

OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR



CONGREGATION CEREMONY

MARCH 2023

ADDRESS BY:

**PROFESSOR NANA ABA APPIAH AMFO
VICE - CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

TUES., MARCH 21 – SAT. MARCH 25, 2023

GREAT HALL, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA



Madam Chancellor,
Chairperson and Members of Council,
Pro Vice-Chancellors,
Registrar,
Provosts, Deans, Directors and Heads of Department,
Guest Speaker,
Chairman and Members of College of Humanities Advisory Board,
Members of Convocation,
Staff and Students,
Alumni,
Graduands,
Invited Guests,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to welcome you all to the 2023 graduation ceremonies which are taking place as part of activities marking the University's 75th anniversary. This **afternoon**, we celebrate the achievements of our **undergraduate** Bachelor of Arts students in the College of Humanities who successfully completed their programmes

of study, in the 2021/2022 academic year. Congratulations to all of you on this landmark achievement.

After having to move to virtual Congregation ceremonies because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are pleased to return this year to having in-person ceremonies for all of our graduating students.

13 congregation ceremonies are being held this week, with a total of 11,711 (Eleven thousand, seven hundred and eleven) students graduating from all four Colleges as well as the School of Graduate Studies.

This number is made up of 2,918 (Two thousand, nine hundred and eighteen) graduate students, including 102 PhD students and 2,816 Masters students.

8,331 (Eight thousand, three hundred and thirty one) students are graduating with Bachelors degrees, and 462 with diplomas

State of the University

Admissions

Madam Chancellor, the University is still working hard to get back on track with the regular August to July academic year. The current academic year started in January and will end in August.

Our student enrollment figure for the 2022/2023 academic year is 17, 453 (Seventeen thousand, four hundred and fifty three), made up of 49% males and 51% females.

Award of Scholarships for the 2022/2023 Academic Year

Madam Chancellor, in our effort to embrace equity and provide opportunities for economically disadvantaged students, the University continues to support students with financial difficulties. I am pleased to announce that over 500 students of the University of Ghana have been awarded scholarships for the 2022/2023 academic year, through the Students Financial Aid Office. These scholarships were awarded to brilliant and deserving students, some of whom are living with disability. I fervently urge awardees to stay focused on academic excellence by working hard and remaining committed. It is our hope that these scholarships will motivate and inspire them to achieve their full potential.

The University is grateful to the donors who made financial contributions to ensure that these scholarships were made available to students who would otherwise have been unable to attend the university due to financial constraints. I take this opportunity to call on other donors to also come on board to assist us to ensure that financial difficulties do not serve as a hindrance to our students achieving their full potential.

Student Accommodation

Madam Chancellor, the University is committed to providing quality education to all our students, including comfortable accommodation. As such, we have been working tirelessly to expand our student accommodation facilities, and we are pleased to report significant progress.

One of our most recent achievements in this regard is the steady progress in the completion of a 904-bed capacity hostel facility, located within the university campus. This facility is being funded from the Infrastructural Development Fund, which is a pool of funds from our internally generated funds.

Additionally, in 2022, the sod was cut for the construction of a PhD Apartment Block dedicated to PhD students enrolled at University of Ghana. The project is funded by savings on our Carnegie sponsored capacity building projects, and will provide the much-needed accommodation for PhD students.

Additionally, private investors are working on putting up hostels, which when completed, will add to the stock of accommodation available on and close to the University campus, thereby lessening the burden on our students.

Madam Chancellor, I can also report that in order to ensure that as many students as possible coming into Level 100 have on-campus accommodation, we have re-introduced the in-out-out-out policy, which will result in all our traditional halls of

residence being reserved for fresh and graduate students. This policy which is being implemented progressively will be in full force by the 2025/2026 academic year.

Online Student Academic Records Request Portal And Service Fees System

Madam Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, the University continues to work towards modernising and streamlining our processes. As part of this initiative, we have recently launched an online student academic records request portal and service fees system, which will gradually replace the traditional paper-based system.

This new portal and service provides a more efficient and convenient way for students to request academic records and pay for related services from the comfort of their own devices. The University has also partnered with Ghana Post to provide subsidized courier services for delivery of academic documents. The online system will enable faster processing of requests and reduce the likelihood of errors, which will ultimately improve the overall student experience.

The GRASAG-UG Development Fund has been inaugurated to oversee capital expenditure projects critical to the welfare of Graduate Students at the University of Ghana. Currently, the Fund's primary focus is the construction of a 2000-bed capacity Graduate Student Hostel.

Likewise, a seven-member Board of the Students Representative Council (SRC) Development Fund has been inaugurated. The Board is to champion the implementation of the physical development projects initiated by students.

We laud these student-led initiatives to invest in critical infrastructure to improve upon the student experience.

GK-IMPACT Project Advances University of Ghana's ICT Agenda

Madam Chancellor, distinguished guests, graduands, and members of the University of Ghana community, thanks to the GK-IMPACT Project, a collaboration between the University of Ghana, KOICA, UNICEF, and MEST, we are making significant strides in advancing entrepreneurship and innovation in the ICT sector. Recently, 20 startups were welcomed into the UNICEF STARTUP Lab Accelerator Program, with seven of them established by University of Ghana alumni. These startups operate in various fields, including real estate, finance, education, and career services. This development perfectly aligns with our vision to promote research, teaching and learning, administrative processes, and extension activities anchored in technology and humanism. The GK-IMPACT Project has allocated US\$9 million through KOICA to construct a building that will provide software and hardware for ICT innovation and research. The Lab will also host more startups, including those interested in leveraging ICT to solve contemporary social problems in Ghana and

Africa. This initiative reflects the University of Ghana's commitment to promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, and we anticipate more exciting developments in the future.

Launch of UG Gender Policy

Ladies and gentlemen, over the years, the University of Ghana has worked diligently at creating an environment that is free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination. The University of Ghana was the first university in Ghana to set up a Center dedicated to Gender related issues in 2005 (Center for Gender Studies and Advocacy CEGENSA). UG is also the first university in Ghana to develop a Sexual Harassment Policy, and I am proud to note that last week, the University of Ghana became the first public University to develop and launch a Gender Policy. As you noted when you launched the Gender Policy, Madam Chancellor, the Gender Policy seeks to formalize all the practices that the University has developed over the years, to ensure that all stakeholders are treated equally and have access to the same facilities, opportunities and treatment, regardless of their sex. University Management pledges to continue to work hard in this area, and to ensure equity for all stake holders.

Special Initiatives

Madam Chancellor, the University of Ghana has commenced the implementation of a number of special initiatives that were launched last academic year, to further enhance the student experience at the University.

One Student One Laptop (1S1L) project: We have implemented the One Student One Laptop (1S1L) project, which has already provided 120 needy students with laptops and we will soon give out a second batch of laptops of up to 200. We are most grateful for the generous support from individuals and corporate bodies, who have made valuable contributions towards enabling the beneficiaries to excel in their academic pursuits.

Classroom Modernization Project: Again, the classroom modernization project has yielded some impressive results. Earlier this year, I was glad to commission the refurbished K.A. Busia Classroom which was supported by funding from the Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation. Refurbishment works are complete at the Oracca Tetteh/Larweh Building, the Staff Resource Centre and eight (8) lecture rooms at the Accra City Campus, with the completion of civil works and installation of IT equipment. These constitute the first phase of the project, while the second stage will include the modernization of the Jones Quartey Building, Central Cafeteria, the N Block, New N Block and the GCB Building.

Hotspot Comfort Zones Project: We have also initiated the Hotspot Comfort Zones project, which will provide students with comfortable and reliable places to access internet connectivity. Procurement processes are underway to select contractors for construction to begin.

We believe that these initiatives will significantly enhance the student experience at the University of Ghana, and we look forward to more contributions from friends of the University towards building a world-class institution.

Centre for Disability Studies and Advocacy (CEDSA)

Madam Chancellor, We are committed to ensuring that the University of Ghana remains a place where diversity, equity, and inclusion are upheld, and where our students can thrive both academically and personally. The University Council has approved the establishment of the Centre for Disability Studies and Advocacy (CEDSA). The Centre will provide support services to students and staff with disabilities, focus on research and advocacy, and offer short courses in the area of disability.

Research Activities

Distinguished Chancellor and guests, I am delighted to share some exciting news about our university's research endeavours. From July 2022 to date, through the Office of Research, Innovation and Development (ORID), 62 research grant

contracts and agreements with a total value of US\$4,676,637 were executed, with expected overheads of about US\$508,353. In addition, 18 sub-award agreements worth US\$1,452,051 were issued, and ORID facilitated the submission of 28 proposal/grant applications to various funders worth US\$25,665,527.

Our researchers have also achieved some major collaborations, and I will mention a few of these. Dr. Ceasar Atuire of the Department of Philosophy and Classics has won a 5-year grant from Wellcome Trust Discovery Awards worth 3.2 million pounds sterling for the research project “Moving Beyond Solidarity Rhetoric and Global Health”, which has a global team of co-investigators from Costa Rica, Canada, Austria, South Africa, India, and Australia.

Professor Yaw Afrane of the Department of Medical Microbiology has won a US\$3 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to undertake a project that will strengthen scientific capacity in malaria endemic regions in West Africa. Similarly, Professor Fiifi Ofori-Acquah, Director of the West Africa Genetic Medicine Centre, has been awarded a \$3 million grant by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA, to sequence the whole genome DNA of children with sickle cell disease (SCD) in Ghana.

Again, a team of scientists at the University of Ghana led by Dr. Samuel Kojo Kwofie of the School of Engineering Sciences, has published a pioneering work on artificial intelligence (AI)-based anti-Ebola virus drug discovery.

Additionally, the University has launched the 2.4 million Euro MarCNoWA project in partnership with the European Union (EU) and African Union (AU) on Global Monitoring for Environment and Security.

The Institute of Applied Science and Technology (IAST) of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, continues to research on turning plastic waste into petrol, diesel, and gas. This is done by reprocessing the plastic waste into high-value fuels and chemicals for households or small running engines. We are confident that as IAST continues research into this area, we may be that much closer to solving the menace of plastic waste, while finding an alternative to expensive fuel products.

The Director of the West African Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI), Professor Eric Yirenkyi Danquah, has been named the 2022 Africa Food Prize Laureate for his achievements in training African Plant Breeders for Africa.

Sixteen students of University of Ghana School of Law won this year's national edition of the JESSUP International Law Moot Court Competition, the world's largest moot court competition, and will represent Ghana in Washington DC. Our

students competed with four other universities to pick the first slot and were also awarded the Best Oralist for the preliminary rounds.

The University of Ghana Business School (UGBS) has partnered with Agricultural Managing Group limited, to launch an Innovation and Incubation Hub with the objective of equipping students with practical skills that will enable them to develop job creation abilities. The initiative aims to shift the culture of teaching only theory to involving practical methods aimed at shaping students to be well-equipped and competent to create and manage their own jobs.

We are proud of the achievements of all of our researchers and students and wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

UG Ranked No 1 in Ghana

Madam Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to announce that the University of Ghana was ranked number 1 in Ghana in the Webometrics 2022 University rankings, which among others, tracks the global performance and visibility of universities and focuses on indicators which reflect the global quality of the scholar and research institutions worldwide. I congratulate all who contributed to our achievement of this feat, and I urge us all to do even better and earn more well deserved laurels.

75th Anniversary Celebrations

Madam Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, the University's 75th-anniversary celebrations which were launched last year, are advancing smoothly. The anniversary theme, "Nurturing Resilience; Adopting Technology, Embracing Humanism," reflects our commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and human-centeredness.

The Anniversary Planning Committee has planned a series of exciting events and activities spread over a 12-month period. To start the celebrations, the UG@75 logo was unveiled, and a tour of the logo was organized.

Several events have been held, including "A Walk with UG Alumni & Friends"; various UG@75 Sporting Activities and two Public Lectures, one on Ghana Energy Sector by Mr. Egbert Faibille Jnr, Chief Executive Officer, Petroleum Commission and another delivered by Mr. Manasseh Azure Awuni, Editor-in-Chief, The Fourth Estate, on the topic: "Our Ghana - Reflections on Integrity and Resilience". An evening of relaxation and lessons in resilience was organized with Ms. Elizabeth O. Olympio-Emanuel, an alumna of the University and co-founder of JamRock Restaurant as the speaker. There was also an insightful programme with M.anifest a musician, rapper and record producer in conversation with Akosua Hanson on 'the Creative Economy and Our Collective Future and Development'.

Many other exciting activities have been lined up: we have the Aggrey-Fraser Guggisberg Memorial Lectures in April to be delivered by our own, Her Ladyship Justice Professor Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, as well as a Special Congregation, at which eighteen persons who have distinguished themselves in various fields of endeavour, will be awarded honorary doctorate degrees.

I urge all friends of the University to participate actively in the events when they are announced. As we celebrate our 75th anniversary, let us reflect on our achievements, look forward to doing even better and uphold the values that have defined our great institution over the years.

Well wishes to Graduands

To conclude, I want to offer my heartfelt congratulations to you, the graduating class.

You have gained a wealth of knowledge, skills, and experiences during your time at the University of Ghana, and you have engaged in cutting-edge research and explored new ideas that have broadened your horizons and challenged your assumptions. You have been challenged to think critically, to engage with different perspectives, and to develop a deep understanding of the world around you.

Perhaps most importantly, you have become part of a community that is defined by a shared commitment to excellence, a passion for learning, and a dedication to making the world a better place. You have formed relationships that will last a

lifetime, and it is my prayer that, no matter where your journeys take you in the years to come, you will maintain your connection to the University of Ghana.

I wish you success in all your pursuits, and may you always proceed with integrity in all that you do. Once again, Congratulations!

Thank you, and God bless you all.

Prof. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo
Vice-Chancellor
March 2023