

Professor Clement Sankat, Pro Vice Chancellor and Campus Principal

UWI & Guardian Life Teaching Excellence Forum 2008

'Towards Teaching Excellence and Higher Learner Outcomes'

Learning Resource Centre

Friday 26th September, 2008

2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Thank you, Dr Cockburn.

- Deputy Principal, Professor Rhoda Reddock,
- Members of Campus Management,
- Minister of Education, Honourable Esther Le Gendre,
- Past Recipients of the UWI/Guardian Life Premium Teaching Awards,
- Sixth Form Students from secondary schools across the nation,
- Members of the media,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

Let me begin by once again welcoming you to the St Augustine Campus for this, The University of the West Indies and Guardian Life Teaching Excellence Forum. This year is our tenth year working with Guardian Life of the Caribbean Limited in this way, to promote excellence in teaching. We're really happy with this partnership, and we're very proud to be able to mark this significant anniversary of our collaboration by hosting this special forum, which has the very appropriate title: "Towards Teaching Excellence and Higher Learner Outcomes."

It's very good to see so many young people here; I'm glad that you're taking some time from beating book for your A-Level Exams. Thanks for coming down here to hang out with us a little bit today. We're really interested in hearing what you young men and women have to say, so please remember to take some good notes, jot down any questions you may have, and then at the end, just stick your hand up when we start

taking questions and feedback. I hope we're all comfortable here, I think this set-up here is very nice, and I should probably just take a moment to recognise Dr. Anna-May Edwards-Henry and her team for all the work that she's done with this initiative. Let me commend Dr. Edwards and the entire staff, and her hard-working partners over on the Guardian Life side as well, of course. Good work, Anna-May and team!

(Pause)

Now, I hope it's okay for me to spend some time focusing on all you students from our secondary schools. Right off the bat, I'm going to say that we are taking this as an opportunity to connect with the nation's sixth formers; we **do** look forward to having you return as UWI students in the not-too-distant future, and we do want to use today's Forum to begin to prepare you for your future UWI experience.

We tried to make the environment really comfortable for you, so you can open up and share with us. But guess what? We're no longer your age! We actually don't really know what you like, what you don't like, how you think, what makes you tick! I have a PhD in Engineering but let me tell you, I have a daughter and sometimes I wish I could do a PhD to study Young People. I think that that would be a fascinating study.

(Pause)

Well, it might sound strange but I think that the teachers in the audience will relate to what I'm saying. The idea of a postgraduate degree in Young People is actually not too far off from what we're trying to do here through this Forum. Because, essentially, what we're doing here is learning how to teach you. As teachers, I think that what

we want to get out of today's Forum is some idea of how, **practically** speaking, **how** do we customize our teaching to be more appropriate to our students. And that is a question that is relevant to **all** teachers, whether at the primary, secondary or tertiary level.

As you may know, here at The University of the West Indies this whole issue of Teaching and Learning is one of four key areas on which our 2007-2012 Strategic Plan focuses. The emphasis on teaching excellence is also to help change the perception of teachers and the public at large that teaching and learning at the UWI is more than information dissemination and regurgitation – that students are in fact required to develop and demonstrate critical thinking, creativity, readiness for learning, and they must be actively involved in their own learning to gain the benefits of the UWI experience. Teachers will be able to observe and hear about some of the strategies excellent teachers use in their classes.

So, that's all I want to say really. I don't want to talk too much here at the start of today's programme. I know some of you have probably just eaten lunch, and I know that all of you are looking forward to today's programme. So, again, I'm happy to have you here. I'm very happy to have so many of you here. This is a very good turnout, which I think is a good sign for us, in the initiative that we are trying to accomplish, not just today but also in the long term.

Thank you.