

**Remarks - Graduation Ceremony  
The Confucius Institute  
Friday, November 11, 2016 at 6:00 pm  
The Moot Court  
The University of the West Indies  
Cave Hill Campus**

Chair, Co Directors of the Confucius Institute, Mr Francois Jackman and Dr Paul Song, Her Excellency Ambassador Wang Ke, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China and diplomatic officials of the Embassy of China, Mrs. Trecia King, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Mr. Bu Yu, representative of the People's Bank of China, Mr. Zhou Jun Kun, President of the Chinese Association of Barbados and members of the Executive of the Association, Dr. Ian Craig, Head, Department of Language, Linguistics and Literature, Dr. Corlita Babb-Schaefer, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Law, Lt. Col. Errol Brathwaite, Principal, Ellerslie Secondary School, Mr. Terrence Inniss, Chairman of the Board, Ellerslie Secondary School, students and teachers, members of the media, good evening and welcome. I am delighted to be here. I am very proud of the dynamic work of our Confucius Institute and I readily accepted their invitation to bring you remarks.

I was very tempted to begin my remarks this evening with a well-known Chinese proverb. On reflection, I realized that would be a bit like carrying coals to Newcastle, and as students if you don't know what that expression means, as a

Professor, someone deeply interested in imparting knowledge, I say look it up. So, I thought a Chinese proverb to an audience already far more steeped in the language and culture of Mandarin than I possess might inadvertently suggest a deeper acquaintance with the subject than I might wish to convey.

Instead, given that we are in the month in which Barbados is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence, and at the Cave Hill campus we are approaching the end of an extensive and exciting programme of activities which has complemented the Government of Barbados's own year-long, distinguished, national programme to mark the Golden Jubilee, I thought it might be more fitting to offer some good and solid Bajan sayings. In addition I want our Chinese lecturers to understand as much about our Caribbean culture as we are learning about that great civilization that is the People's Republic of China.

Looking at all of you this evening reminds me of that well-known Barbadian saying - or as we say Bajanism - that "**education is serious business**". As Principal of the Cave Hill Campus that statement has two meanings for me. The first is that at the Cave Hill Campus we take planning for the education of our students very seriously, very methodically. We are about to go into retreat in preparation for the University wide five year strategic plan, 2017-2022. This means that when some of you come to us as students in a few year's time, we will have even more exciting degree programmes awaiting you.

The second point of course is that the statement **education is serious business** reflects the pride Barbadians place on scholastic achievement. This quest for

educational excellence often summoned extra lessons for students whose families could afford them. It also meant that primary and secondary school students were often banned from watching television on weeknights – except Fridays; and that your term report card would be subjected to scrutiny and discussed with the entire family and even with strangers.

Parents and guardians ensured that their young charges maximized educational opportunities that they themselves did not have. Though what they lacked in formal education was often compensated by their conventional wisdom.

So they knew, for instance, that: **If rain water 'en full yuh barrel, dew water cyan' full it** - which meant that if you did not successfully convert the many opportunities offered early in your life, it was unlikely that you would find success later when fewer opportunities presented themselves.

Or that **one hand cyan' clap** – which speaks to the merits of co-operation and team-spirit.

Or that **two poor cow does mek good dung** – which reminds all that a couple could overcome their deprived circumstances by pooling their resources, or more generally the benefits gained from team work.

Over the past decades the vigorous pursuit and attainment of higher education by Caribbean citizens has brought significant regional development. Rigorous scholarly interrogation of our environment has enabled the Caribbean to build on conventional wisdom and to give full expression to an enviable record of

scholastic achievement and academic excellence. Today, The University of the West Indies stands at the apex of scholarly accomplishment in this region with a burgeoning international reputation. Here at the Cave Hill campus, we are proud of our contribution to The UWI's recognition and acclaim as we continue to provide a learning environment that is advanced and diverse, both regionally and internationally, than at any period in our history. This situation enables students to assimilate an intellectual and cultural richness hitherto unavailable to them.

In spite of a recent decline in enrolment, primarily owing to the imposition of fees on Barbadian students, Cave Hill's student population remains the most diverse among The UWI campuses with students drawn from 29 countries across the region and the globe. Falling numbers have caused no concomitant reduction in the campus' vibrancy as Cave Hill remains teeming with dynamism, vitality and a sense of community. We recently held a candle light vigil for Haiti and Barbadian, Caribbean and European students were dancing to the rhythms of the Pompaseters Tuk Band and Mr Blood the Calypsonian. Engagement with Cave Hill encompasses not only international and regional leaders but every spectrum of the regional and national public, both face-to-face and through the Internet. **The University is highly regarded at home and abroad; and we are not resting on our laurels. Instead we are continuously seeking to be more responsive to governments, the private sector and civic society to ensure that we continue to satisfy the human resource needs of the region as well as maintain the high regard in which the University is held .**

In the Faculty of Law itself, where a significant decline in student diversity had been feared following the advent of new UWI law faculties, the nearly 150 law students enrolled at Cave Hill represent 21 different nationalities. This fosters widespread cultural interaction and vibrancy within a single faculty itself and the story is much the same across other faculties. Regionalism is thriving at the Cave Hill campus.

The advent of the Confucius Centre in April 2015 and its rapid influence within the university and wider Barbadian community has significantly strengthened our international profile and global agenda. It offers an international dimension to our academic and co-curricular programming that is already proving transformational to our region. Deeper engagement with Chinese language and culture is bringing greater academic, socio-economic and cultural benefits to this nation and region, especially in light of China's growing geo-political influence.

The Confucius Centre will soon be moving into its own home at Cave Hill. I am informed that the new space will be available for occupation by the end of this year. With the imminent completion of the building in which the Centre will be housed, I look forward to the further integration of Chinese culture within our academic space and the wider society. You will be pleased to know that the Centre will be outfitted with a language lab and other training facilities, administrative offices and other features to further the very relevant work it is already doing.

Since the start of the Centre's academic programmes in 2015, nearly 2000 students have benefitted from the its teachings at three levels on Through the diligence and dedication of our four (4) volunteer teachers and one (1) senior teacher, we are conducting a year-long pilot project at St Stephen's Primary School and Ellerslie Secondary School. We also offer after-school Chinese classes at Providence Secondary School and Sunday morning school for children of the Chinese community

The Cave Hill campus which is the sole accredited institution to offer internationally-recognized certification in Chinese language within Barbados and the OECS, will embark on its inaugural HSK and YCT tests this month to 60 students from the university, the Chinese community in Barbados and beyond. We are also collaborating with CXC to develop Chinese language curricula and textbooks for Caribbean schools.

And that is not all, ladies and gentlemen. Our BSc Software Engineering being offered at Cave Hill and Mona campuses has taken off and promises to revolutionise the region's involvement in software technology, mobile application and related enterprise in the Caribbean. You may recall that this programme was established earlier this year by the UWI China Institute of Information Technology UWICIIT, a collaboration between The UWI and China's Global Institute of Software Technology (GIST).

The BSc in Software Engineering was launched in September and students in the programme will take courses for the first two years in the Caribbean and the next

two years at GIST in Suzhou China with a 6-month internship in China at a Fortune 500 company. This remarkable initiative illustrates a strong collaboration between educational institutes in China and the Caribbean and was established to meet some of the global demands for software engineers.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am excited about the presence of the Confucius Centre in our space. It helps to demonstrate the excellent China-Caribbean relations in existence and the commitment of the UWI to our internationalization agenda and this globalization process.

So as we celebrate the accomplishments of this evening's awardees, I wish to commend you not only on your aptitude for the language but for your willingness to seize this opportunity to learn about a new culture and a different way of life. Remember, **education is serious business**. I truly believe that the skills learnt will place you in a very competitive position globally. Congratulations, and thank you.

November 11, 2016