I have excused them then it was my responsibility to ensure the work was done and it would fall on my shoulders to answer when the housemaster came up for inspection. That night at 8 pm, come he did, and gave us all – including me, the prefect, a good lashing on our backs with an improvised whip! The whole of the night, I pondered deeply about my actions within the context of why I allowed the young lads. I felt justified. This was my DEFINING MOMENT. Early at dawn, I marched straight to the school chaplain, showed him the whip marks, and laid out my case. He took a decisive action. He called in this housemaster who was much feared and banned him from inflicting any of such punishment on any student! In the morning at dining, the housemaster stomped into the room, roared out my name and said: “YOU, YOU HAD THE AUDACITY TO REPORT ME?” He left the same way he came in. There was an applause. I took a risk, but it worked out for the better. This influenced my being voted school prefect. The student body knew I would stand up for them. I made every effort to build and nurture the trust place in me and with the school authorities. This helped me execute my role as one of the best school prefects during my tenure. My message here is, RESPECT AUTHORITY AT ALL TIMES, wherever you go. BUT do not be afraid of Authority.

Dreams grow, and they become better and brighter with time. Finally, I was ready to go to college. There was a big challenge. My father categorically told me: “you are going to be a chemical engineer”. I did not argue to pursue my real passion. I listened, and he supported me to go to Yale University. I took advantage of opportunities which kept my dream alive and which at the same time would make my family proud. However, later on, during my second year in university, I pushed back on my older siblings and moved off campus to find my own accommodation. I took a risk. Not a very pleasant one because nobody took cash for rentals I had to have a credit card! I could not go back to my siblings. I had to work it out, but it paid off and I grew up!

Finally, after Yale, I went to work as a chemical engineer at Uniroyal/Firestone. My observation of senior people gave me the impetus that in that position I could as well be able to move a step closer to leadership. I needed more experience and education. After two years of work, I went back to Yale School of Management for my MBA and went to work for IBM. After 25 years with IBM, with a clear road map in hand, I convinced them to open an office in Ghana, which they did.

In 2016, when Kosmos was looking for a local person with international experience, I was scouted. When the CEO ask me what my vision was, I said: "I got my foundation from Ghana, my vision is to use this opportunity to help create an industry for the country and support young Ghanaians to work towards nation building through innovation and entrepreneurship.

In all these years I continue to live the dream. I have had the opportunity to help my children to reach out on their own. This gives me the opportunity to continue to give much of my time and self to mentor many other young people as they carve out their own future and the opportunity to serve and contribute to national development.

There have been lessons for me; Not to always insist on having my way, second, use my support systems as a stepping stone to the next opportunity; third, not to give up when the going gets tough! And finally, know when to walk away and know when to fight but keep that dream alive. To succeed therefore in life, you must not stop learning.... You need EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE and EXPOSURE to be operating at your utmost. When you have all three, opportunities will avail themselves. Remember that GROWTH and COMFORT cannot coexist, so you will be well prepared to take on challenges, when they come. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: *"If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven played music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, "Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well"*

In conclusion, I would like to remind you again of Eleanor Roosevelt's: *"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."* So, *believe in the beauty of your dream, share that dream, live it and you will by all means succeed in life.*

CONGRATULATIONS!