

# UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH AND ALLIED SCIENCES



## **INVESTITURE SPEECH**

**Professor Lydia Aziato, Vice Chancellor**

Ho VR, 11 AUGUST 2022

### **PROTOCOL**

Your Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of our dear Nation;

Chairman of Council, Your Lordship Justice Victor Jones Mawulorm Dotse; Ministers and Deputy Ministers of State (past and current);

Honourable Members of Parliament (past and current);

Members of the University Council (past and current);

Torgbui wo, Mama wo, Nananom, Niime, Naamei:

1. Torgbui Afede XIV, The Agbogbomefia of Asogli
2. Togbe Tepre Hodo IV, Paramount Chief of Anfoega Traditional Area and President, Volta Regional House of Chiefs
3. Torgbui Amenya Fiti V, Paramount Chief and President Aflao Traditional Council
4. Torgbui Nyakeli Tortsofia VII, Divisional Chief of Akato-Wudoaba, Aflao Traditional Area
5. Togbui Nyaho Tamakloe VI, Dufia of Whuti and the Miafiaga of Anlo
6. King Tackie Teiko Tsuru II, Ga Mantse
7. Obrempong Professor Kyem-Amponsah II, Chief of Fiapre Traditional Area
8. Zangu-Rana Ibrahim D. Yakubu, Chief of Zangu
9. Kulgbea-Rana Justice Issah Abdulai, Chief of Kulgbea

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Colleague Vice-Chancellors (past and current);

Pro Vice-Chancellors (past and current);

Provosts from sister universities,

Deans and Directors (past and current);

August religious leaders;

Members of the quadriad and leaders of nursing and midwifery associations;  
My Ph.D. Supervisor, Prof. Oluyinka Adejumo, watching all the way from  
Rwanda;  
Students, Faculty and Staff of University of Health and Allied Sciences  
(UHAS);  
Special invited guests and my special ladies' groups;  
The media here present;  
Esteemed audience online and our international partners;  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen who have travelled from far and near:

## **GRATITUDE**

*'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart...'* (Jeremiah 1:5). I thank the almighty God for setting me apart for this great honour of leading UHAS, *the great Giant Rising*, and for making me a source of motivation to many. I thank the search party chaired by His Lordship Justice Professor Emmanuel Nii Ashie Kotey and the University Council for finding me worthy of this noble responsibility as the third Vice-Chancellor (VC) of UHAS. I do not take this enormous trust lightly.

Getting this far has been a journey of grace. From a humble beginning and many arduous challenges through the many phases of life, I can only say it has been the Lord. I thank all who have supported and cheered me on; all who believed in me even when all hope was lost; all who have prayed and continue to pray for me; my mentors and mentees who helped me to grow; the many known and unknown who showered me with congratulatory messages and the many who offered counsel and support to get me here. I particularly thank the head pastor of my Church, Rev. John Brebo Andah and his team for their constant prayer support.

I pay tribute to my late parents Mr. Peter Aziato and Madam Hannah Ageklu, who I believe are happy in their graves for sending me to school in the village and not following the stereotype of those days, which did not encourage female education. I acknowledge my uncles, aunts, siblings, cousins, nephews, and nieces for being there for me always. I appreciate my godfather, Torgbui Nyakeli Tortsofia VII for taking me under his wing and providing me with a home. I am also grateful to all my media friends who have helped share my experiences to motivate others. My sincere thanks go to Her Excellency Hajia Samira Bawumia, wife of our Vice President, for her valuable words of wisdom, and for celebrating me in all her social media handles.

To my domestic staff and drivers over the years, I am grateful; I couldn't have risen without your help. I have been very, very fortunate to have the support of a wonderful and supportive husband, Zangu-Rana Ibrahim D. Yakubu who has been my backbone over the years; thank you for everything, Chief. To my children Manzoaya, Suguru and Wunpini, I could not have come this far without you guys. You have been my sounding board, editors, chef and, above all, my source of immeasurable emotional support provided over the years.

Indeed, to all who contributed to my narrative over the years, I appreciate you all most sincerely. My life has been shaped by all of you. I thank God our paths crossed and for the nuggets of wisdom our shared experiences have brought me. God bless you all.

### **UNIQUENESS OF APPOINTMENT WORTH CELEBRATING**

My appointment is worth celebrating for alumni of Ghana Senior High School, Koforidua, Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Korle-Bu, Akuafu Hall of the University of Ghana (UG), women academics from the Volta Region, and most especially the Nursing and Midwifery fraternity being the first nurse Vice-Chancellor in Ghana and West Africa and the second in Africa. Being the 5<sup>th</sup> female Vice-Chancellor in Ghana, I am extremely fortunate to learn from the other four gallant female leaders:

1. Professor Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, Former VC, UCC & 1st Female VC
2. Professor Esi Awuah, Former and Foundation Vice-Chancellor, University of Energy and Natural Resources
3. Professor Rita Akosua Dickson, current VC, KNUST
4. Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo, current VC, UG

With your support and guidance, I have every confidence that I will succeed. I can say that my appointment has made the fingers complete and our hand can now function at its full capacity – *‘together we can!’*

Two very astute nursing and midwifery leaders within the Africa space have inspired me for this new role - the first nurse-midwife VC in Africa, Professor Address Mauakowa Malata of Malawi University of Science and Technology and Professor Hester C. Klopper, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University in South Africa. I acknowledge them for leading the way and for their mentorship.

It is a period of celebration for the Aziato and Yakubu families and the entire Mamprugu fraternity who accepted me more than 20 years ago and have supported me unflinchingly. I join all of you to celebrate this achievement.

I also want to celebrate the appointment of another female, Registrar Ms. Yaa Amankwaa Opuni, who is one of the founding personnel of the University; and yet another female, Senior Architect Ruth Xoladem Ayittey, as Director of Works and Physical Development. I am glad that Mr. Patrick De Souza, an experienced ICT Director, has also been appointed to join the UHAS team. I am very assured of their expertise and competence and together with existing astute team members, I am sure we will work hard to further develop the University during our tenure.

### **ACKNOWLEDGING FOUNDING FATHERS, PAST VICE CHANCELLORS, AND STAFF**

The University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS), established by parliamentary Act 828 in December 2011, started operations in September 2012 as a dream of our late President John Evans Atta Mills with a mission to ***‘provide quality education, advance knowledge through scholarship and research that improves health and quality of life’***. From ground zero and operating from a room in Chances Hotel, Professor Fred Newton Binka and his dedicated team -- with the support of the first Council chaired by Prof Kofi Anyidoho, Ministers, Parliamentarians, the traditional leaders and people of the land, and all stakeholders -- worked tirelessly to start the University on firm footing.

In August 2016, Professor John Owusu Gyapong took over the reigns of leadership and has worked assiduously with his hardworking team and with the support of the second Council chaired by His Lordship Justice Victor. J.M. Dotse and many local and international stakeholders, to move UHAS to its current enviable state.

I pay glowing tribute to all of you, and I join all of you to say, ‘Ebenezer, thus far you have brought us.’

The vision of UHAS is *‘to be a pre-eminent health research educational institution dedicated to community service. It shall realise this vision by taking innovative approaches to research, teaching, and engagement with society, informed by a culture of scholarship, academic and service excellence’*.

The core values of the University include mutual trust, innovation technology, research, clinical service, practical orientation, and collaboration. These values have enhanced the credibility of the University for training skilled healthcare professionals over the years. The overall foundations of UHAS are enshrined in four ethos which are *excellence, integrity, innovations, and service and care*. These four beliefs are also fundamental to my vision for the university.

## **MY VISION AND COMMITMENT**

My vision and commitment for the UHAS over the next 4 years takes into consideration the strategic objectives of the University (2017-2027), which focus on: *Cutting Edge Research, Academic Environment (Teaching and Learning), Internal Management Processes, Stakeholder Management, Diversity, Cultural Brand and Identity, Finance and Capital Investment, State of the art Facilities and Laboratory Equipment, State of the Art Technology and Risk Management, Monitoring and Results Management, Communication, and Global Reach*. It also incorporates the uniqueness and needs of all the schools (8) and Institutes (3) of the University.

My vision for the University in the next four years is to create *a dynamic and responsive environment that promotes credible research, quality teaching and learning, vibrant internal processes, active stakeholder engagement grounded by the principles of **Growth, Integrity, Fairness, Technology and Innovation, and Service (GIFTS)***. I commit to focus on this vision during my tenure.

## **MY STRATEGIC FOCUS**

Your Excellency, Chairman of Council, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I will lead a vibrant and motivated team to ensure the *Great Giant* UHAS continues to rise to become a force to recon within the health space. My drive to achieve my vision for the University is organized into 8 thematic objectives:

### **1. Promote personnel motivation, commitment, and expansion**

UHAS being a young University of only 10 years and developing from an empty plate is at the stage where we need more staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to add to the motivated and committed staff we already have. It is important to ensure recruitment of quality staff who can meet the needs of students and targets of the various units of the University. We will promote staff development and ensure expedited and rigorous processes that promote

fairness in all personnel engagements. It is important for our university to be given special consideration for financial clearance because we are at the *adolescent stage* of development which is characterised by rapid growth and development.

**2. *Expand cutting edge research, and research income with multidisciplinary team approach and high impact publications***

Although UHAS is a young University, it has established a very enviable status within the research space. The AD scientific index (Alper- Doger Scientific Index) in the World Scientist and University Rankings 2022 ranked UHAS as the 3<sup>rd</sup> best University in Ghana. With this strong footing, we will rejuvenate impactful multidisciplinary research and credible publications across the University. We will focus attention on collaborations locally and internationally for grantsmanship and develop skills of early career faculty through mentorship. We will increase graduate and doctoral programs and enhance publication with our students and alumni.

My administration will promote research in all our Schools and Institutes. We will enhance team and multidisciplinary approaches to grant application and collaborations. Our efforts will include local universities, institutes, and centres to build and expand on foundations laid. I am sure when these interventions are pursued, the ranking of the University will continue to rise.

**3. *Create an environment that promotes a high standard teaching and learning systems for knowledge and skills development.***

The core business of the University is to develop future healthcare personnel and leaders through quality teaching and learning strategies. We will work assiduously to ensure a conducive teaching and learning environment for students, faculty, and staff. Efforts will be made to expand infrastructure including skills development facilities for our programs. We will encourage the expansion of special and flexible programs to promote lifelong learning across disciplines.

An important aspect of our teaching and learning drive will be virtual. Credible online teaching and learning platforms and resources for both students and faculty will be used. The Covid-19 pandemic has made online teaching a necessity. Therefore, blended learning is necessary with high fidelity simulation laboratories for skill teaching. We will actively seek funding to support our online teaching and learning platforms.

We will revitalize training for faculty, especially newly appointed and early-career faculty, on pedagogical strategies that promote critical thinking and innovation among students. Courses such as: entrepreneurship, technopreneurship, and artificial intelligence/robotics will be encouraged across disciplines to ensure our alumni fits the current employment and economic environment. We will support our libraries across campuses to meet the needs of our staff and students.

**4. Create an environment that promotes high standard skills through community-based service and technology driven systems.**

One of the unique identifiers of UHAS is community service which we call *vocational training*. All students are placed in different health facilities across the country during the long vacation. This has greatly increased recognition and relevance of the UHAS brand. We will strengthen our community-based service delivery by ensuring high knowledge and skills development of our students. As we grow, we will continue to use innovative ways including telemedicine and interactive virtual platforms to reach our clients and students across the country. The safety and welfare of our students and staff will be paramount in the process. Thus, we will work with the relevant stakeholders to deliver on our mandate.

Modern healthcare delivery incorporates technology, and our administration will promote technology-driven healthcare systems and be a leader within the sub-region in the areas of telemedicine, informatics, artificial intelligence, and robotics. Our university will carve a path in health technology that is research driven and help our faculty and students to render service to a broader client base. We are confident that technology driven health systems will be relevant in case of any infectious disease pandemic in the future. We will work towards establishing UHAS as a hub for health technology in the sub-region. Our model of technology driven healthcare will include both western, traditional, and alternative medicine to provide more options for clients.

Globally, health training institutions have well-resourced clinical facilities that help in the training of students. Hence, our efforts will also be geared towards establishment of a world class medical centre that will provide an enabling environment for training quality health professionals. This advanced medical facility will also facilitate research that can develop the frontiers of knowledge within our context.

**5. Increase internal and external funding with judicious financial usage and risk management**

Your Excellency, Chairman of Council, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, UHAS has been fortunate to receive significant funding and support that has helped us to grow thus far, and we are very grateful especially to the Ghanaian and Chinese governments and other organizations for the tremendous support thus far. That said, because we are at our threshold of development, we will adopt multiple strategies to increase funding to grow our university. We will engage in active advocacy and lobbying to explore governmental and non-governmental sources of funding for the University. We will expand our programs and student numbers as well as our infrastructure and human resource.

Globally, alumni support is an important financial contributor to universities. We will engage our students to initiate 'My Seed Fund' equivalent of \$1.00 for the graduating class and all Alumni and parents could contribute to it in the name of the graduating year group. We will ensure that the funds accrued will be used to improve teaching and learning resources and the year group will have the final decision on what the funds will be used for specifically. This we believe, will strengthen our young alumni association. The University will ensure that all donors to the University are recognized appropriately using UHAS events, websites, social media, among others. To keep our Alumni engaged, we will initiate Alumni tracing and regular engagement through Alumni Lectures, and those who excel will be advertised and promoted. And we will seek their feedback to help us improve our services.

Healthcare professionals work with other health-related disciplines such as clinical psychologists, social workers, medical sociologists, healthcare administrators, etc.; thus, introduction of new programs in the University will generate extra revenue for the University as well as provide a one-stop-shop for providing the full complement of professionals for health institutions. These new programs can use hybrid delivery approaches and can be rolled out using both regular and sandwich modes on multiple campuses. While doing this, we will keep in mind the mandate and focus of the University to avoid mission creep. ***We will still keep our focus on health and allied sciences.***

Your Excellency, Chairman of Council, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, a credible Senior High School component of the Basic School will be considered so that staff of the University with young families can have quality secondary education for their wards. Resources of the University, such as land at Avle, will be used to generate income through farming and other viable projects. Land and facilities at Nungua, donated by Prof. Christian A. Botchway, will be developed into a hotel and learning centre for special



programs of the University. Investors will be actively sought to undertake projects of equal benefit to the University such as UHAS branded water and other products.

We will ensure that the accounts of the University are audited in a timely manner. We will work within the procurement laws of the country and train all leaders to always adhere to it. The Legal Counsel of the University will review all contracts and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs).

**6. *Create a proactive, collaborative and technology driven leadership and governance processes***

We will continue to work in line with established administrative and management systems established such as committees and boards. Regular meetings with Senior Management will be held to address the day-to-day issues of the University. We will review existing policies as necessary, complete ongoing ones and develop new ones to enhance processes and outputs of the University. We will adhere to the schedule of meetings of committees and boards. We will be gender sensitive in constituting committees to enhance equity and diversity. We will adopt a listening and team approach to decisions and continue Virtual or hybrid meetings as necessary. Decisions will be made according to the policies and statutes of the University, and we will promote training of new leaders to enhance effectiveness.

Monitoring and results management systems will be reviewed for efficiency and where necessary, technology driven systems will be introduced to ensure seamless administrative procedures. In instances of contravention of the University's rules and policies, disciplinary procedures will be activated, and the appropriate sanction (s) applied as stipulated. Let me reiterate that our administration will be fair to all parties involved.

**7. *Create an enabling environment active for internal and external stakeholder engagement and decision making***

Today's institutional development hinges on active collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. We will therefore engage all internal and external constituents. We will institute town-hall meetings with internal stakeholders such as faculty, staff, and students. Our administration will ensure that any information sent out will always include regular, sandwich, and international students as well as the various campuses of the university. External engagements will include prospective students, parents, alumni, partners,

sponsors among others. We will encourage an anonymous virtual complaint system for students and faculty that will elicit prompt action.

My administration will strengthen collaborations with hospitals, and we will run Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs to enhance the knowledge and skills of healthcare professionals. We will engage professional colleges and regulatory bodies to provide robust programs that are relevant to the needs of the populace. We will explore academic qualifications equivalent for membership and fellowship programs.

We will engage Traditional Rulers, politicians, and other opinion leaders to build on existing relationships to support the University in terms of setting up scholarship schemes, infrastructure, and other resources. We are very optimistic that together we can all contribute to the growth of the University.

**8. *Increase diversity and internationalization in terms of students, staff, and partners.***

Your Excellency, Chairman of Council, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, we will vigorously pursue a drive to promote the UHAS brand and culture, locally and internationally. Working with the Office of International Programmes, we will attract and recruit international students and motivate faculty and units involved. We will review incentives for international students; we will also introduce and promote attractive programs. We will review and ensure expedited admission processes and examination for international students. In collaboration with the Legal Counsel, we will ensure compliance with agreements relating to mobility and training grants.

There is the need for vigorous search for talents in sports, and those recruited will be motivated to enhance their commitment. My administration will seek resources to enhance sports at UHAS. Sportsmen and women will be mentored to ensure they keep up with their academics. Efforts will be made to seek collaborations and mobilities to other Universities locally and internationally for faculty, students, and staff.

**EXPECTATIONS FROM MY TEAM**

My team comprises everyone in UHAS – students, faculty and staff. I entreat us all to work together and always put the interests of the University first. We should all come together as one family and forge ahead to develop the university. Let us be fair to each other and work with the needed integrity and commitment. Let us always remember the core values of the University which

include *mutual trust, innovation technology, research, clinical service, practical orientation, and collaboration*. When we work with these core values in mind, I am sure that we will achieve our target and have the required impact within the health space. We should all actively engage and contribute to decision-making and also have ownership orientation toward the resources of the university. I encourage all to freely voice out any challenges faced in a timely manner.

## **A CALL FOR SUPPORT**

Your Excellency, Chairman of Council, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, my assessment of the university so far reveals the following urgent and critical needs:

1. Computers and software to aid teaching, learning and administrative procedures
2. Highly powered scanner DRSPS1000 for marking multiple choice exams
3. Summer hut for students especially sandwich students with babies to help them have a comfortable environment to breastfeed their babies in between lectures
4. Tables and chairs in the reading rooms in the halls for students
5. Deep freezers in the halls to help students store their food and other beverages
6. Vehicles to aid monitoring of students during vocational training program

The most pressing need of the university is ***financial clearance*** to recruit more faculty and staff. UHAS being a relatively new university requires faculty and staff to roll out its programs and ensure quality training. Training of health professionals entails both theory and practice, which also demands more human resources; therefore, Mr. President, I passionately appeal to your high office to help us in this regard. Your Excellency, I wish to direct your attention to stalled work at the permanent campus of the Binka School of Public Health at Fodome; our Central Laboratory Complex; and our access road. These projects require your kind intervention to ensure their timely completion.

## **CONCLUSION**

I wish to emphasise that we will focus on growth and expansion in all our activities, resources, and programs as we progress through the years. The growth will be pursued using innovative ways that are technology driven. We

will seek to train health professionals who have high integrity and approach issues and care ethically with a strong sense of fairness to all.

The high demand for service and care is important; thus, the students we train will have the necessary practical skills to meet the needs of the healthcare system at all levels. It is necessary to expand facilities at the training hospitals to facilitate skills development and comfort of students.

*'Arise! Great giant; and shine for health and development; Execute your duties well to make your nation strong.'* -- (UHAS Anthem, by Prof. Esi Awuah).

My administration is obliged to build on the foundations laid by our predecessors with due diligence; and we therefore cannot fail. Thus, I pledge my firm and solemn commitment to discharge my duties as Vice-Chancellor of this noble University, UHAS. The task may be hard, but we will there. Together. So, help me God!