

The University of the West Indies

Cave Hill Campus

**The Future of Work and You**

**Matriculation Address**

**August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018**

Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, Chair of the Cave Hill Campus Council, Sir Paul Altman, Pro Vice Chancellor, Board for Undergraduate Studies, Professor Alan Cobley, Deputy Principal of the Cave Hill Campus, Professor Clive Landis, guest speaker, Ms Chavier Cummins, Campus Registrar, Mr Kenneth Walters, Campus Bursar, Ms Lisa Alleyne, Director, School for Graduate Studies and Research, Professor Winston Moore, Deans and Deputy Deans of the Faculties, President of the Guild of Students, Mr Cristian Attong and members of the Guild Council, President of the Barbados Chapter of Alumni, Dr Leroy McClean, members of the academic community, especially our new faculty and staff, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen, but most of all our students, national, regional and international, a blessed good evening to all. Welcome to the University of the West Indies, the Cave Hill Campus, Barbados and welcome to our 2018 matriculation ceremony. We welcome all of you to our beautiful Campus, and thank you for your faith in us by agreeing to pursue your higher education at the Cave Hill Campus of

the University of the West Indies. We also wish our Trinidad and Tobago colleagues among us a Happy Independence Day.

We have among us 4 Scholarship and 11 Exhibition winners, a total of 15, this year. This is significant in that these students have the option of attending a university of their choice across the globe. Yet they have chosen to attend Cave Hill for this important part of their academic journey. This, ladies and gentlemen, is testimony to the value and confidence that they and their parents and guardians place in acquiring a UWI Cave Hill education, Welcome to the Cave Hill family.

As this new academic year gets underway, there is a lot of interest in our new student numbers; of course, for good reason. In June, Prime Minister Mottley, informed the nation that her government will resume paying tuition fees for Barbadian students studying at The University of the West Indies, and the next month Minister of Education Ms Santia Bradshaw elaborated on the Government's policy in a ministerial statement.

On behalf of all the students I say thank you to the Barbados government. Our enrolment to date of new and returning students stands at 4430 students. 4133 undergraduate and 297 graduate students. Last year at this time 4203 students were registered, and both undergraduate and graduate registration is ongoing. We look forward to the final numbers by the second week of September.

Students, You are embarking on this journey at a time when some of you may be wondering whether a university education is the correct path to a brighter future. I can assure you that a UWI education will certainly illuminate that pathway. You will acquire a body of knowledge, a toolkit of skills, an aptitude for higher learning and a strong network of regional connections that will stand you in good stead when you leave here in a few years.

In addition, and more significantly, what distinguishes a University from other tertiary institutions, is its vibrant research culture. You are in an environment where new discoveries, especially about our Caribbean region, are constantly being added to the knowledge landscape. This year there is an upsurge in interest in postgraduate studies. We are pleased to report an increase in the number of applicants - 1131 (to date) as compared to 1094 last year. This is the highest number of applicants since 2015. The Faculty of Humanities and Education followed by the Faculty of Social Sciences recorded the highest number of postgraduate applicants. Registration is ongoing and we have had to extend our registration period to accommodate the change in government policy.

However, I should also add that this difficult economic climate (what we know in some parts of the Caribbean as “guava season”) continues to be a testing one for the campus. We still have a staggering government debt that has accumulated over years and that has affected our capacity to undertake capital renewal, in many areas but especially of the Faculty of Science and Technology. I assure you the

Campus is quietly, yet actively working on the infrastructural renewal of this faculty. A new one is on the way!

It is no secret that our host country, Barbados is about to embark on an IMF adjustment programme. The Campus will continue its ongoing efforts to remain financially viable and programmatically sustainable in this challenging, austere environment. We are working with the Government and look forward to ongoing discussions to manage the debt.

Students, I give you our assurance that you will receive the best educational and co-curricular experience possible. We place student centredness and a strong commitment to the highest standards of quality assurance at the core of all that we do. We are institutionally accredited. (This means that our programs and operations carry the highest stamp of industry approval?). Not only does our Faculty of Medical Sciences hold double, professional accreditation (region and US) but that Faculty and its George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre prove their indispensable worth to health care delivery in Barbados and the wider region every day. They continue to enhance the delivery of health care at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the polyclinics and strengthen government's data collection and analysis in laboratories, besides undertaking path breaking, medical research. Cave Hill academics and administrators, continue to serve as chairs, directors or members on over 27 public and private sector boards and committees. The Campus puts its expertise at the service of national and regional priorities.

Class of 2021, on graduation, you will face a future that no one can predict even though it is only three years away. What will the world of work and Caribbean societies look like when you graduate? How is the Cave Hill Campus seeking to ensure you are ready for the future? We have noted the growing significance of artificial intelligence and the worldwide impact that it continues to generate. In this regard, we continue with our emphasis on building a SMART Campus and expanding our global engagement, within the context of the UWI's Triple 'A' Strategic Plan. We face challenges but we fully embrace the vision and the necessity of adopting the digitization of services and learning possibilities.

Most of you regard Facebook as passe, and you are deeply immersed, (some of us think too deeply), in the use of Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter, but whether you are studying theology or botany, your use of social media and many features we take for granted, is driven by technological developments in a world that is rapidly being reshaped with the application of artificial intelligence.

According to Kai-Fu Lee, President, CEO and Founder of Sinovation Ventures, Artificial Intelligence Institute, the scale and impact of the AI revolution will be larger and faster than the industrial revolution (Lee, 2017).

Mr Lee defines AI as technology that takes in huge amounts of information from a specific domain (say, loan repayment histories) and uses it to make a decision in a specific case (whether to give an individual a loan) in the service of a specified goal (maximizing profits

for the lender). He states to understand the workings of AI, think of it as a spreadsheet on steroids, trained on big data, and that these tools can outperform human beings at a given task (NYT Online, 2017). The digital revolution is changing the future of work and everyday life and the Cave Hill Campus has embraced it in our Smart Campus Initiative. We have teething pains and resource challenges but there is no turning back.

The development of a programme in software engineering is one of the University's early initiatives in preparing you for this exciting new world and the coming revolution in labour markets because of the global impact of artificial intelligence. The first cohort of students in the BSc in Software Engineering Mobile Applications Technology will travel next Tuesday for two years of study at the Global Institute in Software Technology, GIST in Suzhou, China. Students from the Mona Campus will also be there.

We are constantly reviewing our curricula for relevance even as we accept that there are fundamentals of higher education that must always define a university education. Curriculum renewal is one of the areas of our educational mission that receives our fullest attention. Your Campus undertakes rigorous assessments of our students, through quality controlled examinations, of our faculty, through pedagogical renewal and peer reviewed assessments, of our academic programmes through routine, cyclical, externally led, quality assurance reviews, and our facilities and resources through institutional accreditation reviews led by the Barbados Accreditation

Council. Every aspect of the Campus' operations and programmes is subjected to quality control and review, and we assure you that every degree and certificate comes from a university with internationally recognized institutional accreditation. Accreditation means our degrees have educational currency, recognition and transferability. The University of the West Indies has been ranked first in the region by the Times Higher Education Survey and 37<sup>th</sup> of 129 of the best Universities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In June, we launched a suite of relevant and innovative academic offerings which we expect will provide our various strategic partners with the assurance that The UWI is providing a level of tertiary education to advance all dimensions of the human resource needs of Barbados and the region. New programmes are being introduced across many faculties, including new collaborations geared towards strengthening interdisciplinary studies. The Faculty of Medical Sciences is offering an MSc Nursing Education and an MSc Nursing Administration. These are specifically tailored to improve the shortfalls existing in these areas in Barbados, the Caribbean and beyond. Caribbean and world populations are living longer, therefore there is an increasing need for professionals in health care. We expect Barbados to grow as a destination for health tourism. Professional careers in nursing will continue to be in great demand regionally and internationally. These are only part of the academic aspects of our mission to reposition Cave Hill as a Smart Campus for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and to expand our appeal to regional and international students. Besides the ongoing Bsc in Software Engineering In the

Faculty of Science and Technology, we are offering a new MSc in Information Technology (with specialisations in Mobile Applications, Web Development or Enterprise Systems) and a new Postgraduate Diploma in Information Technology.

The Faculty of Science and Technology is also offering a Bsc degree in Environmental Science. This provides opportunities for students to develop knowledge and skills that are in accordance with regional needs related to ocean health, climate change, natural hazards, and sustainable development.

The Faculty of Humanities and Education is offering a Minor in Creative Writing. This aims to support not only the growing national investment in the creative industries, but a regional network of literary festivals and literary prizes.

The FHE is also offering a Minor in Chinese (Mandarin). This is the first programme-level collaboration between the Confucius Institute and an academic Department at Cave Hill. Students enrolled in this programme will develop the rudiments of functional Mandarin as well as learning about traditional and contemporary Chinese culture, history, society and economy. This Minor, positions participants to pursue the internationally recognized HSK proficiency certificate in Chinese language, already offered by the Confucius Institute, and further qualifies them for postgraduate, undergraduate and short term scholarship opportunities to experience language immersion and further training in Chinese language and literature, or Chinese history, philosophy and traditional medicine. Students successfully

completing the Minor will have their credits counted towards the BA in Chinese and Asian Studies which is in development.

The School of Education is offering the new Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Care and Education. This programme prepares participants\students for a variety of careers working with and advocating for children during the first (8) eight years of life.

The Campus is actively pursuing the introduction of a new faculty – **The Faculty of Caribbean Culture and Creative Arts**. One of the region's exceptional contributions to creativity and knowledge is our distinctive Caribbean culture. A faculty structure recognises the region's maturity, intellectual marketability and scholarly weight in cultural studies. A Faculty enables Barbadian, Caribbean and international students to study and gain valuable skills and hone their talents in the visual and performance arts and the cultural industries. Just today the BBC reported a study that stated international students add £20bn to the UK Economy. A Faculty of Caribbean Culture opens up the campus to an international market for Caribbean cultural studies.

We have established a Centre for Professional Development and Lifelong Learning to cater to the changing dynamics and the ongoing transformation of labour markets. This centre offers short new courses and workshops, as well as certificate programmes and postgraduate modules from all of our faculties.

Last October the Campus co-hosted with York University, the first Caribbean Conductors Symposium dedicated to improving the

quality of teaching, conducting and performance of wind bands. Working under the leadership of Professor Bill Thomas, Chair of the Department of Music at York University and with the Royal Barbados Police Force Band as the demonstration Band, the symposium provided training in ensemble conducting, rehearsal techniques, and repertoire selections to music teachers and other interested musicians. We are currently positively evaluating a proposal by the National Cultural Foundation to provide a home at the Cave Hill Campus for the Barbados National Youth Orchestra. Do not be surprised to hear about a developing BFA programme in music at the EBCCI next year, stay tuned.

My dear students, these are all examples of your Campus ensuring that on your behalf, we expand access, operationalize the smart campus initiative, deepen external alignments and enhance our agility to catering to you and our various publics. The Cave Hill Campus is ensuring that we prepare you for the 21<sup>st</sup> century labour markets and for life. Welcome to Cave Hill, Thank you.

Professor V. Eudine Barriteau

August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018