

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

CAVE HILL CAMPUS

Press Conference: Launch of The UWI-Dukes Agri-Business Development Park

October 09, 2017

Protocol, Ladies and gentlemen of the media, good morning and welcome.

Thank you for your presence here this morning. The UWI Cave Hill Campus has invited you to share what we regard as some very enlivening and energizing news. We want to tell you of an entrepreneurial journey that we are about to embark on which can bring transformational benefits to this university and, even more importantly, has the capacity to revolutionize the economies and societies of Barbados and this region.

You may recall that The UWI Cave Hill campus received a gift of twenty eight and a half acres of land in 2012 from two gracious benefactors, Mr Charles and Mrs Vanessa Edghill, owners of Dukes Plantation in St. Thomas. There has been periodic public comment about what was happening to this agricultural resource since The University took possession. We decided not to address those comments and speak about our plans before these proposals had received the requisite statutory approvals. The University has to be factual about the statements it makes. As a result we did not consider it appropriate to speak publicly of our plans until we were given the necessary permissions.

Today, we are extremely happy to report that our major obligation to secure Town and Country Planning approval for our plans has been achieved. This now paves the way for the implementation phase of what we are calling, **The UWI-Dukes Agri-business Development Park**.

MAP UNVEILED:

Ladies and gentlemen, what you see before you is a master plan for a multi-million dollar development project at Dukes, St. Thomas. This will create an environmentally-friendly, state-of-the art science/agricultural park in the

heartland of rural Barbados. The UWI, Cave Hill Campus which is already a major, multifaceted contributor to the economic life of this country, is about to make its economic presence felt in an even more significant way. This mega-community of agri-business activity will not only offer a diverse range of employment opportunities, but will position Barbados to become a regional hub for entrepreneurial development, educational training and cutting-edge agri-business research in a 21st century, expansive, multi-faceted complex. When you consider that the campus site at Cave Hill occupies just over 40 acres and this is almost 30 acres, you gain a sense of the scale of activity which is in store. In the near future, the UWI-Dukes Agri-business Development Park will be teeming with activity from researchers, teachers, trainers, students, and various business-related ventures.

The Dukes project is one of several which The UWI Cave Hill campus has initiated under its Centre for Food Security and Entrepreneurship (CFSE). This was inaugurated under the trailblazing, visionary leadership of Professor Leonard O'Garro who is seated here. Professor O'garro is an outstanding, internationally recognized, Caribbean scientist and a 2012 recipient of the Anthony N. Sabga Caribbean Award for Excellence. You may already be aware of his association with two other CFSE projects which have captured the public imagination; I speak of the **Sail Cargo Project** to facilitate intra-Caribbean maritime trade and the **Black Belly Sheep Leather Project** whose products are keenly anticipated across the length and breadth of Barbados.

You will hear from Professor O'Garro shortly but I wish to say some more about this Park which we anticipate will position Barbados as a key provider of highly skilled labour power training needs in agri-business and related entrepreneurship creation in this region.

The University is well aware that the Park is located on prime agricultural land, so in keeping with our philosophy of prioritizing Caribbean self-sufficiency, the wishes of our benefactors and many others who desire an accelerated thrust towards greater self-sustainability in food production and food security, a significant portion of the land has been set aside as agricultural parcels for farming. In addition, the Park will accommodate agro-processing and meat

curing facilities, a chocolate manufacturing and training facility, cotton processing facilities, a food standards laboratory, a sewerage plant treatment and recreational spaces.

While the UWI-Dukes Agri-business Development Park offers support to a modern agricultural sector and bolsters the green economy, the Park will also have multi-sectoral linkages. For instance we have included a 500-seat conference facility for the site along with retail shops and restaurants. We are seeking to introduce integrative links with the tourism sector.

I know many of you must be wondering whether the Cave Hill campus was able to secure some of its outstanding arrears and is planning to finance this project with those funds. The answer is **no**. We remain committed to getting the arrears. However in our strategic planning, we are aggressively seeking opportunities to continuously advance the ongoing contributions of the Cave Hill Campus to national and regional development. So in the meantime, we have secured an estimated US \$34 million which was obtained by the Government of Barbados through its bilateral aid programme with the Government of the Peoples' Republic of China.

Let me say that we are extremely grateful to the Barbados Government for including the Cave Hill Campus in this bi lateral aid programme with the Peoples Republic of China. I especially want to thank the Minister of Education, the Honourable Ronald Jones, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator Maxine McClean, and their very competent permanent Secretaries. We are inviting the Government of Barbados to extend that collaboration further by assisting the project in contributing to the human resource and economic development of Barbados by providing an infrastructural upgrade in the Dukes area. I refer, specifically to the lighting and road works which will be needed to complement the modern facilities that will transform a rural community and revolutionize the agri-business value chain by creating a quantum leap for agro-processing in this country.

I am confident that our telecommunications partners will wish to join us in this venture with the provision of adequate and required IT infrastructure.

Ladies and gentlemen, what I have outlined for you will yield income generating activity and we fully anticipate benefits for the Cave Hill campus. Reduced financial support and increased competition mandate that we change our business model and we are more than ready for the latter challenge. The Cave Hill Campus is aware of the reality that the tertiary education funding model is under threat as demonstrated by the large sum of arrears currently owed to the campus.

As a university we see the need to become more agile and responsive to our environment while ensuring that our educational offerings are relevant, aligned with our public and private sector partners, and are accessible. The implementation of this agri-business park is part of the new direction of the Cave Hill campus, a smart campus for the 21st century. We are seeking to become more entrepreneurial and more self-reliant. The Cave Hill campus is open for business.

I thank you and now I introduce to you Professor Leonard O'Garro the intellectual visionary at the helm of all that I have unveiled to you this morning. We are very pleased to have him lead.

Professor O'Garro...

Professor V. Eudine Barriteau

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