

Symposium on Research, Enterprise and Impact

Opening Ceremony

Wednesday 2nd October, 2013

1:00 p.m.

Learning Resource Center Auditorium

Closing Remarks

Professor Wayne Hunte

Pro Vice Chancellor, Research

Good afternoon all, special greetings to Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training and to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, thanks for taking the time to be with us; to Ms. Cassandra Patrovani-Sylvester, Vice President, Human and Corporate Relations, National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago, representing as it were the private sector here in Trinidad and Tobago; Mr. Ewart Williams, Chairman of the St. Augustine Campus Council; and of course greetings to all of my UWI colleagues, in particular our Vice Chancellor Professor E. Nigel Harris and Professor Clement Sankat, Principal of our St. Augustine Campus. It is a pleasure to make a few Closing Remarks at the Opening Ceremony for this important initiative and event here at St. Augustine....and I want to start by placing this moment, this event, in its proper context.

The Mission Statement of the University of the West Indies at its establishment begins 'To unleash West Indian potential for economic and cultural growth by high quality teaching and research aimed at meeting critical regional needs'. Some 65 years later, this responsibility has in no way waned, and indeed this development role for the University of the West Indies in Caribbean societies is felt ever more keenly at the University of the West Indies.

Consistent with this, in our 2007-2012 Strategic Plan, we correctly increased our emphasis on research for knowledge generation, driven by the clear understanding, that, in the final analysis, it is knowledge that potentially drives national and regional development; and driven as well by a clear appreciation of the societal responsibility of the UWI in this context, since UWI has by far the largest pool of technical and professional human resources for research in our region. In our current 2012-2017 Strategic Plan, we retained this emphasis, but we made a very deliberate and important shift in our approach; for in order for the knowledge we generate to have significant developmental impact, two important dimensions and emphases must be fulfilled. First, the nature of the research, its design and objectives, must be such that its goal from the onset is to have significant developmental impact. Secondly, to achieve full impact, we must develop mechanisms and approaches that facilitate the transfer of the knowledge we generate to our key stakeholders, both in the private and public sectors. At the very least initially, this requires creating opportunities to showcase our research to key stakeholders and the general public, which of course is precisely what Research Expo 2013, of which this Symposium is a part, is all about. Expo 2013 is an exciting package of activities and events whose objective is precisely to showcase the research being conducted across the full range of Faculties, Departments and Centres at St. Augustine to our key stakeholders with the explicit hope and expectation that from this will emerge the embryonic partnerships and opportunities that will flourish and grow, and thereby ensure that we work together to drive the integration of the University's knowledge into the productive national development sectors in Trinidad and Tobago. This is where a National Innovation System for Trinidad and Tobago must start....with the goal that it will ultimately evolve into the sophisticated set of relationships between knowledge producers and knowledge users for commercial gain and for economic development, that is the essence of what a National Innovation System is.

Not because I am today at St. Augustine, but honesty forces me to say that our St. Augustine Campus is leading the way in this emphasis on ensuring that our research at UWI must have significant and measurable development impact. An important recent initiative to further this goal is the development and operation of a Research Development Impact Fund at St. Augustine, driven by the Office of the Campus Principal and supported by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in which the key criterion that determines whether or not a research programme will be selected and funded for implementation is the *a priori* demonstration that the project will have significant and measurable national development impact. We consider this RDI programme a best practice approach that we are now trying to export to our other main Campuses in Jamaica and Barbados...and we thank the Trinidad and Tobago Government for taking the lead in this context.

Indeed, this is an opportune time to formally thank our Governments in general for the support that they provide for research at UWI, but I do wish to make the point that we have not been sitting back and relying on our Governments exclusively for this support. Over the past ten years or so, we have significantly improved our approach and procedures for developing substantial research proposals across our Campuses for submission to external donor agencies, and have significantly increased our competitiveness in this context. Many of these grants are from EU-ACP funded programmes, such as the FP7 programme (grants of about €5.0M), the Science and Technology programme (grants of about €1.0M), and the EDULINK programme (grants of about €0.5 M). However, we also have significant grants from GEF (grants of about US\$6.0M), from the IDRC (grants of about CAN\$2.0M), from the CIDA and others. As an indication of our increased competitiveness, the University of the West Indies was the single most successful institution in competing for EDULINK grants in their first two Calls for

Proposals, and we were therefore invited to Brussels by the EU and ACP Secretariats to give a presentation to EU and ACP universities on best practice in preparing research proposals for funding support. Because of our success, we are frequently sought out as Partners in research, and UWI is now a part of a significant network of research institutions globally. Presently, as I speak, we are conducting collaborative research projects with 115 different Partner Universities from 50 different countries spread across Europe, Africa, the Pacific, the USA, Canada, South America and, of course, the Caribbean.

So let me close by assuring our Public and Private Stakeholders that we are fully committed to ensuring that our research at UWI is steadfastly focused on achieving significant development impact, by assuring you that we are doing our best to access funds in support of this from External Donor Agencies, and by thanking the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for partnering with us to achieve this goal, particularly through its support of our Research Development Impact Fund here at St. Augustine. I note from the Minister's remarks the aspiration to drive Trinidad and Tobago towards a Singapore state, and I note the intention to establish a Higher Education Research Fund. This latter is a commendable initiative, but its success and impact will lie fully in its structure and how it is operationalized, particularly on how the projects to be funded are to be selected. Its impact will also depend on how it is resourced, attaining a Singapore status will require a significant investment by the government of Trinidad and Tobago in Research and Innovation; this should be at least in the order of 1% of GDP. I wish also to thank the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago for its commitments, plans and actions to partner with us, including the provision of financial support; for it is precisely these partnerships, this harmony of intent, that will allow us together to grow our relationships as knowledge producers and knowledge users, and thereby ensure that we achieve our common goal of social and economic development for Trinidad and Tobago.