

## EDITORIAL

The Faculty of Engineering will soon be celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, and it seems appropriate at this time to review its performance and contribution to the region it serves. This review will not focus on its successes, since these will be properly documented elsewhere in the coming months. Instead, the present review will consider some areas where success has proved elusive: appropriate programs, feedback from alumni and research.

The U.N. special fund, one of the donors in the establishment of the Faculty, observed in 1965 that the Faculty was doing a good job of training engineers in the four traditional fields of Chemical, Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering. However, it was noted that little was being done to help solve the region's problems. With this in mind, the Special Fund offered scholarships in the fields of Coastal Engineering, Computing and Food Technology to members of the Faculty, in the hope that these would be included in the Faculty's programs. This was the first expansion of programs.

The next expansion took place in 1976, during 'the boom years', when the Government of Trinidad and Tobago funded postgraduate programs in Construction Engineering and Management, Power Systems, Electronics and Instrumentation, Petroleum Engineering, Production Engineering and Management, as well as undergraduate courses in Industrial, Petroleum and Agricultural Engineering. Assistance was also received from CIDA with respect to Agricultural and Industrial Engineering.

Ten years have now passed since the second expansion, and more than twenty since U.N. Special Fund scholarship were offered. In that time, all of the new programs have borne fruit. Computing and Food Technology are now well established. It is unfortunate that Coastal Engineering is not as well developed. The region is composed of islands and coastal erosion is a problem of major importance. It is therefore a field of total relevance for the Caribbean and we do hope the Faculty will do all in its power to help in the establishment of this field of study.

Of the programs instituted during the second expansion, all have produced graduates, either at the Bachelor's or Postgraduate level. What, then, has been the impact of these expansion programs? Is the region better off due to these graduates? Are all of these programs still relevant? Are the teaching methods used cost-effective? Clearly, there is need for a comprehensive review of the work of the Faculty, in order to chart its course into the next twenty-five years.

There is a pressing need to develop a closer relationship between the Faculty and its graduates. At present, a large number of graduates feel alienated. Therefore a mechanism must be established through which our graduates are made to feel that the Faculty is truly their 'Alma Mater'. There is no doubt that the Faculty has been insular. It is time to remove this insularity.

Twenty-five years is a relatively short time in the life of a University Faculty. Yet, in that short time, the engineering profession in these islands has been radically altered. Before the University of the West Indies offered an engineering degree, the profession had no indigenous graduates. Today, UWI graduates cover the whole spectrum of the profession from the most senior positions to the beginner grade. This wealth of experience can be tapped to the benefit of the Faculty. Academics need not fear interference from outside, nor should they abdicate their natural role. Nevertheless, they should recognize the real contribution which Alumni of the Faculty can make.

If there is fear of disagreement or conflict, then this fear should be removed. A university community is of necessity a community in conflict, for it is through conflict of ideas that the clearer direction emerges.

Within the twenty-five years of our existence we have made progress: our student numbers have increased, our

programs expanded and our physical fixtures multiplied. Unfortunately we cannot say our research efforts have increased to the same extent. Lack of funds has been the main drawback. Although we are attempting to pay more attention to West Indian problems, our attempts are still fragmented and lack coordination. The time has come for critical self-examination in order to 'fine-tune' our Faculty, and truly make it a 'centre of excellence' in the Caribbean.



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