

**Address by Campus Principal Professor Clement Sankat  
At Inauguration Ceremony**

**Friday 10 October, 2008 – 6.00 p.m.**

**Daaga Auditorium, UWI St Augustine Campus**

- Chancellor of The University of the West Indies, Sir George Alleyne
- Vice Chancellor, Professor E. Nigel Harris
- Speaker of the House
- Honourable Minister in the Ministry of STTE, Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffery
- Honourable Minister of Education of Guyana, Mr. Shaikh Baksh
- Honourable Minister of Education & Sport, Belize, Mr. Patrick Faba
- Honourable Minister of Education, Science & Technology, Antigua, Mr. Bertrand Joseph
- Chairman of our Campus Council, Mr. Michael Mansoor
- Members of University Council
- Other Honourable Ministers of the Government in Trinidad & Tobago and those from the Region
- Members of Parliament
- Pro Vice Chancellors and Campus Principals
- University Registrar, Mr. C. William Iton
- Members of our Management Team - St. Augustine
- Presidents of the Guild of Students, the Alumni Association and WIGUT

- President of the Universities in T'dad & T'go and other representatives of tertiary level institutions
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Distinguished Members of the Business Industry
- Esteemed colleagues of the St. Augustine, Mona, Cave Hill and Open Campuses
- Honoured Guests, especially those from the Engineering fraternity.
- Family and Friends – And let me especially welcome my dear wife, Dr. Rohanie Maharaj, my children: Olivia, Cecilia, Sarisha, Katyana & Nishal; My brothers and sisters also have travelled far to be here with us tonight, Vincent, Stanley, Anjali and Gargie, my brother and sister-in-law, Sanand and Christel, together with my nephew, Dennis – Thanks for being here and reuniting after more than 20 years! My adopted family in Trinidad and Tobago, my mother-in-law, Ms. Maharaj and her very supportive family, and those who have adopted me since I have been here in Trinidad & Tobago.
- To my dear friend from our stay in Canada Hall, Engineer Chandar Lall Subaran of Jamaica.
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

### **Good evening.**

October has always been an important month for me. It was in **October** that I matriculated as an undergraduate student in the Faculty of

Engineering here at this St Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies. That was in 1969, nearly forty years ago. Again, it was in **October** that I came back to the University as a member of staff. The exact date of my formal appointment as a UWI Lecturer, having just completed the PhD at Guelph, and very eager to be back at a place and in a country I had grown to love, i.e. The UWI - St Augustine Campus and T&T, was October 10, 1978. It's a day I have always reflected upon, year after year, giving my praise and thanks to the Almighty and to a University that have given me so much. It's a day that I always wanted to celebrate with those who have been at my side: my family, my big UWI family, my friends and the very many who have supported this journey thus far. I have journeyed a straight path with my Institution towards a destination yet to be reached. But this journey together has come a very long way together, 39 years to this day. Today, in 2008, I find that it is in **October 10<sup>th</sup>**, that I join with all of you to mark my undertaking of this appointment as Campus Principal here at UWI, St Augustine. Thank you, all of you, for joining me today for this Induction Ceremony.

It is significant that this Induction Ceremony is taking place at a time of tumultuous change at every level, from individual habits and traits to global changes of major importance. But, Caribbean people have demonstrated to date the importance of scrutinising their local circumstances through the lens of a global understanding, and have become resilient and adaptive to the changes surrounding us. Not that we cannot do much better in certain spheres particularly in matters pertaining to human capital development, industry, food security, crime, poverty reduction, and the enjoyment and the happiness of life.

Coming in 2008, this Induction is also located at the crossroads of change that are occurring on the global stage, often turbulent change. But the UWI has been a steady ship, sailing the Caribbean seas for 60 years, in sometimes very rough weather. This ceremony of change today is a symbol of the buoyancy, stability, accomplishments and good order of this noble West Indian institution, as we forge ahead for the next 60 years.

The timing of this Ceremony is full of significance for us, not just as a Campus, but also as a University. This year, the regional University is celebrating 60 years of service to the Region; we have formally and boldly announced our five-year Strategic Plan with pillars of Teaching and Learning, Graduate Studies, Research and Innovation and our Open Campus taking centre stage. In a matter of months, the St Augustine Campus will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Incidentally, our historians have advised that our actual anniversary at St. Augustine is regarded as October 12, 2010, since that was the date in 1960 that the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture and the University College of the West Indies formally merged and we began here in 1960 with the Faculties of Engineering and Agriculture. We have come a long way.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of the last six decades, and we look forward to more celebrations to come, especially our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at St. Augustine, with God's great mercy, I will be there and will have spent four decades at St Augustine.

In sharing some thoughts with you for the St Augustine Campus and our University this evening, I am more aware than ever that my own

experience of service and leadership must integrate seamlessly into this emerging responsibility to prepare our University and our Caribbean region to confront the complex challenges of this new age, a task which I am confident we can collectively respond to. Just as our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations have brought to light many people who, through their individual efforts, contributed to the development of this great institution, so too I wish, this evening, to recognise some people whose input have been invaluable to my personal and professional development and have given me the confidence to now face the next stage of my professional journey. When I entered the Faculty of Engineering in 1969 as an undergraduate student in Mechanical Engineering, I was struck by the quality of the staff in Engineering and those who taught me - Professor Ken Julien (the then Dean of the Faculty), Professor Desmond Imbert (a former Dean), Professor Harry Phelps, the late Professors Satcunanathan, Atrops and Konasiewicz, and several others.

Our current President, former Campus Principal and former Dean of Engineering, His Excellency Professor George Maxwell Richards, was

also there. These early pioneers of the Faculty of Engineering all had one thing in common, a complete focus and dedication on building a first rate Faculty of Engineering. They must be applauded for their efforts. And in 1970, came Professor Chris Narayan, a QC old boy from Essequibo, and an Agricultural Engineer trained in Guelph and Michigan. He and Mr. Ron Dennis of Australia really inspired me with their innovative Research and Development work in farm machinery and agro processing, pigeon pea harvesting and shelling and coconut de-husking, So too did Professor David McGaw, another former Dean with his work on the drying of Caribbean crops, including nutmegs and ginger. The Research was relevant, creative and impacting. Research that all, both inside and outside of the UWI could understand and appreciate. The Faculty of Engineering was an exciting place, less than ten years old at this time. 1970 was also a memorable year on this Campus and Trinidad & Tobago, with the rise of the Black Power Movement right here, in our old Guild Hall, today re-built and re-christened as Daaga Auditorium.

Around this time too, I found time from my Year I classes, to attend the First International Conference on Agricultural Engineering in the JFK Complex. The development of a programme in Agricultural Engineering was in the air, as was Industrial Engineering and I had to be part of this excitement. Professor John Spence as well as Dr. Louis Campbell of the Faculty of Agriculture were also at the centre of this. And so, having graduated in 1972, I was soon back at the Campus in 1973 as a UWI scholar working on the mechanical extraction of the coconut meat from the shell, you know “how to dig this meat from the coconut shell”. But there were some who did not think this was the kind of research for young scholars, that topics like these were too mundane. That scholarship in Engineering and the Applied Sciences was about the application of mathematics to the solution of complex problems. All of this is laudable of course, but what was missing in this discourse was that it can also be applied to solve real, West Indian problems. That scholarship and creativity, application and innovation are not separate but connected, and that in a University environment, this can and must be demonstrated. Innovation happens everyday outside of the University environment, but when we pursue this in academia, it should emanate through scholarship. I completed the M.Phil equivalent in

1975, and with the support of the Faculty and the Campus, journeyed to the University of Guelph and the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) to study for the PhD. Here again, I met a dynamic, exciting mentor in Professor Walter K. Bilanski, Emeritus Professor and several times President of the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario. He nurtured me in critical thinking and how as a young postgraduate, I could demonstrate good scholarship while meeting the needs of the food and agricultural sectors. In fact this Guelph experience led me to about 15 years of intensive, team oriented industry driven work on “feed manufacture from sugar cane bagasse” By 1978, I was back at St Augustine, as this was the only place in the Caribbean that would have allowed me an expression of my own creativity in the service of the peoples of the region. I was coming back to a campus that I do love, and one that nurtured my youthful energies for research, creativity and innovation. Today “innovation” is a buzz word, but let me assure you it was there a long time ago, but never had the meaning and status that it has today and rightly so, as it provides the basis for the competitiveness of our nations and the benefits that accrue.

Permit me also to mention former St Augustine Campus Principal, Professor Compton Bourne, now President of the CDB, under whose stewardship I was first appointed Dean of Engineering, and former Vice Chancellors Sir Alister McIntyre and Professor Emeritus Rex Nettleford, who supported my appointments and initiatives for several years as Campus Coordinator for Graduate Studies and Research at St. Augustine. Sir Alister, I understand, was especially supportive of my elevation to Reader and to Professor. Yes, an Engineer could be made a Reader, a title that I possibly cherish the most in my academic progression yet ironically we have discarded it at the UWI. As Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, I had the support of my Campus Principal, PVC Tewarie, as well as all my colleagues in the Faculty of Engineering. During my years as Dean, we developed a brotherhood with Deans across the Campuses, and I am pleased to see many of you here. I have also enjoyed long and mutually supportive relationships with our Pro Vice Chancellors, especially Professors Wayne Hunte, Ronald Young, Alvin Wint and Hilary Beckles, and now with Gordon Shirley and Hazel Simmons-McDonald. Working with all of you, some over several years has truly enriched me and lighted my pathway

Finally, I am happy to be able to publicly acknowledge and thank our Vice Chancellor, Professor E. Nigel Harris and our Chancellor, Sir George Alleyne. It is Vice Chancellor Harris who gave me the opportunity to continue to work with our graduate students in the capacity of Pro Vice Chancellor, Graduate Studies last year. And now Sir George and the University Council have given me this great opportunity to serve in the leadership of the St Augustine Campus as PVC and Campus Principal. I thank you, our Chairman of the Campus Council, Mr. Mike Mansoor, and all my colleagues and members of our Campus Council. On reflection, I ask what greater tribute can be paid to me by my Institution, which in six short months propelled me from Dean of Engineering, to Pro Vice Chancellor, Graduate Studies and then to Pro Vice Chancellor and Campus Principal? I must give praise and thanks to those gathered here and also to that Superior Being who moves us in his own mysterious way to guide us to do his good work.

I name here these few among the many but important colleagues only to point to and celebrate the many others whose minds have moulded me

and whose hands have supported me and whom I hope will continue to support, guide and teach me. In any organisation, at the core of the success of the few who lead is the collective and coordinated effort of the many who serve. Here at UWI St Augustine, in whatever capacity I have executed leadership responsibilities over the last thirty years, my success has not been the result of my own individual competence but the dedicated support and service of my colleagues, my graduate students and my collaborators, both within the University and beyond. This is a profound and humbling reality, one that I have been aware of for the better part of the last thirty years.

In fact, the inextricable link between Leadership and Service is at the very core of my leadership philosophy and values as Campus Principal, in my direction for taking this Campus of the UWI forward. True leadership is founded upon a spirit of servanthood; on the pursuit of the enhancement of the whole through giving and selfless service. It is through service that we strengthen the capacity of our nation and our Region and facilitate the sustainability of our University. Our acts of institutional citizenship make a direct contribution to human welfare,

but they also contribute by modeling good citizenship for our students, and help to inculcate in them a sense of social responsibility and leadership. By advancing and applying the knowledge of science, technology, agriculture and medicine, and of the arts and social science, we will create the foundation for economic growth, material well-being, the health and well being of our citizens and improvements in the ethos of our nations and the happiness of our peoples. By educating students to be perceptive about needs in our society, to become problem solvers, capable of flexible, adaptive, and creative responses to changing conditions, we will strengthen the region's capacity to innovate and build better societies. It is in this cycle of service which meets our Region's needs and built around good ethical and moral values - honesty, integrity and transparency, that will allow us to fulfill our *raison d'être* as a Campus, University and as individuals.

In my time as an educator in this University, I have witnessed the intensification of the international competitiveness of higher education, to the extent that learners and teachers as faithful as they are to their country or region, often fall prey to the attractions of perceived greener

pastures in a rapidly developing world. This is a real and present challenge for us at the UWI. One is seeing the traditional model of the physical campus all but replaced by the virtual and/or the “workmanlike” classroom of extra regional providers of higher education. Bricks are giving way to clicks, with connectivity that is fleeting. We are also witnessing the growth of national institutions, responding to market demands for tertiary education in areas where The UWI may not have responded as it should have. But is this all sustainable in the long term? It is my view that The University of the West Indies should **lead** the tertiary education institutions of the region and those that are state supported in working together, not merely loose networking but in deep, structured integration so as to pool our resources and strengthen our Regional capacity in order to develop innovative responses to today’s realities and for tomorrow’s challenges.

I believe that it is time for The University of the West Indies to re-affirm its commitment to serving the Caribbean region in a new way, by establishing ourselves as the regional leader in driving the transformation of the entire tertiary education sector of the Caribbean

region to respond to the sweeping challenges and urgent demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I believe that this great institution has the regional machinery and the human capacity to take the lead in creating the framework for a **Federal University System** that encompasses all Caribbean tertiary education institutions. I believe that **all** the universities of the region must work together to focus on developing sustainable, regional responses not only to the human development needs of the Caribbean but to the research, development and the service needs of our countries - the challenges of poverty reduction, environmental management, energy conservation and food security, to name a few, and the competitiveness of our countries in terms of wealth creation. To enable this process, to build capacity and robustness and to treat with both internal and external competition, I believe that the Caribbean region needs a **single University System** operating as a deeply integrated network of institutions of lifelong learning and research, each serving its own space to the very best of its abilities and each maintaining some symbol of its

autonomy. But institutions that are working together and not apart, for the common good.

The benefits to be derived from such an approach are many. It will create economies of scale through reduction of duplicated effort, competition and expenditure. It will promote widespread mobility of students, staff and graduates within the region, lifting all to a common benchmark of quality and it will make it easier for Caribbean researchers and entrepreneurs to collaborate in wealth creation and knowledge dissemination. If Caribbean countries do not establish collaborative research and knowledge creation networks, and pool limited existing intellectual resources, we could remain ever dependent on the developed world rather than become active participants in knowledge creation and transfer and wealth generation for our countries. Currently resource allocation to R&D is very much less than the benchmark figure of 1.0% of the GDP in most of the Caribbean. Governments as well as Business and Industry need to commit to funding research, creating government-industry-academia alliances and collaboration networks so as to enhance the competitive capacity of our

Region and to develop innovative and sustainable responses to Caribbean issues. Private tertiary education providers operating on large economies of scale and quick return on financial investments will not focus on appropriate curricula consistent with national and regional developmental goals and social needs. And as we are witnessing, they have no interest in the area of knowledge creation and dissemination. We therefore need to build and then to conduct National and/or Regional Systems of Innovation, to resource them, manage them and monitor them to deliver the goods. This is what many of us have been yearning for over the years as our Vision 2020 Report of Trinidad & Tobago has illustrated. Now is the time for action.

In practical terms, this approach of One Caribbean, One University System will involve the development of comparable criteria and methodologies for joint programmes that harness the collective intellectual potential of the collaborating universities. It will involve the forging of new partnerships and the strengthening of existing partnerships between individual higher education providers, regional governments, labour, civil society and global industry. It will involve

lateral and critical thinking, to discover the underlying unity behind our parochial differences and develop novel strategies for reconciling the interests of each for the good of all. We will all have to give a little to gain immensely. The possibilities for this “coming together” are limitless. This is a new journey we must walk and do so now!

I believe that it is the responsibility of our University leadership, and all of us to consolidate political will around the formation of this regional, Federal University System. As daunting as the challenge may be, I can think of no better champion for the cause than our own University, and let me add our premier, national Universities – UTECH (Jamaica), UTT, UG and ADEK (Suriname) and the University of Belize. I believe that The University of the West Indies, with its complex inter-governmental, institutional management hierarchy transcending regional borders, possesses the critical mass of administrative capacity, intellectual power, brand equity and especially experience to take the leadership role in this critical initiative. We are also the largest, though not the oldest, internationally recognised university in the Caribbean. Who else can unite the region in this time of the need for change?

During my term as Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and now as Campus Principal, I have seen the hunger and thirst for tertiary education and postgraduate professional education. We have made a start to respond in Guyana (MSc in Engineering, Construction and Project Management) and Suriname (MSc in International Relations). There is much esteem and regard for the UWI in these countries. I saw what is possible when UWI and UTT collaborate on our internationally accredited programmes in Applied Mechanical and Electrical Technology, and that we can make it “big time” if we work together as we are doing. I do remember the day when Professor Julien, President of UTT and my former colleague, addressed the Faculty Board of Engineering on what was a clear vision for working together and I am very proud of this achievement. There are several examples of what is possible in serving the needs of our Caribbean people through integrated partnership and our Vice Chancellor and other Campus Principals can tell their own experiences of this.

I believe that we at the UWI should not wait, but we should act. Now is the time for collaborative leadership to get us started down the path of a united Caribbean response. I hope that some of the ideas that I've laid out today can serve as the basis for this collective response. I hope that our colleagues from across all our four campuses and from our other Caribbean universities, citizens from all Caribbean territories, and collaborators from all levels of government, business and industry can hear this call and come together in the near future to launch this serious quest for a united, sustainable regional higher education development and future. There is no issue that is more important than this for our next 60 years! If we get this right, it will benefit all our people and institutions, build robustness and ensure even greater access to tertiary education of a common standard and bring capacity and value to our Caribbean tax payers. More importantly, it will deepen our regional integration movement, and with this, bring a form of Caribbean identity and pride to all our graduates - the world will take notice of us.

And so, in conclusion, the question that you may have in mind is what can we expect from this new Principal today? Continue to serve,

continue to learn, continue to be what I am, a West Indian son of the soil, Trini to the flesh, though possibly not to the Bone! I would like to identify six emphases that must remain at the forefront of the Campus' immediate agenda. In moving forward with implementation, the following actions are very important for our success, but let me emphasize that in this enterprise people are at the centre – staff, students and stakeholders.

- We need to build our internal **capacity**, and that includes human, physical and financial. We have 15,000 plus students, and there are stresses in the system here.
- We need to continuously build **quality** in our plant, processes and outputs.
- We have to continue building effective teams on this Campus. This is the only way to achieve what we may not even think is possible.
- We have to actively create supportive, collaborative partnerships between our Campus and the UWI Centre, as well as with our other Campuses, our Government of Trinidad and

Tobago, the regional governments, the private sector and other tertiary level institutions.

- We've also got to escape insularity and **strengthen the regional character of the UWI.**
- Finally, I think we have got to aim to impacting positively and linking with the Community we serve; communication and feedback are central. We must promote creativity, knowledge transfer and more innovation. We must go beyond mere publish or punish! We must move from mere paper transactions to live transformations. We must hold hands, show and demonstrate how to; we must connect with the needs of the citizens and of our countries. This must be the calling of the UWI – national and regional development and through such efforts we will make an impact on the Caribbean. Scholarship for the world is very important and brings us wide recognition and visibility but Charity begins at home! Let us not lose sight of this.

I think that these imperatives are the keys to our ability to formulate a response to today's Campus challenges while we look to a bigger, more sustainable University future as I have given. I look forward to working with all of you so that together we overcome these immediate challenges and move to shape the vision of One Caribbean, One University. Let us all work to meet the real needs of our West Indian peoples. Making this happen is the hope of my final destination.

I would like to thank my parents, Henry (deceased) and Carmen for their love, dedicated support and most importantly the values they have entrenched in my family. Personal growth in the context of giving back to community has always been central to their life's work and I applaud them for this.

I would like to leave you this evening with one final thought shared with me by one of our own outstanding alumni, an MBBS graduate who holds an honorary doctorate from this University, a captain of local industry, an innovator and entrepreneur and a pioneer in the international global

market - Dr Aleem Mohammed, Chairman of S M Jaleel & Company Limited.

Earlier this week, in a truly inspiring and moving meeting, Dr Mohammed told me, ***“Whatever your destiny, your challenge is to identify and determine your purpose. Make no mistake about it. We are the children of God. We were created by Him for a particular purpose. We must first seek and understand what that purpose really is. Purposeful work gives meaning and adds value to human life. It goes beyond vision or goal. It’s about contributing to the betterment of society and mankind at large.”***

Those thoughts have resonated with me, about my own purpose and my role in the context of my own University. This is the bedrock and the guiding philosophy on which my stewardship as Principal will be built.

I thank you for your attention and for your support.

Professor Clement K. Sankat  
Pro Vice Chancellor & Principal

October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008