

# **Induction Speech by Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo**

## **Vice-Chancellor, University of Ghana**

**26<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

### **Protocol**

Your Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the President of the Republic of Ghana;

Madam Chancellor and Chair of this remarkable occasion, Mrs. Mary Chinery Hesse;

The Honourable Minister of Education, Dr. Yaw Aduetwum;

Chairperson of the University of Ghana Council, Her Ladyship Justice Sophia Akuffo (rtd);

Ministers and Deputy Ministers of State (past and present);

Honourable Members of Parliament both past and present;

Members of the University Council;

Nananom, Niime, Naame;

Nana Susubribi Krobea Asante (Prof. S. K. B Asante) Omanhene of Asante Asokore;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Colleague Vice-Chancellors;

Pro Vice-Chancellors;

Provosts, Deans and Directors;

Faculty, Staff and Students;

The media;

Specially invited guests;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

## **Appreciation**

I am awed by this honour done me, by my appointment as the 13<sup>th</sup> Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana and the first female to be so appointed to this office. My heart is full of gratitude to the Lord God Almighty for bringing me this far in my life. He has been

my Strength and my Guide, giving me hope and assurance, when doubt and incertitude were raging. I'm thankful to the Council of the University of Ghana for the demonstration of confidence and trust in me by endorsing the recommendation of the Search Committee chaired by His Lordship Justice Jones Victor Mawulorm Dotse.

It has been a long and circuitous process; but in the midst of this faith-refining experience, the overwhelming goodwill and support from countless people have buoyed me this far. I thank all of you who believed in me; who stayed with me; who encouraged me; who advised me and who prayed with and for me. Some of you never stopped reminding me that I would **not** get here if God didn't want me here at this time.

The avalanche of congratulatory messages I have received since the announcement of my appointment has been tremendous and humbling. I am grateful to my family – my husband Frank for his unvacillating support over all these years and more especially throughout this period of uncertainty and anxiety; my son Yoofi and my daughters Maame Araba and Efua Benyiwa for their steadfastness; my siblings for keeping faith with me and being resolute. I thank my parents – my late dad, Rev. J. A. Appiah, for

bringing me up to make me believe I can achieve whatever I dreamt of. Dad, you missed this day, but I am positive that you are beaming with smiles from heaven, and that you are the proudest dad ever. My mother, Beatrice Abena Anima Appiah, a woman of amazing strength. Mum, you taught me the attributes of resilience, forte and forthrightness; and you live by these.

I wish to thank my Head Pastor, Rev. George Amoako-Nimako, for his unceasing prayer support and assuring and heartening words. I am indebted to all my Destiny Helpers (too numerous to attempt to recount) – your prayers, advice, interventions, and reassuring messages sustained me through this journey. I will continue to count on you all, because the real work is just about to start.

### **Recognition of the historic moment**

Mr. President, Madam Chair, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen: Today is a proud moment for me. Exactly thirty years ago this October, I came to this University as a first year (FUE) student. This was after my basic and secondary education in Kumasi, Takoradi, Tarkwa and Cape Coast. I was happy to reunite with my high school and long-lost friends and to pursue my ambition of obtaining higher education, just like any reasonably ambitious young woman. Twenty years ago, in November 2001,

after my Master's degree, I returned to begin my lecturing career here. All I did was to look forward to an illustrious career in academia. Competing for the high office of the Vice-Chancellor was definitely not in the career mix. But the Most High God had a plan. And I stand here, 20 years on, ready to take up the challenging task of leading Ghana's premier university. In these 20 years, I have applied myself to the essentials of being an academic. I have also learnt, both formally and through experience, the intricacies of higher education management.

Today, the University of Ghana has made history with the induction into office of its first female Vice-Chancellor. It has taken us a while. Seven decades and three years! Other public universities went ahead of us in this advancement in gender equality, but when the University of Ghana did it, we did it in a comprehensive style. My appointment is the last in the series of appointments of female Principal Officers. First, we had our first female Chancellor, then the first female Council Chair and now the first female Vice-Chancellor. So, for the first time ever, the three Principal Officers of the University as by law defined are female. And we topped it up with a female Registrar. It is a bold statement that the University, supported by government, is ready to give true

meaning to its fourth strategic priority, Gender and Diversity, by ensuring that merit is rewarded, irrespective of one's gender, background, ethnicity and race.

I would like to salute every woman who ever put herself up for this position. It took four other women competing in previous Vice-Chancellor races, until we got our first female Vice-Chancellor. Each woman who applied for the position built on the audacity of earlier ones who did. I would like to pay tribute to all women academics here at UG, who went ahead of me, particularly all who held competitive administrative positions (such as Deans, Directors and Pro Vice-Chancellors), and significantly to every woman who ever dared to apply for the position of Vice-Chancellor of our noble institution.

I am thanking you today; because you crawled, so I could walk; you walked so I could run; and I am running now so the next generation of women academics and professionals can gallop. Thanks to the colleague female Vice-Chancellors of public universities, past and present, for showing the way: Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyeman of University of Cape Coast, Professor Esi Awuah of University of Energy and National Resources, and Professor Rita Akosua Dickson of Kwame

Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, I thank you, seniors, for your intrepidity. I know I can count on you for your support.

### **The Obligation Ahead**

Mr. President, Madam Chair, in as much as I am thrilled about this opportunity to be appointed Vice-Chancellor, I am not oblivious of the onerous responsibilities that come with it, as CEO of arguably the most complex public institution in the country and undeniably the premier university in this country, with a student population of 61,000 and a staff strength of 6500. My job is well cut out for me, and it is no mean one.

### **Contributions of former Vice-Chancellors**

Madam Chair, the University of Ghana has, over the years, lived up to its mandate, but this has not been easy. Each epoch of our existence came along with its own peculiar challenges, some of which persist to date, even as new challenges emerge. Successive Vice-Chancellors have guarded our rich intellectual tradition which I am duty bound to sustain and enrich further.

### **My Commitment and Vision**

Mr. President, Madam Chair, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, My vision as Vice-Chancellor is to **create a culture that promotes research, teaching and learning, administrative processes and extension activities driven by technology and anchored in humanism**. My vision aligns with our aspiration, as a University, to become a “world class research intensive university” with a mission to “create an enabling environment that makes UG increasingly relevant to national and global development through cutting-edge research as well as high-quality teaching and learning”.

In our quest to produce knowledge and expert human resources, we will not forget the essence of universities. Whatever we do, we should strive to remain humane, noting that the university should be for the public good. We have what it takes to show the nation the way, and it should not just be by our talk, but we should actually walk the talk. And that is what my leadership stands for. We will face some uncomfortable moments, as we seek after truth and attempt to reconcile our differences. My pledge is to lead us to build our future together.

**What we should expect**

Mr. President, Madam Chair, University of Ghana's vision is driven by nine strategic priorities. These are:

Research; Teaching and Learning; Internal Stakeholders; Gender & Diversity; Institutional Processes; Financial Performance; Asset Management; Monitoring & Evaluation; External Stakeholders.

Madam Chair, my overarching plan is to drive the aspirations of UG through **technology and humanism**. I will do so through six Key Strategic Objectives (KSOs). They are as follows:

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 the 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.

Mr. President, Madam Chair, I will seek to execute these six key strategic objectives while insisting on **Innovation, Efficiency, and Humanism**. As we pursue our three-pronged core mandate of teaching and learning, research and community engagement/extension, we will innovate, be efficient, and above all, we will remain human. As Vice-Chancellor, I will adopt a

doctrine that is centered on humanism. This doctrine holds that as a society, we thrive on collectivism rather than individualism. To implement this, I will harness the individual talents that abound in this university for our collective good. We will unite with oneness of purpose, community, and the strength symbolized by the Adinkra symbol - **nkonsonkonson**.

I cannot successfully lead this university by working alone or with a small section of people I perceive to be aligned with me. I will inspire our community of academics, staff, and students to join hands to improve the state of all aspects of our university and to continue to develop beyond the scope of our imagination. These actions will be guided by our four core values of integrity, commitment, respect and loyalty.

Madam Chair, I will leverage talents in the University of Ghana to advance our research vision to “create a vibrant intellectual climate that stimulates relevant cutting-edge research and community engagement”. I will promote creativity and innovation in teaching and learning, driven by technology. Our classrooms will be modernized to allow for the use of modern pedagogical aids which permit, among other things, lecture capture for reuse in non-contact situations. Our faculty will receive continuous

training in modern pedagogical skills. My goal as Vice-Chancellor will be for the University to train students who are critical thinkers, technologically adept, humane, culturally sensitive and ready to provide leadership for the country and the continent. I will focus on developing 21<sup>st</sup> century citizenry skills of our students. It shouldn't matter whether you are an Engineering, Mathematics, Nursing, Political Science or Theatre Arts student. Through our program content and delivery, our students and graduates ought to be ready for the fourth industrial revolution. Mr. President, drawing a cue from you, I intend to institute a ONE STUDENT ONE LAPTOP POLICY, where we collaborate with established IT companies to provide our students and staff with their own laptop/handheld devices. Mr. President, in this regard we will need your support and that of your government to waive taxes for us, making these devices affordable for our students and staff. The need for them to acquire their own laptops/handheld devices is critical in a period where we are upscaling technology to make us functional in the fourth revolution as we live through and beyond a health pandemic.

Mr. President, Madam Chair, As part of a double pronged approach to make our education more accessible to the teeming high school

graduates from all over the country, and to upscale graduate education on our main campus, I am supervising the establishment of two City Campuses, already approved by Council. I will monitor their operations and replicate the model in other Learning Centres across the country.

Madam Chair, Our internal stakeholders are the key drivers of our strategic processes, it is critical for us to have forward-thinking academics, meticulous administrators, committed professionals and engaged students who would all work together in a congenial environment to own the processes leading to the realisation of our strategic objectives. Our HR systems, including our recruitment processes, will be reworked to align with our strategy. To motivate staff and faculty, Colleges and Central Administration will be directed to (re)introduce various periodic awards schemes. Some of these I notice have already started.

I will translate my passion for leadership development to help groom the next generation of leaders at UG. This objective will be accomplished through a meritorious programme focused on honing the skills of a cadre of potential leaders through actively involving them in university governance and management, and providing/facilitating structured leadership and management

training programmes through a ***Legon Leadership Academy***. I will lead the University to improve our student services through expanded and more accessible careers and counselling services; improved tutorial services; modernised market on Legon campus; increased student accommodation through private participation; and internal and external internship opportunities, driven by an internship policy.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, It is well established that gender, diversity and inclusion is a mark of world-class institutions; the promotion of these humanistic values definitely improves organisational outlook. We will create a sense of appreciation of diversity and inclusion, I will lead an upgrade of the Office of Students with Special Needs to a Centre for Disability Studies and Advocacy, and develop a phased plan to make our buildings and facilities accessible to differently-abled persons.

### **Financial Performance**

Mr. President, Madam Chair, One of the key issues which has consumed the Management of UG in recent years is our financial liabilities resulting mainly from judgment debts and botched agreements. Mr. President, I would like to make a special appeal to you, for your government to deliver us from this yoke that

hinders our growth and efforts to be truly world class. I am making a special appeal to you to support us clear our unfortunate UGEL debt; so we get a clean slate to start on. We will also, on our part, work hard to increase our alternative income streams. We will increase our research, consultancy and external funding income; increase special programmes across the Colleges, streamline our non-traditional income sources (rental of facilities, agricultural products and produce); operationalise and grow UG and College endowment funds; and continue to resource our newly established Office of Institutional Advancement to be a major fund-raising unit of the University. Current efforts to minimise waste through stringent financial controls will be sustained.

Madam Chair, The value of a 21<sup>st</sup> century university is in the wealth of the knowledge it produces, the training it offers and its perceived relevance to its external publics. We will build effective partnerships with our external stakeholders for our mutual benefit. I will continue with efforts to strengthen our alumni relations by working closely with the Alumni Relations office of the Office of Institutional Advancement and the UG Alumni Association Council to revamp sectional alumni groups and deliver projects and programmes of mutual concern.

The success of the implementation of our strategic objectives hinges on our ability to “mainstream and enforce structures and processes for system-wide monitoring and evaluation”. We will develop parameters for continuous evaluation of our processes and appointive officers, even as we prepare to start the process of preparing a new ten-year strategic plan (2025 – 2035).

## **Conclusion**

Mr. President, Madam Chair, as I conclude, I would like to remind myself and all that these are challenging times to be a Vice-Chancellor of any University, not least of the premier and most complex University in our country. Over the past 73 years, the University of Ghana has sought to embody what universities stand for. UG has provided an avenue for frank intellectual discourse and succeeded in training highly skilled human resource for our nation and the international community. Our alumni serve in leadership positions at home and abroad; they provide critical workforce for local, regional, and international institutions. The University of Ghana has shown significant leadership in higher education in Ghana and West Africa. We have faced challenges in the past and have always responded with resilient reorganisation and restructuring to get ourselves back on track each and every

time. We can only get finer and better as we move towards our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in just about two years.

Madam Chair, as I end, I remember the words of our revered late Emeritus Professor J. H. Kwabena Nketia, captured in our anthem, that we are “the nation’s hope and glory, the place that bears the star of peace and bids us all to do our best. Let the great tower of learning inspire both young and old to proceed in unity to uphold the public cause”. And so, I reach out to all associated with Legon, starting with our distinguished alumni (President, Speaker, Chancellor, Council Chair, and our numerous alumni here at home and abroad), our cherished students, ingenious faculty, hardworking staff and our dear friends, all as members of the Legon fraternity to “arise, arise O Legon, defend the cause of freedom, proceed in truth and integrity to make our nation proud”. Mr. President, Madam Chair, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I believe, we will make it! Let’s now get to work to restore and reposition our beloved university on the global stage.

I thank you for your attention.