



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES  
ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

**OFFICE OF THE CAMPUS PRINCIPAL**

**Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian Copeland**

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**Address by the Campus Principal**

**Remarks on the occasion of the 2017 Guild Inauguration**

**Professor Brian Copeland**

**Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal, St. Augustine Campus**

**Salutations: to be inserted**

On March 9th, students on this Campus exercised one of the main principles enshrined in a democracy – the right to vote.

This Guild has been given the mandate by their peers to act as the single voice and representative to The University's administration and, indeed, to the wider community.

I congratulate Jonathan St. Louis-Nahous and his team and remind them that, with authority, comes tremendous responsibility.

You have earned the trust of your fellow students but, as we see daily in local and international reports, a tax-paying electorate expects results and the fulfilment of campaign promises. Since every student on this Campus pays a compulsory ‘Guild Fee’ of \$250 - the total is over \$4 million which you now manage and which means you also have a fiduciary responsibility that comes with accountability.

One way to ensure the continued trust of all stakeholders is to maintain your communication and outreach activities, just as you did on the campaign trail. And, while social media engagement is a key 21st century communications tool, never let it replace the face-to-face connection that won you, their support.

Your membership on several decision-making committees - including the University Council – allows you the opportunity to speak up and speak out, to let your voice be heard in a constructive way. When you take your seat at the table, don’t miss the moment. Ensure you are fully prepared and that you present your case cogently and effectively. Think of the experiences you have in these fora as a dress rehearsal for the rest of your life – for that’s what they are.

Among your many roles as a Student Guild is advocacy on social issues. By questioning the status quo, this advocacy mandate has often had social impact and influenced a world that, ultimately, will be in your charge.

Globally, examples abound in that regard. But, in our context, we remember the late Makandal Daaga who led the charge in the 1970’s on the social and economic imbalance that affected Afro and Indo Trinidadians and Tobagonians. The St Augustine Campus is recognised as the embryo for this Movement. That willingness to shake things up a lot, even in the face of opposition from parents, peers, and others in authority, led to profound change in this country. It took courage and it took conviction.

There will always be imbalance in our world, always causes to champion. Individuals may choose one or the other but there is no option to tick the ‘none’ box. You are Caribbean tertiary level student leaders and must therefore be mindful that our multicultural developing countries are constantly juggling competing economic needs. We are faced with challenges that, if not surmounted, will keep us mired in a cycle of ‘developing’ or ‘emerging’ nations.

The actions of one or a few can make a big and positive difference to the many. Having taken this step into servant leadership, there is no turning back solely into the insularity of your own personal concerns.

As the premier regional tertiary level institution, The University of the West Indies cannot shirk its moral responsibility. We are expected to deliver graduates who are ready to revitalise the Caribbean and securely place it on a path to sustainable development. We see it as an imperative to advance learning, create knowledge, and foster innovation for the positive transformation of the Caribbean. Since our inception in 1948, the people of the Caribbean have looked to us to fulfil that mandate in an environment that is still characterised by economic volatility and uncertainty.

We at the St Augustine Campus believe that fostering a culture of innovation, which allows for the creation of brand new knowledge, ideas, or inventions with market potential, is the way to sustainable development. The UWI has, for the last five years, consciously and consistently strengthened its support for impactful research and innovation in sync with critical regional developmental goals that result in concrete solutions and marketable products. Yet there remains a gap between product and process creation, and product development.

Given the current economic crisis facing the region, it is past time to close that gap and UWI is on a mission to lead the way to a new learned behaviour. Just as risk aversion is learned, so too are risk-taking and entrepreneurship. Today we are working on bringing the ingredients for the ecosystem together – the academic curriculum, facilities, research and development focus based on market foresight, along with internships across all disciplines which provide students with work experience while helping them identify innovation opportunities.

I will be looking to the Student Guild, not just to support and participate in these initiatives, but to suggest other ways and means by which we can achieve our goal of an innovative University and society. With your help, we will turn vision into reality.

You promised effective leadership and that requires you keep your eye on the ball or, rather, a multitude of balls. It will mean doing the due diligence, trusting your instinct, and letting go of control so that others around you can learn and grow.

I have every confidence that the 2017 Guild team will serve with integrity and provide good governance as well as accountability.

Please be assured that we in Administration - Management, Faculty and Staff - are absolutely committed to working with you for the benefit of all.

Thank you.