



Campus as Classroom



Ethan Deonarain, a student from the Department of Geomatics Engineering and Land Management, uses a Wild T2 theodolite with the St Augustine Campus's iconic Main Administration Building in the background. Known for its wide, open, and green spaces (as well its many buildings, some going back to colonial times) the campus serves not only as a place for scholarship, it is also a haven for sports, exercise, relaxation, and, for students such as Ethan, invaluable field experience. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM



Ranked Among the Best in the World



WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS
GOLDEN AGE UNIVERSITY RANKINGS
LATIN AMERICA RANKINGS
IMPACT RANKINGS

Follow The UWI St Augustine on



100+
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

200+
POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

335+
SCHOLARSHIPS & BURSARIES

REASONABLE PAYMENT PLANS

SUPPORT SERVICES

#1 Ranked Caribbean University

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Crafting a Caribbean approach to AI



EDITOR’S NOTE: On July 23, 2026, UWI St Augustine Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine delivered remarks at the inaugural Caribbean AI Forum (CAIF 2026) held at the University Inn and Conference Centre. UWI TODAY is pleased to share an excerpt from her remarks.

I am delighted to welcome policymakers, innovators, researchers, entrepreneurs, development partners, and students from across the Caribbean and beyond, who have gathered here with a shared commitment to shaping our region’s digital future.

Today is particularly significant because this forum is not simply a conference about technology. In recognition of the potential impact of AI, the Caribbean AI Task Force was established by the CTU following the adoption of a resolution by Caribbean ICT Ministers to develop harmonised policy recommendations and advance a coordinated regional approach to AI governance. Bringing together experts from government, academia, civil society, the private sector and international organisations, this task force represents one of the most ambitious regional collaborations in the digital arena yet.

I am certain you must have heard this phrase often, yet it bears repeating in this instance: the Caribbean stands at an important crossroads. We have all witnessed the way AI is transforming societies. How will we collectively shape it to serve our region?

The Interim Report of the Caribbean AI Task Force argues that our region must be a standards-maker rather than merely a standards-taker, so that emerging AI systems reflect our regional values and priorities. This forum demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that the Caribbean is not merely a consumer of emerging technologies, but an active contributor

to their development, governance, and responsible application.

Given the immense responsibility for getting AI “right” in our region, I think it is more than fitting that UWI St Augustine hosts this critical conference.

As a regional university, we have always been committed to advancing knowledge in service of society. Indeed, some of you may not be aware, but our campus has a proud and longstanding history of leadership in AI that stretches back decades. Long before the global surge in interest in AI, the Faculty of Engineering hosted the Caribbean’s first AI conference in 1989, establishing a foundation for innovation and scholarship that continues to this day.

Scholars such as Professor Patrick Hosein and many others helped lay the foundation for the leadership position the campus enjoys today. Building on that legacy, The UWI St Augustine Campus has significantly expanded its AI ecosystem.

In December 2025, we launched the Artificial Intelligence Innovation Centre (AIIC), now the largest dedicated AI centre in the Caribbean, to advance research, capacity building, commercialisation, policy development, and AI governance. It is led by Dr Craig Ramlal, whose leadership has been instrumental in advancing regional conversations on artificial intelligence, including through the Caribbean AI Task Force.

For Small Island Developing States such as ours, AI is not simply about economic opportunity. It is about resilience. We have the opportunity to strengthen food security, improve disaster preparedness, modernise public services, enhance healthcare delivery, support education, and expand innovation and entrepreneurship.

While AI represents both opportunities and potential challenges, what gives me confidence is that our region possesses unique and immeasurable strengths. We have world-class researchers, innovators and a culture of resilience.

We also possess something equally important: the ability to work across disciplines.

At the St Augustine campus, our engineers collaborate with experts in agriculture, law, medicine, social sciences, the arts, and public policy. It is precisely this interdisciplinary strength that will contribute to developing AI that is not only technically sophisticated but socially relevant and deeply rooted in our realities.

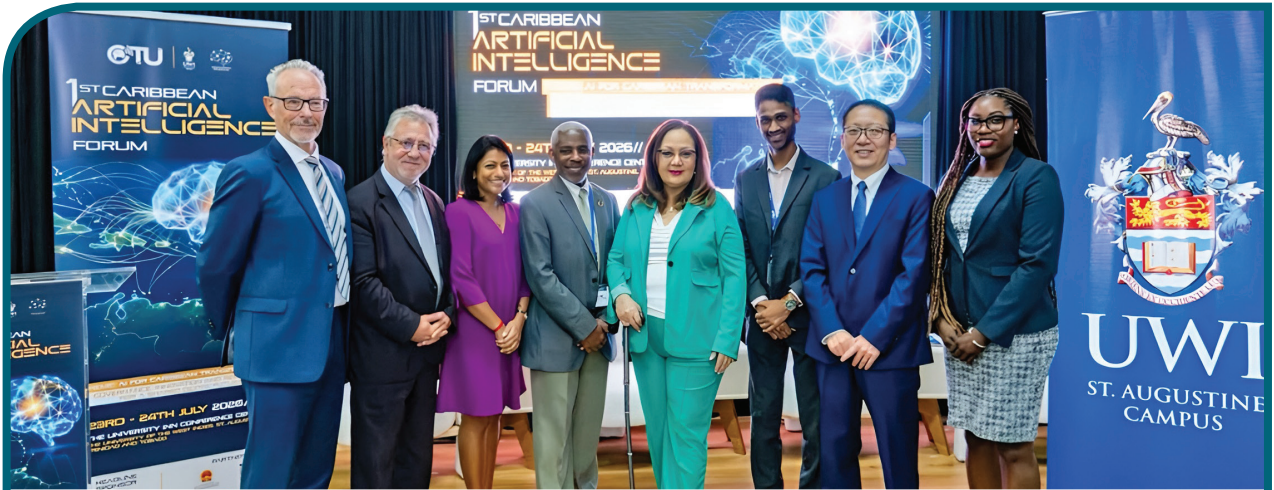
We are especially proud to support this effort through the AIIC and through partnerships with CARICOM, UNESCO, the United Nations, development agencies, and industry leaders.

The Caribbean AI Task Force notes that the region’s future success will depend upon our ability to build indigenous expertise, strengthen regional cooperation, leverage our diaspora, and develop solutions that address our unique realities as Small Island Developing States. The University of the West Indies stands ready to support that mission.

I look forward to the discussions ahead, including the presentation of the Caribbean AI Task Force’s work and the exchange of ideas that will help chart a distinctly Caribbean pathway for artificial intelligence. As some of you may know, this work has already stimulated important regional conversations about how we can collectively approach the opportunities and challenges of AI.

I wish to commend the Caribbean Telecommunications Union, the Caribbean AI Task Force, the Artificial Intelligence Innovation Centre, and all the sponsors, partners, and organisers whose hard work and vision have made this inaugural forum possible. We are grateful for your commitment to advancing the region’s AI agenda. Let this forum mark the beginning of a new chapter in Caribbean development—one in which AI serves the interests of our people.

Thank you.



CARIBBEAN ADVANCES IN AI: Participants at the opening ceremony of the 1st Caribbean AI Forum held on July 23-24 at the University Inn and Conference Centre in St. Augustine. Shown (from left) are Founding Member of the World Digital Governance Mr Graeme Thomson; Ambassador of the French Republic to T&T HE Guillaume Pierre; Executive Portfolio Manager of the Project Management Office within the Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence Ms. Jaya Ramoutar; Deputy Secretary-General and Head of Regional Policy Development at CTU Mr Nigel Cassimire; Campus Principal Prof Rose-Marie Belle Antoine; Executive Director of the Artificial Intelligence Innovation Centre and Chair of the CTU Caribbean AI Task Force Dr Craig Ramlal; Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to Trinidad and Tobago HE Ren Hongyan; and Senior Programme Officer, Strategic Partnerships and Initiatives Office of Global Affairs in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, UWI Ms Lois St. Brice. PHOTO: KC MEDIA LTD.

Rose-Marie Belle Antoine

Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine
Campus Principal

Editorial Team

Campus Principal
Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine

Director of Marketing and Communications
Wynell Gregorio

Ag. Editor
Joel Henry
Email: joel.henry@sta.uwi.edu

Editorial Assistant
Amanda Lee

Contact Us
The UWI Marketing and Communications Office
Tel: (868) 662-2002 | exts. 82013 / 83997
Email: uwitoday@sta.uwi.edu

■ CAMPUS NEWS

Professor Krisha Marcano



‘Art is not separate from nationhood’

Prof Krisha Marcano challenges creatives and Caribbean society at the Rex Nettleford Distinguished Lecture

BY CHERISSE LAUREN BERKELEY

“Art has always been the most honest language the Caribbean has spoken.”

With those words, Professor Krisha Marcano challenged her audience to rethink the role of artists in shaping Caribbean society, setting the tone for an evening that celebrated culture not as an accessory to nationhood, but as one of its foundations.

Academics, creatives, dancers and patrons of the arts filled the Learning Resource Centre Auditorium at The UWI St Augustine Campus on Saturday, June 27, for the fourth annual Rex Nettleford Distinguished Lecture. Held under the theme “Dancing the Nation into Being”, the event honoured the legacy of the late Professor Nettleford, renowned Caribbean scholar, choreographer, and Vice Chancellor Emeritus of The UWI, whose work championed the power of culture to transform Caribbean societies.

This year’s keynote speaker, Professor Marcano, Dean of Theatre at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, brought that vision home.

Born in Queens, New York, but raised in Trinidad and Tobago, Professor Marcano reflected warmly on the country that shaped her artistic journey. Crediting her education at the Caribbean School of Dance and the wider Caribbean for her success, she spoke affectionately about home, even joking about her continued craving for bake and shark.

The programme opened with welcome remarks from Mr Jessel Murray, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA), Deputy Dean of Distance and Outreach at the Faculty of Humanities and Education, and Programme Co-ordinator for the BA in Film. Greetings on behalf of the Rex Nettleford Foundation were delivered by former Prime Minister of Jamaica Mr PJ Patterson. The evening also featured a performance of O’ Joy, choreographed by Joanna Charles and performed by Tueron McKellar, Jade Bishop, and Kyla Perkins, as well as a vocal interlude by Joshua Goolcharan.

“This is where it cooks”

Drawing from history, personal experience and cultural practice, Professor Marcano explored how dance and artistic expression preserve the stories of Caribbean people.

Reflecting on the experience of enslaved people, she noted that while so much had been taken from them, they carried their histories within their bodies. Traditions such as Bélé, Shango, Moko Jumbie and Limbo became living archives through which memory, identity, and resistance endured.

“It’s a callaloo, we are a stew,” she said. “This is where it cooks; this is where it begins.”

The arts, she argued, continue to preserve the region’s collective memory while shaping its future.

Rejecting the false divide between creativity and intellect, Professor Marcano insisted that artists are indispensable to national development.

“Art is not separate from nationhood,” she said. As artificial

intelligence reshapes industries across the world, she asked the audience to consider the qualities technology cannot replicate: imagination, interpretation, ethics, uncertainty and embodiment.

“Artists fail publicly and continue to create,” she said, describing uncertainty not as weakness but as one of creativity’s greatest strengths.

Yet despite possessing qualities essential for innovation and leadership, she questioned why artists remain largely absent from national decision-making.

Professor Marcano also celebrated the progress of the Caribbean’s creative industries, highlighting initiatives including The Cocoa Dance Festival, Metamorphosis Dance Company, the New Play Festival, FilmTT’s tax rebate

negotiation, and the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival celebrating its 20th anniversary as evidence of a region rich with creative potential.

“You iterate and fail. You ideate and try again”

She cautioned, however, that talent alone is not enough.

“The argument that art cannot be a serious economic investment is a myth and has cost the Caribbean dearly,” she said, noting that the global creative economy generates more than US\$2.25 trillion annually.

Rather than competing within a culture of scarcity, she encouraged artists to strengthen regional partnerships and create opportunities for sustainable careers after graduation.

She also challenged creatives to see themselves as entrepreneurs.



CAMPUS NEWS

Professor Krisha Marcano receives a gift from UWI St Augustine Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine on behalf of the campus.



“You begin with nothing and create something from it,” she said. “You iterate and fail. You ideate and try again. Read the room and adapt in real time. You move people to buy, to listen, to come back, to win, to think, to feel, to watch, to read.”

The difference, she suggested, is not in the work itself, but in how artists have been taught to value it.

Looking ahead, Professor Marcano called on governments, educators and institutions to invest in arts education from an early age, develop creative job policies, equip artists with entrepreneurial skills, and include creatives in leadership and national policymaking. She also underscored the importance of harnessing the influence of Caribbean artists across the diaspora.

Bringing the lecture to an emotional close, Marcano reflected on what it meant to return to the region that had shaped her life.

“Coming back here is full circle in a way that makes me full,” she said. “It makes me grounded, it makes me determined, and it makes me strong today.”

Yesterday, I felt diminished, but today, I am ready.”

After a brief pause, she added with a smile, “I still need a doubles though.”

The packed lecture theatre erupted in laughter before responding with sustained applause.

Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine presented Professor Marcano with a plaque of appreciation in recognition of her contribution to this year’s distinguished lecture.

As the fourth annual Rex Nettleford Distinguished Lecture came to a close, Marcano’s message echoed the vision of the man it honours: that the arts are not peripheral to Caribbean development, but central to it. The hope is that other institutions will commit to advancing scholarship, culture, and public dialogue while challenging a new generation of creatives to imagine and help shape the future of the Caribbean.

■ To view the Rex Nettleford Distinguished Lecture, visit UWI TV on YouTube at www.youtube.com/@UWITVGlobal



Cherisse Lauren Berkeley is a journalist, activist, mas-maker, and multidisciplinary artist.



Professor Rean Maharaj (left), Acting President of UTT, and Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Campus Principal of UWI St Augustine, shake hands following the signing as Senator Emeritus Professor Prakash Persad, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, looks on.

MTEST, UWI and UTT Sign Strategic MOUs

UWI St Augustine and The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) have signed a suite of Memoranda of Understanding to expand student opportunities and accelerate research in areas critical to national and regional development.

The agreements allow them to work together across disciplines such as mechanical and manufacturing engineering, mechatronics and innovation, chemical engineering, energy and the environment, biosciences, and veterinary medicine.

Senator Emeritus Professor Prakash Persad, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (MTEST), emphasised the need for both universities to partner for the benefit of the country, citing collaborations between the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture and the Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry, former iterations of The UWI and UTT respectively.

This view was shared by Emeritus Professor Selwyn R Cudjoe, ORTT, Executive Chairman of UTT, who, in his remarks at the ceremony, stated, “...both institutions possess significant expertise that can be leveraged for greater national good.”

Under the MOUs, The UWI and UTT will work together to increase research, educational, and training opportunities for students and graduates through joint academic programming, shared expertise, research collaboration, student projects, internships, exchanges, electives, practicum opportunities, workshops, and joint grant proposals. Overall, they intend on developing graduates who are better prepared for industry, entrepreneurship, innovation, and public service.

Extolling the benefits of the agreement, UWI St Augustine Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine stated that, “[The UWI’s] relationship with UTT has in fact been longstanding and fruitful, and this occasion marks a deepening of that relationship.... It is a partnership we are proud of—one in which the national interest takes precedence over institutional boundaries as we prepare our students, support industry, and shape solutions for the country and wider region.”

A central feature of the relationship is its emphasis on applied learning. In mechanical and manufacturing engineering, the partnership will support the design and delivery of new academic programmes, particularly in mechatronics, innovation, and related fields.

Commenting on the relevance of mechatronics, Professor Antoine shared that “it is one of the fastest growing fields shaping modern industry”, and that, “Collaboration in this area allows institutions like ours to pool expertise, strengthen research capacity, and better prepare students and policy makers to develop the technologies and solutions on which our country and region will increasingly depend.”

In veterinary medicine and biosciences, the MOU between The UWI’s School of Veterinary Medicine and UTT’s Centre for Biosciences, Agriculture and Food Technologies provides a platform for joint study and training, student internships and exchanges, education abroad, joint supervision and teaching, professional development, public education, and collaborative grant activity.

■ UWI IN SOCIETY

EDITOR'S NOTE: On June 24-25, UWI St Augustine held the International Media and Communication Conference 2026, hosted by the Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Department. Themed *"The Digital Nexus: Media and Communication in the Age of AI"*, the conference highlights included a keynote address by prominent Nigerian-American author, academic, and media scholar **Dr Farooq Kperogi**. **UWI TODAY** is pleased to share an excerpt from his address, which is also available in its entirety at sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/

The theme of this conference, "The Digital Nexus: Media and Communication in the Age of AI," could not be more urgent. Artificial intelligence is now embedded in the everyday infrastructures through which we search, research write, teach, report, translate, bank, vote, travel, police, remember and imagine. It is not merely a tool. It is becoming a communicative environment. That is why I want to speak today on "The Global South's Fight for Communicative Sovereignty in the Age of AI."

By communicative sovereignty, I mean the right and capacity of peoples, nations and communities to control the conditions under which they are represented, heard, translated, archived, classified, predicted, and governed through media and technology. It is the right to be more than raw data. It is the right to be more than a market. It is the right to be more than a user of tools designed elsewhere, trained on someone else's histories, financed by someone else's capital, and governed by someone else's assumptions.

I do not mean communicative isolationism. Nor am I making a disguised argument for technological retreat. I do not believe the Global South should reject emerging technologies merely because many of them are designed in the Global North. That would be both impractical and intellectually lazy.

What I mean by communicative sovereignty is equitable participation in shaping the infrastructures of meaning that now shape our lives. It is the insistence that our languages should not be treated as noise, that our accents should not be treated as errors, that our linguistic idiosyncrasies should not be stigmatised as signs of ignorance, that our bodies should not be turned into databases, that our labor should not be hidden, that our cultures should not be flattened and that our democracies should not become testing grounds for algorithmic experiments.

The question before us is not whether AI is good or bad. That is simplistic, facile and misleading. The more important questions are these: Who designs it? Who owns it? Who trains it? Who profits from it? Whose data feeds it? Whose labour cleans it? Whose languages structure it? Whose histories are erased by it? Whose futures does it make imaginable and whose futures does it foreclose? For the Global South, these are not new questions. They are old questions wearing new technological clothing.

Conception of colonialism as the physical and cultural conquest of peoples' lands is well established. But it is also the conquest of meaning. Colonialism named people. It classified bodies. It mapped territories. It reorganised languages. It created archives. It decided whose knowledge counted as science and whose knowledge was dismissed as superstition. It turned local worlds into objects of external administration. AI risks automating this old hierarchy at a new scale.

The Global South's Fight for Communicative Sovereignty in the Age of AI

BY FAROOQ KPEROGI



"The question before us is not whether AI is good or bad. That is simplistic, facile and misleading. The more important questions are these: Who designs it? Who owns it? Who trains it? Who profits from it? Whose data feeds it? Whose labour cleans it? Whose languages structure it?"

The term digital coloniality helps us name this condition. It reminds us that colonial power did not disappear simply because flags were lowered and anthems were changed. Coloniality persists in the structures of knowledge, markets, finance, technology and global authority that continue to privilege some people as producers of knowledge and others as sources of data.

In the AI age, the new plantation is not always a field. Sometimes it is a data centre. The new raw material is not always sugar, cotton, gold, bauxite, or oil. Sometimes it is the intimate residue of human life: our clicks, voices, faces, movements, questions, preferences, social networks, and biometric signatures. The new overseer is not always a colonial officer. Sometimes it is an opaque algorithm. The new imperial archive is not always in London, Paris, Madrid, or Lisbon. Sometimes it is in a proprietary model whose training data we cannot inspect and whose decisions we cannot contest.

This is why scholars of data colonialism warn that human experience itself is being appropriated as raw material for profit. AI firms do not merely process information. They enclose the communicative life of societies. They scrape public expression, absorb cultural memory, convert social interaction into machine-readable training material and then sell the resulting systems back to the very people whose lives helped produce them.

In that sense, AI raises a fundamental political question: Can people be sovereign if their communicative life is owned, organised, and monetised by institutions they do not control?

This question has special urgency for media and communication scholars. Journalism has always been about the struggle over public truth. Communication has always been about the struggle over meaning. Media systems have always reflected relations of power. AI intensifies these age-old struggles.

AI can help journalists analyse large datasets, translate across languages, detect patterns of corruption, support fact-checking, and expand access to information. These are real possibilities. We should not dismiss them. But AI can also automate falsehood, scale propaganda, intensify surveillance, concentrate platform power, displace media labour, and distort cultural representation.

In fragile, transitional democracies, it can give authoritarian actors new tools to monitor dissent. In polarised societies, it can flood the public sphere with synthetic confusion. In under-resourced newsrooms, it can deepen dependence on external platforms that control distribution, visibility, and advertising revenue. The danger is not simply misinformation. The deeper danger is infrastructural dependence.

If the Global South depends on foreign platforms for visibility, foreign models for language, foreign cloud systems for computation, foreign firms for content moderation, foreign standards for ethical governance, and foreign capital for innovation, then its media systems may appear modern while remaining structurally subordinate.

■ To read the entire keynote address, visit: <https://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/>.

■ UWI IN SOCIETY

There is a growing expectation that universities do more than teach. Increasingly, they are being asked to translate expertise into services that are relevant, accessible and sustainable.

At UWI St Augustine, that expectation is taking practical shape within the Optometry Unit. The recent launch of the UWI Optical Store reflects a broader shift towards aligning academic training with real-world application, in line with the university's push through initiatives such as UWI MADE to connect education with enterprise.

Within the UWI Optometry Clinic, faculty and students consistently encountered patients who required corrective eyewear but struggled to access affordable options after diagnosis. The gap between identifying a problem and resolving it was becoming increasingly clear.

"We observed that several of our patients who are currently in the UWI Optometric Clinic do not have access to affordable eye care and spectacles," explained Dr Kingsley Ekemiri, Head of the Optometry Unit. "So, it was on that note that we decided to set up the UWI Optical to meet this gap and this need."

That decision reframed the unit's role. Rather than stopping at diagnosis and training, it began building a system that carries patients through the full continuum of care.

From Clinical Training to Complete Care

At its core, the Optometry Unit remains a teaching and clinical environment.

The UWI Optometry Clinic provides comprehensive eye examinations, including vision testing, prescription assessments, dry eye treatment, myopia control and screening for common eye conditions. Students are trained through direct patient interaction under supervision, developing both clinical competence and professional judgement.

The introduction of the Optical Store extends that training into application.

Patients diagnosed within the clinic can now transition directly into the next stage of care—obtaining corrective eyewear—within the same system. The model removes a key barrier that many patients face after diagnosis: access.

At the same time, the service is not limited to the university.

"The UWI Optical Store is open to everyone," Dr Ekemiri noted, emphasising its accessibility to students, staff and the wider public. Patients may also bring prescriptions from external providers, including the Regional Health Authorities (RHAs), reinforcing the unit's role within the national eye care ecosystem.

In a landscape with established private providers, the unit is clear about its position.

It does not see itself as competing with optical stores. Instead, it operates as a centre of excellence—training professionals, supporting smaller outlets, and strengthening overall capacity within the sector. This includes, over time, the potential to provide technical support such as lens fitting and fabrication to operators who may not have the infrastructure to do so independently.

The emphasis is not on market share, but on system support.

Building Through Guidance and Collaboration

The development of the Optical Store and the broader expansion of the unit's work required careful planning, institutional co-ordination, and sustained commitment.

As Head of the Optometry Unit, Dr Ekemiri served as the key implementor of the initiative, leading it from the development of the initial business proposal through the planning, co-ordination and operational steps that culminated in the official launch of the UWI Optical Store on February 25, 2026.

He also acknowledged the important support received from senior colleagues throughout the process. He noted the valuable guidance of Professor Ezenwanka Chidum and Emeritus Professor Patrick Akpaka, whose advice encouraged a thoughtful, patient, and solutions-oriented approach as the initiative moved from concept to implementation.



Dr Kingsley Ekemiri, Head of the Optometry Unit.

From Persistence to Practice

How UWI's Optometry Unit Is Building Sustainable Eye Care Solutions

BY KIERAN KHAN

At the departmental level, leadership also played a decisive role. Dr Ravi Maharaj, Head of the Department of Clinical Surgical Sciences, provided strategic direction and support at key decision points, helping to create an enabling environment for innovation to move forward.

Beyond its immediate impact, the initiative is being designed for long-term sustainability.

Dr Ekemiri outlined a multi-layered approach combining revenue-generating services, cost management, and integration with academic programmes. Partnerships with local and international organisations are also being explored, alongside opportunities for expansion. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are being built into the system to ensure it remains both financially viable and academically relevant.

The next phase will deepen that integration.

Plans are underway to establish a dispensing laboratory, allowing lenses to be fabricated and fitted on site. This will improve turnaround times, expand service capacity, and provide additional technical training for students.

Looking ahead, the unit is also exploring a specialised academic programme in optical dispensing, aimed at strengthening expertise in lens fabrication and fitting across the region.

Where Training Meets Impact

For Dr Ekemiri, the long-term vision extends beyond the campus.

The aim is not only to produce clinically competent graduates, but to develop professionals who understand how to operate within and contribute to the systems that support healthcare delivery. Alongside this, the unit continues to emphasise proactive eye care, encouraging regular examinations for early detection, and simple habits such as managing screen time, maintaining lens hygiene, and protecting the eyes from UV exposure.

What is emerging within the Optometry Unit is not simply an expansion of services, but a shift in how impact is defined. Training is no longer confined to the classroom or clinic. It is being extended into systems that close gaps, strengthen industries, and create lasting value.

And in that shift, the Optometry Unit is doing more than delivering care—it is building the system that sustains it.

■ **For more information on the Optometry Unit, visit sta.uwi.edu/fms/optometry. For updates on the UWI Optical Store, visit www.instagram.com/uwi_optical/**

■ UWI IN SOCIETY



Taking Campus Innovation Public

BY VANEISA BAKSH

When Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine became St Augustine Campus Principal in 2022, her strategic objective was to build an entrepreneurship culture, in particular, implementing the commercialisation of the innovations on the campus, with concrete support from the Office of the Principal. Financial sustainability was an urgent issue.

“For me, it was about our research, our uniqueness, our brilliant scholars, who could create things that the community and the society needs. So it was about using our research, leveraging it, and making money out of it,” she said.

As it caught on, she realised that partnerships with public and private sector organisations had to be formed. It was not practical for the university to get involved in the actual production process on long-term bases.

“We can’t run all these factories by ourselves” forever, she said. “So I was looking for these investor-type arrangements.”

From classroom to convention centre

She traversed the private sector, meeting with several of the top business-persons in the country. She also joined the Chamber of Commerce to have a presence and raise awareness of UWI’s business initiative. Similarly, she met with the then President of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers’ Association to forge linkages. When she heard about the TTMA’s annual Trade and Investment Convention (TIC), she decided that this was something the UWI should participate in as a serious innovator and entrepreneur.

Three years ago, UWI set up its first booth for UWI Made products at the TIC (the campus had previously had a presence at the convention for recruitment and other purposes). They were pleasantly surprised by the amount of attention it garnered. Their presence has broadened, and the UWI’s booth now features a range of products created on the campus.

We call them our UWI MADE merchandise, she said proudly, listing off some of the brands that were featured from companies that have been formed: UWI Seal-It Ltd. and UWI Fine Cocoa Ltd, which showed off its “Spirit” dark chocolates, now being made at its Chocolate Factory at TIC.

UWI also displayed Biophyt 1.0 (a completely organic, non-toxic bio-control solution developed by researchers at the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Sustainability (formerly the Faculty of Food and Agriculture), UWI Optical, and Humankind Studios (a video production enterprise created by the Faculty of Humanities and Education).

This year, the TIC was its biggest yet, reflecting the steady growth since it first started 27 years ago as a gathering place for business networking.

Shanna-Marie Israel, its lead co-ordinator, said there were 422 booths and tables, and five pavilions, up from 318 booths last year. Total traffic over its three days was 26,500, and there were 381 B2B (business to business) meetings. The TIC also arranged 21 webinars and seminars as part of its Business Education series.

From all reports, it was a productive event all round.

Ms Koscina Sookram-Quintal, Business Manager for UWI Optical, said the experience allowed them to showcase their products and raise public awareness about the importance of eye health.

“There was a high degree of interest in our services and people were particularly fascinated by the fact that the university was providing professional services to the general public. It is my view that it will have a positive impact as we have already received requests from contact information collected over the three days for appointments for eye exams.”

UWI Optical is the eye care and vision services of the Optometry Unit at the Faculty of Medical Sciences (Editor’s note: see interview with Optometry Unit Head Dr Kingsley Ekemiri in this issue).



TOP-BOTTOM

The UWI Made booth at TIC 2026.
PHOTOS: ANEEL KARIM

Russell Thomas (right), a member of the UWI Seal-It team, explains the capabilities of one of their products to an attendee.

Ms Koscina Sookram-Quintal, Business Manager for UWI Optical, shares a flyer with a visitor to the UWI Made booth.

■ UWI IN SOCIETY

"It supports the teaching and learning component of the Bachelors of Optometry in the area of dispensing. So, in addition to the Optometry Clinic services we now have an optical lab for the students to gain skills in lens cutting and fitting, and the optical store for skills training in frame fitting, lens selection, and customer service," she explained.

Developing an entrepreneurship culture at St Augustine

The Principal relates how staff have become so invested in the entrepreneurship culture, that a marketing person, Events and Projects Officer Wendy Maynard, came up with the idea that a lens cleaner should be part of the range of products and collaborated with the Optometry Unit (without her knowledge) to make one. It is one of her treasured collection of products that are UWI MADE.

Dr Lebert Grierson, a Chemistry Lecturer, and Nizamudeen Mohammed, a Development Engineer, worked together to produce the UWI Seal-It brand of products, for which they received the Principal's Innovation Award.

Dr Grierson represented them at TIC and reported that for this, their third appearance, the reception was very favourable and they were able to demonstrate some of the superior qualities of their products.

"UWI Seal-It products are asphalt-based primer coatings and sealants. We have developed a range of products that include UWI Seal-It Primer Type 1 penetrative coating, UWI Seal-It primer Type 2 protective coating, and UWI Seal-It Roofing Compound Sealant. They are effective for waterproofing concrete roofs, walls, wood, and metal surfaces. They work by sealing cracks and pores in any surface, especially concrete. We also manufacture marine coating, a rust prevention coating."

He and Mohammed were focused on providing waterproofing for tropical and desert-like climates for periods of greater than 10 years, where the similar imported products only provide water-proofing for little over two years, he explained.

"Imported asphalt sealants products from temperate climates are not very sustainable in tropical climates. Our UWI Seal-It products can be used in temperate and tropical climates," he said.

Mohammed said he is responsible for the lab; analysing raw material, and preparing and supervising the products during production and packaging. He also modifies products, customising them to suit the needs of clients.

With his interest in inventing, he is always working on developing new products, and designs equipment to manufacture them. Naturally, he teaches his considerable skills as well.

Seal-It is working to expand manufacturing facilities at a site at Mount Hope because as it stands, demand is far greater than their capacity. The will soon be available at regional hardware stores.

Professor Antoine spoke about the savings The UWI has gained since implementing Seal-It.



A conference goer receives a sample product from the University Field Station. The UWI's high quality cow milk is available at supermarkets throughout T&T.



A visitor to Humankind Studios learns about the video production/storytelling services they provide.

"We were spending millions on roof repairs, and I said, 'We will use our own products to fix our roofs.'"

There was resistance at first.

"And then little by little, next thing you know, everybody wants to use the products. So, it was established."

Dr Grierson confirms that all waterproofing jobs over the last two years at the campus have been done by UWI Seal-It.

It has been a journey of transformation, changing the culture of the campus from its mindset as a research-first institution into one that embraces the idea that its research-led innovations could be transformed into income-generating products without compromising its academic status.

Professor Antoine has identified four key areas where that progress could be clearly discerned: translating research into entrepreneurship, fostering employee engagement, advancing a green agenda, and strengthening stakeholder relationships.

She also identified other initiative such as a Shark Tank to evaluate new entrepreneurship proposals. This includes a series of services ranging from consultancies to an analytical and diagnostic services centre, and an optometry centre which would offer health care services.

Many of these projects have come to fruition because of the determination of the Principal and many other members of the campus community to see the university steer itself into a position where it could be a viable institution, serving its community sensibly and sustainably.

Vaneisa Baksh is an editor and writer. Earlier this year, she released her book "Son of Grace", a biography of cricketer Sir Frank Worrell.



An attendee learns about Biophyt 1.0, an eco-friendly biological pesticide and soil enhancer developed by scientists on the campus.



RESEARCH

Did you know the chronic medical condition previously known as Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) was officially renamed to Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (PMOS)?

The name change was announced in May 2026 in The Lancet, which is a global, weekly peer-reviewed general medical journal.

According to Professor Venkatesan Sundaram and Dr Stephanie Mohammed of The UWI St Augustine Faculty of Medical Sciences, the name change was made by global consensus as more information emerges about its complexities.

Dr Mohammed explained, "The reason why this name change is important is because the old name [PCOS] gave the impression that the condition simply involves cysts in the ovaries."

"But [PMOS] is an endocrine and metabolic disorder with reproductive, metabolic, dermatological and psychological consequences."

"Therefore, a woman doesn't necessarily have to have polycystic ovaries in order to have PMOS."

PMOS and depressive symptoms

Internationally, there is expanding research into the condition to continue developing a robust understanding of its symptoms and effects to help women access better healthcare.

Locally, Dr Mohammed continues to lead teams at UWI St Augustine to better understand the effects of PMOS on women in Trinidad and Tobago.

Recent research has identified an association between PMOS and depressive symptoms, and the research team is encouraging women with persistent symptoms to seek appropriate medical assessment.

"In our findings, we found that PMOS is impacting the mental health of women, and this is also an area of research on the condition that is taking centre stage in the international arena," Prof Sundaram explained.

"Our research found that depressive symptoms were more frequently observed among women with PMOS than among women without PMOS."

These deductions were made based on screening hundreds of women across Trinidad for PMOS and conducting detailed interviews with women living with the condition, as well as women who do not.

To broaden the research into the effects on mental health and get more data, Dr Mohammed said the research team also recently conducted a targeted study among 500 university students and got similar insights.

Dr Mohammed said, "We have recently completed a study among university students examining reproductive health and mental wellbeing. The findings are currently being prepared for scientific publication."

Dr Mohammed noted that concerns about fertility and the effects of PMOS on body weight may be among the factors contributing to the greater burden of depressive symptoms observed in women with PMOS.

Hundreds of women screened in T&T

These new insights into the condition locally come almost a decade into the pair's local PMOS research, which started in 2017 by looking into the prevalence of PMOS in women across the country, screening hundreds of women, and creating strategic awareness campaigns to assist women in learning more about the condition.

In the past two academic years (2024/2025 and 2025/2026), MBBS students of The UWI St Augustine Faculty of Medical Sciences have been assisting Prof Sundaram and Dr Mohammed with the research into PMOS and mental health.

They said involving MBBS students provides an opportunity for the students to better understand the symptoms of PMOS and the guidelines for testing when they eventually go into practice.

Symptoms of PMOS include irregular or absent menstrual cycles, hirsutism (excessive facial or body hair growth), infertility, alopecia, sporadic weight changes, fluctuations in metabolism, insulin resistance, and acanthosis (darkening of the neck, around and underneath the armpits).

But Dr Mohammed cautioned, "I would also like to add that women should not panic if they have one of the symptoms. Having a single symptom does not automatically mean you have PMOS."

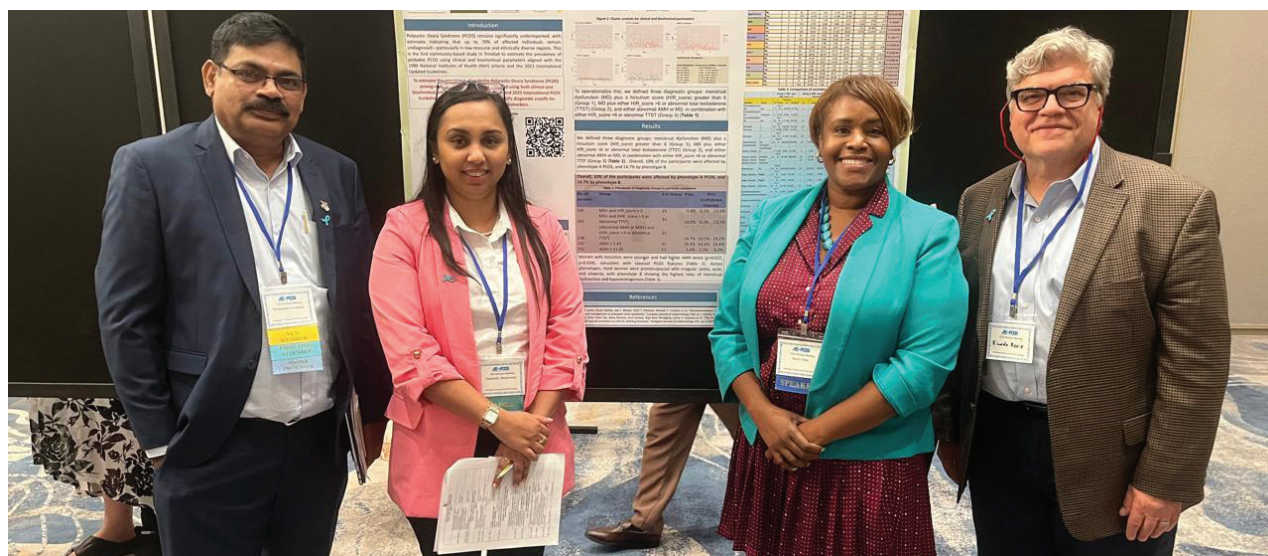
"However, the persistent symptoms or combination



From PCOS to PMOS

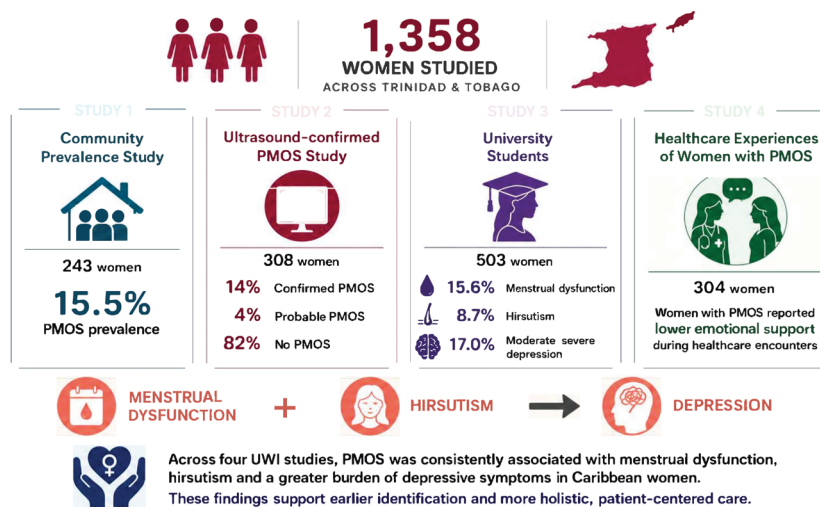
UWI research highlights the mental health burden of PMOS among women in Trinidad

BY TYRELL GITTENS



FROM LEFT: Prof Venkatesan Sundaram, Dr Stephanie Mohammed, Ms Sasha Ottley, and Prof Ricardo Aziz at the Androgen Excess and PMOS Society 2025 Conference in Houston, Texas.

UNDERSTANDING PMOS IN TRINIDAD



Recent research has identified an association between PMOS and depressive symptoms, and the research team is encouraging women with persistent symptoms to seek appropriate medical assessment.

of these features should prompt the conversation with the healthcare professionals, and it should be properly assessed."

Women with persistent symptoms or combinations of symptoms should seek assessment from a healthcare professional and routine screening should be guided by clinical assessment. Parents can begin screenings once a girl starts menstruating if there are concerns, though the recommended testing age group is 18 to 45.

Prof Sundaram highlighted that women can seek assessment through their healthcare provider or appropriate specialist services, including facilities such as the Mount Hope Women's Hospital.

Once screened, healthcare professionals can provide guidance on treatment options for the conditions based on individuals' symptoms and needs.

Working with international experts and community groups

For Prof Sundaram and Dr Mohammed, the research and work continue to better understand PMOS to help women

make informed decisions, which includes multi-country and multi-stakeholder collaborations.

Dr Mohammed shared, "We have been working with Professor Aziz, who is an endocrinologist and one of the most recognised persons in the world of PMOS research. He has been doing many preliminary studies in places where there's not much data on PMOS."

"We've also been submitting a lot of our research to the Androgen Excess and PCOS Society and attending their conferences around the world."

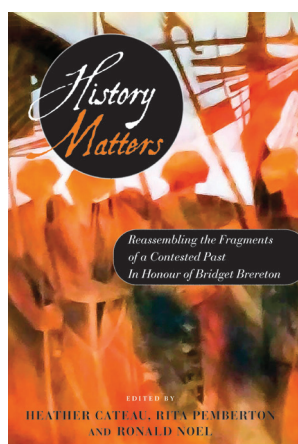
"Locally, we are working with stakeholders like the Rotary Clubs, which helps us fulfil our focus on community education, creating awareness and policy development."

The research team's goal is to translate their research into awareness of PMOS and improvement in the healthcare experiences of women living with the condition.

The next stage of the research will investigate the prevalence of PMOS in adolescent girls and its effect on this demographic.

Ethical approval has already been granted for this stage of the research, which is expected to kick off in 2027.

■ CAMPUS NEWS



A book paying tribute to influential Caribbean historian and UWI academic Emeritus Professor Bridget Brereton has been named a winner in the 28th annual Foreword INDIES Book of the Year Awards.

Titled *History Matters: Reassembling the Fragments of a Contested Past – In Honour of Bridget Brereton*, the publication was awarded a Silver Winner in the History

(Adult Nonfiction) category. *History Matters* was edited by UWI academics Dr Heather Cateau, Dr Rita Pemberton, and Dr Ronald Noel, and published by The UWI Press. The winners were announced on June 4, 2026 by *Foreword Reviews*.

UWI Press Managing Director Christine Randle notes, “This honour carries special significance, as *History Matters* pays tribute to the remarkable life and legacy of Bridget Brereton, one of the Caribbean’s most distinguished historians. We are delighted that the book has received international recognition from Foreword Reviews and extend heartfelt congratulations to the editors and contributors. This achievement highlights the global importance of Caribbean scholarship and reinforces the value of safeguarding and exploring our collective past.”

History Matters pays tribute to Prof Brereton and her significant contributions to the understanding of the region’s history. Featuring a collection of essays that explore

Book honouring UWI Historian Bridget Brereton wins Global Award



FROM LEFT: Dr Ronald Noel, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank Dr Dorian Noel, Dr Rita Pemberton, Dr Heather Cateau, Professor Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw, Emerita Professor Bridget Brereton, Director of the UWI Press Ms Christine Randle, Emerita Professor Patricia Mohammed, Dr Karen Eccles, Dr Fiona Rajkumar, and Dr Gelien Mathews at the Association of Caribbean Historians conference.

various aspects of the economic, social, political, and cultural history of the Caribbean, it reflects her balanced approach and commitment to complexity in historical narratives.

In its statement on the awards, *Foreword* editor-in-chief Michelle Schingler said, “Each year, as our number of entrants increases and diversifies, the job of narrowing each genre category to a select few finalists gets harder.

But that also makes the judges’ ultimate selections all the more exciting. We so look forward to their final choices, and we are so proud to celebrate this year’s exemplary slate of winners.”

Foreword Reviews is a book review journal focusing on independently published books. The INDIES Book of the Year Awards celebrate outstanding books published in 2025 by small, independent, and university presses.

Trinidad and Tobago has earned its first-ever medal at the International Chemistry Olympiad (IChO), a historic breakthrough for the nation’s scientific community and the National Chemistry Olympiad programme led by The UWI St Augustine campus in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

Reginald Mohammed, a student from Naparima College, secured a Bronze Medal at the 57th International Chemistry Olympiad, held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from July 10–19, 2026. He is the first Trinidad and Tobago representative to earn a medal at the Olympiad, the world’s most prestigious chemistry competition for secondary school students under the age of 20. The Trinidad and Tobago team also included Leon Copilah of Iere High School, Soren Narine of Fatima College, and Zeeshaan Lall of Naparima College.

“This medal didn’t happen overnight,” said Dr Nigel K. Jalsa, Coordinator of the Trinidad and Tobago Chemistry Olympiad. “It represents years of deliberately raising the standard of our programme, challenging our students beyond the secondary school curriculum and helping them realise that they can compete with the very best young chemists in the world. Today, Trinidad and Tobago has shown that it belongs on that stage.”

The UWI and the Ministry of Education established the Trinidad and Tobago Chemistry Olympiad (TTChO) in 2019 during the Faculty of Science and Technology’s Science Week under the leadership of then Dean, Professor Brian Cockburn. The programme was created to identify and develop exceptionally talented secondary school students while preparing them to compete at the highest international level.

A statement from UWI St Augustine said the university “acknowledged the Ministry of Education, participating secondary schools, teachers, parents and the programme’s corporate sponsors whose continued support has made Trinidad and Tobago’s participation in the International Chemistry Olympiad possible.

“Competing at the international level requires significant financial investment, including registration fees, international travel and accommodation for students and

T&T wins first International Chemistry Olympiad Medal through UWI-led Programme



FROM LEFT: Members of the T&T Chemistry Olympiad team Zeeshaan Lall, Naparima College; Soren Narine, Fatima College; Reginald Mohammed, Naparima College; and Leon Copilah, Iere High School; at the 57th International Chemistry Olympiad, held in Uzbekistan.

mentors, making sustained partnerships essential to the programme’s continued success.”

While many countries have participated in the Olympiad for decades without earning a medal, Trinidad and Tobago has reached this milestone in only its fourth official participation. Since joining in 2021, Trinidad and Tobago has steadily strengthened its performance, first competing virtually before making its in-person debut in Switzerland in 2023, followed by participation in the United Arab Emirates in 2025, and now Uzbekistan.

Preparing students for that level of competition requires months of intensive instruction. Following the first

round of the Trinidad and Tobago Chemistry Olympiad, the country’s highest-performing students participate in a demanding programme of online and face-to-face training delivered by faculty from The UWI’s Department of Chemistry while simultaneously preparing for their Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) examinations.

Former participants have gone on to distinguish themselves nationally in the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE), including Elizabeth Singh of Naparima Girls’ High School, who represented Trinidad and Tobago at the 2025 International Chemistry Olympiad before earning the President’s Medal.

EDUCATION



A Professional Group, proud of our Calling

*ACHEA celebrates 25 years as the
standard-bearer for Higher Ed administrators*

BY VANEISA BAKSH

At a time when it seems like institutions are dwindling and fading, it is noteworthy that ACHEA, the Association of Caribbean Higher Education Administrators, marked its 25th anniversary on July 5. It was by no means smooth sailing, and the tale of its growth is marked by the fettle of the people who brought it to life in 2001.

It really began with the newly appointed University Registrar in 1992 (the first female to serve in that post at The UWI), Gloria Barrett-Sobers, who was President from 2001 to 2004. Though retired for some time now as she is approaching 85, Mrs Barrett-Sobers is known as ACHEA's mother. She recalled the rationale behind its formation.

"I encountered many competent and knowledgeable administrators who were operating as if they were second-class citizens (to the academics) at the university. The academics are, of course, the producers of The UWI's core products: graduates and research," she acknowledged.

But, "The UWI could not achieve its superb reputation without its excellent, professional administrative staff. I wanted these staff to become, to know, and relish this perspective. We needed to be a professional group, proud of our calling."

It wasn't a question of money, or even the working conditions, she said; their union was strong. It was about how they saw themselves professionally within the university community "in terms of competencies, qualifications, code of ethics, ability to discuss their role in the university with as much pride and self-awareness as the academics".

Administrators from throughout the region

It was an act to demand respect and one that recalibrated the Caribbean's relationship with its administrators in higher education. The membership was around 50 at first, but that figure has significantly increased, said the Membership Officer, Allison Johnson. Countries like Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, Turks and Caicos, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, The Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, and even Ghana and the USA are included.

This year's conference, ironically the 23rd one, marked the milestone of 25 years, so it had a special celebratory feel. Dr Helen Williams-Cumberbatch, 1st Vice President, who chaired the anniversary celebrations sub-committee, was very excited about the plans for the event, which took place from July 2 to 5 at Breezes Resort in The Bahamas.

Among them were the 25@25 Initiative, a tribute to the contribution of members. The following four categories were defined and 25 institutions were invited to nominate an excellent administrator in each.

- **Lifetime Achievement in Higher Education Administration** – An individual who has demonstrated enduring commitment to the institution's mission through decades of exemplary service
- **Excellence in Leadership** – An individual whose vision and decisive leadership have inspired action and fostered a culture of collective success



Mrs Marvette Facey-Thompson, Immediate past President of ACHEA, delivering remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the 23rd Annual Conference held in The Bahamas, 2026. Looking on are President of the University of The Bahamas, Dr Robert J Blaine III and Ms Antona Curry, Conference Chair. PHOTOS: COURTESY ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS.



FROM LEFT: Members of the ACHEA Executive Committee 2024-2026. Back row: Dr Kofi Nkrumah-Young, Ms Michelle Bruce, Mrs Kasiane Reid-Martin, Ms Alison Johnson, Dr Justin Zephyrine, Dr Courtney Garrick. Front Row: Ms Michelle Hollness, Mrs Marvette Facey-Thompson, Dr Linda Steele, Dr Helen Williams-Cumberbatch, Dr Candice Williams, Mrs Antonia Charlemagne-Marshall. Dr Williams-Cumberbatch and Dr Williams were elected as the new President and Vice President of the 2026-2028 Executive Committee.

■ EDUCATION



THE NEW ACHEA EXECUTIVE: (From left) First Vice President Dr Candice Williams, President Dr Helen Cumberbatch-Williams, and Second Vice President Ms Lourie Clare in an image from the official announcement from the association.



Dr Linda Steele, Past President, presents Dr Patrick Anglin, The UWI Data Protection Officer, with a token of appreciation following delivery of a plenary address at the 22nd Annual Conference in the Turks and Caicos Islands in 2025.

- **Innovation in Administrative Practices** – A creative problem-solver who challenges the status quo and implements strategies for improving institutional efficiency and effectiveness
- **Service and Commitment to Institutional Development** – A devoted advocate whose tireless efforts have directly contributed to institutional growth and strengthened organisational capacity

There was also an artwork competition open to students at higher education institutions. The winning design, created by Carina Chin of COSTAATT, was the signature artwork for the conference.

There was also a gala themed Glitz and Glamour, a red-carpet affair meant to pay tribute to honourees of the ACHEA charity programme.

On the anniversary Sunday, a commemorative church service was held at the hotel. The service was officiated by Dr Kofi Nkrumah-Young, an ordained minister and ACHEA's International Liaison Officer, who defined his role as seeking and maintaining connections with similar organisations.

The Aftermath of COVID-19

The impact and consequences of COVID during the period from 2020 to 2022 has not yet been fully measured. Dr Linda Steele, who served as president from 2016 to 2018, recalled some of the upheaval. She had already decided that she would not seek another term because she was due to retire in July 2019 from her position as Senior Assistant Registrar (Human Resources) at St Augustine. So Claire Craig (now an Internet Exchange Point researcher and consultant) succeeded her, and Dr Steele remained on the executive as the Immediate Past President.

"Things were moving along smoothly until COVID arrived in March 2020. The conference scheduled for Barbados in July 2020 had to be cancelled, and hope for a conference in July 2021—also in Barbados—slowly faded because of closed borders and more and more COVID," she said. It meant that elections were also cancelled. The annual executive retreat was conducted online in September 2020.

"ACHEA went through its most turbulent time after that. At the end of the retreat, we got a message from the president advising that she was resigning with immediate effect! Following an emergency meeting the next day during which we consulted and re-read our constitution, the 1st Vice President, Marvette Facey-Thompson, was appointed to act as president until elections could be constitutionally held."



'The UWI could not achieve its superb reputation without its excellent, professional administrative staff. I wanted these staff to become, to know, and relish this perspective. We needed to be a professional group, proud of our calling.' - Mrs Gloria Barrett-Sobers, first woman to serve as Registrar of The University of the West Indies, and President of ACHEA's Executive Committee from 2001 to 2004.

That period and its unprecedented circumstances yielded some positive adaptations. Bound by determination not to let the organisation fail, the membership grew closer.

Great challenges often squeeze out extraordinary resourcefulness, and by 2021, when it was obvious that the conference could not take place again for another year, they tried a one-day webinar type of conference. The presenters came primarily from the aborted conference in 2020 and it was a success, said Dr Steele. "We continued with monthly webinars after that session."

Topics that the Executive felt would benefit members were presented and interest grew. ACHEA had become "extremely proficient" at hosting Webinars—an unexpected bonus. "I need to mention here that professionals in the Caribbean are very generous. All of them presented at no cost to ACHEA!"

By July 2022, the annual conference was back. ACHEA once again was able to host it in Trinidad, and the acting president, Marvette Facey-Thompson, was voted in as President. Given that the previous past president had resigned, the spot for Immediate Past President on the Executive was empty. Dr Steele was asked to continue.

(On July 2, 2026, the elections were held, and a new executive was approved. At the time of writing, this had not yet happened.)

More than an association

For Facey-Thompson, it has been a fascinating journey since she attended her first conference 15 years ago. She's never missed one since, she said, and she's moved steadily through the ranks. Her commitment is evident.

"ACHEA is more than an association. It is a community of higher education administrators dedicated to sharing knowledge and best practices in the furtherance of higher education administration," she said, adding that her tenure as President was rewarding.

"It has been a privilege to serve the region in the many fora that ACHEA has led that focused on promoting higher education at the highest level. Our annual conferences have been the flagship event on the calendar and despite the many challenges, we continue to thrive." She proudly acclaims the executive as "world class leaders" in their own rights.

"We sought to improve on the foundation that was laid by the early leaders by strengthening and building upon the structures already in place and creating new ones to support the mission and vision of ACHEA. At the forefront is our customer—the many members of the association—and the value they bring when our minds come together to share knowledge and best practices."

As she looked toward the elections and the changing executive, she is realistic... and optimistic. "Financial challenges are ever present, but we remain resilient."

As the association moves past its first quarter of a century, it is fitting that it celebrates the past and remains hopeful for the future.

Mrs Barrett-Sobers sums it up with all the pride of a mother seeing her baby come to adulthood.

"I am delighted and proud of how the association has grown and developed. I am particularly pleased at the number of academics who have chosen to attend our annual conferences and present research papers. The conferences tend to provide insights into universities and how they operate as institutions and what is trending globally within the sector. If one is a physicist or historian, one tends to research and be informed in those areas in order to progress career-wise. Some become interested in how the institution that employs them is structured and operates. These are core topics at ACHEA's annual conferences. I am proud that the association is keeping track and contributing to these insights and thus keeping our university on its toes in terms of global trends," she said joyfully.

■ For more information on ACHEA, visit them at <https://www.acheacaribbean.org/wp/>

■ OUR PEOPLE

A beloved black Labrador helped Professor Karla Georges understand that veterinary medicine was never only about animals.

As a child living in Dominica, Georges assumed the family dog would accompany them when they moved to Trinidad. Her mother explained that the Labrador would have to spend six months in quarantine, so he remained behind. Years later, while studying veterinary medicine, the understanding clicked: the regulation was not simply about controlling an animal. It was designed to protect an entire population from rabies.

"That was when it came together for me," she recalls. "These regulations are in place to protect human health. That is part of public health and part of the role of the veterinarian. But it also highlighted just how connected all species are—and we are increasingly just learning to what degree."

Today, Professor Georges has spent more than two decades studying the connections between animals, people, and the environment. A veterinary epidemiologist and public health scientist, she has served as Director of The University of the West Indies' School of Veterinary Medicine at St Augustine since 2018. Her work spans tick and vector-borne diseases, food safety, antimicrobial resistance, disaster response, and the increasingly urgent field known as One Health.

Beyond the Veterinary Clinic

One Health is a collaborative approach built on a simple reality: the wellbeing of people, animals and the environment cannot be separated. It brings together expertise from medicine, veterinary science and environmental research to prevent disease outbreaks, strengthen food safety, confront antimicrobial resistance, and respond to pressures such as climate change.

Rabies offers a clear local example. In Trinidad, the disease is transmitted by bats and can affect livestock. Human health authorities vaccinate people, agricultural authorities vaccinate animals, and cases are reported through the Anti-Rabies Unit. A One Health system connects those moving parts, allowing agencies to respond when an animal is bitten or a person is exposed.

"It is basically trying to work together instead of working in separate boxes," Georges says.

The same principle applies to leptospirosis, which becomes more dangerous when flooding brings people and animals into contact with water contaminated by infected rodents. Dogs, cattle and other livestock may serve as early indicators of increased risk to people. Yet without reliable reporting between veterinarians and public-health authorities, an important warning can be missed.

Climate, Disease and a Changing Caribbean

Climate change is sharpening that threat. More intense rainfall, flooding and stagnant water create favourable conditions for mosquitoes and biting midges (which we call sandflies), while extreme weather can blur the boundaries between wildlife, domestic animals and human communities.

"People have to be alert and aware," Georges says. "When you have stagnant water, flooding, a proliferation of mosquitoes and susceptible hosts, that is where these things start to happen."

Another growing concern is antimicrobial resistance. Antibiotics used unnecessarily or incorrectly in people and animals can encourage bacteria to evolve resistance, making infections harder to treat. Georges says Trinidad and Tobago still needs stronger systems to track antimicrobial use, monitor resistant organisms, and translate research into regulation.

"The challenge is to move from dialogue to policy," she says. "But it has to be data-driven. You have to know what is happening in each area."

The Health of One is the Well-Being of All

Professor Karla Georges on animals, public health and Caribbean resilience

BY KIERAN KHAN



Professor Karla Georges,
Director of the School of
Veterinary Medicine.

Her research has helped build that evidence, including studies of resistant strains and genetic markers in Salmonella associated with food and food-producing animals. The work is not glamorous, but it is foundational: before authorities can decide where to intervene, they must know what is circulating, where it exists, and how serious the risk may be.

When Disaster Planning Includes Animals

One Health also becomes strikingly visible during disasters. Following the 2021 eruption of La Soufrière in St Vincent and the Grenadines, regional partners mobilised assistance for livestock and companion animals. Georges says St Vincent's inclusion of animals in its disaster planning helped speed recovery.

Hurricane Beryl in 2024 presented a different logistical test. Georges and her colleagues helped move approximately 75 tonnes of animal feed to affected communities. During Grenada's Independence weekend, when ships were crowded with food, drinks, generators and other supplies, one captain insisted that the animal feed receive priority.

"This is what we want One Health to be," Georges says. "We want people to be moved to care and to give

priority to the animals and the people who care for them, including the farmers."

Ignoring animals in a crisis can also endanger people. Many residents will refuse evacuation if they must abandon pets, while the loss of livestock can deepen economic hardship and threaten food security. Disaster planning that treats animals as an afterthought is therefore not only incomplete; it misunderstands how Caribbean communities live.

A Regional Model for Resilience

For Georges, this interconnectedness is the heart of veterinary medicine and the future of Caribbean resilience. The region may be small and resource-constrained, but its close networks also create an opportunity to become a global model for co-operation.

"The overarching goal is to interlink human, environmental and animal health for the welfare of all of us," she says. "It is about welfare, resilience and progress."

The lesson that began with one Labrador now extends across laboratories, ministries, farms, hospitals and islands: protecting an animal can protect a family, a food system, an economy, and sometimes, an entire community.

■ OUR UNIVERSITY

Accelerating the OneUWI Dream through *Digital Transformation*

BY NAZIR ALLADIN



The University of the West Indies has always been more than a collection of campuses. It is a regional institution with a shared mission, a common identity, and a powerful promise: to serve the Caribbean and the wider world as one university. Today, that promise is being strengthened through the OneUWI Digital Transformation Programme.

At its heart, the programme is about transforming the OneUWI dream into a lived digital reality. Whether a student studies at Mona, Cave Hill, St Augustine, Five Islands, or the Global Campus, or engages with the university online, the experience should feel consistent, accessible, secure, and distinctly UWI. The vision is clear: one university, one standard of service, one coherent digital presence, one secure environment, and one smoother journey for all stakeholders within the regional university community.

The Digital Transformation Programme is a multi-year university-wide journey, running through to 2027, designed to make The UWI easier to navigate, more connected, resilient, and better equipped to serve students, staff, alumni, partners, and the region.

It brings together modern platforms and shared services, including the OneUWI Student and Staff Portals, the OneUWI Service Desk, AI agents and chatbots, a unified library services platform, stronger cybersecurity capabilities, business continuity and disaster recovery planning, upgraded network infrastructure, and a refreshed digital presence.

This transformation is not simply about technology. It is about our people. It is about making everyday interactions easier for our students who need timely support, staff who need better tools, academic teams who collaborate across borders, and leaders who require trusted data for decision-making. At the heart of the transformation is reducing duplication, replacing fragmentation with integration, and creating common, standardised services that can be delivered consistently across the regional University space.



UWI



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

One Standard of Service, Many Campus Strengths

For students, the OneUWI digital experience will mean fewer barriers and clearer pathways. The OneUWI Student Portal is being developed as a single gateway to learning systems, registration information, communications, and support services. AI-enabled support and chatbots will provide faster answers to common questions, while the OneUWI Service Desk will improve tracking, transparency, response times, and consistency.

For staff, digital transformation will strengthen the workplace experience. The OneUWI Staff Portal will provide a secure digital environment where policies, tools, university news, and services are brought together in one place. Modern collaboration tools, supported through a single Microsoft 365 environment, will make it easier for colleagues across campuses and departments to work together, share information, and serve the university community more effectively.

Importantly, OneUWI does not mean uniformity without identity. Each campus will continue to reflect its own strengths, history, and community. What digital transformation makes possible is a shared foundation beneath that diversity: common platforms, common service standards, common security expectations, and a common commitment to excellent stakeholder experience.

For the institution as a whole, the programme provides the foundations for a more integrated and resilient UWI. Stronger IT governance, data governance,

enterprise architecture, cybersecurity training, and business continuity planning will help ensure that the university's systems are not only modern but also trusted, secure and sustainable. This is especially important as higher education responds to rising expectations, increasing cyber risks, climate-related disruptions, and the demand for flexible, hybrid operations.

Inclusive, Secure, and Built to Last

Inclusion is also being built into the transformation from the start. Accessibility, assistive technologies for students with special needs, inclusive design, and gender-responsive approaches are all part of the digital acceleration agenda. The goal is to ensure that UWI's digital systems work for the full diversity of its community.

The year 2026 has been identified as UWI's Year of Digital Acceleration, marking a decisive shift from planning and piloting to visible delivery. Across this year, the university is accelerating training, technology deployments, and infrastructure upgrades so that students and staff begin to experience tangible improvements sooner.

Success will not be solely measured by systems launched. It will be measured by improved experience: faster access to support, fewer duplicated processes, more reliable services, stronger cybersecurity, better accessibility, improved continuity, and greater confidence in UWI's digital future. Through digital transformation, The UWI is strengthening the foundations of OneUWI and creating a more seamless, secure, inclusive, and resilient university for the Caribbean and the world.

The UWI Calendar of Events | September-October 2026

Matriculation and Welcome Ceremony 2026 **September 17** **Sport and Physical Education Centre** **St Augustine Campus**

This September, UWI St Augustine will officially welcome all its new students at Matriculation 2026. This ceremony is where the incoming class is formally recognised as members of the university. It will include campus traditions such as the signing of the Matriculation Register, as well as stirring words of welcome and affirmation from the university's leadership. If you are the parent of a first year student, or a new student yourself, be sure to take part in this important campus event.



Graduation 2026 **October 22 to 24** **Sport and Physical Education Centre** **St Augustine Campus** **ONLINE**

Join the entire university community this October for the 2026 Graduation Ceremonies. After years of study, projects, examinations, and research, the class of 2026 will cross the graduation stage and receive their degrees. Graduands, family, and friends can attend in person, while other well-wishers can view this monumental occasion online.



UWI Life New Student Orientation **August 28** **St Augustine Campus**

If you're a new student entering UWI St Augustine this year, come and be part of UWI Life, a campus celebration filled with music, performances, games, and prizes. This special event only happens at the beginning of the new academic year to welcome new students.

For updates on UWI Life, visit the campus events calendar at
<https://sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar/default.asp>

First Year Experience (FYE) 2026 **St Augustine Campus** **ONLINE**

FYE is the signature orientation programme for all new students and their parents/guardians. Events and activities include Smart Start, UWI Life, FYE Mixers, UWI Clicks and FYE workshops that focus on health, finances, and career planning. These events, which take place all year-round.

For more information on FYE,
visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/fye/>

