

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS
30TH JULY 2020 CONGREGATION CEREMONY

We welcome all our viewers to the first ever virtual Congregation ceremony for the 2019/2020 cohort of students. For this cohort, the University of Ghana is expecting to graduate a total of 14,295 students, comprising 964 students in the non-degree programmes, 8,236 undergraduates, 4,668 post graduate students and 427 PhD students, with 6,807 being females and 7,488 being males.

This ceremony will graduate 133 students of the School of Law, Medicine and Dentistry; a figure comprising 88 students of the School of Law and 45 students of the School of Medicine and Dentistry. Other ceremonies will be organized to graduate the rest of the cohort of the 2019-2020 graduating class.

The State of the University

Academic Affairs of the University

Madam Chancellor, following the directive issued by the President of the Republic of Ghana on March 15, 2020, for all educational institutions in Ghana to be closed down until further notice, management rolled out the online teaching and learning programme to ensure that the Second Semester of the 2019-2020 academic year would be completed successfully. We fully activated the UG Sakai Learning Management System, arranged with Vodafone Ghana to distribute limited data to enable faculty and students work off-campus. We also collaborated with telecommunications companies to whitelist all UG academic resources and created a help desk to provide technical support to faculty and students.

It was heartwarming to witness many innovations with faculty employing additional e-resources to complement the use of the UG Sakai Learning Management System.

When on 31st May, 2020, the President announced that the final year tertiary level students could resume lectures, management met with stakeholders and decided to continue with the online teaching and learning programmes for final and continuing students, while affording final year students who so wished to return to campus to use on-campus resources the opportunity to do so.

The University successfully conducted the end-of-semester examinations from June 8, 2020 to July 3, 2020. Provision was also made to receive registered final year students who wanted to relocate to campus to use on-campus resources from June 15, 2020. Make-up lessons were arranged for final year students who could not participate in the Online Teaching and Learning programme to take their examinations by August 1, 2020. This batch of students will finish their examinations by August 1, 2020.

The online arrangement for teaching, learning and examinations was largely accepted by faculty and Students. Management is grateful for the co-operation of all stakeholders. A special recognition to you students who have braved all the odds and adjusted to complete your programmes.

Accommodation

The University has for some time now, decoupled admission from accommodation, due to some financial obligations and judgement debt which have affected its capacity to undertake further investment to augment the housing stock.

To address the accommodation challenge which will be posed by the influx of the first cohort of graduates from the Free Senior High School policy, management is considering various approaches including an off-campus arrangement to identify suitable private residential facilities and recommend same for interested students.

Strategic Direction

Madam Chancellor, strategic teams which were set up in November 2016 to drive the transformational agenda of the University of Ghana, have continued to put in excellent work, thereby creating a better University.

Fundraising Strategy for the University of Ghana Endowment Fund

Ladies and gentlemen, the Development/ Major Donor Fundraising Unit of the Office of Institutional Advancement launched a fundraising drive dubbed 20 for 20 Fundraising Campaign in December 2019 to raise a minimum of GHC 20 million in 2020 for the University of Ghana Endowment Fund. The money would be raised from: (i) Alumni (ii) Faculty, Staff and students of the University of Ghana. (iii) Major Donors (iv) Foundation and (v) Corporate Entities.

Sports and Games

Ghana Universities Sports Association (GUSA) Games

The University of Ghana hosted the 26th Ghana Universities Sports Association (GUSA) Games from 3rd to 19th January 2020. The games, which recorded the highest spectatorship in the history of the competition, saw the UG team winning 12 Gold (4 more than in 2018), 21 Silver (13 more than in 2018) and maintaining the 19 Bronze medals it had won in the 2018 Games. Congratulations to the Sports Directorate and Local Organizing Committee for the hard work and class they demonstrated!

World Public Speaking Championship 2020

The University of Ghana Debate Society successfully defended the World Public Speaking Championship at the Assumption University in Bangkok, Thailand, in January 2020. This feat was achieved by Mr. Kwaku Apreku Agyepong, a level 300 student of the UG School of Law.

UG School of Law

Virtual Seminars on Implications of Covid-19 for Governance and Justice

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Covid-19 brought in its wake a wave of innovations. The University of Ghana School of Law successfully initiated a series of virtual seminars on the implications of Covid-19 on delivery of justice and governance in Ghana. This arrangement brought together highly experienced legal luminaries from academia and industry across law schools and institutions in the country to share ideas on possible and realistic ways of dispensing justice and implementing interventions in the face of the pandemic.

UG Contribution to the National Management of COVID-19

The University of Ghana's contribution to the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been very impressive. The Universities flagship Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR), and the West Africa Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens (WACCBIP) have strengthened capacity for testing

systems nationwide. More so, the NMIMR has served as Ghana's biggest COVID-19 testing Centre.

Doctors of the UG Medical School as part of the Case Management Teams, are involved in the setup, operationalization, and provision of care to COVID-19 patients at National Treatment Centres and in developing treatment guidelines for COVID-19 case management.

The threat posed by the coronavirus to the public necessitated strict adherence to safety measures and interventions recommended by public health scientists at the School of Public Health (SPH), working with the national case management and contact tracing teams.

The School of Pharmacy on the other hand has developed and manufactured an alcohol-based hand sanitizer in line with WHO recommendations; the product, known as *UG Sanitizer – Pharmol*, has been approved and registered by the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA).

The Department of Psychology and the Careers and Counselling Unit are also offering counselling services to Covid-19 patients to help them cope with stigma. Further, the University's Emergency Response Team has joined forces with the National Contact Tracing Team to manage the response to the pandemic.

Well wishes to Graduands

The COVID has taught us many lessons we are yet to fully appreciate. One that has stood out for me is to value our interdependence as a human community.

During these COVID days, the University has received many donations to support its fight of the pandemic. One such gift was from Mr. Lei Liang, an alumnus who studied BSc. Administration (2007 to 2012). He made a generous donation of 6000 face masks to the University. We also appreciate the wonderful contribution of students of the School of Public Health who serve as volunteers on the University of Ghana Emergency Response Team (UG-ERT). They engaged those operating at the campus markets through sensitization talks and creating more awareness on the use of the personal protective equipment (PPE).

To prepare for the reopening of the University Basic Schools, some other students dedicated time and effort to put together the information package to promote effective infection prevention control.

I believe you have all, in very significant ways, also been able to lend a helping hand to someone and made great personal sacrifices to protect others.

I would like to conclude with the words of Madison Alcedo: *Ambition is the path to success; persistence is the vehicle you ride in.*

I, therefore, pray that your commitment to obtaining knowledge does not end with your graduation but that you will continue to seek knowledge to enable you to make significant changes in your lives and in society as a whole.

As you move on to the next stage of your lives, remember to uphold the values of the University – Respect, Commitment, Integrity, and Loyalty. You must recognize that the pandemic has had adverse effects on the economy and various sectors. Various initiatives have been rolled out to contain these effects. You must remain focused and contribute meaningfully to what is essential in your field of study. I would entreat you to make your lecturers and parents proud by demonstrating initiative and creativity in these unusual times. Your sacrifices, especially during the latter part of this academic year, are laudable and I hope these have shaped you for a better future.

I call on you, in this period of COVID-19, to continue to keep yourselves and others safe by observing the safety protocols. Always remember that, stigma makes a precarious situation worse. Do not reaffirm existing stereotypes about persons who have been infected by or recovered from the disease, but let your words spread hope. As the President of the Republic of Ghana says, “*this too shall pass*”.

I wish you all the best in your individual endeavours. Once again, congratulations!

Professor Ebenezer Oduro Owusu

*Vice-Chancellor
30th July 2020*