

A VALEDICTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY MR. JACOB SEMEKOR MORDZIFA AT THE NOVEMBER 2019 CONGREGATION OF THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.

The Chancellor; Members of the University Council; Vice Chancellor; Pro Vice Chancellors; Registrar; Provost of College of Humanities; Deans; Members of Convocation; Parents and Guardians; Fellow Graduands; Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen; all other protocols observed,

I am very humbled and honored to be the chosen one amongst equally deserving fellows to deliver this speech on this memorable day that will forever be on our minds.

My journey here should have begun in 2005 but I could not make it because of financial difficulties and I know some other colleagues might have faced similar challenges. I had to go into commercial driving but later pushed my dreams further to become a professional teacher and finally walked in here through the famous gates of the Premier University in 2015 – 10 years on. Even though our storylines of how we got here four or five years ago may be different, I believe we came with a common objective; to add value to our lives and become useful to our families and society at large. Many sacrifices were made by our families and friends to ensure these dreams of ours were achieved and some of those wonderful people are right here with us; by the special grace of God we made it together as a family and I would like my colleagues to please be on their feet as we give a round of applause to such deserving people. In 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Apostle Paul wrote *‘I have fought a good fight, I have won the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing’*. This statement is very synonymous to what is happening on this day the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2019 at this Great Hall.

I remember how we walked in here in 2015 as freshmen, some of us with no friends and others with few friends. One scene that is fresh on our minds, like it took place just yesterday, is how we climbed into this same hall for orientation, familiarized with some people and drew our plans of how this day will be to us. In the first two or three weeks of lectures, some of us stood right in front of lecture halls and still asked passersby to help us locate those same halls. I remember the

jubilation that consumed a serene atmosphere when a lecture was cancelled and how Powerpoint (slides) of lecturers became the most sought after commodity during IAs and end of semester examinations. Funny as these scenarios seem now, we still took every necessary step with the hope of making our dreams a reality and finally, here we are about to walk out with our lives shaped for a better and brighter future.

Why did we choose University of Ghana and not any other institution? I say we were raw materials four years ago to be processed into finished products; as we searched for the best processing company, Legon emerged on top of the list hence we chose the best and our presence here today shows that, the process is complete and the finished product is ready for the market.

University education at the undergraduate level I would say is a package that enables an individual acquire some level of knowledge and skills leading to the award of a degree. However, what goes on in the lecture halls is just about thirty percent of the total work. We would all agree to the fact that, even when we worked on our assignments or studied for exams we read and researched further in order to perform excellently and these are all part of the seventy percent that is expected from the student. It is a similar fashion out there in the world of work; you need to update your skills regularly through research, training and being proactive in order to be very efficient in whatever field we find ourselves. It would be important to revisit our notes where necessary because some would be relevant in finding solutions in the world of work.

Today's world is very versatile and competitive with ICT leading the charge in many sectors. I am therefore very happy that the University of Ghana Computing Systems gave us free access to various computing programs to enable us become competitive in the job market. I therefore expect our dear graduates to be as timeless as GTP because we've been through vigorous training which should make us productive at all times. The certificate we are awarded regardless of its class or course is just the proof of our four-year study and that alone is not enough to be successful at what we do. Values such as hard work, discipline, honesty, punctuality, determination and sincerity are important factors to see us through climbing all the giant steps in our lives.

Please let us bear in mind that we are brand ambassadors of this prestigious institution hence our actions and inactions will have, if not direct, an indirect impact on the image of the University of

Ghana. I want to encourage us all to see every challenge as an opportunity to solve a problem because it will interest you to know that problem solvers are rulers of the world.

There are countless achievements and successes chalked by the University of Ghana but I wish to use this opportunity to draw the attention of management to a problem we faced both as freshmen and continuing students. The problem is accommodation; some of us had to travel several kilometers to and from Legon for lectures and this affected our lives in various ways. The news we got when the 2019/20 freshmen reported showed that, the rate of the problem seems to be compounding other than reducing. Meanwhile, Legon is the pride of West Africa hence we do not only want it as a place to learn but a home we can always come back to. Thankfully, we read in the news that the Old Vandals Association have cut the sod for the building of a 4000-bed capacity annex for the Commonwealth Hall. It is our hope that other associations will also come onboard to help solve this problem.

Colleagues, unemployment is one serious canker eating very deep into the fiber of the youth in many parts of the *global south*. The reality is that the population of job seekers far outnumbers the job opportunities available. We therefore must be creative using the entrepreneurial skills we've acquired and try to be creators of jobs other than job seekers.

Madam Chancellor, looking back, my colleagues and I have a lot to be thankful for; foremost is the Almighty God for his goodness upon us through the journey of life. To Faculty, Administrators and all other University of Ghana staff we say thank you. There are some names that ring a bell on this campus especially when it comes to food; 'night market', 'common market for the Vandals' and 'bush canteen', thanks to the vendors for saving us from the claws of hunger. I use this wonderful opportunity to also thank my former college, the Presbyterian College of Education- Akropong Akuapem for the vigorous academic and physical training given me. Again to my employer Ghana Education Service-Asuogyaman District and Eastern Regional directorates for the grant of my study leave.

I wish to end my speech on the words of Aristotle; *we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit*. Therefore, if you wish to fail, keep doing nothing and if you want to achieve your dreams let determination, hard work and discipline be your daily bread.

God bless our homeland Ghana, God bless the University of Ghana, God bless our dear graduates and may God bless us all as we proceed with integrity.

Thank you