



3rd Matriculation

10th October, 2015

President's Address

Protocol

- Acting Chairman of Board of Trustees
- Members of Board of Trustees, Palm Institute and NAPE Foundation
- The Director, Academic Affairs
- The Director, Finance and Administration
- Faculty and Staff of Palm Institute
- Students of Palm Institute
- Matriculants, Parents, Guardians, Family and Friends
- Distinguished Invited Guests, Siblings and Members of The Okantey Family, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Introduction

I would like to add my voice to the warm and sincere welcome extended to you all by the staff and faculty of Palm Institute; but also say how pleased I am this Saturday afternoon, to be part of this matriculation rite, where Palm welcomes to its fold, new students who have taken a firm decision to join us for the 2015/2016 academic year.

Many of the students here may have arrived on campus four or five weeks ago, have registered for courses, been taken through orientation and started attending lectures. They have indeed found their feet already; but they have not been made bona fide students of this Institution without signing the matriculation register and without swearing the matriculation oath administered by a designated officer of this Institution. Indeed, we have all been waiting for this ceremony which should officially usher them into Palm.

Colleagues, distinguished guests, friends and family, I can see the new faces before me today, twitching with enthusiasm but also anxiety; the broad smiles of smartly dressed young men and women, proudly wearing their matriculation gowns. In the past of few weeks while I walked around and taught, it has not been difficult distinguishing between fresh students and continuing students. Sometimes from the timid looks alone, style of dressing and level of self-confidence exhibited as they walk on campus; from their trembling and uncertain footsteps, one can tell who a freshman was and who was already familiar with the terrain. After several weeks of interaction however, I am confident the new students have somehow blended with the continuing students. Though we are a very small college, some of these differences stand out.

On another note, I cannot imagine the anxiety level of parents and guardians, both present and absent who have released their cherished children into our hands, eager to determine whether the choice of Palm holds the promise of a bright future or whether the journey to Palm will be a misstep.

Thankfully, seated before you is a team of distinguished and dedicated personalities here to welcome you and to assure you that you made the right choice for your ward. The Director of Academic Affairs, the Director of Finance and Administration as well as faculty and staff of the Palm Institute are all here to demonstrate the fact that you made the right choice for your child. With these academics and professionals behind Palm, I can only assure you that your children are in the hands of some of the best and finest you can find in any reputable institution of higher learning in Ghana and around the world.

Fully robed in academic gowns, they are here not just as part of the welcome contingent and the process, but also to assure you that the choice of Palm at this turning point in your lives, is not a leap in the dark, but a strategic choice of a University College.

The Lord has kept us for the past three years and particularly the past year since we started academic teaching and learning. He has kept the Palm University vision in our hearts and minds for 10 years and this is how far He has brought us, and we are extremely grateful.

It all started with a dream as a result of personal struggles and experiences accessing higher education in Ghana and going through the higher education system in Ghana and being exposed to work and higher education in the United States. I remember travelling the length and breadth of this country seeking admission into one of our the then three public universities. After training as a teacher, I remember gaining admission to the University of Ghana and sleeping on the floors of Akufo Hall, Mensah Sabbah Hall and eventually ending up in my officially designated hall of residence, Commonwealth Hall.

There were days I did not have money to buy food nor pay my fees. I remember fighting for chairs for lectures and sometimes standing through lectures at the School of Business at the University of Ghana.

Thankfully, I had a pleasant and a different experience in the United States at Warner Pacific University and Regent University in Portland and Virginia Beach respectively.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the differences between my experiences in Ghana and the United States and the differences between the two worlds (the world I grew up in and the world I was seeing in the United States at the time) birthed the Naa Amerley Palm Education (NAPE) Foundation and Palm University vision.

Ladies and gentlemen, the above experiences made me start asking why? Why it appeared as though the world I grew up in seemed to be backsliding whilst the one I found myself in at the moment appeared very progressive. Three themes emerged as I continued to ask why. The themes were:

- ***Sacrificial Leadership***
- ***A Spirit of Investment and***
- ***Investment in Higher Education***

Sacrificial Leadership because it felt as though Western leaders were able to sacrifice their personal and national resources for the improvement of humanity and society while African leaders over the years appeared to have sought to amass wealth for themselves at the expense of their people and society.

A Spirit of Investment because in almost every sector (human resource, finance, real estate, education etc.), I saw evidence of growth and investment. The people were consciously investing in people and chosen sectors for a better future.

But what caught my attention the most was investment in higher education. Not just higher education but quality higher education where students have ample space to study and be taught, books to read at a library, good internet connectivity and computers for study and research. Where students are taught to think critically and analytically; questioning assumptions, theories, models and making informed choices, decisions and giving relevant feedback when the need arises; the kind of education that prepares the individual for personal and professional success; an education that prepares the educated to identify and solve society's problems.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the above things drove me to establish the NAPE Foundation and Palm Institute because I became convinced that the way forward for Ghana and the rest of Africa was quality higher education. By then there were very few universities in Ghana. Today, there are several emerging universities and to most Ghanaians, we have enough universities.

However, I dare to say we don't have enough universities in Ghana and Africa as a whole. I do not want to bore you with statistics but, the State of Oregon, where Beth and I lived with our children before relocating to Ghana has more universities than Ghana. Oregon is similar in size geographically to Ghana with a population of less than 4 million people. Yet, Oregon has over 100

universities and colleges serving less than 4 million people. As I speak, there are less than 66 colleges and universities serving a population of over 26 million people in Ghana.

This is woefully inadequate and has a direct impact on the development of a people and a nation.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am convinced beyond every shadow of doubt that our state of poverty and slow paced economic, social and political advancement as a people and nation has a direct correlation with how enlightened we are as a people and the kind of education we have received over the years.

NAPE Foundation

The Naa Amerley Palm Education (NAPE) Foundation was founded in March of 2005, named after my late mother, Evelyn Naa Amerley Palm, who passed away a year after I settled in the United States. Beth and I thought it was relevant to name the Foundation and the eventual after her because of her motivational and financial investment in my education. NAPE Foundation is run by a board of trustees and advisers from the business community and academia in Ghana and the United States. NAPE Foundation has been awarding scholarships to Ghanaian students at the high school and university levels since 2009. The Foundation has awarded scholarships to over 100 students at Ashesi University, University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, Central University, Regent University of Science and Technology and a few high schools across the country over the years through the following scholarship funds:

- **The Lee Nusich & Lane Powell Scholarship Fund**
- **The Matthew S. Essieh & Family Scholarship Fund**
- **The Florence M. Hutchful & Family Scholarship Fund**
- **The Nathan Howells Scholarship Fund and**
- **The Susan & Robert Smith Scholarship Fund**

The Foundation is currently focused on supporting only students who enroll at Palm

Palm Institute

Launched in September of 2012, our goal as a higher educational entity has been to educate and launch generations of ethical and excellent leaders in Africa. We have been determined to ensure our graduates successfully function in Ghana and any part of the world. We are committed to teaching our students how to think critically and analytically. Our faculty is keen on teaching our students to read effectively, write properly, speak and present their thoughts logically and confidently on any platform they find themselves. Our programs have in-built compulsory internships designed to facilitate our quest to bridge the gap between theory and practice; a missing ingredient in most of our higher educational institutions in Ghana and Africa as a whole. It is our ultimate goal to raise ethical and values-based leaders in Africa. We do this in a liberal arts environment where students are encouraged to take courses in psychology, sociology, writing, African studies, critical thinking, leadership and ethics as they pursue their chosen major.

After running a few certificate courses, we sought affiliation from the National Board for Professional and Technical Examinations (NABPTEX) and were given the mandate to run three two-year Diploma Programs in:

- **Business Administration,**
- **Computerized Accounting and □ Banking Technology and Accounting.**

Sturdy Growth at Palm

Ladies and Gentlemen, Palm has seen steady and consistent growth over the past year. We started with 11 students in September 2014. In January 2015, 16 more students joined us, and 18 students have joined us this August 2015. Our current total number of students is 43.

Percentage Growth per Program at Palm

- **Business Administration Program - 40%**
- **Computerized Accounting - 67%**
- **Banking Technology and Accounting - 150%**
- **Overall Growth - 70% over a period of one-year**

Gender at Palm Institute

We have a **33% female representation and 67% male representation.**

Faculty

We started with 4 faculty members in September 2012. We currently have 8 faculty members; 4 full-time faculty members and 4 adjunct faculty members. We are looking at hiring more full-time faculty to join our team in the next few weeks.

HND Programs

Over the past year we have been pursuing accreditation for 3 HND (Higher National Diploma) Programs in **Business Administration, Marketing and Banking and Finance** with the National Accreditation Board (NAB). As I speak, the NAB has granted Palm Institute "Institutional Authorization" to run the above three programs pending an upgrade of our facilities, library and hiring of additional faculty.

Degree Programs

As part of the accreditation process, we are almost done with the preparation of program documents for the pursuit of degree programs in the area of Business Information Technology, Computer Science, Accounting, Management Information Systems. Our goal is to pursue accreditation for these programs concurrently with the above HND Programs.

Governance

Leadership in every organization, particularly an institution such as ours, requires strong leadership and proper governance systems. Hence, we are strategically taking steps to recruit new board members to strengthen our current Board of Trustees. The goal is to ensure good governance and to build our networks within the Ghanaian corporate community for the benefit of our students and the work we do at Palm. Fortunately for us, some of the finest and most talented individuals in the higher education industry and corporate Ghana have agreed to serve on our board of trustees. Our current board has been helpful, and we express our appreciation for their contributions and will encourage them to continue with the work they have done.

Clubs at Palm Institute

Ladies and Gentlemen, as part of encouraging students' involvement and the development of social and leadership skills among our students, Palm has taken steps to work with a team of faculty and staff to establish student-led clubs on campus. A few of the clubs are:

- **The Business Club**
- **The Leadership and Ethics Club**
- **The Research and Development Club**
- **The Sustainable Development Club**

I believe this will enhance students' interaction with one another, faculty and the community and encourage the realization of bridging the gap between theory and practice. This process will also attract some of the finest corporate minds and talents in Ghana and around the world to Palm to interact with our students and faculty.

Our New Campus

We were located in a building across from this one just down the road. Considering our steady growth as indicated above, we quickly realized the previous building could not house our students and faculty going forward. Hence, we decided to move to this building which is more spacious and well ventilated. It houses three lecture halls, a computer lab, library and four administrative offices.

University Life and Time Management

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we matriculate you today, your biggest challenge will be managing your time effectively as young adults with a lot of freedom at your disposal. Your parents are not here to tell you what to do and as you may have noticed none of my colleagues or I come to your hostels or walk around campus telling you how to behave or dress. The reason has to do with the fact that you have transitioned from pre-university life to university life. You are mature enough to make your own choices. Therefore, there is no need for us to breathe down your neck telling you what to do and what not to do.

I suggest you spend your time dedicated to books and study materials so you can achieve the very reason for which you enrolled at Palm. You have a responsibility to keep yourself in school by taking your studies and your lecturers seriously.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by thanking all faculty, staff and continuing students who played a role in this year's Admissions Drive. Thank you for your hard work, thoughts and prayers. I am particularly grateful to the members of the team that travelled with me to the Brong Ahafo Region and its sounding areas recruiting students for our August 2015 admissions. Thank you to those who diligently followed up with our students who are with us today. I am grateful. Last, but not the least, thank you to the staff that assisted with planning and hosting our third matriculation. And thank you to all who are here with us today.

On this note, I officially welcome all our new students to one of the emerging, thriving and best liberal arts colleges in Ghana today - Palm Institute. Welcome!

Thank you!

Dr. Peter Carlos Okantey

