

Induction Speech

As Vice-Chancellor of the University of

Health and Allied Sciences, Ho,

Ghana

By

Professor John Owusu Gyapong

Monday, 3rd October, 2016

Chairman of the University Council, Professor Kofi Anyidoho,

Members of the University Council,

Ministers and Deputy Ministers of State,

Members of Parliament,

Members of the Judiciary,

Traditional Rulers, Togbeoo, Mamaaoo,

Vice Chancellors Ghana,

Pro Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Deans, Directors, Heads of

Departments, and members of convocation,

Alumni of this great University,

Staff and students of the University,

Special Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I stand here this on auspicious morning with mixed feelings of joy, hope and trepidations as I take office as the second Vice Chancellor of the University of Health and Allied Sciences.

Mr Chairman, first and foremost, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the almighty God for bringing me this far in my career. I also acknowledge the Council of the University of Health and Allied Sciences (chaired by your good self) for the confidence reposed in me to provide leadership for the University at this great but challenging time in its history.

I am also appreciative of the decision of the search party, led by Professor Clifford Nii Boye Tagoe, for recommending me as their preferred candidate to take up this job in spite of keen competition from equally qualified candidates. Electioneering is over. It is now time

to build. I therefore invite you all to come and let's reason together to build UHAS.

Mr. Chairman, Members of Council, ladies and gentlemen, as I take over the mantle of leadership of the university from Professor Fred Binka who unfortunately cannot to present today because of a World Health Organisation assignment in Cambodia, I want to recognise his great leadership as foundation Vice Chancellor in bringing UHAS this far. Indeed, he has left very big shoes to be filled but I am also convinced that with the good Lord on our side, we will build on the very strong foundations that have been laid. Indeed, one plants, another waters but it is only God who gives life.

The University of Health and Allied Sciences envisions to become a pre-eminent research and practically oriented health educational institution dedicated to community service. A strategic planning process has begun which consolidates recent gains, charts a distinctly

impactful future, accentuates its strengths and affirms its commitment to excellence by identifying areas for improvement, through growth and development of partnerships; being cognisant of contemporary challenges of higher education.

The draft strategic plan embodies the goals, values, mission and vision of the university for the next 10years. The key strategic objectives focus on:

- Engaging in Cutting-edge Research;
- Creating a Conducive Academic Environment;
- Efficiently Managing our Internal Process;
- Engaging our Internal and External Stakeholders;
- Promoting Diversity;
- Ensuring Prudent Financial Planning;
- Improving Facilities and Laboratory Equipment;
- Creating an ICT Enabled Environment; and
- Effective Monitoring & Evaluation to achieve our goals.

My vision as Vice Chancellor is to finalise and implement the strategic plan to transform UHAS into a pre-eminent research and practically oriented health educational institution and provide strategic direction and leadership to achieve the key performance indicators.

Research

Mr Chairman, all over the world, using research productivity a proxy measure of research investment has been strongly correlated with national development.

I intend to facilitate a vibrant intellectual climate that stimulates innovative research and community engagement. We will develop policies and guidelines to regulate the conduct of research in the university and a research uptake strategy to facilitate stakeholder engagement. One key thing I shall do will be to establish the proposed Health Research Institute in my first year in office to

promote multidisciplinary research in Infectious Diseases, Chronic Diseases, Maternal and Child Health, Policy and Implementation Research. I will headhunt some of the best research scientist available in the country today to build the profile of the Institute and raise money to do the necessary research.

We shall foster research collaboration with other academic institution in and out of Ghana to improve on our research, strengthen our capacity to conduct research and publish in high impact peer reviewed journals.

A Research Directorate will eventually be established to enhance research management by professional Research Administrators who would be the equivalent of Assistant Registrars to drive the University's research enterprise.

Academic environment

My goal will be to promote academic excellence using the highest international standards of teaching, learning and leadership development. To facilitate this, I intend to establish an Academic Affairs Directorate that is student centred and quality assured and to develop appropriate policies that will eventually improve academic and students' records.

To achieve this, we shall invest heavily in building the capacity of both academic and non-academic staff to enable them do what they are supposed to do.

We will make plans to initiate the outstanding academic programmes (Pharmacy and Dentistry), by engaging the regulatory bodies more effectively. We will need senior faculty to do this. I therefore beseech the senior academic faculty who are working in the choked environments of Korle Bu and Komfo Anokye Hospitals to come over

to Ho and help! I believe the horizon is brighter here than in your “comfort zone” over there.

Internal Processes

I will ensure that all governance arrangements are institutionalised to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency. My focus will be to facilitate the finalisation of the interim statutes and strategic plan. In addition, I will facilitate the development of relevant policies to facilitate the management of the University at the decentralised units. The services of a legal counsel will be critical in this process.

Internal Stakeholders

The key internal stakeholders in every university are students, academic and non-academic staff. I intend to facilitate an environment that will ensure fulfilling experiences for all. One of my key goals will be to create a world-class mind-set in pursuit of excellence among all our internal stakeholders. We shall benchmark

best practises for all to follow and create a reward-based performance system to incentivise high flyers. I shall have an all inclusive approach to the governance of the university to facilitate a sense of belonging by the entire community. I will engage to obtain inputs in the governance of the university including appropriate social media platforms. I shall promote interaction between students and faculty using new technologies to make the teaching and learning a pleasurable experience.

Diversity

The diversity of a university's faculty, staff, and students influences its strength, productivity, and intellectual personality. Even though diversity of experience, age, physical ability, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, etc. contribute to the richness of the environment for teaching and research, it also brings challenges of cohesiveness, anxiety, and discomfort for members of the community. Learning to respect and appreciate each other's differences and becoming aware

of unconscious assumptions and behaviours will enable us to minimise the challenges and derive maximum benefits from diversity.

I plan to maximise the benefits of diversity and minimise its potential challenges by promoting diversity in staff and student recruitment through an equal opportunity policy that ensures gender and ethnic balance and sensitivities. I will promote internationalisation of our students and faculty to ensure cultural diversity. As a health training institution, we shall give appropriate attention to students with special needs.

Financial Management

Mr Chairman, training health professionals is an expensive undertaking however, in recent times, Government funding for public universities has had some significant constraints. Alternative sources of funding beyond student fees will have to be explored. I intend to launch a multi-prong approach to fundraise for the university including the setting up of a UHAS foundation. In addition, prudent

financial management will be the hallmark of my administration. I intend to strengthen budget processes, ensure an efficient treasury management, improve procurement systems and ensure a timely and publication of financial statements.

Infrastructure

Improvement of infrastructure for teaching and learning shall be one of my key goals. To achieve this, I shall ensure increase professionalism at the Works and Physical Development Directorate. I will ensure that we follow the masterplan for the next phase of the campus development for Academic Buildings, Staff and Student Housing and the Teaching Hospital. We shall develop an assets register and have in place a planned maintenance plan of all our infrastructure.

Improved ICT environment

Effective use of ICT to deliver tertiary education is essential. Many

options currently exist on the market including the Integrated Tertiary Software (ITS) used by many universities in Ghana and South Africa. I plan to adopt such a system to manage the university business to provide a dashboard for management decisions. Through this, we shall promote ICT-based teaching and learning and develop e-learning platforms to expand the reach of the Access Course. This would require an improvement in our ICT infrastructure which is currently rudimentary.

Monitoring and Evaluation

I intend to put in place systems to provide management and key stakeholders with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, and systematically and objectively assess all Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). My aim would be to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of my plans. I will publicise the KPIs widely to create awareness of the targets and operationalise the strategic plan at the

Unit level to ensure buy-in.

Beyond monitoring and evaluation at the unit level, I intend to strengthen the Academic Quality Assurance monitoring systems and develop guidelines for internal quality assurance.

External stakeholders

Mr Chairman, I intend to promote partnerships with private and public institutions, nationally and internationally, to improve the fortunes of UHAS.

Under my leadership, I plan to significantly build on and improve on the public image of UHAS by restructuring our public engagement and ensuring that our external publics are engaged in a systematic way. I will transform the Public Affairs Unit into a Directorate and recruit more professionals to improve on our operations.

I intend to build Stakeholder confidence in the capabilities of the UHAS. Some of the initiatives will include:

- a. A planned engagement of Government: I intend to explore channels to engage Government to garner more support for our infrastructure development.
- b. Improvement of our relationship with the National Accreditation Board and the National Council for Tertiary Education shall be targeted for improvement
- c. Institutionalisation of a public engagement system with the Press and relevant Civil Society Groups to advocate and tell the UHAS story positively.
- d. UHAS has a unique relationship with the Chiefs and people of the Volta Region. I intend to build on this relationship to the mutual benefit of both parties.
- e. Finally, I intend to create special channels for disseminating the work of the university beyond our current traditional channels by

promoting development oriented research to facilitate research uptake

Mr Chairman, Members of Council, Invited Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen. This is a summary of the vision I presented to the Search Party that has landed me this job. Obviously, I cannot do it alone. I need the support and cooperation of the entire UHAS community to achieve these goals. I call on all to have a mind to work; put our shoulders to the wheel and build UHAS together train the Health and Allied Professionals that this country requires.

It is my firm believe that by the Grace of God, four years from now, members of the Search Party and Council for that matter will affirm that they made the right choice.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the challenges of higher education in Ghana, the

University of Health and Allied Sciences has started well and has very great potential. A draft 10-year strategic plan has been developed through a consultative process with the ultimate goal of transforming it into a pre-eminent research and practically orientated health educational institution dedicated to community service. As Vice Chancellor, I intend to consolidate the gains of the last four years by embarking on a recruitment drive to mobilise all human and financial resources possible to pursue the set vision and mission passionately, guide by the core values of integrity and innovation. I intend to create an enabling environment that makes the University increasingly relevant to national and global development through cutting edge research as well as high quality teaching and learning.

I trust that I can count on the strong commitment of all towards the full attainment of the University's mission.

In all these, I shall be guided by the statutes, strategy and core

values. God being my helper!

I thank you for your attention