

University of Ghana, College of Humanities Graduation Ceremony
Saturday 17th November 2018 (Afternoon Session – 1:45pm)
Speech by Mr Henry Baye - Guest Speaker

Member of Council representing the Chancellor

Vice Chancellor

Pro-Vice Chancellors

Registrar

Members of Council

Members of the Advisory Board of the College of Humanities

Members of Convocation

Hon. Ministers of State

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Alumni and Friends of the University

Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen

Graduands

I consider it a truly humbling experience to be invited as a guest speaker at the graduation ceremony of my Alma Mata. I never saw this day coming. Let me start by first, thanking The Vice Chancellor, The Provost and Senior Members of faculty for Inviting me. It's a true honour I do not think I deserve or take for granted. I am pleased to find Mrs Otoo Ayeh who was a big sister to me whilst I was on Campus still working tirelessly as the College Secretary of this great College. Dr Clement Appah and I used to sing together in a choir and it is really refreshing to see that unlike me he has taken his dreams to mould lives and is now working in academia.

I would also like to salute all graduands on this special day of yours. I remember with great nostalgia each of my own graduations and makes me feel like coming back to Campus again. I congratulate you for your hard work and commitment to high standards. Let me also use this opportunity to thank all members of the faculty who have helped you through your studies and have enabled Ghana to see another unleashing of talents into productive activity.

Ladies and gentlemen, I miss Chorkor! Chorkor was a place of great buzz, mirth fights and many free entertainment shows that were in your face whether you called for it or not. The entertainment shows were as varied as the interestingly coloured beach sands. The sights and

sounds of Chorkor are unforgettable. You need to suffer amnesia to forget Chorkor. There were the fishermen's group carnivals, to the daily open quarrels between people of all walks, Hawkers who had amazing slogans to sell their wares and the perpetual honking of cars 24/7. Chorkor never slept. I am a Chorkorite!! My parents lived at Chorkor from my early childhood till when I completed my University education so I have seen many seasons of life at the California of Western Accra. We walked daily to and from school. We enjoyed the wonderful experience of bathing in the rain, we played 'Chars Kele', gutter to gutter and made Christmas huts from Coconut palm leaves and stems and we fought the many fights young boys in slums fought. I still recall with great nostalgia how sometimes after school we went mango hunting during the mango season or go and buy sugarcane from farms in the Korle bu area. Nothing compares to these priceless experiences. "How can you start a graduation speech like this" you may be asking.

I am today the executive director of a global bank. I sit in the board room and on some serious committees to steward a bank that holds depositor funds. I chair the board of the development fund of a University and many other big responsibilities of that nature. But I once grew up in an environment and circumstances that could have killed any possibility of making such a contribution.

I recall that during some of my vacations I worked as a porter at the beach and sometimes went to the then new Achimota when it was in its primal stages of development and worked as a construction labourer. When we had to take a vehicle to most parts of Accra our journey started on the Mummy truck. On some occasions, bus 36E came along. Later, as we grew up, the younger generation now called the Mummy trucks 'aro glass eh' to wit "roll up the glasses" when the mummy trucks only had wooden frames on the sides. This was terribly offensive to the driver's mates who collected the transport fares from the passengers. You will be lucky not to get away with a terribly vulgar insult from these driver's mates. These driver's mates were well known for many Things from their arrogance to the many stunts they pulled off daily. One of the stunts that never ceased to amaze me was how the driver's mates and the area boys would hop into the moving truck or get down from the moving truck. I always saw the ease with which they did it. So, one day I tried getting down from a moving truck and you can guess the result. I found myself flat on the street and was lucky to get up. Sure, I did get up but with my whole body burning from the scratches I got from the screech.

I made sure the story never got told because what I would have got would have been some heavy spanking from Mummy if she found out.

We had many great times but also some really difficult times. I remember on several occasions my mother of blessed memory would look at me with tears in her eyes when she gave me a tin of gari and one bottle of shitor and told me “that’s all we can afford for now, but please study hard” My father was working with a company that provided a scholarship scheme for the children of employees and by the divine Grace of God I received one of those scholarships. So at least my fees were paid that way.

During my days In Secondary school I made one big decision of faith. This decision gave me belief and gave me hope beyond my circumstances. I started to aspire for something bigger or so I thought. Later I realised that even the dreams I had were very mediocre and were purely defined by how far my eyes could see. Somehow my eyes of faith started seeing more than my limited mind could imagine. I saw possibility and a belief that I could make a big difference with my life. I started to define my life based on the influence I could make in other people’s lives.

I have had the great blessing of working in world class organizations. I have had the fortune of being mentored by some great corporate leaders. I have had the privilege of rising through the ranks and making my mark without ever asking for my next job. I have been honoured to stand on the same platform with people I could only have seen in my dream if I was blessed with a sweet dream. But I guess even then I will be so shocked in my dream that I will wake up thinking it was a nightmare.

Through all these I have learnt some great lessons of life. Today I want to share with you five of the lessons life has taught me at my young age.

1. Take a stand of faith but don’t become a fanatic. He who stands for nothing falls for anything. I have learnt that the human being is a mystery among many mysteries of life. I have learnt that there is something in mankind that makes us connect to the supernatural. The supernatural in man is the foundation of a person’s values, purpose and self-worth. When our relationship with God is missing the very foundations

become meaningless. Like a ship finds stability in its anchor, each human finds their anchor from the deep connections with their God. Studying and becoming intellectuals should bring us into a Deep sense of appreciation of the mystery of creation and an honest acknowledgment that the things we see, the various species of trees, humans, the human anatomy and it's workings, and the seasons could not just have appeared. Our exploits in Academia should lead us on an inner journey of discovery rather than the opposite. A human who is truly complete is one who is spiritually and physically together.

2. It's a small world. When I first started my career, I worked as an entry level recruit for one fine distinguished gentleman who occupied the exact position I am occupying today. After 11 years of work in the company I went on to work for two other organizations. In my second organization I happened to work for him for a second time but this time I was sitting on his executive team and he was the managing director. I have learnt that it's a really small world. Many of the people you encounter in your world today, you will encounter again in one form or the other. You must aim to always leave positive footprints in all situations because you will be confronted with the stories one day. During my days as a branch Manager at the Standard Chartered Bank Branch here on Campus, I had encountered a lady who I helped. I did not even remember the story when she herself played it back to me many years after. My sister went to the states to live there and at the early stages of her studies she needed help to pay her fees. She approaches a friend who helped her with a loan. One day, the two of them were chatting when out of the blue she asked her, 'do you know a gentleman by the name of Henry Baye?' my sister was shocked and replied, 'he is the brother I come after'. The lady was shivering all over with goose pimples and exclaimed in typical American style "you must be kidding me". She went on and recounted almost in tears how I had helped her to get money from the bank on a day she was in some great difficulty and her salary had not yet arrived. Imagine if the story was different. Recently I was caught in a situation where I had my passport with one embassy and I had to get a travel certificate to travel. When my PA went to the office where this was to be issued, she was directed to see a particular gentleman to get help. As soon as the gentleman saw my name he said to her "give him my number I know him" it turns out his brother was a protege of mine and a cousin also. He helped me to get the

document within a time frame I could only have imagined. He literally got me sitting in his office and within 45 minutes got me the document to catch a closing counter which was within another 45 minutes. It is a small world. At any cost endeavour to be a force for good and teach everyone you come across to be a force for good.

3. Authenticity is priceless. There are various synonyms for the word Authenticity. These include true, honest, genuine, integrity etc. To be authentic means you take a decision to be true consistently no matter the circumstances. In a very rough world where most people are looking for God knows what at any cost, to be authentic is to be in the minority. Sometimes requires that you look vulnerable in telling the truth and being true to yourself. Sometimes it requires that you must say sorry in a sincere way and mean it. It means you must have the purity of spirit to genuinely celebrate others even if they got something ahead of you or you competed for the same thing. It means you must live a life with your own personal purpose and destination in mind so you don't end up in someone else's destination. Authentic makes you truly look after people who work for you and truly care for their development in a selfless way. It means doing everything to open doors for other people. Authenticity can be costly, sometimes it might make you look naive or weak at a time people are scheming, backbiting and bootlicking to get to the top. But remain true because in the long run it is what endures. Stay true to who you are and stay true to your purpose.
4. Have an ambition but don't let it consume you. An Ambition could be a force for good or for evil depending on whose bosom it lies. Julius Caesar's crime for which he was thought worthy of death by Brutus and the gang was that he was ambitious. In defence of him, Mark Anthony remarked, "ambition should be made of sterner stuff". What he sought to imply was that, if you are driven by ambition you will possess harder qualities. Indeed, ambition is one motivator that has led many to become real greats in life. Personal ambition of some individuals has led them to change nations. We have also been witnesses to how people consumed by selfish ambition could become the most destructive forces on earth. Ambition has been a cousin of greed and a twin sister of selfishness in many hearts. Ambition has been a gun in one hand and plough in another's hand. So, as you step into our world please be reminded that we have enough of men and women with ambition who have not added positive value to our world. Don't become another one. We have many more people who are burning with

hatred that someone got in the way of their ambitions and would do anything they could to destroy them. We do not need another one. We need men and women of great ambitions that are clothed with humility, compassion and an unquenchable desire to spread a positive fragrance wherever they go. You will be that person I am sure.

5. Love your Spouse and family and give endlessly. If you think you are not a risk taker and yet you have contemplated marriage or you are married then trust me you are a risk taker. When you meet a stranger, who becomes a friend and then becomes a lover and then a spouse you have landed smoothly via a beautiful continuum, that makes you feel you have not taken risk but you actually have. Your Spousal relationship could be your most important relationship yet. So, pray that you find a good friend who you love passionately and selflessly. When you do, give it your all. When you give it your all you stand a greater chance of getting back what you give. Your Philosophy of marriage will drive its success. I have discovered that a man's worth in his home is not found in exerting his ego and authority but in loving selflessly, always seeking the other's good. I have seen many great people whose only regret is that they conquered everything except their own home. I have met many successful people who have lost their children to drugs and crime. The real legacy you leave behind can be found in your biological children or otherwise. The work we do will dispense of us one day but we will always end up with the family. The friends we hang out with will be there no more one day when our circumstances change. The money we make will not go with us when we are helpless. Family always stays with us. Spend your life and time building your family. Give endlessly because therein lies enduring blessings. Reach out beyond your nuclear family and know that there is a spark you can bring to one's life.

During this period, we have been sitting here many new inventions have been unearthed and some new technologies have been cracked. You are living in a world where many things are being redefined. Competition has been redefined. One of the most intriguing developments in business globally is the ever-changing definition of competition. In the past it was easy to combat competition by focusing on who your known competition is and what strategies they are executing or likely to execute. In recent times competition has become amorphous and

constantly mutating. A few years ago, it would have been unthinkable to imagine that a technology company could take over the business of taxi's globally. It would equally have been unthinkable to imagine that a Telco which deals in providing telephone services could also provide financial services. Technology has become the tool that makes no sacred cows of any business. In various countries in Africa there are more mobile wallets now than there are bank accounts and Telcos are holding more deposits on wallets than some banks. Technology has made it possible to totally debunk the provision of services in fixed locations via known business models. Technology has created new phenomena that has enabled it to totally disrupt existing businesses. What these all mean is that businesses cannot predict what in the environment is coming to eat up their cake with utmost certainty. Business models must constantly evolve with a clear view of the forces that are shaping the future. It calls for new thinking hinged on the exponential and an understanding that collaboration is the new competition.

As I bring this speech to a close, may I remind you that you belong to a world that is changing faster than has ever been recorded in history. You belong to a world where what is unpredictable is far more than what is predictable. You belong to a world where the forces that could shape anything you dream for and look forward to could hit you like a bolt from the sky. So, do not go into it with a fixed mindset because you will not survive. Do not go into it with the thinking that there is work out there waiting for you. Do not go into it with a mindset that your university education has fully prepared you for what you are about to face because the University does not even know what you are about to face. You must go into the world with a mind that embraces technology and how it can help drive solutions to daily problems. You must go into it with a mind to find the new jobs of the future and create a few. You must move into your world with a deep knowledge that the new word for competition is collaboration.

Define a vision for your life that invigorates you. Define a goal for your life that fuels your passion and set your eyes on a purpose that you live for and that finds meaning in the influence you can have on other people. Therein lies true fulfilment in your life.

You alone can be your show stopper and it lies in the daily decisions you make. So, make 5 choices today

Make a choice to find grounding in faith

Make choice to live with humility knowing that you live in a small world

Choose authenticity and find true fulfilment

Make a choice to be ambitious but don't let it consume you and finally

Love your family and give endlessly

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you once again and congratulations to our graduands.