

**STATE OF THE GRADUATE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION OF
GHANA, KNUST.**

(STATE OF GRASAG-KNUST)

BY: MR. FELIX OSAFO, PRESIDENT

ON THE 3RD NOVEMBER, 2015

Right honorable speaker, the judicial committee, electoral commission, executive committee of the Graduate students, honorable members of this August house, leadership of the house, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, GOOD AFTERNOON.

I am always filled with joy when I appear before this house not because of my position as the president of all postgraduate students but as a former member of the house. The passion and loyalty that crowded our sense of judgment and arguments in the house was superb and on point. Senators put in their best to ensure the forward movement of the association. I expect the current house to engage in gone similar constructive argument and strive to make GRASAG better.

Mr. Speaker, the association has gone through several changes from the beginning of this semester; administrative, academic transformation. We have also seen changes at the various departments of the association that we all feel proud to be part of.

OFFICE / SECRETARIAT RENOVATION

Mr. Speaker, upon assumption of office, we noticed that the office that house all the executives was not in proper and good condition. We renovated the office with new seats for visitors to feel comfortable and also purchased office chairs for the executives. Office materials were also procured to enhance proper administrative work.

Several fittings have been done within the secretariat. We have fixed the electrical faults, fixed faulty air-conditions, well-labelled offices within the secretariat and others.

REGISTRATION

Registration started from September 7th -13th. The association registered local and International students, IDL and regular students. On the whole about 5000 students were registered and over 20000 exercise books, about 5000 stickers and 3500 copies of the constitution were distributed. Over 4000 bursary forms were also filled. (This figure is the sum total of all distributions across the various campuses). As part of the registration, legible students filled the bursary forms. The registration did not end here but was extended to our members in Accra. We were in Accra on the 10th and 11th of October, 2015 at the Kwabenya and Ashaley Botwe campus. Students were given 4 exercise books each, a sticker, and constitutions for first years. Though we could not reach as many students as we expected because most of them were at lectures during the periods we were around for the two days, the students were still grateful that we came. The filling of bursary forms was closed to students two weeks ago. However, registration is still ongoing where students can receive their souvenirs.

SENATE ELECTIONS AND NATIONAL CONGRESS AT UMAT

Mr. Speaker, the electoral commission of our noble association conducted elections for applicants who wanted to represent their respective departments on this year's senate. The EC opened nomination on the 25th Oct, 2015 and closed it on 2nd Nov, 2015. All the departmental applicants met the electoral requirements of the electoral commission and got elected accordingly. As reported by the EC in the first senate meeting, elected senators were presented for swearing in and

I say with joy that GRASAG Senate is formed and now performing its functions as the constitution demands. The remaining departmental representative elections will be conducted by the EC and elected members will be presented to senate for swearing in.

The association was also represented at the national GRASAG congress where policies of our national association were discussed and elections held to get new batch of national leadership. I must say that KNUST really distinguished itself in all matters and activities on the campus of University of Mines, Tarkwa. I am happy to report that, GRASAG-KNUST presented two candidates for the positions of vice president and treasurer. At the end of the electoral struggle, we were successful in securing these two portfolios on the national front. Messrs. Richard Nana Kofi Anoff and Ebenezer Henaku Jnr were voted as treasurer and vice president respectively.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

The first general assembly meeting for the 2015/2016 academic year was held on the 25th September, 2015 at the college of science auditorium. The meeting started at 10:15am and closed at 2:30pm. The agenda of the meeting includes

1. Activities for the semester
2. Issues of Bench fee/Research support fee
3. 2015/2016 Bursary applications issues
4. 2015/2016 Senate elections
5. A.O.C.B

1. ACTIVITIES FOR THE SEMESTER

The proposed activities for the semester were stated as shown below;

Programme	Proposed date
IDL Registration	3 rd &4 th October, 2015
Departmental visitation	5-6 th October, 2015
Research Training	8 th - 10 th October, 2015
Educational forum	15 th October, 2015
Research Training	22 nd -24 th October, 2015
Departmental visitation	26 th - 30 th October, 2015
IDL visitation	31 st October, 2015
Research Training	5 th November, 2015
Departmental visitation	6 th -20 th October, 2015
Socializing	21 st November, 2015

A decision was reached by the house that tickets for the socializing be made available to students ahead of time.

2. Issues on Bench fee/Research support fee

A discussion on the reduction of bench fee, now research support fee is ongoing. A committee has been set up by the Graduate school, which I am a member, to consider and recommend appropriate fee relevant to one's programme of study. As a result of the committee's work, there had been a reduction in the amount charged for most departments. Though a final decision has not yet been reach, effort would be made to see how best monies would be reimbursed to students if it becomes appropriate.

Concerns raised by members during the general assembly meeting centered on failure to use the bench fee for its intended purpose and this was evident based on the poor facilities at the various departments which do not meet the standard of the Postgraduate student. Other comments were commendations to the executives for the work done.

3. 2015/2016 Bursary applications issues

An explanation on the required information on the bursary form stating failure to provide all relevant information could lead to the rejection of the form.

4. 2015/2016 Senate elections

During the meeting the EC briefed members on senate elections and its formation. The Electoral Commissioner therefore opened nominations for interested members to apply, stating the modalities involved.

2.3 Deduction of an Amount of the Bursary to Assist Research

The house approved of a decision made by national officers of GRASAG to deduct GH¢10 from the amount every bursary beneficiary receives

PUBLICATION AND INFORMATION COMMITTEE.

The committee started its work at the time when apathy of GRASAG members towards the association's activities was high. The major concern of the committee is to devise a means of rigorously and vigorously publicising the programmes and activities of the association.

Fortunately, the steps and measures adopted are yielding positive results. The timely dissemination of information to members has so far been marvellous. This is evident by the high turned up recorded during GRASAG programmes and activities this semester.

To continuously and accurately inform members of the happenings of the association, several strategies have been adopted to ensure timely delivery of information. The GRASAG website which has remained dormant for the past years has been revived. A team of IT Experts led by the PRO whose jurisdiction the management of the site falls was contracted to bring back the site to life. The IT Experts from the UITS were charged with the responsibility of ensuring an active and up to date website that reflects the happenings of the association. To this, a complete redesign and rebranding of the website was carried out.

The new GRASAG website, following the successful redesign and rebranding was launched on 26th October, 2015. As we speak, about 70% of the all information needed on the site has been provided. This however, came with a cost. Processes are currently underway to ensure that payment is made on time to the UITS staff. Again, in order to ensure that, the website never return to the state it was, we are currently in talks with UITS to secure the services of WEB MANAGER. This we believe will ensure continuity and constant update and upgrading of the website to meet international standard.

Members are therefore encouraged to visit grasag.knust.edu.gh for announcements, events, news and any other information they may need. To remain interactive and current, members are encouraged to visit our Facebook page: GRASAG KNUST, twitter: GRASAG_KNUST, and Instagram: GRASAGKNUST. The 2015/2016 executives determine to abolish the annual creation of yahoo and gmails for the running of the association made a case to UITS for official email. Our request was therefore granted through the help of the Director of UITS. All suggestions, enquiries can be sent via grasag@knust.edu.gh

The most authoritative radio show on focus FM, GRASAG hour faced some technical challenges at the beginning of the academic year. However, all technical hiccups have been surmounted. The first show of the semester was aired on 29th October, 2015. Members are therefore entreated to listen to FOCUS FM 94.3 on every Thursday 8pm-10pm. The host of the programme is the GRASAG PRO.

The annual production of the GRASAG newsletter is also on course. Members will therefore be informed on when to submit articles for publication.

GRASAG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' REPORT 2015/2016

GRASAG International Students in collaboration with GRASAG KNUST started the academic year with registration of continuing and new students. During this process, which lasted for one week, there was also the registration for the NHIS. Contacts of students were taken in which some were added in the international students' WhatsApp group page. Some countries organised programmes such as socialisation, freshers' welcome party and football competition.

GRASAG International Students coordinator in the person of Ntali Emmanuel G. is in the process of forming a committee where members from the different countries would be represented for easy dissemination of information, in making GRASAG KNUST better. The committee will be presented to senate approval and ratification upon completion. As it stands now a temporal committee have been working in collaboration with the executives since the start of this academic year.

GRASAG International students have shown appreciation to the leadership of GRASAG KNUST for the opportunity and the recognition given them to fully participate in all the association's activities. The International students' committee serves as a platform where members

could share ideas on international students' issues to improve their stay in Ghana as well as orientate and assist them in times of need.

Countries	Total number of students	Freshers	Graduating in November	Programmes organised
Burkina Faso	08	02	02	
Cameroun	06	01	02	Freshers 'party (at Madot)
Liberia	35	8	0	Back to school and cultural events (At Pool Side)
Sierra Leone	22	3	15	
Gambia	12	0	9	
Senegal	01	01	0	
DR Congo	02	02	0	
Rwanda	02	0	0	
Zimbabwe	01	01	0	
Mali	07	0	0	
Germany	01	0	0	
Nigeria	25	09	05	Fresher's welcome party (Pool Side)
Namibia	01	01	0	

Tanzania	01	01	0	
United States of America	02	02	0	
Ethiopia	12	02	05	
Total	138	33	38	

Overall Total: 138

Total Freshers: 33

Total Graduating: 38

BURSARY UPDATE

Mr. Speaker, the frustrations that shrouded the bursary delayance was doused when upon incessant pressure on the government by previous and current executives, the bursary was finally released to the universities. In the letter from the scholarship secretariat to my outfit, it stated that 310 students were disqualified on the following accounts;

- That some students were found to be non-regular students
- That some students have exceeded their normal duration of study
- That some students failed to provide Index numbers
- That some students did not complete their forms well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put on record that the figure aforementioned is far below the reality on the ground. I can say that about 500 students were disqualified out of the 4935 applicants. The problems that surrounded

the collection of the bursary money by students at their various colleges were also resolved, especially with the IDL applicants.

SCHOOL FEES REDUCTION/BENCH FEES

Mr. Speaker, as a proactive executive body led by my humble self, we noticed the drastic increase in this year's fees for all students. We followed it up at the finance office and the vice chancellor's office to 'fight' for reduction of the 17% fees increment. We succeeded in getting the 17% reduction in the fees schedule of the business school fees but was unsuccessful with the science and arts students.

On the bench fees, this has now been nomenclature as the Research support fees. Mr. Speaker, I must say that lots of discussions have gone into bench fees issues. Most departments were invited to the dean of graduate studies board to justify what they use the bench fees for and how students can have access to their deserved percentage of the bench fee. The board meeting has not come to an end with all the departments so there is no final conclusion on the way forward of the bench fees. I can only report that some departments have started to implement the reduced scheduled as agreed at the board meeting. I hope senate will do a good job to ascertain how far the bench fee issues are going and how to help drum home the demands of students we serve.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

The Association under the auspices of the School of Graduate Studies (KNUST) in collaboration with KNUST Library (E-Resources Section) organized Research Training programme for all postgraduate students.

The programme commenced on Thursday, October 8 in two (2) sessions according to the following categories;

A. 1st Batch

(8th October, 2015)

Faculty of Art

Venue: Main ICT center, KNUST Library
center, KNUST Library

Time: 9am – 12pm

Faculty of Social Science

Venue: Main ICT

Time: 1pm – 4pm

(9th October, 2015)

Faculty of Built Environment

Venue: Main ICT center, KNUST Library
center, KNUST Library

Time: 9.00am – 12.00pm

School of Business

Venue: Main ICT

Time: 1.00pm – 4.00pm

(10th October, 2015)

IDL Kumasi

Venue: IDL ICT Lab and Main ICT center, KNUST Library

Time: 9.00am – 12.00pm

B. 2nd Batch

(22nd October, 2015)

College of Agric and Natural Resources

Venue: Main ICT center, KNUST Library
Science ICT LAB

Time: 9.00am – 12.00pm

College of Science

Venue: College of

Time: 1.00pm – 4.00pm

(23rd October, 2015)

College of Engineering

Venue: Main ICT center, KNUST Library
Science ICT LAB

Time: 9.00am – 12.00pm

College of Health Science

Venue: College of

Time: 1.00pm – 4.00pm

(24th October, 2015)

IDL, ACCRA

ACCRA CITY CAMPUS, KWABENYA

9.00am – 12.00pm

Topics treated during the programme included;

- ✚ Online Resources
- ✚ Mendeley/Zotero
- ✚ Citation
- ✚ Turnitin anti-plagiarism web tool
- ✚ Web 2
- ✚ Online sharing etc.

However, participants turn-out was overwhelming with an average number of about one hundred per each session. Response from participants after each session was a clear measure of programme success as members sought for hand-outs and other programme materials for future referencing.

The last day of the programme occurred on 24th October, 2015 at IDL, Accra when committee members with some GRASAG-KNUST executives organized similar training programme for the benefit of colleague IDL and part time members in Accra.

It can be concluded that, the programme recorded a massive turn-out with a high positive commendations and expression of favourable opinion by participants who were well equipped with new and easiest means of acquiring project information and other related topics of need for attainment of their academic excellence.

WOMEN'S COMMISSION

The Women's Commission of GRASAG KNUST organized its annual Educational Forum on 15th of October, 2015 at the College of Science

Auditorium. The theme for the program was **STAND OUT; MAKE A MARK.**

By the grace of God, we had a great program with massive turn out. Resource persons were influential people who have made / are making an impact in their various fields of work and life.

The Special Guest of honor for the forum was the former 1st lady, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings.

Chairperson was Dr. (Mrs.) Florence Ellis, lecture and wife of the Vice Chancellor.

Other speakers were

Dr. Frank Ankobea (GMA president, Ashanti Chapter; Senior Lecturer at SMS and Gynecologist at KATH)

Barimah Osei Mensah, Entrepreneur and CEO of Adinkra Pastries

Mrs Bernice S. O. Peasah,
Counselor, Dean of Students office.

Some topics discussed included

The Entrepreneur, Breaking the Cycle of Graduate Unemployment.

The Prudent Wife, (Combining Education with Family)

Challenges faced by Women in High Ranking Positions

There was free medical Screening and Presentation by Marie Stopes International and Sentinel Medical Diagnostics Center.

Certificates of participation and Results of the medical Screening are at the GRASAG Secretariat ready for Collection.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Mr. Speaker, honorable members of senate, the much-anticipated gathering of all graduate students is almost loaded. The organizing committee is working tirelessly to put good measures in place for this year's socialization. At the appropriate time, the committee will be avail itself before the house to present budget, venue, and other information about the programme. I must report that 21st November, 2015 has been proposed for our socializing to be held. I will entreat the house to help have a very successful programme.

PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

Mr. Speaker, my administration is looking forward to implementing some projects and continue with its good programmes unabated.

We looking forward to;

- renovating the study room
- mooring for the GRASAG hostel to be started as designs are ready
- expansion of the GRASAG study room

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Research Training	5 th November, 2015
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Socializing	21 st November, 2015

CONCLUSION

Mr. speaker, honourable members of senate, I want to conclude by thanking all of us for our efforts to making GRASAG better. We have no option than to work together as a team and correct ourselves when necessary. Our association can do better if we strive hard to make it better ourselves. We are the change we seek together.

God bless Ghana

God bless KNUST

God bless GRASAG