

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR KWASI KWAFO ADARKWA,
VICE-CHANCELLOR OF KNUST ON THE OCCASION OF THE
41ST CONGREGATION (MORNING SESSION – COLLEGE OF HEALTH
SCIENCES AND COLLEGE OF SCIENCE) HELD
ON 9TH JUNE, 2007 IN THE GREAT HALL**

1. SALUTATION

Your Excellency, President of the Republic of Ghana

Chancellor of the University

Chairman of University Council

Honourable Minister of Education, Science and Sports

Honourable Ashanti Regional Minister

Honourable Ministers of State

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Nananom

Colleague Vice-Chancellors

Past KNUST Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellors

Pro Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellors of sister Universities

Registrar and Registrars of Sister Universities

Members of the University Council

Provosts,

Deans and Directors

Heads of Department

Guest Speaker

Alumni of the University

Members of Convocation and hardworking Faculty Members

Senior Staff

Junior Staff

Proud and relieved parents

Distinguished Jubilee Year 2007 Graduands and KNUST Graduating Class of 2007

Members of the Media

Distinguished Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

2. WELCOME

As you are no doubt aware, we started this year's graduation ceremony yesterday during which time graduands from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, College of Architecture and Planning and the College of Engineering were presented with their degrees and certificates. Today, we will have two sessions for the Colleges of Health Sciences and Science in the morning and Art and Social Sciences in the afternoon; respectively.

On behalf of the University Council, teaching and non-teaching staff as well as the entire University community, I would like to welcome all of you to this morning's ceremony. With your co-operation, especially the graduating class, the function is likely to be a very short one. On my part, my report is usually short and I will plead with you to spare me the next twenty minutes of your time. Once again, I welcome you all to this morning's function.

Congregations, commencements or graduation ceremonies are held to award degrees to deserving students who have followed courses of study and have also satisfied all requirements of their specific programmes. This year's Congregation is the 41st to be held in the history of this great University. Most of the Congregations I have witnessed are usually very solemn, orderly and peaceful events and I trust that this one will also live up to expectation because this year is a jubilee year and all those we see before us about to be graduated are very special people.

In view of the fact that it is a special occasion, we have invited a distinguished alumnus to speak to the graduating class. Ms. Dzidzor Amoah, the current Managing Director of Triumph Ventures which is a real estate development company, is our guest speaker. She graduated from this University with a Bachelor of Sciences degree in Biochemistry in 1990. Following her graduation, she worked for a while and went on to study law. Consequently, in addition to being a Biochemist, she is also a qualified lawyer who has

had a distinguished career. Ms. Dzidzor Amoah, you are welcome to KNUST, your alma mater.

Please permit me to say a few words about the two Colleges that are graduating their students this morning. The College of Science is one of the largest Colleges with a student population of almost 4,000 and a Faculty strength of 128. The lecturer : student ratio is nearly 1:31 but in spite of this, the College has continued to mount quality programmes in Actuarial Science, Computer Science, Biochemistry and Biotechnology, Chemistry, Theoretical and Applied Biology, Mathematics, Physics and Optometry. I am happy to inform you that, our first batch of 17 Doctor of Optometry students are graduating today. I would like to invite them to stand to be acknowledged.....Thank you. Thus far, the College has produced many graduates who hold various sensitive positions in the country. The College has a bright future and we all need to facilitate it to attain its full growth potential.

The College of Health Sciences is home to the School of Medical Sciences, Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences as well as the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences. The latter includes Nursing, Medical Laboratory Technology as well as Sports and Exercise Science. Virtually all the pharmacists and a bulk of the doctors working in the health sector in the country were trained in this College. I am happy to announce that this morning, we will be graduating our pioneering class of 37 student Nurses. At this juncture, I would like to invite these nurses to rise for a bow.....Thank you. We trust that now that the conditions of service of nurses in the public sector have been enhanced somewhat, you will stay on in Ghana to make a living here.

3. GRADUATES FROM THE COLLEGES OF HEALTH SCIENCES AND SCIENNCE

This year, we will be graduating about 113 students in Human Biology. Compared to last year's figure of 110 represents an increase of only 2.7 percentage points. Pharmacy will

also be presenting 119 students for graduation out of which 16 or 13% earned first class, 64 or 54% secured second class upper division degrees and 37 or 31% secured second class lower division degrees. Only 2 or 2% students secured pass degrees. This morning, we will also be graduating 116 students with various postgraduate degrees.

The academic staff members in the College of Science have worked very hard and are gradually gaining international recognition. In the Department of Computer Science and in the area of Computer Vision and Image processing, for example, some outstanding work has been recognised worldwide. Together with three other overseas collaborators, a lecturer in Computer Science has developed techniques and evaluated their potential for gait as a biometric. This epic work provides encouraging results for gait as a biometric for recognising human images even at a distance. A simple web search, using Google, indicates that there were over 240 published papers from top journals and conferences all over the world that have cited this particular scholarly work. This is a clear indication that KNUST is making its impact felt worldwide. Dr. James Benjamin Hayfron-Acquah, congratulations.

In a related development, the work of one of our professors in experimental solid state physics has been listed in the Web of Science Citation Index with a reasonable number of citations; implying that the professor's work is being noticed at other institutions all over the world. Professor Robert Kwame Nkum, congratulations.

The College of Science has expanded rather quickly over the past few years to provide greater access to more people to benefit from our programmes. Unfortunately, this pattern may not be sustainable given our current constraints but strenuous efforts are underway to enable us begin to tackle some of these constraints head on. Once we go over these problems and our staffing situation improves, we may be able to increase intake, especially, for the well patronised programmes in the College.

The College of Science will be presenting a total of 659 students for graduation this morning. Out of this number, females comprised 26.1% while the males were 73.9%.

Once again, this emphasises the need for us to encourage more females to study Science. In all the eight programmes on offer, we have recorded marked increases in enrolment figures over the past few years and this is reflected somewhat in the number of students being presented for graduation this morning. Again, we are happy to note that the University now graduates on the average, 100 students in each of the basic science disciplines, namely: Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics as well as Theoretical and Applied Biology. The trend is the same for Computer Science, Optometry as well as Biochemistry and Biotechnology. It is, therefore, quite clear that in spite of our limited financial fortunes, the KNUST continues to train a substantial proportion of the manpower needed in the basic sciences required for the socio-economic development of the country.

Overall, we have also recorded a 1.5% percent increase in the number of graduates from the College of Science. The quality of degrees have also improved because this year, a little more than 8% of all the graduating students from the College of Science secured first class degrees, with about 80% earning second class degrees. The remaining 12% of students secured pass degrees.

4. “SCIENCE, THE BEDROCK OF DEVELOPMENT”

It has been said over and over that science is the bedrock of development and indeed, this is the motto of the College of Science. For us here at the KNUST, this is what has guided the conduct of our affairs including the review of the various curricula and mounting of new programmes. We are of the firm belief that without science and technology, Ghana will not be able to seriously pursue its development agenda. Perhaps as basis for future policy rationale, we need to encourage the study of science and technology at all levels of the educational ladder. In the interim, I am happy to announce that we have commenced discussions with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports so we can begin to emphasise the study of science. As a University, we are going to take cognisance of this and reflect it in our admission policy and consequently in the enrolment figures. In this direction, we have been encouraged to begin examining the implications of reverting to four-year senior high school following the full implementation of the new educational

reform programme. At the appropriate time, the Academic Board will consider this policy directive but I would like to assure all concerned that we are very sensitive to, and supportive of, Government policy. Hence, we will do all we can to ensure that the policy is fully adhered to and reflected, to the extent possible, in our programmes on offer.

We are of the firm belief that it is only with science and technology that we will be able to tackle our environmental problems, food sufficiency, depletion of the ozone layer, soil depletion, desertification and poverty; amongst others. It is with this background that the United Nations University has recently established a Regional Centre of Expertise in Africa for environment and education for sustainable development at the Department of Theoretical and Applied Biology here at the KNUST. This is the first of such centres in Africa and the 12th in the world. Indeed, the KNUST is making significant contributions to the development of Ghana through the application of science and technology.

The College of Health Sciences made considerable progress in the diagnosis, treatment and control of tropical diseases. The School of Medical Sciences and the Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research into Tropical Diseases together with the Agogo Presbyterian Hospital and the Kintampo Health Research Centre participated in the development and trials of a malaria candidate vaccine.

The Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences has established the mosquito repellent properties of selected plant species such as *Xylophia aethiopica* and *Clausena anisata* for commercial exploitation.

At the local level, students from the College of Health Sciences are contributing positively in the delivery of health care services on campus. Through an innovative scheme, students from the College of Health Sciences can now work a maximum of ten hours a week to earn additional income while studying. We have found this extremely useful in the wake of staff shortages in critical areas such as nursing.

In view of the importance we attach to the study of science and technology in this University, plans are well advanced for work to commence on the construction of our Teaching Hospital. The sod cutting ceremony is scheduled for the 17th July 2007 and we will start in a modest way with the construction of the Out Patients' Department.

In the interim, we have decentralised health care delivery on campus with the introduction of a Students' Clinic. The location of this Clinic within the proximity of the halls of residence has encouraged its intensive use as it is devoted solely to students. We shall continue to employ science and technology to improve the conditions under which we live on campus.

5. BENEFACTORS

At this juncture, I would like to acknowledge some of our benefactors. The Government of Ghana continues to pay the emoluments of our lecturers and has also provided some modest funding for infrastructural development through GETFund.

The College of Science has also received an approval for a grant of £85,000 under the England-Africa Partnerships in Higher Education (EAP) Scheme to help develop a new and modern academic programme in Meteorology and Climate Science in the Department of Physics. We are grateful to the British government for this grant. Other benefactors include individuals such as Dr. Evans Adunyah, who donated books to individual programmes in the Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology as well as the School of Medical Sciences. We are extremely grateful to all our stakeholders.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT TO 41ST CONGREGATION

I would like to acknowledge with immense gratitude, the support offered by some organisations to make this Congregation, a success. These organisations offered some

financial support to this year's Congregation by way of advertising in the Congregation Brochure.

These organisations are:

- CAL Bank;
- Sambus Company Limited;
- KEK Insurance Brokers Ltd; and
- University Press, Kumasi (UPK).

We believe that this cordial relationship will flourish and develop from strength to strength for our mutual benefit. We thank you most sincerely for your support.

7. CONCLUSION

For our Jubilee Class of 2007, once again, accept my congratulations and remember that as you enter the world of work, you will have to employ all that we taught you here at the University and more. Remain receptive to any new ideas that may come your way and remember that we all learn something new everyday. Continuing education should be part of your daily vocabulary if you want your basic knowledge in science and health science to form the basis with which you can tackle our many developmental problems.

There is a cliché which says that you are the future, but I contend that the future is now. Tackle it with all the seriousness it requires and particularly face it with imagination, ingenuity and audacity, explore, discover and change Ghana. This is your opportunity and do not let it pass by. Face the future with honesty and transparency. Regard honesty as a jewel of inestimable price and the sky will be your limit. Arrogance should have no place in your scheme of things. Learn from the experience of others and look honestly in your hearts as a treasure.

Once again, my heartiest congratulations on your splendid achievement.

Stay blessed.