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SUNDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2024



Blue! Paint de Town!

Legend of soca music Austin Lyons, Superblue, leads the crowd during his performance at *The Old Yard* on February 4 at The UWI's Global Campus in St Augustine. Themed "*The Year of the Blue*" for 2024, *The Old Yard* is the university's annual celebration of Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, history, and culture. Planned and executed by **UWI St Augustine's Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA)**, *The Old Yard* is a teaching and learning tool for students, an opportunity to showcase traditional Carnival, and an entertaining day of activities, performances, and fellowship for attendees. In keeping with the theme, this year's event also included a "terrifying" performance by the iconic *Blue Devils'* band from Paramin. PHOTO: KC MEDIA LTD



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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

2024, AN AUSPICIOUS YEAR

The second semester of Academic Year 2023/2024 is well underway at the St Augustine campus in the midst of an early, and somewhat brief, Carnival season.

In my final address for 2023, I spoke of gratitude. Those of us that make up this university community are blessed to be part of an institution of service, created to develop the human potential of our region, advance the collected trove of ideas and knowledge, and provide the insight and expertise necessary for the improvement and prosperity of society. Two of the important motivators of action for most people are purpose and meaning. The UWI offers meaningful work. For this we are grateful and inspired to be able to make a difference. There is much more work to do and we look forward to continuing it.

The campus recently held *The Old Yard*, a unique Carnival event hosted by the Department of Creative and Festival Arts. *Old Yard* is not only an innovative event experience that turns its audience into participants, it is also a living museum of valuable lore on the history of traditional Carnival, simultaneously preserving and teaching new generations. This year, *Old Yard* was even more special as it included a performance by Mr Austin Lyons himself, the musical and cultural icon known as *Super Blue*. What an incredible endeavour to be part of – preserving history, sharing culture, and making a crowd “jump and wave”.

Late last month, we opened the doors of the campus and invited in secondary students from all over T&T for the *Math Fair*. This event, birthed by the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, has grown from strength to strength. Who could imagine young people clamouring with excitement to learn about math, a subject that is crucial for personal and professional development, but is often viewed with trepidation? Ingeniously, the fair demystifies math, makes it accessible, and shows some of its many uses in an engaging and even entertaining format.

Thousands of students took part in the *Math Fair*, and that has the potential to translate into



Undoubtedly, this institution will experience several challenges this year, as indeed we have for several years now. However, I have absolute faith that UWI St Augustine has what it needs to meet its institutional goals and overcome the obstacles before it. I underscore that its greatest asset is our human potential.

many young people provided with a better and more empowering outlook and understanding of the subject, which can benefit them as students and in their careers when the time comes.

I could go on and on. It is always tricky to focus on a single event or a single success because they happen almost every day at UWI St Augustine. As I type this, there are UWI scientists in the lab or at their computers engaged in research with potential benefits for society. There are educators preparing coursework or exams, engaging with their students even on the weekend. UWI staff are in the field or in the planning phase of outreach efforts for communities throughout the nation. They are all bolstered by the professional and support staff, without whom the campus could not function.

Undoubtedly, this institution will experience several challenges this year, as indeed we have for several years now. However, I have absolute faith that UWI St Augustine has what it needs to meet its institutional goals and overcome the obstacles before it. I underscore that its greatest asset is our human potential.

I have long been a true believer in the capacity of Caribbean people. And, time and again, I have personally witnessed the excellence of the academic and non-academic staff of this campus and the wider university. I look forward this year to seeing that excellence on display yet again and scaling greater heights.

On behalf of the entire campus community of UWI St Augustine, I wish to express with confidence that we will embrace this year in that spirit of courage, confidence, and the resilience required to get the job done. Our 2024 will live up to expectations.

Rose-Marie Antoine

Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine
Campus Principal

A ROLL OF THE DICE: A secondary school student from **Asja Girls' College Tunapuna** takes part in an educational game/exercise at **The UWI Math Fair 2024** at the St Augustine campus. Held on February 1, the Math Fair brought out thousands of students to the JFK Auditorium, Daaga Auditorium, Engineering Lecture Theatre 1, and the JFK Quadrangle for activities designed to boost their interest in mathematics and motivate them to pursue further studies in the field. Themed “*Expand your Math-Verse, Explore Your Potential*”, the Math Fair was hosted by the **Department of Mathematics and Statistics in the Faculty of Science and Technology**.

PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM



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■ CARNIVAL 2024

TOGETHER AGAIN

DCFA's Old Yard 2024, 'Year of the Blue', takes visitors back, moves culture forward

BY SCYLLINA SAMUEL

The Old Yard 2024, themed “Year of the Blue”, is a nostalgic journey, filled with calypso melodies that transport visitors. Held on February 4 at the grounds of The UWI's Global Campus on Gordon St in St Augustine, The Old Yard is more than an event space – it is a time machine to Carnival's past. It is hosted by the Carnival Studies Unit of the Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA)

Visitors walk on trimmed grass. Colourful galvanised fences surround the space, referred to as “de yard”. Within is the domain of the locals. These include *Grandma Titi*, *Doctor*, *Nurse*, *Officer*, *Thief*, *Fancy Indians*, *Pierrot Grenade*, *Baby Doll*, *Moko Jumbies*, *Midnight Robber*, *Dame Lorraines*, *Jab Jabs*, *Gorillas*, *the Paramin Blue Devils*, and *the Dragon*.

Families unfold chairs and lay picnic blankets under the tree shade. Children dance around the yard to the rhythm of kaiso. People share stories, boasting of their yearly attendance. The event has become a second home for a particular young girl. Six years ago, she celebrated her birthday at the yard. Now, the entire audience joins in singing for her 12th.

It feels like a close-knit family. A shared love for Trinbagonian history, folklore, and culture binds them. During the event, a father instructs his son to request *Never Ever Worry* by Lord Pretender from the DJ. Young students, guided by their teacher, request *Black Sage*. They celebrate with an impromptu dance when it plays.

For many, the highlight of the day is the traditional Carnival characters. The *Fancy Indians* captivate the audience with their colourful feathers and unique chants. *The Pierrot Grenade* entertains with her unconventional spelling. *The Baby Doll* confronts young men for child support, drawing laughter from the crowd. *The Midnight Robber* enters the yard with a chilling whistle. He tells a haunting story, leaving the crowd silent. *The Gorillas* leaps, filling the yard with energy. Brave children scream into the faces of the *Jab Jabs* and *Blue Devils*, challenging them. The visitors become a large part of the performance.

Strange and sometimes grotesque characters appear at the Dame Lorraine Ball. “*Madam Piss-en-lit*” (French for piss a bed), portrays a very unhygienic woman. She holds an old-school plastic potty in her hands and drinks from it. There are other versions, such as “*Madam Sore Foot*” and “*Madam Big Belly*”.

As the afternoon progresses, the legendary Super Blue steals the spotlight. He sings his major hits, including *Soca Kingdom*, *Fantastic Friday*, and *Bacchanal Time*. The crowd, covered in baby powder, jumps to the rhythms, filling the space. The UWI Arts Percussion Ensemble integrates themselves into the vibrant sounds. They turn plastic dustbins and metal trash cans into instruments.

In the end, participants speak about The Old Yard's significance. They express comfort and joy in seeing history and culture pass on to the next generation. It is much more than a show. “*Year of the Blue*” represents a commitment to preserving traditional Carnival arts. It is also a community of the festival managers and performers (many of them students and staff of the DCFA), and the audience that work together to create a creative and cultural corridor through time.

Scyllina Samuel is a writer and a second year Literature and Communications student at UWI St Augustine.

PHOTOS:
KC MEDIA
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UWI NEWS

The University of the West Indies' Global Institute for Climate Smart and Resilient Development (GICSRD) led an important side event at the 2023 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP28), held from November 30 to December 13, 2023. The event, which targeted Caribbean delegates and attendees, highlighted the GICSRD's work and promoted coordination and networking around climate action.

Hosting and presenting on behalf of the Institute, Project and Resource Mobilisation Officer Ms Neisha Manickchand said, "We want to strengthen partnerships for a climate resilient zone in the Caribbean."

Ms Manickchand reported on key initiatives, including a university-wide call for climate change and resilience projects that is yielding a database and has already facilitated connections between The UWI experts and local NGOs. She also highlighted the UWIScholar platform which could be used to find experts in various fields, including climate change.

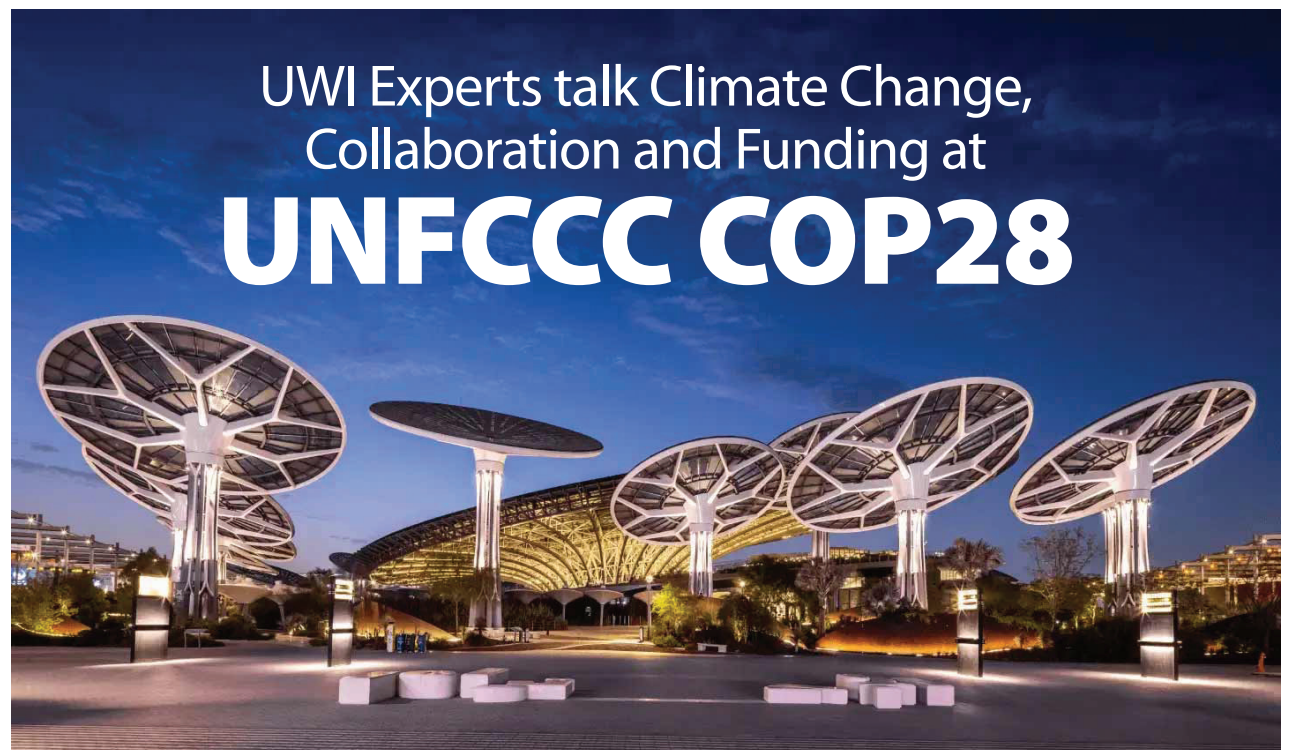
The COP side event also featured a panel that included Professor Dale Webber, Professor of Coastal Ecology and Environmental Management; Dr Jan Yves Remy, Director of The UWI Shridath Ramphal Centre for International Trade Law, Policy, and Services; Professor Donovan Campbell, Professor of Environmental Geography; and Professor Michelle Scobie, Professor of International Relations and Global Environmental Governance.

Professor Webber used the opportunity to give examples of the contributions of The UWI's Climate Studies Group Mona (CSGM) and Centre for Marine Sciences (CMS). He spoke on the importance of funding and collaboration for research at the university. With IDB funding, The UWI has increased computer modelling capacity in predicting climate change in Jamaica and the wider region to inform water and agriculture decisions.

According to Professor Webber, "The ability to move sweet potato crop growth areas from Eastern Jamaica to Western Jamaica has helped us adapt our agriculture to match our climate, increasing our climate resilience."

Expanding the conversation on funding, Professor Donovan Campbell made a plea for much needed increases in science investments:

"[Regarding] the vulnerabilities that are articulated for small islands, our scientists are providing the evidence basis to leverage funding, [but] the investment in Caribbean science is nowhere near where it should be... we will make a big mistake if, when all these investments come in, none of it or an inadequate amount goes back into the science. If we are not investing in science as a public good, we will not progress as a region."



UWI Experts talk Climate Change, Collaboration and Funding at UNFCCC COP28



COP28, hosted by the United Arab Emirates, welcomed delegates from over 200 countries gathered to reflect on progress of the Paris Agreement. It was a moment for the world to unite around tangible efforts and deliver realistic solutions through collaborations across civil society, governments, industries, and sectors. The resulting UAE Consensus is an enhanced and historic package to accelerate climate action.



Speaking in her capacity as the director of the premier centre for trade capacity building in the region, Dr Yves Remy called for the social, economic, and legal voices to speak more prominently in the international sustainability debate.

"We are finding that you cannot talk trade without talking about the sustainability agenda. Climate action should become the catalysing voice to bring the sciences, as well as legal, economic, and social issues together," she said.

Professor Scobie gave her perspective on climate governance and advocating for climate justice. She noted, "If we address the why we have climate change, the investments for Small Island Developing States would be much greater because the sense of responsibility as to the cause would be understood."

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ECONOMICS

THE

FOREX
SITUATION*...not dire but some sectors feeling the pinch*

BY DIXIE - ANN BELLE

Trinidad and Tobago's foreign exchange situation is not dire. This was the statement of Dr Terrence Farrell, former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, during his keynote address at the Trade and Economic Development Unit's recent "FOREX Flows and Woes" virtual seminar.

Dr Farrell noted, "We have the official reserves which are currently about 6.3 billion [dollars], but have come down significantly over the course of the last eight years or so. We have the HSF [the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund] which is about five and a half billion currently."

He added, "We have some amount of foreign currency deposits which, in an extreme situation, the government could potentially access. The point I am making here is that the foreign exchange situation is not dire."

Why then does the average citizen struggle to get foreign exchange? The answer lies with the way the funds are distributed. The Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago provides the banks with foreign exchange. Dr Farrell explained that this leaves them with the difficult role of rationing the funds to customers.

"The commercial banks manage their foreign exchange situation by ensuring that on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis they don't sell more foreign exchange than they have," he said. The situation is worse when citizens need the US dollars in cash which are extremely scarce.

Foreign exchange and the energy sector

Dr Farrell explained that the reason for this overall scarcity comes down to gas.

"The foreign exchange essentially comes from the energy sector," he said. "It comes from the upstream producers."

He continued, "The gas comes in. The natural gas goes out. They provide the tax revenues in US dollars to the government, to the Central Bank."

However, Trinidad and Tobago's natural gas and crude oil production have been falling: "We have come down from being a 4 bcf [billion cubic feet] per day economy to an economy where we are now about 2.7 bcf per day."

The former deputy governor noted that it is impossible right now to predict the future of natural gas and oil prices. "The best estimate of price tomorrow is the price today."

He said that the reserves would continue to decline slowly though the situation is not dire. However, he commented, "The current infrastructure that we have in respect to the foreign exchange market and the exchange rate" are a disincentive to economic diversification and the production of tradable goods outside of the energy sector.

As he summed up Dr Farrell's address, session chair Mr Vivek Charran, Chairman of The Confederation of



Dr Terrence Farrell

Dr Roger Hosein,
Professor of
Economics
at UWI St
Augustine.

Regional Business Chambers, observed, "Whereas we're not at that crisis level as yet, some aspects within our economy, particularly certain sectors, are feeling the pinch very much while others are not."

During his contribution to the seminar, trade unionist Mr Michael Annisette stressed that the unions saw the economy in the context of people.

"Are we looking at the amount of small business, medium-sized business that are shutting their doors every day?" he asked. "What are the implications for the economy? What are the implications for the whole social society?"

He added, "What happens to a worker in the context of this foreign exchange?" Because of inflation, he notes, the value of the dollar makes it difficult for ordinary citizens to purchase the goods and services they normally buy.

Under-employment on the rise

Economist Dr Rebecca Gookool-Bosland also noted the economy is "19.8 percent smaller than in 2015 and 8.8 percent smaller than in 2019. This declining growth trajectory and the magnitude of this declining growth is, of course, coinciding with the declining quality of our macroeconomic environment."

She noted that under-employment is rising while the labour force participation rate is falling. She pointed out that the ease of doing business is worsening and there are fewer employment opportunities. She also highlighted the issues of weakened economic linkages between sectors, youth unemployment, crime, and reduced citizen security.

"The average man on the street is feeling the decline," she declared. "It is showing up in lesser sales for him. The average doubles man is now selling less. He now has to come out more often. He is now faced with the threat of someone coming to rob him on the spot. And the narrative that is being touted is that things are getting better. The truth is these numbers show otherwise."

The speakers emphasised the importance of coming up with solutions

"We are living in Trinidad and Tobago, and as workers, we have a right to be able to maintain a standard of living that would not send us into abject poverty," asserted Annisette. "How do we then move forward if we want to be solution oriented?"

He suggested the education system, connecting the state of education to the crime situation.

Dr Roger Hosein, Professor of Economics at UWI St Augustine, recommended taking urgent steps to switch to green hydrogen, an alternative form of energy. He also emphasised the vital role tourism could play in boosting foreign exchange.

Dr Gookool-Bosland suggested that entrepreneurs should focus less on buy and sell operations, and more on crafts and skills such as carpentry, plumbing, and tiling. She underscored the importance of Spanish language proficiency.

She added, "At the community level, there is a need for smaller, medium-sized, and other types of firms to get involved in their CSR [corporate social responsibility] interventions to focus on smaller micro suppliers. Business chambers can and should be used as hubs for incubators focusing on a hub-based set of services that micro businesses may need."

"FOREX Flows and Woes" was part of UWI St Augustine's influential National Conversations Series. The Trade and Economic Development Unit (TEDU) is a research cluster within the Department of Economics in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

■ OUR PEOPLE



A Philosophy of IMPACT

Dr Alicia Elias-Roberts, pioneering Oil and Gas Legal Scholar at The UWI St Augustine, shares her plans as Dean of the Faculty of Law

BY SERAH ACHAM

When the UWI St Augustine campus approached Dr Alicia Elias-Roberts to join its Faculty of Law teaching staff in 2011, she saw an opportunity. Today, that faculty is one of the few in the world to offer oil and gas law as part of its curriculum. The Guyana-born legal scholar was appointed as Dean of the Faculty of Law in August 2023.

When the UWI St Augustine campus approached Dr Alicia Elias-Roberts to join its Faculty of Law teaching staff in 2011, she saw an opportunity. Today, that faculty is one of the few in the world to offer oil and gas law as part of its curriculum.

The Guyana-born legal scholar was appointed as Dean of the Faculty of Law in August 2023.

With a Master of Laws (LLM) in Energy and Environmental Law, and a PhD in Offshore Energy Law and International Law, oil and gas is one of her specialisations, and she shares, a particular favourite.

Dr Elias-Roberts was inspired by her parents to pursue her law career.

"I was always opinionated," she says.

She loved to read, and her father found her very articulate even at a young age. "He would always say I liked to argue my positions."

She went on to complete her Bachelor of Laws (LLB) at the University of Guyana, and then her general LLM at Oxford University. While at Oxford, she embraced an opportunity to participate in a project hosted by the Organisation of American States.

"They were looking to develop persons in energy and the environment," she explains.

That experience led her to a second LLM, this one in Energy and Environmental Law at the University of Houston.

She then became CARICOM's International Treaty Law Expert, providing legal opinions, drafting treaties and advising governments on the registration of those treaties.

"All the while," she says, "I would be teaching at the University of Guyana."

'I always wanted to be a teacher'

Despite her parents' thoughtful advice, she couldn't ignore her calling. "As a young girl, I always wanted to be a teacher," she reveals, adding that as an undergrad, she'd find herself reteaching class lectures to her peers during study groups.

There are some, she says, who think less of teaching and believe the fallacy that "those who can't do, teach". For her, teaching is meaningful.

"One of my role models is Oprah Winfrey," she shares. As a high school student, she would devour the Oprah Show, soaking up the lessons on living her best life. She'd take notes and get the books Oprah recommended, searching for something bigger. She wanted to make a positive impact and build "a life of purpose and meaning".

Destiny called when she graduated at the top of her LLB class at the University of Guyana and was asked if she was interested in returning to the university to teach.

"I jumped at it," she says.

Dr Elias-Roberts taught in the University of Guyana's Law Department for 10 years, eventually becoming the Head of the Law Department.

In 2011, she left to join UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Law, where the LLB was being offered at the campus for the first time. She was ready "to be part of something from the foundation", something she could help "establish and develop".



Dr Elias-Roberts in a 2017 photo with students at the UWI St Augustine Faculty of Law's second Oil and Gas Conference.

"The UWI never had courses in oil and gas law until I developed them," she says. Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, the then Dean of the Faculty of Law, was instrumental, encouraging her to develop the courses, as well as conferences and workshops that would be run by the faculty.

"There are many law schools around the world, but few that do specialist education in oil and gas," Dr Elias-Roberts says.

Developing Oil and Gas Law Education for T&T and the region

She explains that, prior to UWI's course offerings in oil and gas law, the region's attorneys had to enrol at universities in other parts of the world – such as the universities of Dundee and Aberdeen in Scotland, for example, or others in Houston, Texas and Calgary in Canada – to attain specialised training. With the importance of oil and gas in Trinidad and Tobago's industry and economy, making training available at home made sense.

Among Dr Elias-Roberts's first tasks was to meet with oil and gas industry stakeholders and insiders – lawyers who practised in the area, as well as attorneys-at-law from BP, Shell, and Petrotrin (when it was still in operation) for their views on what training should be focused on. Any courses developed, she knew, would need to be relevant to the industry.

She designed the courses and implemented them, and as UWI's Faculty of Law grew, so did its oil and gas law offerings. What began with outreach initiatives, workshops, and conferences, expanded to include a third-year optional course, and now a postgraduate diploma and master's programmes.

Her experience and expertise also grew with the faculty. During this time, she attained her PhD in Offshore Energy Law and International Law from Queens College.

Among her other legal specialisations are environmental law, human rights, energy (oil and gas law), and other areas, including constitutional and administrative law. In addition to government bodies, she provides and continues to provide "consultancies and

legal advice to various international organisations, companies and stakeholders", including Guyana's World Wildlife Fund and the Government of Guyana's Public Procurement Commission.

"I'm seen as an expert who can look at laws and treaties and see what is needed within the legal framework to fill those gaps," she explains.

She likes to simplify the law and says that being able to use her training to help others gain that understanding is empowering.

Making Law accessible to others

"I find that quite impactful... that I can facilitate that knowledge and awareness. I love the work I do."

There's a theme to Dr Elias-Roberts's interests and work – creating impact through knowledge. It should come as no surprise then, that despite her list of accomplishments and various roles, she holds teaching dearest.

"It's the thing I come back to," she says.

Just a few months into her role as the Dean of UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Law, Dr Elias-Roberts is already building on her reputation of creating positive change and, she notes clearly, on the foundation that Professor Bell-Antoine laid as a former dean.

In the works are the development of a new pre-law programme and outreach training activities in various areas, including human rights, industrial relations law, sports law, and intellectual property; efforts to expand the faculty's reach, both regionally and across the globe; and continued outreach to communities through legal aid and human rights clinics.

One of her top priorities however, is to consult with her colleagues every step of the way. "I am the first among equals," she declares.

Dr Elias-Roberts takes inspiration from her mother, a woman whose philosophy was to simply live with integrity and be grateful for all that life has to offer. Of her own legacy, she says, "I would like to be remembered as somebody who made a positive impact."

RESEARCH

Microbial fuel cells, thin-film solar panels, efficient and cost-effective technologies

UWI St Augustine's Physics Department is engaged in research to unlock the future of Renewable Energy for the Caribbean and the world

BY TYRELL GITTENS

Estimates by the International Energy Agency have projected that renewable energy sources will account for 35 percent of the world's power generation by 2035.

As the world continues its shift towards renewable energy, a team of lecturers at UWI St Augustine's Department of Physics at the Faculty of Science and Technology are researching how current and emerging renewable energy technologies can be made more efficient to better serve the Caribbean's needs.

In a recent interview, the department's head, Dr Davinder Sharma, said they are focused on this particular research because of the goals set by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to reduce global carbon emissions and limit global warming.

Trinidad and Tobago, like many other Caribbean countries, is a signatory to numerous UNFCCC frameworks. Dr Sharma believes it is important that the department contribute to the region's efforts.

Power from wastewater

Leading by example, he is currently researching how the electricity generation process in microbial fuel cells (MFCs) can be optimised by using wastewater – from different sources in Trinidad and Tobago – as a fuel source.

To determine which wastewater sample will be more efficient, the samples are being tested in MFCs using different types of MFC structures – proton exchange membranes, mediators, anode materials, and cathode materials, with different shapes and sizes. Use of nanoparticles in various sections is also being explored.

"In the United States, particularly in San Diego, there is a wastewater treatment plant which is using microbial fuel cells to generate electricity for over one hundred homes," he explained.

Currently, hydrogen powered fuel cells are the most popular types of fuel cells on the energy market, but MFCs are emerging as a more sustainable energy source.

In MFCs, wastewater is used as a fuel source instead of hydrogen.

Since the MFCs research started in 2015, Sharma and his students have tested a variety of wastewater samples from both residential and industrial areas.

"My students have collected many different samples from residential areas, farms, swamps, and breweries, to find out which is the best substrate [material from which fuel can be obtained] for electricity generation," he said. "What we are also trying to see is if we have specific types of microbes in Trinidad and Tobago which can help generate more electricity."

Testing alternatives to traditional silicon solar cells

Also working to improve existing renewable energy sources in the region is Dr Dinesh Pathak.

A material science lecturer at the UWI St Augustine Physics Department since 2021, Dr Pathak has been researching the structure-property correlation of thin-film solar panels.

In doing so, he's able to determine which of the many thin-film materials used to create these panels will have the best potential to be used in solar cells to capture and store energy for conversion into electricity.

Since the creation of photovoltaics (solar technology), Pathak said, silicon has been one of the most popular, widespread, and durable materials for solar cells. But over the years, other forms of solar technology like thin-film solar cells have been developed.

"At the Physics Department, we have a lab dedicated to exploring new materials," he explained. "By preparing the thin-film in many methods – like spin coating, deep coating, or the spray method – we try to see the properties of those thin layers and if they are suitable to capture the solar spectrum."

Compared to silicon panels, said Pathak, some thin-film panels are less expensive and more efficient because of their micro and macro structures.

Ultimately, he will continue to identify and recommend materials that can make solar panels more efficient and inexpensive.

Finding ways to improve energy processing and distribution

Dr Vinod Kumar has also been conducting research on different types of dye-sensitised solar cells, perovskite (a calcium titanium oxide mineral) solar cells, and organic solar cells.

Dr Kumar explained, "Part of what we are doing to test these materials is looking at the different ways they can be structured in the devices to improve energy processing and distribution."

He added, "For example, in the third generation cells, we are looking at layering materials unlike the single layers in some other generations of technologies. So, we are working on the architecture of these devices and how they can be modified to improve device efficiency with the collaboration of different research groups worldwide."

To date, Dr Kumar said the efficiency of these third generation solar cells are already competing with the current widely used commercial silicon-based first generation solar cells and thin-film based second generation solar cells.

Not only are these cells efficient, they are also less expensive. "I am working on these third generation solar cells because I believe that, in the future, these will replace existing technologies worldwide," he explained.

"I believe that, in the future, these will replace existing technologies worldwide"

As part of the Physics Department's ongoing research, all three academics, led by Dr Sharma, are collaborating to work with a PhD student on the modelling and simulation of thin-film solar cells.

Reflecting on the worldwide shift to renewable energy and sustainability, Kumar said the department's research helps the region have more options to embrace these technologies and give students the skills to be able to contribute to this shift.

Dr Sharma is hopeful the technologies discovered through their work will be used to diversify the energy streams of the Caribbean and the world.

He said, "In the end, we can save money, material, time, and benefit the environment if we first do modelling and simulation to identify optimum structures and materials for the solar cells to get maximum efficiency."



Dr Dinesh Pathak, a material science lecturer, has been researching the structure-property correlation of thin-film solar panels. In doing so, he's able to determine which thin-film materials will have the best potential to be used in solar cells to capture and store energy for conversion into electricity.



Renewable energy lecturer Dr Vinod Kumar has been conducting research on different types of solar cells.



Dr Davinder Pal Sharma, Head of the Department of Physics, and his PhD student Kevin Beepat, who is working on the modelling and simulation of thin film solar cells. PHOTOS: ANEEL KARIM

In the 1970's, at UWI St Augustine, against a backdrop of plentiful oil in Trinidad and Tobago, a group of lecturers from the Physics Department started research on renewable energy and renewable energy applications. These researchers included Professor Ramsey Saunders, Dr Alwyn Tang Kai, and Dr Imran Mc Doom.

"Initially trained in theoretical physics and medical physics, they saw the need to initiate research in solar thermal applications such as the drying of food crops, solar distillation, and solar refrigeration," explains Dr Ricardo Clarke, Senior Lecturer of Environmental Physics.

They later developed an Environmental Physics minor in the department in the late 1980's as part of the undergraduate curriculum.

From that beginning, research in renewable energy and environmental physics has blossomed at the Physics Department. It has led to the earning of PhDs in renewable energy fields, the development of an MSc in Renewable Energy Technology, partnerships with public agencies engaged in energy or environmental services, and the establishment of the department's Environmental Physics Lab in 2007-2008.

Grooming the next generation of renewable energy and climate scientists

The Environmental Physics Laboratory (EPL) was created to focus on not only renewable energy but also other environmental issues such as climate change, sustainability, and resilience, with focus on Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean.

"This year, the Environmental Physics Lab celebrates 15 years," says Dr Xsitaz Chadee, lecturer in Renewable Energy and Environmental Physics. "It has had two PhD and four MPhil graduates. It continues to grow in research areas and interests and emphasises grooming the next generation of renewable energy and climate scientists."

Among that next generation are postgraduate students Nkese McShine and Mohammed Shaddy. Nkese, a PhD student, is investigating the historical variations in the wind resources and the impacts of climate change on the wind resources in the Caribbean. Mohammed, who is studying for his MPhil, is focused on wind measurements relevant to tall wind turbines. This project is part of a collaboration and involves the use of a sonic detection and ranging (SODAR) device from the Flensburg University of Applied Science in Germany.

Research work is also currently being conducted in an industry-academic partnership with Trinity Exploration and Production (Trinidad and Tobago) Limited.

"This industry-academic partnership has been instrumental in providing state-of-the-art research grade equipment for Nalini Dookie, a PhD candidate," explains Dr Chadee. "Measurements of the components of solar energy are being taken at high temporal resolutions to improve the projections of the annual energy outputs of photovoltaic systems."

Dr Chadee was the first PhD student from the EPL. With training at the International Centre of Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy and the Centre for Wind Energy in Chennai, India, she created high resolution wind maps for Trinidad and Tobago through numerical weather prediction modelling techniques. This was the first time high-intensive computational resources were used for research work in the Physics department and the first wind energy research project specifically on wind resource assessment.

In addition, Dr Chadee improved the regional wind maps for the Caribbean using global climate data sets. Together with Dr Clarke, she worked with the National Energy Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries on developing a Wind Resource Assessment Programme for Trinidad and Tobago. This was submitted to the Green Fund in 2014.

Collaboration essential for Environmental Physics Lab research

According to Dr Clarke, "Collaboration is essential for most of the research projects in the Environmental Physics Lab."

For Priscilla Sahadeo's PhD research in solar drying of cocoa beans, much of her work is driven by Dr Darin Sukha



Research in **renewable energy and environmental physics** has blossomed at the Physics Department. It has led to the earning of PhDs in renewable energy fields, the development of an **MSc in Renewable Energy Technology**, partnerships with public agencies engaged in energy or environmental services, and the establishment of the department's **Environmental Physics Lab** in 2007-2008.

Environmental Physics Lab PhD student Priscilla Sahadeo in a natural convection solar greenhouse dryer for cocoa beans at UWI St Augustine. Much of her work is driven by The UWI's Cocoa Research Centre (CRC) and funded by the campus's Research and Development Impact (RDI) Fund.
PHOTOS: COURTESY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PHYSICS LABORATORY

Looking at Environmental Issues through a Physics lens



Members of the Environmental Physics Lab team in 2024 on the Physics Department roof with solar panels on the campus.

and Professor Pathmanathan Umaharan of the Cocoa Research Centre (CRC) and under an RDI grant obtained by the CRC.

Zaffir Mohammed, an MPhil candidate, is jointly supervised by Dr Gregory Gouveia of the Department of Food Production and Dr Clarke of the Physics Department. Mr Mohammed's research focuses on characterising expansive soils that pose a high risk in infrastructure and housing developments.

Shane Baldeosingh, whose research focuses on the impact of sea level rise on coastal areas of Trinidad, was jointly supervised with the late Professor Dave Chadee of the Department of Life Sciences.

Research projects at the EPL can also span multiple disciplines. Randy Ramadhar Singh, PhD candidate, is investigating the energy transition for Trinidad and Tobago as a unique case of a country transitioning from natural gas to include renewables and how the country can meet its nationally determined contributions to climate change in the power generation sector.

The EPL has had an excellent relationship with the Meteorological Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TTMS). Data from the TTMS have been used to assess the historical trends in rainfall and temperature as well as their extreme indices, and to perform pre-feasibility assessments in wind and solar resources. Sadira Khan, a recent graduate with an MPhil in Physics, used such data to develop empirical models that can help with filling gaps posed by limited solar radiation data sets.

Pioneers in Renewable Energy Research at UWI St Augustine

Faculty and students at the EPL are doing important research today, however it would not be possible without the groundwork laid by pioneers on the campus. Dr Clarke and Dr Chadee point to a few postgraduate students in the 1990s who enrolled to study solar energy applications and did innovative work in solar timber drying and solar cooking. This not only led to PhDs in these areas, but also the installation of a solar timber dryer at the University Field Station in Mt Hope.

Likewise, Dr Indra Haraksingh, renowned for renewable energy and policy in the Caribbean, and recently retired from the Department of Physics, developed the MSc in Renewable Energy Technology in conjunction with the Cave Hill and Mona campuses, the Flensburg University of Applied Sciences and the University of Flensburg, Germany. The MSc was launched in 2013.

The Environmental Physics Lab serves as both a centre for research and a hub for mentoring and training the next generation of environmental physicists. The lab continues to nurture talent whose contributions are shaping a more sustainable and resilient Caribbean.

■ **For more information** on the Environmental Physics Laboratory and renewable energy research at UWI St Augustine's Department of Physics, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/fst/physics/>

■ UWI IN SOCIETY



Prof Gerald Hutchinson, Professor of Psychiatry in the Department of Clinical Medical Sciences at the Faculty of Medical Sciences. PHOTOS: ANEEL KARIM



BY CHERISSE LAUREN BERKELEY

“It’s something we must consider. The aftermath of the pandemic and coping with illness, death, and stringent measures surely led to a high risk of a mental health epidemic,” warned Professor Gerard Hutchinson from The UWI’s Faculty of Medical Sciences.

In such taxing circumstances people often turn to substances such as alcohol or cannabis. But what if these imperfect remedies lead to an outcome almost as bad?

The question of whether the abuse of cannabis and other intoxicating substances could be classified as an epidemic emerged during a panel discussion titled “Cannabis Use and Young Persons” hosted by the Faculty of Social Sciences’ Department of Behavioural Sciences (DBS) on January 25, 2024. This event, held at the Social Sciences Lounge at the St Augustine campus, tackled the potential risks facing the nation’s youth.

“Canabidiols (CBD) can cause some psychoactive effects, and there is surely some medical value in Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC),” said Prof Hutchinson. He pointed out that our bodies naturally have cannabinoids as they produce endo-cannabinoids responsible for various responses.

Psychiatrists are witnessing a surge in cannabis-related psychosis cases. Prof Hutchinson mentioned, “Excessive cannabis consumption can cause suicidal ideation, panic disorder, and short-term memory loss”. Effects he said, “Which can be repaired through abstinence”.

‘We have to reorient our perception of substance abuse’

On the question of whether THC causes psychosis, he asserted, “There is no final answer, but evidence suggests that people predisposed to psychiatric disorders are at a higher risk of cannabis use and suffering from psychosis.” He urged the audience to be aware of their family history regarding mental disorders and cannabis use.

“We have to reorient our perception of substance use, as other drugs caused lots of problems. We live in a society that promotes permissive use of substances. However, lack of information prevents people from making informed decisions,” revealed Prof Hutchinson. He also noted that rehab centres aren’t focused on cannabis, as the primary focus is mainly on alcohol, cocaine, and prescription drugs.

The panel, moderated by DBS sociology lecturer Dr Tyehimba Salandy, included DBS research psychologist Dr Joni Lee Pow, Professor of Pharmacology Yuri Clement, and Senior Council Rajiv Persad of Allum Chambers. The discussion delved into the diverse impact of cannabis use among young individuals.

Head of DBS Dr Talia Esnard stated in her welcome address, that young people were “being offered cannabis, yet few of them are actually aware of what this substance really is.”

Dr Esnard said the panel discussion aimed to equip students with knowledge for more informed decisions regarding substance use.

Dr Salandy gave special mention to the work of the late independent scholar Dr Peter Hanoomansingh and his research on cannabis use and legislation in Trinidad and Tobago.



Dr Joni Lee Pow (left), research psychologist and instructor at the Department of Behavioural Sciences, speaks with Dr Talia Esnard, senior lecturer and head of the department, while Prof Yuri Clement, Professor of Pharmacology at the Faculty of Medical Sciences, looks on.



Cannabis activist Mr Marcus Ramkissoon (left) in conversation with Mr Rajiv Persad, Senior Council at Allum Chambers.

For young people, knowledge and education are key

Dr Lee Pow’s presentation focused on the inadequacies of knowledge of potency levels in cannabis substances and products. She asserted, “THC is the main psychoactive constituent of cannabis; however, this is one of 113 total cannabinoids that can be found in the plant.”

According to the International Research Programme on Psychoses in Diverse Settings (INTREPID), about 20 percent of the local population used cannabis daily. Dr Lee Pow stated, “Persons who used cannabis two times or more per week were at risk of a psychiatric disorder.”

On the legality of cannabis use, Rajiv Persad remarked, “Laws did not discriminate or differentiate based on age when it came to cannabis under the Dangerous Drugs Act.”

Describing the laws as draconian, he added, “The criminal justice system was overburdened by police bringing people to court for possession.”

The legislation was amended in 2001 to introduce mandatory imprisonment of 25 years for the trafficking of dangerous drugs, including cannabis. Mr Persad explained, “There were minor allowances for young people. However, typically the fine was TT\$100,000 with an additional 15-year sentence for non-payment.”

Dr Salandy remarked, “We in the Caribbean had missed an opportunity, as it’s only when our neighbours in the West acted on amendments that we reacted, while Rastafarians had been championing amendments for quite some time.”

570 published studies on the medicinal benefits of cannabis

Providing an alternative perspective, Professor Yuri Clement said, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater when it comes to cannabis!”

Though cannabis is still a Schedule I drug, Professor Clement noted there were still benefits to it, with over 570 published studies on the medicinal benefits, including pain relief, and the treatment of nausea, vomiting, epilepsy, and multiple sclerosis.

Professor Clement highlighted cannabis’s usefulness for treating severe cases of epilepsy like Dravet Syndrome, which typically do not respond to standard medication. He stressed the need to balance the benefits and risks of cannabis, recommending further exploration into the other chemicals found in the plant.

Cannabis activist Marcus Ramkissoon encouraged The UWI to use its prominent voice to put pressure on the government to educate the public on cannabis.

He remarked, “Giving the layman the right to create their own medicine is akin to giving the population firearms to protect themselves, which would then result in no need for police. Similarly, what would be the role of doctors and pharmacologists?”

BOOKS



Vaneisa Baksh, author.

This year is the centennial of the birth of Sir Frank Worrell (1924-1967), so it is entirely appropriate that it also sees the appearance of the long awaited biography by T&T's own Vaneisa Baksh, veteran writer, journalist, columnist and former editor of UWI TODAY. It's cleverly titled *Son of Grace* – literally, his mother's name was Grace; metaphorically,

his cricket was famous for style and grace – and it is a thoroughly researched and very readable book of 326 pages.

Son of Grace is not the first biography of Worrell, but as an earlier English reviewer writes, “the essence of the man remained elusive”. Baksh's book is about Worrell the enigmatic and complex man rather than Worrell the great cricketer and Test captain, though naturally there is plenty of cricket too. Her aim was to probe the character of an important 20th century West Indian and to tell a well-rounded story of his all too brief life. She succeeds brilliantly.

This biography tells the story of Worrell's whole life, but I was especially interested in its last few chapters which detail his multi-faceted involvement with the regional university in the 1960s.

In the 1950s, living in England, Worrell came to know Arthur Lewis, then Professor of Economics at Manchester University. Baksh shows that it was on Lewis's advice that Worrell signed up to do a BA degree there in 1956. Despite playing as a professional for an English club and taking part in Test matches, Worrell managed to earn his degree in 1959. He was offered the captaincy of the West Indies twice, for tours in 1957/58 and 1958/59, but declined because of his studies.

Clearly, Worrell was preparing himself for his post-cricket career. The famous Australian tour of 1960/61 might be seen as a triumphant climax to his cricketing life. By 1961, with his BA in hand, aged 37, the still fairly new regional university must have seemed like an obvious fit—and Lewis was now the Principal of the University College of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica, and would become the first Vice-Chancellor of The UWI in 1962.

And so, Worrell came to Mona in September 1961 as Warden of Irvine Hall, the only co-ed residence, as Baksh shows in chapter 25. In addition, he organised and mentored sports on the campus, acting as the de facto coach of the Mona cricket team, and also encouraging other sporting activities. Baksh effectively uses the memories of people who played on the cricket team and who frequented gatherings at the Irvine Hall warden's residence during these years, including Baldwin Mootoo, who decades later would become Deputy Principal at St Augustine and then Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research. They told her how he mentored and encouraged young people in life skills as well as in cricket and other sports.

In his three years at Mona, and despite frequent absences for Test matches and for travel up and down the Caribbean organising and encouraging cricket in the islands, Worrell made his mark. He redesigned the cricket field at the “Mona Bowl” and advised on plans for the Students' Union building (it was brand new when I came to Mona as an undergraduate in 1963).

SIR FRANK WORRELL AND THE UWI

BY PROFESSOR BRIDGET BRERETON



Sir Frank Worrell greets Queen Elizabeth II at UWI St Augustine in February 1966. Looking on are Campus Principal Sir Dudley Huggins and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

In 1964, Worrell went to Trinidad on the invitation of Eric Williams's government, seconded to the Community Development Ministry for one year to advise on its Better Village programme. He also got involved in community coaching with Wes Hall. After this year (about which Baksh was unable to find much information), in August 1965, UWI agreed to second him to St Augustine as Warden of Milner Hall, then the only residence, and as Dean of Students.

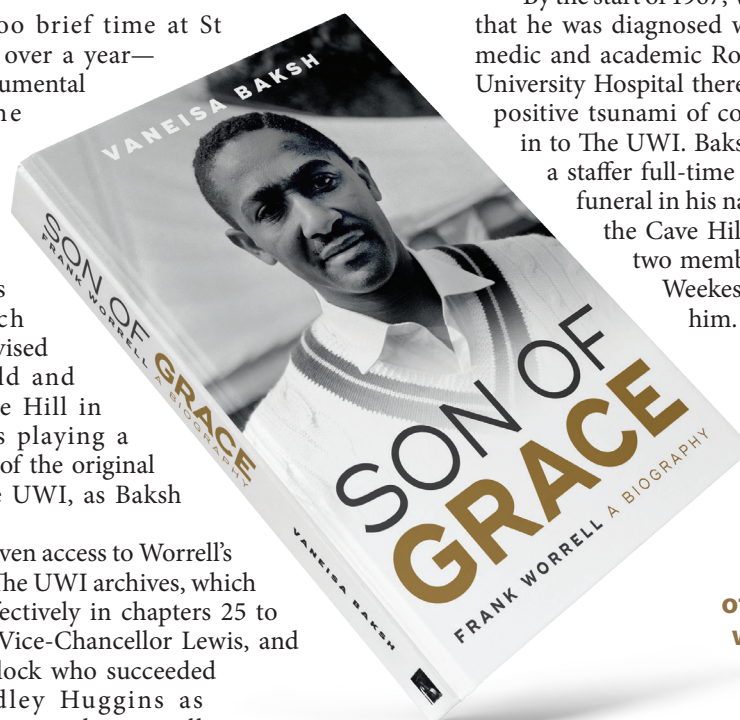
In his all too brief time at St Augustine—just over a year—Worrell was instrumental in creating the campus playing field, fittingly named for him. It was officially opened just one week before his death in March 1967. He also advised on the new field and pavilion at Cave Hill in Barbados—thus playing a role on all three of the original campuses at The UWI, as Baksh shows.

Baksh was given access to Worrell's personal files in The UWI archives, which she uses very effectively in chapters 25 to 29 of her book. Vice-Chancellor Lewis, and then Philip Sherlock who succeeded him, plus Dudley Huggins as St Augustine Principal, were all

extremely accommodating with his frequent requests for paid leaves of absence—whether to play in Tests, or to visit the smaller islands to lecture, mentor, and organise cricket, or to cover a Test in England for a British newspaper and the BBC. No doubt they were star-struck with their famous staff member, and saw his work throughout the region and beyond as part of the remit of the regional university and as valuable public relations too.

By the start of 1967, Worrell was dying. It was at Mona that he was diagnosed with leukaemia (by Trinidadian medic and academic Rolf Richards) and he died at the University Hospital there on 13 March 1967, aged 42. A positive tsunami of condolences and tributes poured in to The UWI. Baksh writes that they had to assign a staffer full-time to deal with them. After a state funeral in his native Barbados, he was buried on the Cave Hill campus, where later the other two members of the “Three Ws” (Everton Weekes and Clyde Walcott) would join him.

In his all too brief time at St Augustine—just over a year—Worrell was instrumental in creating the campus playing field, fittingly named for him. It was officially opened just one week before his death in March 1967.



■ UWI IN SOCIETY

Looking to the mountains of the Northern Range in dry season, it's not uncommon to see plumes of smoke rising up as fires alight through the parched landscape. Forest and bush fires, exacerbated by human activities in these green areas, have long been a part of life for those who live along the northern stretch of Trinidad.

The Fondes Amandes community, deep within the St Ann's valley, has found ways to come together and manage the continuing project of protecting and rehabilitating the landscape around them over the past four decades, fighting forest and bush fires, and reclaiming the watershed for its natural ecosystem to thrive. Now, the Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project (FACRP) is taking their wealth of knowledge on community building and conservation, and finding ways to share it with other groups learning how to tackle community issues as a collective.

For Kemba Jaramogi, her childhood, growing up in the Fondes Amandes watershed, was characterised by a state of constant vigilance.

"It is something that is woven into your DNA at this point, that as soon as you see or smell smoke, you need to find it," says Kemba. "Because we were so hyper-sensitive when we were younger, now I can tell exactly what's burning if I smell a fire."

She can differentiate the scent of burning plastic, from garbage, from leaves, from cloth. Kemba is the second generation of her family to work in this field—in 1982, her father, Tacuma Jaramogi, and mother, Akilah Jaramogi, established the FACRP.

From the Karinya word 'kayapa'

One of the pillars of the FACRP is their use of the "gayap" to accomplish large projects. Coming from the indigenous Karinya word "kayapa" (a term which describes the tradition of people getting together to complete a huge task), this method brings together members of a community to work together on completing a task for a positive outcome. The Jaramogi family has been hosting gayaps informally since the 1980's, but when Tacuma Jaramogi passed to ancestorhood in March 1994, there was a need to begin formalising this process. Akilah sought to begin hosting a yearly gayap in his memory, where members of the community could come out, work on a project, and also learn more about conservation and the indigenous and Merikin knowledge that she had brought with her from her upbringing with the company villagers in South Trinidad.

"They made the perfect team," says Kemba, "having that kind of local knowledge, indigenous knowledge, traditional practices, that connection to the land. So, they said they had to do something to change the pattern of bush and forest fires every year."

In the 1990's, Dr Innette Cambridge, a lecturer in the Department of Behavioural Sciences at UWI St Augustine, was the first from the institution to build a connection to FACRP. In order to teach her classes about sustainable development and seeing these theoretical ideas in action, she took her students out to Fondes Amandes. Now, FACRP and UWI have partnered on a series of projects over the years, the latest of which is the documentation and formalisation of their gayap process, through the Gayap Toolkit.

Currently, Dr Deborah McFee, Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) Outreach and Research Officer, has been leading the collaborative effort to share with FACRP some of the experience of the IGDS on gender and its relationship to climate change, while learning from the NGO's knowledge base.

"It's very much a reciprocal relationship," says Dr McFee. "Fondes Amandes is a woman-led civil society organisation, and we have been working with them for a long time.... IGDS has an outreach and research team, and when we work with civil society, generally it's about bringing our technical knowledge to the table and working with our partners to have an understanding of the ways in which these concepts become realities on the ground."



From left: Akilah Jaramogi, Co-founder and Director of FACRP, with representatives of IGDS Lesaidee Legall, Khadijah Pierre, and Dr Dr Deborah McFee, alongside FACRP Technical Director Kemba Jaramogi at the launch of the Gayap Toolkit in July 2023. PHOTOS: COURTESY FONDES AMANDES COMMUNITY REFORESTATION PROJECT

A Tool for Communities

Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project partners with UWI IGDS to codify the Gayap Toolkit, a traditional solution for present-day challenges

BY AMY LIBAKSH



A community organisation representative giving feedback on their gayap process.

The collaboration between IGDS and FACRP has yielded benefits for both sides, and the communities they work with.

'FACRP and UWI have partnered on a series of projects'

Today, FACRP is well-established in the civil society space as an expert in what they do. But as a woman-led organisation, it was an uphill battle to get there.

"Fifteen or so years ago, you walk into a space and you have to do a lot to convince people about what you're talking about. Typically, it's a male-dominated space," says Kemba. "You had to work twice as hard to prove you know what you're talking about."

But over their 40-plus years of work, they have shown their expertise. "We've demonstrated consistency in the work that we do. Consistency and transparency... We have that respect because of the work that we do. But it wasn't always easy."

The collaboration between IGDS and FACRP has yielded benefits for both sides, and the communities they work with. In 2019, they finished a three-year project developing the Gender and Climate Change Toolkit which looked at the intersections between gender and climate change and incorporating gender focus into climate change programming—an initiative supported by the Commonwealth Foundation.

"Following that toolkit, we had an opportunity with the Commonwealth foundation to do a small project illustrating our understanding of the intersections of gender and climate change. Because of that partnership we realised that it would be nice to collaborate with IGDS to inform us—we could learn from them on gender and they could learn from us on the environment side of

■ UWI IN SOCIETY

things. Co-learning and co-partnership was really powerful and impactful,” says Kemba.

Through that project, they were able to plan workshops with secondary schools, starting up a conversation that many of the young minds would not have otherwise been exposed to. They addressed issues like the different considerations that have to be made during disasters when it comes to gender.

For example, in disaster shelters, there is a priority made for women, girls and boys to be hosted, while men might be considered more suited to be out in the field.

“They don’t look at ability rather than gender. Some women might prefer to be out in the field fighting fires, and some men might be better at coordinating in the kitchen or doing a children’s programme, or being a nurse or doctor. So, it was so great to see a lot of the young men have eureka moments when they realise that gender discourse is something that they should be engaged in, and they are also represented in this, and we need their voices to lobby for areas where they themselves are disenfranchised,” says Kemba.

As the teams worked together on further projects, the topic of the annual gayap came up in conversation, and Kemba was asked if she had a document outlining the specifics of how it was run. She realised that though they had some documentation they had built up over the years, there was no official document that contained all the information needed to understand the meaning of what a gayap could be and how to best utilise this tool for larger-scale problem solving within communities.

‘Gayap is all about bringing people together to work for a positive cause’

“The toolkit is pulling together how you do a gayap,” says Dr McFee. “The gayap doesn’t necessarily have to be about climate change. It is about how you pull the community together. [The Gayap Toolkit] answers things like: what is the purpose of the gayap? Why would you host a gayap? How

One of the pillars of the FACRP is their use of the “gayap” to accomplish large projects. Coming from the indigenous Karinya word “kayapa”, this method brings together members of a community to work together on completing a task for a positive outcome.



The Fondes Amandes community, deep within the St Ann’s valley, has found ways to come together and manage the continuing project of protecting and rehabilitating the landscape around them over the past 4 decades, fighting forest and bush fires and reclaiming the watershed for its natural ecosystem to thrive.

do you ensure you’re inclusive in terms of the work that you do? It is an ideal experience of the university being in service, not to but in service with our community.”

As part of the development of this project, there was also a pilot initiative where eight organisations were trained in how to use the Gayap Toolkit, and then took that knowledge and attempted to plan and execute their own gayaps to solve problems in their communities.

“The gayap is not just for bush and forest fires,” says Kemba. “The gayap can be used for anything, and it is keeping those traditions alive that helped our fore-parents survive. Back in the day, people had a gayap to build a house – now you must have a lot of money and contractors to do so. People in a hillside community might have a gayap day to tote materials up the hill for building. If a road caved in you might have a gayap to put the road back together. So, there are so many different ways that you can use a gayap, because gayap is all about bringing people together to work for a positive cause.”

Right now, the toolkit is in the process of being completed and made available digitally for dissemination, although Kemba has hopes that they will be able to get some much-needed funding to publish physical copies as well. They have also put together a documentary on the experiences their gayap participants have had, to be screened this year in partnership with the Trinidad And Tobago Green Screen Environmental Film Festival.

“We hope to continue to share and promote, especially when working with disaster responses,” says Kemba. “The impact of climate change is becoming more and more critical, and more devastating. We really need to appeal to our community energy and efforts to not break up because of disasters but to gel together and really find long-term solutions and short-term actions that could really benefit everyone as a community.”

Amy Li Baksh is a Trinidadian writer, artist and activist.

OUR GRADUATES

UWI graduates are everywhere – politics, business, the arts, and as public intellectuals. In the coming months, **UWI TODAY** will profile some of our high achieving alumni who have made or are making a positive impact on society.

CULTIVATING CHANGE

Jody White's Entrepreneurial Journey from UWI to Food and Agri-Business

BY DAVID RILEY



When UWI alum Jody White first graduated from university, his future seemed set in stone. After graduating with first class honours from UWI St Augustine's Management Studies and Finance undergraduate programme in 2008, he was offered a postgraduate scholarship and envisioned himself "working in finance in the Twin Towers", happily reporting to work at his desk job in long-sleeved shirts every day for the rest of his professional life.

Thankfully for Jody, life conspired to put him on a different path – one which he has since been boldly committed to carving out himself as a food and fitness enthusiast and agri-business entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurs are steely risk-takers with a clear vision of how their ideas and innovations can solve specific problems. Jody is no different. But he credits his ability to take his first roll of the entrepreneurship dice at 21 to having the freedom to take a chance as a young man who still lived with his parents at the time.

After graduating, he opted not to take up his scholarship offer and worked as a brand manager for a major pharmaceutical company for 18 months, before a merger of the company made his job redundant. Rather than search for another job, Jody opted to find some way to utilise his passion as a fitness enthusiast, and took a leap of faith by launching Slimdown 360, a catering company that provided healthy meals to the local fitness industry.

"Nobody in Trinidad had a business that would provide meals for the fitness industry, so that's pretty much what I did," he recalls. "The search for healthy foods naturally led to a search for the healthiest ingredients around, and that is how I got into agriculture: for the business."

Since its launch in 2010, Slimdown 360 has become one of the largest prepackaged meal production companies in Trinidad and Tobago, boasting more than 1 million items delivered to date.

Jody began to design agri-products which, in addition to being used to supply Slimdown 360's meal production operations, could also be uniquely branded, and exported to foreign distributors. This strategy grew into a business model that saw the production and distribution of healthy root crop pastas, made from sweet potatoes and cassava, into American markets.

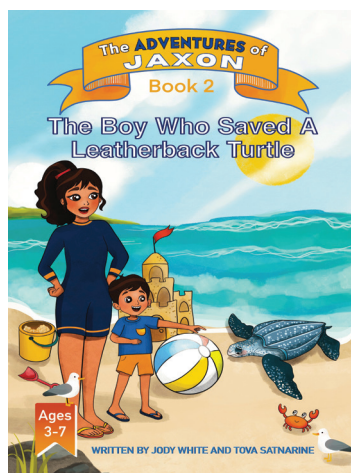
The proper way to search for answers

Without knowing Jody White's full story, if one had to guess his field of study at The UWI, one would be forgiven for assuming that he pursued a degree at the Faculty of Food and Agriculture. While he did not, he credits his time at UWI for inculcating him in the crucial skills of problem-solving, knowledge application, and dynamic learning.

As he tells it, "The knowledge obtained from UWI was in the field of Management and Finance, but my degree helped me to search and figure out answers beyond what I learned. It's the process of figuring out an answer to a challenge that's important. And I have had to figure out answers to challenges beyond my field of study."



Since its launch in 2010, Slimdown 360 has become one of the largest prepackaged meal production companies in Trinidad and Tobago, boasting more than 1 million items delivered to date.



The series, titled Jaxon's Playground, features book such as The Boy Who Saved a Planet and The Boy Who Saved a Leatherback Turtle and tackles topics of sustainability in a kid friendly format meant for ages 3 to 7.

He adds, "This is where I believe a university degree helps. It's not simply about what you're taught, because you can't be taught everything. It's about the proper way to search for the answers to the challenges that you're faced with. This is where a university degree is invaluable."

This approach to learning combined with his penchant for applying new knowledge in ways for the benefit of specific target groups has been core to Jody's success in fields beyond agribusiness. While he has an appetite for learning, he has also been magnanimous in sharing his perspectives with mentees and the public at large.

As a media contributor for the past 10 years, Jody has worked in television, press, and radio, sharing his knowledge on health, fitness, food and agriculture. He currently hosts the *Agribusiness Innovation* weekly radio show on Freedom 106.5 FM – a programme which, as the name implies, highlights innovative aspects of agriculture, such as modern farming techniques, agricultural technologies, and trends in the agri-business sector.

Through this programme, Jody has been able to bring the world to his audience, as the show has featured guest experts from around the globe, discussing topics as far ranging as the growing of tomatoes in space by NASA, to the ethical considerations involved in technologies enabling the 3D-printing of meat from animal cells.

Broadcaster and Author

When he isn't introducing his listeners to the world of agri-innovation, Jody is opening the eyes of his youngest readership through his line of children's books, which he has jointly written with his wife, Tova Satnarine. The series, titled *Jaxon's Playground*, features books such as *The Boy Who Saved a Planet* and *The Boy Who Saved a Leatherback Turtle*, and tackles topics of sustainability in a kid-friendly format meant for ages 3 to 7.

Ever the entrepreneur, the idea for creating this series came from a need to innovate within Jody's own household, when he and his wife grew wary of reading books to their young son that they believed he could not relate to. *Jaxon's Playground* became a creative outlet to solve this problem and the series is available locally and internationally through e-commerce platforms.

Jody's list of accolades and awards is as long as his interests and business endeavours. In 2018, he placed third (out of 42 Commonwealth nation candidates) at the Royal Family's Entrepreneurial Competition and, as a perk of this honour, had the privilege of opening the London Stock Exchange. In 2020, he won the OECS-Republic Bank Business Model Competition, and in 2022, he won the National Award for Agriculture in the youth category.

While his career path is anything but linear, his commitment to advancement and enlightenment for himself and others remains a constant feature of his success.

UWI/FIFA/CIES Study Tour

takes students/graduates to the Pan American Games in Chile

“A transformative and enriching academic experience,” that is how one graduate of the UWI/FIFA/CIES Postgraduate Sports Management programme described the programme’s Second International Study Tour. The students travelled to Chile in late October 2023, taking part in lecture seminars, visiting tourist attractions, and most excitingly, witnessing the Pan American Games.

“The experience was nothing short of phenomenal,” said Kristi Ali, a graduate of UWI St Augustine. “Having the opportunity to witness the Pan American games was very exhilarating. It gave me a sense of sporting culture and allowed me to bask in the world of sport to have a greater appreciation for not only the players, but the coaches, marketing team, events manager, and all those that contributed to making such an event successful.”

The study tour was made up of 70 students, coordinators, and facilitators from the FIFA/CIES International University Network of Chile, Peru, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, and Trinidad and Tobago.

In collaboration with the Universidad Santo Tomás, Chile, the study tour included four lecture seminars:

- Mariana Behr Andrade – “The Human Legacy of the Rio Olympic Games 2016”
- Sebastian Morales – “Journey as an athlete participating in Pan American Games to Parapan American Games”
- Luis Fernando Castro – “Argentina Football Association National Selection Strategic Plan”
- Jorge Guerrero Cortés – “Chile’s Generational Participation in Football project ‘GEN Chile’”.

The students were given tickets to some of the Pan American Games events. They also got the opportunity to visit the Arena Santiago for volleyball; National Stadium Park for the gymnastics, swimming and field hockey; and Ancha Playa Stadium for a football game between Chile and Uruguay.

Liselle Johnson-Marcelle, a 2023 UWI/FIFA/CIES student, said, “The FIFA/CIES tour opened my eyes to the opportunities that are available to advance sport in Trinidad and Tobago. Most of the lectures were based on football, but it created a thirst in me to make a positive change in youth sport development. I am excited to apply some of the concepts I saw in Chile.”

The students also experienced the “Grand Santiago Tower” (also known as the Sky Costanera skyscraper), the tallest building in South America, Casas del Bosque wine tour, and Viña del Mar and Valparaíso city tours.

Corissa Bournes, a 2021 UWI/FIFA/CIES alumna, explained that the study tour “didn’t only provide a deeper understanding of sports management and mega sporting events”, but also inspired her “to think about the socio-cultural impact of events like the Pan American Games”.

She added, “The cross-cultural interactions allowed for enriching academic discussions and the creation of a broader network that spans across several countries.”

Christian Medina, a 2011 UWI/FIFA/CIES alumnus, said “I am thankful for the opportunity to attend the Pan American Games in beautiful Chile. I met new friends, networked and enjoyed the talks, especially the ones by Ms Mariana Andrade and Sebastian Morales, a Para-Athlete. Their stories were inspiring, as was watching the athlete’s compete.”



VIVA CHILE! Participants of the UWI/FIFA/CIES Postgraduate Sports Management programme’s Second International Study Tour in Santiago during the Pan American Games. The tour group included, from left, student Liselle Johnson-Marcelle; alumni Calistra Gregoire, Calisia Gregoire (also the Programme Coordinator), Keron Toussaint (a graduate of the BSc Sports Management), and Amara Felix-Toussaint; Director and Lecturer of the Sports Management programmes Sherlan Cabralis; and alumni Christian Medina and Corissa Bournes. PHOTOS: COURTESY THE UWI/FIFA/CIES POSTGRADUATE SPORTS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME.



The tour group attend the lecture “Chile’s Generational Participation in Football project ‘GEN Chile’” given by Jorge Guerrero Cortés, Director of Technical Development, Chilean Football Federation.



“Ultimately, the UWI/FIFA/CIES 2023 Study Tour was a success, and we look forward to our next study tour in 2025,” said Calisia Gregoire, UWI/FIFA/CIES Sports Management Programme Coordinator.

■ **The FIFA/CIES International Study Tour** provides past and current students of the UWI/FIFA/CIES Post Graduate Sports Management programme to network with other students, coordinators and facilitators within the FIFA/CIES International University Network and continue their professional development in sports management.

■ **The UWI/FIFA/CIES Post Graduate Diploma in Sports Management programme** is a blended programme offered through UWI St Augustine’s Department of Management Studies within the Faculty of Social Sciences. It is a collaboration with FIFA, the Centre International D’Etude Du Sport (CIES), and the St Augustine campus.

The UWI Calendar of Events | February–March 2024



Homeward Bound: Navigating Repatriation and Reintegration of Returnees from Syria February 20

ONLINE

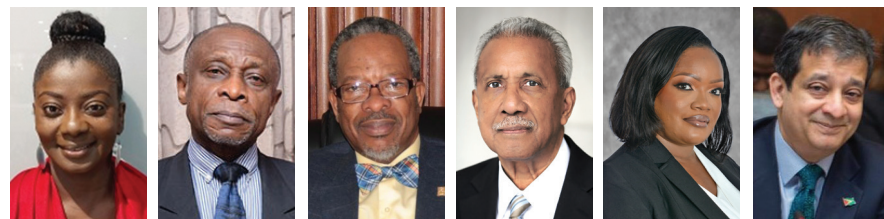
Do we remember them, the Trinbagonians in Syria? This thought-provoking panel discussion, hosted by the Institute of International Relations, is meant to give a voice to the forgotten 100 Trinbagonians in Syria who want to return home, and share their stories, challenges, and hopes. The webinar will be shown on Zoom and is free of charge. The discussion will be moderated by **Dr Malisa Neptune-Figaro**, lecturer in the Department of Behavioural Studies at UWI St Augustine.

Panellists include:

- **Mr Patricio Gálvez** – Culture Project Manager, Repatriate the Children - Sweden
- **Mr Sheikmus Ahmed** – Head of the Office of Displaced Persons and Refugees, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
- **Ms Poonam Taneja** – Investigative Journalist, BBC
- **Dr Timothy Affonso** – Deputy Dean and Lecturer, Faculty of Law, UWI St Augustine
- **Ms Sareta Ashraph** – Senior Legal Consultant to the Centre for Justice and Accountability, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Atlantic Council.

This event will be valuable for social justice and human rights organisations, family members of T&T nationals in Syria, journalists, UWI staff and students, and the general public.

For more information, visit the Institute of International Relations site at www.sta.uwi.edu/iir/. To register, go to <http://bit.ly/SyriaToTrini>



The Guyana-Venezuela Controversy: The Argyle Declaration and Implications for International Law and the Caribbean February 22

ONLINE

Attend this free Zoom webinar hosted by The UWI's Institute of International Relations (IIR) in collaboration with the Caribbean Policy Consortium and UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Law on the Guyana-Venezuela controversy. The webinar will delve into the significance of **The Argyle Declaration** and its implications for International Law and the Caribbean.

Moderator:

- **Dr Annita Montoute** – Acting Director, Institute of International Relations, UWI St Augustine

Panellists:

- **Mr Carl Greenidge** – Former Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guyana
- **Prof Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith** – Fellow, Caribbean Policy Consortium and Senior Associate, Centre for Strategic and International Studies
- **Prof Anthony T Bryan** – Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Caribbean Policy Consortium and Professor Emeritus, University of Miami
- **Dr Alicia Elias-Roberts** – Dean, Faculty of Law, UWI St Augustine
- **Ambassador (ret) Dr Riyad Insanally** – Fellow, Caribbean Policy Consortium and Non-resident Senior Fellow, Adrienne Arsht Latin America Centre

For more information, visit the Institute of International Relations site at www.sta.uwi.edu/iir/. To register, go to <https://bit.ly/GuyanaVenezuelaControversy>

The UWI St Augustine Campus Council Meeting 2024 March 12

ONLINE | TV

The UWI St Augustine invites the public to watch the live streamed presentation of the open session of their **Campus Council Meeting 2024**. This annual meeting will give viewers a report on the campus's activities and accomplishments in the previous academic/financial year, as well as the outlook for the New Year. Viewers will see opening remarks from Council Chair **Ms Sharon Christopher**, the council presentation from Campus Principal **Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine**, and remarks from **Professor Sir Hilary Beckles**, Vice-Chancellor of The UWI.

This is an opportunity for anyone interested in UWI St Augustine to get a better understanding of their activities and agenda.

The council meeting can be viewed on
UWITv: www.uwitv.global
Facebook: www.facebook.com/UWITV
Flow: channel 102

