



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

Innovation and Entrepreneurship: we can and we will

Innovation is about more than making money. A people who are quick on their feet, who come up with new ideas, know how to solve problems, an entrepreneurial people, translates into a sustainable society, a strong Caribbean.

Trinidad and Tobago is known worldwide for its creativity. We are the ones who took old drums and turned them into a new musical instrument in the twentieth century. We've successfully exported our Carnival and mas-designing capabilities along with our people to foreign countries all around the world. Our people have made names for themselves in science, technology, the arts, in academia, in politics in those very same 'First World' countries.

There is absolutely no reason why this proven entrepreneurial and innovative thinking cannot be turned inwards. There is nothing stopping us except our belief in ourselves – as individuals, as a nation, as a collection of nations – to make it so.

A university institution cannot survive unless the constant goal is service to the communities that support and sustain its activities. The University of the West Indies, the only regional tertiary-level institution, considers it a mandate to actively promote a belief in ourselves that we can achieve and that we will succeed. Oil and gas reserves are diminishing, tourism is a fickle thing; it is now an imperative that our mind sets change.

On becoming Principal, I shared with colleagues a vision of an innovation agenda in which the highest level of any education system must inevitably include the inculcation of a culture of innovation that, by definition, embodies the creativity needed to sustain and grow society and the systems that support it. The ideal aim is a culture that seamlessly allows the creation of brand new knowledge, ideas or inventions with market potential.

An innovation is a product or process that has been created anew and has begun to produce returns on investment, thus bringing value to society. No one can disagree that wealth generation is necessary for sustainable development. Innovations that impact on the economic space will, more often than not, bring social or ecological benefit.

Universities worldwide are engine rooms for game-changing technologies and processes. Caldan Therapeutics, for example, a spin-out company from the Universities of Glasgow and Southern Denmark, is discovering novel therapeutics for metabolic diseases including Type 2 Diabetes and other indications. It was named an 'Early Stage/Risk Capital Deal of the Year' at The Scottish Business Insider 'Deals & Dealmakers Awards' 2016. In the US, Silicon Valley, the

technology hub of the United States, operates in a near symbiotic relationship with Stanford University, relying on it for research, manpower, and budding tech entrepreneurs.

As Dean at the Faculty of Engineering at the St. Augustine Campus, I had been a strong advocate for increased academic/industry collaboration of this type here at The University of the West Indies. Indeed, the Faculty of Engineering at the St. Augustine Campus has for some time sought ways to make Caribbean societies more innovative and entrepreneurial.

Now, as Principal, I am even more determined to inculcate the spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation throughout the Campus. Indeed, over the years we have used our local knowledge and skill to deliver solutions on several projects with Industry. Among these are the first electronic scoreboard in the Queen's Park Oval; an offshore data movement system for TRINMAR's marine operations; plus software designs for a fraud detection package for TSTT and for a Call Monitoring and Accounting Package for a private telecommunications company.

In spite of these successes, local businesses have not sufficiently taken advantage of the capabilities existing in The University to allow for the establishment of an innovation-generating relationship. It is my view that, for The UWI and industry to create the sort of impact required to develop the nations of the Caribbean, more needs to be done in terms of contract research and process and product development. This will help build regional technical competence in activities that would turn the scales of economic balance more in our favour through increased competitive advantage. The UWI is willing; we want to use our resources for the material benefit of our societies. We want to push boundaries in research and use that research to push local and regional products and processes on a total operational basis. We need business to want this too so that we can help them generate wealth for the benefit of all.

Further, we want students to consider being their own boss after graduation. The current economic situation in the Caribbean may often make this the only viable option for our graduates. Our response to the innovation imperative is multi-disciplinary. So, in partnership

with Republic Bank Limited, we've established a course in Entrepreneurship and Innovation for final year students in the Faculties of Engineering, Social Sciences, Science and Agriculture, and Humanities and Education. In addition, anyone with an innovative idea will get the necessary tools and support to turn the idea into a bankable business. The bank will even provide the expertise, venture capital, financing, office space, and support services to turn that idea into a bankable business.

This is all 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.

Where do our Alumni come in? Many alumni are well placed to advance this agenda of entrepreneurship and innovation. We at The UWI welcome your inputs, your advice, and your contributions. Join us to break the cycle of dependence. Talk to us on how – together – we can turn belief into concrete solutions.