

The Cave Hill Campus: An Inclusive University Space

Matriculation Address 2016

The University of the West Indies

Cave Hill Campus

September 2nd, 2016

Master of Ceremonies, Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, Chair of the Cave Hill Campus Council, Sir Paul Altman, guest speaker, Dr Stephen Boyce, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Mrs June Chandler, Campus Registrar, Mr Kenneth Walters, Campus Bursar, Ms Lisa Alleyne, Acting Campus Coordinator, Professor Sean Carrington, Deans and Deputy Deans of the Faculties, President of the Guild of Students, Mr Olvine Holas and members of the Guild Council, President of the Alumni, Mr Philip Chandler, members of the academic community, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen, but most of all our students, national, regional and international, a blessed good evening to you and welcome to our 2016 matriculation ceremony. Let me also extend to our new students a very warm welcome to the University of the West Indies and the Cave Hill Campus.

The faculty, administration, and entire staff welcome you and we are very pleased you have entrusted your university education to us.

We remain dedicated to ensuring you have a most rewarding and fulfilling educational experience with us. You will find that we intend to promote your intellectual growth, and expect you to engage in critical thinking, and of course you have already demonstrated this

by your wise choice of studying and experiencing a UWI student life at this most beautiful campus by the Caribbean Sea.

The UWI Cave Hill Campus prides itself on being an inclusive Campus and my theme for this address is, *The UWI Cave Hill Campus: An Inclusive University Space*. The diverse composition of our student body underscores our inclusivity. Last year Barbadian students represented 77.7% of our undergraduate students while regional and international students formed 20.2% and 2.1% respectively of the undergraduate students. At the graduate level, Barbadian students were 64.4%; regional students were higher at 32%, while international students represented 3.6%. Not only does the Campus actively promote the cross fertilization of cultures that occur when we have students from Denmark and Dominica, Brazil and Barbados, we proactively encourage and welcome students who are differently abled, and we are very proud that this group of our student population has formed their own club which we know will result in greater sensitization of the needs and requirements for our differently abled students. We exist in a resource challenged environment. However to accommodate students and our general population with mobility challenges we have just approved infrastructural works to expand the access ramp and install an elevator in the 3 W's Pavilion. We welcome all students and we respect your sexual orientation or if you view your gender identity as existing outside of the male / female binary. The University of the West Indies respects differences, and we reinforce to all within our academic community that being different must not be read as an invitation for any form of abuse. It will not be tolerated. Once you meet our matriculation requirements, there is a place for you at the UWI, Cave Hill.

Our dedication to inclusivity extends to ensuring that every person who wants to pursue a UWI education, every person who is qualified to matriculate, that for all those persons, they in fact have the opportunity to do so.

Vice Chancellor Beckles has focused the UWI's 2017-2022 strategic plan on activism, agility and accessibility. In respect of the latter mandate the Cave Hill Campus in meeting the triple objectives of 1.) Marking Barbados' celebration of its fiftieth anniversary of independence, 2.) Supporting the donor week of global giving, but most importantly, 3.) Creating access for deserving students, the Cave Hill Campus has introduced a number of student scholarly support measures. We have launched fifty Independence scholarships and have raised nearly \$100,000 to support these scholarships. Many outstanding citizens have donated to guarantee our deserving, qualified students will obtain a University degree. According to Sandy Baum, the evidence underscores that university "degrees significantly improve earnings and career prospects for the vast majority of students" while non tangible benefits include health, longevity, professional satisfaction and civic engagement (Baum 2016:20).

As of September 1, 2016 our enrolment figures stand at 4,418; 393 graduate students and 4025 undergraduate students. Of those numbers 33% of the undergraduates are male and 67% are female. At the graduate level the percentage of men registered by September 1 to pursue higher degrees stood at 26.5% with women at 73.5%. The overall gender ratio is 67.1% female and 32.9% male. We will not compare ourselves with other campuses and we welcome all students who are registered. However I want to appeal to young men in Barbados and the region to make the time to invest in a University education and reap a lifetime of benefits.

While we are not yet at the optimum registration level, we anticipate an improvement in our enrolment numbers. I would like to focus your attention on the wide disparities among categories of potential students. There is a significant divergence among applicants that is those who want to come to Cave Hill to study, the offers the Campus made, through screening and acceptance of successful applicants, but most significantly, the student acceptances, that is those who have registered to be here.

As of September 1, we had a total of 4,803 new applicants, 896 graduate and 3907 undergraduate applicants. Some of these applications would have been incomplete. However from these applicants we made offers to 2,478 potential students, 469 graduates and 2009 undergraduates. The offers represent 52% of all applicants. Here is where it gets interesting and reveals a significant gap (what I call a financial gap). 1537 persons accepted our offers, 253 graduate and 1284 undergraduate. So to quickly recap, 4803 applied, we screened and offered places to 2478 potential students and 1537 accepted. But it does not end there. Of the 1537 that accepted the offer to study at a Cave Hill, a total of 1071 students, have registered, 135 graduate and 936 undergraduates. The total that has joined the Campus represents 70% of those who accepted the offer. This is a high registration rate and we welcome that. However these new students constitute only 43% of all those potential students who we accepted. Ladies and gentlemen 57% of the qualified and accepted applicants did not make it to Cave Hill. When we telephoned and spoke to some of these potential students they emphasized their straitened financial circumstances.

The Government has provided a Higher Education Financial Grant tied to annual household income. Students in households with income up to \$25,000 per year qualify for full tuition, while those whose household income is between \$25,001 to \$45,000 qualify for

partial tuition. The University of the West Indies welcomes this support and thanks the Barbados Government for making it available. Yet we have 2478 students who have qualified and have been accepted to start studies, 1537 who accepted a place at Cave Hill, but the reality that only 1071 are here. On that basis, I am asking the Government through the Ministry of Education to raise the minimum threshold for annual household income from \$25,000 to \$35,000. The Cave Hill Campus is in a beautiful location and Barbados offers comparative social, political and economic stability. But the cost of living in Barbados is high and many persons with an annual household income of just over \$25,000 will still be struggling to make ends meet. \$30,000 per year translates into a gross, monthly income of \$2500 per month; this is before taxes, national insurance, rent, groceries, and transportation, - the basic survival needs. We believe the major difference between acceptance and registration is the financial gap. This can be closed by raising the minimum income qualifying threshold and we urge the government to do so.

Of course in the past year we have demonstrated the ongoing resiliency of the Campus, and implemented many cost reduction and entrepreneurial measures including reducing our electricity bill substantively.

We are an inclusive campus on the move and in keeping with the Vice Chancellor's thrust to expand the UWI's global footprint, to guarantee accessibility and agility, the Campus is proceeding with its plans to renew the Faculty of Science and Technology as part of our long term thrust to develop a smart campus for students of the 21st century. We will not compromise on this. We have ongoing plans to further expand learning commons in the Sidney Martin Library as the Campus librarian Dr Grete Pasch redesigns plans for our overdue main library. Yet, perhaps what you our new students would find most exciting, is

that in May next year the Cave Hill Campus will host the UWI Games. If you have competitive athletic talent please see Head of the Academy of Sport Mrs Amanda Reifer or any of the head coaches and sign up for one of the ten sporting disciplines. We will host athletes and officials from our three other campuses for ten days and your Campus will showcase the best of UWI at the Games. This is a great year and time to be here, the year Barbados celebrates its fiftieth anniversary as an independent nation. Welcome to the Cave Hill Campus and do make wise use of your time.

Eudine Barriteau, PhD, GCM

Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal

September 1, 2016