

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR KWASI KWAFO ADARKWA, VICE-
CHANCELLOR OF KNUST ON THE OCCASION OF THE 43RD CONGREGATION
HELD ON 17TH JUNE, 2009 (MORNING SESSION) FOR THE COLLEGE OF SCIENCE
(FACULTY OF BIOSCIENCES) IN THE GREAT HALL AT 09.00 HOURS**

SALUTATION

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Members of the Council of State
Members of the University Council
Pro Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellors from Sister Universities
Registrar and Registrars from Sister Universities
College Provosts
Deans and Directors
Heads of Departments
Nananom
Guest Speaker
Members of Convocation
Alumni
Senior and Junior Staff of KNUST
Parents and Guardians
Graduating Class of 2009
Members of the Press
Distinguished Invited Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

As the Vice-Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), I have the singular honour and pleasure to welcome you to this morning's function which is primarily to graduate our students from the Faculty of Biosciences in the College of Science. As you may be aware, we have had similar ceremonies for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, College of Architecture and Planning and the College of Engineering. We are billed to have a similar ceremony for the Faculty of Physical Sciences this afternoon.

This arrangement has been necessitated by the sheer number of students we are graduating this year and the need to manage them such that as many parents and guardians as possible can participate in the graduation ceremony.

As we all know, Congregation ceremonies the world over, are periodic academic rituals of institutions at which degrees and certificates are awarded to deserving graduands. You will all agree with me that, the graduation day in the life of a person who has spent some years of his or her life on a University campus, is a solemn but momentous period since such a day serves as a crowning moment for hard work and perseverance displayed by students. Our Congregations have also been occasions for the Vice-Chancellor to report on the conduct of the University's core business as well as to graduate students who have followed prescribed courses of study and have been found worthy of the award of their respective degrees or certificates. This morning's ceremony will not be substantially different from this expectation.

MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER

After you have listened to our motivational speaker, you will appreciate why he was selected for this occasion. Our motivational speaker for both this morning and afternoon sessions is Mr. George Nanyi Kojo Andah, the Chief Marketing Officer of Mobile Telecommunications Network (MTN). He holds a B.Sc. degree in Biochemistry from this great University and an MBA degree in Marketing from the University of Ghana.

Our motivational speaker has worked for many years with various high profile organisations. He has worked as Brands Manager, Innovations Manager, Head of Marketing and Marketing Director for Guinness Ghana Ltd. He also worked as the Head of Sika Card Centre for SG-SSB in 2001. Mr. George Andah, thanks for accepting our invitation and welcome back to your alma mater.

THE FACULTY OF BIOSCIENCES

Just like other Faculties of the University, the Faculty of Biosciences evolved in the year 2005 from the then Faculty of Science during the University's restructuring process into the collegiate system. The Faculty of Biosciences is the other Faculty in the College of Science in addition to

the Faculty of Physical Sciences. The Faculty is the only Faculty in the country which is wholly devoted to the training of students in the Basic and Applied Life Sciences.

Currently, the Faculty runs five undergraduate programmes under the Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology, Department of Food Science and Technology, Department of Optometry and Visual Science, Department of Environmental Science and the Department of Theoretical and Applied Biology. The Departments of Food Science and Technology and Environmental Science are currently being nurtured by the Departments of Biochemistry and Biotechnology and Theoretical and Applied Biology, respectively.

The Faculty prides itself with a total undergraduate student population of 1,173 with about 40% of this number being females. There are, however, only 99 postgraduate students made up of 13 Ph.D. students, 7 MPhil. students and 79 M.Sc. students in this Faculty. It is our hope that following some subsequent investments in academic facilities, we will be in a much better position to enrol more graduate students in the Faculty of Biosciences.

SOME ACTIVITIES AT THE FACULTY

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, a comprehensive report of activities of the Faculty is in the Vice-Chancellor's Report, copies of which should have been made available to you by now. I will encourage all of you to get copies to have a full appreciation of the various activities of the entire University and its constituent parts including the Faculty of Biosciences. Nonetheless, I would like to use this opportunity to shed light on just a few of the activities of the Faculty over the past year.

Following the visit to the University of Bamako, Mali, by a four-man delegation in October 2008, the KNUST and the University of Bamako signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish collaborative links. It is expected that staff of the Faculty of Biosciences will take advantage of the state-of-the-art facilities at Bamako to carry out collaborative research. In addition, the exploratory visit to the College by a three-member delegation from the Royal Society, UK in December 2008 has laid the foundation to establish collaboration with Universities of Manchester and Liverpool, particularly, to assist senior members pursuing Ph.D. studies locally to use laboratory facilities in these institutions for a brief period to facilitate experimental data acquisition.

The Faculty has developed several other local and international links with some organisations in its attempt to advance student training. Notable among such collaborations include that of the Kirk House Foundation and the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG). The latter's periodic visits to the Faculty offer regular hands on practical training to undergraduate students of the Faculty in Molecular Biology Techniques. This collaboration has enabled CRIG to also send two of their staff to be trained at the Ph.D. level in Food Science and Technology as well as at the MPhil level in Biochemistry. The Environmental Protection Agency as well as the Food and Drugs Board also make their facilities available for student training through vacation attachments for students of the Faculty. An MOU between the Food Research Institute and the Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology as well as the Food Science and Technology programme for regular student attachment for one semester for 3rd year Food Science and Technology students is now operational and students in these Departments are sent for industrial attachments at the institute to enhance their practical orientation.

Other collaborations of the Faculty include that with the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine (BNI), Hamburg, through the Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research in Tropical Medicine (KCCR), that with the Ramapo College of New Jersey, and the one with the University of Copenhagen, Denmark; amongst others.

In recognition of its financial challenges, the Faculty is making all efforts to step up its income generating activities such as the rationalisation of the production of Yoghurt and other products by the Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology, organisation of more Eye Clinics by the Department of Optometry and Visual Science, and upgrading recreational facilities at the Botanic Gardens to attract more visitors by the Department of Theoretical and Applied Biology. The Clinical Analysis Laboratory of the Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology also continued to generate some modest income for the Faculty.

STATISTICS OF GRADUATING CLASS

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, as I intimated earlier on in my address, we have gathered here this morning principally to graduate our students from the Faculty of Biosciences. In all, there are 315 undergraduate students being presented for graduation this morning. There are 18 students who are graduating with First Class degrees, 148 graduating with Second Class (Upper Division) degrees as well as 120 students who are graduating with Second Class (Lower

Division) degrees. The remaining six are graduating with Pass degrees as well as 23 students graduating from the Doctor of Optometry programme. The Departmental breakdown is as follows: Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology 98, Department of Food Science and Technology 40, Department of Optometry and Visual Science 23, Department of Environmental Science 52, and the Department of Theoretical and Applied Biology presenting 102 students. As I have said in some of my earlier addresses, the Faculty is also graduating the highest number of graduates this year than ever before and this is ample testimony of our resolve to enhance access to science and technology education at the tertiary level.

ADVICE TO GRADUANDS

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the peculiar challenges that confront us as a nation urgently require a paradigm shift for the reconstruction of our society and the building of a better world for our future generations, yet unborn. These should be our concern and I would like to seize this opportunity to urge you fresh graduands from the Faculty of Biosciences to live up to this expectation. Your compatriots such as Mr. George Andah of MTN who is your motivational speaker for this morning's session as well as many other personalities who graduated from your Faculty have blazed the trail to bring solutions to some of the problems of our society today.

As you graduate from the walls of this University, remember that you are ambassadors of your alma mater and I urge you to emulate the steps of your earlier alumni. Every action and inaction of yours will be subjected to critical analysis by all and sundry. As Jeremy Collier, an English Bishop and Theologian (1650 – 1726) puts it, *“emulation is a handsome passion; it is enterprising, but just withal. It keeps a man within the terms of honour, and makes the contest for glory just and generous. He strives to excel, but it is by raising himself, not by depressing others”*. I, therefore, urge you to continue to emulate the steps of your earlier compatriots.

CONCLUSION

To all of you who have helped to form and shape these young brains, we say *ayeeako!* You have created in these young people a vibrant, inclusive and creative culture that we hope will provide them with opportunities for enrichment, expression and experience to enhance their lives and to make them proud of our great University. Our mandate of advancing science and the technological development of Ghana and Africa as a University gives us a sense of place of

pride; we propel the industries, help to maintain good health, provide answers to industrial problems, feed the hungry and store the surplus to make money and provide the milieu for appreciation of our rich cultural heritage. All these make us proud of the unique role of KNUST. All of you here have contributed in various ways to this celebration and harvest. We say BRAVO!!!. To you the beneficiaries, our new graduands, you are most welcome to the world of professionals. Enjoy this day and make it as memorable as possible remembering it as the day you were given the baton to run the race to prosperity and the day you will begin giving the best to your institution and your country.

Let me take advantage of this opportunity to sincerely thank some benefactors of the Faculty for their various roles in ensuring the survival and sustenance of academic work in the Faculty. The GETFund, as usual, has been of tremendous assistance in our investment programme aimed at completing the multi million Cedi Science Complex. We trust that adequate funding will be made available for completion of this project soonest. Other benefactors include Mr. Raphael Yankey in the USA for donating textbooks worth over \$1,000, Dr. Isabelle Louis for donating textbooks in Immunology and Microbiology as well as Dr. Peter Twumasi, who donated molecular biology laboratory equipment worth GH¢15,000. I would also want to recognise the invaluable contribution of lecturers, staff, administrators, parents and family members and friends for their contribution to the success story of the graduands. They will forever remain indebted to you all their life.

On this note, I say welcome to you all and do enjoy the ceremony.

Thank you.