GC UNIVERSITY, LAHORE

8th

CONVOCATION

THE
VICE CHANCELLOR’S ADDRESS
12 December, 2009
Vice Chancellor's Address
8th Convocation of GC University, Lahore
Held on 12th December 2009

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Another year has passed. A new group of students has graduated after a productive stay in GCU. Very soon they will enter the market and be gainfully employed. They will be followed by a new class of freshmen. The life in GCU goes on while the academic year ends with the Convocation. But each year is different from the last, in content and achievements. This is the real source of the vitality of the life in GCU which fashions achievements of the students and the ambiance of the university. The life in GCU is unique in the sense that it provides a rich and unmatched blend of academic, co-curricular and sport activities. And above all while remaining committed to the grand traditions, we are equally aware of the new challenges of our times.

The world has seen an unprecedented major event with global outreach during the last year. The stock markets have plummeted, the credit markets are frozen, unemployment is rising. Consumer spending is weakening. Big businesses are closing down leading to massive layoffs. The global recession has taken its toll. All these have direct consequences for the young graduates as well as their universities. It calls for a serious review of the existing academic programmes and the research agendas for the future.
Matching up of educational and manpower planning has become a necessity in the contractionary conditions. This approach appears to show a way forward in the existing economic environment. In our view, this would be best means of empowering the youth of today for becoming the productive manpower of tomorrow. But this would entail significant changes in the ways that the population, particularly the younger people, adapt themselves to the new world and its technology.

It would be pertinent to ask: what makes it possible for the advanced countries to reap endless benefits of modern technology? The answer is: it is nothing else but promotion of high quality science which flourishes on the campuses of top universities. Presence of conducive educational environment thus opens doors to material progress and promotion of scientific culture. In this way gradually innovations become a norm, thus opening up a virtuous cycle of overall educational progress and development.

The core point is that our nation has to adopt modern technology and its new culture. By doing so they will enhance the prospects of jobs on the one hand and raise the productivity of the system on the other. And it is a well known fact that good education is the soul of progress in every society. It is also true that high quality education can be imparted only in a progressive institution like GC University, Lahore which has moved with the time. We accept changes because change is the law of life. Stagnation is Death. Change indeed is painful, yet needful. That is the great lesson we learn from history. Guided by this principle, GC University, Lahore has maintained wonderful traditions of academic excellence, research, promotion of new ideas and, above all, respect
for others’ faith and opinions. These traditions have sustained us even in difficult times.

We use formal and informal methods of class teaching, tutorials, seminars, conferences, workshops, debates and literary meetings to educate the students. The purpose is to inculcate the Ravian spirit — which is the hallmark of every student of Government College motto — “Courage to Know” — which, to quote the great philosopher Emmanuel Kant, “is the motto of enlightenment”. The spirit that this motto instills has produced students of such rare vintage as Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Ahmad Shah Bokhari, Dr. Abdus Salam and Dr. Hargobind Khorana — the Noble Laureates, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Ishfaq Ahmad and many more. We remain committed to pass on the legacy of enlightenment to generations of students; and in keeping with its past traditions, the university gives students the tolerance of true knowledge, not the arrogance of dogma. And above all, whatever students are imparted should be through non-judgmental education. This has helped the generations of Raviants to take the high road to progress, which also greatly benefited the society. It is our goal that the young graduates of GCU have the same breadth of vision and are attentive to new ideas and are able to work constructively with them.

Past, Present and Future Vision

As a matter of fact, our institutional reforms process pre-dated higher education reforms in Pakistan. Government College, Lahore was the first public sector educational institution to get autonomous status in 1989, though autonomy remained restricted until the College was
declared degree-awarding institution under an Act of the Punjab Assembly in 1997. This was a major step forward for the oldest public sector college of northern India, established in 1864. The next significant change came in 2002 when the GC, Lahore was upgraded to a university. GC, Lahore was again the first public sector college of General Education to get the university status. And we say with confidence that our performance during the last 8 years has shown consistent improvement; in fact, it has been rated better than many other universities, old and young.

The university status offers us unlimited opportunities of experimentation for qualitative change. We want to get to a height where we can make this institution a world-class university by raising the quality of our graduates. We would like to place our university at the intellectual heart of Pakistan and the world. GC University is a modern, demand-driven, research-based, quality-conscious, futuristic and affordable institution. Guided by this vision, we attempt to ensure three things in our academic programmes: (i) quality assurance of teaching; (ii) high standards of research and (iii) organizational and managerial efficiency. In the future we will position ourselves as a first class research university. We plan to build the research strength necessary to become leaders in selected subject areas, including Mathematics, Physics, Biotechnology, Chemistry, Economics, Computer Science, Electronics, Telecommunication, and Psychology.
Quality Assurance of Academic Services

Like other services, modern higher education too is expected to meet the high quality standards. The main focus of quality assurance programme is continuous professional development of staff, criterion-referenced evaluation and assessment of the academic and administrative departments. In addition to a comprehensive QEC programme with a focus on staff training, 28 teachers of GCU are at present studying for PhD degree abroad and 07 in Pakistan. Two teachers of the Statistics Department have been selected for the Fulbright / HEC / USAID PhD Scholarship Programme for 2009. Hopefully many more will go abroad soon for higher education so as to build a strong human resource base for the future development of GCU. I am pleased to put on record that, courtesy HEC, our University has 41 foreign professors in various departments — the highest number in any Pakistani university. Their presence is a big advantage to us. Over all, there are 413 faculty members, of which 140 hold PhD degrees while the rest are MPhil. GCU also has a large number of staff working under Tenure Track System which assures excellent salary to the productive researchers and committed teachers.
Research Activities

In a short period after gaining university status in 2002, GC University, Lahore has attained a distinguished place among Pakistani universities owing to its strong commitment to academic standards and research work. These research explorations range from Biological and Physical Sciences to Social Sciences, and to languages. In all, GCU students produced 893 theses in various disciplines during 2008-09, while the staff and students published 491 papers in International and National journals, of which ASSMS's share was 332. To name only the leading departments, Abdus Salam School of Mathematical Sciences, Institute of Industrial Biotechnology, Salam Chair in Physics, Centre for Advanced Studies in Physics, Sustainable Development Study Centre, and departments of Botany, Chemistry, Physics, Economics, Persian, Psychology and Urdu have remained actively involved in various research projects.

In 2009, Higher Education Commission of Pakistan ranked all public and private universities on the basis of research publications which appeared in ISI Indexed Journals during 2007-8 and placed GC University Lahore at 6th position. Moreover, as per HEC overall ranking of General Universities in the public sector, GCU, Lahore was 3rd in the Punjab and 6th in Pakistan. For a young and resource-starved university, this performance is fairly satisfactory.
GCU and International/National Academic Linkages

In this age of synergy, globalization and internationalization, GC University, Lahore believes in developing and strengthening academic links with the leading national and international universities and research institutions. At present, GCU has 77 international and 48 national linkages with universities, industries and national organizations of repute. We have received encouraging response for joint research projects, and exchange of students and faculty from various renowned universities of Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Netherlands, Singapore, Turkey, UK, and the USA with whom we are collaborating in areas of mutual interest.

Conferences, Seminars and Invited Lectures

We have vigorously pursued the policy of arranging conferences, seminars and invited lectures for the last few years. In 2008-09, GCU arranged 109 seminars and invited lectures. Our University also held a number of international and national conferences, including the Fourth World Conference on the 21st Century Mathematics 2009 at ASSMS, International Conference on "Culture and Mental Health"; "Language, Culture and Society"; the Second Pakistan Botanic Gardens Conference, National Workshop on Crystallography, and National Symposium on
“Frontiers in Physics”. GCU also organized lectures and seminars on very significant topics such as Pre-budget Seminar, Radiotracer Development for Positron Emission Tomography (PET); Macro Matters: Classical, Neoclassical and Keynesian Perspectives; The Punjab: Past, Present and Future; Fish & Fisheries of Pakistan, etc.

**Academic Results and Awards 2009**

GC University has upheld the tradition of excellence in academic work at all levels. At Intermediate level, this year 07 out of 12 top positions in various groups in the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Lahore were won by the GCU students. GCU student Muhammad Akram Karimi topped the results in all groups and got the highest score of 1,036 out of 1,100. GCU students also grabbed the top position of the Pre-Medical, Pre-Engineering groups and all three positions of the General Science group. This is not an ordinary achievement. This was the 16th Year in a row that GCU was placed on top of all institutions on the basis of Intermediate result.

At graduate and postgraduate levels, the number of degree holders progressively increased every year. It gives me immense pleasure to announce that at this Convocation 1000 graduates of BA/BSc (Hons), MA/MSc, MPhil/MS and PhD have received their degrees.

GCU has produced 58 PhD graduates in a variety of subjects during 2005-2009. At present 355 PhD students are enrolled in the
university, while 332 are busy working for MPhil/MS degree. University status and revamped academic environment has opened up unlimited opportunities of research work for the students and staff.

**Co-curricular Activities**

Life in GCU is coloured by co-curricular activities. At present, there are 44 societies and clubs in our University, which organize extra-mural events in line with the cultural, intellectual, and national dynamics of Pakistan. Keeping the torch of our classical tradition lit, Majlis-e-Iqbal, Majlis-e-Sufi Tabbasum and Punjabi Majlis held regular weekly literary meetings throughout the year and also arranged special invited lectures of foreign and Pakistani scholars and writers. Students remain busy in the GCU Dramatics Club, Debating Society, The Ravi, The Gazette, The Scientific Ravi, and in other bustling co-curricular activities round the year. In 2006 this university opened Minhas Art Gallery named after Prof. Aslam Minhas – a legendary teacher of Fine Arts of GCU and artist of national fame. The Art Gallery offers excellent opportunities to the young Pakistani artists to exhibit their creative works and thus helps in the promotion of creative activities on the university campus. The University thus provides ample opportunities to its students to discover themselves, to realise their potential and prepares them for the challenges of life.
**GCU Dramatics Club**

Functioning since the last decades of the 19th century, GCU Dramatics Club (GCUDC) pioneered theatre activity in pre-partition years and after independence. GCU Dramatics Club, in keeping with its tradition of producing quality theatre and training the younger generation of Ravians in the theatrical arts, organized and participated in several dramatic activities over the course of the session 2008-09. The most important event was the production of Paul Sartre’s adapted play “Men Without Shadows” in Urdu: Bay Saya Log. This performance received accolades of the Theatre lovers. The high point of this production was that the play was adapted in Urdu by the GCU students.

**GCU Debating Society**

The GCU Debating Society is the oldest forum for various genres of public speaking in the Subcontinent. Having introduced the House of Commons Style Debates in 1952 and the GCU Style Parliamentary Debates in 2002, the Debating Society has groomed hundreds of renowned orators over the last 145 years who went on to make their mark as jurists, academicians, civil servants, politicians and scientists.

During the session 2008-09, the GCU Debating Society bagged a total of 146 prizes which include 33 Team Trophies, 03
Runner-up Trophies and a total of 110 Individual Prizes, including 50 ‘Best Speaker Awards’, 27 ‘2\textsuperscript{nd} Positions’, 24 ‘3\textsuperscript{rd} Positions’ and 09 ‘Consolation Prizes’. This was the highest number of prizes ever won by the Debating Society. One of the numerous highlights of the year was GCU’s enviable victory at the Chief Minister of Punjab speech contest. Mr. Ummar Ziauddin was declared the Best English Speaker of Punjab in the University category and was awarded a cash prize of Rs. 300,000/-. Besides this, the Society organized Annual Internal Debates, 28\textsuperscript{th} All Pakistan Allama Muhammad Iqbal Bilingual Declamation Contest 2008, Inter-varsity Parliamentary Debating Championship, 14\textsuperscript{th} Annual All Pakistan GCU Style Parliamentary Debates, N.M. Rashid Monthly Debates and Weekly Training Camps for Debates and Declamations.

Last year Prof. M.A. Khan, a retired teacher of GC University, Lahore instituted Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medal and cash prize of Rs.25,000/= for the most talented English Speaker to be awarded annually at the Allama Iqbal Declamation of the University. This year the medal and the cash prize was won by Saad Suhail of School for International Studies in Science and Arts.
Nazir Ahmed Music Society

Established in 1930, Dr. Nazir Ahmed Music Society (NAMS) has been active in promoting musical activities in GC University. This year, the NAMS won team trophy of the 8th All Pakistan Music Festival 2009 held at Chand Bagh School Mureedkay where Saad Farooq and Waseem Amjad secured first positions in vocal and instrumental categories respectively, which showcased the musical prowess of the GCU students. The NAMS team also participated in All Pakistan Music Conference 2008 held at Open Air Theatre Lahore and won five prizes and team trophy. At present, Pakistani classical and pop music scene is dominated by Ravians. They include, among others, prominent singers like Waris Baig, Shafqat Amanat Ali Khan, Rustam Fateh Ali Khan, Hadiqa Kayani and Ali Zafar.

Athletics and Sports Achievements

Ladies and Gentlemen, people also admire the smooth blending of academic and sports activities in the GC University. This is an old tradition which we have kept alive with great zeal and would like to maintain it in future too by providing all incentives to sportsmen. Our achievements in the world of sports are as impressive as in the realm of academics. GC University took part in 22 games held by the Lahore Board of Intermediate Education during 2008-09 and won 04 Trophies in Squash, Cricket, Tennis, and Gymnastics. We were runners-up in 11 games and got various positions in 05 games. At inter-varsity
level, GC University participated in 18 games and won 02 trophies and got 02 runners-up positions. Details are available in the Compendium.

**Development Projects**

Today GCU faces serious space constraint. The University is housed in a land-locked small campus with its historic Neogothic style building built in 1877. This building is insufficient to cater for the space needs of the new departments. Nonetheless, it needs to be conserved and kept in shape as it is a part of our architectural heritage. This job requires funds, which are just not available.

The other part relates to the building up of infrastructure for the planned academic programmes of the future. For that purpose, we have bought land to set up a second campus of GCU at Kala Shah Kaku with Punjab Government’s special grant. Now is the time to start designing and building the new campus to be ready for meeting the ever increasing space requirements at the earliest. So we turn to the Federal and Provincial Governments to request them to help in building up this historic educational institution for the future by endowments and liberal development grants.
The previous financial year was particularly difficult for the development work on the campus. Not only our request for grant to initiate new development projects was turned down, but the on-going projects also remained unfunded, thus creating many administrative problems. We are hoping that at least the on-going projects shall be funded in the current year.

The foremost current challenge is the restoration and renovation of the historic buildings of the GCU. Allow me to put up a request for special grant for two very important Development Projects of the university:

a) Repair and Upgradation of GCU Main Campus (built in 1877)

b) Rehabilitation and Expansion of Quadrangle (Iqbal Hostel) built in 1891.

This request is very special as it is about two GCU historic buildings which are 132 and 118 years old, respectively. The Main Building and the Iqbal Hostel have provided educational and residential facilities for all these years to innumerable talented students; including our poet philosopher Dr. Muhammad Iqbal and two Nobel laureates: Prof. Abdus Salam and Prof. Hargobind Khorana. We wish to save these heritage buildings which are in a state of disrepair at present. This important work can be carried out only with your kind support.
GCU Endowment Fund

For the last many years, we have done everything to support the financially disadvantaged students by way of fee waivers, transport subsidy and even for payment of hostel dues. In 2008-09, the University allocated 10.00 million for the needy students of GCU. However, the financial need of the disadvantaged students is ever increasing. In fact, we request for your kind support for this noble cause so that bright students of GCU can continue their studies without mental stress. It may be mentioned here that the students of GCU mostly come from lower and middle income groups.

The world over, societies have moved forward by means of developing educational institutions with the support of alumni and the friends of the universities. To mention only a few, in 2008 the Harvard University had an Endowment fund of $34 billion, Oxford £90 million, MIT $10.1 billion and Yale $22.53 billion. In 2003, the GCU established an Endowment Fund Trust for raising Endowment Fund in a planned manner which could sponsor educational and development projects of the University. The contributions of philanthropists to the universities are extremely valuable for the overall development and we urge the Ravian alumni and other philanthropists to make their valuable contributions to the cause of educational progress by building up this historic institution for the future.
The GCU Graduates and their Future

Dear Graduates,

It is our duty to educate ourselves as well as others as to the means of setting up a sane society – a society that does not promote hate and conflict among people. Instead, it helps people to have convictions rather than opinions, faith rather than superstitions, vision rather than narrowness. What would ultimately make it possible is our faith in man's reason and his goodness. So rational thinking, objectivity and logical reasoning be made the means of developing the collective force of like minded people. This is the primary role of higher education in the contemporary world. Without this role, education is likely to give way to irrational fears and phobias which give birth to all kinds of negative forces that abound in today's world.

GCU takes pride in the success of its alumni, its love of intellectual stimulation and debate, and its special respect for the grand Ravian traditions. I congratulate the graduates who have received their degrees today. This is the fruit of their efforts in pursuit of knowledge. Dear graduates, as you progress in practical life, never forget the deep debt you owe to your country and to your Alma Mater and pay it off as much as you can. In fact, by serving them you will be building up your own future.

Distinguished guests I thank you for the patient listening.

Pakistan Paindabad.

Prof. Khalid Aftab