Welcome Remarks by the Campus Principal

50th Anniversary – Panel Discussion on

‘The Future of the University’

Daaga Auditorium, UWI St. Augustine

Monday 11th October, 2010  6.30pm

Salutations

- Thank you Chair
- Chancellor of The University of the West Indies, Sir George Alleyne
- Pro-Vice Chancellor of Planning and Development, Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie
- Distinguished Panelists – Mr. Reginald Dumas, Ms. Aduke Williams, Mr. Peter Minshall, Dr. Aneesa Ahamad and Eng. Richard Saunders
- Colleagues of the UWI St. Augustine Campus
- Students, members of our wider Campus Community
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

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- Good evening!
It is an honour and a pleasure to welcome you all to this evening’s panel discussion entitled, “The Future of the University”. We began our Jubilee Week of celebrations yesterday with an Interfaith Service in this very Daaga Auditorium and it was indeed a splendid occasion! For those who couldn’t make it yesterday, let me say that you missed a splendid service with invocations and benedictions by Anglican, Catholic, Hindu, Muslim and Orisha faiths, complemented by wonderful music and singing by the UWI Arts Chorale, to give thanks for all that we have built and achieved over the years as a Campus, and to ask for continued wisdom, guidance and blessings.

In that spirit, it is fitting that we are this evening engaging in a discussion on diverse perspectives on the role and future of the University. For this 50th anniversary signifies a moment for celebration and at the same time, introspection. As a Campus and a University, like many institutions, we have had successes and challenges over the years. However, our continued growth as a Campus – into one with more than 17,000 students, 3,000 staff members, five Faculties and a sixth on the horizon – even in an increasingly competitive tertiary education landscape is testament to the resilience of the St. Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies. At the same
time, it is important to reflect on the positioning of the Campus for even greater impact and contribution to national and regional development over the next fifty years and beyond!

- With that said, I would like to welcome the distinguished members of our panel: the Chair of this evening’s proceedings - our Chancellor, Sir George Alleyne, Mr. Reginald Dumas, Ms. Aduke Williams, Mr. Peter Minshall, Dr. Aneesia Ahamad and Eng. Richards Saunders. I also extend a warm welcome to all our specially invited guests, representatives from the public and private sectors, alumni, students and staff both current and retired. Thank you for taking the time to be here on this special occasion and I would like to encourage you to give us your feedback and share your thoughts with us during the open forum. We each have a part to play in shaping and strengthening the synergistic relationship between the university and society, fondly referred to and “gown and town” and as Campus Principal, I am very interested in hearing your views and suggestions.

- Sherlock and Nettleford (1990) in their publication on The University of the West Indies wrote that in 1943, Oliver Stanley, Britain’s Secretary of State for the Colonies, responding to the increasing demands for self-sufficiency
and self-governance by the colonies, emphasized then the urgent need to create highlight educated leaders and to expand the facilities for higher education for without these, the leaders cannot be created. This I believe we have achieved. Without wanting to preempt the discussions this evening and the contributions to be made by our distinguished panelists, I would like to draw reference to a recent quote from our very own Vice Chancellor, Prof. E. Nigel Harris, who stated that “If this university’s more than 90,000 graduates were to stop working for a single day, Prime Ministerial offices in at least seven Caribbean countries would close, half the Cabinet and government offices in all 16 English-speaking contributing countries would cease operations, the leading banks, corporations and other business entities would come to a standstill, the judiciary and legal system, media houses and educational institutions at all levels would be muted”. While this is not something we would ever want to happen, it certainly depicts quite clearly the extent to which our UWI graduates contribute to the leadership and management of Caribbean societies and in a range of disciplines!

- Ladies and gentlemen, when I look around the Campus, I truly believe that we have not just met but have surpassed the expectations of our founders! And as custodians of this cherished institution, not just its physical
structures, but more importantly, its core values and its ethos, it is our duty and responsibility to continue reinforcing our foundation and shaping the vision for the leadership of the institution over the next 50 years and beyond!

- Sherlock and Nettleford (1990) highlighted that the Irvine Commission led by the Vice Chancellor of the University of St. Andrews in 1948, made reference to the following points: that the UWI should be a single centralized institution, that it should be an entirely residential university, the intellectual centre of the Region. It also made specific mention of the need for leadership, the position of women in the academe and the importance of research. As we reflect this evening on “The Future of the University”, it is useful to consider how the University over its 62 years and the Campus over its 50 years in existence have performed in these and other areas. How are we impacting on society through the distinctive UWI graduates we produce, our research, our innovations, our ability to engage national and regional audiences on public policy issues, as well as our service to national, regional and international boards and associations?

- Ladies and gentlemen: For this very special anniversary, it is important that we not only celebrate our past and pay tribute to those who have gone before
us to help build the Campus. We have to look in earnest towards the future! And a successful future has as much to do with planning, preparation and resource mobilization as it has to do with having a vision! I am therefore truly pleased that our Pro Vice Chancellor for Planning and Development, Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie, who is leading the implementation of our UWI Strategic Plan, is here with us this evening and can share his own thoughts on creating a robust and sustainable platform and charting a course for the future of the Campus. Given the very dynamic and competitive environment in which our Campus is functioning, our future success will depend on our ability to maintain our focus on quality in academic programming, service and student centredness. We must produce relevant and impacting research, innovation and generate new knowledge and their applications in a fast-paced, technology-driven society, which we must all help to shape. Furthermore, the future will not be secure if we cannot sustain ourselves financially – this is an imperative! These are no small challenges and I am truly looking forward to hearing your thoughts and perspectives.

- In closing, I would like to again say a special thanks to our very distinguished panelists and to our staff members who have been instrumental
in organizing today’s panel discussion and our other 50th Anniversary events during the week.

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- I would now like to introduce our Chancellor, Sir George Alleyne, who has graciously agreed to be the moderator for this Panel Discussion. For those of us in the UWI system, Sir George needs no introduction but for the benefit of our guests, I will provide a very brief biographical outline:

- Sir George Alleyne, OCC, M.D., F.R.C.P., F.A.C.P. (Hon), DSc (Hon), a native of Barbados, became Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB), Regional Office of the World Health Organization (WHO) on 1st February 1995 and completed a second four-year term on 31st January 2003. In 2003, he was elected Director Emeritus of the PASB. In February 2003, Mr. Kofi Annan, then Secretary General of the United Nations appointed him as his Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean. He was reconfirmed in this position by the current Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. In October 2003, he was appointed Chancellor of the University of the West Indies. He currently holds an Adjunct professorship on the Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University.
• Dr. Alleyne has received numerous awards in recognition of his work, including prestigious decorations and national honors from many countries of the Americas. In 1990, he was made Knight Bachelor by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for his services to Medicine. In 2001, he was awarded the Order of the Caribbean Community, the highest honor that can be conferred on a Caribbean national.

• It is indeed an honour to hand over to our Moderator for this evening’s Panel Discussion, our UWI Chancellor, Sir George Alleyne…