KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

RECORDER

Published by Authority

No. 504 March 2021 Vol. 56 No. 7

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SALUTATION

Chairman and Members of Council Honourable Ministers of State Vice-Chancellor and Vice-Chancellors from Sister Universities Pro Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellors from Sister Universities Registrar and Registrars from Sister Universities Provosts of Colleges Members of Convocation Senior and Junior Staff Nananom Alumni of the University Invited Guests Graduands Ladies and gentlemen

WELCOME

It is a pleasure for me to have you all join us on our various social media platforms for the 2021 special congregation of our great University. We are grateful that you have devoted time out of your busy schedules to join us for this all-important programme.

On behalf of the entire University community and on my own behalf, I welcome you to the 2021 special Congregation ceremony of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, which is being held virtually. Our elders say that "one who causes others misfortune also teaches them wisdom." COVID 19 is teaching us a lot of wisdom. Today, we can all sit in the comfort of our homes and take active part in this graduation ceremony; something none of us thought of a few years ago. Much as the COVID-19 is having a toll on us, with all the restrictions one can think of, let us try and focus on the innovations the pandemic by default, has created for us to adapt. This will help lessen the stress on us and cause us to forge ahead.

As has been the tradition, my welcome address will touch on a few issues, which in my view are germane to the development of tertiary education in general and KNUST in particular.

MANAGING EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

Ladies and gentlemen, since our country recorded its first case of COVID-19 in March 2020, the case count has steadily been rising and this has affected all facets of our lives. The education sector has been particularly hard hit by this pandemic, as students had to stay home for well over ten months. Having come to the realisation that COVID-19 may be with us for some time, it became imperative for us to appreciate the NEW NORMAL. Government, therefore, took the bold decision to re-open some aspects of our national lives, including schools but with the firm directive that the COVID-19 protocols must be strictly observed. Management of KNUST has taken this directive very seriously.

I am informed that Management has constituted an eight (8)-member KNUST Covid-19 Coordinating Committee, tasked to assess the situation on the ground and offer advice on the steps to take to prevent, contain and manage COVID-19 and its related matters on campus. I am further informed that the students have taken keen interest in ensuring adherence to the COVID-19 Protocols and have formed teams called COVID-19 ambassadors. These young ladies and gentlemen have dedicated themselves to educating their peers on the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic and to encourage them to adhere to the protocols. I would like to take this opportunity to appreciate our gallant "ambassadors" and the KNUST COVID-19 Committee for their sense of duty and patriotism.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me also commend Management of the University for the stringent measures put in place to manage the pandemic on campus. The daring decision to bring over seventy thousand students to campus was made not without apprehension and anxiety. But I must say, the situation has been managed so well and most importantly, the good Lord has been very gracious to us. I will however, strongly admonish my dear students to appreciate that the danger is not yet over. It beholds on each and every one of us to dutifully adhere to all the protocols and ensure their observance as their little contribution to the management of the public health threat imposed by COVID-19 on the University Community and the nation. To borrow the words of the President, *'our safety is in our own hands'*.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR VIRTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

Ladies and gentlemen, theme 4 of the University's Corporate Strategic Plan (Plan 2016-2025) provides for universal access and application of ICT in teaching, learning, research and management of the University. Thus, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology as a forward-looking Institution, had already started putting in place its ICT infrastructure to enhance and ensure access to, and intensify the use of ICT for academic work of faculty and students. The COVID-19 pandemic is accelerating the process; since it leaves us with no other option but to embrace virtual teaching and learning as the emerging mode of education delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guest, I am told not all the students have access to the requisite ICT gadgets to enable them take active part in the virtual teaching and learning. To ensure equal opportunity and provide a level academic platform for all students, irrespective of their background, Management has found it expedient to facilitate the acquisition of electronic gadgets for underprivileged students to enable them to also fully participate in the virtual teaching and learning through a Programme dubbed "Support One Needy Student with One Laptop" ("SONSOL"). This programme was announced by the Vice-Chancellor during her investiture last year. I am informed this programme has received overwhelming endorsement by corporate institutions and so far, 593 laptops have been donated to the University. I must highly commend the Vice-Chancellor and her Management Team for this good initiative to create a level playing field for academic work in the University. While using this platform to commend our benefactors for their admirable gesture to the University and humanity, I also want to passionately appeal to other stakeholders to come to the aid of these underprivileged students, who are the nation's hope for tomorrow.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS

Ladies and gentlemen, as I mentioned earlier, the University on its own has initiated steps to improve upon its ICT infrastructure. However, the sudden switch to online activities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic means investing heavily in the ICT infrastructure to adequately support academic and administrative work. This has brought in its wake a challenge with funding. I, therefore, call on Government to extend a hand to the University in the upgrade of its ICT infrastructure. I am aware of the Government's wi-fi deployment programme across secondary and tertiary educational institutions in the country. However, information available to me is that the project is yet to commence on the University campus. I would, therefore, want to appeal to Government to expedite action on the project at KNUST. Data charges also continue to be high. In this era of online learning, students would require a lot of data in accessing the various online classes. The plea is to the telcos to reduce data charges for students to enable them fully participate in the online-learning system. I will also want to encourage the telcos to work at improving the network quality especially in areas that have high concentration of students. As partners in virtual education, your support so far is appreciated and we will continue to count on you.

The KNUST Teaching Hospital

Ladies and Gentlemen, the KNUST Teaching Hospital Project is so dear to my heart and I have spoken about it in almost all my addresses to Congregation, in the recent past. The last time I spoke about it was in 2020 during the investiture of Prof. (Mrs.) Rita Akosua Dickson as Vice-Chancellor. Fortunately, the President was with us at that programme and gave his assurance that the project would be done.

I want to once again thank the President for the firm assurance to construct the KNUST Teaching Hospital. I can comfortably rely on the words of the President and therefore would not want to be labour the point. Once the President has spoken, I know it would be done.

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A WORD TO THE GRADUANDS

Now to my graduating class. Let me first of all congratulate you all for successfully going through your academic work during this stressful COVID-19 era. There is no doubt that you have demonstrated commitment and hard work to complete your course work and long essays. It is this same resilience and commitment that the world of work requires of you to move this nation forward. Go out there and prove that you were trained by KNUST.

I wish you the best in all your endeavours. Ayeekoo!

OTUMFUO OSEI-TUTU II, ASANTEHENE CHANCELLOR, KNUST MARCH 12, 2021

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY PROF. (MRS.) RITA AKOSUA DICKSON, VICE- CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY AT THE 2021 SPECIAL CONGREGATION CEREMONY (VIRTUAL) OF THE UNIVERSITY HELD ON THURSDAY, 11TH AND FRIDAY, 12TH MARCH, 2021 AT 09: 00 A.M. AND 2: 00 P. M.

The Chancellor of the University, His Royal Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Chairman and Members of Council **Colleague Vice-Chancellors** Past Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellors Pro Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellors from Sister Institutions Registrar **Provosts of Colleges** Deans and Directors Heads of Department Members of Convocation Senior and Junior Staff of the University Graduating Class of 2020 Parents and Guardians **Distinguished Audience and Viewers** Our Friends from the Media Ladies and Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

It is an honour to once again present the 2021 Special Congregation address; the third time the University is holding a virtual congregation. The 1st virtual congregation was held on the 18th and 19th September, 2020 with the second one being the virtual congregation for the Ministry of Health Training Institutions mentored by KNUST held from 27th to 29th January, 2021. The apprehension that characterized the first virtual ceremony has given way to a University ready and poised to embrace the paradigm shift into the virtual space of academic life. This Special Congregation should have been held in November last year but for the disruptions of the academic calendar caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. As an African proverb says **"when the music changes, so does the dance"**, we are thus learning to dance graciously to our new music. On behalf of the entire University Community, I would like to add my voice to that of His Royal Majesty, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the Chancellor of the University, to warmly welcome all our graduands and distinguished personalities who have joined us all over the globe, through the virtual space, to be a part of this special congregation ceremony.

STATISTICS ON GRADUATING CLASS

Nana Chancellor, I would like to begin with the graduating statistics. For this 2021 special congregation, we are graduating a total of four thousand, four hundred and seventy-two (4,472) students made up of eight hundred and fourteen (814) Undergraduates and 3,658 postgraduates. In terms of gender, the University is graduating 1,563 females representing 34.95%.

Ladies and Gentlemen, 91 of our postgraduates will be receiving Ph.D. awards and it is heart-warming to announce that 28 of these Ph.D. graduates are females. This is an improvement over last year's figure of 5 females. We emphasize the achievement of our females every year to encourage a lot more to pursue postgraduate studies and dispel the notion that science and technology education is the preserve of men.

I also want to congratulate all staff who are part of our graduands and to let you know that KNUST is indeed very proud of you.

Please permit me, at this stage, to give the breakdown of the graduating figures in terms of Colleges. We are graduating:

- * 267 for the College of Agriculture & Natural Resources;
- * 515 for the College of Art and Built Environment;
 - 280 for the College of Engineering;
- * 218 for the College of Health Sciences;
- * 1213 for the College of Humanities & Social Science;
- * 255 for the College of Science; and
- * 1724 for the Institute of Distance Learning

Nana Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, as I am enjoined to do for such an assembly, I would like to highlight some policies and programmes we have

initiated as a University, over the past year and would want to begin with the University's research undertakings and the impact of same on society.

KNUST'S IMPACT ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a research-intensive institution, KNUST continues to embark on several impactful researches, but for the purpose of this address, I would restrict myself to the most topical issue on the global stage, currently, i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic. In the world's search for vaccines and cure for the corona virus pandemic, KNUST has not been left out. The University's Covid-19 Clinical Trial Team KNC19 has received approval for a herbal preparation, *Cryptolepis Sanguinolenta*, for a Phase II Clinical Trial on Covid-19 patients. Nana Chancellor, it is our prayer that the University's efforts would bring Ghana and the world at large the needed relief, at the end of the Clinical Trial.

Nana Chancellor, our KCCR has been a key partner to the Ghana Health Service and the Ministry of Health. Right from the outset, our scientists established COVID-19 testing sites at KNUST. KCCR gained recognition as the second largest laboratory that has so far provided over 128,000 COVID-19 tests for 13 out of 16 regions (11.9 million people) in Ghana to guide the public health response in Ghana. KCCR conducts COVID-19 tests for football teams requiring clearance certificates to participate in sports as well as travellers. In line with our mandate we have had excellent scores following participation in National and International Quality Assurance Programmes. The visit by the President of Ghana, His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to KCCR in May 2020 was a huge motivation to our staff at KCCR involved in the COVID-19 testing.

KCCR has provided technical expertise in setting up other laboratories in the country. In Ashanti Region our scientists helped in setting up the KATH and Public Health reference laboratory in the Kumasi South Hospital, Agogo for COVID-19 testing. To further improve access to testing our scientists in collaboration with the Ghana Revenue Authority Customs Division and GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit) have deployed a COVID-19 mobile laboratory to disease hotspot areas and currently provides testing in the Obuasi Municipality. These additional laboratories have significantly boosted COVID-19 testing in Ashanti Region.

OBUASI CAMPUS

During the last congregation, I reported that KNUST was planning to introduce undergraduate programmes in Nursing, Midwifery, Medical Laboratory and Electrical and Electronic Engineering programmes for the 2020/2021 academic year, at our Obuasi Campus. Nana Chancellor, the constructive efforts of KNUST and its dedicated partners have made this a reality. In the not too distant future, we intend to introduce postgraduate programmes as well. To cater for the large increase in student numbers, we have been able to develop an additional 6 lecture theatres and extended internet connectivity to parts of the campus for effective online teaching and learning. The Obuasi Campus is gradually taking shape and enrolment has also increased from 343 to over 1000. We therefore, plead with Government to continue supporting the expansion of facilities at the Campus to facilitate teaching and learning.

COLLABORATIONS

Your Royal Majesty, a University of our stature thrives on collaborations. Nothwithstanding the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic, the year under review saw some significant collaborations. The following are a few of them:

i. University Partnership Initiative Projects

KNUST and the U.S. State Department Bureau of African Affairs' launched the University Partnership Initiatives (UPI) in flexible learning: Responding and Re-imagining Education and Community driven Projects. The collaborators of this initiative are KNUST, U.S. Embassy-Accra, Texas International Education Consortium (TIEC) and Iowa State University (ISU). The initiative is intended to strengthen existing ties and foster new collaborations. It is also to promote Faculty and student exchanges, joint research, administrative capacity-building and public-private partnerships.

ii. The Association of Ghana Industries (AGI)

The Association of Ghana Industries has renewed its long-standing relationship with KNUST. This partnership is to facilitate the establishment of formal practical training programmes for KNUST students at AGI member establishments and assist the University to raise funds and other resources for the execution of specific projects of mutual interest to the University and Industry. The partnership is also to facilitate the identification of problems from its members and bring these problems to the attention of KNUST to inform and drive our research in the University.

SUPPORT ONE NEEDY STUDENT WITH ONE LAPTOP (SONSOL) PROJECT

Nana Chancellor, during the 54th Congregation Ceremony, we mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic was not going to allow us the luxury of doing things at our own pace in terms of the digitization agenda and was obviously going to alter the tertiary education landscape for a longer time. What we did not anticipate however was a new and more virulent variant of the corona virus emerging all over the globe and causing such havoc. As an institution, we had to put in the necessary measures to adhere strictly to all the laid down safety protocols of the COVID-19 to stay safe and these have compelled us largely, to resort to online teaching and learning regardless of the physical presence of students on campus.

Currently, all departments are doing at least 30% of online teaching. The challenge however is that not all the students are able to effectively participate in the online platform engagements due to lack of the requisite IT gadgets. It is in this light, that KNUST is working hand in hand with our stakeholders to provide needy but brilliant students with laptops. This initiative dubbed the SONSOL Project i.e. "Support One Needy Student with One Laptop" has received massive response from our stakeholders and benefactors. In all, a total of 593 laptops have been donated by our esteem stakeholders. Nana Chancellor with your permission, I would like to mention the donors as follows, Vodafone Ghana, Stanbic Bank Ghana, Absa, Standard Chartered Bank, SIC Insurance, Jospong Group of Companies, Consolidated Bank of Ghana, Tobinco Pharmaceuticals, AndySarp and Multinec Companies. Of particular mention are two of our illustrious alumni who also donated

laptops to us. These are Ing. Nana Poku Agyemang, Ashanti Regional Director of Urban Roads and Lawyer Nana Agyei Baffour Awuah, Council Member.

I am also delighted to report that the first set of 593 laptops received have been distributed to our underprivileged students at a ceremony held at the Great Hall on 25th February, 2021. I refer to it as the first set because I am very hopeful that sooner than later, we would receive a lot more to give to other students who are anxiously waiting for the opportunity to be part of our virtual classes.

KNUST is very grateful to these organisations for their kind gesture and wishes to reiterate its call to our other stakeholders to come to our aid to promote this worthy cause.

ICT INFRASTRUCTURE

Nana Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, the University has invested significantly in ICT Infrastructure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, an amount of 1,871,877.57 has been spent on audio visual equipment to enable synchronous and asynchronous learning interactivity. The University, through the Ghanaian Academic and Research Network (GARNET) and the West and Central Africa Research and Education Network (WACREN) has also purchased premium zoom accounts for academic staff to help in teaching and to improve user browsing experience and connectivity to the virtual classroom. The University has also increased its bandwidth capacity and continues to work on enhancing our internet services due to the high student numbers.

Again, to ensure that academic work can continue even from the homes of faculty members, the University, through its telecom partners, is facilitating a fibre optic internet connectivity project to provide faster internet connection at a cheaper rate for members of the University community.

KNUST AT 70

Nana Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, as an institution, we have cause to rejoice, even in the midst of this pandemic as the University celebrates its 70

years this year. The Theme for the anniversary is, "KNUST, 70 Years of Global Impact: A New Age for a Renewed Focus". Nana Chancellor, I believe the theme is very appropriate considering the role KNUST has played and continues to play on the global scene.

KNUST, no doubt, as a research-intensive institution has brought about incredible changes in the world through the numerous research and publications embarked on over the years by its faculty and students. I wish to inform you that the launch of the year-long celebration is going to be very soon as we leverage on all the virtual opportunities at our disposal and want to use this opportunity to invite all of you to participate in the activities to make the celebration a success. All our stakeholders, especially KNUST Global Alumni and corporate bodies are invited to join us to celebrate this remarkable milestone.

AWARDS

Nana Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, the year under review saw a number of our staff winning grants to embark on impactful projects. The following grants were won by the University:

- Eight Hundred and thirteen thousand, one hundred and fifty-one dollars (\$813,151.00);
- One million, two hundred and ten thousand, four hundred and three euros (€1,210,403.00);
- Forty-seven thousand, seven hundred and seventy-two pounds (£47,772.00);
- One hundred and ninety-eight thousand, three hundred and seventyeight dollars (\$198,378.00)
- One hundred and thirty-two thousand, seven hundred and fortynine dollars (\$132,749.00)
- One million, one hundred thousand Norwegian kroner (NOK 1,100,000.00); and
- Two hundred and seventy-three thousand, seven hundred and fiftythree Ghana cedis, ninety pesewas (GH¢273,753.90).

I would like to mention a few of the individual grants that were won:

- i. Prof. Ellis Owusu-Dabo, the Pro Vice-Chancellor won One million, two hundred and ten thousand, four hundred and three euros (€1,210,403.00) from the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership Association (EDCTP2) to work on the project, "Pediatric Phase I/II age de-escalation dose-finding study of a vaccine against invasive non-typhoidal salmonella infections in Sub-Saharan Africa (PEDVAC-iNTS)".
- Prof. Francis Kemausuor of the Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering received One hundred and ninety-eight thousand, three hundred and seventy-eight dollars (\$198,378.00) from USAID – Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER), for study into, "Agrivoltic Technology in Drylands of West Africa: Strengthening National Innovation Systems for Diffusion and Market Development at the Water-Energy-Food Nexus".
- iii. Prof. Sampson Antwi from the Department of Child Health won One hundred and thirty-two thousand, seven hundred and forty-nine dollars (\$132,749.00) from the National Institute of Health (NIH) to work on, "Pediatric HIV Disclosure Benefits Study (Ph.D. – BS) – Sankofa 2".
- iv. Prof. Marian Asantewah Nkansah, Department of Chemistry, was named among the top 10 and top 60 scientists in Africa and the world, respectively, in the 2020 Analytical Scientists Power List.
- v. Rev. Frof. William Obeng-Denteh was approved as a Chartered Mathematician by the Chartered Mathematician Panel of the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications in the United Kingdom.
- vi. Prof. Nathaniel Boso, Dean, School of Business has been named one of the Chairs in 10 African Universities to host the O.R Tambo Africa Research Chairs Initiative (ORTACHI).
- vii. Prof. Veronica Millicent Dzomeku received an Award from USAID's partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research. These people have indeed raised the banner of the University so high and deserve to be commended.

You can be sure that KNUST is extremely proud of you.

Your Royal Majesty, ladies and gentlemen, it is not only our staff who are excelling, we are indeed gratified by the successes that are also being chalked by our students and graduates and I am pleased to mention the following:

- Mr. Ibrahim Mahama, an Alumnus of the KNUST has been honoured by the Prince Claus Fund based in the Netherlands with the 2020 Principal Prince Claus Laureate awards at a virtual ceremony held at the Royal Palace Hall, Amsterdam for his knowledge and contribution in addressing issues on Culture and Development.
- The KNUST Team comprising Kyei Baffour Papa Kwasi Baah, Isaac Sarfo Jr., Emmanuella Bemah Appiah, Justice Opoku and Jephter Kumuyi Danso won the Devex Hackathon Challenge hosted by Arizona State University, USA, under the thematic area of Business Transforming Development Hackathon challenge.
- Miss Prisca Chinaza, an Alumna of the KNUST, was adjudged the Best student actress at the Ghana Tertiary Awards.

To our gallant Faculty members and students, we say AYEKOO!!!

DONATIONS

Nana Chancellor, our stakeholders and benefactors continue to support the vision and mission of the University. During the year under review, the following donations were made by these stakeholders:

- The Thomas Scientific and Seeding Laboratories and UNIJAY Company Limited donated 100,000 KN95 and 10,000 reusable facemasks, respectively, to the University to help fight the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Support One Needy Student with One Laptop (SONSOL) project has received immense support from Vodafone Ghana, Stanbic Bank, Absa Bank, SIC Insurance Company Limited, Tobinco Pharmaceutical, Jospong Group of Companies (Zoomlion), Andysarp and Multinec Companies with 593 laptops valued at Two Million Nine Hundred and Sixty-Five Thousand Ghana Cedis (GH¢2,965,000.00).

- Ghana National Gas Company was also generous to the University by donating GH¢2,000,000.00 towards the building of a Multi-Purpose Basic Sciences laboratory for undergraduate students.
- Japan Motors Trading Company Limited donated its first locally assembled pick-up vehicle to KNUST for learning purposes.
- The University Library also received 20 computers, monitors and a local server from the North-America Chapter of the KNUST Alumni-Association.
- Anglogold Ashanti also supported the KNUST Obuasi campus with GH¢600,000.00 to carry out expansion works on some existing structures to accommodate the fresh students.
- Jospong Group has donated 10 tricycles to the University to improve sanitation.
- Finally, Ghana National Petroleum Corporation has graciously decided to build the extension of the Main Administration Block.

We are extremely grateful to all our benefactors.

APPRECIATION

I wish to express Management's sincerest gratitude to our students, especially to you, our graduands, for bearing with us in these difficult times of the coronavirus pandemic. We are also very appreciative of all our teaching and non-teaching staff for your unflinching support and hardwork which has brought us this far. To our IT staf; we salute you. The task of navigating unfamiliar terrains has been enormous, but you dedicatedly and committedly took each challenge on its merit and produced excellent results by all standards. Our Covid Ambassadors among our Student Leadership, how could we have fought this virus by ourselves as staff without your resolve to own this targeted battle on the virus. Well done. The KNUST Covid 19 Committee and the hospital staff in general, the COVID focal persons among senior members at the Departments, Faculties and Colleges we really appreciate your good works.

ADVICE TO GRADUANDS

My dear graduands, KNUST has trained and provided you with the requisite skills and knowledge to be functional and useful to society. As the world evolves, please ensure you build on your skills and knowledge to make you continuously relevant in the changing times we are in. Please be guided by KNUST's core value of Integrity and Stewardship of Resources by exhibiting the highest standard of professional ethics and a culture of accountability and responsibility in all your endeavours.

Continue to work very hard at whatever your hands find doing. Remember that "a dream does not become a reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and perseverance and hard work"- Colin Powel.

Always remember that circumstances may change but do not let that change your dream. Drive your dream with all the energy you can find wherever you are. Please bear in mind that the pandemic is still with us. Do please observe the protocols, Stay Safe and Stay Healthy.

Now unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you his peace both now and ever more.

I wish you very well in all your endeavours, once again Congratulations.

Thank you very much and God Bless Us All!!

PROFESSOR (MRS.) RITA AKOSUA DICKSON VICE-CHANCELLOR, KNUST, KUMASI MARCH 11 & 12, 2021