



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

OFFICE OF THE CAMPUS PRINCIPAL

Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian Copeland

BSc (UWI), MSc (University of Toronto), PhD (University of Southern California), IEEE, ISA

Address by the Campus Principal

**Conference on Science, Technology, Innovation in the Caribbean –
Strengthening Co-operation**

“Science, Technology and Innovation in the Caribbean - Strengthening Cooperation”

Wednesday 3rd May 2017; 8.30am; Noor Hassanali Auditorium

**Welcome Address by Campus Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian
Copeland**

The Rt. Honourable Dr. Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada

**Prof. Emeritus Harold Ramkissoon, Chair - CARICOM Science, Technology and Innovation
Committee (CSTIC)**

Prof. Indar Ramnarine, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology

**Ms. Sylvia Lalla, President (Ag) - National Institute of Higher Education, Research Science
& Technology (Niherst)**

Professor Dyer Narinesingh, President – The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)

**Mr. Navneet Boodhai, Vice President - Entrepreneurship & Business Development, The
University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)**

Dr. Lesley Lewis-Alleyne, Chair of the Department of Chemical and Physical Sciences at University of the Southern Caribbean

Dr. Richard Taylor, Executive Secretary, CARISCIENCE and Chair of this morning's proceedings

Specially invited guests

University Staff and Students

All our presenters and attendees

I am extremely pleased to welcome you to the St. Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies and, of course, to this Conference on Science, Technology and Innovation in the Caribbean – Strengthening Co-operation.

The mere fact that this conference was successfully nurtured and now implemented through the joint efforts of several agencies – the CARICOM Science, Technology and Innovation Committee, CARISCIENCE, a UNESCO affiliate, two local and one regional universities, as well as UNESCO's Inter Academy Partnership – is testimony to what co-operation can achieve and the need to foster it even further.

In 2014, Prime Minister the Rt. Honourable Dr. Keith Mitchell, the Prime Minister then responsible for Science and Technology in CARICOM established a CARICOM Science and Technology Committee to strengthen the science and technology capacity in the region. The intent was, and is, to use science and technology to drive regional economic and social development in the shortest possible time. Some of CARICOM's brightest minds are members of this important Committee.

UNESCO has long identified that Small Island Developing States must strengthen their science and technology base since these are critical factors in building economic resilience in island societies. Science and technology are a cross-cutting issue for all sectors for sustainable development. To name just a few that are critical to our social and economic life, we must ramp up our observation and knowledge of oceans, water management, small islands and coastal zones,

as well as our ability to reduce the effects of natural disasters – and, if we needed reminding, just this week UWI’s Seismic Research Centre has had to increase the level of its alerts on the underwater volcano, Kick ‘em Jenny which has awoken from its slumber.

In April 2008, a high-level CARICOM meeting in Grenada considered and made recommendations based on the 2007 Mokhele report regarding 'Using Science, Technology and Innovation to Change the Fortunes of the Caribbean Region'. It is significant that ‘Innovation’ was added into the mix.

Innovation can drive wealth generation which, in turn, can fuel sustainable development. Sustainable development improves the state of society and ensures that the existence of generations to come remains uncompromised. Achieving this developed country mode requires cutting edge scientific enquiry; product and process creation; product development; production, and services. It means having a mind set to turn all of these into commercial activity and, therefore, into revenue.

All of this can only become possible by consciously adopting a more aggressively innovative culture to strengthen the ability of companies to compete internationally and allow SMEs to develop for international markets. Unquestionably, it speaks directly to economic diversification and has implications for education at all levels but none more so than at the tertiary level.

Regrettably, local and regional businesses have not sufficiently taken advantage of the capabilities existing within our universities to allow for the establishment of an innovation-generating relationship. We are willing and ready to use our resources to push boundaries in research; and to use that research to push products and processes on a total operational basis. Relevant, directed research will inevitably be in step with the current and future critical needs of Caribbean societies. It’s a symbiotic relationship and business must want this too so that Academia/Business can together generate wealth for the material benefit of all.

This Campus’ response to the innovation imperative has in fact been multi-disciplinary with an improved alignment of research initiatives to the local and regional priority needs. In this regard,

the St Augustine Campus runs a course in Entrepreneurship and Innovation for final year students in the Faculties of Engineering, Social Sciences, Science and Technology, Food and Agriculture, Humanities, and Education. It is planned that anyone with an innovative idea gets the necessary tools and support to turn their idea into a bankable business.

All of this is part of a collaborative and continuing programme in Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Wealth Creation which seeks to foster an appreciation for the important role of business in the Caribbean. The ultimate aim is to inspire graduates to rise to the challenge of entrepreneurial creation.

Admittedly, there are challenges on the course that's been set, the biggest of which is the cultural and mind shift. While stand-alone courses, three-day boot camps, or even full-fledged programmes have an impact, to make the change really required – we need a complete cultural shift so as to create an ecosystem that encourages and provides tangible support for what Professor Emeritus St. Clair King calls “a new embryonic entrepreneurial class for success”.

Students must consider being their own boss as a first option, not a last. This is even more an imperative where the current economic situation in the Caribbean may often make that their only viable option on graduation. By engaging together, we can make this a reality.

This Conference intends to take a look at the strides made over the last two decades, as well as the role played by regional, extra regional and international organizations. At the same time Conference delegates will identify ways to strengthen this co-operation so that Science, Technology and Innovation can more effectively assist with the socio-economic development of our Caribbean people.

We are on a quest to break the cycle of dependence. Our aim is to turn vision into belief; belief into concrete solutions. Over the next two days, you - the brightest minds of the Caribbean and further afield - will question, theorise, and come up with practical solutions and recommendations. I wish you success in your deliberations and look forward to reading your Conference Report.

Thank you.