**VICE-CHANCELLOR’S ADDRESS AT CONGREGATION:**

**NOVEMBER 7-8, 2014**

Chairman of the University Council, His Lordship Justice Samuel Kofi Date-Bah;

Members of Council

Honourable Ministers of State and Members of Parliament;

Our distinguished guest speaker …………… ;

Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Provosts;

Registrar;

Deans and Directors

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Colleague Vice-Chancellors;

Members of the University Council and Members of Convocation;

Niimei, Naamei, Nananom;

Graduating Students;

Parents and Guardians;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

**Welcome**

I am pleased to welcome you all to today’s graduation ceremonies.

Before we start proceedings, however, I would like to respectfully ask you to join me in observing a minute’s silence in honor of Mr. Kyei-Baffuor Akuokoh, the University’s former mace bearer and the face of congregation ceremonies for a number of years. He passed away in August and was laid to rest a week ago.

(PAUSE)

May he rest in perfect peace.

Today’s ceremonies are the second for the cohort of students who completed their final examinations in the 2013/2014 academic year. The undergraduate students in this group are part of the first batch of students graduating under the four year degree system that was introduced in the University in the 2009/2010 academic year. Under this system, all the academic work that students do as part of their programme count towards their final grade point. Additionally, under the new programme, the University introduced a unique general education programme in which students take what we call University of Ghana Required Courses. These courses are intended to foster broad student familiarity with key advances in the humanities, science and technology.

It is expected that taken in combination with students’ main areas of study, these compulsory courses will prepare our students to meet the development needs of Ghana and Africa, and equip graduates of the University of Ghana to be confident, rounded scholars, capable of holding their own with graduates from any part of the world.

As we have proceeded, we have reviewed various aspects of the revised undergraduate programme and will continue to do so periodically, until we come up with the formula which best represents the capabilities and performance of our students.

4,172 students are graduating this November at various levels.

Of the 1,278 post-graduate graduands, 23 have completed Doctor of Philosophy programmes.

At the Bachelor’s level, a total of 113 students representing 4.5 percent of the graduating class, obtained First Class Honours, 1,119 or 44.5 percent Second Class Honours Upper Division, 1229 or 48.9 percent Second Class Honours Lower Division and 44 or 1.8 percent, Third Class Honours.

25.9 percent of Certificate and Diploma students obtained distinctions, with the remaining students obtaining passes.

**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

**ADMISSIONS**

Ladies and gentlemen, admissions into the University of Ghana continue to be very competitive. Once again, the University made it possible for students in Ghana who completed their WASSCE in May, to enter the University in the same year that they wrote their examinations. Additionally, for the first time, the University took up the challenge of admitting students in the West African sub-region who wrote their final senior high school examinations in May/June 2014.

For the 2014/2015 academic year, the University received a total of 37,326 applications made up of 30,083 undergraduate admissions and 7,243 graduate applications.

The University admitted undergraduate students into programmes on the Main Campus, the Korle Bu Campus and the Accra City Campus, and was able to offer admission to 11, 944 undergraduate applicants and 2, 939 graduate applicants. The University intensified efforts to achieve gender parity in the admission of students, and the percentages of females admitted to all programmes continues to rise.

The University continued with its policy of giving the opportunity of university education to applicants from Less Endowed Schools on a concessionary basis. Also, for the 2014/2015 academic year, following approval of the policy on the Admission of Student Athletes by the University Council, admission was offered to talented sportsmen and women, based on their sporting abilities. Students admitted under the policy must first satisfy the general entry requirements of the University, and also show proof of athletic ability, and it is our expectation that student athletes will work with officials of the Sports Directorate to enable them effectively combine their participation in sporting activities with academic work.

Our Accra City Campus, located close to the Central Business District, continues to be an exciting option for many of our students. From this academic year, Social Work and French have been added to the subjects on offer at this campus, and more subjects will soon be introduced.

**DISTANCE EDUCATION**

The University’s Distance Education programme has been restructured and provides an opportunity for applicants to earn a University of Ghana degree without having to take time off their work or other duties, as delivery is mostly through self-study and e-learning platforms. In addition to the Bachelor of Science in Administration and the Bachelor of Arts programmes, two new programmes have been introduced for delivery through the distance mode: the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology and the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, the latter of which is intended for professional nurses who already have the Diploma in Nursing certificate from recognized Nursing Training Colleges. As these programmes will be run in the Regional Centres of the School of Continuing and Distance Education, nurses and other professionals may remain at post while pursuing their degree programmes. These changes will take effect from February 2015. Applications into Distance Learning will remain open until January 15, 2015, and applicants who are writing the 2014 November/December WASSCE are eligible to apply for admission.

**University of Ghana Strategic Plan**

Chairman of Council, ladies and gentlemen, the University’s Strategic Plan for the period 2014 to 2024 has been finalized, and will be launched before the end of the calendar year. The Plan has nine strategic priorities which should put the University of Ghana on the path to becoming a world class research university and aims to help rethink the longer term strategy for the University’s development. The strategic priorities are:

1. Research: and the aim is to create a vibrant intellectual climate that stimulates relevant cutting edge research and community engagement.

Key actions to be taken towards achieving this goal are the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment and the improvement of facilities as a necessary foundation for academic research; the implementation of a plan for increasing the pool of University controlled funds available for academic research; and the establishment of University-Industry partnerships to promote research in areas of industrial and national interest.

1. Teaching and Learning: The University is focused on promoting academic excellence using the highest international standards of learning, teaching, and leadership development. Towards this goal, the University has stepped up its support for PhD training for lecturers without PhDs and is providing training and mentoring support for early career academics to enhance teaching and research skills. Also being done is the establishment and enforcement, through the Academic Quality Assurance Unit, of standardized teaching methods for undergraduate and post-graduate teaching; and enhancing the importance and utility of the UG library system.
2. Internal Stakeholders: The University aims to provide an environment that will ensure fulfilling experiences for internal stakeholders. To achieve this, the University is working to create a world class mindset in the university; by developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for the modernization of university facilities; formalizing arrangements for student engagement with the community; creating platforms for shared educational and social experiences in the university; strengthening student support systems; proactively enhancing employee welfare at all levels; and developing and implementing a proactive plan of action to engage organized employee associations and relevant government agencies.
3. Gender and Diversity: The University is committed to creating the best environment for equal opportunity in gender and diversity, and has introduced measures to improve gender balance in numbers of students, staff and senior members.

We are also, as a University, working towards attracting more international students to study here, and also providing a congenial atmosphere and learning support systems for students with special needs.

1. Overhaul of Institutional Processes: Governance arrangements in the University have been overhauled to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency, and to this end four Colleges have been established: The Colleges of Basic and Applied Sciences, Humanities, Education and Health Sciences. The aim is to decentralize the majority of operations of the University through the collegiate system; develop a model for measuring the operational cost of all units; strengthen the budgeting system as an effective means of relevant resource allocation and management and

modernize management systems and processes using an integrated ICT approach.

1. Financial Performance: It has become abundantly clear over time that the reliance on government subsidy becomes a major challenge, especially in difficult economic times. The University seeks to rise above the uncertainties of economic expansion and contraction, to achieve greater financial independence in order to sustain its programmes and research, and ultimately shape the University’s future. Significant effort will be made to strengthen the capacity of all colleges to raise funds for research projects as well as position them better to win research contracts.
2. Asset Management: The University intends to undertake systematic expansion and rehabilitation projects in the areas of health care facilities, the construction of multi-purpose buildings, offices and lecture halls, as well as residential accommodation and social spaces. The expected growth resulting from these initiatives of the University requires that proper direction is established to safeguard University owned assets and investments. The University owns a significant amount of land and property beyond the traditional physical boundaries of the University, and these must be properly accounted for and managed to ensure effective integration into the expansion plan. Later on in my speech, I will touch on one initiative to be introduced; the Legon City Project
3. Monitoring and Evaluation: The University constantly navigates through a complex network of activities and programmes to sustain its relevance. However, the outcomes of these activities are only as good as the ability to measure them, report on them, and act on them. It is imperative that the University develops a concise approach to ensure that valid, reliable and useful measures of its performance are made readily available and used to support the implementation and management of its strategy, institutional learning, improvement in programmes, mitigation of risks and consistent reporting on performance.

Our key strategic objectives are therefore to create a robust institutional research function; build a strong quality assurance culture and develop and implement an effective framework for staff performance management.

1. Build stakeholder confidence in the capabilities of the University:

The key to building stakeholder confidence in the University’s capabilities lies in the perceptions of the credibility and impact of our results and outputs both nationally and internationally. This will be demonstrated in the number of references to research publications, endorsements and support by a wider alumni community, as well as improvements in our international ranking globally. The University will integrate the knowledge derived from its research with a strong public engagement focus to demonstrate an unwavering resolve to act in the interest of public good.

The University is in the process of developing a clear strategic Marketing and Communications plan and policy with a focus on properly managing all of the University’s brand assets. These will be achieved through developing a conscious plan of public engagement that is aligned with the research ambitions of the university; promoting stronger collaboration between the University and its key stakeholders; and strengthening collaboration with top-tier international research universities.

Major pillars of the strategy over the plan period will be to:

* Grow the numbers of graduate students, especially at the PhD level, to ensure a ratio of 50:50 by the end of the plan period;
* Maintain a total number of regular residential students at not more than 35,000;
* Expand the total number of Distance Education and Accra City Campus students to not more than 20,000;
* Expand significantly the number of faculty to ensure a decent teacher: student ratio in conformity with national norms and standards; and
* Equip all colleges and their constituent units to develop a strong research focus reflected in their incentive structures.

Each of the strategic priorities has a set of strategic objectives and key performance indicators. Each unit of the University has its own strategic plan and objectives, which fit into the overall vision, and I count on the support of all members of the University of Ghana community to enable us meet our goals.

The strategic plan will be subjected to periodic, rigorous and objective review to establish its impact and maintain its relevance. We are convinced that the process of detailed analysis and internal discussion that we have undergone, stands us in good stead to exercise strong influence over our future. By focusing on our strategic priorities, we will prove to ourselves that we are truly on our way towards becoming a World Class University.

**Research at the University of Ghana**

The University is committed to re-defining itself as a research-driven institution and actively encourages faculty to engage in research activities. Toward this end, starting from the 2008-2009 academic year, a portion of the University's annual budget has been earmarked to facilitate and promote cutting edge research.

It is the expectation that the University will be able to fund projects that are capable of addressing pressing national and developmental issues and offer recommendations that will be relevant to policy makers and stake holders.

**The major modes of financing research in the University are UG Research Grants, Conference Grants and Faculty Development Grants**

All Senior Members in the University are eligible to apply for conference grants to enable them attend or organize conferences relevant to their field.

For the 2013-2014 academic year, the University, through the Office of Research,

Innovation and Development, awarded 50 conference grants with a total value of **GHC 229,812.** Out of this number, six grants were  approved  for  the  organization  of  conferences  while the  remaining  44 were  for  senior  members to  attend  or  present  papers  at international conferences, seminars and workshops.

For research grants, under the 7th Call for research proposals; 37 research grants with a total value of **GH942,611.00** were awarded in the three grant categories:

Seed Grants; which are targeted at faculty members at the early stages of their careers, to enable them explore new ideas to apply for larger funding or bigger grants in the future and would normally not exceed GHC 7,500;

Investigator –Led Grants: which would normally not exceed GHC 40,000. Grants of this nature are awarded to faculty members with a clear research question they wish to address.

Multi-Disciplinary Grants: These shall not exceed GHC120,000 and are for multi-disciplinary and inter-faculty research projects which specifically address a national development issue and are also capable of shaping or influencing policy in Ghana.

To  date,  a  total  of  124  grants  with  a  total  value  of  about  GHC3.2 million  have

been  awarded  as  research  grants  funded  by  the  University  of  Ghana.  Out of this

number, 38 projects have  been  successfully  completed  and  most  of  the Principal

Investigators of these projects have gone on to win international competitive grants.

The 8th Call for proposals for UG Research Grants has recently been launched, and I hope that faculty members will take advantage of this opportunity to access funds for research.

Faculty Development Grants were introduced in response to the University’s drive to provide funding for faculty development and to enforce the requirement of a PhD or other terminal degree as the basic qualification for being a lecturer in the University. Since its inception in the 2008/2009 academic year, grants worth over GHC 678,000 have been awarded to 67 faculty members.

The maximum grant currently awarded is GH¢35,000, and existing faculty members who hold an MPhil Degree, have registered for PhD studies and have served at the University for at least one year are eligible for the award.

The grants are available to staff from all disciplines and are tenable in any reputable institution of higher education across the world. It is therefore expected that a major outcome of these grants will be high quality faculty with diverse learning and research experiences who will positively influence teaching and learning outcomes at the University of Ghana. The requirement that grant recipients publish at least two articles from their PhD research ensures a boost in the University’s research profile.

**Installation of Scientific Equipment**

Ladies and gentlemen, the University has developed a programme for the acquisition of modern equipment for the various units of the University undertaking scientific research, at a total cost of $2.5 million. I am pleased to announce that an ultra-modern 500MHz Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) Spectrometer, a device with wide applications in scientific research and industry, was recently installed and launched at the Chemistry Department. The NMR, the first of its kind in West Africa, is to facilitate the research of faculty and graduate students.

A nitrogen plant has been set up at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research to produce liquid nitrogen for the use of scientists. An Xray Diffractometer (XRD) equipment has been installed and commissioned at the Department of Physics. HPLC equipment for the Department of Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology has also been installed. Additionally, procurement of equipment for general purpose use in the sciences has also been done.

**Governance**

As part of the overhaul of governance, as outlined in the strategic plan, the University has adopted a decentralized system of administration starting from the 2014/2015 academic year. The Colleges under the collegiate system of administration are each headed by a Provost.

The collegiate system is intended to decentralize the academic and management functions of the university, and to make the process of decision making shorter and more structured. The leadership of the various colleges have been given adequate leeway to facilitate decision making at the college-level, and to boost financial autonomy.

Additionally, under the collegiate governance structure, faculties no longer exist. Groups of departments have been organized under Schools, headed by Deans. Some of the major changes are as follows: the former Medical and Dental Schools have been merged into the School of Medicine and Dentistry, while the former School of Allied Health Sciences has been expanded and has become the School of Biomedical and Allied Health Sciences. We also have the School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences and the School of Biological Sciences as part of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences. The College of Education is made up of the Schools of Information and Communication Studies; the School of Education and Leadership, and the School of Continuing and Distance Education, while a new School of Languages has been introduced under the College of Humanities.

In terms of administrative structures, many of the functions previously carried out at the centre will now be done at the College or School level. All of these are with the aim of ensuring less complexity in decision-making processes, and providing prompt and efficient service to all our stakeholders.

**Legon City Project**

Chairman of Council, ladies and gentlemen, in the last decade, the University of Ghana has struggled to hold on to lands that have been assigned to it for present and future use. The University’s assets are threatened by rapid urbanization and the related rapidly growing demand for land in Accra.  In the effort to ensure that the University derives as much benefit as possible from the land available to it, both for current and future purposes, the University is updating its master plan. This is intended to guide land use with a view to enhancing efficiency in the use of University of Ghana lands.

As part of this new plan, it is proposed to develop a 'sites and services scheme' on part of the University lands in the Okponglo-Bawaleshie-Trinity Theological Seminary enclave to be known as "Legon City". The proposal is to develop a modern mixed-use development on 100 acres of University land with a number of objectives in mind, namely:

* Halt the encroachment on University lands
* Provide additional academic facilities in partnership with the private sector.
* Generate a sizeable endowment for the University that will sustain it for many years to come.
* Complement the development of modern business space for Accra with a more congenial environment.

Such an undertaking will have several dimensions and considerations, both in terms of design and expected outcomes and impacts.

**Health Services**

A team headed by the Director of Health Services, with representation from the School of Public Health, the Public Affairs Directorate, the Physical Development and Municipal Services Directorate, the University of Ghana Computing Systems, the Dean of Student Affairs, SRC, GRASAG and the Ghana Health Service has been put in place to plan the University’s education strategy and action plan in the event that any cases of Ebola are reported on the University campus. Pamphlets and banners have been circulated, and comprehensive information on the disease has been circulated via email and placed on the University’s website.

A facility has been prepared to initially contain suspected cases of Ebola. If positive cases are identified, transfer to the national treatment base will be arranged. As a precautionary measure, all members of the University community are required to complete an Ebola risk assessment form. Responses are being studied and requisite support and advice given.

**Scholarly Lectures and other Events**

Chairman of Council, Ladies and gentlemen, our faculty continue to share their research and expertise with colleagues and the general public, and I will highlight a few activities that have taken place recently.

Professor Richard Adanu, Dean of the School of Public Health, has delivered the first Inaugural Lecture for the 2014/2015 academic year. In his lecture on the topic, “Her Right Not A Favour: The Future of Women’s Health in Ghana”, Professor Adanu noted that women’s health has been understood over the years as only concerned with women’s reproduction but should be viewed as a combination of clinical and social issues that women face as a result of their biological make up and the cultures that they find themselves in.

This year’s Alumni Lecture was delivered by Professor Henrietta J.A.N. Mensa-Bonsu, Director of the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy on the topic “The African Union’s Peace and Security Architecture: A Guarantor of Peace and Security on the Continent.” Professor Mensa-Bonsu expressed the belief that despite the numerous challenges that the African Union’s African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) faces, it could achieve its aim through the continued support, commitment and political will of member states.

The [Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies (IESS)](http://iess.ug.edu.gh/) has joined the Global Alliance of Earth Systems, becoming the research hub in Africa.  The Research Centre Accra is led by the Institute’s director: [**Professor Chris Gordon**](http://www.earthsystemgovernance.org/people/person/chris-gordon)**.**

Professor Ebenezer Oduro Owusu, Provost of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences has formally presented the Grant Agreement Document of the Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA) Project to the President of the ECOWAS Commission.

The newly established ECOWAS Coastal and Marine Resources Management Centre at the University of Ghanais responsible for co-ordinating activities that utilize earth observation data from satellite to help manage fisheries resources, and also provide early warning information on ocean conditions for the benefit of artisanal fishers. The Centre is one of six Regional Centres of Excellence which will implement the Pan-African programme on Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA).

The MESA project is a pan-African programme that utilizes Earth Observation data for developing products and services to increase the information, management, decision-making and planning capacity of African countries. It is being implemented through 7 Regional Implementation Centres (RICs), including the ECOWAS Coastal and Marine Resources Management Centre based at the University of Ghana.

The Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER) has launched the 2013 edition of the State of the Ghana Economy Report (SGER). The report highlights developments in the various sectors of Ghana’s economy; including fiscal developments, monetary and financial developments, international trade and payments - as well as developments in the agricultural, industrial and services sectors.

The College of Humanities recently launched a book: “Changing Perspectives on the Social Sciences in Ghana”, published by Springer and edited by *S*amuel Agyei-Mensah, Joseph Atsu Ayee and Abena D. Oduro. The book details the development of various disciplines in the social sciences over the years, and traces the progression and change in focus by new and older breeds of researchers in the various fields.

**Publication of Readers**

Chairman of Council, ladies and gentlemen, as part of the University’s efforts to enhance the quality of teaching and research at the University of Ghana, the development of “Readers” or collections of essays on disciplines or sub-disciplines was initiated. 22 Readers have been published and launched so far and another 20 Readers are at various stages of revision and will be launched soon.

This is one of the most significant initiatives in book publication in any African university, and is useful reading material both for our students and for students and scholars across the world. The endeavour is partially funded with a grant of US$80,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and by the University of Ghana from its internally generated funds.

**THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

The welfare and well-being of our students is at the heart of all that we do as a University, and several interventions have been introduced to ensure that our students reap the maximum benefit from the time that they spend here as students.

Our Counselling and Placement Centre has stepped up the services on offer to students and officials who deal with student affairs:

Facilitation sessions are periodically held for Academic Advisors and Hall tutors as part of our goal to enhance the student experience. Participating staff share their experiences, and recommendations are made for the role of both the hall tutor and the academic advisor to help with effective student handling.

In the 2013-2014 academic year, leadership training sessions for SRC Executives were held in conjunction with the Office of the Dean of Students for student leaders, and Career Development Leadership Academy sessions were run for students who were then put forward for internships

A number of students went through Peer Counselling training programmes and have been put forward for volunteering as peer counsellors both on campus and in some Junior High schools.

Career planning workshops have also been held for students, and their teachers and school counsellors at the Junior and Senior High School levels. We see this as very important, because these are potential students of the University, and it is important to ensure that they are given the right orientation in terms of subject and programme choices that may determine their future choices and outcomes.

An industry-academia forum was held in the 2013-2014 academic year as part of the Centre’s open house week to brainstorm on how to make our students more employable. Students had the opportunity to meet with companies for an opportunity to be enlisted for internship, national service and graduate employment.

**Financial Aid**

Our Students Financial Aid Office continues to administer funding for students who face challenges in funding their education. In the 2013-2014 Academic Year, the equivalent of GHC 648,000 was disbursed to 411 students. More than half of the amount disbursed was realised from the University’s internally generated funds, and the rest from kind donations from individuals, Churches, non-governmental Organisations and corporate sponsors, both foreign and local. I wish to commend the Students Representative Council for the introduction of the *Yi Bi Boa* Scholarship Scheme, the SRCs contribution to the provision of financial support to needy students, which has significantly bolstered the University’s efforts. I once again extend an invitation to all well-meaning members of society to contribute to the University’s work to ensure the removal of financial barriers that may prevent our students from pursuing their educational goals.

**Academic Prizes**

In order to motivate and reward students who excel in their courses of study, 18 new academic prizes with a value of over GHC 150,000 were introduced in the 2013-2014 academic year, making a total of 61 university-wide prizes. We thank all our sponsors, especially those who have supported us over the years, and we welcome new sponsors to enable us continue to celebrate and encourage our students.

**Sports**

Our Sports Directorate is giving wider meaning to the compelling power of sports to achieve broad developmental and social outcomes. The Directorate continues to grow in visibility, and offers a variety of sporting programmes and activities for both staff and students. These include the first year games, the inter-hall games, bilateral games with sister universities and inter-departmental games for staff.

I have already mentioned the University of Ghana Policy on Admission for Student Athletes (UG-PAAS) **w**hich is expected to promote the growth and development of students’ performance in sports, thereby creating a sustainable relationship between sports and academic performance. I am happy to report that by all indications, students admitted under this newly introduced policy are excelling both in their academic work and in their sporting endeavours.

**Well wishes to Graduating Students**

I will end by congratulating our graduating students, who have worked so hard to get to this point. We wish you all well in your future endeavours and trust that as you move on to the next stage of your lives, the values and life lessons you have learned during your time here will serve you well.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.

**Professor Ernest Aryeetey**

**November 2014**