A good morning to all of you, and welcome to The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus. You have to allow me to offer a special welcome back home to Minister Sutherland; Alumni, UWI Cricketer, a member of the first cohort of graduate students in the Masters in Project Management, Lecturer for 4 years in International Business and International Business Management. I am pleased that you could join us here this morning, for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Centre for Professional Development and Lifelong Learning, and LUMIN Consulting (formerly known as UWI Consulting). Today, signals yet another important step in the cementing of this University’s role, in building the capacity of entrepreneurs and innovators in the region. In fact, I dare, say that these two bodies are proof positive of the ingenuity and forward-thinking of my colleagues, guided by our Vice Chancellor, Sir Hilary Beckles.
Indeed, The UWI can be seen as a laboratory of good practice in the investment in innovation; and our 2018 Research Week just held in November, was a wonderful testament to this. Entrepreneurs and chemists, Kemar Codrington and Mikhail Eversley, both alumni of this campus, were two of the innovators featured at the expo. The duo behind Oasis Laboratories, manufacture biodegradable products by using locally grown organic and indigenous plants and other local resources – sargassum seaweed, chief among them.

Since graduating from The UWI Cave Hill, these young, enterprising men, (and I am so proud of them) have combined innovation and entrepreneurship by incorporating breadfruit, tamarind, lemongrass and other regionally-based plants, in their research, doing this to create and market new product lines. Their current offerings boast a variety of bath and body soaps and body butters, with plans to expand into lotions, balms, scrubs, shower gels, toothpaste, shampoos and conditioners, massage oils and moisturizers because they are our Alumni, I am here to tell them that I am available for product reviews at no charge.

Our Staff adaptation of energy conservation best practices and student innovation, these two areas are also assisting the University in decreasing its carbon footprint. For instance, PhD student Nikolai Holder, has been using grass clippings, from around the campus to generate biofuel which is then used to power six research labs, the biology prep room and a teaching lab in the Faculty of Science and Technology. Most excitingly, he is actively considering expanding this use of energy to other laboratories, canteens and kiosks across the campus. Such innovation compliments the Government’s wider efforts at greening our society and economy and of course, it provides some financial reprieve from our high electricity costs.
Our Smart Campus app has already revolutionized the way we communicate with staff and students. By the end of the student registration period last semester, 40 per cent of those enrolled were actively using the app. This is an overwhelmingly greater response than we anticipated, and we are grateful for the hardworking and dedicated efforts of our Smart Campus coordinator, Mr. David Marshall and his team.

Inside the classroom, we are also equipping our students to be on the cusp of nascent technologies, guiding the way we live, work and do business. Plans are well ahead for the roll-out of two new courses in blockchain technology. These will be offered as elective courses in the M.Sc. in Information Technology. These courses, **Introduction to Blockchain I** and **Blockchain Applied** will not only take students through the history and basics of blockchain, but will also focus on its applicability, and the steps towards building their own applications. The courses are pending approval from the Board of Graduate Studies, and are on stream to be delivered in the second semester of the coming Academic Year 2019-2020.

So as you can see, this University is at the vanguard of innovation in the region. We are therefore pleased to provide another avenue to assist in unlocking the potential of Caribbean entrepreneurs. We are doing this by providing opportunities to enhance their skills or learn new ones. I am also happy to hear that the courses identified for delivery in the near term, focus on areas such as the internationally-acclaimed Lean Start-Up methodology, investor readiness and of course, finance for entrepreneurs. Together, these account for the most immediate needs of a new business owner, who is ready to take her or his product or service to market.

While much uncertainty looms in this economic climate, there is still great opportunity for growth, which we need to nurture. Along with this initiative, the Student Entrepreneurial Empowerment Development (SEED), in the Department of
Management Studies, is also in the process of establishing a Small Business Development Centre (SBDC) on the campus. This will serve to streamline technical and managerial assistance to small businesses, especially those borne out of retrenchment.

SEED responded to the national layoffs with an Entrepreneurs’ Clinic held during the Campus Research Week and Open Day. The clinic was well subscribed, and some of the persons counselled, have joined the SEED programme this year. SEED plans to stage additional clinics across the island.

The Business Plan Competition of The UWI SEED CIBC FirstCaribbean International Bank, provides graduates of the programme with an opportunity to jump start their businesses, by developing and presenting business plans to a panel of judges comprising entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, local businesspersons and faculty. The competition is sponsored by CIBC FirstCaribbean International Bank and is part of the Bank’s commitment to supporting and developing UWI students around the region. Since its inception, $180,000 has been disbursed among thirty start-ups. The finals and awards ceremony of the 7th edition of the competition will be this June.

In closing, we strongly believe that those who seek to help themselves will always receive assistance in kind. In this regard, the campus is strongly committed to supporting innovation by offering research grants, using mechanisms such as the Postgraduate Research Fund which provides Masters and PhD students with financial assistance for research, and other activities approved by its governing committee.
Of course this pool of funds is never enough and we certainly welcome further public and private sector partnerships, similar to that which we are launching this morning, with partnerships such as these, as we work assiduously towards re-engineering and accelerating growth in the region.

I thank you.

Professor V. Eudine Barritteau, GCM
Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal

February 4, 2019