

UWI TODAY

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES • ST AUGUSTINE CAMPUS

SUNDAY 11 DECEMBER 2022



BLUE WAVE



“Spread your hands and ‘leggo’ [once you are in your safe space],” said Ms Ingrid L-A Lashley, former Director of the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited and honorary graduate of The UWI St Augustine. She gave her conferral speech to a packed audience of graduates, their loved ones, and other members of the campus community on October 27 at **The UWI St Augustine 2022 Graduation ceremonies**. So said, so done. Newly minted graduates celebrated their hard-earned success and the completion of one of the most impactful journeys of their lives at the ceremonies. Held from October 27 to 29 at the Centre of Excellence in Macoya, they were the first fully in-person graduation ceremonies in two years due to the pandemic. The theme for this year across the four campuses was “*Lux Via*”, *Light the Way*. PHOTO: KEYON MITCHELL

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Celebrating a Student and a New Paradigm for Education and Development

On November 12, it was reported that 28-year-old activist **Kareem Marcelle** had been successfully admitted to the Bar and qualified as an attorney-at-law. His community celebrated with him. For those who know this outstanding young man, it is a moment of shared celebration. Kareem dedicated himself to the task of uplifting his community of Beetham Gardens while pursuing his academic and professional credentials in one of the most exclusive and challenging fields – the law. His efforts have culminated in this victory, one for both himself and his community.

Kareem is a relentless advocate for Beetham Gardens. Since his early teens he has been working to advance the community. He is a member of several community groups that provide opportunity for the residents through sport, cultural activities, mentorship and counselling, educational access, and funding for school books and uniforms. He is regularly featured in both the mainstream and social media speaking on behalf of Beetham Gardens, an area that faces both marginalisation and stigmatisation from the wider society.

Kareem even leads his own initiatives to raise funds for the community for various causes, such as providing Christmas gifts and meals or much-needed supplies during the pandemic. What a remarkable young man.

As Campus Principal, I wish to congratulate Kareem as one of our graduates from the Faculty of Law, St Augustine. However, my relationship with this inspiring young man goes back to my position as Dean of the Faculty of Law. Kareem is the very first recipient of the faculty's Makandal Daaga Law Scholarship, an extremely exciting initiative which represents a potential paradigm shift in how we think of higher education and access to education.

The Makandal Daaga Law Scholarship was created in 2017 as an alternative opportunity/access scholarship open to CARICOM nationals of any age, race or gender. The scholarship is named after one of Trinidad and Tobago's most prominent political activists and revolutionaries, Makandal Daaga.

The scholarship widens access to the Law (LLB) programme by adding a criterion for entry, social activism. Applicants who satisfy the basic UWI matriculation requirements, but who would not normally gain a place in Law due to the fiercely competitive requirements, based solely on CAPE and similar academic qualifications, now have an opportunity to access a legal education.

Scholarship applicants must therefore have a strong record of advocating for positive social change in their



communities through work on issues of justice, equality, or democracy, whether in an NGO, governmental, regional, or individual capacity. Daaga himself was a deeply engaged student of The UWI St Augustine, who in his time on campus was a student leader that balanced his academic work with anti-colonial and anti-racist protest action, making a huge positive impact on society.

While the Makandal Daaga scholar enters without the stratospheric academic requirements for admission, we have never doubted that the scholarship student who applies themselves can and will achieve the necessary academic record. Kareem shows the merit of that belief, graduating with second class honours. Speaking on this achievement in a 2019 interview, he said:

"If you know that you have been working hard continuously for your community, and it does not have to be a physical community, it could be a community of so many different diasporas of persons and groups that you would want to fight for, a law degree can definitely help you to make that one step closer to achieve that."

Standards are important. Excellence matters. Healthy competition is a fine mechanism to bring forth the best in people. But there are structural deficiencies built into society that operate contrary to standards of fairness, and lead to sometimes severe inequality and a lack of access to opportunity. The Makandal Daaga Scholarship is an initiative that not only confronts this problem by granting access, it also encourages recipients by rewarding the path of service.

We look forward to the outcomes of our second scholarship winner, Suana Sookdeo, a young activist and writer from Chaguanas.

In my own career, I have placed a major emphasis on community service and outreach. That includes encouraging my students to see the law as a tool for helping others, uplifting society; and working to ensure that underserved people are given access to an education in the field of law and other disciplines. It is an ideal that The UWI St Augustine has embraced.

One of the greatest illustrations of this effort (but far from the only one), is our contribution to the success of Kareem Marcelle. The Students' Guild and the Freedom Hall Management (Dr Michael Sutherland) and even law alumni Vaughn Thomas, who helped mentor Kareem, also contributed to the success of this scholarship.

When service is encouraged, we create an ever-growing pool of citizens dedicated to serve society. I sincerely hope that our graduates will look at Kareem's example and be inspired to serve – in their own ways of course. Good citizenship can take many forms. Finding new ways to make a positive contribution is part of the adventure.

Rose-Marie Antoine

Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine

Campus Principal



Attorney-at-Law and Makandal Daaga Scholarship winner Kareem Marcelle (third from left) alongside Professor Antoine and members of the Daaga family, Akhenaton Daaga (left), his mother Liseli, and sister Karomana (right) in a photo from 2017.

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FOOD

According to the United Nations report, around 800 million people, or 10 percent of the world's population, were anticipated to suffer from hunger in 2021, while 2.3 billion people, or 30 percent of the world's population, were predicted to face moderate or severe food insecurity. A nutrient-rich diet was beyond reach for almost 3 billion people in 2020, an increase of 100 million from 2019.

Dr Shakuntala Haraksingh Thilsted knows quite a bit about hunger and malnutrition and how to address it. She is the World Food Prize Laureate and also received the prestigious Arrell Global Food Innovation Award in 2021, for her ground-breaking work on fish-based food systems to combat malnutrition, and sustain children and women in underdeveloped regions in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. Since 2020, she has been the Global Lead for Nutrition and Public Health at the CGIAR research centre, WorldFish, with headquarters in Penang, Malaysia.

This October, she returned to The UWI St Augustine, where she attained her undergraduate degree at the Faculty of Agriculture, to both receive an honorary doctorate from the university and speak on this crucial topic.

World Hunger post-COVID, during Conflict

“Transforming Food Systems: Building Resilience, Nourishing People and Improving Livelihoods with Aquatic Foods”, a UWI Open Lecture, was held on October 26 at the Daaga Auditorium of The UWI St Augustine campus. In her presentation, Dr Haraksingh Thilsted shared that world hunger and malnutrition would continue to effect populations for years to come.

It is now projected, she explained, that approximately 670 million people will continue to face hunger in 2030. Conflicts such as the war in Ukraine, climate change and COVID-19 have decelerated the substantial progress that has been made in fighting hunger and malnutrition globally.

In our region, there is a scarcity of data on malnutrition. “There is much work to be done in this area, in order to monitor progress with the changes we hope to implement,” she said.

Dr Haraksingh Thilsted also focused on solutions to global hunger and malnutrition, what is being done and what can be done in the future.

“Many global efforts have been made to achieve food and nutrition security,” she told the audience.

These efforts included initiatives such as the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021 where Caribbean nations pledged to achieve various goals. For example, Barbados pledged to reduce their food import bill, while Guyana pledged to promote greater food and nutrition security by investing in research and development, diversifying agricultural production, and boosting agro-processing, while investing in agricultural-support infrastructure.

Guyana's pledges were similar to the plans presented in Trinidad and Tobago's Budget Statement 2023. Dr Haraksingh Thilsted spoke favourably of the government's approach.

Nourishing All People and Our Planet

To solve global food and nutrition insecurity, Dr Haraksingh Thilsted advocates, “We must distance ourselves from the narrative of ‘feeding our population’, which could encourage a reliance on a few staple foods, to ‘nourishing all people and our planet’, which considers diverse food groups, nutritional value, food safety, reducing food loss and waste and environmental concerns.”

Her work focuses on aquatic foods as a way to address food and nutrition insecurity, poor growth and development in children, obesity, and high rates of poverty. Aquatic foods, she said, include “animals, plants and microorganisms that are farmed in and harvested from water, as well as cell- and plant-based foods emerging from new technologies”. They are obtained from diverse aquatic environments, oceans and inland waters.

Currently, 3.3 billion people consume aquatic foods,



Dr Shakuntala Haraksingh Thilsted, World Food Prize Laureate and internationally renowned scientist in food, nutrition and agriculture, gives public lecture at The UWI St Augustine

and 800 million depend on aquatic food systems for livelihoods and income. These systems are also vital for sustainable development as they “have the potential to contribute holistically to all three pillars [social, economic, and environmental] of sustainable development”, she explained.

Dr Haraksingh Thilsted also said aquatic foods contribute to several of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well Being, Gender Equality, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Climate Action, and Life Below Water.

In addition, the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference, commonly referred to as COP27, will include the themes of food and nutrition security and transformation of food systems. They were first linked to climate change last year at COP26.

Eating Diverse Aquatic Foods

In 2021, UN Nutrition, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and WorldFish, published a paper highlighting aquatic foods' capability to transform global food and nutrition security, Dr Haraksingh Thilsted said.

She pointed to several ways to increase the consumption of aquatic foods:

- Using multiple entry points in the food systems framework – food production, policies, nutrition education, as well as the culture, needs and wants of the population
- Promoting a change in perception and demand for aquatic foods
- Creating culturally-appropriate dishes for each country that include aquatic foods.
- Cooking demonstrations and fish-based recipes (which have been shown to increase the consumption of diverse aquatic foods in Zambia and Timor-Leste).

Moving to a diet rich with diverse aquatic foods requires more food production – sustainable food production. Dr Haraksingh Thilsted pointed towards the polyculture practices of countries in Asia and some in Africa. Fish farmers cultivate multiple species in homestead ponds and integrated aquatic/terrestrial production systems.

In parts of India, village ponds and even water tanks have been used to produce fish. In such places, the contribution of women as part of the production system was an unexpected societal benefit. Their work has historically been undervalued, unpaid and even prohibited.

Dr Haraksingh Thilsted said that it was important to build partnerships with institutions such as universities and intergovernmental organisations like CARICOM, as well as to influence policymakers to include nutrition-sensitive aquatic food systems in their plans and research investments.

For these systems to be sustainable far into the future, she explained, youth engagement must be strongly considered, as most aquatic food system workers are of the older generations.

In Dr Haraksingh Thilsted's view, the starting point to changing the perception of healthy diets is connecting to the youth through nutrition messaging and social behaviour change. Once more young people consider not just what they wish to eat, but what they should eat and which options are most sustainable, then slowly, the perception of healthy diets would become more attractive.

A change in this direction would amplify the demand for diverse healthy and nutritious foods, creating a chain reaction through the food system, also with food providers, and leading to a well-nourished population who can contribute to national development.

CAMPUS NEWS

The UWI St Augustine Researchers share in 2022 GULBENKIAN PRIZE for HUMANITY

Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine has issued congratulations to Professor Michelle Mycoo, a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was declared a co-laureate of the 2022 Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity, together with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

“This is wonderful news, and a tremendous achievement by you and your colleagues. It reinforces what I truly believe – that the St Augustine campus of The UWI has colleagues of the highest worth who can compare and even surpass their peers on the international stage, and who are making meaningful contributions in every facet of our lives. I am very proud. Congratulations,” she said.

Professor Mycoo, a Professor of Urban and Regional Planning in the Faculty of Engineering shared that “it took a tremendous amount of hard work, discipline and leadership as the Coordinating Lead Author of the Small Islands chapter of the IPCC Working Group II Report”.

She added, “I am most humbled by this award as an IPCC scientist, and grateful to the team of authors who contributed to the global report, including scholars from The University of the West Indies and UWI alumni.”

The Jury of the Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity, led by former German Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel, selected the IPCC and IPBES out of 116 nominations from 41 countries, in recognition of “the role of science on the front line of tackling climate change and the loss of biodiversity”.

IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee received the award “on behalf of IPCC scientists who deliver the most up-to-date and robust climate change knowledge to the world’s policymakers”.

Lee said, “science is our most powerful instrument to tackle climate change, a clear and imminent threat to our wellbeing and livelihoods, the wellbeing of our planet and all of its species. For IPCC scientists, this prize is



Professor Michelle Mycoo

an important recognition and encouragement. For the decision-makers, it is another push for more decisive climate action.”

The prize was launched by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 2020 with the objective of distinguishing those persons and organisations from around the world whose work has greatly contributed to mitigating the impacts of climate change. It comes with a generous purse of one million euros.



GREEN THERAPY: Students **Sai Sonali Anmolsingh** (left) and **Ashley Khan** plant a seagrape tree (*Coccoloba uvifera*) with assistance from **Amanda Ramsaroop** (green top) and **Kiran Seusanker** (grey) on the lawn just outside the Department of Behavioural Sciences building on the St Augustine Campus. On November 3, 2022, students from the PSYC 3003 Community and Environmental Psychology class spearheaded an initiative “aiming to raise awareness and advocacy on the symbolic, psychosocial, and environmental benefits of physical and social spaces”, according to Head of Department, **Dr Talia Esnard**. The event, hosted by the Psychology Unit of the Department of Behavioural Sciences, was attended by many faculty members and students. The organising committee was led by **Ms Anmolsingh**. PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE

By Josette Deonanan



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BOOKS

Dr Sterling Frost ORTT is a very driven individual. He is the Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Operations and Administration at First Citizens Bank and UWI St Augustine Professor of Practice – Management Studies. He's also Chairman of The UWI Development and Endowment Fund and other academic, government and civil society organisations.

Most recently, he was awarded the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the nation's highest honour, for his contributions in banking, education and community service.

Now, Dr Frost is sharing some of the knowledge and experience that have helped him reach such profound heights with the publication of his book *Calibrating Organisational Culture: A Dialectical Model Towards Competitive Advantage*.

The ambitious project, which draws from his doctoral thesis, case studies, personal experience and in-depth interviews, guides institutions through 21st century optimisation of organisational performance and growth. The book is a blueprint not only for the Caribbean banking industry – where Dr Frost has over 40 years of experience – but for all sectors and industries seeking solutions in areas such as organisational behaviour and development, strategic leadership, performance and management, and human resource and cross-cultural management.

Calibrating Organisational Culture was launched in October with an event at Castle Killarney in Port of Spain.

"The question of the day is: how do we operationalise culture transformation?" Dr Frost asked the audience. "It's a highly debated topic starting from the national development strategy all the way down to process improvement in organisations."

He expanded, "For the most part, culture transformation remains conceptual, because many pontificate on the levers that need to be pulled, but no one knows exactly how and in what cadence to pull them. As professionals, we reduce culture to its parts and pursue culture transformation as a project: we define a problem, hypothesise a solution, implement and then declare benefits... perhaps a bonus for ourselves. But culture transformation is far from this linear dimension. Culture transformation is a continuous and contiguous exercise by nature. It is an evolutionary process which is driven by culture recognising itself, its opposing tendencies and reconciling both towards something new but yet familiar – it is an eternal dialectic."

Dr Frost presented a metaphor for cultural transformation through comparison to parasitism and symbiosis in ecosystems.

"I think of culture as possessing its own ecosystem. Are we using our expertise to feed off the fat of the land? Or are we fully integrating ourselves and our various roles to benefit the larger ecosystem so much so that if the ecosystem is harmed so are we? Including yourself in the failures of society is the highest level of accountability," he said.

Sharing his vast knowledge of institutional organisation is just one way that Dr Frost holds himself accountable to T&T society. Speaking at the book launch, Professor Patricia Mohammed, Emeritus Professor, UWI St Augustine, said, "He has made this knowledge now available not only for students but for his counterparts in business and industry. While it is an overdone cliché that everyone has a book in them, few people actually get around to producing one. The books we write emerge from a commitment to share knowledge with others. This book comes from his enmeshed experiences of learning, labour and life and from the individual and unique imperatives that have driven him to present to a reader on transformation and growth."

Prof Mohammed's sentiments were echoed by Dr David Rosenblatt, Senior Economic Adviser for the Caribbean at the International Development Bank (IDB) – a patron of the publication. In his review of the book, Dr Rosenblatt noted that Frost's approach to banking – a shift from focus on profits to a focus on people – was refreshing.



Dr Sterling Frost

A Model for Organisational Culture Transformation from a Change Maker

BY ZAHRA GORDON

"[The book] provides a highly structured and systematic method for diagnosing how organisational culture affects a firm's performance and how knowledge sharing, and knowledge management structures mediate that impact."

Dr Rosenblatt added, "this goes well beyond 'gut-feeling' diagnostics and helps one to disentangle the specifics of what might need to change to improve outcomes. But as if that were not enough, Dr Frost also provides 'gut-feeling' qualitative information from carefully constructed interviews that supplement the empirical analysis."

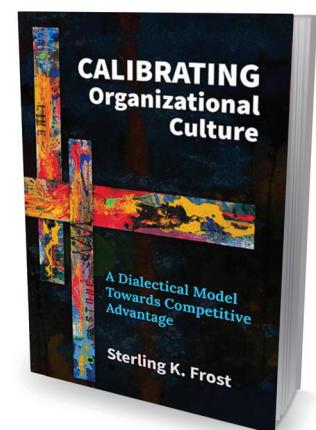
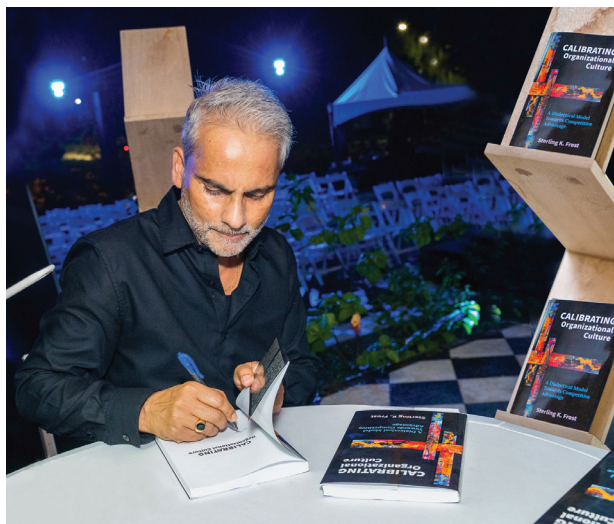
In his opening remarks, The UWI Chancellor Mr Robert Bermudez noted that *Calibrating Organisational Culture* was a canonical contribution to the industry:

"Building on other great thinkers in this field, Frost reminds us that knowledge is itself a key economic resource and the dominant and perhaps the only source of competitive advantage available to us currently. Those

firms which effectively manage their knowledge resources can expect to reap a wide range of benefits such as reduced manpower and infrastructure costs, as well as improved corporate efficiency, growth in revenue, efficiency, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement."

Insightfully, Mr Bermudez commented, "perhaps one of the key lessons that we have learnt as we have moved into the 21st century is that while the profit motive remains central, those we serve and those we employ are centrally important to reaching our economic goals."

The book has also been endorsed by Dr Mark Rittenberg, Distinguished Teaching Fellow, Walter Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley who provided the foreword; as well as Professor C Justin Robinson, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Board for Undergraduate Studies, The University of the West Indies, and Justice Deborah Thomas-Felix President of the Industrial Court of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.



Calibrating Organisational Culture: A Dialectical Model Towards Competitive Advantage is available on Amazon.com

PERSPECTIVES

Lula is back, and Latin America with him

BY JACQUELINE LAGUARDIA MARTINEZ AND ANNITA MONTOUTE

Institute of International Relations

On October 31 with a narrow victory of 51 percent of the votes, the 77-year-old Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva returned to the presidency of Brazil. This position is not new to him as he previously served two terms as President, from 2003 to 2011. During his previous terms, nearly 30 million Brazilians were lifted out of poverty and a so-called “new middle class” emerged.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Brazil – o gigante sul-americano – enjoyed an economic boom propelled by the commodities super cycle that allowed the government to promote social policies and programmes. However, most of the economic prosperity and social gains evaporated once the super cycle ended, and Latin America suffered the negative impacts of the financial crisis. Poverty, unemployment, high inflation, and inequality resurfaced stronger than before. The COVID-19 pandemic added fuel to growing social dissatisfactions which visibly manifested in the streets and ballot boxes.

Lula’s election consolidates the return of the left in South America where only Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay are run by right wing governments. He managed to come back to active politics after the Lava Jato operation that embroiled his party in a huge corruption scandal.

New Left in a Polarised Brazil

But the new left that dominates Latin America is quite different from the one that Lula knew a decade ago, and he will have to utilise his experience and trade union abilities to achieve his goals. “Bolsonarismo” is far from being defeated. A highly polarised Brazil demands that Lula forges a coalition government capable of uniting political forces which will allow the country to heal while policies and social programmes that Brazil urgently needs are implemented.

In his first speech as President-elect, Lula pledged to address some of Brazil’s key challenges: to restore peace and govern for all Brazilians, to end hunger, and to return the country’s credibility, stability, and prestige to attract business and foreign investment.

In an interview with the BBC, following Lula’s electoral triumph, former Uruguayan President Pepe Mujica said that Lula was not a radical but rather an “un doer” of messes. Lula is a union leader who spent most of his life trying to sort out problems to find the best possible solutions. Brazil, Latin America, and the world could benefit from his expertise and political arsenal to advance social welfare, economic recovery, regional integration, and South-South cooperation within a reinforced multilateral order. It would also move the region

away from concerning unilateral postures and polarisation attempts that usually work for the benefit of the powerful.

It is not only within Brazil that Lula’s reconstruction impetus is needed. Lula’s return to the presidency is important for advancing Brazil’s role as a regional and global player, and reversing the country’s retreat from global engagements. Brazil is the largest country in South America, accounting for approximately half of the continent’s population, landmass, and gross domestic product. Globally, it comes in fifth and sixth place in terms of landmass and population respectively, and it possesses the second largest military in the Western Hemisphere after the United States.

Lula’s Foreign Policy Approach

Brazil plays a significant role in global trade, and used to lead environmental and climate change discussions. The country is a middle power and a member of the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa group (BRICS). Lula, who acknowledges that Brazil is too big to be relegated to multilateral business, has pointed out his government’s intention to resume its leading role in the fight against the climate crisis and the protection of the Amazon rainforest, declaring that now the fight will be for zero deforestation. Additionally, he has stated his commitment to a new global governance structure for greater representation in the United Nations Security Council – with Brazil as a member, of course – and to agitate for an end to the right to veto.

Considering the evolving geopolitical challenges, the adverse global fallout from the pandemic, and intensification of the environmental crisis, the world needs a global Brazil. Lula’s return is timely and significant as Brazil lost its international and regional leadership under the previous presidency. Under Bolsonaro, who estimated that international norms and institutions threatened Brazil’s sovereignty, the country adopted an anti-globalist stance and shunned multilateralism. Bolsonaro denied global warming and downplayed the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, in 2020, Bolsonaro suspended Brazil’s participation in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Lula’s return has deep implications for South-South cooperation, for Latin America and Caribbean regional integration, and for revitalising the Caribbean’s relations with Brazil. It was under Lula’s previous administration that, in 2008, the first Latin American and Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development was organised – a meeting which helped to prepare the ground for the creation of CELAC. Brazil’s support

for Latin American and Caribbean regionalism is vital; the region is counting on Lula to join Mexico’s President, López Obrador, in jumpstarting CELAC, reinvigorating the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and rescuing the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).

Lula’s presidency should enhance Brazil’s engagement in the BRICS group and strengthen its New Development Bank and the group as a whole. Moreover, a Lula administration promises greater opportunities for engagement with the People’s Republic of China through the BRICS group and the China-CELAC forum, which will serve to reassert China’s influence vis-à-vis that of the United States in the Hemisphere.

It is important to note that Lula’s left-leaning values and policies may not always coincide with the US agenda and the latter’s objectives in multilateral fora in the hemisphere, such as in the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Lula’s presidency promises to restore Brazil’s vibrant and beneficial political, cultural, trade and economic relationship with African countries as well. It is important to notice that Lula visited 27 African countries during his two previous terms while Bolsonaro never visited the African continent.

What it means for the Caribbean

In terms of Brazil’s relations with the Caribbean, the window of opportunity is present for greater engagement with its Caribbean Community (CARICOM) neighbours Guyana and Suriname. Both countries are members of the Amazonian Cooperation initiated by Brazil in 1978. The former’s membership in a revived UNASUR and the MERCOSUR also offers a channel for forging closer Brazilian relations with these two CARICOM countries. Brazil’s lack of membership in the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) has hindered Brazil’s larger engagement with the Greater Caribbean region. Under Lula’s leadership Brazil may get closer to the ACS.

Brazil and the Caribbean share a history of European colonial domination, imperialism, forced migration and enslavement of African peoples. Days before the election, Haitian peasants staged a rally in solidarity with Lula and identified with his social agenda as the path to addressing their own plight. Notwithstanding the huge economic challenges Brazil faces currently, there is a chance now for the Caribbean to re-engage with Brazil for a mutually beneficial solid cooperative relationship. It is essential and imperative that this unique opportunity should not be missed.

Brazil and the Caribbean share a history of European colonial domination, imperialism, forced migration and enslavement of African peoples.



■ CLIMATE CHANGE



Dr Aidan Farrell

Counting the Cost

PHOTOS: COURTESY AIDAN FARRELL

Focusing on the climate change consequences for local plants, crops, and wildlife

BY TYRELL GITTENS

As environmental stakeholders and political representatives from around the world travelled to Egypt in November for the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27), alleviating climate loss and damage was one of the most widely discussed topics.

At the time one writing it seems unlikely that participants at the conference will come up with a singular solution to address the issue, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) continues to call on countries to better understand the issue at local levels and make strides towards addressing climate impacts.

At The UWI St Augustine campus, senior plant physiology lecturer Dr Aidan Farrell has been contributing towards local literature by conducting research on the effects of climate change on agriculture and biodiversity over the past several years.

With a PhD in plant physiology, Farrell has worked with the Department of Life Sciences at the Faculty of Science and Technology for the last 12 years.

In an interview with UWI TODAY, he mentioned that his earlier studies – including his PhD research – focused on the general relationship between plants and their environments.

But, given the urgent need for small island developing states like Trinidad and Tobago to understand the effects of climate change, and strengthen their resilience, Farrell felt compelled to do specialised research on the adverse effects of climate change on plants.

Farrell told UWI TODAY, “Over the 20-year period I have been in the field, climate impacts have gotten worse and have become a priority on the environmental agenda. So, for the last ten years, most of the work I’ve done is looking at how the increase in global temperatures associated with climate change will affect plants.”

“We have students looking at different tree species, their distribution around the country, and whether certain trees will be under threat as the climate changes.”

To date, research led by Dr Farrell’s PhD student, Joshua Spiers has found *Podocarpus trinitensis* – a species of conifer found only in Trinidad – is one of the local tree species most vulnerable to climate change.

Found mostly in cooler places on high mountains, the tree requires delicate environmental conditions to thrive, and changes in temperature and moisture at higher altitudes can affect the survival of the species.

With the delicate relationship between climate and agriculture, Farrell also has a laser focus on researching how tolerant local crops are to harsh climatic conditions.

Growing different varieties of crops in controlled environmental settings – such as different temperatures and light exposure – in greenhouses at The UWI, the aim of Farrell’s research is to determine how tolerant they are to heat and what mechanisms they use to cope.

In doing so, it is possible to determine and suggest more heat-tolerant varieties to farmers in an effort to improve their climate resiliency.

“There is a lot of attention on how we will be able to produce enough food with major changes in climate.

“The crops I’ve worked on most often are tomatoes, hot peppers, sweet peppers and other vegetables because they are especially vulnerable to periods of extreme heat.”

While tomato varieties like Hybrid 61 and Heatmaster were found to fare better in heat, they naturally produce less yield when grown under local conditions as opposed to cooler climates, which means climate change can further impact their productivity.

In other studies, Farrell has done research to understand the relationship between climate change and local wildlife. Between 2015 and 2016, Farrell teamed up with US researchers Jack Torresdal and Caren Goldberg who were doing research on the Golden Tree Frog. In the collaborative research, investigations into the effect of climatic conditions on these frogs, which are adapted to cool conditions on Trinidad’s highest mountains, were done.

Spending most of their lives in one species of bromeliad found on the peaks of El Tucuche and El Cerro del Aripo, Farrell said regular research on these frogs has been going on since the 1940s.

But in recent years, researchers have struggled to find these frogs in the field, especially without destroying their bromeliad homes.

So, during their research, the team determined the presence of these frogs by looking for their DNA in samples of water taken from bromeliads. This method gave general estimates of their distribution.

With global temperatures already up by at least one degree, Farrell explained some species may have already adapted to this increase by moving to higher altitudes:

“The higher you go in altitude, the temperature usually drops. But, if you have a species that already lives in the top 100 to 150 meters of a mountain peak, it’s not able to move elsewhere.

“The worry is, as temperatures increase, then the environment no longer exists for these frogs to thrive... there is nowhere else for these frogs or bromeliads to move.”

Although this project is complete, Farrell said similar research is currently being done by other researchers, and the topic is ever evolving. Looking forward, he reminds people that local species of flora and fauna already took thousands of years to adapt to local climatic conditions. While scientists hope these ecosystems can develop resilience to climate change, Farrell calls on people to recognise the importance of playing their part in mitigating these changes.

“The ecosystems that exist here took a long time to evolve and the plants and animals changed their physiology to match the kinds of temperatures which naturally occur here.”

“Even when it comes to agriculture, farmers have a particular way and time of sowing crops. But once you get the rapid changes that we are getting where temperatures are increasing faster, all of those systems are put under pressure.”

“Over the 20-year period I have been in the field, climate impacts have gotten worse and have become a priority on the environmental agenda. So, for the last ten years, most of the work I’ve done is looking at how the increase in global temperatures associated with climate change will affect plants.” – Dr Aidan Farrell



A senior plant physiology lecturer, Dr Farrell has worked with the Department of Life Sciences at the Faculty of Science and Technology for the last 12 years. PHOTO CREDIT: AMY DEACON



Dr Farrell collecting cocoa pods at the Cocoa Research Centre’s International Cocoa Gene Bank to do research on which varieties of cocoa are better suited to thrive in extreme heat conditions in the face of climate change.

“The crops I’ve worked on most often are tomatoes, hot peppers, sweet peppers and other vegetables because they are especially vulnerable to periods of extreme heat.”



US researcher Jack Torresdal (left) and Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists’ Club member Dan Jaggernauth (right) sample golden tree frog DNA in bromeliads found in the Northern Range during a study to determine how climate change may affect the populations of these frogs.

Tyrell Gittens is a conservationist, environmentalist and geographer dedicated to the sustainable development of T&T and the advancement of environmental education.



A FLAME FOR FOOD SECURITY: (From left) Head of the Department of Food Production in the Faculty of Food and Agriculture (FFA) **Prof Duraisamy Saravanakumar**, Chairman of NAMDEVCO **Mr Wayne Inniss**, Dean of FFA **Dr Mark Wuddivira**, T&T’s Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries **Senator Kazim Hosein**, Campus Principal **Prof Rose-Marie Belle Antoine**, Deputy Principal **Prof Indar Ramnarine**, and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Representative for T&T and Suriname **Mr Reuben Robertson** lead a candlelight vigil in October for World Food Day 2022. Members of the campus community marched in solidarity for this worldwide celebration commemorating the creation of the FAO and highlighting the importance of healthy and nutritious food under the theme “Leave No One Behind”.

PHOTO: MAKANZWA PITA

■ OUR PEOPLE



The Quintessential All-Rounder

Author, leading academic Prof Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw becomes the Faculty of Humanities and Education Dean in a post-COVID world with a mission to champion creative thinkers and see their value recognised

BY AMY LI BAKSH

PHOTO: SHEA BEST

At The UWI St Augustine campus, in the office of the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Education (FHE), there is a large board. Something between a vision board and a mood board, filled with the faces of Professor Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw's family, students and art. "Faces, and sayings, and people, and artwork, and friends, and things that I believe in," she explained.

It's no coincidence that this board was one of the items that Professor Walcott-Hackshaw felt she "couldn't live without" when she moved into the Office of the Dean after taking up the mantle on August 1. It reflects her deep value for people, for creativity, and for the community around her.

After two years of quiet campus grounds and online learning, the university is back to a flurry of life and activity as staff and students try to find a new way of learning and teaching in a post-COVID world. For Professor Walcott-Hackshaw, this value for people and sensitivity for the world around us has helped guide her in taking on a role with all-new challenges.

"We think we're coming to the tail end of [COVID-19] and I would agree in terms of the biological part of it... we're having fewer people infected; not as many hospitalisations and deaths. The part that I do not think is winding down yet is the collective trauma that we've all been through. That sort of trauma on a collective and individual level takes a while to work through. Mentally, we are still trying to come to terms with it."

As someone who enjoys seeing people, talking and chatting, Prof Walcott-Hackshaw was excited to be back out to the world of UWI.

"Seeing the students back on campus has been a true joy. It has filled everyone with a sort of energy and purpose."

But, it has been an adjustment from the two years of isolation we have all faced, and there is a learning curve both for her as a new Dean, and the entire staff coming back out from remote work.

In a post-lecture discussion in 2018.



Across the globe, there has been a decline in registration in the humanities fields, and part of her goal is to address that locally and find ways to make the FHE experience more rewarding for students and teachers alike.

"I came up with REP: Recruitment, Experience and Placement," she says. Her goal is to focus on encouraging students to see the value of getting into the humanities, to enrich their experiences while on campus, and to help them along their career journey once they have graduated with initiatives like internships.

As former Head of the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, Prof Walcott-Hackshaw cut her teeth as a leader in the department under the reign of COVID. As the campus opened up, and she was able to move physically into the office of the Dean and be back on the St Augustine grounds, she credits her success so far to the support and guidance of much of the staff at FHE, as well as the outgoing Dean, Dr Heather Cato, who once described Prof Walcott-Hackshaw as "the quintessential all-rounder" of academia and creative writing.

This all-roundedness has served the new Dean well in understanding the strange circumstances we find ourselves in as we near the end of 2022. Studying our Caribbean history, literature, art and culture gives one a depth of understanding of our collective psychology; our pain, our joy, our past and future. From her inaugural lecture in 2018, she was already exploring what she referred to as "trauma poetics" in the Caribbean. The way in which our history remains marked in our DNA.

Now, in real time, we have witnessed a deepening of this trauma over the past few years, experiencing loss and isolation, and emotional and economic hardship that will continue to have ripple effects on us all as we move forward.

But even through hardship, we must also acknowledge our collective resilience and ability to affect positive change.

"I would love for the next cohort [of creative thinkers

emerging from FHE] to be able to insert themselves a little more in the current conversations. Things like climate change, food and nutrition. New ideas about education, the way we can move forward from traditional modes. A Humanities and Education degree can set them on paths that are perhaps very different than they would have imagined,” says Prof Walcott-Hackshaw.

She goes on to highlight the value of the “creative analytical skills” learned in these fields, and how they can be used to bring about change and transformation. The Humanities are not separate and apart from all other fields of knowledge, but instead are interwoven into every aspect of life and can truly bring a depth of understanding to our Caribbean identity and how to solve our unique problems, as well as a much needed perspective on our place in the world at large.

“University is a special time for students – the connections you make stay with you for the rest of your life,” says Prof Walcott-Hackshaw. “So, it’s important that the experience is solid and enriching.”

As a former graduate of FHE myself, with very fond memories of my time there, I am inclined to agree.

Across the globe, there has been a decline in registration in the humanities fields, and part of her goal is to address that locally and find ways to make the FHE experience more rewarding for students and teachers alike.



Prof Walcott-Hackshaw as Public Orator at the 2022 Graduation ceremonies.

Amy Li Baksh is a writer, artist, and activist from Trinidad and Tobago.



Centre for Language Learning programme helps migrants learn English – and life in T&T

BY PAUL HADDEN

Over six million Venezuelan nationals have left their homeland and sought refuge abroad (UN International Organisation for Migration). Even though Trinidad and Tobago is only a fraction of the size of Venezuela, we are still one of its closest neighbours, and every year, a significant number arrive on these shores in the hope of making a better life for themselves and their families.

“What I would like people to understand about the migrants,” says Natalie Bhawanie, a tutor at the Centre for Language Learning, “is that these people have been put into an extremely difficult situation and were forced to uproot their lives and move here. They didn’t just wake up one day and decide to leave everything behind and move to Trinidad for no reason. You hear a lot of negative comments about the migrants, about how they are coming here to take away jobs from locals and other such narratives, but I think we could all afford to be more tolerant and understanding of their situation and strive to show more empathy towards them.”

The migrants face many challenges when arriving in T&T, and in addition to the resistance with which they are sometimes met, they also face the challenge of having to learn a new language.

“The migrants already have enough on their plate,” adds Bhawanie, “so at the CLL, we thought about how we could try to help them with their language needs.”

This assistance was given through a beginner level English language programme funded by the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), with the support of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) of the US Department of State, and delivered by The UWI’s Centre for Language

Learning earlier this year. Bhawanie, alongside another CLL tutor, Christobel Maynard, delivered the pilot course over a period of six months.

The instructors at The UWI noted that many of the migrants were already qualified to perform a variety of jobs in various sectors. A sound knowledge of English is often a key factor in whether or not the migrants are able to find good jobs and determined their ability to integrate into the society and economy. However, the language barrier prevents many from getting the jobs for which they were qualified. To remedy this, the course offered by CLL strove to give migrants a solid basis for their language learning needs.

“We started off by covering all aspects of the language that was necessary for daily life here in T&T. We focused on things like going to the bank, getting medicine at the pharmacy, and even how to order doubles! The hope is that they would be better equipped to communicate in an English-speaking environment.”

The course received a very favourable response from the students.

“We really would like to thank God for putting these wonderful teachers in our path,” says Rómulo José Moya, one of the students of the English language programme, “and we would really like to thank the university and all the members of this team who helped us with our English training. We really appreciate the blessing of having knowledgeable teachers with such a high level of commitment who always offered us words of support.”

Bhawanie’s hope is that more courses like this will become available that are geared to the specific needs of the migrants.

“I really wish that we can get more funding to do more projects like this, because it’s never enough. This is just one way for us to help,” she says. “Hopefully, we would be able to do more work like this in the future.”

“We started off by covering all aspects of the language that was necessary for daily life here in T&T. We focused on things like going to the bank, getting medicine at the pharmacy, and even how to order doubles!”

Paul Hadden is an educator and freelance writer with a passion for the art of storytelling.

■ OUR STUDENTS



PHOTO: MICHAEL ANTHONY/WILE ANTZ PIXOGRAPHY

Hope Triumphs

BY DIXIE - ANN BELLE

“I had to pinch myself into believing that I actually won,” recalls Kendra Hope, winner of UWI Got Talent 2022. “I remember thinking after the host announced my name... wow, I must have something inside me that is really special to have gotten this far; placing first is a divine blessing.”

Anyone seeing the talented vocalist’s rendition of *Hallelujah* during the competition finale on October 1 would be understandably dazzled by her confidence and courage. Her inspired performance swept her past 15 other talented contestants to make her the winner of the annual campus event, which was produced by the Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD) and the Student Guild.

It might be a surprise to her new fans that the 21-year-old Criminal Justice student at first struggled to find the self-assurance to strive to be the winner of the talent extravaganza.

“When I saw the UGT flyer in my UWI email, right there and then, I wanted to try out for it,” she recalls. “I was still uncertain. I thought I would embarrass myself and forget the song lyrics. I couldn’t do it. A million and one thoughts flashed through my mind.”

She was scared during the auditions, but she impressed with her choice of the song *Rise Up* which she felt reflected her Christian values.

It wasn’t the first time the young singer had competed. She took part twice in the talent show at Palo Seco Secondary School, and won the second time, but she was still doubtful that she was up to the necessary level of excellence.

One thing for sure, she had an extensive musical

background to guide her. Kendra has been singing since she was five, performing at the Pentecostal church where she grew up. Musical talent runs deep in Kendra’s family. She was guided by her father, the pastor of Peace and Love Ministries in Siparia.

“He would encourage me to sing with him when he was called to preach, and to play guitar for church events,” reminisces Kendra. “He realised I loved singing, so he continued to mentor me and teach me all he knew about music and what his father taught him – my grandfather, who was in the Daisy Voisin band [La Divina Pastora Serenaders].”

“Singing fills me with joy,” she declares. “It is like food for your soul. It’s like happiness.”

She adds, “When I sing, I feel important. I feel I am where I am supposed to be. I could be sad, and before I know it, I am singing, and then I actually forget everything. It’s like a literal escape from harsh reality.”

Kendra’s decision to participate in the competition was fortified by the support of family and mentors. Realising how much the venture meant to her, her father agreed with her decision to perform, though he was concerned about her travelling to school alone. Her sister promised to support her at every step. Her music teacher, Kwasida Smith, gave her the pep talk she needed.

“Forget about fear if you can do something,” she said. “People are only afraid if they can’t do it. I saw what you can do, so believe in yourself.”

UWI Got Talent mentor and choreographer Sherma Burke also gave her advice and guidance, and Kendra credits

Jarell Alder, Manager of Student Engagement at DSSD, and the team behind the event for empowering her.

At the grand finale, though nervous at first, she stepped self-assuredly onto the stage.

Dressed in white, Kendra opened with *I Know Where I Have Been*. She chooses songs which she believes will minister to her audience, and she explained that she felt that that song depicted hope. Her performance took her to the top five. She chose *Hallelujah* as her second round song, a hymn about love and deceit, which she finds relatable. Her rendition catapulted her to the top.

She was deeply touched not only by the response of her audience, but by the praises of her fellow contestants. “To know that I was surrounded by true supporters... it meant a lot to me. This was the first time that I saw people show sincere happiness for each other in the way they did collectively.”

It was an affirmation that she deserved her place in the spotlight.

“I am reminded that I have a gift to share, and that my hard work did not go in vain,” she says, and Kendra is taking the lesson to heart.

Asked what advice she has for students who might hesitate to participate in upcoming UWI Got Talent competitions, Kendra declares, “Hey, what are you waiting on? Sign up and give yourself a chance!”

Reflecting on the influence of the programme, she observes, “It is a statement that we are all worthy and capable of greatness, and that our lives are purposeful. I am truly grateful for this amazing opportunity.”

‘Community is the most important thing’

Prof Surendra Arjoon gives seminar on the moral approach to work, relationships, and personal fulfilment

BY PAUL HADDEN

“A crowd is just a large group of people, and a university should not be a crowd,” says Professor Surendra Arjoon. “It should be a community, and a community is a group of people who are bound together by love: unconditional love. We are social creatures who cannot just exist as individuals. We need to build a community.”

Arjoon, Professor of Business and Professional Ethics at The UWI, was speaking during his online seminar entitled “Psychology and Ethics: Connecting the Modern and the Moral”. The hour-long interactive event was recently hosted by the ANSA McAL Psychological Research Centre, and although the lecture was geared towards psychology students at The UWI, it was also open to the general public.

Prof Arjoon passionately touched on many fundamental and timeless ideas – some of which we hear very little of these days. Discussed during the seminar were topics such as friendship, love, virtue, and humility, as well as many of humanity’s common pitfalls, including the empty pursuits of pleasure and fame.

The seminar represents just the very tip of the iceberg of Professor Arjoon’s work.

“What I do is try to teach the things that we have forgotten. The ideas that I discuss are not my own, but they represent over 2,500 years of wisdom that have been used to build great nations all over the world,” he says.

Far from just seeing teaching as a 9 to 5 job, Professor Arjoon views his work as his life’s calling, and encourages others to seek their own unique path in life.

“I do these lectures because I believe that everyone, during our short time on Earth, is called to a mission, and this mission is our vocation. Many people mistakenly use ambition for wealth, honour, power, and pleasure as their vocation. They think, ‘oh I can make more money if I do this or that’, and that’s where they go. But, if you end up doing something for the wrong reason, something that is not in alignment with your own natural talents, then you will never be effective in this world.”

Helping others to break out of this rat race mentality is something that Professor Arjoon actively seeks to do, and many of his students can attest to the way in which his lectures have impacted their lives.

“As students, we are programmed by society to have a very specific idea of what success entails,” says Shania Ali, a second year Management Studies student at The UWI. “We are conditioned to think that there are certain material things that we must achieve if we want to be happy. Taking Professor Arjoon’s Ethics class helped me to realise that there is so much more to life than material success. I have learnt that detaching from material things and taking the focus off of the self is what truly brings happiness.”



PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE

“I do these lectures because I believe that everyone, during our short time on Earth, is called to a mission, and this mission is our vocation. Many people mistakenly use ambition for wealth, honour, power, and pleasure as their vocation.... But, if you end up doing something for the wrong reason, something that is not in alignment with your own natural talents, then you will never be effective in this world.”

Throughout the seminar, the topic of community repeatedly came up for discussion. Arjoon believes that a sense of community is fundamental for human happiness and well-being, and it is why he seeks to actively engage with students both in and outside of the classroom:

“Many times I would just go up to a student on campus, a student who is not in any of my classes mind you, and introduce myself. I would start by saying something like, ‘hey do you have a couple of minutes, because I would like to ask you something: what do you think is the most important question that we can ask in this life?’ This would then normally lead to a very interesting discussion about some pretty fundamental issues.

“People might think it might be weird to approach a stranger with a question like this, but in a university setting, it makes perfect sense, and the students find it the most natural thing in the world. To date, I have never had anyone say no to my question, and that is how I know that these students are all starved for something deeper.”

“These are topics that we just don’t get a chance to discuss in our other classes,” adds former student Ali. “I was honestly surprised that instead of just talking about business, we were learning about the path to true internal freedom and happiness.”

During the seminar, as in all of Prof Arjoon’s classes, he made it clear that learning should not just be a passive activity in which the students sit down silently and imbibe the teacher’s ideas. He stresses that learning is a give-and-take, where both the teacher and students bring their own unique experiences to the class.

“I like to think of the classroom as a banquet table. Yes, the teacher might often be bringing the main course, but everyone has something to contribute to the feast. We all share in this and leave the classroom enriched, teacher and student alike. Teaching and learning are really acts of love at the end of the day, something that helps us to grow as human beings.”

The recent seminar was just another addition to the great banquet of learning that he believes that the university should be offering students.

Not surprisingly, Professor Arjoon ended the seminar with advice on how to truly find happiness:

“Detach yourself from things that pull you down, and attach yourself to those that uplift you. Forget yourself and be other-centred. Community is the most important thing, and thankfully, this sense of community has not been totally lost here in Trinidad and Tobago. There are many good seeds that have been planted here, we just need to water them.”

HEALTH

“Midwifery is something that I hold dear to my heart, and I think it is something very important, especially during a transformative time in a woman’s life,” said Mrs Arlene James-Euin assistant lecturer at The UWI School of Nursing (UWISoN) and midwife.

“The greatest challenge is that people don’t see midwives as being autonomous practitioners, and so we are not able to work within our full scope of practice in Trinidad and Tobago.”

In addition, T&T is currently experiencing a shortage in midwives because of natural attrition and migration.

Recognising the need to fill the gap of qualified midwives in Trinidad and Tobago and develop the profession, UWISoN is set to launch a specialised Bachelor of Science in Midwifery (BSM) in early 2023. The programme was created to enhance the services provided by midwives, and give renewed legitimacy to midwifery as an autonomous practice.

In a recent interview with UWI TODAY, Mrs James-Euin lamented that midwives are viewed as “assistants to obstetricians”, when their services are as essential as any other health care practitioner in the care of the childbearing population. She said the gradual inclusion of midwifery under nursing over time, and the adoption of a medical model of care, led to the field losing some of its autonomy.

James-Euin is a member of the TT Association of Midwives, has been a midwife since 1995, and is also a registered nurse.

A midwife is a person who has successfully completed a midwifery education programme aligned with The International Confederation of Midwives Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice, and global standards for midwifery education.

Currently, aspiring midwives in T&T with no nursing experience can complete a three/four-year certificate programme offered by the Ministry of Education at their nursing schools located in southern and northern Trinidad. Registered nurses can opt to do an 18-month programme.

The College of Science and Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago also offers a BSc in Midwifery for Registered Nurses.

However, students in all programmes must sit and pass the same licensing exam from the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago to be able to practice midwifery.

Mrs James-Euin said the introduction of UWI’s specialised BSM programme means aspiring midwives will no longer need to attend nursing school or be a nurse prior to becoming a midwife.

The programme is geared towards everyone, regardless of their nursing experience, but registered nurses and midwives will have a two-year course of study to finish the BSM, while people without nursing experience will take four years. The programme will have written and practical components.

Though there are currently only three male midwives in T&T, James-Euin said men can become midwives, and she encourages interested men to apply for the new programme. With the new programme, she said midwives are poised to be better empowered and equipped for autonomous practice, including opening their own clinics.

“I applaud the UWI for seeing that offering a BSM is a necessary way of moving midwifery forward. They are not only supporting the national objective in terms of providing much needed competent midwives, but also aiding in developing the field and supporting a group of people who believe in their autonomy and independence,” said Mrs James-Euin.

“What students can expect is to be enrolled in an experience that focuses on women-centred care. But, if you look at midwifery from a deeper level, we don’t only look after women and their unborn babies... we look after the entire family.”

She added, “the whole philosophy behind midwifery is taking care of women pre-conceptually, during their pregnancy, during labour, and then afterwards, in the postnatal period.”

Students in the programme can also expect to learn skills such as communication techniques and leadership styles. Overall, James-Euin wants people to understand the significance of having midwifery being offered at a BSM level.

“The students coming into our programme will realise that they have a special skill they could offer women and their partners in Trinidad and Tobago – midwifery care in and outside of the hospital environment.”

With T&T currently experiencing a shortage in midwives because of natural attrition and migration, James-Euin is calling on people who are passionate about caring for others and midwifery enrol in the programme.

Reflecting on her decades of service, James-Euin said the most exciting and fulfilling part of being a midwife is the interaction with women during one of their most vulnerable stages in life and providing care.



Assistant lecturer and midwife Arlene James-Euin is encouraging aspiring midwives to apply to The UWI’s new specialised Bachelor of Science in Midwifery (BSM) which is set to launch in early 2023.

MIDWIVES

essential health care practitioners

UWI School of Nursing to launch new programme to meet demand and boost autonomy of the profession

BY TYRELL GITTENS



Midwives at the Scarborough General Hospital in Tobago share a light moment after a meeting.



A midwife in training does a practical skills activity on a test doll.

The programme is geared towards everyone, regardless of their nursing experience, but registered nurses and midwives will have a two-year course of study to finish the BSM

“You make a connection with someone, you are there with them, you can help and hopefully empower them to know they can get through pregnancy. “You are even there with them in the early times as they learn to parent their child.”

■ **People interested in the programme** can find more information on UWI’s website or contact 662 2002 Ext 3006.

■ UWI IN SOCIETY

In March 2020, as the world came to a halt, many of us turned to technology. From remote work to online classes, screens became our window to the rapidly changing world. As the pandemic stretched on, the effects of income inequality heightened, and access to phones, laptops and stable network connections became more vital than ever. Marginalised groups have disproportionately less access to these digital amenities.

For Abigail Wren and her project, ClickToStart Foundation (CTSF), their work in bridging the digital divide was crucial during lockdown periods. But Ms Wren's journey in tech outreach goes much further back than COVID-19.

CTSF was established in 2013 by Ms Wren, a project manager and E-Learning specialist who works with UWI's IT department. The mission of the not-for-profit organisation is to provide training to help marginalised groups close the skills gap in the use of technology. CTSF focuses on offering training workshops to youths and senior citizens from various communities across Trinidad.

As a long-running series of projects, the work of the foundation is run entirely on volunteer time and expertise. The resources used to train and equip workshop participants are also entirely provided by the kindness and generosity of individual and corporate sponsors. From in-person classes assisting mature citizens in navigating the digital world to teaching programming to teens, the NGO has been finding ways to empower with technology.

"We try to make it as hands-on as possible," says Ms Wren.

CTSF initially started with an Adult Technology Literacy (ATL) course created to close the knowledge gap between mature citizens and the digital world, introducing them to essential computer skills. Two founding members who helped to establish these classes were Julien David and Wade Guy.

The response was overwhelming, prompting their next foray, the Programming for Teens courses, idea of then volunteer, Marcus Sanatan. These courses helped youth from underserved communities, providing them with the support to learn Python programming – a technology used heavily by software developers. Students were introduced to core programming techniques, and the course culminated with them developing a working game. Not only were they shown that one could solve complex problems while having fun, but they were exposed to gaming, one of the most economically-viable industries globally.

Pandemic Response

With the onset of the pandemic, ClickToStart Foundation was faced with the challenge of not only going digital, but addressing the inequality in education for households without computer access.

While many students had access to some form of device to support online learning, certain students had devices that were not adequate for their areas of study. Others did not have access to any device at all. Ultimately, those without direct access either declined in their academics, or were forced to withdraw from classes completely.

CTSF pivoted their Programming for Teens during the early months of the pandemic and taught approximately 20 teenagers web development virtually over the 2020 summer holidays. They also embarked on another project, one in which they began sourcing computers to assist students attend school online. This project is called Computers for Kids.

Naresh Segobin, at the time a network administrator at UWI St Augustine's Department of Computing and Information Technology (DCIT), was involved in sourcing some of the secondhand computers.

"Abigail asked around to find out who has computers that can be written off, which is The UWI's process with any assets that are not functional anymore," he explains.

The Computer for Kids project is a partnership with the Rotaract Club of Diego Martin and brainchild of Alana Warden, a CTSF volunteer and UWI alumni. An open call was made, and both private organisations and the public contributed towards computer donations. Financial contributions were used to buy computer parts, and pre-owned devices were either serviced, or scrapped for parts to refurbish others.

As mentioned, The UWI DCIT played a critical role in contributing devices for this drive, and also volunteered to assist with computer repairs, along with technicians from The UWI School of Education (SoE), Donald Matthews and Anton Brown.

The computers were distributed to students in need. When physical classes resumed, the distributions were extended to secondary schools to provide additional capacity to computer labs. In total, CTSF distributed over 100 hampers to needy families and delivered approximately 65 computers to 19 schools during the pandemic.

"I learned the different codes and commands on how to build a simple and easy computer game," says Tyrese Pollydore, a past student of the Programming for Teenagers class of 2019 and recipient of a refurbished computer through the Computers for Kids Programme.



Opening Windows of OPPORTUNITY

Campus IT professional establishes ClickToStart Foundation to bridge the digital divide

BY AMY LIBAKSH



Adult Technology Literacy (yellow tops) and Programming for Teenagers (blue) graduates share a moment with the mentors and lecturers from the CTSF (green) at a certificate distribution and closing ceremony in 2019. Ms Abigail Wren is fourth from the left in a black jacket. PHOTOS: COURTESY CLICKTOSTART FOUNDATION



From left: Ms Cheiyenne Seerattan of the Rotaract Club of Diego Martin (RCDM), Ms Alana Warden from the ClickToStart Foundation, and Mr Alexander Hillaire from RCDM, meet with Ms Asha Banwari, a representative of the Bamboo Grove Presbyterian Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Centre as part of the Computer for Kids initiative.



CTSF Adult Technology Literacy mentor Julian David teaches Ms Antoniette Thompson at a lab in the Faculty of Food and Agriculture.

"The teachers there are motivated, communicable and fun workers, and they always find a way to help their students if needed."

When asked to say what projects she is most pleased with, Ms. Wren said that, "graduating over 100 participants from our Adult Tech Literacy and Programming for Teens projects were two of my proudest moments so far." She added, "pivoting our classes in the pandemic to an online platform was also a wonderful recent achievement."

These and other projects were made possible by many solid partnerships and the generosity of many individual donations. The foundation has worked with various organisations and entities, on and off campus. These include the Office of the Deputy Principal

(while under former Deputy Principal Professor Reddock), Campus IT Services, the Ministry of Community Development St George East Catchment, the Living Water Community, TTARP Chaguanas, and UWI faculties, staff, students and alumni.

Recently, the ClickToStart Foundation worked on the European Union and UWI STA YouthSpeakUp TT Project, where they assisted in curriculum development, recruitment and train the trainer, as well as management of the project's website, social media and learning management system. This project runs from January 2021 to April 2023.

If you think you can help the foundation in any way, please reach out to clicktostartfoundation@gmail.com or check their website and Instagram pages.

UWI Calendar of Events **January 2023**



UWI Fete 2023: ReLive
January 22, 2023
 Grounds of the
 Office of the
 Campus Principal
 The UWI St Augustine

Join The UWI St Augustine family for the official return of UWI Fete, the all-inclusive event that has raised more than \$80 million for scholarships and bursaries to deserving students in need. Hosted by The UWI Development and Endowment Fund (UWIDEF), and dubbed “ReLive”, this afternoon occasion promises live performances from the stars of 2023 Carnival season, an unparalleled culinary experience, and rebirth of the positive energy and fellowship that UWI Fete brings. All proceeds go toward scholarships and bursaries for our students.

Cost: Early Bird \$1,100.00 | Regular \$1,200.00

Tickets are available at:

Republic Bank Branches

Centre City Mall | Grand Bazaar | Gulf View
 Long Circular Mall | Trincity Mall | UWI | Valpark

Saith's Gas Station in Marabella

Call 653-1403/337-4880 • 7:00 am to 7:00 pm

Prestige Awards

Building #1 Christina Court, 33-35 Boissiere #1, Port of Spain.
 Call 220-7251 • 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

Online at Island E-Tickets

islandetickets.com/event/ReLive

For early bird tickets, visit Republic Bank branches at Grand Bazaar, Long Circular Mall, or Gulf View, or Island E-Tickets

For more information on UWI Fete

email uwide@sta.uwi.edu or call 662-2002 Ext. 82326



The 210th Anniversary of the Chacachacare Expedition that liberated Eastern Venezuela in 1813
January 30, 2023

ONLINE

Join the Institute of International Relations for this informative and insightful discussion on the significance of this island expedition in the struggle to liberate Venezuela from Spain led by General Santiago Mariño and a small force of revolutionaries. The featured speaker for this webinar is Mr Álvaro Sánchez Cordero, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Venezuela.

This event will bring together members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, The UWI St Augustine campus community, and members of the public with an interest in history, regional politics, and international relations.

To register, visit: <https://bit.ly/IIRJAN2023>

For more information, visit IIR at <https://sta.uwi.edu/iir/>



General Santiago Mariño



Dancers from the Belmont Folk Performing Arts Company take flight during the piece “Bélé Suite” at Rhythm of Culture, A Festival of Movement 2022. Held on November 18 and 19 at the Little Carib Theatre, the event was hosted by the Dance Unit of The UWI’s Department of Creative and Festival Arts under the leadership of Coordinator Ms Deboleena Paul. Rhythm of Culture brought together professional and student dancers and choreographers from The UWI and several other institutions and groups. The performance of “Bélé Suite” was choreographed by Terry David.

PHOTO: VISHAL RAMOUDITH