

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE 2021 SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES MATRICULATION CEREMONY

SALUTATION

Chairman of the University Council

Pro-Vice-Chancellor

Registrar

Deans and Directors, University officials

Fresh Students

Distinguished Invited Guests

The Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the University Council, the Academic Board and Staff, I warmly welcome you all to the 2021 Matriculation Ceremony for fresh students of the School of Graduate Studies of this great University. This ceremony should have been held at the latter part of last year but had to be rescheduled due to the persisting COVID-19 pandemic. My deepest congratulations to our freshmen and women who have gained admission to pursue various graduate programmes here at the University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA). Your choice to study at UPSA is a clear indication that you believe in the quality of teaching and learning being offered here, and are poised for an exciting academic experience. Thank you for your confidence in us.

Being postgraduate fresh students, all of you probably might have been previously matriculated and might have a sense of what matriculation is all about. Nonetheless, I will simply add that this time-honoured tradition is the annual ceremony of initiation, where the Vice-Chancellor of the University formally admits fresh men and women as bona fide members into the University community. Matriculation confers on fresh students, full membership of the university upon the fulfilment of all the necessary admission requirements.

Every student who enrolls in UPSA for the first time must go through the rites of Matriculation and take the Matriculation Oath, signifying formal admission into UPSA. Among other things, the Matriculation Oath will require you to be diligent in the pursuit of your studies, to seek knowledge and truth, and to promote the general good of the University. It also binds us, as University Management, to seek the welfare of students in whatever we do. As fresh students, in your pledge to put up good behaviour, you are committing yourselves to be disciplined and good ambassadors of the University.

COVID AND ITS CHALLENGES

Studying during COVID times presents its set of challenges, the most critical being managing academic activities safely amidst the growing threat of the pandemic. Health experts are constantly warning us of a second wave of the virus in our part of world. This development undoubtedly portends a possible disruption of academic work if care is not taken. To this end, I would like to add my voice to the call on all of us to play our part in the fight against the virus by adhering to all the COVID-19 prevention protocols, that is, wearing of masks, social distancing and frequent hand washing or sanitising.

ADMISSIONS

The University received a total of 1,288 postgraduate applications for the 2020/2021 academic year. At the end of the admission process, a total of 1,212 applicants were offered admission. The total number of registered postgraduate fresh students stands at 883. This includes 25 PhD students, 31 MPhil students, 658 MBA students, 143 MA/MSc students and 26 MBA (by Distance Learning) students. The postgraduate registered fresh students comprise 508 males and 375 females. The above statistics brings the male to female ratio for the 2020/2021

academic year total number of registered postgraduate fresh students to 6:4. This year's intake represents about 26.87 percent increase over that of the previous year.

BLENDED TEACHING AND LEARNING

As part of measures to curb the spread of the Coronavirus, Management of the University has decided that teaching and learning during the 2020/2021 academic year should be delivered through blended teaching and learning. In other words, the normal in-person instructional method which spans a period of 13 weeks per semester will now be delivered as follows:

- For the first six weeks, there will be in-person or face to face teaching with double contact hours per week. This would be followed by another six weeks of on-line or virtual teaching.
- There will, of course, be one week of revision. Thus, the 13th week would be devoted to revision.
- The end of semester examinations will largely be held in-person with examinations for some few courses taken on-line or as take-home assignments.

NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

We are pleased to be matriculating the first batch of students who have been enrolled onto the Master of Science in Insurance Risk Management Programme after having received accreditation to mount this programme last year.

The University has received approval for the introduction of the Master of Science in Procurement Management programme, and I am certain we will be welcoming new students into that programme next academic year.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

In spite of all the challenges brought about by the pandemic, all the new infrastructural development projects initiated in 2019 are progressing according to schedule. This includes the two hostel buildings — which will both house 812 students — and the multipurpose, twin tower building, which will comprise commercial, office and lecture rooms.

There is also a challenge of shortage of accommodation for our graduate students, leaving many of you at the mercy of private hostel owners. We understand the specific needs of our graduate students, and I am happy to inform you that the University has purchased property behind this Auditorium, which will be converted into a Postgraduate Hostel.

FREE WIFI PROJECT

UPSA has been selected as one of the 13 Public Tertiary Institutions benefitting from the Government of Ghana's Free WiFi Project in the amount of US\$ 514,545.45, for the improvement of campus Internet connectivity. This project comes at an opportune time when online teaching and learning has become the order of day in the wake of the pandemic. I am happy to inform you that ECG has already started executing the project on the USA campus.

ADVICE AND CONCLUSION

My dear matriculants, I congratulate you all once again on your successful admission into this great University. As the Vice-Chancellor, it is my job,

alongside other academic and administrative staff, to make your experience here as exciting as we can.

First of all, I urge you to honour the tenets of the Matriculation Oath you are about to take and be guided by the rules and regulations contained in your students' handbook available on the University's website. Your admission at the UPSA School of Graduate Studies is the beginning of a good future that is awaiting you, and every necessary resource to take you there is available on this campus. Explore them to the fullest.

You are mostly business students, so let me restate what the famous businessman Steve Jobs, once said: *“Your time is limited, don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma, which is living the result of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinion drown your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition, they somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.”*

My heartiest congratulations again on your matriculation today. May you have many more years of success and higher achievements. It is great to have you admitted into this great institution of scholarship and professionalism, a privilege others have longed to get. Happy matriculation! I look forward to celebrating with you again during your graduation. Let's work together to make this a reality!

Thank You, and God bless us all.

Professor Abednego F. Okoe Amartey

Vice-Chancellor

Friday, 22nd January, 2021