



Graduation Speech by Matt Essieh –Palm Institute

Given on October 8, 2016, Accra, Ghana

Dr. Peter Okantey, Ms. Beth Okantey, Members of the faculty, Distinguished guests.

It is my privilege and honor to be invited to speak at the Maiden Graduation of Palm Institute.

First, I want to thank Dr. Peter Okantey for his vision, determination and persistence to get this Institute to this successful stage. That is the graduation of the pioneers of this excellent Institute. This has been a long journey. Of course, he couldn't have gotten this far without the support, major contributor of talent, skills and a shared passion for educating of our youth, of his lovely wife Beth. Please join me in giving them a warm applause.

I want to thank the faculty and staff of this institute. Together you have created an amazing opportunity for the students to get quality education.

Every graduating student here deserves a big Congratulations!

Our family foundation - The Matthew Essieh and Family Foundation based in the United States has been privileged and honored to be a supporter and a sponsor of scholarships of many students of this Institute. Our mission is: *“Changing lives for the better, one at a time through education”*. When I was young and growing up in Sampa where most of you, the graduating students are from, I didn't have the prospect of realizing my dream of higher education beyond middle school due to lack of financial resources from my family. My life was changed, however, when an individual by the name of Susan Major who was not even a family member, sponsored

my education. So the goal of our foundation is to embody that spirit of Susan Major and hope that the beneficiaries of the foundation will live it and pass it on.

Over 450 years ago, a famous philosopher in England – his name was Sir Francis Bacon -- made a simple observation: “Knowledge is POWER” he said. Those words are so true that they still are quoted today.

And here’s the truth about knowledge:

Education is the single best source for any of us. It’s the power that you have obtained by graduating from this great institution. The power of an ethical and value based liberal arts education!

But as you look ahead at your life ... how will you use your education?

Education does give us power: to improve our own lives ... to better our communities ... and even to change the world for the better.

But notice the order in which I named those things:

Each of us ... ourselves ... as individuals come first.....

We can’t help others around us in any successful way until we’ve first developed our strengths. The more developed we are, the more we can contribute.

Only after we’ve educated ourselves ... only then, do we have the tools to improve our own communities ... and from there, quite possibly, to expand the impact we have, and actually change the world for the better.

Go forward and actively engage in your communities, place of employment and country. Always look to be part of the solution to whatever situation you are in. Be positive. Seek to create opportunities for yourself and for others. With the power of this education, you can be the architect of your destiny despite potential challenges.

Hopefully, our foundation has played a small positive role in changing your lives for the better.

Again, Congratulations. We are proud of you!