

Central University
Vice Chancellor's Report for 2021/22 academic year

Rev. Dr. Mensa Otabil, Chancellor of Central University

Madame Florence Hutchful, Chair of Council

Members of Central University Council

Members of ICGC Presbytery and Senior Pastors

Pro VC, Prof John Ofosu Anim, Registrar, Mr. Emil Afenyo, Deans & Directors,
Heads of Departments

Members of Convocation & members of staff

Graduating Class 2021/22; Parents & Guardians
Ladies, Gentlemen and all who are joining us virtually.

Introduction

I extend to you a warm welcome to this 21st Congregation Ceremony of Central University. Once again, we are holding the graduation ceremony here at our Christ Temple Campus which we have now occupied for the last year.

We thank the church management for allowing us the opportunity to conduct this ceremony here and for offering this campus to the University.

May I ask all of you graduands to conduct yourselves well here – no littering, no loitering, do not exit this hall in a disorderly manner during and after proceedings, please wait till after the Chancellor's procession leaves the auditorium. Door Marshalls should please ensure this.

The last five years we have had severe upheavals culminating in COVID-19.

We all thought we would have respite after 2021. Little did we know that Putin's war on Ukraine would be unleashed in 2022. The consequence on the global economy is evident to all.

We have had 5 straight years of turmoil and I am reminded of the old song my parents loved to sing when I was a child:

'Will your anchor hold in the storms of life
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife
When the strong tides lift and the cables strain

Will your anchor drift or firm remain?’

I shall return to this song later. For now, let me turn my attention to why we are here.

Why we are here

Today we celebrate our students from many disciplines who have laboured to fulfil all the requirements for award of various degrees and certifications.

Mr. Chancellor, for this Congregation, we present for your pronouncements:

- 961 students from
- 30 undergraduate programmes and
- 118 students from various graduate programs

Of this number,

- 73 are receiving 1st class degrees and
- 18 are coming in for special awards and commendations.

When the Deans come up to present their students, they will indicate to you the statistics concerning each graduating programme.

Progress & Developments at the University

I am happy to report several developments over the last academic year.

1. We have received accreditation for several new programmes including:
 - Diploma in Law
 - Diploma in Paralegal Studies
 - i. Both programmes are very suitable for people working in the judicial and court system.
 - MA/MPhil in Development Policy
 - MA/MPhil in Educational Leadership & Administration
 - BEd Social Science (Secondary)
 - MBA Project Management (18months)
 - Master of Public Health

May I take this opportunity to inform our graduating class that there is a 15% discount for our Alumni when you return to CU for further studies.

2. We have set up a Counselling and Careers Service to ensure appropriate psychological and guidance support for our students. As this initiative grows, the service will extend to our catchment communities, especially to the Secondary Schools in the Miotso/Dawhenya and the Abossey Okai/Mataheko/Kaneshie areas.

3. Unconfirmed reports suggest that our 2022 licensure candidates for both PA and Nursing did extremely well. I believe many of them are in this graduating cohort.
4. Two past students from SADe, won global top spots in global competition. Nine students from various Departments at CU went on a 2wk Work Ethics tour to Singapore and the UAE. Three students of the Department of Communication & Media Studies secured Investigative Journalism Fellowships with the Media Foundation of West Africa
5. Our Faculty of Law continues to develop in the right direction. A former student: Mr. Owusu Apiaw Kodi is the 2nd best performing student in the Prt 2 Bar final exam and has this year been called to the Bar.

The current president and vice president of the Gh Sch of Law SRC Mr. Atta Agyapong Odupong and Mr. Darlington respectively are both former students. Our former students have picked up best student status in Advocacy & Ethics, Conveyancing and Drafting as well as Civil Procedure.

6. Eight faculty members have completed their PhD studies. We are therefore very much on target to achieve well over 35% terminal degree profile of our teaching faculty.
7. CU is now a fully-fledged Centre for running the UK-based Awards for Training & Higher Education which offer an access route to University through a Certificate and Diploma system. We have programmes in
 - Health & Social Care,
 - Information & Digital Technologies
 - Business and
 - Education & Training.

Graduates from these programmes can join CU from L100 through to the postgraduate depending on the Level at which they exit the ATHE.

8. Phase 1 of the construction of our University Hospital Project is more than 70% done. We thank Rev. Christopher Yaw Annor and the leadership of Holy Ghost Temple of ICGC for the invaluable support which has made this long-standing project possible. When the facility is complete, we shall be poised to launch our MBChB programme, while serving our catchment community.

Staying with the medical theme, the university has consolidated several MoUs with major health facilities including the UGMC for the practical clinical experience rotations of our students in PA, Nursing and Pharmacy.

We have also incepted a collaborative research project with the University of Birmingham on the economics of health delivery.

Under the leadership of the Dean of Sch of Pharmacy, the School has procured 600 student lockers which now line our corridors of the Gadzekpo Building. Financing for this was provided largely by past students who are now working pharmacists

9. After the hiatus brought on by COVID19, we have resumed our public lecture series. These lectures have been well attended. The last was by HL Justice Sophia Akuffo. We have six more lectures planned to be delivered by notables including: Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Adow Obeng, Prof. Philip Bondzi-Simpson. Please watch this space!
10. I am also happy to report that the range of new programmes we launched over the last 2-5yrs are seeing real growth. These a CS, IT, SW, Sociology, Miotso Wknd MBA. I am particularly proud that my own discipline is coming into its own here at CU.
 - We have taken overall best student.
 - We have taken overall best female student.
 - We have produced overall best student in Psychology!!! Joyce Nyarko!!! She has made me so proud I can hardly sleep.

Mr. Chancellor, I am happy to say that you preside over a good University which has great prospects – and we are only 24yrs old! We have our challenges no doubt, but with just a bit more resources, who knows what heights we shall attain. Our vision is to build a University focused on applied science and applied social science, a university with significant advocacy and research voice, a university that makes much of its Christian fundamentals and prepares tomorrow's minds today.

We are committed to build an institution that will make you proud, that will make our alum proud and a place where students are treated well, and an institution which brings glory to God.

Policy Issues

Mr. Chancellor, let me turn my attention to a few national policy matters.

- LEGAL EDUCATION was trending last year but seems to have simmered down. Our view, as articulated last year, is: let us move towards a training/examination/licensure structure that allows aspiring people to acquire the needed theoretical and applied training from specifically accredited Law Faculties.

Those who pass by set criteria can then go on to take the Bar exam organised by the Law School as an examining body. This is the practise with many professions across the world.

The burden then falls on the student to choose the best Law Faculty (for their LLB and pre-BL training – and given the way our Faculty of Law and its students are going, I have no doubt the successive generations of students will choose us); and on the examining body to set a series of rigorous exams.

- REGULATORY BITE I commend the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, for grabbing the errant bull by the horns and bringing some order into the accreditation space with its recent attention to the accreditation challenges of some of the known universities.

This is noteworthy because it simply attests to the fact that the rule of law and of regulation is valuable for order in society and shows that size, might and age irrespective, rules are rules.

In this same vein, I urge the Tertiary Education Commission to look carefully at the matter of regulatory oversight exercised by professional bodies and by the Commission. We have a situation where often there are multiple demands, timelines, costs and requirements placed on HEIs concerning the accreditation or review of some programmes.

- PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AS PARTNERS Appropriately supported, Private Universities can assist to expand the enrolment situation if we implement a Fee Credit/Voucher system that allows qualified students to take their fee voucher to any University of their choice.

Mr. Chancellor, in this regard, let me state emphatically that the solution to Ghana's HE gross enrolment targets, the solution to our access, affordability and inclusiveness challenges do not lie in unbridled expansion of the public HE space.

The State cannot afford that. Such an approach crowds out the private sector initiatives which have been so vital since the 1990s when we faced

a crisis of explosion in number of aspirants to HE with very few public options available.

A viable approach is in partnering and allowing good home-grown private universities, polytechnics and specialist institutions to develop, stabilize and consolidate.

Mr. Chancellor, we seek no handouts, what we ask for is a policy regime that recognises our contribution and works with us to advance the HCD agenda for Ghana.

- ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COP27 has just taken place in Egypt. Climate change and global warming are a real threat to humanity. I must say, however, that no amount of 'Loss & Damage' Funds will address our problems here. For us in this country our problems include:
 - Indiscriminate sand-winning, indiscriminate building constructions in places where such activities should not take place
 - Indiscriminate disposal of Plastic waste and poor approaches to disposal of trash
 - Galamsey and its consequent pollution of water bodies
 - Indiscriminate deforestation.

If we are serious about the environment, then we must be serious about the institutions and efforts which will demonstrate in concrete terms that our rules on the built and unbuilt environment are enforceable.

Message to graduating Class

To this graduating class, I say well done! Please take a moment in the coming days to say a true word of gratitude to all those who helped you to get this far, be they your parents, guardians, friends, relatives, or distant benefactors. Show deep and sincere gratitude.

I would like to encourage some of you to consider academic careers. In recent times we have recruited a few who were former students of ours, have gone on to do the post graduate programmes and now return to us as faculty. That is a most encouraging sign.

Let me bring my delivery to an end by going back to where I began: will your anchor hold?

Difficulties, challenges, ethical dilemmas, serious life, professional and career choices will confront you.

The economy may challenge you, but if you but place your trust and life in God's hands and choose to align your behaviour, choices and values to what is proper and professional and good,

if you allow Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith
if you allow yourself to get rooted and grounded,
if you allow yourself to appreciate that God is indeed able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we may ask or think,
if you will recognise that there is a power that is at work in us, then

as God's power works in you to establish your person; as the Holy Ghost and the Word give you a moral compass and strengthen you in preparation for present and pending challenges, you will truly be able to sing that:

I have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll.
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.

You will then present yourself as a true ambassador of the place (let me borrow from our anthem) where dreams are born where we stand on destiny's hills to welcome a new day.

Create that new day in your workplace. Through your faith be the difference at work.

I'd like to thank those faculty members and administrators who were truly professional and did a dedicated job to get our students to this point. And I also want to thank the Council and its Chair Madame Florence Hutchful for her insightful and gentle but firm steering of the affairs of the University.

Finally, my dear graduands, I sentence you to a life of grounded confidence in God Almighty.

And I know you will make us proud as true ambassadors of the Central experience.

Thank you,
And may the blessing of the Lord be with us all.

Professor Bill Puplampu
Vice Chancellor, Central University November 2022