

## **VALEDICTORY SPEECH BY MISS AMANDA NUTAKOR**

Madam Chancellor;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to stand before you today to deliver the valedictory speech on behalf of the inspiring, and undeniably brilliant, graduating class of 2020. Without doubt, our journey has been a long and challenging one. An Arabic proverb states that: “*He who has health has hope; and he who has hope has everything.*” We have practically experienced the import of this saying in 2020. The onset of the global pandemic in March proved to us that the good health of our bodies and minds is of utmost importance. This is why today, there is a greater significance attached to the celebration of our graduating medical doctors, dental surgeons, who will proceed after this, to not only contribute to the general healthcare system of our country, but also, to help in the universal fight against the deadly virus. We are truly grateful to our medics, including my own father, who happens to be a general surgeon, without whom, I must say, some of us might not have participated in this ground-breaking occasion... The University of Ghana’s maiden virtual congregation! Yes, we have braved all odds and I am proud to say that we did so excellently.

Graduating Class of 2020, Congratulations !

For all of us we have created a lot of memories during our time as students of our various schools. Some positive, others not so much.

About four years ago, and for some of us, three years ago, and for others as much as six years, we were all excited and anxious to begin our various studies in law at Ghana's premier university. We believed that the degree would open up various doors to success, with some of us merely yearning to be accepted into the prestigious circle of 'learned' individuals, whilst others dreamed of securing enough finances to take a first-class flight to famous tourist destinations with Bali on top of the list!

We all came in confident of our chances to achieve our goals, due to our intelligence. After all, we are smart, aren't we? Some of the best students of our various high schools. However, we were wrong.

After our first week of lectures, our spirits dropped. 'Where are we going with this?', some of us asked ourselves as we observed our reading lists continuously pile up with cases and other reading materials. Confusion and agitation gripped us, when we struggled for hours to find materials in the law library, only to realize that we were searching at the wrong place to begin with! As for reading and understanding the complex texts and cases assigned, that was a whole other concern we all grappled with during our first days. Despite this, semester by semester, we got accustomed to the pace at the School of Law and, gradually, everything got better for all of us. I

believe our compatriots from the University of Ghana Medical and Dental Schools will have their own stories and moments of trepidation.

Without doubt, we would not be here today if not for our parents and guardians who invested in us in all aspects to ensure our success. They have worked long and hard and even made sacrifices for us to be here today. Unfortunately, some of them are no more with us, although they supported us at the beginning of our studies. I have to say, we are eternally grateful to our parents, guardians and other loved ones for everything they have done for us throughout this exciting, but demanding, journey.

Our utmost appreciation also goes to our lecturers for their patience, guidance and encouragement throughout our time here. Without their advice, mentorship and direction, we would not be able to say that we have victoriously attained a, BDS, an LLB, or an MB ChB. Some of them, despite their own personal problems, went the extra mile to motivate us and consistently provide updates during the online classes and online examination period. Words cannot express our gratitude to them for that.

We are also beyond thankful to the other University staff who have contributed to creating a conducive and efficient learning environment during our studies here. We therefore say a big thank you to the helpful and considerate Librarians, IT personnel, Janitors, national service personnel and other support staff, without whom our studies would have proved to be much more difficult than they already were.

It is necessary to mention that although we overcame the struggles of our first semesters studying law, other major setbacks came into the picture threatening to take away our opportunity of making it to this congregation. There was the interruption of on-campus classes, followed by anxiety and depression caused by the limited knowledge of our future. Would the class of 2020 really graduate in 2020? Finally, the University of Ghana came through with the online classes, which although brought us hope, also came with a myriad of other technological, technical and domestic issues. Whilst some of us were struggling to get internet connectivity, others were battling with power and technology problems.

Despite all this, I must not forget to say that we have had amazing and truly phenomenal moments as a class during this journey as well. A number of us excelled in certain subjects notoriously known for being difficult and almost impossible to top. Maybe some years from now, we will not remember the details of some things we studied, but surely, we will remember the laughs and jokes we shared when studying some remarkable cases such as **Glah v. The Republic** and **R v. Brown**, which made the study of law a positive and humorous experience. Even though the coronavirus pandemic took away our opportunity to have our last Law dinner and make memorable experiences, we nevertheless triumphed in creating unforgettable moments online. We stood united as a class to protect our interest multiple times during difficult situations. Our class and Law Students' Union representatives also

exceeded all our expectations and proved to us that, indeed, in difficult times, true leaders are not only courageous on behalf of their followers, but are also the most determined problem-solvers. For their hard work and perseverance, we, as a class, will be forever grateful.

Look at us now, the class of 2020, the class that overcame the challenges caused by the deadly coronavirus pandemic, and managed to perform creditably. Overall, at the University of Ghana School's Dental School, School of Law, and Medical School, we have built connections and friendships which would certainly last a lifetime.

Most of us from the School of Law aspire to become lawyers, and that is why from here, we wish to undertake the Professional Law Course at the Ghana School of Law and, eventually, be called to the bar. I trust that success would come to each and every one of us who has decided to start this next stage and is working and studying tirelessly to be accepted for the competitive professional course. I look forward to seeing all of us excel and take up influential leadership positions in government and other institutions.

Fellow graduands, our real journey did not begin when we went for our first lecture at this University. Our true journey begins today. With a BDS, LLB or MBChB in hand, we seek greater heights, both personal and professional. We enter the world

outside the walls of our beloved university and aim to excel, not as against others, but as against ourselves. I truly believe that the biggest motivation for greatness is to compete, not against others, but against yourself. We must all strive to be better tomorrow than we are today, for everyone's path is different and it is only you who can measure how far you have come.

A big thank you to everyone once more, as well as the University of Ghana as a whole, for making today possible.

Congratulations once again Class of 2020, and I wish you all the best!