

# Prof. Owusu urges leaders in higher education to be courageous

**P**ROFESSOR Ebenezer Oduro Owusu, the Vice Chancellor, University of Ghana, has urged leaders in higher education to be courageous to accept changes in the way they have traditionally governed the institutions.

He said in the face of recent threats to traditional higher education space by massive open online courses for

example, both public and private institutions of higher learning had to rethink critically their styles and methods of teaching and learning.

This led to massive investments in distance learning and other technologically driven approaches to teaching and learning.

"Now, more than ever, as higher education leaders and

stakeholders, we must exchange notes and collectively and sincerely work towards a common good," Prof. Owusu stated at the opening of the 2017 International Association of Universities (IAU) Conference in Accra.

He said it was obvious that the solutions to problems facing higher education today lay not only with public institutions but private institutions as well.

"As we seek to find creative and ingenious ways of self-sustenance, let us remember that as universities, we play the role of the ombudsman of the world's knowledge economy and we must be careful not to lose the values and freedoms, thereof," he said.

The conference, on the theme: "Leadership for a changing public-private higher education funding landscape," was opened on behalf of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo by Prof. Kwesi Yankah, the Minister of State in charge of Tertiary Education.

"Today, the share of operating costs that are covered through tuition fees has and continues to grow in many parts of the world and Ghana has

been no exception.

"At the start of this academic year, our students sounded alarm bells against proposed increment in Academic Facility User Fees, which, in the purview of the university, is critical for survival," he said.

He recalled similar and more defiant protests in South Africa, last year, when students from universities across the country marched against tuition hikes causing the South African Government to put a freeze on tuition fee increment for a year.

"Evidently, the sound argument we raise in support of charging realistic fees appear not to be achieving the desirable outcomes, which feed into the serious threat to funding in both public and private universities," he stated.

He said the IAU Conference, over the years, had created a unique platform for higher education leaders from all over the world to have congregation, to share experiences, provide wealth of knowledge, and redefine the future of higher education in the world.

Prof. Owusu said the challenges confronting higher

education leadership, particularly in the area of funding, did not have boundaries adding, "it occurs worldwide in both private and public universities."

Prof. Pam Fredman, the President of IAU, expressed gratitude to the University of Ghana for hosting this year's conference.

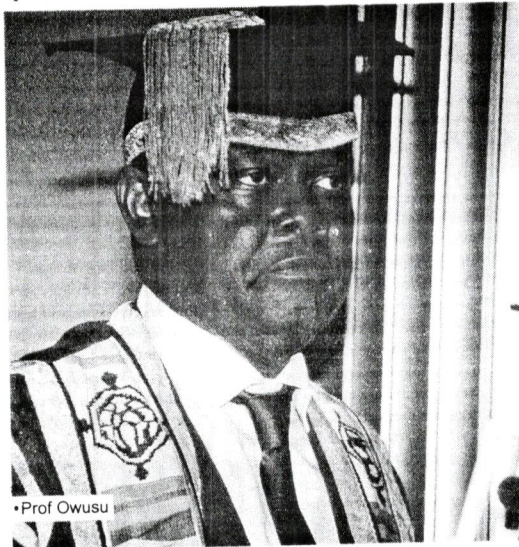
She said the IAU's mission was to build a worldwide higher education community by offering a forum and a variety of services to higher education leaders who shared common values and interests, and who wished to exchange ideas on issues of global concern with their peers.

The three-day conference brought together more than 200 participants from IAU member universities across the globe.

The IAU is a membership-led non-governmental organisation working in the field of higher education, with its official partner being the UNESCO. It comprises more than 650 higher education institutions and organisations in some 130 countries.

Among the dignitaries was Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh, the Minister of Education.

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•Prof Owusu