

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROF. KWAMENA KWANSAH-AIDOO,
RECTOR, GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE 15TH CONGREGATION OF THE GHANA
INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM, ACCRA (21ST AND 22ND APRIL 2022)**

The Director General of the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission

Guest of Honour, Your Excellency Maher Kheir, the Lebanese Ambassador to

Guest Speaker,

Honourable Dr Ibrahim Mohammed Awal, Minister of Tourism, Culture and

Creative Arts,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Vice-Chancellors, Rectors and officials from sister universities,

Rectors of NAFTI and GIL, who are part of the triumvirate that makes up UMAC

Deputy Rector,

Registrar,

Members of Convocation,

Staff of the Institute,

Graduands and their families here present,

Women and men from the media fraternity,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Media fraternity,

Graduands.

As always, it is a distinct pleasure on my part to welcome you on behalf of GIJ, the premier journalism and communication training institution in the West African sub-region, to our campus and to our 15th Congregation ceremony. This Congregation marks a significant milestone in our institutional history because it is bound to be the last one for the Institute, as a single and independent tertiary education institution with its own charter. The UMAC Bill which sought to merge the Ghana Institute of Journalism, the Ghana Institute of Languages and the National Film and Television Institute into one university - the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UMAC) has received presidential assent and is now UMAC Act 1059.

Given the events of the past two years, I would like to start by reminding all of us here that we are blessed to be alive at a time like this. And being alive means for you most of you graduands, you will have stories that you will tell to your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Part of that story will be about how you survived the dreaded COVID-19, including how you navigated the murky waters of the then uncharted waters of online lectures and examinations. It will also include the collective sigh of relief that our nation breathed after Ghana's president lifted most of the restrictions put in place to fight the pandemic, and the joy of graduating after enduring the vicissitudes of the times. You survived not only COVID-19 but also quizzes, examinations, term papers, presentations, and your dissertation/project work. A number of your colleagues with whom you started this journey are not graduating with you at this congregation, so if you are here, give yourself a pat on the shoulder.

The 15th Congregation will witness the graduation of undergraduate and postgraduate students who completed their programmes of study in the Institute during the 2020/2021 academic year. This morning's event is one of two to be organised between today and tomorrow.

A total of **1,457** students will be graduating in the two sessions. At today's ceremony, we will be awarding certificates to a total 858 graduands in the BA Communications program consisting of 417 in the Journalism Option, and 441 in the Public Relations Option. This is made up of the following:

BA Communication Studies (Journalism option)	417
BA Communication Studies (PR option)	441

At tomorrow's (today's session) session, we will award 599 certificates to graduating students. This consists of the following:

Diploma in Communication Studies	368
MA Journalism	6
MA Public Relations	123
MA Media Management	7
MA Development Communication	95

We thank your parents, your guardians, sponsors and lecturers for guiding and supporting you in your quest for knowledge, your pursuit of a fulfilling career and your dreams for a better life.

STATE OF THE INSTITUTE

Admissions

At the end of admission process for the 2021/2022 Academic Year, **1,180** undergraduate students enrolled, with the following breakdown:

Diploma in Communication Studies	-	400
BA Communication Studies Degree (Level 100)	-	402
BA Communication Studies Degree (Top-up)	-	378

The School of Graduate Studies and Research admitted **210** graduate students for its four graduate programmes with the following breakdown:

MA Journalism	-	5
MA Media Management	-	6
MA Public Relations	-	97
MA Development Communication	-	102

Governance

Our Institute has over the years grown in size and complexity. This campus became operational in March 2021 and now houses offices for all principal officers and some core administrative and academic staff. To stay in step with the needs of the Institute, we continue to empower our staff through capacity building programmes in the areas of teaching and learning, research and community outreach.

Scholarships and Academic Recognition

I want to take the opportunity to report on two management initiatives that, though falling outside the reporting period, need mentioning now, first, because

of their significance and second, because they may be reported differently at the next opportunity/congregation, under UMAC. I am extremely proud to mention that in line with our quest to assist students who face financial challenges and to encourage academic excellence management instituted two schemes which have both been implemented to the full. These are: the GIJFund Scholarship and the Rector's List Awards.

GIJFund Scholarship

This was established to support and cover the tuition fees of undergraduate students who show excellent academic inclination and performance but are in the unfortunate situation of having to contend with severe financial challenges. In the 2020/21 Academic Year, the scheme awarded partial and full scholarships to a total of 19 students, to the tune of GHS 19,000. For the 2021/22 Academic Year, we have just awarded full tuition scholarships to 16 students at the total value of GHS44,060. For an institution our size, let me say it myself, that, we are punching above our collective weight, and so let's pat ourselves on the back. Afterall, Chinua Achebe says: The lizard which jumped down from the high Iroko tree said it would praise itself, if no one else did".

Rector's List Awards

The Rector's List Awards is a management initiative that seeks to encourage academic excellence through acknowledging at various levels, students who distinguish themselves during an academic year by obtaining a CGPA of 3.0 and above. Just this week twenty-two (22) students received certificates of merit for

their outstanding performances during the 2020/2021 Academic year. The list was made up of six (6) Diploma students, seven (7) Level 100 students, one (1) Level 200 student and eight (8) Level 300 students. This was the maiden edition of this initiative, and I would like to congratulate the recipients once again; they should be proud of their achievement and be spurred on to obtain the ultimate – A First Class Honours.

COVID-19 and our Learning Management System

As a forward-looking institution, we have continued to upscale the functionality of our digital online platform, the Learning Management System. This was operationalised in the 2020/2021 Academic Year to ensure smooth teaching and learning even in the COVID-era. It is this same robust Learning Management System that we have continued to deploy and improve for virtual learning this Academic Year.

Physical Development

Ladies and gentlemen, in November 2020, this ultra-modern lecture hall and office complex was commissioned, more than two decades after construction commenced. It is refreshing to inform you that, plans are far advanced to develop this campus into a fully-fledged ultramodern university campus. We have commenced processes to partner private investors to construct hostel facilities and a lecture hall complex. Building plans for the lecture hall complex are ready and we are looking for funding in the neighbourhood of 200 million cedis to make it a reality. We also plan to build a Digital Media Hub that will be the technological heartbeat of the Institute and the training grounds for the 21st Century well-rounded digital graduate. Other facilities we plan to construct

include an administrative block; a specific building to house our growing academic faculties, secretariats and staff, a multi-purpose building that will house a Students' Centre, a commercial hub, clinic, alumni offices, religious space among others.

UMAC

Last year, the University of Media, Arts and Communication Bill 2020 was signed into law. This merges the Ghana Institute of Journalism, Ghana Institute of Languages and the National Film and Television Institute into one university. This means that legally, we are now part of the University of Media, Arts and Communication.

As we await the formation of the University Council which will enable the real work of integrating the component institutions to birth our new university, we are hopeful that this merger will provide significant opportunities to build on the synergies offered by the component institutes, while safeguarding the history and identity of each institution.

Collaborations

The Institute embarked on unprecedented collaborations with reputable organisations locally and internationally to share its expertise. Most notable amongst these, was the collaboration with the Ministry of Information and other key stakeholders which culminated in the launch of the Media Capacity Enhancement Programme (MCEP) in October 2021 and the maiden training held for selected media practitioners in Kumasi in January 2022.

The Institute signed MoUs with the underlisted institutions during the period under review:

1. Ministry of Information
2. Ghana Statistical Service
3. United Nations Development Programme
4. Penplusbytes
5. Paradigm Initiative, Nigeria

We look forward to more of such collaborations in the coming years.

Research and Publications

Through the Directorate of Research, Innovation and Development (DRID), a vibrant research culture has been initiated which is driving the research agenda of the Institute. We are determined to create an enabling environment to facilitate our chances of producing research of national relevance and contribute to global knowledge creation.

We have joined the collaborative global research drive through our membership with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU). Not only is this going to augment our local efforts, but it will also provide us with opportunity to access the wide range of research grants for our faculty members to engage in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research.

I take this opportunity to congratulate all our staff who continue to publish their works and contribute to global knowledge. Our research output continues to improve significantly and recognized on the global scene. We are discussing partnerships in our quest to secure funding to meet our research budget.

Graduands

My dear graduands, as you leave to enter the big wide world, I want to leave you with three things: (1) Remember that you are graduating during very unpredictable times, in which there are global crises of all sorts. This requires each one of you to adequately prepare to be: reasonable, flexible and adaptable. As you look for a job or seek greener pastures, endeavour to retool yourself for survival and progression in the world of work. If you ever get opportunities to upgrade, the doors of GIJ remain widely opened. Just as our vision states, we have done our best to mould you into world class professionals who should be at the forefront of the transformation that we seek in our society. Be determined to scale above your limits and move out of your comfort zones.

2. Always endeavour to challenge yourself, to do better than before. You were born wired for the task, armed with an array of abilities of which you will only ever use but a tiny fraction in your lifetime. The Institute has only sharpened some of that. It is up to you now to go boldly into the world and to do what needs doing, to take you to the heights that you were destined to reach. Wherever you find yourself, endeavour to give off your best and resist the temptation to complain about the missteps of your predecessors. Ensure that by dint of hard work, dedication, and conscientiousness', your successors find little with which to fault you. Be the custodians of the future and be sure to earn the praise of those who come after you, when you exit the scene, grateful for what you have bequeathed to them.

3. Finally, as fresh alumni of GIJ and worthy ambassadors of this great institution, you have a charge to uphold the institutional values that we have instilled in you.

The DG of GTEC, Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you all for your attention.