

**ADDRESS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. ERIC OPOKU MENSAH,
AT THE 2ND SESSION OF THE 3RD CONGREGATION OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION
DATE: 21ST March, 2025**

Prof. George K. T. Oduro, Chair of the National Education Forum representing the Honourable Minister of Education

Prof. Augustine Ocloo, Representative of the Director General of GTEC, representing the Governing Council

The Pro Vice-Chancellor

Rectors of Constituent Institutes of UniMAC

The Acting Registrar

Deans, Directors and Institute Registrars

Heads of Departments

Members of Convocation

Staff of UniMAC

Members of the Media Fraternity

Esteemed Graduands and their beloved family

Distinguished Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning!

It is an immense privilege to see all of you gathered here this morning for the second session of the third Congregation ceremony of our dear university, UniMAC. Your presence today reflects your genuine interest in this young and vibrant University, and we deeply appreciate your support.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Honourable Minister of Education, Honourable Haruna Iddrisu for sending us a representative in the person of Prof. George K. T. Oduro to be with us today. Prof. Oduro is my mentor and a great influence in my leadership career in the University, from the University of Cape Coast to UniMAC. Prof. I am honoured to have you here.

I am also grateful to the Director-General of the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), who is ably represented here by Prof. Augustine Ocloo, to Chair this congregation on behalf of the University's Governing Council, and formally constituted this gathering as an assembly, for the conferment of degrees and other academic honours. His presence underscores the significance of this occasion, and we are grateful for his role in this important academic milestone.

During the first session of the third Congregation, held on December 19, 2024, over one thousand and three hundred (1,300) students were awarded various undergraduate degrees and diplomas.

We have gathered here, once again, to specifically celebrate and graduate our postgraduate students, acknowledging their dedication, perseverance, and remarkable achievements.

Today's occasion marks a profound significance, as demonstrated in the colourful nature of our campus decorations, and our beautiful outfits this morning. As the GenZs will say, 'e be vibe paaa'. You have shown up the UniMAC way, and I want you and your lovely parents, family and friends to take a moment to clap for yourselves for how far you have come (pause for applause).

This event is not just a graduation ceremony but also an occasion that affirms our collective commitment to excellence and progress.

Permit me to share a personal story which I am sure you can very much relate to, having come this far on your academic journey. Many years ago, as a PhD student at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, I found myself at a crossroads, as some of you may have. The demands of rigorous research, the numerous constraints, and the weight of expectations seemed overwhelming. One particular night, I sat in my apartment, staring at my thesis drafts, questioning whether I had the strength to continue. But then, I reminded myself of why I had embarked on that journey: the unwavering belief that education has the power to transform not only individual lives,

but entire societies. That belief kept me going, and today, standing here as the Vice-Chancellor, I see that same resilience in every one of you.

Your journey, like mine, has not been easy – the practical assignments, the deadlines, the “according to” and the “et als” have all come to an end. And yes, you stand victorious; Congratulations!

Graduation Statistics

Ladies and gentlemen, this year, we are proud to confer Master of Philosophies (Mphil) and Master of Arts (MA) degrees upon a remarkable cohort of students from the Institute of Journalism.

The total number of graduating students for this second session of the third congregation is a little over two hundred, representing a significant milestone for us as young university. Out of the total, we are graduating one hundred and sixteen (116) females and eighty-nine (89) males, a testament of we empowering more women to ‘accelerate action’.

Additionally, our admission figures for the 2024/2025 academic year stand at two thousand one hundred and seventy-seven (2,177) students, reflecting the growing trust that prospective students place in UniMAC’s ability to shape their futures.

The male-to-female ratio on our campus now, stands at about 1:3, indicating our resolve to promote gender parity.

UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

UniMAC’s Vision in Alignment with National Development

Ladies and gentlemen, UniMAC is not just an ordinary University, it is a unique one, a catalyst for national and global transformation. As we have ushered in the new government under the leadership of His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, it is imperative that we align our vision with the broader national agenda.

The new government has emphasised job creation, digital transformation, and inclusive education, all of which are at the heart of UniMAC's mission. Our focus on media, arts, and communication uniquely positions us to contribute significantly to these priorities.

By equipping our graduates with the skills necessary for the 21st century economy, we are playing our part in ensuring that the Ghanaian youth have access to sustainable and rewarding opportunities.

Moreover, our alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reinforces our commitment to quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), industry innovation (SDG 9), and reduced inequalities (SDG 10). Through research, policy advocacy, and academic excellence, we remain steadfast in shaping a future where education is the bridge to prosperity.

Major Developments and Achievements in UniMAC

This academic year marks a significant milestone in the history of UniMAC. At the post graduate level, we proudly launched our first doctoral programme - the PhD in Media and Communication. I am pleased to announce that the first cohort of twenty (20) students have been admitted and had undergone orientation into our pioneering PhD programme.

This is made up of fifteen (15) males and five (5) females (the narrative is different here compared to the undergraduate level). It is my hope that we would see more females at the PhD level too. Our first cohort for the PhD programme, are now set to embark on their doctoral journey, contributing to academic excellence and advancing research in the field. We look forward to witnessing their growth and impact in the years ahead.

We have also expanded our academic offerings with the introduction of two master's programmes: the Master's (MA) in Political Communication Management and the Master of Philosophy (Mphil) in Political Communication Management.

At the undergraduate level, we have introduced two new bachelor's programmes - the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Bilingual Business Administration and the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Development Communication - to provide students with broader academic and career opportunities.

Additionally, in response to public and stakeholder demands, we have launched a Diploma in Bilingual Business Administration, further enhancing access to specialised education in this field.

I'm proud to say that our faculty is on fire with ground breaking research the interrogates current issues in the media, arts and communication space. Our research capacity keeps improving impacting academia globally. Thank you to the senior faculty members for heeding to my recommendation to nurture and mentor junior staff in conducting and publishing trailblazing research.

Strengthening Partnerships for Academic and Research Excellence

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, at UniMAC, we remain committed to fostering strong collaborations with both local and international institutions to enhance our academic and research capabilities. These partnerships are essential in providing opportunities for our students and faculty while strengthening the impact of our institution.

UniMAC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the College of Arts at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), establishing a framework for academic collaboration. This partnership aims to enhance faculty exchange programmes and promote joint research activities between the two institutions.

Through this agreement, the College of Arts at UFV will facilitate the engagement of UniMAC faculty and researchers through adjunct faculty appointments, research associate positions, and visiting scholar programmes. The MoU fosters academic growth,

knowledge sharing, and cross-institutional collaboration, strengthening research output and faculty development in both institutions.

One of our valued collaborators, the Lebanese Embassy, continues to support brilliant but financially disadvantaged students by offering scholarships in disciplines such as Public Relations, Languages, Performing Arts, Film and Television, and Translation. Their generosity plays a vital role in shaping the future of many students, and we deeply appreciate their support.

We have also received significant donations from various institutions to enhance teaching and practice, particularly at UniMAC's Institute of Film and Television (UniMAC-IFT). The University of Technology Sydney, Australia, contributed a G3 transmitter/receivers kit valued at USD \$3,300. Nanguang Photo & Video Systems Co. Ltd. (China) donated two LED Studio Lighting units, worth USD \$2,700, to improve TV studio lighting for student productions.

Additionally, Sony Middle East and Africa (MEA) gifted us two high-quality cameras with lens kits, valued at USD \$5,000, to support photography and videography training. We extend our sincere gratitude to these organizations for their generous contributions.

Prof. Chair, our long-standing relationship with HFF Munich, Germany, continues to flourish. Last year, three faculty members from UniMAC-IFT traveled to Germany to engage in discussions on a faculty and student exchange programme between our two institutions. This marked yet another step in deepening our academic collaboration.

Our commitment to international collaborations also led to a landmark tripartite Educational Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Virginia State University (Virginia Tech), and the University of Cape Coast (UCC). This partnership will enhance research and training in communication, agriculture, rural development, and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, we have formalised an

MoU with Africa Views Organization, USA, aimed at advancing media and communication studies at UniMAC.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, our ties with NLA University College, Norway, have also been strengthened significantly. Last year, one of our students won a prestigious scholarship to pursue a Master's in Global Journalism. Additionally, UniMAC-IJ secured funding for four students and three faculty members under the Erasmus+ Credit Mobility Exchange Programme for the 2024-2025 academic year. This initiative will facilitate international exposure and knowledge exchange for our students and staff.

Beyond Europe, we are actively strengthening partnerships within Africa. Through an exchange programme with the Institute of Information and Communication (ISTC) in Burkina Faso, students from UniMAC's Institute of Journalism (UniMAC-IJ) are gaining valuable cross-cultural academic experiences. Additionally, we have finalised a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Confucius Institute in Ghana to integrate the Chinese language into UniMAC's Institute of Languages (UniMAC-IL), broadening linguistic and cultural learning opportunities for our students.

I am happy to announce that just this March 2025, your unique UniMAC has signed an MoU with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). UniMAC is the first University in Ghana to sign an MoU on the ILO Integrated Programme on Recruitment Phase III (Fair III). This MoU is a demonstration of UniMAC's commitment to fair recruitment practices and changing the narrative on the perception of labour migrants. It affords us the great opportunity to incorporate the ILO Global Media Toolkit and Media-Friendly Glossary on Migration, Fair Recruitment, and Forced Labour into relevant UniMAC courses, creating a specialised module on 'Communication on Labour and Migration' for our students.

Engaging Locally: Promoting National Dialogue

While expanding our global reach, we remain deeply committed to addressing local issues through discussions, lectures, and national forums. During the academic year, we

hosted several Public and Guest Lectures. One of such major highlights was our Pre-Election Forum, titled: "The Election Dividend: Threats to Democracy, the Role of Communication, and Reinventing Civic Responsibilities."

This forum brought together experts who underscored the importance of responsible communication in preserving democracy. Key takeaways included the urgent need to combat misinformation, the recognition that "words" can 'make or break democracy'; 'democracies don't sustain themselves, 'active citizenship is the key' and that we must 'dismantle media biases for gender equality in politics.' The contribution of this forum, I can boldly say, is the peace we enjoy today in Ghana that has made it possible for us to assemble here for the 2nd session of the 3rd congregation of UniMAC.

UniMAC's Commitment to Innovation and Excellence

As we celebrate this congregation, we must also reflect on the future of UniMAC. Our commitment to academic excellence is unwavering, and our focus on impactful research is stronger than ever.

Our new PhD in Media and Communication programme, alongside our Master's in Political Communication Management and other recently introduced programmes, will ensure that our graduates are well-equipped to lead and innovate.

Furthermore, we recognise the need for infrastructural expansion, improved student welfare, and enhanced faculty development. These priorities remain at the core of our growth strategy. We are actively working on strategic partnerships with both local and international institutions to drive UniMAC's vision forward.

Our collaborations with global universities, industry stakeholders, and government agencies will ensure that we continue to offer excellence in education.

Prof. Chair, Our Special Guest of Honour representing the Minister, one of our key issues as a university is inadequate facilities especially, hostels for students. This keeps

me awake at night, always. I am however, happy, to announce that the Ministry of Education has promised us seed money for a UniMAC hostel. Prof. Oduro, as you go back to give account of today's colourful graduation, kindly remind the minister of this promise so that it is fulfilled in time, thank you.

A Message to Our Graduands

To our esteemed graduands, today marks the beginning of a new chapter. The world you step into is one filled with opportunities and challenges, but you have been prepared for this moment. Remember that resilience, adaptability, and continuous learning will be your greatest assets.

You are not just graduates of UniMAC; you are ambassadors of excellence, creativity, and innovation.

As you venture into the next phase of your journey, hold on to the values of integrity, perseverance, and leadership. Continue to dream, continue to strive, and most importantly, continue to make an impact.

Conclusion

Prof. Chair, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, as we celebrate this special congregation, let us reaffirm our collective commitment to making UniMAC a great global leader in media, arts, and communication. The journey ahead is promising, and together, we will reach new heights.

Congratulations once again to our graduands. The future is yours; go forth and make history!

Thank you, and God bless us all!