

An Enhanced Model for University-Industry Collaboration for Innovation in Trinidad and Tobago

Graham S. King ^{a,Ψ} and Cary R. Cameron ^b

Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies

^aE-mail: Graham.King@sta.uwi.edu

^bE-mail: Cary.Cameron@gmail.com

^Ψ Corresponding Author

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Abstract: *Economic diversification is a top priority in the nations of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean region, which are heavily dependent on tourism and depleting oil and gas reserves. Product and process innovation leading to a wider range of manufactured goods is a vital response, but capability in the region is poor. The University of the West Indies (UWI) has a key role to play in facilitating innovation but historic attempts at university-industry collaboration have not been sustained. Good practice suggests that building relationships with industrial partners, mutual appreciation of capabilities by academic and industrial partners, and having clearly defined and well-managed projects are critical success factors in university-industrial collaborations. A new approach to collaborative applied research projects and to commercialisation of inventions, based on good practice, is being implemented in The UWI Faculty of Engineering. Much increased dialogue with industrial, commercial and government partners is at the heart of the new approach, with the objective being to gain an enhanced appreciation of the needs that exist in external partner organisations. These needs are matched to the capabilities within UWI in the Mechanical and Manufacturing Enterprise Research Centre (MMERC). The MMERC provides activation and coordination of projects of various scales, stimulating university-industry collaboration, and has the potential to significantly boost the innovative capacity in the Caribbean region.*

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