



5th Matriculation

15th March, 2017

Founder's Address

Protocol

- **Members of Board of Trustees, Palm Institute and NAPE Foundation**
- **The Director, Academic Affairs**
- **Faculty and Staff of Palm Institute**
- **Students of Palm Institute**
- **Staff of The Okantey Group Inc.**
- **Matriculants, Parents, Guardians, Family and Friends**
- **Distinguished Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Introduction

I would like to join my colleagues in warmly welcoming you all to Palm Institute by expressing how pleased I am this Wednesday morning. It is indeed a great honor to be part of this matriculation rite, where Palm Institute welcomes new students who have taken a firm decision to join us for the 2016/2017 academic year.

Many of the students here arrived on campus several weeks ago and have registered for courses, been taken through orientation and started attending lectures towards their academic excellence. I have no doubt in my mind that they have found their feet already.

However, they cannot be made bona fide students of this noble Institution without signing the matriculation register and swearing the matriculation oath administered by a designated officer of this Institution.

Undeniably, all of us have been waiting for this ceremony which should officially usher them into this great Institution.

Colleagues, distinguished guests, friends and family, I can see the excitement, nervousness, anxiety and at the same time smiles of hope for a new beginning on the faces of these smartly dressed young men and women.

Indeed, it has not been difficult distinguishing between fresh students and continuing students. I have however been impressed so far by the level of confidence exhibited by some of our freshmen over the past couple of weeks.

In a similar vein, I cannot take for granted the anxiety levels of parents and guardians, both present and absent who have released their children, eager to establish over the shortest possible time whether the choice of Palm Institute holds the expected results of success and a promising future or whether the expedition to Palm Institute will be a blunder.

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 child.

With these academics and professionals behind Palm Institute, 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 in Ghana and around the world.

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

The Lord has kept us for the past five years and particularly the past three years since we started academic teaching and learning.

We have been able to successfully graduate our first batch of 19 students who are diligently undertaking their National Service assignments across the country.

The Lord has kept the Palm University vision in our hearts and minds for 12 years and this is how far He has brought us and we are extremely grateful for where He is taking us.

It all started 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.

Ladies and gentlemen, my experiences in United States 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.

As I have always said, 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 are able to sacrifice their personal and national resources for the betterment of humanity and society whilst African leaders over the years appeared to always 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 most was **investments 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 compared to today.

However, ladies and gentlemen, I was convinced beyond every shadow of doubt then and I am still convinced today that our state of poverty and sluggish paced economic, social and political progression as a people and nation has a direct association with the kind of education we have received over the years. The average Ghanaian graduate cannot think critically, write properly, secure and keep a job. This in itself defeats the purpose of higher education. I share these things to challenge myself to do better. I share it to challenge our staff and faculty. I share it to challenge our fresh students and continuing students to strive for excellence. Because it is the very essence for which Palm Institute was born.

NAPE Foundation

Ladies and Gentlemen, 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 161 students since its inception.

Our Scholarships are awarded through the following scholarship funds:

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

Every student enrolled at Palm Institute benefits from the above scholarship funds.

Palm Institute

Since September of 2012, our goal as a higher educational entity has been to train and launch generations of strategic leaders for Ghana, Africa and the world at large.

We have been determined to ensure our graduates successfully function in Ghana and in any part of the world. We have been 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 are designed in a way that incorporates Mandatory Internships and Community Service to facilitate our quest to bridge the gap between theory and practice. We do this in a liberal arts environment where students are encouraged to take courses outside their chosen areas of specialization. Though we are a business college, our students are encouraged to take courses in psychology, sociology, writing, African studies, critical thinking, leadership, ethics etc. to help broaden their horizons.

Palm Institute is to affiliation and accreditation by the National Board for Professional and Technical Examinations (NABPTEX).

Our current programs are:

- Diploma in Business Administration
- Computerized Accounting
- Banking Technology and Accounting
- Agribusiness and Finance
- Procurement and Materials Management

Sturdy Growth at Palm Institute

Ladies and Gentlemen, Palm Institute has seen significant and consistent growth over the past years considering our commitment to quality and high standards.

Students

We began with 11 students in September 2014 and our current total number of students is 64 including the 33 new students are matriculating today.

Faculty

We started with 4 faculty members and 5 administrative officers (most of whom were the teaching staff) in September 2012. We currently have 11 faculty members and 6 staff members

HND Programs

The NAB has granted Palm Institute "Authorization" to run three HND Programs; namely:

- HND in Business Administration
- HND in Marketing and
- HND in Banking and Finance

Pending an upgrade of our facilities, library and hiring of additional faculty.

Degree Programs

In the very near future Palm will be offering degree programs in the following areas of study:

Accounting, Business Administration, Banking and Finance, Computer Science, Civil Engineering, Pharmacy, Human Resource Management, Management Information Systems, Social Work and Community Development, Leadership and Governance, and Social Entrepreneurship.

Our New Campus

We are diligently working on establishing our permanent campus on the Tema-Afloo Road. Plans are far advanced and you would begin to see signs of progress and development soon.

A permanent campus facility will afford us the opportunity to add more programmes to our current programmes, open up international relations opportunities via student and faculty exchanges etc. etc.

New Initiatives

International Internship with U.S Universities and Colleges

During my recent trip to the United States, I had meetings with officers of several universities and colleges who have expressed interest in sending students to Palm Institute for International Internships. In fact, I have received confirmation that one of the universities - Portland State University has approved Palm Institute as one of its vendors for International Internships so if all goes well we would have some interns coming to study and work with us.

We may also have Study Abroad Students joining us from Portland State University and Warner Pacific College, my alma mater.

Plans are underway to have visiting faculty from Portland State University to Palm Institute. We have exciting times ahead of us.

New Business Challenge - GNBCC

Last year six (6) of our students had the opportunity to participate in the New Business Challenge, a program organized by the Ghana Netherlands Business and Culture Council on annual basis. This program is designed to train and equip young Ghanaian graduates and entrepreneurs. Selected students are given the opportunity to visit the Netherland for 10 days on

a fully sponsored trip. Though none of our students were selected, I am grateful to announce that Palm Institute has become a permanent participant in this competition with three other universities in Ghana - Ashesi University, Central University, and University of Professional Studies. In my opinion, this is a major milestone in the history of this great Institution. In essence, we will be part of this competition as long as GNBCC continues to organize. My prayer is that some of our students will be selected this time around.

The Palm Hive

Another great and innovative initiative introduced at Palm recently is what we call the "Palm Hive." This is a new program introduced in Palm Institute designed to equip every student with knowledge, skills and abilities to thrive as an entrepreneur. This program has been structured to focus on the practical aspects of entrepreneurship. Students will be given the required assistance and guidance to succeed as entrepreneurs. Sessions are currently held on Mondays and all students are encouraged to take the seminars seriously to sharpen their entrepreneurial skills.

University Life and Time Management

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to turn my attention to my dear matriculants. 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.

I tell students this every year. Your parents are not here to tell you what to do. As you may have noticed, my colleagues I do not come to your hostels or walk around campus telling you how to behave.

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 therefore suggest you spend your time dedicated to books and study materials so you can achieve the very reason for which you enrolled at Palm Institute. Some started with us but never graduated. You have a responsibility to keep yourself in school by taking your studies and your lecturers seriously.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to all faculty, staff and continuing students who assisted with our February, 2017 Admission Drive. I say thank you for your hard work, thoughts and prayers. Thank you to those who diligently followed up with our students who are here with us today. I am grateful. Last, but not the least, thank you to the staff that assisted with planning and hosting our 5th Matriculation Ceremony. 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 best liberal arts colleges in Ghana today - Palm Institute. Welcome!

Thank you!

Dr. Peter Carlos Okantey