

## **VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS: JULY 2017 CONGREGATION CEREMONIES**

Chairman and Members of the University Council,  
Pro-Vice-Chancellors,  
Registrar,  
Provosts,  
Distinguished Guest Speaker,  
Chairmen and Members of College Advisory Boards,  
Officials of Sister Universities,  
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Members of Convocation,  
Niime, Naamei, Nananom,  
Graduating Students,  
Parents and Guardians,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

### **WELCOME**

It is my singular privilege and honour to welcome you all to this Congregation ceremony. When I assumed office as Vice-Chancellor in August last year, I became even more fully alive to our role as custodians to the many lives we are mandated to mould for societal advancement. I am very grateful to all faculty, administrators and other stakeholders for the support provided in charting this course. We also appreciate the time parents and invited guests have taken off their respective schedules to converge here to celebrate with our graduands.

This ceremony is part of the first of two sets of graduating ceremonies for students who completed their programmes in the 2016/ 2017 academic year. A total of **3858** students will be graduating today and tomorrow at various levels from all four Colleges in the University. This number is made up of 1148 at the post graduate level, 2449 at the Bachelor's level and 261 at the Diploma level. Another set of ceremonies will be held in November this year.

## **Update on the State of the University**

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, kindly permit me to use this opportunity to give an update on the state of the University of Ghana.

### ***Strategy Execution***

In line with the University's vision to position itself as a "world-class research-intensive University" over the next decade, a strategic plan was launched in 2014 to serve as a roadmap towards attaining this vision. Thus, nine strategic teams were formed and inaugurated in November 2016 to drive this University to the status of a "Go to University" which potential students around the world would desire to attend. These teams are the:

- Institutional Advancement Team
- Agricultural Centres Commercialization Committee
- University of Ghana Rebranding and Marketing Team
- Medical and Dentistry School Expansion Team
- University of Ghana Regional/World Ranking Team
- Vice- Chancellor's Green Project Team
- Independent Power Supply Team
- Laboratory Modernization Team
- Committee to Review the Four-year Undergraduate Programme and Grading System

Through the collective efforts of the strategic teams, a lot of progress has been made with regard to the achievement of the core mandates. May I use this platform to express my heartfelt appreciation to the chairpersons and members of the respective teams for championing the progress of the University's strategic direction. The common motive of the strategic teams is to ensure resource mobilization, create a university that has immense international visibility, and create an environment that is green to ensure the needed congenial atmosphere for teaching and learning is hugely provided. Through the efforts of the respective teams,

- Some private companies have expressed interest to collaborate with the University to generate electricity supply through solar and biogas systems, redesign our grounds as part

of the green project, and partner us to ensure there are enough trees and green coverage, as well as develop and complete a waste disposal system that will rely on separation of waste, to serve as a model for our dear nation.

- Several investors have approached the University to invest in commercial activities operated by the University's Agricultural Centres.
- One-day seminar series on *Living the University of Ghana Brand through Enhanced Customer Service* have been held for all categories of staff. The seminars educated participants on how to; represent the University brand through great customer care; maximize productivity through proper work ethics and conduct; and ensure professional and pleasant interactions with stakeholders.
- The Registrar's Office, in June this year, organised the 2017 Registrar's Seminar on the theme, *Achieving Research-Intensive University Status: Walking the Talk*. This seminar prepared Senior Administrative and Professional Staff and selected Senior Staff as ambassadors to facilitate the strategy execution.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the University is making a headway in work on achieving the goals of the Strategic Plan, and I am hopeful that the relentless efforts of the strategic teams and the input by all categories of staff and stakeholders, will add the much needed push to advance the vision.

## *Academic Affairs*

### Admissions

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, our admissions process reflects the diverse nature of our student population. I am happy to note that during the 2016/2017 academic year, the University admitted students to the various programmes run on the Main Campus, Korle-Bu Campus and Accra City Campus and by Distance Learning. A total of **12,405** students, made up of **9,465** undergraduates and **2,940** graduate students enrolled.

These numbers include a total of **754** international students from across the world who accepted offers of admission and enrolled on programmes in the University of Ghana. Let me, however, note that the 2016/2017 academic year saw a slight decline in international students' enrolment following some external factors. The University is taking the necessary measures to address this and other factors that militated against enrolment during the 2016/2017 admissions session.

### ***Research, Innovation and Development***

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, any higher educational institution worth its salt must ride on a vibrant research portfolio. Having declared our intention to become a research-intensive university, the Office of Research, Innovation and Development (ORID) is taking the lead in ensuring that we meet our set goals.

### ***Research, Faculty Development and Conference Grants***

At the end of the review process for the most recent call for proposals for faculty development grants, eight grants with a total value of **GHC244,302** (two hundred and forty four thousand, three hundred and two Ghana cedis) were awarded to faculty. The tenth call for research proposals by ORID yielded 17 awards with a total value of **GHC881,733** (eight hundred and eighty one thousand, seven hundred and thirty three Ghana cedis). This year, ORID has disbursed 82 conference grants with a total value of **US\$111,142.00** (one hundred and eleven thousand, one hundred and forty two dollars).

### ***Capacity Building***

The University of Ghana was part of a consortium of five higher education institutions which were awarded an amount of **EUR 1,359,975** (one million, three hundred and fifty nine thousand, nine hundred and seventy five euros) to run the Africa Regional International Staff Student Exchange (ARISE II) programme under the Intra-Africa Project. Under this project, applications are being reviewed for both staff and student exchanges. Through the efforts of ORID, the University is hosting two full time master students at the Department of Crop Science under the ARISE Phase I project

Ladies and Gentlemen, the University of Ghana is one of seven universities that have been selected by the World Health Organization (WHO) to host an international postgraduate training scheme for masters and PhD students. The first cohort of students under this scheme completed their programme in July 2016 and the second is expected to complete later this month. The third call of applications has been processed and five applicants have been selected to receive awards.

In addition, the University, through ORID, co-ordinates the Climate Impact Research Capacity Leadership Enhancement (CIRCLE) programme under which four CIRCLE visiting fellows from Tanzania, Nigeria and Uganda have been admitted to one-year fellowships with departments in the University

The University of Ghana (the Lead Institution), together with its partners (Aarhus University and University of Copenhagen) has submitted a proposal for a grant of 13 million Danish Kroner to run the Building Stronger Universities (BSU) Phase III programme. Under the current phase of the programme, four PhD scholarships have been awarded and six short courses on research have been organised for faculty and postgraduate students.

### Faculty and Student Fellowships

Faculty members have also benefited from the Cambridge-Africa Partnership for Research Excellence (CAPREX) Phase II programme, the Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellowship and the Fox International Fellowship Scheme to spend time teaching at prestigious universities in Europe and North America.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that you agree with me that our investment in research is paying off. As a university, we will continue to dedicate resources to research as we work towards attaining our vision.

### Partnerships/Collaborations

I will now touch on a few major partnerships and collaborations that have been entered into in the 2016/2017 academic year.

The Government and people of Japan through a bilateral agreement, have provided US20 Million for the construction of an advanced state-of-the art laboratory at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR). The sod-cutting ceremony was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2017. The provision of the facility is a commitment by the Government of Japan to support the University's research into infectious diseases. When completed, the laboratories will enable the University to:

- Increase capacity for conducting clinical trials;
- Undertake research into molecular characterization of laboratory animal strains, including research into diseases such as Diabetes and Hypertension;
- Increase the number of journal articles and conference reports for policy initiatives.

The University, through NMIMR continues to function as a supporting centre for the World Health Organization (WHO) and the African Region in the following capacities:

- The WHO recognised National Influenza Center for Ghana;
- The WHO Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio;
- The WHO Reference Centre for the Identification of Rotavirus;
- The Lymphatic Filariasis Support Centre for Africa;
- The host to the West African Centre for International Parasite Control (WACIPAC) project.

The University has also signed an MOU with Toyota Ghana Company Limited (TGCL) for mutually progressive and supportive activities, to provide the University with an Engineering Training Center to train our students as part of Toyota's Corporate Social Responsibility. The cost of the building and other provisions is expected to be about US \$ 8 million. Some highlights of the MOU are:

- Hosting students from the School of Engineering Sciences for industrial internships;
- Offering workshop facilities to students from the School;

- Provision of tools and equipment worth **USD 2,000,000** to the School over a period of ten (10) years.
- Provision of a 30-seater bus by TGCL to shuttle students from the School to the training centre.
- Establishment of a scholarship scheme for bright but needy Engineering Science students.

The University, through the Institute of Applied Science and Technology, has established several partnerships with local and international companies targeted at promoting contract research, student internships, product development and capacity building. Notable among these partnerships is an agreement signed with Fuji Oil Group in March 2017 to conduct a one-year research into Shea Butter Quality and Yield Improvement.

### **Physical Development**

Ladies and gentlemen, for the University of Ghana to have the required capacity to achieve its vision and to absorb the increasing need for higher education across the world, quality infrastructural facilities are necessary. Walking around our campuses, one would notice a plethora of projects which when completed, will provide lecture halls, residential facilities and office spaces for our staff and students. Currently, there are about 15 ongoing projects which are at various stages of completion. These projects include the multi-purpose School of Performing Arts facility, new blocks for the School of Pharmacy, the Department of Nutrition and Food Science and the Department of Earth Science; the West African Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens (WACBIP) building, the multi-purpose building for the West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI), and buildings to house each of the four Colleges.

We thank our local and foreign partners who have contributed to funding for these projects, and as a University, we will continue to prudently source for funds to complete these and other ongoing projects.

### **ICT**

The University has made huge leaps in in the provision of ICT services. The University of Ghana Computing Service (UGCS) has been able to migrate the email system to the cloud to ensure stability, availability and excellent performance. In addition, a number of installation works have been done to augment internet access. A major wireless replacement exercise has been conducted to provide student hostels with Wi-Fi. Installation works have been completed at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research to serve as a Data Backup Site. UGCS has also been instrumental in the use of the SAKAI Learning Management System and Turnitin Plagiarism Software for academic purposes as well as the provision of eLearning services to the various units of the University.

UGCS has been very resourceful in the development and redesign of websites for units in the University as well as the development of a security management system to safeguard the University's integrity and online services.

Training programmes continue to be organised to equip students with skills in digital literacy and Microsoft Office, and in this vein, a two-week boot-camp for IT skills was recently organized for visually impaired students to enhance their academic work.

### ***Financial Aid to Students***

Ladies and gentlemen, the Students Financial Aid Office was set up to ensure that financial need does not deny any student equal access to quality education. Donors to the needy brilliant students fund span individuals, students, alumni, corporate and international bodies to units of the University. Contributions are also made by the University through internally generated funds, and by the student body through the “SRC Yi Bi Boa” scheme.

During the period under review, 429 scholarships worth a total of GHc931,494 (nine hundred and thirty one thousand, four hundred and ninety four cedis) were awarded to students. This amount represents an increase of 27 per cent over the GHc681,842 (six hundred and eighty one thousand, eight hundred and forty two cedis) worth of scholarships disbursed in the 2015/2016 academic year.

### ***Sporting Activities***

Ladies and gentlemen, physical activity, sports and games are an integral part of who we are as a University. The University’s Sports Directorate has made significant contributions to our sports output by lifting the name of the University through recent competitions.

At the end of the 2017 Bilateral Games held in April 2017, the University emerged the overall winner in Badminton, Basketball, Chess, Table Tennis and Debate. The University also placed second with 10 gold medals, 12 silver medals and 11 bronze medals at the Universities Sports Association (GUSA) games held in January 2017 at the University of Cape Coast.

Just last week, the 2017 University of Ghana Staff Games were held, and I am glad to note that attendance and participation by all categories of staff in the various activities was very encouraging.

The University of Ghana Sports Fund (UG-SF) has been instituted to support needy brilliant sports students and to retain their interest in sports while pursuing their studies. I encourage everyone interested in supporting our student athletes to contact the Sports Directorate to discuss ways in which they can support the initiative.

### **Issues Affecting the Smooth Running of the University**

Ladies and gentlemen, I have spoken extensively about matters that are affecting the University in a positive way. Permit me to speak briefly about a number of issues that are hindering the smooth running of the University.

The absence of a Council over the past seven months meant that many important decisions affecting the University could not be taken. I am pleased to announce that the newly constituted Council of the University has now been inaugurated. We look forward to working with Council to move the University forward.

The continued lack of financial clearance for recruitment means that the University is severely constrained in the employment of faculty, administrators and other staff to replace those who leave the services of the University. This situation is adversely affecting academic work as there are simply not enough staff to teach and provide the necessary support services.

We have received notification that public universities are required to cede 34 percent of their Internally Generated Funds (IGF) to government. The University of Ghana, like other public universities, depends heavily on its IGF to operate, as government funding is woefully inadequate. For instance, allocation for goods and services for the tertiary education sub-sector ranges between 1 and 3 percent of the sub-sectors total budget, making it virtually impossible to carry out planned activities. Also, as I mentioned earlier, the university has not received clearance to employ new full-time staff, a large chunk of IGF therefore goes towards paying critical staff whom the University has taken on, to ensure that academic work is not negatively affected. Having to relinquish 34 percent of IGF will put the University in a very dire financial state.

It is my humble appeal that government will revisit these two issues and grant financial clearance as well as allow public universities to retain 100 percent of their IGF, so that they can operate at optimal level and continue training the next generation of leaders for the nation.

### **Well Wishes to Graduands**

And now, I devote my attention to our graduating students, who are the reason we are gathered here today.

Your graduation today is a testament to the fact that you have worked hard and burnt the candle at both ends; you have withstood challenges in the academic arena and have sacrificed your energy and time to achieve success. Today, the University is officially dispatching you into the wide world as its able ambassadors.

I challenge you to raise the bar of excellence, and to be team players wherever you find yourselves. As you go out and make indelible marks on the world, I encourage you to reflect on these thoughts:

- *Nothing can stop your aims in life when you work out of a clean heart and your determination is to achieve your goals rather than to challenge others.*

and

- *Great success lies in the joy of achievement and the thrill of creative teamwork effort. The secret of getting ahead is getting started.*

I wish you well, and once again, congratulations on your achievements!

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.

***Professor Ebenezer Oduro Owusu***

*July 21-22, 2017*