

**MATRICULATION SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR (MRS.) RITA AKOSUA
DICKSON, VICE-CHANCELLOR, KNUST ON 7TH FEBRUARY, 2023**

SALUTATION

Pro Vice-Chancellor

Registrar

Provosts

Deans and Directors

Heads of Department

Colleague Members of Convocation

Senior and Junior Staff

Presidents, Students Representative Council and the Graduate Students Association

Distinguished Viewers and Audience

Parents and Guardians who have joined us via our social media handles

My Precious Freshmen and women, and Future Alumni of KNUST

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Nothing brings us more joy than welcoming our young, fresh, talented and highly focused new members into the wonderful KNUST Family. We believe that with the hard work you are determined to do here at KNUST, with regards to your studies and personal development, we can together, take our Great and Noble University to new heights. A very warm Welcome Aboard!

Without a doubt, Higher Education Institutions the world over, since 2020, after having been hit out of the blue, by the unsolicited and unwelcomed Covid-19 pandemic, had to undergo a number of transformations including modes of service delivery, and KNUST was not left out. As a result, some of our official ceremonies such as today's matriculation are conducted virtually. Although we are not oblivious to the fact that the virtual space may not give the same euphoria as the in-person one, we are very excited that you are able to achieve this milestone of being a student of KNUST, nonetheless.

As a University, we continue to work very hard at engaging with our immediate environment, our cherished stakeholders, society, and the globe as a whole, to ensure access to transformative opportunities, and higher education offers, as we relentlessly take on the profound challenges facing our communities, our country and the world at large.

As I congratulate you for working hard to pull through the rather stiff competition to join us here at KNUST, may I right from today challenge you all to be interested in, dedicated, and committed to learning and researching so as to contribute your quota to solving local and global problems through technological innovations, social entrepreneurship and world-class knowledge production and usage.

At KNUST, we are keen on preparing our students to be competitive for success in the global knowledge economy, not only as employees, but also as employers. This charge starts right from today and your unalloyed cooperation is highly solicited.

Indeed, this is the University you have chosen to be part of, and it is only fair that you join the Romans to do what they do best, once you are in Rome.

On that note, I am extremely honoured and deeply excited to welcome you on behalf of the Chancellor, His Royal Majesty, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the Governing Council, Management, staff, students and the entire University Community to today's programme.

Matriculation is a crucial part of the University's Academic Calendar, in that, this ceremony officially marks the enrolment of new students unto the register of the University. At this brief, but important event, all newly admitted students would be required to take the Matriculation Oath and sign the Matriculation Register. It marks your official welcome, acceptance, and recognition as full and bona fide students of KNUST. I wish to inform you that, the Oath further admits students as Junior Members in Statu Pupillari of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology with all the attendant privileges and responsibilities. I entreat you to live by the words of the Oath, that is to: observe the regulations of the University, obey those to whom your obedience is required, study diligently, seek the truth and promote the good name of this University at all times. Please be informed that the University takes this oath-swearing very seriously and would not hesitate to apply the necessary sanctions, should anyone flout it, or any of the regulations that govern this University. Having given you the basis for the matriculation ceremony and the basic rules of conduct expected of you, I want all our freshmen and women to note that KNUST is indeed proud of you.

CONGRATULATIONS!

KNUST Off-Campus Students' Accommodation Support System (KOSASS)

Ladies and gentlemen, student accommodation on campus has been a long-standing challenge for all public tertiary institutions, and has led to universities adopting various policies to manage it. The KNUST has, as a result, adopted the "in-out-out-out policy" and by this, only first-year students get the opportunity to stay in our traditional halls of residence on campus.

It is important to note that as a University, we have decoupled admissions into the University from accommodation, and students have the liberty to go on the accommodation portal to book their spaces in the traditional halls as well as other hostels on campus on a first come first served basis.

I must be quick to add here that, unfortunately, not all first years are accommodated in the traditional halls plus other hostels on campus due to the limited spaces, making the exercise very competitive. Consequently, when the accommodation portal is opened, it is the first years who are quick enough to apply that get the opportunity. This means that in your second year, this accommodation policy will apply and you would be required to vacate your halls for other freshmen and women to take your place.

Currently, with over Eighty Thousand (80,000) students and the traditional halls being able to accommodate just about 20%, the University has had to adopt ingenious ways to handle the situation. We have, over the years, endeavoured to ensure that students have decent and secure private accommodation off- campus. To further improve the off-campus accommodation services rendered to our students, the University through its Directorate of Student Affairs (DoSA), has developed an online application system known as the KNUST Off-Campus Students' Accommodation Support System (KOSASS) to aid students in securing accommodation off-campus in the best possible way. The system provides the needed information such as estimated prices for different categories of hostels, directions to KNUST approved hostels and available facilities offered by the hostels, as well as allowing students to interact directly with the owners and managers of the various hostels and 'homestels' on the platform. This has helped, significantly, to reduce the incidents of middlemen who sadly swindle students and parents of their hard-earned monies, in the name of getting them accommodation. You are all advised to kindly make use of this system to secure hostels when you get to your second year to avoid any unfortunate incidents. If any of you are yet to find accommodation, please make use of this system via: kosass.knust.edu.gh or visit the Directorate of Student Affairs for assistance. We are on standby to provide any support you may require.

Appointment of Senior Tutors for Off-Campus Residents

Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to assure those of you who could not access on-campus accommodation or our traditional halls that even outside the University, we still have your interest at heart. To ensure your security and welfare, the University has zoned the off-campus hostel facilities and appointed Senior Tutors, under the Directorate of Student Affairs, to oversee the well-being of students who reside within their jurisdiction. Please do not hesitate to contact your Senior Tutors who reside within your vicinity when you have any challenges. Be assured that ensuring your safety and well-being is paramount.

The University has further intensified security measures by improving the street-lighting system on and off-campus. In similar vein, Senior Tutors have been appointed for the GUSSS Hostels to ensure the welfare of students who reside there.

Training Sessions on the use of the KNUST Learning Management System (The V-Class)

Ladies and gentlemen, the University, during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, adopted a hybrid mode of teaching and learning. Since this blended approach to studies affords some flexibility to both the lecturer and the student, the University Management thought it wise that the system be maintained. To ensure the effectiveness of this mode, the University has equipped its E- Learning Centre with 23 newly developed E- Learning Studios. For you to be conversant with the use of the KNUST Learning Management System (V-Class), the E-Learning Centre took you through a virtual training on the use of the system from 17th to 19th January, 2023. Kindly take what you learnt seriously, since you would be required to apply the knowledge during your online engagements. If you missed the first training for any reason, please

endeavour to take advantage of similar training sessions which would be organised by the University through the E- Learning Centre throughout the semester, in order to be well-versed in your engagements online. Please do not forget to print out your certificates to enhance your CVs when you complete the training sessions.

The SONSOL Project

Ladies and gentlemen, with the introduction of online lectures, Management is not oblivious to the fact that there are some brilliant but needy students among you who cannot afford the electronic gadgets needed for your studies. The University, therefore, strives to support these students through a project dubbed: 'Support One Needy Student with One Laptop' (The 'SONSOL' Project), where our stakeholders and benevolent organisations and philanthropists donate laptop computers to support these students in their training. Since its inception, the Project has received a total of One Thousand Three Hundred and Ninety-Seven (1,397) laptops estimated to cost Seven Million Ghana Cedis (GH¢7,000,000). We are indeed very grateful to all our cherished partners and donors for their kindness. At this juncture, as we appreciate our generous partners on whose kind shoulders we have stood, I wish to, at the same time, appeal to parents, organisations and philanthropists, Alumni and all other stakeholders and partners to continue to support this noble cause with their widow's mite.

No number is deemed too small. Indeed, your kind donation of at least one laptop will bring relief and put huge smiles on the faces of these brilliant but needy students to undergo their studies and personal development, and not be left behind by virtue of the families and backgrounds from which they come. The interesting thing about this Project is that, you will have the opportunity to give the laptops out to these students yourselves at the Great Hall of the University and to share in their mentorship and development as part of a well-structured mentorship programme if you so desire.

Directorate of Students Affairs

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, places a high premium on the welfare of students. To achieve this mandate, the status of the Office primarily responsible for students' welfare has been elevated to a Directorate to give it a lot more leverage in carrying out its role. The Directorate of Students Affairs (DoSA) is headed by the Director of Students Affairs who acts in loco parentis or as your parent while you are students of this University. The critical assistance offered by the Directorate includes Students' Financial Services, which assists needy students in various ways, and the Counselling Centre that provides students with academic, career, emotional and psychosocial support. To bring counselling services closer to our students, each College has its own dedicated Counsellor. I entreat all of you to make maximum use of the services these vital units of the University provide, and all other support systems readily available to you, to enrich your KNUST experience. Under no circumstances should any of you suffer in silence. We are here to support you on this journey.

ADMISSION STATISTICS

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, let me now briefly give the admission statistics for the 2022/2023 Academic Year.

In total, there were Seventy-Two Thousand, Seven Hundred and Sixty-Eight (72,768) applicants for admission. We have so far registered Twenty-One Thousand, One Hundred and Twenty-Six (21,126) Undergraduate and Postgraduate students made up of Twelve Thousand, Three Hundred and Fifty (12,350) males representing 58.46% and Eight Thousand, Seven Hundred and Seventy-Six (8,776) females representing 41.54%.

It is important to note that, the all-inclusive model of higher education run by this University, whereby no one is left behind, continues to gather steam. In this regard, KNUST continues to succeed both in academic rigour where students are driven by curiosity to discover what they may not know, regardless of any challenges they may have; and secondly; increased diversity of the student body. Through our less-endowed policy, KNUST continues to increase the number of students from socioeconomically disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds, including a significant number of first-generation University applicants.

Additionally, we provide ample support to our physically challenged students through assistive technologies and provide the needed infrastructure to enable them thrive, including dedicated specialised accommodation and lecture spaces, as well as dedicated vans with fitted equipment for ease of usage that take these students to and from lectures to mention a few. As a University, we continue to improve on these facilities in partnership with our stakeholders.

Talk to us, and we will be happy to assist you. The assurance to all students irrespective of whatever challenge you may have is that, you are in the right University. Do not be afraid or hesitant to share your challenges with us. KNUST will support you to succeed.

Our STEM for girls' initiative remains in full force. We are on course and committed to improving upon it, as we shore up the interest of more girls to study STEM programmes at KNUST.

ADVICE TO STUDENTS

My dear students, the Matriculation Oath enjoins you to observe and obey the rules and regulations that govern our great University. These said rules and regulations are enshrined in the KNUST Students' Guide. Copies of the Guide will be made available to each Freshman and woman subsequently. I want to draw your attention to the fact that the Guide stipulates the general code of conduct for you as students of this University. It is in your best interest to be abreast with these rules and regulations, and as the saying goes, **“ignorance of the law excuses not”**.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Matriculation Oath further entreats you to promote the good name of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. You are advised to avoid any action or inaction, that would put the hard-earned reputation of the University into any form of disrepute. As I have already mentioned, the University would not hesitate to apply the necessary sanctions, should one's actions or inactions be deemed to have brought the name of the University into disrepute.

My dear students, as you may have noticed, being in the University comes with its own freedom, but this freedom goes hand in hand, with a lot of responsibilities and a level of decorum. Please do not let this freedom get into your head. Your main objective here, is to study and add value to yourselves as individuals and as resourceful citizens of this country. It is important that you do not lose focus of this. Study diligently to achieve your aims and objectives, and become the best version of yourself.

Avoid any self-sabotaging habits that may hinder that objective, and manage the commodity called time very judiciously. Learn to channel your qualities in the most effective ways and commit to keeping the promises you make to yourself daily.

Trust in God, and believe in yourself, and in what God has purposed for you, to reach your full potential.

Every decision you make is like a brush stroke on your life portrait. Think through all decisions before you act and hold yourself to high standards at all times.

Always remember that we are here for you, we believe in you, you are a masterpiece, one of a kind, capable of so much, so let us achieve this success together as partners.

Do please make time to network and fraternise with others, being guided by the basic principle that your friends can either make or mar you. Therefore, choose your friends wisely.

Gaining admission to study at KNUST is a lifetime opportunity that has been offered to you, seize it and make the most of it. Jim Moore could not have put it in a better way “**there is a big difference between seeing an opportunity and seizing an opportunity**” end of quote. Never lose sight of the fact that you are endowed and equipped to achieve more. So go for it courageously and confidently.

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude by welcoming you once again to the premier Science and Technology University in Ghana. We are the best in the provision of quality education, and we continue to put in maximum effort to provide the requisite facilities and conducive environment to enable you to succeed.

Finally, May the Good Lord preserve you from all evil as you commence this very important journey of your life. May His Goodness and mercies always follow you. May His grace and favour never depart from you and may every step you take be guided by Him all the days of your life.

CONGRATULATIONS once again and a warm welcome to the KNUST family.

God richly bless you all.

Thank you very much.