

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR KWESI YANKAH, MINISTER OF STATE FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, ON SATURDAY JULY 22, 2017 AT 2.00 P.M.**

Chairman of the University Council,  
Members of the University Council,  
Vice-Chancellor  
Pro -ice-Chancellors  
Registrar  
Provosts and Deans  
Niime, Naamei, Nananom  
Guest Speaker  
Students of the Graduating Class,  
Invited Guests, Members of the Press  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great honour and privilege to be here for the congregation ceremony of your University, and I would like to thank the University Council for this special invitation. I bring you warm felicitations from President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the president of the Republic of Ghana.

It is always great to be back home, back to this Great Hall, the majestic hall of fame whose feel and grandeur has rubbed on new and graduating students alike and from where they have been inspired and enabled to move on, to rule Ghana, and to rule the world. And do we forget the great tower of learning that rules the elements and under which this University holds courts to pass on knowledge to future generation.

Congregation is an important rite of passage in the life of University. For the graduating class, it is the pinnacle of all the years of hard work undertaking their studies. It also proves to the stakeholders of the University and the world at large, that the institution is alive to its responsibility of converting the “raw material” of qualified candidates into the “finished product” of qualified, world-class professionals ready to positively impact society and contribute to the well-being of its people.

Mr. Chairman, we have met with the vice-chancellors, principals of colleges of education, interim vice chancellors of technical universities, POTAG, UTAG and similar bodies to discuss matters of mutual interest and the state of our education system in general. We believe that this engagement is important if government is to build an effective partnership with our institutions of higher learning for the benefit of this country and her citizens.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and gentlemen, government is committed to the reform of our education system at all levels and to improve upon it. In pursuit of this, the ministry has embarked on a review of the legal, institutional and regulatory framework of our agencies to ensure that they are properly aligned to provide a clearer understanding of their functions and strengthen their mandate to perform efficiently. Specifically, the National Council for Tertiary Education Act 454(1993) and the National Accreditation Board Act 744 (2007) are currently under review.

Over the years, successive governments have been confronted with the challenge of adequate funding for higher education. As part of efforts to confront this, government has committed itself to the establishment of a research fund for the sole purpose of funding relevant and specific research work in our institutions of higher learning.

A draft bill for the establishment of the research fund has been completed and consultations for stakeholder inputs are currently underway.

Mr. Chairman, the delivery of quality education at the pre-tertiary level is key to successful tertiary education. To improve the quality of education at this level, government has committed itself to reforming the curriculum at pre-tertiary level, to focus on the 4Rs, namely; Writing, Arithmetic, Reading and Creative Arts.

A key plank of our educational reform initiative is the introduction of the Free Senior High School policy, which will start from the 2017/2018 academic year. This policy will particularly assist children who otherwise would have been denied the opportunity of a senior high school education because of their families' financial circumstance.

Inevitably, the Free SHS policy, which we expect will boost enrollment figures in our senior high schools, will ultimately mean greater demand for tertiary education. As a nation, we must therefore begin to prepare for the increased numbers as from 2019. Government is committed to expanding access to tertiary education to accommodate the expected increase in demand. An amount of GHC 255.5 million representing 32.33% of the total GETFund allocated this year has been allocated to tertiary sector for the implementation of priority projects. We are determined to ensure that Ghanaian citizens who seek higher education in our public universities shall not be deprived of the opportunity.

### **Graduate Students**

Many advanced countries distinguish colleges from universities, even though both of these institutions grant degrees; the difference being that Universities are distinguished by going beyond undergraduate degrees and also offering post graduate degrees.

Most African universities are predominantly undergraduate teaching institutions. Very few can truly be said to be research universities, these include University of Ibadan,

which was established in the same year as University of Ghana in 1948, now has a graduate population of over 40% of the total student body. The University of Ghana's graduate population is still under ten percent of the total student body.

But graduate training has been a distinguishing mark for universities the world over, since the construction of knowledge and the quality of research move several notches up. Similarly, the student is not simply a student anymore; he is expected to be good enough himself to create knowledge and impart this knowledge created to the young ones. Fortunately, here you are today saying we have graduated to save the situation and to add value to the agenda for planning and development through the application of skills acquired.

But before I conclude let me take the opportunity even while I salute my alma mater, to lament an observation while seated here.

That some of our future leaders here, decided to honour this great and solemn occasion on a footing that does not bode well for the transformation leaders I otherwise see in you. Discipline and punctuality are the hallmark of His Excellency the President. To see graduating students coming late, to perhaps the greatest moment in their lives, should give us all a food for thought.

You step out of this Great Hall to rule the world and I urge you to be a good example, a good role model by word and deed.