

**ADDRESS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA AT
CONGREGATION:MARCH 29, 2014**

Chairman of the University Council, Justice Professor Samuel Kofi Date-Bah;
Members of Council
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (ORID);
Madam Registrar;
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Our Distinguished Guest Speaker
Members of Convocation;
Niime, Naamei, Nananom;
Graduating Students;
Parents and Guardians;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Welcome

I would like to welcome you all to the University of Ghana and to this congregation ceremony. In the two sessions to be held today, students from the Distance Education programme, the School of Graduate Studies, the University of Ghana Medical and Dental Schools, and Diploma students in Social Administration and the Commonwealth Youth Programme will be graduated. After today's ceremonies, and as we move into the collegiate system we shall have two sets of congregation events each year, to be organized at the college level.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, please let me provide you with some statistics about our graduating students.

Graduation Statistics

A total of 2,534 students are graduating today at various levels. 1,601 students from our Distance Education programme are graduating. Of these 5.62 percent obtained First Class Honours, 22.36 percent Second Class Upper, 57.59 percent Second Class Lower, and 13.37 percent Third Class. Also graduating are 21 newly qualified Dentists, 156 Medical Doctors and 156 students with Bachelor of Science in Medical Science.

I turn my attention now to reporting on the state of the University beginning with developments in our academic programmes.

Restructuring PhD Programmes

In line with our new policy on PhD, departments, institutes and centres continue to work on the restructuring of their PhD programmes. The restructuring is to bring the programmes in line with best practices around the world, and to sharpen the analytical skills of our PhD graduates. The new programme is made up of one year of course work, one year of practical research training and two years of independent research and thesis writing.

So far, four of the restructured programmes have been approved by the Business and Executive Committee, while 50 others have received provisional approval to start running. As many as 230 students have registered for and commenced their programmes of study. It is our intention to increase this number by 15 percent in the coming academic year.

As part of the PhD restructuring process, the first University of Ghana Doctoral School has been held under the theme, “Managing the Doctoral Process”. The four-day workshop was attended by 25 students undertaking various PhD programmes at the University. The Doctoral Schools have been introduced as part of the University's efforts to improve PhD delivery. These special schools will focus on specific skills gaps and provide in-depth treatment of selected topics such as the doctoral environment; the architecture of supervision, grants, fellowships, conferences, and publishing. The schools will be held periodically, and there are plans to expand these into a Doctoral Academy in the near future, which will also be open to PhD students in other universities throughout Africa.

New Programmes

A number of new masters level programmes have been introduced since the last congregation: These are: a Master of Science programme in Extension and Livelihood Studies offered by the Department of Agricultural Extension; a sandwich Master of Arts programme in Contemporary English Studies run by the Department of English; and a Master of Arts programme in Theatre Arts to be run by the Department of Theatre Arts, School of Performing Arts.

The introduction of new graduate programmes is crucial as we move towards a 50:50 ratio between regular under-graduate and post-graduate students, and I take this opportunity to urge departments to design new programmes which are of relevance to students and also to industry.

Two undergraduate programmes have been approved in the period under review. The first of these is a Bachelor of Science programme in Dental Laboratory Sciences to be run by the School of Allied Health Sciences. Also approved to be run on a pilot basis is an Experiential Learning Course for undergraduate students, which is meant to provide undergraduate students with a learning experience that will require the application of concepts and theories learnt in the classroom to real-life situations, and that will result in positive outcomes to both the students and the communities or organizations they work with.

Students on the course will spend 20 hours over a period of 9 weeks in a community or organization, working on a project that, among other things, provides them an opportunity to apply theoretical concepts to real world situations.

Financial Aid

The Students Financial Aid Office continues to receive donations from individuals and organizations to supplement the University's efforts to provide assistance to students who face challenges in meeting their financial obligations. Ecobank Ghana Limited recently

presented a cheque for GH¢30,000 to support needy and brilliant students at the University. The Women's Empowerment for Social Development in Africa (WESDA), a non-governmental Organization has donated GH¢3,032 to cover the payment of the Academic and Residential Facility User Fees, feeding, books and pocket money for a level 100 female student of the University of Ghana Business School. The donation from Ecobank is the third in as many years. We are indeed grateful to all of our donors, and we encourage other corporate bodies and individuals to donate towards this worthy cause.

UG Readers Project

The Readers Project began as part of activities towards the University's 65th Anniversary celebrations, and was intended to showcase the growth in thinking in various disciplines at Legon over the years. The Readers are expected to show how disciplines have evolved in the University over the last 65 years and the contributions of scholars in the University to this evolution.

In December last year, eight books were launched as part of the Readers Project. Another 22 manuscripts have been delivered to publishers and will be launched in May when published. It is expected that a total of 40 books will be published by the end of July this year.

Following the huge success of the Readers Project, I have proposed to launch the "Operation Top Tier" Project as an extension of the Readers project. The idea is to provide incentives to departments and other academic units to support publication in top-tier international journals. This is the surest way to boost our standing in the eyes of the world's best universities.

2014 Aggrey-Fraser-Guggisberg Memorial Lectures

This year's Aggrey-Fraser-Guggisberg Memorial Lectures were delivered by Professor Rose Gana Fomban Leke on the theme "Science and Health in Africa's Future Development". The lectures took place between March 26 and 28, 2014.

Over three days, Professor Leke, Professor of Parasitology and Immunology at the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, University of Yaoundé 1 Cameroun; delivered thought provoking lectures on Eliminating Infectious Diseases: The Remaining Challenges; Immunization: A Crucial Element in the Health Battles; and Advancing Scientific Research for Health and Development in Africa.

Professor Leke, you managed to engage the audience on the challenges in eliminating infectious disease in Africa, the major role of immunization with regard to health and development, and how scientific research into health related matters has had an impact and will continue to play an important role in accelerating progress and development in Africa. We are grateful that you were able to honour our invitation to deliver the lecture series, and to share your life's work with us.

Ladies and gentlemen, in recognition of Professor Leke's contribution to improving healthcare, particularly on the African continent, and the introduction of interventions to reduce the effects of malaria around the world, the University will, as part of this event, confer on her an honorary degree.

Research, Innovation and Development

The University of Ghana has begun the process of transforming itself into a research university. What this simply means is that we will become a research-intensive university. To this end, we have identified four areas for concentration and created centres of excellence for them. These are malaria research, climate change research, food security research and poverty research. These are research areas that will require significant funding. They each require investments in human resources and research

infrastructure. In the coming academic year, University of Ghana will allocate GHC 1 million from its internally generated funds to each of the four centres of excellence with a view to kick-starting their research activities.

Conference Grants

The University of Ghana conference grant facility has awarded a total of 57 conference grants with a value of GHC88,500 since May 2013. The grants are awarded to provide support to senior members to attend and present papers at various conferences.

UG Funded Research Grants

As many as 33 awards have been made to faculty members following the 7th call for proposals in the seed fund, investigator-led and large multi-disciplinary categories totalling GHC942,611. Since the 2008-2009 academic year, GHC3,200,000 has been awarded as research grants from the University's Internally Generated Funds. This is our way of showing our new commitment to research. Our ability to continue with this will depend to a very large extent on the effectiveness of new fund raising initiatives.

Capacity Building

UG Faculty Development (PhD) Grants

A total of eight awards valued at GH¢112,000 have been given out as PhD support grants to faculty members for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Commonwealth Scholarships

The Commonwealth Scholarships Secretariat in the UK (CSCUK) requested the University to nominate candidates for consideration for its Commonwealth Scholarships and Academic Staff Fellowships tenable in the UK from the 2014/2015 academic year. 10 nominations were received from the various Colleges and Faculties and the applications of five nominees were shortlisted for onward submission to the CSCUK.

The Cambridge Africa Partnership for Research Excellence (CAPREx) Project

In September 2013, two staff members of ORID took up Research Management Fellowships at the University of Cambridge Research Operations Office for 2 weeks: this fellowship is part of activities of the CAPREx project aimed at strengthening research capacity at the University of Ghana. Currently the University of Cambridge is hosting four post-doctoral fellows of the University of Ghana as part of the programme.

DFID/CHAG Masters Dissertation Grants

The Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG) in collaboration with DFID provided an amount of GH¢25,000 to the University of Ghana to provide dissertation grants to masters students conducting research on topics related to mental health. The support is expected to continue for the next five years. The first batch of applicants have been interviewed and final decisions on the awardees are currently being made.

Leventis Foundation Scholarships

The College of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences (CACS), has received scholarship awards totaling GH¢40,000 from the A.G. Leventis Foundation, for post graduate students at the College. The beneficiaries are made up of 22 students pursuing MPhil Philosophy programmes and 5 PhD students. The foundation has been supporting students at the University of Ghana for the past 25 years.

UG ACE Projects

The University of Ghana was selected by the World Bank to receive a total of USD16 million to enable it establish the West Africa Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens (WACCBIP) and also to develop the West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI) into an African Centre of Excellence for training plant breeders, seed scientists and seed technologists. WACCBIP will provide Masters, PhD and Post-doctoral level training, and conduct research focused on cell and molecular biology of common diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis while WACCI is to be developed as a sustainable centre of excellence to train plant breeders who will develop superior climate-

smart and resilient varieties of staple crops of the West African sub-region as a means of increasing productivity. The two projects are expected to be implemented over a three-year period.

University of Ghana Research Report

The maiden University of Ghana Research Report has been launched. Initiated by the Office of Research, Innovation and Development (ORID), the report catalogues research conducted by faculty members in the various academic units during the 2012/2013 academic year, and was developed to coordinate research being organized by faculty of the University. As the University moves towards becoming a research university, the next issue of the report will focus on research in the four main thematic areas: Malaria Research and Control, Food Security and Crop Improvement, Climate Change and Adaptation, and Development Policy and Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation.

Governance

Update on the Collegiate System

The University is gearing up for the full take off of the collegiate system at the start of the 2014/2015 academic year. Towards this end, interim Provosts and College Secretaries have been appointed for the Colleges of Education, Humanities and Basic and Applied Sciences.

The college officers have worked with the University's Legal Counsel to develop changes in the statutes that will allow for the creation of the colleges by law. The amended statutes have been placed before the University Council for consideration. It is expected that once the relevant changes to the statutes have been approved, positions within the colleges will be advertised and substantive officers appointed.

The interim officers have also worked on the rationalisation of academic programmes in the colleges, and it is expected that many new courses and programmes will be approved by College Academic Boards in the coming academic year.

Development of a Human Resources Policy

Chairman of Council, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, after working hard to improve on documentation at the University through the use of ITS as a management software, the University of Ghana accompanied this with the development of new financial regulations and governance arrangements. We are now in the process of modernising documentation and processes for HR management. We have recently engaged consultants to develop a new HR policy document for the University which will provide the means for performance assessment and establish the rules of engagement between employees of the University and their employer. This report should be ready later in the year.

Strategic Plan for the University

There has been extensive discussion of a draft University of Ghana strategic plan, and preparation of the plan is nearly complete. It is expected that the strategic plan will be launched at the start of the 2014-2015 academic year. The nine strategic priorities which should put the University of Ghana on the path to becoming a world class research university have been defined as:

- Research: Create a vibrant intellectual climate that stimulates relevant cutting edge research and community engagement.
- Teaching and Learning: Promote academic excellence using the highest international standards of learning, teaching, and leadership development.
- Internal Stakeholders: Provide an environment that will ensure fulfilling experiences for internal stakeholders.
- Gender and Diversity: Create the best environment for equal opportunity in gender and diversity.
- Institutional processes: Overhaul all governance arrangements to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency.

- Financial Performance: Enhance the mobilization and management of resources of unit and central administration levels.
- Asset Management: Strengthen the management of the University's assets and facilities
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Mainstream and enforce structures and processes for system-wide monitoring and evaluation.
- Build stakeholder confidence in the capabilities of the University

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen; I now turn my attention to physical developments at the University of Ghana.

Physical Developments

Ongoing building projects

There are several ongoing projects at various levels of completion on our campuses.

These include the University of Ghana Teaching Hospital, the Small Animal Hospital, Phase 1 of the School of Pharmacy building, the construction of offices, conference rooms and lecture halls for the Department of Earth Science, the construction of offices and lecture halls for the Faculty of Arts, the construction of drama studios, offices and an auditorium for the School of Performing Arts, a multi-purpose Graduate Building for the University of Ghana Business School and Phase II of the Project for Developing ICT Infrastructure. The University has also recently completed work on a new crèche.

A number of academic buildings have been recently rehabilitated, and these include the buildings housing the Physics and Chemistry Departments and the Jones-Quartey Building. The re-roofing and rehabilitation of all residential facilities on the Legon campus is in progress.

Roads

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen; the story of Legon roads is now legendary! Work on major road construction and rehabilitation that started a year ago is

now almost complete, having relied on a GH¢ 8 million bond facility issued by our bankers. Unfortunately, the aim of reducing the build-up of vehicular traffic on the campus, and thus creating a more congenial atmosphere for academic work, has suffered severe hiccups. First, the University was compelled to suspend the introduction of road user charges in response to the request from the Government of the Republic of Ghana, acting through the Ministry of Roads and Highways.

Before this, the National Security Coordinator had caused the demolition of a toll booth and security post, which were under construction on the Stadium Road without notifying management of the University.

The University has since taken measures to prevent the Legon Campus from being used as a thoroughfare, by requiring members of the general public entering the University by the Stadium Road to exit the campus by the same road. This road will remain open 24 hours a day to the general public, while all other entry points, including the one at the Link Gate on the road from Achimota and the Annie Jiagge Road Extension from Haatso, will be available only to vehicles that show a UG sticker following pre-approval.

Lessons Drawn from the Backlash on Restrictions on Legon Roads

Mr. Chairman, before I conclude my address I need to touch on what lessons we as a University community must draw from the extremely negative press we have received in the last several weeks.

The most important lesson is that the general public did not get a chance to appreciate fully our intentions and our motivations. Many analysts have attributed this to the University not making adequate effort to educate the public on its intentions and the rationale. This may have been so, and we can only intensify our public education on University activities in future. We assure the general public that we meant no harm and were only trying to protect our University in the public interest. We will continue to work in the best interests of the wider community, always mindful of what our mandate is.

We also believe that a large part of the negative publicity was fuelled by elements of the community who stood to lose some of their privileges and self-accorded entitlements to University of Ghana assets. They had become comfortable from drawing on University of Ghana resources without ever giving back. They questioned the University's "right to make money", especially from them. They questioned the legal authority of the University to leverage its assets and borrow for its operations. They questioned the authority of the University Council in all of this. Some even questioned the collective wisdom of the Council members. The more daring and less charitable ones also questioned the mental state and humaneness of the Vice Chancellor. And all because we have been trying to exercise the University's rights and responsibilities and make it a world class University.

Mr Chairman, there is no point in dwelling on the injustice that has been done us. We are willing to forgive and move on. We appreciate the fact that the University community has committed itself to "Operation Let's Take Our University Back". This is what we mean when we ask for a serene environment for teaching and learning. The Academic Board exhibited its commitment to this cause clearly at its meeting held on 20th February 2014. The Business and Executive Committee has always stood by University Management in the making of decisions and this is highly appreciated. The University Council has been indispensable in weathering the storm and provided the wisdom and guidance to deal with the recent challenges. We thank the Chairman and members of Council for this incredible show of support and for their time.

A number of individuals outside of Management took it upon themselves to save the University from being torn apart by its detractors. They volunteered their time to take the University's case to the general public. The leadership of Legon UTAG has been exceptional in articulating the University's position on road user charges, and this is highly appreciated by Management. I would like to single out Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo, Dr. Margaret Amoakohene, Dr. Evans Aggrey-Darko, Dr Ransford Gyampoh, Dr. William Baah-Boateng and Mr Paa Kwesi Yankey, Member of Council

for commendation. I would like to express a personal ‘thank you’ to each one of them for coming to our aid in our time of anguish.

I trust that our alumni, members of the general public, and indeed all who have the welfare of the University of Ghana at heart, will continue to support us as we try to ensure the safety of our staff and students, and work towards acquiring a serene atmosphere conducive to academic work. The University of Ghana is a microcosm of Ghanaian society, and I am convinced that if we, as individuals, try to make a difference and work towards improving whatever situation we find ourselves in, there will be positive change in our dear nation.

As I begin a second term in my position as Vice Chancellor, I would like to assure the Government of Ghana of my unblemished loyalty and of my commitment to lead the transformation of this University into one that the Government can be proud of. The road to becoming a world class university is a very difficult one and all stakeholders must brace themselves for difficult choices and actions from time to time.

Well Wishes to Graduands

Now, to our graduating students: You have all worked extremely hard to get to this day, and I join your lecturers, your friends and family to sincerely congratulate you on your achievements. We wish you well in all of your endeavours, and trust that you leave this University well equipped to handle whatever situation you might find yourselves in. I urge you to strive to do what is right, and stick to your convictions. Surround yourselves with people who believe in you, but who are willing and able to critique you, your work and actions. The road might not be easy, but with these traits, you are well on the road to success.

Once more, accept our congratulations. I thank you for your attention.

Professor Ernest Aryeetey
March 29, 2014