

**The University of the West Indies
Cave Hill Campus**

Remarks

2018 Student Awards Gala

Tuesday, April 03, 2018

PROTOCOL: Good evening and Welcome!

Here we are once more, at our Annual Student Awards Gala. This is one of my favourite events and a very special occasion in our academic calendar. It is a highly anticipated moment in the functioning of our university and in the lives of our students, especially those of you whom we are here to celebrate this evening. This year is special, and it is not only because this year we celebrate seventy years of the University of the West Indies serving Caribbean societies in every facet of social, economic and political life. We are extremely proud of the seven decades of enhancing Caribbean societies by our university. But awardees, this annual Awards Gala is special, because every year, I enjoy seeing your look of pride at your collective achievements, and every year I am exceedingly grateful that so many corporate sponsors, civic organizations and individuals once again has kept faith with the Cave Hill Campus and join us in ensuring you, our students, our future leaders and citizens obtain a University of the West Indies education. We are all here to acknowledge your award winning achievements; to recognise your capture

of the coveted scholarships, awards and prizes being bestowed for your outstanding academic performance.

Many of you who have benefited from corporate or individual sponsorship are coming face to face with your benefactors for the first time. This is an exceptional moment in your personal and professional development. For those of you, who have not yet thought about it, I want you to pause and reflect on how persons, organizations and institutions whom you did not even know, have decided to invest in your professional growth. They have decided to invest in your future, in your earning capacity, really in transforming your lives. What they are really doing is investing in the continuity of Barbadian and Caribbean societies. In this age of entitlement, of taking assistance for granted, I want each of you to commit to writing a letter to your benefactor, whether an individual, corporation or civic organization, I want each recipient to say thank you, in writing. You can email it, you can tweet it, or you can even hand deliver it, but I want that thank you expressed in writing.

Thank your donors for recognizing that you too can become a Chief Executive Officer, a successful entrepreneur or criminal lawyer, Governor General of Barbados, owner of a fleet of fishing boats, an in demand dancer, film producer, a future President of Trinidad and Tobago, a linguist, or owner of an organic farm. This evening we are creating transformational encounters because these generous

donors, and you, their beneficiaries, are embarking on a shared journey with widespread individual and social benefits. This evening marks the beginning of apprenticeship opportunities, job placements, and research undertakings, as you grow in confidence to deliver on the potential these donors see within you, but first, say thank you.

I encourage you to take pride in your award winning achievements and I urge you to excel in your levels of performance by not only meeting classroom expectations, but by constantly thinking how your growing skills and knowledge can improve Caribbean societies. As Principal, I am delighted to see so many of you here, and I am very proud of your various accomplishments. Occasions like this compensate for the challenge of managing the University with limited resources. To those of you in your final semester, I note the theme of this evening's ceremony and I look forward to your continued performance of excellence. If you do excel, you will join a distinguished cohort for whom I now host an annual celebratory ceremony. At that Evening of Scholarly Excellence on October 18th, Deo Volente, I will meet and greet all of you who have gained first class honours or distinctions or high commendation in your Bachelors, Masters and PhD degrees.

I offer my sincere appreciation to our sponsors for your continued generosity in enabling these students to fulfill their dream of securing higher education, a dream which thousands like them have abandoned or deferred during the last few years.

We have witnessed the struggle of those who persevered though many have found it difficult to meet their financial obligations in a challenging economic climate.

And although we at the university have put in place a number of measures to assist them, we recognise that we could not ease their financial burdens without your generous support. Like our students, The University relies heavily on the enduring goodwill, generosity and collaboration of many partners including our scholarship and prize giving donors. Students, I urge you to join me in thanking our sponsors for their continued financial support for higher education in these very difficult economic times.

At this juncture of the University's strategic journey, it is critical that we further deepen our collaborations with our multiple partners to address current social challenges, drive economic growth and revitalise Barbados and Caribbean development. The UWI's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan is built on the triple A goals of access, alignment and agility. The Plan aims to expand access to the university; strengthen greater alignment with corporate, state and civic partners; and improve our agility in responding to student and other stakeholder needs.

Our renewed Memorandum with the Barbados Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) provides for several areas of collaboration between the university and industry partners – regardless of their size. These include research of the business environment; the staging of seminars and workshops; internships;

participation in our annual job fair; and joint hosting of at least one policy forum annually. The Cave Hill Campus **is open to business and for business**. We are in the business of providing first class University education. Let the word go forth throughout the business community. We look forward to expanding the number of Entrepreneurs-in-Residence as a complement to our newly installed Professors of Practice which you shall soon hear more of. In fact I invite more of you to cultivate greater relationships with the Cave Hill Campus. Call our Business Development Officer Ms Sonia Johnson, or Dr Yolande Cooke in the Office of the Principal and explore how you may do so in mutually beneficial ways. The Campus' Report to Council on March 9th, made it quite clear, that in spite of a challenging economic environment, the Cave Hill Campus is on the move. I invite you to get on board now, because we are getting ready for take off. This Campus will be one of the strongest engines of economic activity in Barbados in the next five years.

One of the areas in which we look forward to working more closely with the business community is with the UWI Dukes Agri-business Development Project as it moves into its implementation phase. This as you know is a multi-dimensional project that is set to revolutionise the country's and the region's agri-business sector. I anticipate that the roll out of this multi-million dollar project funded by the People's Republic of China under The UWI's Centre for Food Security and Entrepreneurship - led by Professor Leonard O'Garro – will yield for the university

unprecedented recognition in the area agricultural innovation. This is a development which our newly established Cave Hill Office of Research and Innovation (CHORI) will be well equipped to deal with as it relates to intellectual property, patent creation and related initiatives.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are well aware that even as we position the University for its role in meeting the region's educational needs for an increasingly unpredictable future, we have to address curriculum development. Indeed, the university realizes that workplaces are changing rapidly and meeting the requirements of those in the future requires considerable creative strategizing and planning, now.

We have to alter traditional approaches to curriculum development so that we may offer, for example, a joint or dual law and medical sciences degree to meet emerging challenges and issues such as bioterrorism, biomedical compliance, health law and health care policy. At Cave Hill, we have already begun that process with the establishment of a Centre for Bio-Security Studies. This interdisciplinary Centre will integrate the fields of law, medical research, international relations and public health to build regional capacity to deal with threats arising from biosecurity issues.

The 2017 hurricane season of devastation in our region left myriad social, economic and health challenges. It created geographical degradation, including coastal erosion; bacterial threats, and temperature related health concerns. These in turn exacerbated conditions of poverty due to the massive dislocation and loss of resources and livelihoods. These adversities create both geo-political and bio-security concerns. The Centre for Bio-Security Studies will address these matters in specialized, certified training, preparation of policy briefs and specialized consultancies. Our first activity will be a One day Symposium on August 2nd where a panel of international experts will examine how to build resilience to bio-security threats in the Caribbean.

In closing, again I congratulate our student awardees and reiterate our appreciation to our generous sponsors, donors and benefactors. I commend RBC for once again partnering with us to maintain a focus on the value of higher education and to raise funds for scholarships through the annual UWI-RBC Race for Kids held on March 11. The numbers supporting this cause increased significantly this year to approximately 2000 including volunteers and we anticipate an even larger turn out next year as this signature event on our calendar grows stronger. There is room for many types of collaboration linking your companies and institutions with one of the region's most credible, enduring institutions dedicated to strengthening Caribbean societies and economies, **get on board.**

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.