

OPENING CEREMONY – GIRLS IN ICT DAY HACKATHON

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2018

SAGICOR CAVE HILL SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

9:00 A.M.

PROTOCOL

Good morning everyone, especially our budding female scientists, programmers and hard nosed teckies! Welcome to the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus. First, let me say how delighted I am to see so many girls and young women here today who are participating in this essential area of Information Technology. I am extremely pleased that some of our own Cave Hill students are here. Your presence is both encouraging and very gratifying. Your attentive faces reveal that you have a keen sense of awareness about the subject in which you will engage and that you are highly anticipating the day's programme.

I am confident that as young people of Generation Z, that is according to the social demographers, you are **born in the period spanning late-1990s to 2012**, that you are already well-immersed in the digital age that underpins contemporary social and economic life. I know far more engaged than I am or perhaps want to be. However, before you dismiss me as a dinosaur, let me announce quite proudly, as

Principal, I have my own IG account, and while it may be true, that my son set it up, I want to boast that I post my own pictures and videos, thank you.

Historically, in educational planning and curriculum development, women in the Caribbean and world-wide were afforded fewer opportunities to participate in the sciences, including technology, engineering and mathematics. For example, in 1946, when Dame Elsie Payne, became the first Barbadian woman to win an island scholarship, she could not pursue University studies in the sciences because in the 1940s, girls in Barbados, were not taught science subjects even in the leading girls' secondary school, Queens College. Women who were very keen on the sciences were discouraged and when they persisted, were kept in the back ground.

I hope all of you have seen the biographical movie, *Hidden Figures*, which tells the incredible, true story, of three brilliant, African American women who worked at NASA, and who served as the mathematical brains behind the launch into orbit of American Astronaut John Glenn. This was an event which turned around the space race to the advantage of the USA. They experienced racism and they were hidden away, hence the title. In 2015, one year before the movie was made, one of the women, mathematician Katherine Johnson, received the US Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Thankfully now, women in the sciences do not have to be hidden away, even though lingering prejudices and practices still lag behind significant curriculum and social changes. Many Caribbean women and girls from earlier generations did not think the sciences were for them, many were discouraged from studying in the sciences, and far too many shied away from pursuing knowledge in this vital area. Women still continue to be underrepresented in careers in the sciences. Yet proficiency in STEM disciplines are required not only for future jobs, but to understand life in our rapidly changing societies. To correct the under representation of women in science related fields and information and communication technologies, we must create enabling conditions with programmes such as **Girls in Information Communication and Technology Day**.

I am extremely pleased with the nurturing of the talent of girls and young women today throughout Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Barbados, in the field of Information and Communication Technology. This second Girls in ICT Day Caribbean Hackathon 2018, contributes to an educational and social revolution that is taking root right within a most fitting intellectual space, and incubator, - The University of the West Indies at Cave Hill.

Of the six faculties at the Cave Hill campus, Science and Technology is our only faculty where men outnumber women, **at both levels, as students and as lecturers**. I am not advocating women outnumbering men either, and as Principal I

welcome more men to enroll and study at our beautiful Campus. However, the disparity in female enrolment and female lecturers in the Faculty of Science and Technology is significant, especially in a context where females comprise two thirds of the campus' overall enrolment. This disparity reinforces a stereotype with regards to the science and technology fields and may serve to limit female recruitment and retention as scientists, engineers, IT specialists and related professions.

As Gen Z, you are the second generation of digital natives, but according to this analysis, you are the most authentic of our new digital citizens. Your views and behaviours are shaped by your everyday interactions with digital technology. Those of us who came somewhat earlier are merely digital immigrants, in fact some of us are yet to migrate. We have had to adapt to various evolving technologies. You on the other hand have spent your entire lives in a digital environment – with information technology and social media platforms deeply affecting everything that you do.

It is against this background that I again welcome your presence here and say that I look forward to you joining us at The UWI Cave Hill campus to pursue degree studies in the area of ICT. Last year, we launched the Smart Campus Initiative for the 21st Century, in a sense preparing a campus that is geared especially for you

and one in which you will feel most at home. We are putting in place a number of IT-based initiatives whose data-gathering capacity together with applications of algorithms, will transform the university into one of the region's most energy-efficient, innovation-driven, intellectually engaged and internationally competitive institutions. I know that your online upbringing among social communities whether on blogs or other social networking sites, rating and review sites, virtual gaming realms and other cyber societies, make you ideal candidates to compete confidently with your male counterparts in any domain. It is your both your confidence and your intellectual curiosity that equip you to fit in this digital environment. These traits qualify you to participate as equals in all STEM related fields.

The Cave Hill Campus is proud to work with civic minded corporate partners to create the enabling environment required to promote the participation of women in STEM disciplines. We are proud to announce this morning that FLOW, the regional telecommunications Company has agreed to establish a one year, renewable scholarship valued at BDS \$10,000 for new female students from Barbados pursuing an undergraduate degree in Computer Science/Information Technology. The Cave Hill Campus and FLOW will collaborate to introduce several initiatives around ICT support for students and faculty, so stay tuned for the launch of these. One of you here might just be the first Female FLOW Scholar.

While you are here, you can showcase your inner Nerd on our annual Nerd day, inaugurated this year.

Led by Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology, Dr. Colin Depradine, we have established the Women in Technology Network (WTN). This network was soft launched in June 2017. Its primary purpose is to encourage female students to see science and technology as a viable career option and hence encourage them to remain in the field after graduation. The network also seeks to use online technology to provide links between female students and women who work within the science and technology fields. The network will look to provide opportunities for mentoring, advising and the sharing of experiences. This is to be both private and public sector driven in its implementation.

As budding scientists, computer engineers and other IT professionals, I urge you to take the issue of networking - that is career networking - very seriously. It offers vast and serious opportunities for career advancement once you enter the world of work.

The Women in Technology Network is working on a science popularization project which will consist of a monthly online publication featuring various Barbadian and Regional Women working, and accomplishing great achievements

in the field of Science and Technology. They are currently gathering significant relevant information.

In closing, let me celebrate and congratulate you for being here as engaged participants. You are contributing to your own empowerment by taking the necessary action to build better lives for yourselves. The CARICOM (Caribbean Community) Human Resource Development Strategy is dedicated to unlocking Caribbean human potential. The University of the West Indies in its 70th year is committed to revitalizing Caribbean Development, and the Cave Hill Campus is a Smart Campus for the 21st Century. Welcome home! And continue to shine!

I thank you. Eudine Barriteau, April 26, 2018.