

**ADDRESS BY MR. FRANKLIN AKPOR SOWA AT THE JULY CONGREGATION,
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, JULY 21, 2018**

Member of Council representing the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Provosts, Registrar, Members of the University Council, Members of the Advisory Board of the College of Humanities, Members of Convocation, Niime/Naamei, Hon. Ministers of State, Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Alumni and Friends of the University, Family members of Graduands, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon!

On behalf of the Advisory Board of the College of Humanities of the University, it is my greatest pleasure to welcome you all to this graduate congregation for the cohort of students who completed their study programmes in May 2018.

This group is made up of about 1000 students graduating with either

- PhD
- Master of Philosophy or
- Master of Arts (including EMBA, MBA, MPA)

from various disciplines such as business, arts, social sciences, languages and performing arts.

I am humbled by the invitation to be the Guest Speaker for this memorable event today. It brings back so many wonderful memories and experiences to me. As somebody whose parents have always wished me to be a medical doctor, I started off as a science student but diverted to Arts after GCE O'Level. Then, I fell in love with Economics and was just certain I should pursue a career in Business. I have no regrets, especially knowing that God has a

plan which makes all things work together for the good of His children. In the year 2000 when I completed Chartered Institute of Marketing, UK, Professional Postgraduate Diploma qualification and was successfully awarded the Chartered Marketer status, I did not find any need to return to the lecture room to study anything again. One thing I found so intriguing is the fact that everything I had studied in school in one way or the other comes in handy in my career to date. This improved my understanding that there is still value in adding on knowledge or even upgrading / refreshing oneself and that gradually ignited an interest in me to get back to school. This burning interest eventually made me return to the lecture room after 10 years to start my EMBA, here at UGBS. Another lifetime decision and reward that has contributed immensely to where I find myself today. The quality of lecturers, course contents, networking and everything else got me to a point of resolving that, as difficult as it may be, self-development through education is the springboard to my next career ambition. This, by the grace of God, reactivated a lot more confidence in me to aim higher and higher. I am grateful to all the great lecturers of the Business School, not forgetting Dr. Samuel Buame of blessed memory - may his soul rest in peace.

On completion of my EMBA in 2012, I again decided that it was the end of formal school for me, but after 4 years, I found myself back to the lecture room. Due to the innovation and foresightedness of the UGBS, which are informed by robust insights and deep understanding of peculiar needs of practitioners out there in the business world, the Master of Arts in Marketing Strategy sandwich programme was introduced and the module was so exciting that I enrolled immediately. I guess my course programme mates were the first cohort for that initiative. Thanks to the experienced lecturers who combined their theories and practical experiences, with those of students, to successfully add-value to myself and my colleagues here at the UGBS. At this point, one is sure of taking on higher career challenges to impact businesses and the lives of junior colleagues in the business world. The confidence to make a

higher career move has a lot to do with what you have studied and experienced in life through the grace of God.

The Call to Action for you on this special day will be expressed in my 10 career philosophies per my experiences so far as a professional as follows:

1. **Never despise humble beginnings:** No matter how uncomfortable and menial you feel about your current job or task, that is what you have now so just do it. I have sold concepts, sold female hair products, sold airtime for radio, sold advertising space for newspaper, sold UPS and stabilisers, rented outdoor air-conditioners, sold outdoor / billboard sites, bought media across all media channels, etc. All these at some point might not have been too exciting and encouraging considering my qualifications and knowledge at the time but brought me new opportunities, met new people and kept me focused on the greater and better tomorrow daily.
2. **Give your best shot to every opportunity:** We are in the era of networking and referrals. One good work, backed by high professionalism in executing your current task could be the key to unlock the next breakthrough for you. Who knows? Probably, the owner or CEO of your 'dream job' or the partner to grow your company as an entrepreneur is the person seated in the audience, or there is somebody who knows a need of a certain organisation watching you. Do not forget that one day the chief cupbearer remembered Joseph (Genesis 41:9).
3. **Still achieving, still pursuing:** Never be complacent and comfortable with your current state; it could be better each day. Always set for yourself new goals and targets with practicable timelines and work at achieving each set of goals timeously. Always add value to yourself and to others. Keep moving, don't relax at any point.

4. **Controlling is good, but checking is better:** One of my Mentors made me believe it is always good to control things and people from afar, but better to follow-up and keep checking on everything yourself if the required standards, specifications and outcomes are being delivered. Do not make assumptions else you may be unpleasantly surprised.
5. **Listen more, be humble/ respectful:** No matter who and what you are, what you know or what you have, you do not know or have everything. Therefore, listen more, be humble and accept views of others in the team, remember, this adds value to the expected outcomes. Learn to respectfully correct wrong directions or perspectives without being arrogant or offensive.
6. **Be Trustworthy/ Have integrity:** Can you be trusted? Do you keep your word? You must lead by example, pursue excellence and always push for the best results. As far as you are concerned, what is said about you in your absence should not be different from what is said in your presence, be a consistent brand.
7. **Be focused:** When you focus on problems, you get more problems. When you focus on possibilities, you have more opportunities – Zig Ziglar. Therefore, remain focused and keep the main thing the main thing. Your agenda should always be to add value and leave a legacy, otherwise what is the point? I am a member of Paddies, a ‘**Whatsapp**’ group of friends with diverse professional backgrounds who share a common value to voluntarily support deprived communities with health and educational initiatives/ interventions. As the President of Paddies three years ago, I

led the group to secure partnership with UNAIDS, the World Bank and other Corporate organisations to execute various projects that have positioned the group as an aspirational group till date. What are you doing with all these social networks, the WhatsApp groups you belong to?

8. **Be positive about life - Everything is possible:** Steve Jobs said, “Believe things will work out. How was I ever to know that the girl who broke my heart in university would be my soulmate? How was I to know that the ‘dream job’ I was rejected from out of college would lead me to a year of entrepreneurship and adventure in Spain? How was I to know that taking a miserable job back in the states would be just the push I needed to vow never to do something I wasn’t passionate about again? Everything works out. I mean everything. As long as you believe it will. When you do, you will find the silver lining that will take you to the next level.”

9. **Dare to be different:** Never be scared to do things differently. Never be scared of being wrong, it is all part of learning each day. “Learn from every mistake, because every experience, particularly your mistakes, are there to teach you and force you into being more who you are.” – Oprah Winfrey. Adapt solutions and make them relevant to identified challenges.

10. **Be Accountable and responsible:** The consciousness that others are watching you should not be the only reason to be accountable, but you must naturally be excited that not under your watch should anything go bad. Take actions that improve expected outcomes and accept responsibility if it does not go well but ensure that it must succeed and it will succeed.

In conclusion, this part of our world is steadily accepting the mantra that things work differently here, and we are all seemingly encouraging this posture as our culture, but I dare to say it should not be so. Why should we accept the world is a global village when it comes to ICT but everything else, we want to maintain our typical mediocre style and approach?

Dear Graduands, what you have gained during your studies here at University of Ghana is supposed to contribute into efforts aimed at achieving a paradigm shift in our way of thinking and attitude to everything as a people, as a nation and as professionals. The stakes are high and Ghana needs you, you must make a difference.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I cannot end without mentioning that in this ICT dominated era, it is imperative on everyone to **understand, appreciate, accept and leverage** the relevance of ICT in all you do, therefore none of you graduands should be alien to this narrative.

Remember, everything is possible to them that believe, only believe, work at it and there will be no restrictions to the height you could attain in this life.

My charge to you all is this, go out there and make a difference, it is possible.

God bless you all. Best wishes.

Thank you.