

## VALEDICTORY SPEECH (July 2019)

Chancellor of the University of Ghana,  
Chairman of the University of Ghana Council,  
Vice-Chancellor and other officials of the University of Ghana,  
Provosts, Deans, Directors, Heads of Department, Senior Members & Other Staff;  
Parents and Guardians,  
Fellow graduands,  
Invited Guests,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour and a privilege to deliver the valedictory speech for the graduating class of 2019. To me, it feels like a dream. I can still remember a course mate jokingly asking me in November 2018, during the first semester, to start writing my speech and, as I usually do when mates make silly jokes, I gave him a gentle knock on his head and told him he wasn't serious. I guess I'm the one who needs to be given both a knock and a pinch now to wake me up from this dream.

- Here we are, after eight semesters in this prestigious University or more accurately after seven and a half semesters for those who either got their admission quite late or always decided to report three weeks after lectures had started. We did it! But you all will agree with me that it would not have been possible without God. Hence, to Him who has given us life, assisted, guided, and helped us through the ups and downs from admission to graduation, to the Almighty God, we say **Thank you, Yedaase, Wo mli da bo shi, Akpe**. Next, we extend our gratitude to our parents, guardians, siblings and to all those who have, even by mere words of encouragement, made this journey a much more liveable one, thank you so much. Shall we please give them a round of applause?

Now, we wish to thank our dear lecturers. Not only did you impact knowledge into us but you also taught us values like honesty, integrity and the love of a well-done job; thank you very much. Last but not the least, to the whole administrative staff of the university, we also say thank you.

Now, to you fellow graduands, I say congratulations. We made it! It was no less than difficult but we did it. Actually, the downs of the journey make this day a more enjoyable one. For all those who started this journey with us but are not here today for countless reasons, we wish them the very best. Some of us have gone through “hell” in these four years, either because we had to toil to be able to pay our fees, or because we experienced the loss of dear ones, or just because all we could read on people’s faces was “you can’t do it, you’re not smart enough”. We all had our days of “I’m tired, will I ever be able to finish this?” But we did not give up and here we are by God’s grace. To all those who demonstrated tenacity of purpose, perseverance and courage in the face of hardships, I say thank you for not giving up.

University life has been full of experiences. We learnt how to cope with different types of people. There are those who animate classes, those who are always chilling, those who always need to let the lecturer know that they exist by asking questions even when the time is up in stark contrast to the truants we only see on examination days; and there are the quiet ones always smiling and speaking in low tones, or at the opposite end, the savage-answer givers. These are all but superficial descriptions. We learnt to discover far more than those clichés by getting to know them, and we discovered great people. As a foreign student and an introvert, I was afraid not to be able to mingle, but I met people who were not scared of moving past cultural barriers, who saw more than the “French girl”. They have become more than mates; they are friends for life. So please, out there, do not judge a book by its cover. Dig into people, be nice to them and learn to cope with them.

Another sort of students I cannot forget to mention – the politicians. Those who will always want to comment on decisions of the government no matter the place or the time. Thinking about it, we all do that. We all say that “the government does not do this, or they only think about themselves, they are chopping our money”, we have our own way of commenting and criticising. We have been taught how to think, how to reason, how to research. Here we are, at the door, let’s make a difference. Let’s endeavour not to repeat mistakes others have made which we criticized. When others are making comments, let’s not join them blindly but rather, let’s pause, think thoroughly and make valuable and useful contributions. Ghana needs you, Africa needs us, let’s use whatever we acquired to make things move. It starts with the very little things.

Remember that sentence everyone was saying when you started classes in level 100: “work hard, okay?”. It certainly pays off to work hard; we all are a living testimony of that. There is no “shark” as commonly said in students’ jargon. Whether willingly or not, we learned to work in teams, to prioritize, to do it well even though it was often only for the marks all because we had a goal. This is what will help us outside, setting a target and striving to reach it. Whether you are going to work right away or further your education, you are aware of the steps to achieve it (if you don’t know, apply your lessons in research work), so “start and keep moving”; you’ll get there. To those who already have great ideas, write them down, plan, and when you are done: “start and keep moving”.

A tous les étudiants francophones je dis, « ne laissez pas la langue être une barrière à votre réussite. » To those who do not understand French, All I am saying is « To all the French students, do not let languages be a barrier to your success »

Lastly, they say: “we are now entering the real world”, I say: “we’ve always been there but now, we are equipped with knowledge, skills and values, we are shining so much that they cannot help but notice us.” World, here we shine!

**THANK YOU**