

OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR



**CONGREGATION CEREMONIES
(SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES)**

JANUARY 2022

ADDRESS BY:

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

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UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

Madam Chancellor,

Vice-Chancellor,

Chairperson and Members of the University Council,

Pro Vice-Chancellors,

Registrar,

Provosts, Deans and Directors,

Distinguished Guest Speaker,

Members of Convocation,

Staff and Students,

Alumni,

Graduands,

Invited Guests,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, including those joining us virtually from
all around the world,

It is my pleasure to warmly welcome you all to the second set of congregation ceremonies for the 2020/2021 cohort of students. The first set took place in July 2021 for students of the School of Law and the Medical and Dental Schools.

For this set of ceremonies, in-person out-door ceremonies are being held for graduate students, while virtual ceremonies are being held for undergraduate students. We hope that in the future, when it is again safe to do so, we will be able to return to in-person congregation ceremonies for all graduating students.

For the 2020/2021 cohort, the University of Ghana is graduating a total of nine thousand, six hundred and forty three (9643) students, including two thousand, three hundred and sixty three (2363) Masters' students and eighty eight (88) PhD students.

This ceremony is dedicated to graduate students who completed their programmes of study in the 2020/2021 academic year.

The State of the University

Madam Chancellor, I was appointed as Vice-Chancellor on 26th October, 2021. My goal as Vice-Chancellor is to lead the University of Ghana to attain the status of a 21st century world-class research-intensive University, and my vision is to create a culture that promotes research, teaching and learning, administrative

processes and extension activities driven by technology and anchored in humanism.

Realisation of my vision hinges on six key strategic objectives (KSOs):

1. Reinvigorate impactful research in the (applied) sciences and humanities, resulting in increased research income, exponential growth of research outputs such as publications, improved citations and vibrant community engagements.
2. Develop technology-driven and robust processes in research management, teaching and learning, and all other institutional processes.
3. Strengthen traditional revenue streams and expand alternative income sources to meet our debt obligations as well as our current institutional needs and ensure robustness of mechanisms for the prudent management of resources to guarantee value for money, and safeguard sound decision making in all transactions to ensure success and avoid failures and debts.
4. Lead a vibrant and responsive governance and management system which empowers the Colleges and Directorates and promotes efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and a sense of responsibility, while ensuring

adherence to UG's basic laws and other relevant (national) laws and regulations.

5. Increase UG's visibility and hence rankings by, among others, ensuring a strong web presence through aggressive propagation of our achievements and outputs via appropriate (social) media/web outlets.
6. Create a sense of ownership and commitment among students, faculty, staff and alumni, to promote creativity and innovation.

The KSOs will drive achievement of the University's nine strategic priorities, provided for in the University's 2014-2024 strategic plan.

Following my appointment, I have engaged with constituents of the University in a bid to align my key strategic objectives with the needs of the University community. Very useful feedback has been obtained, which will be used to draw up unit-level strategies and action plans towards realizing the University's strategic objectives in the following key areas:

- Revenue generation
- Technology-driven processes
- Improved service delivery

- Improved web presence
- Enhanced graduate studies delivery
- Gender and diversity
- Staff motivation

I constituted the University of Ghana Pursuit of Excellence Taskforce (UG-POET) to develop strategies that will drive overall growth for the University. The Taskforce has already submitted an initial plan of action for implementation.

Review of Collegiate System

Ladies and gentlemen, as you may be aware, the University of Ghana adopted the collegiate system of governance in 2014. A panel, chaired by a former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr, was appointed to conduct a thorough review of the system, and has presented recommendations to the University.

After extensive discussions by Colleges and the Academic Board, eight committees have been established to study and provide strategies to implement recommendations made by the Review Panel on various areas of the University's governance structure.

Academic Affairs

Madam Chancellor, the University continued with the online teaching and learning programme during the 2020/2021 academic year, progressively increasing face to face classes, tutorials and examinations.

To prevent the spread of Covid-19, the University adopted a modular system for undergraduate students for the 2020/2021 academic year, following extensive consultation and dialogue across our four colleges. Students were in school in two cohorts, with the period of teaching and learning for the main University structured to six weeks of instruction, one week for revision and two weeks for examinations.

A few units, such as the University of Ghana School of Law, the University of Ghana Medical School and the University of Ghana Dental School, received approval to organise teaching and learning in a different mode to suit their training programmes.

Madam Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, this modular arrangement facilitated the observation of Covid-19 protocols and decongested lecture halls during the academic year. Many more students were able to access residential facilities, while at the same time making use of the University's IT infrastructure.

The online arrangements for teaching and learning were complemented by in-person lectures, tutorials and examinations as a result of the reduced number of students on campus.

The academic calendar for graduate students was also modified, with academic work for this group of students taking place in the blended mode; and it was exciting to see seminars, consultations with supervisors and defense of theses and dissertations taking place online.

Numerous innovations were introduced, with increased use of Microsoft Teams and additional e-resources to complement the use of the Sakai Learning Management System.

Our students braved the odds and made the necessary adjustments to effectively utilize the modified semesters and we salute you all for your resilience.

I applaud the hard work of all our faculty, administrators and staff, whose relentless efforts throughout the period, enabled us to successfully complete the 2020/2021 academic year.

Gradual return to normal operations

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, Management set up the University of Ghana Emergency Response Team (UG-ERT) to make recommendations for infection prevention and control measures aimed at reducing transmission within the University community. Based on advice from

the UG-ERT, various directives were issued, with periodic updates on the University's efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 on its campuses and among members of the University community.

Given developments in the spread and control of COVID-19, the UG-ERT made recommendations to Management on the University's gradual return to regular operations during the 2021/2022 academic year. Subsequently, Management decided that academic work as a single cohort should resume, for both graduate and undergraduate students, with teaching and learning continuing in the blended mode. The use of technology for meetings, administrative and academic work will continue to be encouraged and facilitated.

Measures to ensure compliance with protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19 will continue, particularly with the onset of the Omicron variant. There is ongoing Covid-19 vaccination at the University hospital, and a number of mobile sites on-campus, for students and employees of the University as well as the general public. As we start the new academic year, we entreat all students to get vaccinated before returning to their respective campuses, so we can minimize the chances of massive outbreaks that could disrupt the academic calendar even further. Faculty and staff who are yet to be vaccinated are also urged to do so.

I salute all our colleagues who have played such important roles in the management and understanding of Covid-19, not just within the University, but on the national and international levels as well. Your efforts are indeed appreciated, and we look forward to your continued contributions as we all pray for the end of the pandemic and the disruptions that it has brought in its wake.

Achievements by students

Our students continue to excel in various areas, and I will highlight a few of these:

- The University won the 7th Ghana Universities Debate Championship (GUDC) which was held at the University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani. Students from the University of Ghana won a total of eight awards at the championships.
- Mrs. Justina Adwoa Onumah, a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) candidate of the Institute of Statistical, Social, and Economic Research (ISSER) has been awarded an international prize for the Best PhD Student Paper presented at the 17th Global network for the Economics of Learning, Innovation and Competence building Systems (GLOBELICS) Conference, held in Costa Rica from 3rd to 5th November, 2021. Mrs. Onumah's award

winning paper, titled, *Welfare dynamics of innovation and innovation system interactions: Implications for poverty reduction among agricultural households*, is part of her PhD thesis, and was published in the reputable Innovation and Development journal.

- Jasmine Takyi-Acheampong and Akua Aduwaa Brifo, Level 200 students from the School of Law, emerged winners of the My Intellectual Property Guide (MIPLG) Competition. The MIPLG competition is an annual event organized by law advocates leading and propagating intellectual property (IP) education for the implementation of IP law in developing countries.

We congratulate our students who continue to make us proud.

City Campuses

Ladies and gentlemen, the University Council, in 2019, granted approval for the establishment of City Campuses in Takoradi and Kumasi, to be situated in the Learning Centres already located in these cities. I am pleased to report that an implementation committee has been formed, and processes towards the take-off of these campuses are on course. It is expected that the first batch of students to these campuses will be admitted once the accreditation processes are completed.

One student one laptop initiative

Madam Chancellor, you may recall that at my induction, I spoke on the one student one laptop initiative, which is intended to ensure support for all our students who need it to have access to laptops to facilitate their academic work. In my interaction with various groups of employees following my appointment, many faculty and other staff expressed the desire to be assisted to acquire laptops to facilitate their work. A committee has been established to work towards support for the acquisition of laptops by students and staff who need these, and I look forward to receiving the committee's recommendations.

Research, Innovation and Development

From August 2021 to date, the Office of Research Innovation and Development (ORID) has reviewed and executed a total of 46 research grant contracts and agreements with a value of approximately 3.9 million dollars. By the end of October 2021, ORID had facilitated the submission of 24 proposal/grant applications to various funders with a total value of proposals submitted of approximately US\$ 63 million.

I congratulate faculty and staff who have worked tirelessly through ORIDs facilitation on these grant applications, and take this opportunity to urge you to continue to apply for grants and to produce ground-breaking research in credible outlets.

Well wishes to students

I would like to conclude with a few words to our graduating students who are the reason we are gathered here for today's ceremony.

We are here to celebrate you, and while the journey thus far may not have been the easiest, you have made it. Today, you officially close this chapter of your life and move on to the next. Your hard work and dedication have brought you to this point, and having made it this far, even the sky should not be your limit.

Some of you are already in the world of work, as you go back to work, let there be a difference in your work output and the way you approach your duties. For those of you who are about to start your careers, let the transferable skills you have acquired be evident, as you step out. I expect all of you to be excellent ambassadors of the University of Ghana brand. Raise high the bar of excellence, and always proceed in truth and integrity to make the University of Ghana proud. I wish you well, and once again, congratulations on your achievements!

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.

Prof. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo

January, 2022

