

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. JOYCE R. ARYEE,
GUEST SPEAKER, COLLEGE OF EDUCATION CONGREGATION
CEREMONY, NOVEMBER 2017**

- Representative of the Chairman of the University Council,
- Members of the University Council,
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor,
- Chairman and Members of the Advisory Board of the College of Education,
- Provosts, Deans and other officials of the University,
- Members of Convocation,
- Graduating students,
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honoured and count it a great privilege to be invited to be the guest speaker at this great day of celebration for the College of Education's graduating class of 2017. Congregations are celebratory occasions and it is a pleasure for me to be able to take part in this ceremony that recognizes the hard work, dedication, commitment and sacrifice of students of the College, who, having satisfied the requirements for their various programmes, are graduating with the degrees due them. We also celebrate with the families and benefactors of graduating students, who also have every reason to be immensely proud today.

Ladies and gentlemen, at ceremonies such as this, graduating students typically look forward with great expectation to the future; a future that holds the potential for the realization of their dreams. I am sure that you all expect your training here to be a passport to a brighter future for yourselves and for your families. I can assure you that the direction your lives will take from this day will depend to a large extent on the decisions you make. The training and education you have received at the University of Ghana have equipped you to be focused, confident, independent and able to look and plan ahead. With these traits and with determination and hard work, you should be able to take decisions that will provide the right sense of direction not only for yourself, but also for your family and by extension for your community, region, nation, Africa and across the globe.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, the global economy is currently facing numerous challenges, creating environments that if permitted, breed anxiety, hopelessness and frustration. Like many others, our economy has not been immune to the ripple effects of these difficulties. Government is not able to provide jobs for the masses of new graduates in various fields, for which reason the future might indeed look bleak.

However, we must see ourselves as global citizens which means that globalisation and global challenges offers us the opportunities to offer solutions that will be relevant to the world. As the world strives to attain development beyond economic progress in the scheme of sustainable development, our sensitiveness towards society and the environment must build a consciousness in us to create creative solutions for the world.

My words of encouragement to you are that you have had the benefit of studying at the graduate level at the premier university in Ghana. You have been trained by some of the finest academics and best minds that this country has. I, therefore, challenge each of you to look beyond depending on government to provide jobs for you. Go out there, explore the possibilities, plan well, and the sky will be your limit. Yes, you can make it!

By the nature of your training here, you stand the opportunity to exert a lot of influence on society. Society will depend on your social entrepreneurship and innovation even as you impart knowledge to society mainly the youth.

Some of the most notable people in society today did not have the opportunities you have had. You may say that Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg made it because they were in the great land of opportunities, the United States of America, but what about our home grown heroes such as Kwame Despote of the Despote Group, Michael Agyekum Addo of KAMA Industries Limited, Kwame Ofori Bamfo of Sikkens, Madam Justina Baidoo of the *AdomMbroso* Company Limited, Dr Theresa Beeko of MANET Group and countless others? These people, who have become titans in their respective fields, were able to make it because they made the most of the opportunities available to them, stepped out of their comfort zones, followed their passion and did not give up when they experienced failure and difficulties.

College of Education, class of 2017 I expect that you will have that sort of courage that will lead you on and that you will not sit down and expect others to create opportunities for you. Wherever you find yourself, whether in academia, in public service, in the corporate world, or starting up your

own business, I urge you to always strive to do the very best you can: be careful of whom you associate with, build networks of colleagues who will encourage you and urge you on, and importantly will point out to you when you are on the wrong track.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our nation needs empowered young men and women like you to make our systems work and to positively influence the direction in which our dear country will go. You are moving out into the world with the required skills and tools needed to survive and thrive in life, but I encourage you not to use these only for your personal wellbeing and that of your immediate family. It is my prayer that you are able to recognize the power you wield and make judicious use of it. I challenge each of you to take the talents and experiences gained during your stay in this university, and do something relevant and positive to help your community and our country at large. I believe in you and know that you are up to the challenge!

Class of 2017, I salute you! Congratulations and well done! The long days and nights fighting off sleepiness, sticking to your books and ardently studying, are now over. I know that many of you are married and have children, and also hold down full time jobs. It know it has been very challenging, but I am sure that being here today is enough evidence that it has all been worthwhile. Today marks the end of an important and exciting phase of your life, it is the commencement of another phase, which should be as challenging as it is exciting. Allow me to express my deep admiration for your efforts. Once again, well done. Accept my very best wishes going forward. However, this celebration will only be relevant if you find fulfillment in the pursuit of further knowledge and its application to

understanding human challenges and becoming a problem solver where ever you find yourself and in your own small way. Technology and research, innovation and Godly values of diligence, patience, love for country, honesty, integrity and character must be the keys for your smooth path.

King Solomon said in the book of Proverbs, “.....In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths”. I urge you to be strong in your faith, and put God first in everything you do. Try to stand on your own two feet, but know that there is nothing wrong with seeking support when needed from your families, friends and mentors, whom I believe will gladly support you and stand by you as you embark on your individual journeys. Be strong and hold onto your values, as you go out and take your place in the world. I am sure that very soon, we will be celebrating your successes and I hope that when the good times come, you will remember to give credit to the University of Ghana and to the College of Education. I like what the Lord told Joshua in Joshua 1:9 (NIV) “*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*”

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, permit me to restate two pertinent quotes from His Excellency Kofi Annan, Chancellor of the University of Ghana and former Secretary General of the United Nations:

*Knowledge is power. Information is liberating.
Education is the premise of progress, in every
society, in every family.*

To live is to choose, but to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there.

How apt these words are today! College of Education, Class of 2017, once again, congratulations! You have attained knowledge, information and education. The world is your easel; go out there, make your choices, paint your picture and make your mark!

You have something your village, constituency, district, region, Ghana, Africa and the world needs. You must be a solution provider and be salt and light to the world.

Thank you very much for your attention and God bless us all.

Dr. Joyce Aryee

November 18, 2017