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Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the honour of leading the Faculty of Law and so, the pleasurable task on this historic occasion of introducing you to the Faculty – its purpose and direction, and the women and men who drive its vision, falls to me – a bit of a report card.

In 2011, the St Augustine campus moved from first year law only toward the creation of an independent faculty of law, offering a university based LLB programme comprising three years of study. This necessitated rapid expansion and institution-building in all aspects, to enable it to become a fully-fledged and high calibre law faculty.

And this is why we are here today – to announce ourselves to the world, to celebrate our progress to date, and to acclaim excellence.

Thanking our Pioneers
As we reflect on our achievements COLLECTIVELY, as a faculty, I acknowledge our First Peoples. This was not an easy road – doing the full 3-year LLB in the TRANSIT LOUNGE, as it were. At first, we had few facilities, no staff to teach all of the many new courses. My predecessors: Acting Dean, Dr. Kusha Haraksingh, John Jeremie, SC, Douglas Mendes, SC, who were in charge of the faculty then; faithful part-timers like Frederick Gilkes, Fyard Hosein; support staff, Cassandra Ramdawar, Marie Madeira and Aldwyn Thomas – both here for over 30 years. These are the persons who shepherded the emerging faculty. They were joined by Dr. Arif Bulkan, Deputy Dean, Dr. Sharon Le Gall, Mr. Timothy Affonso, who served as de facto Deputy Dean, Mrs. Alicia Elias-Roberts, Ms. Afiya France, our fantastic librarian Jolie Rajah, who squeezes water out of stone, Ms. Nicolette Noel, Dean’s secretary and our latest addition, Dr. Amaefule, corporate lawyer, coming to us from Africa, via London.
Our Principal has been the engine driver in this process, focused and enthusiastic, giving encouragement and tangible assistance.
All of us at this moment are pioneers. We have become the flag bearers of this new faculty, embodying its great possibilities. Undoubtedly, being FIRST is a sacred honour. First impressions count.
However, since the Faculty took in its first batch of students in 2011, a lot has changed. In October, we celebrated our first graduating class, with 9 First class honours. Today we can no longer be considered a bastard offspring of our Cave Hill parent. We have made significant strides toward the implementation of our own goals, metamorphosing into a fully functioning, independent Faculty of Law, albeit still in transition mode.

Outperforming Operational Plan toward Excellence and Our Vision
We have implemented an impressive 8 out of the 10 outlined plans in our Operational Plan 2012-3, in some instances, outperforming the stated goals, moving ahead to make strides in
other areas essential to the creation of a high level academic tertiary institution – promoting research; linkages with civil society; rationalising academic workload, consultancy work and income generation.

I think it unnecessary to focus on the history of the Faculty. I would much rather tell you of how valid and relevant is its existence. Some of it you know; the constant demand for law places, the cost benefits and simply the sovereign right of a nation to develop its full potential in its own image and likeness.

While the faculty was born out of the breaking down of a familiar system, it presents wonderful opportunities to BUILD. This Faculty is uniquely placed to reach plateaus of Excellence that are perhaps not open to others. Trinidad and Tobago, with its thriving private sector, its oil and gas industry, its rich multi-culturalism and ethnic diversity, out of Africa, India, China and more; and its gateway to Latin America – gives us the opportunity to fashion law programmes in innovative and relevant ways to our community; and to deepen ties with rich scholarship traditions elsewhere. We have started to do this.

**A Faculty Entrenched in the Development Goals of an Integrated Region**

I see the Faculty of Law, St Augustine as positioning itself as a prime player in advancing a regional developmental agenda. In many ways this Campus, located in Trinidad and Tobago, is the natural ‘hub’ of the region, having close links with the OECS, with Guyana, and with Barbados. In addition, the country and the campus is better placed to strengthen links with Suriname and Haiti, because of the fact that TnT is the geographical home of the CCJ – which includes Suriname – making a powerful argument for upgrading our syllabus to elevate our understanding of the civil law tradition to which our CARICOM sisters, Suriname, Haiti and to some extent, Saint Lucia (hybrid) belongs.

**Strengthening the Links with the OECS**

The creation of this TnT Faculty provides a timely opportunity to enhance our ties with the region, especially our longstanding and deep links with the OECS, never forgetting that this Faculty remains embedded in the vibrant regional institution that is The UWI. As such, we have a duty to include the wider region in our plans, and we have done so.

Many outstanding OECS citizens have served this country with distinction – in Law – I think of the legal giant, Telford Georges, of Dominica who was on the Court of Appeal, and later, the Privy Council and of course, our own President of the CC J, the distinguished Sir Dennis Byron, of St Kitts and Nevis. Such distinction is not limited to law – recall that the Mighty Sparrow, a Grenadian – was honoured this year, with the highest honour of our land.

Thus, the Faculty must use this space to entrench the regionalist agenda and view itself as a truly regional faculty, making concerted efforts to attract students from across the region. It must also, in its research agenda and curriculum development, speak specifically to this need.
Accordingly, this semester we created a targeted admissions policy of inclusion via a special quota for non-nationals. I hope especially to encourage OECS students to come to study law here.

**Consonant with TnT’s Vision**
But, a Faculty of Law founded and grounded in TnT means more than this. While we wholeheartedly embrace regionalism, we are acutely aware of our responsibilities to our host country. The Faculty’s goals must be fully consonant with the aspirations and vision of the forward-looking nation that is Trinidad and Tobago.

**Research Goals and Consultancy Profile to Complement Developmental Vision**
The Faculty’s consultancy profile must make it the first port of business for projects with a law component. It should be the recognized leader in the formation of legal policy. We have the expertise and the capacity to do so. In fact, some of us are already actively engaged in important consultancy work.

We will need to be passionate about the strength and identity of our peoples. I was recently reminded of something I said in a speech at the Vice Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in 2006, that:

“unless we in the region understand that we have the capacity not just to follow, but to LEAD, ... new ideas, ... and methods, we will not attain real development... for us to excel,..., [we must develop a more aggressive pioneering spirit], we must inculcate ... values of creativity and innovation grounded in our belief as a confident people – that we are not only just as good as, but often better than...“.

I still believe in the promise of those words. I believe that they should be applied to every aspect of faculty life, our syllabus, teaching, research, our attitudes and our fashioning of the much sought after indigenous jurisprudence.

**Our Staff – A Balance of Old and experience and Young, vibrancy**
We are fortunate to have a small, but excellent team of highly qualified professionals who will do all in their power to fulfill this vision. It is a balanced mix of the older, experienced, with the young and vibrant. What we all share is enthusiasm, capability and commitment toward common goals.

**Decrease in Reliance on Part-time Staff for Lecturing and Distinguished Adjuncts**
We now have eight full-time academics, reducing significantly our previous reliance on part-time faculty for lecturing. We hope and expect to reach our target by next year.

However, there will always be room for the contribution of dedicated professionals on a part-time basis to complement the Faculty’s lecture offerings. We have practising attorneys who are part-time tutors.
We are also fortunate to have on staff three highly-qualified, adjunct faculty, who are distinguished jurists from the highest echelons, the CCJ, directing courses. We benefit from a long-standing relationship with these CCJ judges. I remember over 10 years ago, as Director of the LLM, inviting now Justice Nelson to lecture on the LLM, and of course Justice Anderson was my former colleague Professor at Cave Hill and now we have Justice Wit.

Madame Prime Minister – I want to thank your Government for headquartering the CCJ in TnT. It has surely been a happy and fruitful coincidence for our faculty.

**Community oriented mentoring – able to direct and guide and shape**

Our staff is not only competent in the technicalities of law – they are mentors, social engineers, demonstrating by example, that law is an instrument of social change: Timothy Affonso operates a free community legal aid clinic, holds workshops with public servants. Deputy Dean Dr. Arif Bulkan, a former Assistant DPP, is a human rights activist, spearheading a legal challenge to discriminatory laws on sexual orientation, sits on Transparency Institute; John Jeremie, Senior Counsel, commercial lawyer, is a former Attorney General; Alicia Elias-Roberts former Head of Dept. in Guyana, environmentalist, leads our moots; Dr. Le Gall, WIPO consultant, brings her considerable Intellectual Property expertise to advance the steel pan and protect our cultural hegemony; Afifa Frances, a Columbia graduate, focusses on the disabled and health issues and mentors high school girls.

**A Pioneering Spirit – in Cutting Edge Curricula Relevant to its Community**

The renewed Faculty of Law at St Augustine has the opportunity to be a beacon for cutting edge curriculum development and we have embraced this. We now offer the full complement of courses on the LLB programme, but, in addition, students are given a wide variety of choices of course of study at the optional level, Year 3, even surpassing Cave Hill, upon which the model was based. This year those Year 3 students had the option of choosing 10 courses out of 23 courses. Six new courses were added. These included ‘cutting edge’, courses such as Integration Law, Discrimination Law [HIV,], Competition Law, Offshore/International Financial Law.

Significantly, some of these are indigenous, courses created here, to meet the demands of a dynamic and relevant law curriculum. One projection which became a reality this year is Oil & Gas law, taught by our own Alicia Elias-Roberts, whom we discovered held an LLM in Oil and Gas Law. This is a significant and exciting contribution that can be a catalyst for broader programmes and projects and build much needed capacity in the legal profession.

Importantly, the current listing of new courses available on the LLB programme, far surpasses the projections of the Operational Plan.

There is more to come – [Marine Law, Health Law, Tourism Law and Sports Law]

**Flexible Diversity Programming to Reach Many**

The Faculty makes a concerted effort to emphasise subject areas that embrace Trinidad and Tobago’s diversity, such as the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, steel pan patents, Hindu family
laws; Orisha traditions, Rastafarianism. How many of you have heard of the Shari’a trust – a recent Islamic financial vehicle in Offshore Financial Law?

**Promoting research and Publication**

Though small and still ‘young’, we are already establishing a strong record of publication and research even among junior staff, fulfilling a core objective of both faculty and The UWI. In the last year alone, a number of publications have been produced by staff members, not to mention the increasing demands for conference presentations, made even more remarkable given our challenged transitory environment. Incredibly, collectively, the academic staff of the Faculty, can already lay claim to publishing 17 books!

The Dean’s policy to source and spearhead consultancies at the Faculty level, bore first fruit in March, when training high level public servants in Administrative Law was carried out in Montserrat by Alicia Elias-Roberts.

It is demonstrable that a culture of commitment to scholarly pursuits and academic excellence is being steadily established.

**What kind of Law Graduate do we aim to produce?**

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From the outlook of our staff and our curricula, it will be clear that our idea of the ideal graduate is not only that of academic achievement and good lawyering skills. We believe strongly in inculcating a social conscience in our students, moulding then into community oriented citizens. They must be advocates for justice poised to make a significant contribution to the life of this nation, the region and beyond, using law as a tool to better society. We take seriously our responsibility to create lawyers who will be change agents.

**Institution of Law Society and Activities**

We are seeing encouraging signs that our students are moving in this direction: the Law Society, instituted in 2011, has already become a vibrant student organization. It launched a magazine, STALA in September 2012 and tonight, meets another objective in the *Operational Plan: A “Students’ Law Review,”* an academic journal. It held several activities: a Prize-Giving, a first for any Law faculty in the UWI, charitable events, and health events, even arranging free eye screening tests.

**Reaching out to its Community to engage the Public, and to Non-Traditional Spaces**

The idea that the Faculty's programming must be deeply rooted in its society informs our outreach activities. Far too often the legal profession is insular and isolated. We want to change this. We are reaching out assertively to non-traditional actors to build important partnerships with civil society, international organizations and the vibrant private sector. This is an essential goal if we are to maximize the quality of our curriculum, research and teaching and even improve the financial resources of the Faculty.
We are already partnering with civil society organisations: CAISO (a leading NGO), the JCC, the Embassies. We hope to emphasise strategic and ‘hands-on’ research projects that have practical application.

We recognize that the Faculty and its students should be actively engaged in the legal issues of the day and should be a leading voice in such debates and discussions through the media, public lectures, workshops, exhibitions and the like.

Already, we have held several successful public sessions: on the Death Penalty on the visit of Baroness Scotland, on LGBT rights, on de-criminalising same-sex sexual conduct by Professor Wintemute of the King’s College London, which attracted a packed audience; on the Law of the Sea, by Ambassador Infante of Chile, on Public Procurement and even a Legal Aid Clinic. Next month we launch a panel discussion series on the current constitutional reform.

**Asserting and Protecting Intellectual Freedom**

The Law Faculty has a voice, a voice that is both passionate and impartial, speaking out on important issues. We will continue to assert and protect the right to our intellectual freedom. We will continue to speak out against the injustices of the death penalty, which is often discriminatory in effect, on juvenile injustices, on the immorality that is the denial of rights based on sexual orientation and HIV. … Our labour lawyers will reserve the right to criticize where necessary, the employers and business interests. We must debate corporate crimes, and environmental atrocities and unfair trade practices. We will tell our fellow citizens when they are wrong, e.g. When they call for extra-judicial killings as a response to crime; domestic violence, or incite hate crimes under the guise of morality and religion. We will even respectfully disagree with our judges;

— and of course we will address the favourite objects of criticism in any society, our politicians, local and regional.

These are ALL legitimate subjects of discussion and debate for any self-respecting law faculty.

We are also building institutional bridges with our colleague faculties and SALISES, our neighbour. Further, now that we share homeground with the Hugh Wooding Law School, we welcome collaborative opportunities to deepen the skill set and educational experience of our students and intend to work closely with HWLS to create such synergies. Indeed, we are on excellent terms with Principal Samaru of the Law School.

And of course, our special ties with the CCJ.

Our presence is beginning to be felt in the community as the increasing invitations attest. But - Our vision goes beyond this: **devising** low cost programmes in arenas which have market appeal: short certificate courses, fee-paying workshops for business enterprises, bankers, judges, unions.
We envision **closer links with the institutions of government** – to help train the police – in human rights and juvenile justice, HIV, anti-discrimination law (still little known), short labour law courses for the Labour Department; and Mr. Attorney General – law modules and refresher courses for public servants.

I am in the process of concluding an MOU with the IACHR which will support this goal.

**International Mooting**
The Faculty is participating in prestigious international moot competitions. *The CCJ Moot* and the *Inter-American Human Rights Moot*, Washington. Our Moot Team was awarded the Best Novice Team in May 2013: the famous Jessup Law Moot, Washington, with participants from over 550 law schools. In 2013, Lisa Theodore, one of the Faculty’s mooters, was ranked among the top 100 orals; and just this morning, as if on **cue** – I learnt the FANTASTIC and heartwarming NEWS, that we won the BEST NEW TEAM FOR JESSUP 2014 – just walked off the plane! Congratulations to Alicia Elias-Roberts and her team: Andre Cole, Arlene Chochan, David Edmund and Shane Pantin.

**New Programmes – Regional LLM Graduate Programme**
Come August, the Faculty will offer a new university-based, regional, LLM programme, instructed by three of the campuses, sharing resources and courses – a hybrid model that permits students from across the multi-border space of the Caribbean to read for courses in any of the law faculties through a combination of face to face and distance teaching.

**A Competitive Faculty attracting Top Class Students with Special Criteria Quotas**
The Faculty of Law attracts the top 1-5 % of the best CAPE results and first degree results, enabling us to select, prima-facie, top level performers at matriculation, using a points-based merit system.

Beginning this academic year, the Faculty has also established special quotas for mature applicants and for applicants from the law enforcement authorities, the latter seen as a public service.

We are also receiving requests from students at Cave Hill to transfer to St Augustine.

We have **moved from 40 students to 422 students with many more applicants than places offered**. I think that the Law Faculty can continue to anticipate good attendance numbers of high caliber students, sufficient to fill the spacious halls of Debe.

**Embracing our new Home – A Great Legal Brain flourishes Anywhere**
As you know, a key component of the transition to an independent faculty is the relocation of the faculty to high quality physical premises, in a newly built South Campus of the UWI in Debe. Last Friday we visited our lovely new home Nestling in Debe.
Personally, as a nature lover, I see great benefit in the new Faculty of Law being located in a rural area. It maximizes space in a peaceful environment conducive to study and reflection. We should not forget that the great universities that we emulate, such as Oxford and Cambridge, started off in little known rural villages, not in cities. Frankly, I believe a good mind, a good legal mind, will flourish anywhere: in town, in Toco, or in Debe. I only ask that we be given the necessary facilities for the campus.

**Meeting the Challenges as we Move Forward**

Yet, for me, sustainability is not only about physical capital. We need to invest in our HUMAN capital. In the competitive environment in which the Faculty exists, one challenge is that the practice of Law remains a lucrative one for attorneys and there is a danger that potential star recruits or sterling academics are forced to opt out of the academy simply because it does not pay enough, thus forcing the Faculty to lower its recruitment standards and subsequent overall performance. As it stands, UWI salaries at St Augustine, in this oil-rich country, are lagging far behind all of the other campuses. There has been considerable investment in funding for students, but little for those who have the task to mould those very students. I trust that the relevant authorities will review this problem and rectify the dire situation.

**A Dedicated Law Library and Resources**

Finally, we still need more specialized library resources but, with a little help from our friends, we hope to meet this particular challenge.

**We are Here**

So, ladies and gentlemen, we have arrived. We are here ... moving and shaking. The Faculty of Law, St Augustine, is here for the campus as it continues its march toward excellence, we are here for The UWI, we are here for TnT and we are here for the region and beyond. Those of us in this BIRTHING PROCESS wear the badge of being first with a pioneering spirit, with commitment, integrity and pride, knowing that we will be a faculty centred on community, true development and grounded in excellence.

As a symbol of this pledge, I call on the Law Society Executive, who will present first copies of the new Student Law Review to our Prime Minister and President of the CCJ.

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen.