UWI
ST. AUGUSTINE
CAMPUS

PRINCIPAL'S RESEARCH AWARDS & FESTIVAL 2025

Group Photo of Principal's Research Awardees 2024

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Foreword

Professor Rose-Marie Antoine
Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal

It is my privilege as Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal of The University of the West Indies (UWI), St Augustine, to present the ***Principal's Research Awards Citation Booklet 2025***, celebrating the winners and honourees of this year's awards. This booklet recognises those on the Campus whose work has been deemed transformational in their respective fields. It features winners who are impactful researchers, scientists, collaborators, students and even members of the public whose work focuses on addressing today's challenges and anticipating future needs in areas such as climate resilience, artificial intelligence, and health, among others. Research, in all of its forms, remains one of my most important strategic goals and the path toward sustainability, not just for the campus, but for the region.

The research conducted at The UWI St Augustine Campus extends beyond journal publications and articles. It is both impactful and meaningful. Their innovative research not only represents worthy additions to the academic discourse, but in many cases, leads to tangible benefits for society as a whole. In this regard, the awards and their recipients were selected because they demonstrated exemplary contributions that align with our Campus's commitment to advancing knowledge and addressing real-world problems. Each category highlights the efforts of individuals and teams in various fields, focusing on the importance of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration in tackling increasingly complex challenges. For the second year in a row, I am pleased to award members of the public for the Hurricane and Earthquake Alleviation Research Award for community groups and programmes. The unfortunate occurrence of Hurricane Melissa demonstrates the significance and foresight of this special award, which was introduced last year.

As Campus Principal, I am immensely proud of all our winners. The UWI St Augustine Campus is truly a hidden gem in the country, so I hope you take the time to get to know each of our recipients and reach out for collaboration or information on the work they do.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the entire team for the wonderful work they have done in producing yet another ***Principal's Research Awards and Festival*** and bringing the vision to reality—the School for Graduate Studies and Research led by the dynamic Professor Duraisamy Saravanakumar, the Research Awards Committee, my Principal's Office and the Marketing and Communications Office.

Professor Rose-Marie Antoine
Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal

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CAMPUS AWARDS

Principal's Award for Best Researcher

Professor Michelle Mycoo

Department of Geomatics Engineering and Land Management, Faculty of Engineering

Contact: michelle.mycoo@uwi.edu

For research in Climate Change and Urban Planning for Sustainable Development

Professor Michelle Mycoo is a distinguished scholar and Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, recognised as a leading researcher on urban development and climate change adaptation in the Caribbean. Her scholarly influence is evidenced by 6,236 citations, an h-index of 22, and a portfolio of 147 publications, alongside the supervision of over 60 graduate research projects. Her research leadership has attracted nine internationally funded grants, totalling US $5 million (TT $32 million), enabling multidisciplinary collaborations, PhD research, and the acquisition of cutting-edge equipment to advance scientific inquiry.

Professor Mycoo's global impact is underscored by her distinguished role within the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—the world's foremost authority on climate science. She was 1 of 263 influential climate scientists drawn from a pool of 1,037 international nominees for the Report on Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Professor Mycoo served as Coordinating Lead Author, the most senior scientific position within an IPCC chapter, responsible for overseeing the contributions of a global author team, ensuring scientific rigour, and shaping key messages for decision-makers. She is also among the top 8% of global scientists as a Lead Author of the IPCC Special Report on Cities and Climate Change, and among 17% of elite scientists as a Review Editor for the 7th Assessment Report on climate impacts and adaptation due in 2029.

Her demand-driven research informs policy and practice across CARICOM governments and international agencies such as the European Union, Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank, shaping strategies for urban planning, disaster risk reduction, water security and coastal resilience.

Professor Mycoo's influence extends to high-level global scientific governance, serving as Vice-President of UNESCO's Management of Social Transformation, and holding appointments with the United Nations Environment Programme, International Science Council and Future Earth Coasts. Her exceptional contributions have earned her prestigious honours, including The Commonwealth Association of Planners Women in Planning Award (2025) and The Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity (2022).

Professor Mycoo's vision is to leave a legacy of Caribbean research that helps build bridges among academia, governments, communities, and the private sector, ensuring that science drives transformative action for a safer, prosperous, and sustainable world.

Principal's Award for Best Researcher

Professor Rohanie Maharaj

Department of Chemical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

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For research in Food Quality and Safety, Postharvest Technology and Development of Sustainable Materials

Professor Maharaj is specialised in postharvest technology of fruits and vegetables. Her expertise spans to food quality, food safety, sustainable materials, and value addition to Caribbean crops. With extensive industry experience, she bridges academic training with real-world application, strengthening programme delivery, research supervision and institutional capacity. Between 2021 and 2025, she graduated one PhD student as well as sixteen MSc and seven Diploma students, supporting regional human resource development in food science. She is the coordinator of the MSc Food Science and Technology programme in the Chemical Engineering department.

In the last six years, she was principal investigator on FAO and UWI grants ($350K), producing 43 scholarly outputs, 19 of which were in peer-reviewed journals, including PLOS One, Sustainable Food Technology, Frontiers in Food Science and Technology and Food Technology and Biotechnology. She has been at the forefront of guiding students in developing edible coatings, biodegradable films and paper-based packaging from neglected and underutilised crops and from agricultural waste. Innovative research using UVC irradiation to enhance the functional properties of Beetroot powder, has supported food security, environmental sustainability, and technological innovation in Small Island Developing States.

She has led studies on pesticide residues, microbiological risks, street-food hygiene, and antimicrobial interventions, generating scientific evidence that guides public health agencies, regulators, and MSMEs across the region. Her co-authored publications on environmental GAP analysis, AI applications in food security, dark chocolate formulations with jaggery, bay leaf and turmeric essential oils in meat preservation, probiotic tropical juice blends, and fermented beverages demonstrate her broad scientific influence and regional impact.

She is a regional representative of the Caribbean Food Crops Society and has developed strong collaborations with institutions including The Ohio State University and University of Florida (USA), University of Saskatchewan and McGill (Canada), L'Institut Agro (France), Government Analytical Services, and Banks Breweries (Barbados), and Universidad de los Andes (Colombia).

Her vision is to advance a sustainable Caribbean food system by reducing waste, strengthening food safety, developing biodegradable materials and increasing value-addition opportunities for regional crops through applied research, industry partnerships, MSME capacity building and mentorship of emerging scientists. Her work positions The UWI as a regional leader in food security, sustainability and research-driven development.

Principal's Award for Most Impactful Community Research

Dr Ben Braithwaite

Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities and Education

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Project: Deaf Caribbean Academic Network Research

Deaf Caribbean Academic Network Research is community-based research on Caribbean sign languages and language rights. At The UWI St Augustine, Dr Ben Braithwaite, Senior Lecturer in Linguistics in the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics and coordinator of The UWI's Diploma in Caribbean Sign Language Interpreting, led the work alongside Ian Dhanoolal, Part-time Assistant Lecturer at The UWI, and President of the Deaf Empowerment and Advancement Foundation. They worked in collaboration with Dr Nick Palfreyman of the University of Central Lancashire (UK), and Deaf researchers and community leaders, Andre Witter from Jamaica and Yarret Piñeiro Rodríguez from Puerto Rico, to establish the Deaf Caribbean Academic Network (Deaf CAN), providing training and mentorship to Deaf researchers from communities across the region. Over the last five years, the team's work has attracted grants worth a total of around TT $ 2,000,000.00.

Their work has achieved many firsts. At The UWI, they hosted the first major academic conference on sign language research in the region, SIGN10, with all presentations delivered in signed languages. They have trained Caribbean Deaf researchers in research skills, including Deaf leaders from Mayan, Kalinago, Kali'na and Akawaio Indigenous communities. Several Caribbean sign languages that were previously undocumented were identified and recorded, making initial descriptions and documentary materials publicly available and prompting the first steps towards formal recognition. Andre Witter's academic presentations in Jamaican Country Sign (SAIN) were the first to be delivered in a small non-national sign language at international academic conferences. Moreover, they have produced accessible, collaborative co-authored publications involving undergraduate and postgraduate students at The UWI, and including some of the first peer-reviewed academic publications on sign languages to have Deaf Caribbean co-authors.

Outside of academics, the team has engaged in advocacy work on language rights, provided input into national disability legislation, and led community-based disaster preparedness and recovery work. The work has been guided by the conviction that academic research on Caribbean sign languages and Deaf communities is fundamental to effective advocacy and social change, and that these can only be most impactful when Deaf community leaders and researchers are empowered to lead the way themselves.

Special Recognition for Most Impactful Community Research

Dr Kenneth Charles

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Project: Action Research to Introduce Community Voluntary Non-Remunerated Blood Donation

Dr Kenneth Charles is a Senior Lecturer in Haematology at The University of the West Indies and Honorary Consultant Haematologist with the North Central Regional Authority. He is the Founding Chairman of The UWI Blood Donor Foundation (UWIBDF). His research interest is the dichotomy between blood transfusion services in developed and developing countries.

He used action research to devise a model for voluntary non-remunerated blood donation in Trinidad and Tobago. This involved collaborative and multidisciplinary research in two countries, for which he was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy from Sheffield University in 2022. Most of the research to examine knowledge, attitudes and practices in the community was performed by students of The UWI under his supervision and used to design information and promotional strategies.

The model has been successfully applied to conduct 36 UWIBDF voluntary non-remunerated blood drives to date, including during the COVID-19 pandemic when blood supplies were diminished globally. The model has been adopted by the Ministry of Health as the working document for transforming the local blood transfusion service from reliance on sporadic replacement donors, which causes shortages and unreliability, to one that uses voluntary non-remunerated donors who are committed and donate regularly. Based on this success, voluntary non-remunerated blood donation programmes have been extended to hospital-based and mobile services to communities nationally.

The research has generated numerous publications and conference presentations and inspired similar research in other Caribbean islands and former colonies. At present, it is at the centre of an international collaboration to examine and address the effects of colonialism on blood and organ donation.

Special Recognition for Most Impactful Community Research

Professor Pathmanathan Umaharan and the Cocoa Research Centre Team

Cocoa Research Centre

Contact: sta-crc@uwi.edu

Project: Research for supporting rural cocoa growing communities to build their resilience against climate change for economic, social and environmental sustainability

The research was conducted by the UWI Cocoa Research Centre in the village of Lopinot-La Pastora towards building an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable society around the cocoa sector. Named REvitalising Cocoa Related Enterprises And Technology Enhancement Project or RECREATE—Cocoa Communities, the study was led by the Director of the CRC,Professor Pathmanathan Umaharan, and involved Drs Darin Sukha, Lambert Motilal and Naailah Ali and researchers Romina Umaharan and Marvin Lewis, with Ms Karen Lee Lum serving as the Project Manager.

The project involved providing technologies, good agriculture practices and business training to strengthen actors within the cocoa value chain, developing a farm design and technologies to reduce cost and address climate change resilience, and training a GAYAP crew to provide labour support services to the farms. The training also extended to value-added businesses, linking them to local cocoa farmers to lift the community. Beyond training, the project also focused on developing indicators for economic, environmental and social sustainability, as well as building an evidence-based-dashboard to support continuous improvement, and a digital traceability platform to improve trust in the local brands.

Overall, the farm productivity was improved by 25%, the number of primary processors and secondary producers increased by 30%, and value-add production increased by 50%. The impact of the sustainability certification will be felt as the brands venture into export markets.

There is also room for the expansion of its application as this validated model can be implemented across communities in Trinidad and Tobago to improve the vibrancies of the communities while simultaneously encouraging their sustainable growth.

Most Productive Research Department Award

Department of Life Sciences

Faculty of Science and Technology
Head of the Department – Dr Mike Oatham/Dr Azad Mohammed

Contact: STA-FST-LifeSciences-HOD@sta.uwi.edu

Biodiversity & Ecosystem Conservation, Biostimulants, Drug Discovery, Antibiotic Resistance Management & Crop Improvement Research with Impressive Publications for Health, Food Security and Climate Resilience

The Department of Life Sciences (DLS) at The UWI St Augustine is a regional leader in biological and environmental research with expertise across plant and animal sciences, microbiology, ecology, biochemistry, biotechnology and conservation biology. Its research addresses major challenges in agriculture, biodiversity, public health and environmental sustainability.

Over the past five years, the DLS has generated more than 160 peer-reviewed articles, several books and technical reports and impactful innovations. Notable achievements include: natural-product drug discovery from local microbes, amphibians and scorpions, resulting in two patents for antibiotic adjuvants; development of seaweed-based biostimulants for sustainable agriculture; and crop improvement in cocoa and anthurium. Its efforts support national and regional priorities and advance multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals related to health, food security, climate resilience and ecosystem conservation.

From 2020–2025, the DLS secured roughly TT $10.88 million in grants from organisations such as The UWI Research and Development Impact/Innovation and Technology Transfer Fund, Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme-Global Environment Fund, INTERREG-European Development Fund, The Royal Society, Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), Ocean Conservancy, Our Shared Ocean Program and BirdsCaribbean. They also maintain strong partnerships with locally based agencies like The UWI Cocoa Research Centre, Environmental Management Authority and CANARI, and collaborate with international universities and institutes in the United Kingdom, France, United Arab Emirates, Bulgaria and Denmark, among others. Its researchers also contribute to global platforms including the IPCC, GBIF, SARGOOD and BioTIME networks.

The DLS's excellence is reflected in major awards, including the FSBI Medal for Fish Biology (Dr Amy Deacon), UWI Principal's Best Researcher Award (Professor Adesh Ramsubhag), Biochemical Society UK ambassadorship (Dr Milena Mechkarska) and top 2% global researcher rankings (Dr Sephra Rampersad).

Looking ahead, the DLS aims to expand commercialisation of research products, strengthen science-policy integration, broaden citizen-science engagement and reinforce regional research networks to drive sustainable development and improved quality of life across the Caribbean.

Most Productive Research Department Award

Department of Food Production

Faculty of Food and Agriculture
Head of the Department – Dr Wendy-Ann Isaac

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Development of Biopesticides, Protein Rich Livestock Feed Formulation and Soil Health Management through outstanding grant funding to lead agricultural research in the region

The Department of Food Production (DFP) at the Faculty of Food and Agriculture is a leading Caribbean centre for agricultural research and innovation. Its expertise spans soil science, crop production and protection, livestock science, agri-food environmental microbiology, food safety, innovative food product development and disaster risk resilience. For over five years, DFP has generated transformative knowledge and practical solutions that strengthen Caribbean food security, advance environmental sustainability and build climate resilience across the region's agri-food systems.

Its commitment to research excellence is reflected in 167 high-quality outputs from 2020–2025, including 91 peer-reviewed articles, 43% in high-impact journals. This work delivers tangible societal benefits. Major innovations include Biophyt 1.0, a biofungicide and biostimulant that reduces crop disease by 87% and increases lettuce yields by 40%. The Agro-Environmental Services (AES) Unit provides revenue-generating soil, water and plant diagnostics, strengthening links between research and field application. Sustainable protein advances include a Black Soldier Fly bioreactor converting vegetable waste into high-value feed. Regionally, they lead CSIDS-SOILCARE, improving soil management across eight Caribbean nations, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)/Global Environment Fund (GEF)-funded REBYC-III project, which enhances fisheries management by reducing bycatch and promoting ecosystem-based approaches.

The impact and credibility of its research are evident in its strong success in resource mobilisation. Between 2020 and 2025, DFP secured approximately TT $79.79 million in competitive research funding, with TT $79.52 million obtained from major external agencies such as the FAO, GEF, Water and Sewerage Authority and the Government of Dominica. Its faculty members hold influential international roles, including Co-Chair of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Working Group on Drought (Dr Gaius Eudoxie), member of the International Science Council and Small Island Developing States Liaison Committee (Professor Mark Wuddivira), and member of the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk Scientific Committee (Dr Ronald Roopnarine). These achievements strengthen DFP's role in shaping regional and global agricultural policy.

Its overarching vision is to catalyse climate-resilient, self-sufficient and profitable food systems across the Caribbean. Strengthening policy engagement to ensure science guides regional agricultural strategies is a top priority. They intend to continue building human capacity by training the next generation of agricultural scientists and extending cutting-edge knowledge to farmers and industry stakeholders, supporting a sustainable and food-secure Caribbean future.

Most Productive Research Institute, Centre or Unit Award

Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES)

Director - Dr Sandra Sookram

Contact: salises@sta.uwi.edu

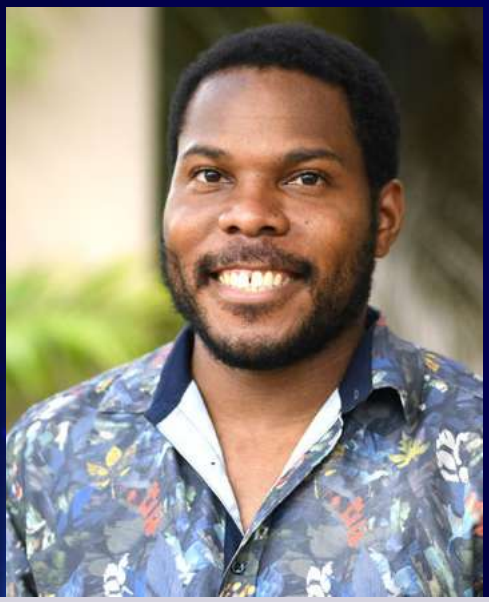
Scholarly research in Climate Finance and Natural Disasters in Caribbean SIDS, inclusive education and disability, constitutional reform and democratic governance, social policy and mental health, sport and culture

The Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) at The UWI St Augustine is a multidisciplinary research institute within the Faculty of Social Sciences that specialises in development policy, statistics and applied social research on the Caribbean. Its particular strengths are in climate and disaster risk finance, social policy and governance, disability studies, sport and culture and population and development.

Over the past five years, the Institute has produced a substantial body of high-quality scholarship, including high impact peer-reviewed journal articles, books and book chapters on climate finance and natural disasters in Caribbean SIDS, inclusive education and disability, constitutional reform and democratic governance, social policy and mental health, and sport and culture. This work has directly influenced regional policy—including CARICOM's climate negotiations ahead of COP28 and national disability frameworks via the Equal Opportunity Commission—and informed debates on climate-resilient development, social inclusion, and public sector reform in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider region.

SALISES has also attracted significant external research funding, with competitively-won grants exceeding US $500,000 (and participation in multi-million dollar international consortia) from agencies such as the Centre for Disaster Protection, the International Development Research Centre, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Resources Institute, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. These projects have enabled strong collaborations with regional governments, international organisations, universities and civil society partners. Notably, members of the Institute have been appointed to prestigious global bodies, serving as Lead Authors for the IPCC Seventh Assessment Report and on the International Science Council's Roster of Experts.

Through its research, teaching and outreach, SALISES seeks to advance a more just, inclusive and climate-resilient Caribbean. The Institute aims to support evidence-informed policy and planning that reduces vulnerability to climate and economic shocks, expands opportunities for persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups and strengthens democratic governance. SALISES will pursue this vision by deepening interdisciplinary research programmes, expanding partnerships with policymakers and communities and mentoring the next generation of Caribbean researchers and policy leaders through its postgraduate programmes and research training initiatives.



Most Promising Early Career Researcher Award

Dr Kegan Jones

Lecturer, School of Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Medical Sciences

Contact: kegan.jones@uwi.edu

Research Focusing on Neotropical Non-Domesticated Animal Production, Neotropical Small Ruminant Production and the Use of Animal Products as Functional Food with impressive publications

Dr Kegan Jones is currently a Lecturer in Animal Science and Production in the School of Veterinary Medicine. He joined The UWI in 2019 as a teaching assistant in the Department of Basic Veterinary Sciences and has steadily progressed to his current position. He was part of the team that received the Most Outstanding Research Department Award in 2024 and has supervised and mentored seven postgraduate students in the Faculty of Food and Agriculture as well as the Faculty of Medical Sciences, while coordinating research activities at the Wildlife Unit at the University Field Station. His research areas include neotropical non-domesticated animal production, neotropical small ruminant production and the use of animal products as functional food.

Dr Jones has published 45 peer-reviewed journal articles, of which he is the first author on 24, the supervising author on 14, and 35 were published in the last five years. He has also served as a reviewer for 26 international peer-reviewed journals. His research impact is also evident in his index ratings, with a commendable h-index of 12 and an i10-index of 16. He has been a recipient of research grants totalling TT $71,867 and has shown that he can produce impactful research with limited funding.

His research interests are developing alternative, low-cost feed from agricultural by-products, understanding the biology, nutrition and digestive physiology of neotropical animals and improving animal production systems using local resources. Through his collaboration with local farmers, including the owner of Vista Dorado Estates' Moruga Hill Rice, he has facilitated joint projects between Moruga secondary schools, the Faculty of Food and Agriculture and Moruga Hill Rice farmers. His research demonstrates that the by-products of the rice can support animal growth, reduce feed costs, lower methane emissions and promote sustainable farming.

Through his research, Dr Jones hopes to see a shift toward locally rooted, sustainable food systems, where people can not only better understand and value the biodiversity around them, but also engage relevant persons and policymakers to translate research findings into sustainable solutions.

Professor Mark Wuddivira
Dean, Faculty of Food and Agriculture

Dr Sunshine De Caires
Graduate Researcher

Most Outstanding Graduate Researcher & Mentorship Award

Contact:
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Thesis: Modelling Spatial and Temporal Trends of Soil Quality in Small Island Tropical Watersheds for Climate Change Resilience

Dr Sunshine A De Caires is an internationally recognised soil scientist whose work bridges cutting-edge research, policy engagement, and mentorship. Her doctoral research transformed soil science in data-poor contexts. Under the mentorship of Professor Mark Wuddivira, she pioneered the use of electromagnetic induction and geostatistics to map soil properties efficiently, developing predictive models for soil depth, which are critical for understanding erosion, flooding and carbon dynamics under climate change. This work has been published in multiple first-author articles and advanced regional soil science, from descriptive mapping to predictive decision-support applications.

Dr De Caires is committed to fostering diversity in STEM, particularly encouraging women to pursue physically demanding field sciences. In 2023, she was awarded the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Young Talents Award (Caribbean), and in 2024, served as a UNESCO panellist promoting girls' participation in science. As a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on Soil, she collaborates with experts to shape sustainable policy frameworks that address soil, water, land and biodiversity challenges.

At UWI, she integrates her research and advocacy into teaching, mentoring undergraduates, supervising, and laboratory training, nurturing the next generation of soil scientists.

Professor Mark Wuddivira, Dean of the Faculty of Food and Agriculture and Professor of Agri-Environmental Soil Physics, stands at the forefront of agricultural and environmental science, with a distinguished career dedicated to sustainable development in the Caribbean and beyond. He is also the President of the Caribbean Academy of Sciences and a member of the International Science Council's Small Island Developing States (ISC-SIDS) Liaison Committee. His research on sustainable soil management in tropical ecosystems is both globally recognised and locally critical, and his work is widely published in high-impact, prestigious journals.

Professor Wuddivira leads interdisciplinary research integrating plant and soil science, driving innovation regionally and globally. This scholarly impact was formally honoured with the 2023 UWI Principal's Research Award as the Most Outstanding Faculty Researcher, alongside other prestigious accolades from institutions like Niger Delta University. Beyond his own research, he is a prolific mentor, having supervised numerous MPhil and PhD graduates who have become leading academics, researchers and CEOs. He further amplifies scientific discourse as an editorial board member for top-tier journals and as a sought-after speaker at high-level international forums, consistently advocating for resilient agri-food systems in SIDS.

Most Outstanding Graduate Researcher & Mentorship Award

Professor Jerome De Lisle
Faculty of Humanities and Education

Dr Nirmala Ramnarine
Graduate Researcher

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Thesis: Validating Interpretations and Uses of School-Based Assessment in CSEC Public Examinations

Dr Nirmala Ramnarine is currently working as a Physics teacher in Shiva Boys' Hindu College; an assessment facilitator for the Teacher Education, Performance and Professional Development unit; and a School-Based Assessment moderator for the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC). Her PhD thesis, "Validating Interpretations and Uses of School-Based Assessment in CSEC Public Examinations (2025)" is in the specialised areas of educational measurement and mixed methods. Her qualitatively driven mixed-methods study of formative assessment in the CXC school-based assessment process insightfully reveals the tensions and synergies between assessment purposes that inform and distort practice.

She has been awarded for her work with various teams studying public examinations: Best paper proposal in the Caribbean and African Studies in Education (CASE) SIG at the 2016 American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC; The International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) 2019 Frances M Ottobre Distinguished Student Scholarship; and AERA Caribbean and African Special Interest Group's 2022 best paper proposal award for CASE-SIG.

She has published one book chapter and nine conference papers, and recently developed a technical manual for the Ministry of Education to help teachers better use formative classroom assessment, and is currently engaged with research teams to develop two book proposals. She is a student member of the United States National Council of Measurement in Education (NCME) and the IAEA.

Professor Jerome De Lisle has been with The UWI since 1995, advancing from Lecturer to his current role as Professor of Educational Leadership. His research focuses on educational leadership and evaluation, emphasising equity and the challenges faced by marginalised groups in Caribbean education. His work provides insights and practical recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders, focused on advancing equity and effectiveness and supporting evidence-based improvements in Caribbean education.

Professor De Lisle has been recognised for his contributions with awards such as the Best Paper Award from the American Educational Research Association Caribbean and African Special Interest Group, as well as a keynote presentation at the Mixed Methods International Research Association 2024 conference. Recent projects include a review of the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) and the Concordat, and the establishment of research clusters within the School of Education. He also served as Chair of the Campus Ethics Committee from 2019 to 2023, and Director of the School of Education from 2019 to 2022. He has produced over 30 publications, including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and conference papers. In addition to these, he has authored at least four technical reports. His work has garnered 1,308 citations in total, with 550 citations since 2019.

FACULTY AWARDS

Most Outstanding Faculty Researcher - Engineering

Professor Festus Olutoge

Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

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Professor Festus Adeyemi Olutoge is a distinguished academic whose 35-year career reflects sustained excellence in teaching, research, mentorship and leadership within Civil and Environmental Engineering. He earned his Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering in 1988, a Master's degree in Structural Engineering in 1995 and a PhD in Civil Engineering with specialisation in Structures in 2006. His academic development includes two postdoctoral fellowships: the first at the Structural Engineering Research Centre in Chennai, India, from 2009 to 2010, and the second at the University of the West of England, Bristol, United Kingdom, in 2015. In recognition of his research achievements, he received the Seal of Excellence for Research and Innovation from the European Union Framework for Research in 2017.

Professor Olutoge previously held the rank of Professor at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, before joining The University of the West Indies (UWI) in 2018. At The UWI, he served as Head of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering from 2021 to 2024, contributing significantly to academic leadership and programme development.

Over the past five years, he has hosted four post-doctoral fellows, one from Nigeria and three from India, demonstrating a strong commitment to mentorship. He also served as an external reviewer for engineering programmes at the University of Belize and the University of Rwanda, alongside reviewing for 11 international journals. In that same time, he has achieved 43 publications comprising 32 journal articles, four conference papers, and seven registered patents.

His research focuses on sustainable construction materials, particularly the valorisation of agricultural wastes as environmentally friendly alternatives to conventional concrete constituents. Through pioneering contributions to geopolymer technology, he has developed cementless concrete using materials, such as ground granulated blast furnace slag, fly ash, corn cob ash and rice husk ash, with the overarching aim of lowering the carbon footprint of construction materials. Professor Olutoge's work directly supports UN Sustainable Development Goals 9, 11 and 13, and it is hoped that, in the near future, his innovations in geopolymer concrete will be adopted within the construction industry, particularly as a viable option for precast housing solutions that can be rapidly deployed in disaster-prone areas.

Most Outstanding Faculty Researcher- Food and Agriculture

Dr Oral Daley

Lecturer, Department of Food Production, Faculty of Food and Agriculture

Contact: oral.daley@uwi.edu

Dr Oral O Daley is a Lecturer in Sustainable Crop Production Systems in the Department of Food Production at the Faculty of Food and Agriculture. He holds a PhD in Crop Science (High Commendation) and has over two decades of professional and academic experience in Caribbean agriculture. His work integrates crop science, plant propagation, climate resilience and sustainable production systems, with a strong commitment to enhancing regional food and nutrition security.

Dr Daley's research focuses on crop genetic diversity, plant physiology, postharvest biology, climate-smart agriculture and the resilience of food systems in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). A major component of his scholarship involves extensive work on breadfruit *(Artocarpus altilis)*, including morphological and molecular characterisation, ethnobotanical studies and postharvest applications. His contributions have advanced the understanding of this important food-security crop and expanded regional germplasm knowledge. Beyond breadfruit, his work spans root and tuber crops, sweet potato physiology, tropical fruit tree management and consumer behaviour relating to food security.

His research has contributed to impactful regional development initiatives, including the Regional Sweet Potato Value Chain Enhancement Project and UWI-funded research on root crop germplasm conservation and propagation. Dr Daley serves as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator on projects that support climate adaptation, agricultural innovation and sustainable production. He has published over 20 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters, and numerous conference papers, serving as a reviewer for several international journals and as Guest Associate Editor for *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*.

His work has earned recognition, including the Dean's Award for Excellence, multiple academic scholarships and international training fellowships. Dr Daley also contributes significantly to regional capacity building through public service, advisory committees, consultancy and training for farmers, extension officers and youth in agriculture.

A central aspect of Dr Daley's scholarly impact is his mentorship. He currently supervises over 10 postgraduate students at the MPhil and PhD levels, providing leadership in research design, capacity-building and scientific development across multiple crop science disciplines.

Through his research, Dr Daley aims to advance resilient crop production systems, improve food system sustainability in SIDS and strengthen the regional scientific capacity needed to address climate change. His ongoing goal is to expand collaborative research, enhance value-addition pathways for tropical crops and support innovation that drives agricultural transformation across the Caribbean.

Most Outstanding Faculty Researcher - Humanities and Education

Dr Nicole Roberts

Director, Centre for Language Learning, Faculty of Humanities and Education

Contact: nicole.roberts@uwi.edu

In 1998, Dr Nicole Roberts was appointed as a Full-Time Lecturer in the Spanish section of the then Department of Liberal Arts. She received tenure in 2004 and was promoted to Senior Lecturer in Spanish and Hispanic Literature in 2011. Over the years, she has taken on several leadership roles within the Faculty of Humanities and Education, including Deputy Dean for Distance and Outreach (2008–2010), and later became the first Head of the newly established Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (DMLL) in 2012. In 2022, she assumed the position of Acting Director at the Centre for Language Learning and was appointed Director in 2023.

Dr Roberts is a specialist in Afro-Hispanic Literature and Hispanic Studies whose scholarship has made significant contributions to the understanding of race, identity and gender in the Hispanic Caribbean. Her single-authored book, *Main Themes in 20th Century Afro-Hispanic Poetry: A Literary Sociology*, examines questions of race, identity politics and colourism.

She has also co-edited several influential volumes. *Border Crossings: A Trilingual Anthology of Caribbean Women Writers* is the first anthology of its kind to bring together women's voices from across the French-, Spanish- and English-speaking Caribbean.

In recent years, her research has expanded into contemporary issues of intersectionality, transnationalism and innovation in language learning. Additionally, she has published widely in regional and international journals, including the Journal of West Indian Literature (Jamaica), Política y cultura (Mexico) and the Delaware Review of Latin American Studies (USA).

Dr Roberts is also Principal Investigator, with Mr Romulo Guédez Fernández, on a project on migrants and refugees in Trinidad and Tobago that is funded through the United in Knowledge: EU-Latin America Academic Synergies project as part of the Jean Monet Research and Publications Grant (29,000 Euros), which will culminate in an international conference and Migrant Fair in December 2025.

As she notes, "I believe that my research on cultural practices, traditions, and Hispanic studies deepens regional self-understanding, strengthens cross-cultural dialogue, and enriches the Caribbean's evolving identity in an increasingly interconnected world."

Most Outstanding Faculty Researcher - Law

Dr Alicia Elias-Roberts

Dean, Faculty of Law

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Dr Alicia Elias-Roberts is the Dean of the Faculty of Law at The UWI St Augustine, and an attorney-at-law, admitted to practice law in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and the United States of America. She has pioneered legal education and training in Oil and Gas Law in Trinidad and Tobago at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She specialises in Oil, Gas and Energy Law, Environmental Law, Administrative Law and International Law. Dr Elias-Roberts has over 25 years' experience as an academic, international lawyer, legal drafter and legal consultant. She has worked as a consultant for several international organisations, including the CARICOM, UNAIDS, International Labour Organisation, World Wildlife Fund and various governments in the Commonwealth Caribbean. She has written over 20 journal articles, book chapters, and edited books with reputable publishers.

Dr Elias-Roberts has a Law degree from the University of Guyana, a Master of Law degree from the University of Oxford (UK) and an LLM in Energy, Environment and Natural Resource Law from the University of Houston (Texas, USA). Her PhD, focused on Energy Development Law, is from Queen's University (Canada).

A current focus of Dr Elias Roberts is Geothermal Resource Governance and Sustainable Development in Montserrat and the Commonwealth Caribbean. For this research, she is collaborating with colleagues from the University of Oxford and working on an interdisciplinary research project on *ReSET: Rethinking Natural Resources*. The project explores how geothermal energy and critical minerals can be extracted in ways that support both global sustainability goals and local economic development. The work brings together a diverse group of stakeholders—including government officials, legal and regulatory professionals, academic and technical experts, community representatives and environmental advocates—to examine regulatory challenges, land and resource rights and best practices for inclusive and responsible governance in Montserrat's geothermal sector. Dr Elias-Roberts' research in this project is based on the "Legal Framework of Geothermal Resource Governance and Sustainable Development in Montserrat and the Commonwealth Caribbean".

Most Outstanding Faculty Researcher - Medical Sciences

Dr Raveed Khan

Lecturer, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, Faculty of Medical Sciences

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Dr Raveed Khan is a family medicine physician and academic attached to the newly formed Department of Public Health and Primary Care. His research interests are vast but include chronic non-communicable diseases, women's health, telehealth, mental health, health promotion and disease prevention.

His research has been published in several high-impact and peer-reviewed journals, with a growing number of citations. Earlier this year, he co-authored a book entitled *Rum Songs and Other Alcohol Issues in the English-speaking Caribbean*, representing the shared views and passions of the co-author team in raising awareness of alcohol use as a public health issue nationally and regionally.

His most impactful research includes the completion of a randomised trial, which concluded that personalised written asthma action plans empower families and improve children's health, thereby bridging the gap between guidelines and real-world practice.

He also conducted a systematic review of the leading reasons for primary health care encounters and their implications for healthcare in Trinidad and Tobago. Further, he engaged in research on the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of primary healthcare workers toward the Oxford AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine and the positive influences of the pandemic on community-dwelling adults.

His descriptive works on public health screening practices provide data on local epidemiology, describe health-seeking behaviours, highlight gaps in uptake and awareness and support policies to inform increased access to these services.

He previously served as a Junior Research Faculty member of The Eastern Caribbean Health Outcomes Research Network (ECHORN), which examined the lifestyles, eating habits and health behaviours associated with cancer, diabetes and heart disease in adult men and women living in the Eastern Caribbean.

He currently serves as a member of the World Health Organization/ Pan American Health Organization Strategic Advisory Group on universal health and primary healthcare and collaborated with the Ministry of Health on the recently completed national STEPS survey of NCD risk factors in Trinidad and Tobago.

His hope is that his research serves to empower patients, build capacity and inform policy, with the ultimate impact of making the world a better place for all and for our future generations.

Most Outstanding Faculty Researcher - Science and Technology

Dr Amy Deacon

Senior Lecturer, Department of Life Sciences,
Faculty of Science and Technology

Contact: amy.deacon@uwi.edu

Dr Amy Deacon is a Senior Lecturer in Zoology in the Department of Life Sciences at the Faculty of Science and Technology, having joined The UWI as a Lecturer in 2016. Dr Deacon's research focuses on biodiversity, with an emphasis on freshwater ecosystems and species. She serves as Scientific Coordinator for the annual T&T Bioblitz event, which has been generating valuable biodiversity data for the country while also engaging communities with their local biodiversity since 2012. Dr Deacon is an Editor for the international journal Animal Behaviour, and for the local journal *Living World: Journal of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club*.

Key research highlights include the establishment of an ongoing long-term freshwater biodiversity dataset from the Northern Range, and its publication onto the open-access BioTIME database, a project in collaboration with researchers at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. This research is critical not only for understanding and protecting Trinidad and Tobago's (T&T's) rivers, but it is also one of only a few temporal tropical freshwater datasets globally. As such, it provides valuable insights into these species-rich yet threatened habitats across the tropics. One of the major threats to aquatic biodiversity is invasive species. Through her research publications, Dr Deacon has helped establish the guppy, a native fish to T&T, as a 'model species' in invasion biology. By exploring more about what makes the guppy so successful and adaptable both in its native habitat and when introduced to new places, Dr Deacon's work has demonstrated the importance of flexibility of behaviour and reproductive strategy to invasive success.

In 2022, Dr Deacon was awarded the FSBI Medal for Exceptional Contributions to Fish Biology, and in the same year, she was awarded a UWI/Guardian Premium Teaching Award.

The work of Dr Deacon, her students and collaborators highlights the incredible opportunities that T&T's biodiversity offers for research, education and outreach. It is her hope that these examples will encourage others to consider how studying local species and habitats can improve efforts to understand and conserve local ecosystems while also addressing some of the 'big' questions in biology and conservation.

Most Outstanding Faculty Researcher - Social Sciences

Dr Henry Bailey

Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics, Faculty of Social Sciences

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Dr Henry Bailey's research focuses on developing tools that small developing countries can use for Health Technology Assessment (HTA). This branch of economics helps governments to determine which new drugs and interventions they should introduce into their health systems.

His published work includes population health and inequality studies across the Caribbean, and most recently, he has led a team of international researchers that has looked at new approaches to measuring health inequality. He has collaborated with international researchers on developing new ways of producing QALY-adjustment values, which are used in population health and pharmacoeconomic studies. Locally, he has collaborated with clinicians at the Faculty of Medical Sciences to conduct health-economic studies of multiple sclerosis, diabetes, HIV, kidney disease, ophthalmology and chronic illnesses.

Since 2020, his work has attracted grants of $800,000, with another $500,000 in the pipeline.

He is a member of the EuroQol Research Group, a founding member of the Global Health Network of Harvard University, and on the editorial and advisory boards of two first-quartile international journals.

In 2013, he received The UWI/National Gas Company Award for Most Outstanding Graduate Researcher in the Faculty of Social Sciences. This was given for his work with his PhD supervisors, Dr Althea La Foucade and Professor Karl Theodore.

Since 2023, Dr Bailey has also served as Deputy Dean for Distance Learning and Outreach in the Faculty of Social Sciences, where he has introduced several new initiatives leveraging our research, including the Faculty Policy Brief Series and the faculty-research newspaper series.

His efforts speak to the ways that he champions development change: "I am working towards getting our health system to use the tools and the capacity that we have developed at UWI to adopt HTA locally. Other regional governments come to us at UWI to help them develop these same tools for their health systems."

An avid runner and aspiring jazz guitarist, he says that one of his biggest accomplishments at UWI so far has been to play on stage with the UWI Jazz Ensemble.

Most Outstanding Researcher - Centre/Institute/Unit

Dr Bephyer Parey

Research Fellow, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies

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Dr Bephyer Parey is a Research Fellow at the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES), whose work at the intersection of disability studies, inclusive education, social care and mixed methods research, has positioned her as a leading scholar advancing inclusion and equity in the Caribbean and internationally. Her scholarship is grounded in rigorous empirical inquiry and a strong commitment to improving the lives of persons with disabilities through policy-relevant, socially responsive research.

A central contribution of Dr Parey's work has been the advancement of the Social Model of Disability and Wellbeing, an extension of the traditional social model that better integrates human rights and wellbeing outcomes. She has also advanced mixed-methods research through the operationalisation of a tool for evaluating rigour, which supports students and supervisors in strengthening methodological quality. Her research on education, employment, healthcare, social care and human rights has influenced regional discourses and shaped institutional and policy conversations on inclusion.

Dr Parey's research visibility has been strengthened through competitive funding, most notably her role as a co-applicant on the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council-funded grant "Fostering Collaborative Research Networks and Knowledge Mobilisation on Inclusive Education". This grant supported the leadership team of the International Partnership for Research on Inclusive Education (iPRIE), of which she is a member, in developing a global research agenda spanning Canada, Africa and the Caribbean. Through iPRIE, she contributes to building international research capacity, strengthening comparative scholarship and promoting evidence-based advancement of inclusive education systems.

Her work has been recognised through invitations to deliver keynote lectures, membership on high-level editorial boards, including the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* and active contributions to global scholarly communities. She has also led the SALISES Disability Studies Research Cluster since 2019, shaping public understanding of disability through media engagements and public forums.

Looking ahead, Dr Parey seeks to drive systemic change by promoting a society in which persons with disabilities fully enjoy their rights and achieve holistic wellbeing. She intends to pursue this through continued cross-sector collaboration, rigorous research, policy engagement and community-oriented dissemination that supports meaningful, inclusive transformation in the Caribbean and beyond.

Most Outstanding Researcher of the Centre/Institute/Unit

Dr Letetia Addison

Project Officer & Researcher, University Office of Planning

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Dr Letetia Mary Addison serves as a Project Officer in the Business Intelligence Unit at the University Office of Planning (UOP) and an Adjunct Lecturer in Statistics at The UWI St Augustine. A mathematician and statistician by training, and educator by passion, she is a proud UWI alumna known for bridging data analytics, purpose and ethical innovation.

Her core research explores statistical modelling, institutional resilience, and AI for social good, driven by a belief that ethically applied data can transform lives and institutions. Her most notable contributions include the development of the One UWI Business Intelligence Model Prototypes for Tuition Price and Student Retention, positioned to strengthen UWI's pricing and student support strategies. In 2024, she led a TT $50,000 Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Computing and Information Technology to support university-wide deployment.

She is also a Principal Investigator on funded projects valued at over US $100,000, including applying artificial intelligence to climate resilience in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in collaboration with multiple international partners. She has contributed to global AI and climate resilience dialogues as an invited UN TEC speaker, including conferences in Azerbaijan and Panama. In 2025, she was appointed UNESCO's Lead AI Consultant for Trinidad and Tobago's National AI Readiness Assessment, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration.

She serves on multiple high-level advisory boards, including the American Statistical Association, UWI's Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, and Artificial Intelligence Innovation Centre. Her numerous accolades include the first place in the UNFCCC AI Innovation Grand Challenge (2024), Nature Research's Inspiring Women in Science Outreach Finalist (2024) championing data literacy as Women in Data Science Ambassador, Senior Fellowship by the UK's Higher Education Academy and the 2024 UWI/Guardian Premium Teaching Award for her unwavering commitment to multidisciplinary Statistics and Data Science Education.

She envisions a Caribbean where decisions are guided by evidence, equity and care. Her research, rooted in data, policy and climate resilience, strengthens institutions and uplifts communities. Whether mentoring students or advising ministries, she brings both technical skill and deep purpose. At its heart, her work aims to build systems that are smart, inclusive and boldly Caribbean.

THE HEAR AWARDS

Hurricane and Earthquake Alleviation Research

Hurricane and Earthquake Alleviation Research (HEAR) Award - Joint Award

Barataria Community Council – Ms June Rogers

Project: Barataria Climate-Smart Hydroponic Edible Landscape Initiative: A Community-Led Model for Hurricane-Resilient Urban Food Security

Ms June Rogers is a Volunteer, Community Development Leader, Project Coordinator and President of the Barataria Community Council, known for pioneering grassroots, climate-resilient solutions that strengthen food security in vulnerable urban communities. With a strong commitment to youth empowerment, climate adaptation and community transformation, she has become the driving force behind one of Trinidad and Tobago's most innovative resilience initiatives.

Her award-winning project, the Barataria Climate-Smart Hydroponic Edible Landscape Initiative, is a model of hurricane-resilient urban food production. Designed to ensure food continuity during and after extreme weather events, the initiative uses climate-smart hydroponic systems that operate independently of soil conditions and are highly resistant to flood-related damage. It functions as a community-led food security hub capable of mitigating food supply disruptions associated with hurricanes, flooding, and national emergencies.

The project blends climate innovation with social development. Through the Best Community Caretakers 4-H Club, Ms Rogers has trained dozens of youths in hydroponics, nutrient management and disaster-resilient agriculture. This youth-centred approach builds long-term resilience by cultivating a new generation of climate-smart agriculture leaders.

Her work has attracted significant partnerships with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/Trinidad and Tobago, Digicel Foundation, SHELL-TT, the Mexican Government, and the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, contributing infrastructure, resources and technical capacity. The initiative has also been strengthened by collaboration with Agricultural Trade and Food Security Researcher David Forgenie, who provided technical advice on resilience-oriented food systems and the integration of food security metrics into the project's development. His support enhanced the scientific foundation and long-term sustainability framework of the initiative.

National recognition followed, with the project earning First Place for Best Community Garden and Second Place for Best Hydroponic Garden in Trinidad and Tobago under the Ministry of Community Development's "Grow It Yourself" competition.

Ms Rogers envisions a future where urban communities across the Caribbean adopt hurricane-resilient food systems. She aims to transform the Barataria model into a national demonstration site that supports community replication, youth climate leadership, and strengthened regional disaster preparedness. Through her work, she continues to advance a powerful model of community-driven resilience and sustainable urban food security.




Hurricane and Earthquake Alleviation Research (HEAR) Award - Joint Award

Ms Karin Hatch, Dr Sarah Subhan, Mrs Dionne Brewster-Phillip, and Dr Cherisse Rambarose

Project: Beyond The Waves Therapeutic Program: A Psychosocial Innovation for Health and Climate Resilience in Post-Hurricane Caribbean Communities

Karin Hatch, MSc, is a Clinical Psychologist and an Applied Developmental Specialist specialising in child-centred therapies. The Beyond The Waves Therapeutic Programme (BTWTP) was created by Ms Hatch in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl in July 2024. This programme was a post-crisis psychosocial intervention for the children of Carriacou.

A programme evaluation was completed by a team of researchers for change. Sarah Subhan, PhD, is a clinical psychologist, counsellor supervisor, and researcher providing trauma-informed and creative therapies within community and child welfare services. Dionne Brewster-Phillip is a PhD candidate in psychology and a research consultant with expertise in the design and implementation of applied social research. Cherisse Rambarose, PhD, is a licensed psychologist providing behavioural parent training and cognitive-behavioural interventions for children and families at the Kennedy Krieger Institute.

BTWTP was conceptualised and implemented to provide trauma-informed, child-centred, psychosocial, and emotional support to children and families who were impacted by the hurricane. The programme was evaluated using mixed-methods approaches utilising the facilitator's narrative data per session—semi-structured interviews and surveys to assess the caregiver's perspectives on the impact of the BTWTP therapeutic play group.

Caregivers reported that the playgroup facilitated social connections with peers, provided safe childcare, helped with schoolwork, and helped children focus on positivity. Thematic analysis of the facilitator's interview included various themes: the need for community support and physically safe spaces; the psychological and emotional impact of the hurricane, centred on trauma, loss, and grief; and the creation of empowering, child-centred, healing spaces supported by the use of creative arts and cultural sensitivity in intervention delivery.

Findings showed that the BTWTP had a positive impact on psychological recovery and resilience in Carriacou. BTWTP provides a foundation for modelling post-disaster psychosocial care for children in Small Island Developing States. This approach was a grassroots initiative supported by donations and without governmental or major organisational funding.

Our next steps involve supporting Caribbean disaster response systems by strengthening psychosocial interventions in preparation for natural disasters, developing a training manual, systematic evaluation of interventions and regional scaling of BTWTP.

Award Committee's Selection for Special Recognition - HEAR AWARD

Dr Omardath Maharaj

Faculty of Food and Agriculture

Contact: omardath.maharaj@uwi.edu

Operation FOOD: Farmers Opting to Overcome Disaster

Dr Omardath Maharaj is an Agricultural Economist, International Consultant and Lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension. His work transcends conventional research, focusing on the practical application of community-led solutions to alleviate human suffering from natural disasters.

Dr Maharaj's research has crystallised into a proven framework for agri-food system resilience. One of the more significant contributions is the creation and coordination of *"Operation FOOD" (Farmers Opting to Overcome Disaster)* during the 2017/2018 flooding events in Trinidad. This initiative mobilised a national coalition to deliver targeted food aid, support rapid damage assessments, and protect livelihoods. It identified farmers as having first responder capacity with equipment operation and indigenous knowledge of rural terrain and inland water systems. His model uniquely integrates strategic public communication, having been used to issue early warnings on health threats like leptospirosis and to ensure food safety. Over the years, the framework's versatility was demonstrated when its core principles were successfully adapted to address cascading food security crises during the COVID-19 pandemic, proving its effectiveness across different types of disasters.

Dr Maharaj's work underscores that true resilience requires a shift from reactive ideas and relief to proactive, systemic investment. He advocates for this change by translating on-the-ground evidence into powerful policy arguments. The development he seeks is the formal integration of this community-led, multi-hazard resilience model into national and regional disaster risk management and food security policy. He plans to continue to pursue this through evidence-based advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and empowering rural communities, ensuring that Caribbean food systems are shock-resistant with foundations underpinned by inclusive, sustainable development.

An evolving example is his role in the Breadfruit Trees Initiative, which has established "regenerative food banks" by freely distributing over 12,000 trees to communities nationwide for long-term change, a cornerstone of the community-informed, holistic model. Recognition, to him, helps to validate this approach and provide a powerful platform to scale these proven, life-and-livelihood-saving strategies across the Caribbean, and ultimately, help to build a region that is more economically secure and food-sovereign in the face of inevitable natural hazards.

Award Committee's Selection for Special Recognition under Best Team Research

Mr Stokeley Smart and Team

Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Faculty of Science and Technology

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Project: The Smart Tables® Trinidad and Tobago Framework, Creating Complete Mortality Life Tables for CARICOM: The Cases of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, and Constructing Complete Mortality Tables for the Employed Population of Trinidad and Tobago

Stokeley Smart, FSA, CERA, LLB, is the Director of the Actuarial Science programme at The University of the West Indies, St Augustine. He combines actuarial and academic expertise in his leadership of the programme, advancing education and research that bridge technical skills with practical applications in the Caribbean and developing world context.

He has published and presented widely on actuarial topics, ranging from the construction of indigenous mortality tables from limited data sets, to the use of actuarial techniques in non-traditional areas to support sustainability. He represents the Caribbean Actuarial Association on the Education Committee of the International Actuarial Association and has contributed to actuarial education initiatives internationally.

In 2015, he formed the Smart Tables® Team, consisting of eight actuaries, two judges, three lawyers, one accountant, two economists, three statisticians and six graduate students from the Campus. Following the introduction of The Smart Tables® to the jurisdiction of Trinidad and Tobago, the aim is to develop the framework for other territories in CARICOM. To date, the framework has received US $10,000 in 2025 and US $8,000 in 2024 in research grants from The Caribbean Actuarial Association.

Research Highlights

- The Smart Tables® was trademarked under the Madrid Protocol, Trade Mark No. 61052 – 2025
- Published "Creating Complete Mortality Life Tables for CARICOM: The Cases of Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica" in the North American Actuarial Journal (NAAJ) – 2025
- Presented 'The Smart Tables® Development of Actuarial Loss of Earnings Tables for the Caribbean' at the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago Inaugural Law Conference – 2024
- Presented "Indigenous Mortality Table Construction for Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica" at the International Social Security Association's (ISSA) Webinar, Geneva – 2024
- Presented 'The Smart Tables® Development of Actuarial Loss of Earnings Tables for the Caribbean' to the Judicial Education Institute of Trinidad and Tobago (JEITT) – 2024
- Presented 'The Smart Tables® (Phase II) Development of Actuarial Loss of Earnings Tables for the Caribbean' at the 2023 Caribbean Actuarial Association (CAA) 33rd Annual conference – 2023

Award Committee's Selection for Special Recognition under Principal's Special Innovation Award

Dr Gloria Ramdeen-Mootoo

Faculty of Medical Sciences

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Innovation: "The Angel App of Organ Donation Trinidad and Tobago"

Dr Gloria Ramdeen-Mootoo is a Lecturer at The UWI School of Nursing at the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the St Augustine Campus. She is a Registered Nurse and Licensed Midwife, holder of a PhD in Sociology from the Faculty of Social Sciences, a Master of Science in Clinical Psychology from the Faculty of Medical Sciences, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing Education (First Class Hons). She also holds a Bachelor of Science in Social Work with a minor in Psychology (Hons) from the Faculty of Social Sciences, and has Certification in Clinical Teaching from the Mona Campus and University Teaching and Learning from the St Augustine Campus.

She has 24 years of experience in Nursing Education. Her doctoral research focuses on the social, cultural and ethical dimensions of organ donation and transplantation in Trinidad and Tobago. Her work contributes to understanding public attitudes, healthcare practices and policy gaps surrounding organ donation and transplantation. She has authored and presented scholarly work at national, regional and international levels, advancing dialogue and scholarship in organ donation and transplantation and healthcare.

Findings from her PhD research indicate that a significant barrier to organ donation and transplantation in Trinidad and Tobago is the pervasive lack of public awareness, as many individuals remain uninformed about the existence and availability of organ donation and transplant services within the national healthcare system. A key recommendation emerging from her PhD research is the development of a mobile application to increase public awareness and engagement in organ donation and transplantation.

With this in mind, she enlisted the help of two colleagues to develop the wireframe of The Angel App of Organ Donation application. Development is now in its early stages. The app aims to increase awareness, simplify registration, improve accessibility, provide real-time updates, engender transparency and trust, and support data collection for policymaking to strengthen national health care goals.

The successful development and implementation of the app will require the support and assistance of the government and key stakeholders to advance organ donation in Trinidad and Tobago.

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