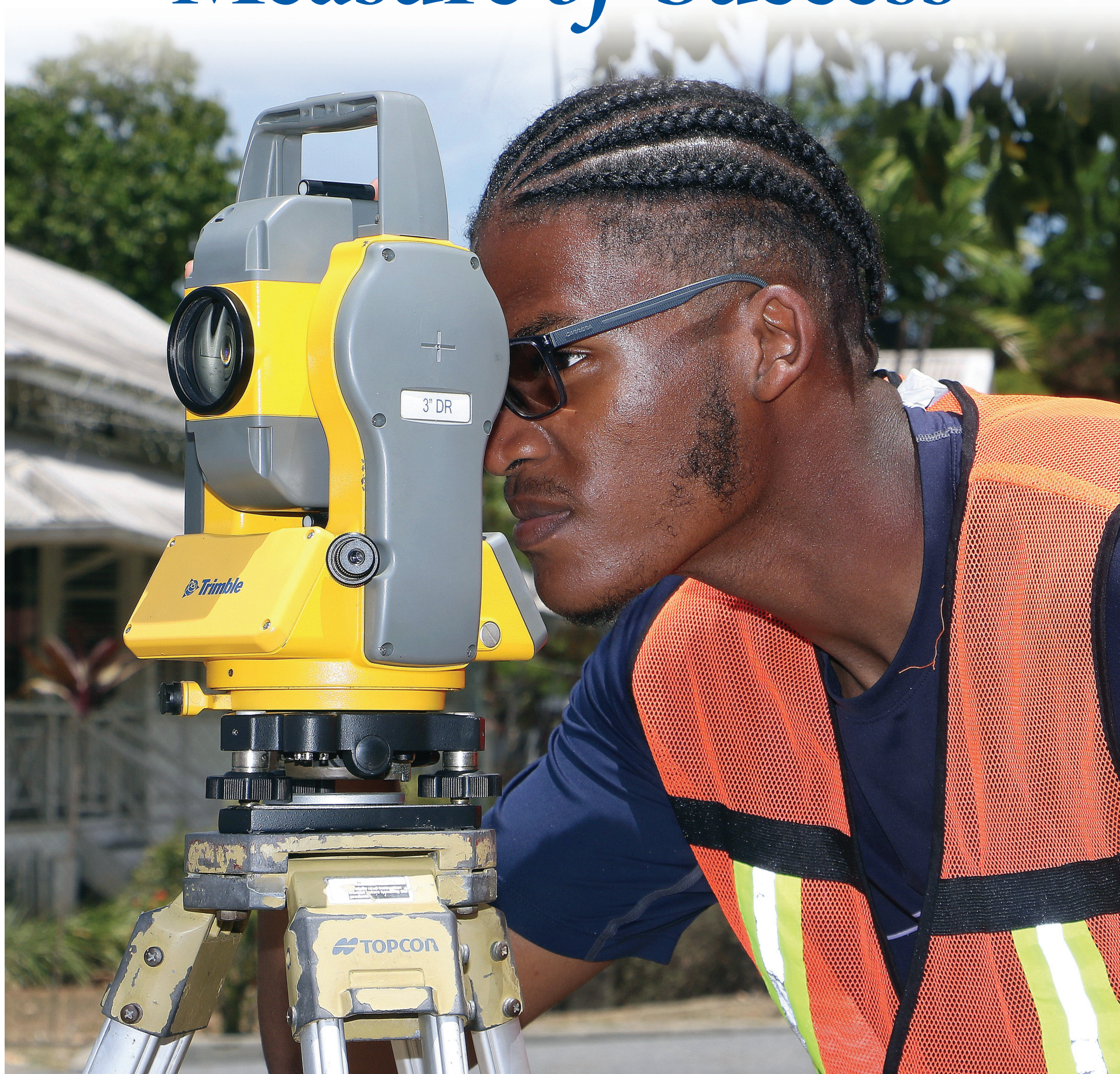




## Measure of Success



**Peter Grant**, a Jamaican Level 1 student in the Department of Geomatics Engineering and Land Management (DGELM), uses a total station to conduct surveys on the grounds of the St Augustine campus. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM





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## FROM THE PRINCIPAL

# Era of Transformation

It is June, and the St Augustine Campus is in Semester 3 (also known as the Summer semester). This is the time when some students do core courses for their degree programmes, either to make up for their performances in previous semesters, or to jumpstart their progress for the semesters to come. Some of our faculties and departments also offer short and professional development courses during this period.

However, for many students this is a time of rest after completing their second semester projects and exams. Many of our regional and international students have gone home. The campus, for the most part, is quiet.

It is a wonderful time for reflection on the academic year (which officially ends on July 26), and to prepare for the year to come. The campus normally does a full review of our activities and successes at the end of the year, so I will leave that detailed retrospective for December.

In general, academic year 2023/2024 has been successful. UWI St Augustine was confronted by many formidable situations, most of which have been with us for some time, yet we continued to perform our essential service as educators, researchers, and developers of the Caribbean's human capital, on the individual and community levels.

The campus has also been involved in the evolution of the services we provide – through the creation of new programmes, the improvement of systems, and the articulation of new operations in areas such as research and development, and commercialisation. This is exciting work with great potential. In many ways, we are paving a new future for the campus that I believe will be looked back on as one of UWI St Augustine's eras of transformation.

In this issue of UWI TODAY, we focus on some of the steps to paving that future. Every appointment, affiliation, involvement, prize, and project create the roads that lead to the St Augustine campus of tomorrow. It is important for an organisation to develop strategic plans and have visions. It is also vital to have people – academics, staff, students, executives – who go out and do the work, and who proclaim the name of The UWI as they do.

This issue also includes an article on The UWI's Research Cluster on Generative AI for Good Research, an initiative that includes all five UWI campuses and is meant to bring direct and tangible benefits to the Caribbean through a proper understanding and implementation of artificial intelligence. I believe this research cluster can be a model for future activities meant for the collective benefit of the region, and encapsulates the spirit of One UWI.

The UWI is one of the region's most successful institutions, a position that gives us enormous ability and responsibility to impact the region. We have to use that power strategically, but we also



“The UWI will perform in an honest, caring, ethical and trustworthy manner, and will create a culture of accountability in our management practices to ensure that these values are sustained.”

must be daring. Another prime example of this is a food security initiative to cut the Caribbean's US\$5 billion food import bill by 25 percent by 2025. On May 15, I had the pleasure of signing a memorandum of agreement as a representative of the Consortium of Universities in CARICOM Involved in Agricultural Education and Research (CUCAER) with Dr Patrick Antoine, CEO and Technical Director of CARICOM's Private Sector Organisation towards this initiative (*article on page 4*).

These ambitious initiatives, Caribbean in scope and potential, are examples of both the journey we must undertake and the destination we should reach.

In recent times, this space has been filled with messages focusing on strategy, financial growth, high-potential projects, technology, and transformation. This university has another imperative, a moral imperative, laid out in its core values:

“The UWI will perform in an honest, caring, ethical and trustworthy manner, and will create a culture of accountability in our management practices to ensure that these values are sustained.”

In this fast-paced, high-tech age, it sometimes seems old fashioned to speak of morals. I would argue that in eras of uncertainty, disruption, and change, a strong moral foundation, inclusive of integrity and accountability, is essential.

Our task, as we continue to make the campus more efficient, productive, innovative, and even profitable, is to always maintain its purpose as an institution of service. Our ultimate value, the ultimate measurement of our success, is the prosperity of this region.

*Rose-Marie Antoine*

**Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine**  
Campus Principal



**OUR COVER:** Geomatics engineering is an emerging field that encompasses the evolution of theories and technologies in land surveying. “Our graduates run the gamut,” says **Dr Charisse Griffith-Charles**, Head of the DGELM, “from becoming cadastral, hydrographic, and engineering surveyors, to land and geographic information systems managers, to land administration and land management professionals.”

This year, the DGELM celebrates 40 years of existence, and in that time, has grown to become an essential department within UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Engineering.

Visit them at <https://sta.uwi.edu/eng/geomatics/>

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## UNIVERSITY NEWS

# UWI/REGIONAL PARTNERS SIGN AGREEMENT to reduce Caribbean food import bill by 25 percent by 2025

UWI St Augustine has hosted the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to cut the Caribbean's US\$5 billion food import bill by 25 percent by 2025. The agreement (signed on May 15) between the CARICOM Private Sector Organisation (CPSO) and the Consortium of Universities in CARICOM Involved in Agricultural Education and Research (CUCAER) aims to bolster food security and agricultural development across the region.

The signing ceremony, which took place at the Office of the Campus Principal, was conducted in a hybrid format.

"Today marks a significant milestone in our journey towards enhancing agricultural development and regional food security," said Professor Mark Wuddivira, UWI St Augustine's Dean of the Faculty of Food and Agriculture.

"By collaborating closely with stakeholders across government, academia, industry, and civil society, we seek to catalyse transformative change and drive sustainable agri-food system development in alignment with national and regional priorities."

The MOA combines the resources of the CPSO and CUCAER to support the "25x2025" initiative created



Dr Patrick Antoine (left) CEO and Technical Director CPSO and UWI St Augustine Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine sign the memorandum of agreement.

***The MOA combines the resources of the CPSO and CUCAER to support the "25x2025" initiative created by the CARICOM Heads of Government.***

by the CARICOM Heads of Government. It focuses on developing human resource capacity and creating viable proposals to attract private sector investment in key agricultural commodities.

CUCAER comprises institutions such as Anton de Kom University in Suriname, The University of the Bahamas, the University of Guyana, The University of Trinidad and Tobago, and The UWI St Augustine campus.

Dr Patrick Antoine, Chief Executive Officer and Technical Director of the CPSO, emphasised the importance of private sector involvement: "The MOA will help the region build resilience in food security. It is for this reason we are happy to be here with all of you, particularly with the bright minds and tremendous competence that The UWI and other universities under this consortium bring to the table."

The signing ceremony was attended by representatives from member universities, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, and the private sector, all expressing their commitment to advancing the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) goals through public-private partnerships.

## The UWI launches AI Research Cluster

The School for Graduate Studies and Research at The UWI has created a network of researchers to help the Caribbean make the most of artificial intelligence. The "Research Cluster on Generative AI for Good Research" will bring scholars together with industry leaders and policymakers from the region.

The network/research cluster will develop new, globally competitive postgraduate programmes on AI, a statement from The UWI said.

Speaking at the cluster's launch on April 5 at the university's Regional Headquarters in Jamaica, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Graduate Studies and Research Professor Aldrie Henry-Lee said that the network was important for The UWI's mission to advance learning and foster innovation for the positive transformation of the Caribbean.

The university, she said, promotes AI for ethical and equitable use, beneficial to all, especially the vulnerable.

The AI research cluster is led by Academic Director



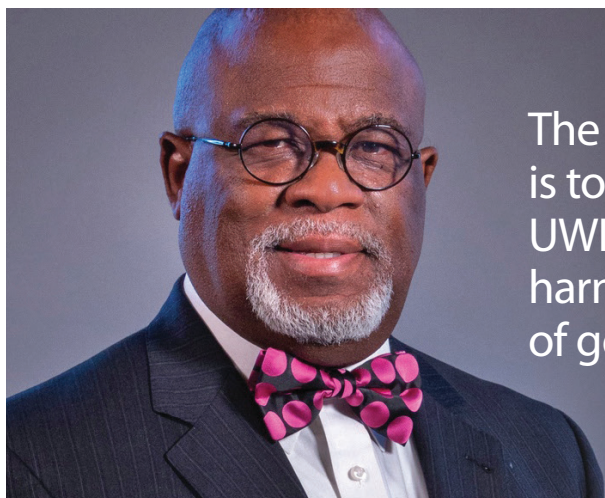
of The UWI Five Islands Campus Dr Curtis Charles, with management supported by UWI St Augustine computer scientist Professor Patrick Hosein, biostatistician Professor Ian Hambelton from UWI Cave Hill, and

UWI Mona ICT and business innovation specialist Professor Maurice McNaughton.

At the launch, Dr Charles said the cluster's "principle of operation" is to create an alliance among The UWI's five campuses "dedicated to harnessing the transformative power of generative artificial intelligence".

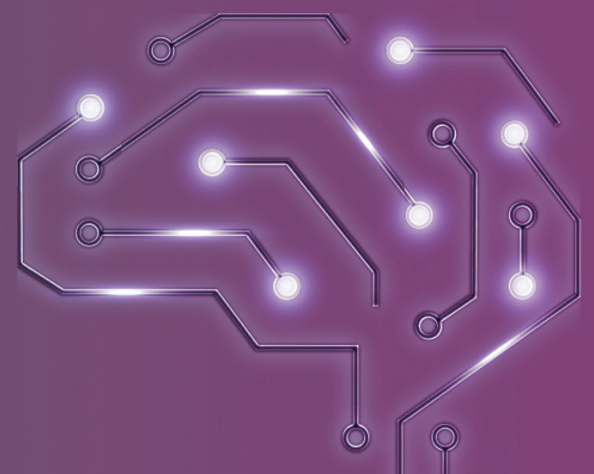
The network's design, he said, included each campus having an AI lab made up of expert researchers. It would also incorporate Caribbean perspectives from governments, business, and civil society.

Over the next two years, the statement from the university said, the AI research cluster will create a strong digital presence, as well as put on research seminars and workshops. From July 8 to 10, the Five Islands campus will host The UWI's first international AI conference. For more information on the conference, visit [fiveislandsconference.com](https://fiveislandsconference.com).



The cluster's "**principle of operation**" is to create an alliance among The UWI's five campuses "dedicated to harnessing the transformative power of generative artificial intelligence".

Dr Curtis Charles, Academic Director of The UWI Five Islands campus, leads the research cluster.





## ■ CAMPUS NEWS

As the global food and agriculture sector continues to navigate uncertain waters in the face of climate change and supply chain issues, players in the local cocoa industry are being called upon to continue innovating their practices to remain competitive and sustainable.

At the launch of this year's UWI St Augustine Cocoa Research Centre (CRC) Annual Research and Development Symposium (CARDS) on May 22, CRC director Professor Pathmanathan Umaharan urged the sector to innovate their production systems, business model, management methodologies, private sector services, and technical assistance.

Since 2017, the annual symposium has provided a space for cocoa stakeholders to convene and contribute ideas to the long-term sustainability and growth of the cocoa sector.

Themed "Strengthening the Cocoa Value Chain and Building Sustainability," this year's event comprised of an in-person event at the School of Education Auditorium on May 22 and online training sessions from June 5-6.

Partners and sponsors for this year's symposium included the Australian High Commission, EXIMBANK, National Flour Mills, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

During his address, Umaharan noted, "A few months ago, with support from FAO under the OCOP project, we completed a comprehensive value chain analysis and sustainability analysis. We were able to identify the gaps or binding constraints (holding back the cocoa industry), and suggest an upgrade strategy for this industry that we think is one of industries that must help us to build a sustainable economy post oil and gas."

Umaharan added the analysis revealed that cocoa stakeholders should place focus on strengthening their value chains, incorporating sustainability into their models, technologically advancing their operations, and building collaborations.

With global cocoa prices climbing to historic highs in 2023 and then tumbling in the first quarter of 2024, this year's symposium highlighted some of the vulnerabilities leading to volatilities in the cocoa market, including the need for greater pest management and disease control in the face of changing climatic conditions.

With the CRC's work on preserving local cocoa genetics, the symposium also offered stakeholders opportunities to network directly with local researchers and experts.

UWI St Augustine Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine highlighted the development of the EU-supported International Fine Cocoa Innovation Centre from 2014 to 2018 as just one initiative of the CRC and university's strategic approach to the cocoa industry's needs for greater sustainability and technological advancement.

She explained, "Within the Innovation Centre, there is a model cocoa estate, a modern postharvest processing facility, a pilot chocolate factory, and business and technology incubators, all established with the support of the Swiss chocolate company Lindt Sprüngli.

"With support from IDB-LAB and George Washington University, the Centre is working on building investment portfolios and creating a hub to attract investment into the country."

Since its creation, the Centre has trained over 300 chocolatiers,

assisted in the creation of over 80 value-added SMEs, and collaborated with the local private sector to establish a fund aimed at supporting the rehabilitation of small farms into productive units.

Prof Antoine added, "I am proud to state that our Innovation Centre has spawned the first commercial entity in The University of the West Indies – a commercial chocolate factory. With the implementation of CRC's quality management system and the acquisition of high-quality, high-throughput equipment, the factory is poised to enhance efficiency, lower costs, and supply high-quality intermediary products to local chocolatiers."

# 'Innovate if you want T&T cocoa to remain competitive'

## Experts at UWI CRC Research and Development Symposium call on cocoa sector players to implement new systems, business models, and services

BY TYRELL GITTENS



Professor Pathmanathan Umaharan,  
Director of the Cocoa Research Centre.  
PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM

Prof Umaharan and Principal Antoine both noted that future editions of the symposium, and efforts of the CRC, will continue to focus on addressing the adaptability of local producers to deal with climate change and other evolving issues including labour cost, soil fertility, diseases, and volatile markets.

Looking forward, they both hinted that the university and centre will expand their efforts to incorporate artificial intelligence, data science, mechanisation, drone technology, and precision agriculture into future-proofing the cocoa industry.

■ For more information on the Cocoa Research Centre and their activities, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/cru/>



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## SPORT



## HISTORIC FIRST St Augustine's Nadra Dwarika-Baptiste Leads CCC Team in Cricket Championship

UWI St Augustine's Nadra Dwarika-Baptiste has been appointed manager of the Combined Campuses and Colleges (CCC) team for the T&T leg of the Cricket West Indies (CWI) Regional Four-Day Championship 2024. This is the first time a woman has been appointed manager of a men's team in the 159-year history of West Indies first-class cricket.

Mrs Dwarika-Baptiste, an administrative assistant at the St Augustine Academy of Sport (SAAS), said, "It is absolutely thrilling to be the first woman to hold the position, but I definitely look forward to not being last. The horizon is expanding for women in sport. There are significant opportunities to forge a career path."

She added, "I am very proud as a staff member of The UWI, whose core values includes gender justice, to achieve this milestone."

Mrs Dwarika-Baptiste is the manager of The UWI Women's Cricket Club and the T&T Under-19 Women's Team. She has a Cricket West Indies (CWI) Level I coaching accreditation, and is a qualified national cricket umpire.

"I felt right at home with the male cricketers," she said of the experience as CCC team manager. "Every player was respectful and highly enthusiastic, and brought their best. It's clear we've got some of the brightest cricket talents right here in the Caribbean."

Dr Anand Rampersad, head of the SAAS, said, "[Her] leadership and dedication have been pivotal in elevating our cricket programme. She knows how to bring out the best in our young cricketers, and her passion and creative approach have been incredible for our academy and for cricket in the Caribbean."

The St Augustine Academy of Sport is part of The UWI's Faculty of Sport, the university's first multi-campus faculty. For more information on the faculty and its programmes, visit <https://www.uwi.edu/sport/content/home>.



Mrs Nadra Dwarika-Baptiste, Manager of the Combined Campuses and Colleges team.

**"I felt right at home with the male cricketers," she said of the experience as CCC team manager. "Every player was respectful and highly enthusiastic, and brought their best. It's clear we've got some of the brightest cricket talents right here in the Caribbean."**

Sport enthusiasts are well aware that playing and defeating a team at their home ground is no easy feat. Last month, the Cricket West Indies (CWI) women's team did just that: they defeated Pakistan 3-0 in the 50 Overs, and 4-1 in the T20 Overs in Karachi, Pakistan.

The team's preparation for the games was key, stopping for a training camp in Dubai before Pakistan, and notably, appointing Antonia Burton as strength and conditioning coach of the senior women's team.

Burton, a certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist, joined the team in January. The appointment came at the beginning of her second semester at UWI St Augustine, where she is pursuing the UWI/FIFA/CIES (Centre International D'Etude Du Sport) postgraduate diploma in Sports Management.

Currently holding additional posts such as Athletics Coach at the University of Trinidad and Tobago, Director of the Sports Performance programme at MP High-Performance Training, and National Sprints and Hurdles Coach for regional and international games, Burton is no stranger to the sporting landscape. However, the Sports Management diploma, she said, would provide, "a diversification of [her] resume and a deeper understanding of sport from an administrative and management perspective."

Burton knew she could benefit from an in-depth understanding of management, marketing and policy development challenges through a Caribbean lens. An opportunity for hands-on learning, and the development of necessary skills for success in senior management roles in both for profit and non-profit organisations seemed like exactly what she wanted.



## Balancing Bat and Books

Women's cricket coach Antonia Burton pursues UWI/FIFA/CIES postgraduate diploma

BY KANISHA VINCENT

Yet, the balancing act has been tough, particularly with all the travel her work requires and the different time zones for classes. She says her classmates have helped her get through it so far.

"They have made the experience a lot more bearable considering my workload," she stated. "They provided me with fresh perspectives on the industry all while allowing me to work at my pace during group projects."

Soon, Burton will add to her workload when she heads to Sri Lanka to support the CWI women's team next month. CWI is vying for a spot at the 2025 Women's ODI World Cup in India. Winning these matches will give them crucial points, moving the women up the table for qualification.

As with her academic pursuits – she studied Psychology at the undergraduate level, and completed certifications in strength and conditioning – she believes that discipline and "being present" are key to success in all aspects of life.

"I think it's a case of allowing myself to fully embrace where I am and what I am doing," she says. "I let my work speak for itself, and wherever that takes me, I welcome it with open arms."

**For more information on the UWI/FIFA/CIES diploma and further education in Sports Management** visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/fss/dms/sports-management-msc-and-pg-dip>



## ■ CULTURE

**American Jurist and defender of the US First Amendment Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr** once stated, “Language is the dress of thought; every time you speak your mother tongue, you reveal a part of yourself.” Despite serving the US Supreme Court from 1902 to 1932, his words still have relevance today worldwide.

Music is another important signifier of a people and culture, and in the Caribbean there is perhaps no greater representative of regional identity than Jamaican-born musical icon Robert Nestor Marley, beloved worldwide as Bob Marley. In February 2024, after an early release in Jamaica, *Bob Marley: One Love*, a film on the artist’s life and music, was released worldwide.

When it came time to capture the authentic voice of Jamaican people on film, the filmmakers approached Dr Joseph T Farquharson, Senior Lecturer in Linguistics at UWI Mona and current coordinator of the Jamaican Language Unit (JLU) for assistance.

Dr Farquharson is also an Honorary Research Fellow of the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (DMLL) at UWI St Augustine.

In a video discussion on the film, lead actor Kinglsey Ben-Adir explained that “I don’t have anything physically the same as Bob, even the voice.”

Ben-Adir, whose star has been rising with prominent roles in *Barbie*, *One Night in Miami* (where he played Malcolm X), and even as the main antagonist in the Marvel Cinematic Universe TV show *Secret Wars*, says it was crucial to capture the essence of Marley, and that includes the way he spoke.

“I have no business being a part of this film if I’m not going to work like that to represent the culture,” he says. “There was never going to be a version of this film where there wasn’t an attempt to represent the way Bob spoke specifically, because I think Bob would have been against that.”

### Seeking expertise in linguistics

It was Fae Ellington, well-known Jamaican broadcaster and dialect coach on *One Love*, who came up with the idea of approaching UWI Mona linguists for assistance with the film. Specifically, she was aware of the work of the campus’s Jamaican Language Unit (JLU) in the Department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities and Education. For more than 20 years, linguists at the JLU have been doing the work of language planning and developing a language policy for the Jamaican language and its users.

The unit has been involved in work towards the acceptance of Jamaican as the national language, with the ultimate goal of seeing it co-officialised alongside English.

Ellington recommended Dr Farquharson. He took up the job of Linguistics Consultant to support *One Love*’s dialect coach, Brett Tyne. Tyne, who was a dialect coach on major films such as *Dune*, *The Road House*, and *The Boys on the Boat*, was the coach for both Ben-Adir, and co-star Lashana Lynch (another rising star), who played Rita Marley.

“I worked extremely hard,” Dr Farquharson recalls fondly, “because I was working with people who would not rest at all.”

As the Linguistics Consultant, Dr Farquharson was tasked to not only support Ms Tyne’s work, but also to check the different versions of the script to ensure the dialogue was reflective of the language, whether it was the Jamaican language or the English language.

### Writing how a people speak

During his time spent on this job, from 2022 until the post-production phase, Dr Farquharson was able to lean heavily on a writing system developed by the JLU. The Cassidy-Le Page Writing System is a phonemic system for writing Jamaican originally developed by the



# SO MUCH THINGS TO SAY

## UWI linguist consults on *Bob Marley: One Love* biopic



FROM TOP LEFT  
Dr Joseph T Farquharson  
and Ms Brett Tyne.

FROM BOTTOM LEFT  
Ms Fae Ellington  
and Mr Kinglsey Ben-Adir.

linguists Frederic Cassidy and Robert Le Page. The JLU, under linguist Hubert Devonish, Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at Mona, worked on the system for wider public acceptance, and has conducted major nationwide surveys and research projects.

The Cassidy-JLU system developed a standardised Jamaican alphabet. For example, in Jamaican, “sick” is spelt “sik”, and “band” is spelt “ban”. The writing system was wholeheartedly welcomed by Brett Tyne and she used it to convert Ben-Adir’s and Lynch’s lines in the script.

The system was used not only for the Jamaican language in the film’s script, but also the English used by Jamaican speakers, in particular Lynch as Rita Marley.

### Rise of the Jamaican language

Since its inception, the JLU has been working to ensure the growth of the Jamaican language. The 2005 Language Attitude Survey of Jamaica revealed that attitudes towards the Jamaican language have greatly improved within the last two to three decades. Over 70 percent of Jamaicans now view Jamaican Creole as a language. By 2011, the JLU, as part of the International Centre for Caribbean Language Research with representatives on all campuses, worked to produce the Charter on Language Policy and Language Rights in the Creole-speaking Caribbean, a framework for national and regional language policies. The Charter takes into account the language rights and freedoms provided for

in various international instruments, including the 1996 Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights of 1996.

“Many Jamaicans themselves threw out Dialect years ago as a term for the language. Most of the population refers to the language as Patois or Jamaican Patwa,” says Dr Farquharson. “We are [also] moving away from that, because Patois does not distinguish us from all the other languages that are referred to as Patois [including French Creole varieties].”

These developments, he notes, are not only the responsibility of linguists. Artists, like musicians (and filmmakers), also have an enormous role to play in creating a shift in how Caribbean people view their native languages, and working with linguists is essential.

Currently, he is on sabbatical and is Vice-President (President Elect) of the Society for Caribbean Linguistics, which recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding at UWI St Augustine. During his sabbatical, Dr Keren Cumberbatch, a UWI St Augustine PhD graduate, is Acting Coordinator.

As to *Bob Marley: One Love*, it had an opening day gross of US\$100,000 in Jamaica, a box office first for the country. Reviewers have been particularly positive about Ben-Adir’s portrayal of the man himself. Praised for his dedication on the project, he was quick to point out the importance of the language team.

“It really was all of us,” he says. “The time we had to work on the language leading up to filming was essential.”



## STUDENT LIFE

# Good students to good citizens

Volunteer Open Day 2024 introduces young people to the individuals and groups making a difference in T&T

BY AMY LI BAKSH

**The responsibility of a university** to its community is not simply to produce graduates with expertise in their field, but also to send students into the world with an understanding of the need to contribute to the society they are a part of. There are so many social issues that exist all around us, and many individuals and organisations have stepped up to solve at least some part of the problem. But figuring out where and how to help can be a daunting process.

The UWI, Volunteer Open Day is a yearly event hosted by the Careers, Co-Curricular and Community Engagement Department of the Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD). The event aims to assist students in exploring the many possible avenues for volunteering for causes championed by a range of NGOs and community-based organisations. It's a way for students to learn more on the possibilities of helping to make a difference, and how to actively engage in working with their communities.

The event was first held in 2012, as part of the DSSD's mandate to support civic responsibility and rounded development of students. The Careers, Co-Curricular and Community Engagement Department, headed by Manager Kathy-Ann Lewis, aims to foster student learning "outside of the traditional classroom", with a focus on giving them the tools they need to be prepared for life after university. While career advice and co-curricular activities are also an important part of their role, the community engagement aspect of the department is a service not just for the students but also for their wider community.

The theme for the Volunteer Open Day 2024 was "Sow, Serve and Flourish Together", and was held on the St Augustine campus on March 14. Volunteer organisations set up booths on the Learning Resource Centre Greens, and under the shade of trees and tents, both the students and staff were able to find out about each organisation and the causes that they represent – including education, the environment and healthcare. Present at the booths were organisations like the Cotton Tree Foundation, which provides literacy and other educational programmes targeted towards youth; Vision on Mission, which provides rehabilitation, reintegration and resettlement services to vulnerable communities; and Rennie's Orphanage and Animal Rescue (ROAR), a wildlife NGO which focuses on animal rehabilitation and environmental advocacy.

Fittingly, as the theme spoke to sowing, serving and flourishing, attendees were presented with seeds and seedlings to be planted and cared for. This was part of the event's focus on highlighting the environment, and attendees were able to learn about how the NGOs present implemented sustainable practices in their work.

As we continue to see the ongoing effects of the global climate crisis, it is more important than ever that the upcoming cohort of university graduates understand the value of incorporating sustainability into whatever field they may enter, whether in their work or through volunteering. The Volunteer Open Day is just one of DSSD's projects under the banner of 'Community Engagement and Service Learning', which aims to mould "active citizens, who are civically aware, morally grounded, and built on the spirit of reciprocity, through participation in various community development/advancement activities and projects."

With first-hand experience on the issues facing our country and region, the aim of these projects is to foster an upcoming generation of citizens who can affect positive change to not just their communities, but the world. Students or staff interested in participating in one of their programmes can reach out the Careers, Co-Curricular and Community Engagement Department to learn more.



A member of Rennie's Orphanage and Animal Rescue carefully handles a snake while talking to a student.



A student signs up to volunteer with Vision on Mission.



With first-hand experience on the issues facing our country and region, the aim of these projects is to foster an upcoming generation of citizens who can affect positive change to not just their communities, but the world.



## ■ OUR CAMPUS



Ms Kristy Smith, Manager of the Financial Advisory Services Department within the Division of Student Services and Development.

# Embracing the Future

## UWI Financial Advisory Services give students the opportunity to afford higher education and campus life

BY AMY LI BAKSH

*‘We have another programme called the Adopt-A-Student Programme which offers eligible students TT\$400-500 a month every month in the semester, and they can renew that the next semester. This programme is funded by members of staff at The UWI.’*

In academic spaces, the narrative of the journey to success often focuses on what you do within the classroom, or within your field of study itself. But, for many students, there are other invisible barriers that can influence their academic outcomes, and one of the most influential is finances. For students who are facing financial difficulties, this can affect their ability to pay for tuition, books and other academic materials, as well as living expenses like meals, accommodation, and transportation.

At The UWI, the Financial Advisory Services Department (FAS) is designed to help students navigate these issues, through financial aid programmes and services.

“The Financial Advisory Services Department provides financial aid programmes to students facing a range of financial challenges,” said Kristy Mannette-Smith, manager of FAS. “We are also the hub for privately-donated scholarships and bursaries – non-tuition-based bursaries – from external or internal stakeholders who are desirous of donating to assist students.”

The department undertakes both the “donor management” – building and retaining donors – and administrative processes related to their financial aid programmes financially challenged students.

“We also offer financial education workshops, because we believe in equipping our students with knowledge on how to manage their funds—how to plan for retirement, how to create a proper budget, and even how to buy a house or car,” says Mannette-Smith.

For First Year student Breana Rambaran, currently pursuing her BSc in Biology, the FAS was able to provide her with the resources necessary to make the commute to campus every day.

“I come from pretty far, from deep south,” said Rambaran. “I need to travel to and fro every single day, because I can’t afford to stay near campus. There’s a lot of travelling every single day to get to school on time.”

For Rambaran, a discussion with one of her lecturers led to her going through the application process. FAS reached out to her, and was able to provide financial aid for her transportation costs. “When I was referred, they contacted me, I gave them my information, they found out about my situation, and it went smoothly after that.”

She always had an inclination towards science, thus pursuing biology is her way of following her passion, and hopefully one day becoming a teacher in the field.

“There’s only one working parent in my household, and I also have a younger sibling in secondary school, so there are expenses for both of us. With the financial aid, I was able to be less dependent on my parents,” she said.

With the issue of commuting off her plate, she is able to focus on her studies, especially as she hopes to take on a double

major—in Biochemistry as well as Biology.

For Saint Lucian postgraduate student Joel Henry (no relation to UWI TODAY’s editor), the FAS has helped ease the mental burden of finances as he pursues his MSc in Economics.

“I took a leap of faith and made my way to Trinidad,” said Henry.

Although he had support from family, he found the financial stress was taking a toll on him, and department staff encouraged him to reach out to the FAS team. “I remember going in on either a Monday or Tuesday, and by the end of the week, they had arranged a grant for me to move onto campus, and another grant for me to buy food and take care of myself until the end of the semester. I couldn’t believe it.”

Explaining the types of scholarships and bursaries, and other the financial aid programmes offered by FAS, Mannette-Smith says, “For instance, once registered, students can apply for a hardship grant of up to \$TT5000 during the semester, to support their academic and non-academic situations. This grant is non-repayable.”

For the scholarships and bursaries, the application process is cyclical. “For new students, the application period runs for the month of September every year. For those who are already in the system, the application period runs from January to May.”

Interested students can always reach out to the FAS team for help finding out what they are eligible for and what the application processes are like. Many, like Rambaran and Henry, are guided by staff in their departments. However, this isn’t the only way UWI staff can contribute through financial aid.

“We have another programme called the Adopt-A-Student Programme which offers eligible students TT\$400-500 a month every month in the semester, and they can renew that the next semester. This programme is funded by members of staff at The UWI,” said Mannette-Smith. “They contribute voluntarily from their salaries every month, which is deserving of mention, and for which we are grateful. Even as little as \$20 can be gifted, because we see how it all adds up to support our students.”

For students who are reticent to reach out for financial help, Mannette-Smith wants them to know that the FAS is a safe space for them to access. “We have these programmes in place just to assist you,” she said. “Even if you think you don’t qualify, give it a try! The funds are here for you.”

■ For more information on accessing financial aid at UWI St Augustine, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/dssd/financial-advisory-services-department>



Ms Trisha Baksh (left), Brand Lead of KFC, Prestige Holdings, embraces Ms Ayanna Holder, recipient of the Pizza Hut bursary from Prestige Holdings. PHOTOS: MEDIA MILL LTD.

## DSSD FAS FINANCIAL ADVISORY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

### Scholarship/Bursary Donors

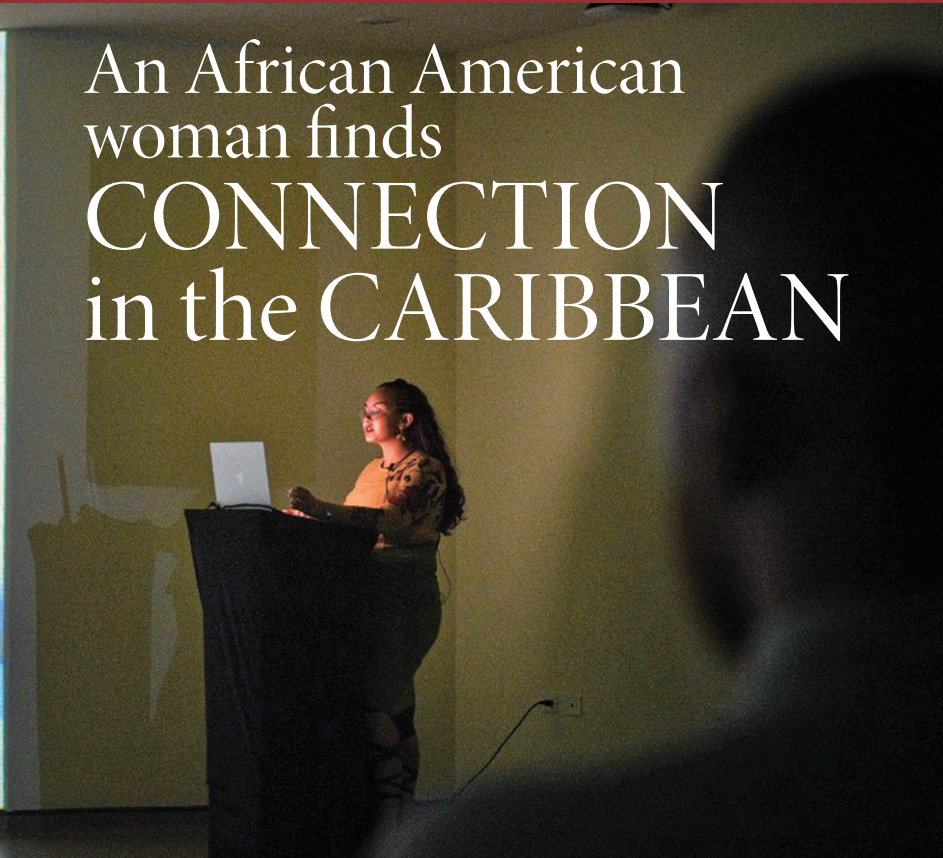
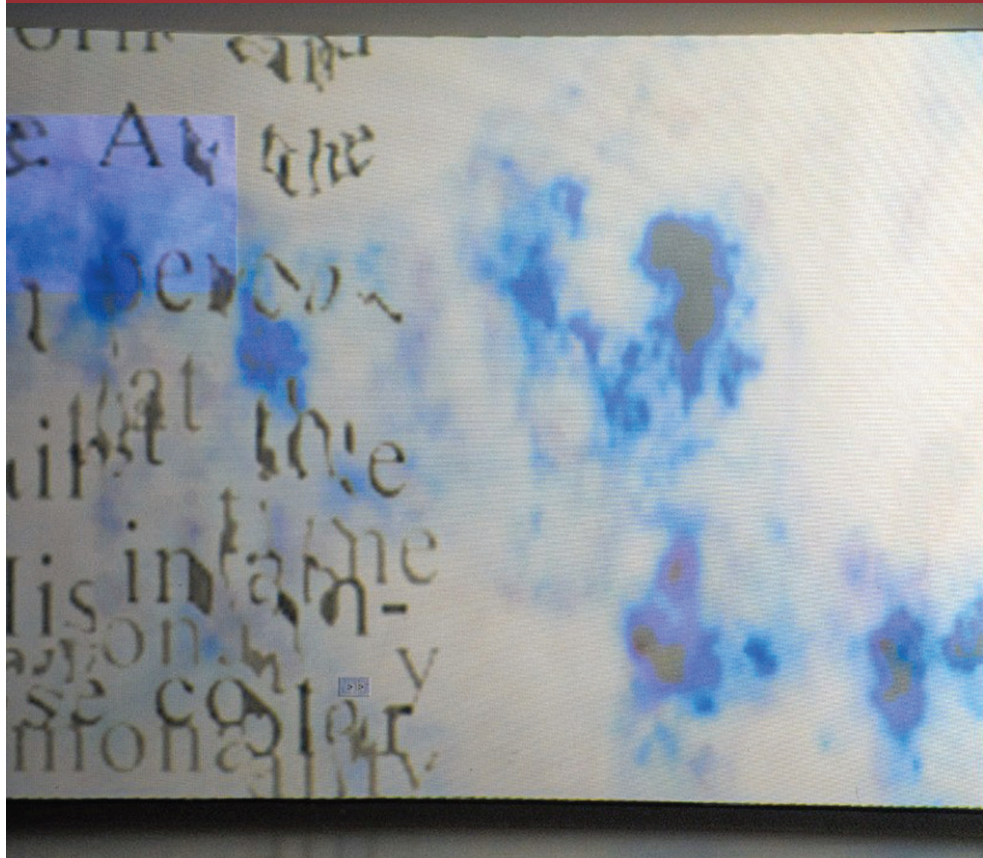
Anya Schnoor  
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YTEPP Limited  
Ms. Zena Mohammed

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



## ARTS

# An African American woman finds CONNECTION in the CARIBBEAN



BY OMEGA FRANCIS

**At the heart of Zoe Butler's work** as a new media performance artist is connection. Connection to history, connection to her father, connection to the beating heart of a culture and their collective consciousness.

Her recent presentation, "Conversations and Constellations: A Performative Reading and Film Screening", held on May 8 at the Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA), was a way for Zoe to tell her story as an African American woman who is making it her life's work to study and speak about the "jumbie" stories of the Caribbean.

"Conversations and Constellations" was an intentional way for others to get to know her and hear her reinterpretation of jumbie stories and their relationship with history.

Folktales, and jumbie stories, like people, exist in many forms. For Zoe, these stories help to communicate her own philosophy through the creative and visual experience. Her study is a historical project that situates materials and stories through lifetimes, regions, and cultures, and help encourage those who engage with them to find connection to the past.

Her own connection to the past resides in the stories of her father, whose ancestral ties lead to Guyana, and the jumbie stories Zoe heard from her family who brought those stories to the United States when they migrated.

Graduating from the School of Art Institute in Chicago in 2021, Zoe set her sights on the Fullbright programme, and while she did not set her sights squarely on Trinidad and Tobago at first, she knew that she wanted her research to be somewhere in the Caribbean. With the apparent overlap in cultural belief with regards to jumbie stories, T&T was the perfect choice.

In Trinidad, she was met by people who have supported her on her journey, a feeling she received from the moment she met Dr Marsha Pearce (Lecturer in Visual Arts and Deputy Dean for Distance and Outreach at the Faculty of Humanities and Education), her mentor at the DCFA.

Since she was 18 years' old, she has been engaging with the archival material that her father left behind. Her practice as a new media performance artist is driven by



Zoe Butler (left) with Dr Marsha Pearce

Folktales, and jumbie stories, like people, exist in many forms, across space and time. For Zoe, these stories help to communicate her own developed philosophy through the creative and visual experience.

the relationship between images, objects, and technology, a work that was inspired by her need to make space in her life for her late father

"Jumbie stories have this quality where they are crafted each time they are told, and I think that kind of care is something that reminded me of my father's stories. Paralleling these stories was a way of putting my father's life into historical context and into a lineage of Caribbean oral tradition that adds dimension to his creative practice as a rapper and artist."

While she experimented with engaging with her father's archives during her undergraduate programme, it was not something she was forthcoming about with her peers because she felt that his life was a sacred thing. She had a responsibility to protect him.

However, the investigation of his works led her to realise that she had to take care in her approach. Attending the Art Institute, which has a predominantly white student body, she needed to be cautious in how she looked at his work and how she looked the jumbie stories.

"The careful eyes that I needed to mentor, look over the work I wanted to do, and help me interpret the material came with a very specific kind of consciousness. I gravitated towards African Americans and black persons who were specialised in interpreting black creative life."

With this new care, a question came up about blackness and the term 'black bodies'. The narratives surrounding blackness in the United States have always been more limiting than black life itself. "Black folks are living lives that are so much more abundant than the narratives that are being told, and that felt very true for my dad as well."

In her recent work, she offered an expansion of this term by relating it to the cosmic microwave background, the oldest light in the universe and a light that is nonvisible. As she says in her presentation, she has always experienced her father as an invisible presence, and she felt this metaphor relevant to how she linked her work to his history. "It's not just a light that is the black body, it is the entire spectrum of light."

Through her research, Zoe has developed a more thorough historical understanding of her environment. She feels as if she is in a better position to communicate the stories with care, and it feels important to her that the right audience receives it.

At the end of the ten-month research period, when she goes back to the US, Zoe has big plans to present her research in Chicago and Charleston as she continues to explore the distinct connections between the American South and the Caribbean. This is just the beginning of her story.



## TECHNOLOGY

# ‘Making good quality education available at all levels is very important’

National Scholarship winner Sarah Sellier speaks on studying abroad, women in IT, and the value of the training she received from the ClickToStart Foundation

It is no secret that STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) is supposed to open doors to new possibilities. This proved to be a life-changing reality for 21 year-old Sarah Sellier when a national scholarship led to her travelling thousands of miles across the world to study engineering at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Sellier has been immersing herself in information and communications technology (ICT) from an early age, and was mentored by the ClickToStart Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation created by Abigail Wren, a

project manager and e-learning specialist who works with UWI St Augustine's Campus IT Services. With volunteers, many of them from the campus, the foundation provides training to both young and elderly people to help close the gap in technology use.

As the world celebrated International Girls in ICT Day, Sellier recently sat down with Communications Professional Jaye-Anne Figaro-Mc Donald to share her experiences. Here are some abridged interview highlights. The full 6-part interview is available on their Instagram: @clicktostartfoundation

**Jaye-Anne Figaro-Mc Donald: Tell us a bit about your background.**

**Sarah Sellier:** I grew up in the ICT age, so I went to a lot of STEM-related camps and workshops, and I think that really shaped how I decided to go about my future.

I studied subjects like physics, chemistry, and IT. I also studied technical drawing and industrial technology, specialising in woodwork and construction technology. I played sports, and also participated in activities revolving around service and faith.

**JFMc: What motivated you to study ICT?**

**SS:** What really drew me to engineering and ICT is that you can take your ideas and make them into reality. The environment that ClickToStart Foundation creates is very supportive, but it's also very dynamic. It's very inclusive.

**JFMc: What has it been like to study abroad?**

**SS:** More than half the students I've met are either international students or first generation immigrants. There are a lot of different backgrounds and cultures and languages represented – you never feel out of place.

I came across a really good piece of advice in a TED Talk once: if something is worth doing, you will make time to do it. I really see that come into play. I know that I can't do everything at once. Rather than letting that crush me, I focus on what I can do and choose the things that are worth doing.

**JFMc: What do you think are the biggest obstacles that women face in the ICT field?**

**SS:** I think there's a two-fold obstacle: under-representation and perceived under-representation. I've been to ICT camps – there were a lot of girls there – and yet there's always that underlying sense when you talk about ICT that it's not a field many women will go into. We want to avoid a self-fulfilling prophecy for the next generation that everyone thinks no women go into ICT, so less women go into ICT. The best way you can tackle that would largely be by making it seem less extraordinary whenever a girl goes into the field.



Sarah Sellier speaking from New Zealand during the online interview.



Sarah (right) receives a certificate of completion from Mrs Paula Wellington-John, IT Officer - Manager of the Technology Support Unit, during a ClickToStart Foundation ceremony for the Programming for Teenagers class of 2019.

**JFMc: How can educational institutions better support women who are pursuing careers in ICT?**

**SS:** Making good quality ICT education available at all levels, especially during the beginning of their ICT journey, is very important. That is essentially what ClickToStart does.

There's also the need to have that sense of "I can do this" fostered in people who are starting out. Once they have that, it gives them the confidence to ask the questions they need in order to learn.

For those seeking a sign that this is right for them – and this may sound kind of Christian-based because I am Christian – I believe that you live as an example of what you want to see in the world. I am being visible. I'm a visible sign that there are people here doing this thing. It's something that's happening, and it's dynamic, and it's growing.

**JFMc: What are your career aspirations?**

**SS:** I definitely want to continue working in Trinidad. Of course, I want to share the knowledge I've gained here. I want to give back to my country because they've given so much to me.

**JFMc: What advice do you have for young women interested in ICT?**

**SS:** I think you should check out a ClickToStart event. ICT is something you have to love in order to love doing. You can't get around that.

**JFMc: What is one of the most important lessons you have learned?**

**SS:** There's a piece of advice a friend always gives me: I'm a shark. I don't move backward. That sense of whatever happens, you keep moving forward.



For more on the ClickToStart Foundation, visit <https://clicktostart.org/>



## ■ OUR GRADUATES



## UWI Grad's award-winning contributions to US Food Safety

# From Lover of Animals to Scientist of the Year

Professor Simone Stoute, graduate of UWI's School of Veterinary Medicine, has become one of the North American poultry industry's top scholars

BY TYRELL GITTENS

In March 2024, the Pacific Egg and Poultry Association, which has served the egg and poultry industry for over 100 years in 11 US western states and Canada, awarded Professor Simone Stoute as its 2024 PEPA Scientist of the Year, an accolade that has been bestowed on scientists in the poultry field for the past several decades.

A graduate of the UWI St Augustine School of Veterinary Medicine, Stoute is a professor of Clinical Diagnostic Veterinary Medicine, and is the Branch Chief of the Turlock Diagnostic Lab at the University of California, Davis (UC Davis).

Stoute recently spoke to UWI Today to reflect on her award, career, and the importance of poultry science.

Reflecting on the award, Stoute said, "Receiving the award and being acknowledged by the North American poultry industry is especially meaningful for me as minorities are largely underrepresented in my field."

"I would say that this award wasn't driven by any one research project that I have worked on per se, but it's more of a testament to my contributions to poultry disease surveillance, diagnostic work, and also my applied research on matters of economic relevance to the industry."

Stoute explained that since poultry is a major, global food source, poultry medicine plays a critical role in ensuring the health of animals in the food production system by identifying and mitigating the spread of diseases.

With the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the effect of climate change on increasing the spread of animal diseases, food producers must take poultry medicine seriously and maintain high standards for their production processes.

"We (humans) handle and eat poultry, so it is important that our poultry is healthy and does not carry diseases which can be transmitted to us.

"At our lab at UC Davis, we do intensive surveillance for diseases that not only affect poultry, but also impact human health, such as Salmonella and avian influenza/bird flu."

Born and raised in Trinidad, Stoute has always had a love for animals, which motivated her to pursue veterinary medicine as a life career.

After graduating from St Joseph's Convent, Port-of-Spain, Stoute completed a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree at The UWI St Augustine.

In 2004, she did a brief stint as a small animal veterinarian.

"At that time, I kind of always envisioned myself as being a small animal veterinarian. So, after graduation, I practiced as a small animal veterinarian for one year, and I found it just wasn't a good fit for me."

At a crossroads, Stoute decided to explore her interest in poultry medicine, leading to her working as a teaching assistant in the Poultry Department at The UWI St



Prof Stoute working with a residents in her lab.

Augustine Veterinary School of Medicine.

During that time, she worked with Dr Gabriel Brown, who she credits with fostering her passion for poultry medicine, and encouraging her to seek opportunities abroad.

"With poultry medicine, I saw the role of the veterinarian as someone who could help producers to maximise productivity, and I just fell in love with it.

"But he [Dr Brown] always encouraged me to take my career to the next level and get more exposure for myself and to explore different concepts of practice.

After applying for different programmes, she was accepted into an Avian Pathology residency at UC Davis from 2007 to 2009. She then went on to complete a PhD in Molecular Virology at the Ohio State University from 2009 to 2012, and served as a Director at Cornell University's Duck Research Laboratory from 2012 to 2014.

"Over the course of those years, laboratory diagnostics

was just something that I found to be really rewarding. I had always loved California and the diagnostic lab at UC Davis, so when I got the opportunity to return, that's exactly what I did."

Since returning to UC Davis as an assistant lecturer in 2014, Stoute has risen through the ranks to her current professorship.

She credits her experience at UWI St Augustine for shaping her work ethic and drive.

"Having a strong foundation at UWI was helpful for me to transition to academia in the wider world.

"UWI sets a high standard for its programmes and requires you to be organised, responsible, and have a larger vision, which helped me.

"I have also had great mentors at UWI, which contributed to building my skills and knowledge."

At UC Davis, Stoute is passionate about paying it forward and supporting her students and faculty as she felt she has been supported.

"The next stage of my career will not be "me focused", but rather about me helping others who are now starting out in their careers. Whether it be residencies or collaborations for research, I want to give back to society in that way."

Stoute mentored Trinidad-born Dr Shayne Ramsubeik, a former student and UC Davis graduate who was a resident in her lab. She considers this a full-circle moment given her own residency days.

"He [Dr Ramsubeik] has returned to Trinidad, and will now be playing a role in supporting the poultry industry, developing diagnostics and helping with research. I think that his returning home and continuing to collaborate with me will be very beneficial to both the poultry industry and UWI."

Stoute is hopeful that the next generation of Caribbean poultry scientists will contribute to the further development of the region's poultry industry in areas such as research and diagnostic services.

Stoute encourages aspiring veterinarians to not underestimate the value they can bring to the field – regardless of specialisations – and she is calling on them to expand their horizons.

"While you are in your programme, start putting "feelers" out there and look for opportunities. A lot of internships and residencies will provide you with livable financial support where possible.

"In conclusion, also look for avenues to gain practical international experience. While it may be easy to find local vets to work for, I encourage you to reach out to veterinary clinics from all over the world, to pursue externships and seeing practice opportunities internationally and to learn and get broader experience from them, even if it's just for a week or two."



## CAMPUS NEWS



# Dr Michael Forde

## First Caribbean President of Commonwealth Chemistry

BY DIXIE - ANN BELLE

Seven years ago, when Dr Michael Forde boarded the plane to attend the Commonwealth Science Conference, he little dreamed that he was stepping onto the path to one of his most illustrious accomplishments.

"The now deputy principal of UWI St Augustine, Professor Ramnarine, volunteered me to go to that conference," he explains. It was the middle of the semester, but the Senior Lecturer in Chemistry was willing to go.

While there, he attended a meeting held by the Royal Society of Chemistry in the UK. Dr Forde recalls, "At that meeting, we decided that we should take this idea of coming together, co-operation within the Commonwealth, using our common goals and vision, and also our recent shared history."

The decision was the genesis of Commonwealth Chemistry: Federation of Chemical Sciences Societies.

Since he was part of the organisation's starting phase in 2017, Dr Forde became a board member. A few years later, he has reached the highest position by becoming the first individual from the Caribbean region to be President of Commonwealth Chemistry. He beat out eight candidates, many of who were leaders of chemistry societies and international entities. Votes came in from 27 countries.

### Representing the Commonwealth

As the current president-elect, he will take on the presidential position at next year's annual general meeting. His responsibilities will include representing the interests of the societies which make up the membership, prioritising the financial stability and sustainability of the organisation, and hopefully, developing models which will be used going forward.

Dr Forde is not only excited about the work ahead. He is ambitious about the benefits his position could bring to The UWI.

"The first thing of course is visibility," he explains, "and we should never discount the value of visibility, especially when we are about putting ourselves on the world stage as a global institution with a global footprint."

He also looks forward to funding opportunities for The UWI.

### A passion for promoting science

The President-Elect also envisions his role as a means to promote his passion, science popularisation, locally and regionally. He observes that chemistry is a central science, "the science that enables all of the others". However, at the same time generally, "People don't see chemistry as really valuable until they think it's valuable". Highlighting how much chemical societies contribute to the economic prosperity of many countries, he declares, "We want to let people know that chemistry is valuable for all industries".

He adds, "I would like every single person in Trinidad and Tobago who passes through a primary and secondary school system to know some chemistry."

Dr Forde's own specialty is sustainable chemistry, and he believes a strong chemistry curriculum which involves sustainability, green chemistry, systems thinking, life-cycle assessment and more will help the population to better embrace sustainable thinking. There would be a greater understanding of recycling for example.

While discussing his current work, Dr Forde mentions that they are looking at converting agriculture waste materials into beneficial chemicals which could be a great asset for the region. For example, they have estimated that the grasses growing in unused Caroni lands could provide a useful option.

"We could easily convert that grass into gasoline blenders and also ethanol," he reveals. "The volume produced could power several hundred thousand passenger cars."

Already as a result of increased understanding of the level of talent in chemistry in Trinidad and Tobago and the region, two new chemical societies have emerged: The Trinidad and Tobago Chemical Society, and a revamped CAS Chemistry Chapter in Jamaica. Dr Forde hopes the local society will get ample opportunity for growth.

"I think the election to this post shows that we can be a big player," he observes. "So, we want to capitalise on that."

■ **You can learn more about Commonwealth Chemistry at [commonwealthchemistry.org](https://commonwealthchemistry.org).** Anyone interested in the Trinidad and Tobago Chemical Society can contact Dr Terry Mohammed - [terry.mohammed@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:terry.mohammed@sta.uwi.edu) or Dr Nigel Jalsa - [nigel.jalsa@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:nigel.jalsa@sta.uwi.edu)



A UWI St Augustine optometry student conducts an eye test on a student from the Tortuga Government Primary School at the Tortuga Community Centre.

## 423 community members receive eye care from UWI OPTOMETRY CLINIC and CANADIAN VISION CARE

Over 423 residents from communities in Trinidad have received critical eye care services thanks to a partnership between UWI St Augustine's Optometry Unit and charity organisation Canadian Vision Care. The screenings took place from February 19 to 22.

Community members from La Vega in Gran Couva, Tortuga, Tabaquite, Flanagan Town, and Talparo were screened for glaucoma, cataracts, and diabetes-related complications, alongside special assessments for children and seniors. They were also given blood pressure readings.

Dr Kingsley K Ekemiri, Head of The UWI Optometry Clinic, said that the exercise showed the school's "dedication to promoting community health" and helping residents "prioritise their vision and overall wellness".

Among the communities, Tortuga stood out with its remarkable turnout. Approximately 230 people took part in the comprehensive vision screenings.

Dr Ekemiri thanked Canadian Vision Care and the people who participated, saying that the clinic "looked forward to future opportunities to provide accessible vision health services".

Even though the four-day screening has been completed, reps from The UWI Optometry Clinic say their services to T&T's communities continue. Stationed at the Couva Hospital and Multi-Training Facility, the clinic provides services like eye examinations and specialised assessments, including binocular and low vision evaluations at affordable rates.

The UWI Optometry Unit is part of UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Medical Sciences based in Mt Hope. Canadian Vision Care is a Calgary-based charity organisation that provides eye care services to people around the world.

■ **For appointments and to inquire about vision services at The UWI Optometry Clinic, call 1 (868) 225 1018 or email [Sta-fms.OptometryClinic@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:Sta-fms.OptometryClinic@sta.uwi.edu)**



## ■ ICONS

# Bringing a Scholar Home

Sociologists gather to recover the life and intellectual legacy of Oliver Cromwell Cox, Trinidad-born scholar of inequality and its threads

BY AMY LI BAKSH

The Caribbean has had no shortage of great and celebrated thinkers over the past century. But, not every great mind has been celebrated on the shores that created them. Oliver Cromwell Cox is one who has contributed significantly to the global conversations on race, class, and sociology's relevance to the wider public.

The Trinidadian sociologist was recently highlighted by The University of the West Indies' Sociology section with their Oliver Cromwell Cox Conference from the 25-27th of April themed 'Caste, Class and Race' – after the name of Cox's magnum opus.

Cox was born in 1901 in Trinidad, and the titular book was first published in 1948. Despite this, he has been largely unheralded as a public figure in the Trinidadian sphere. However, his work remains extremely relevant to the understanding of society and culture in today's world. The conference – hosted by the Department of Behavioural Sciences in partnership with Johns Hopkins University, Connected Worlds, and the Université des Antilles – examined his work in its historical context and in a contemporary setting.

Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine said of Cox, "I sincerely hope that his work gains the recognition it deserves, and that our conference provides a platform for constructive dialogue and shared insights on the issues of caste, class, and race, and by exploring his ideas together, I'm very optimistic that we can develop a more comprehensive understanding on how to create a fairer and more just country, region and world."

## A Trinidadian in America

Although he spent much of his life in the US, Cox's work can be best understood through the lens of his Trinidadian heritage, and in particular, how his Caribbean upbringing has affected his views on the dynamics of race and class.

Dr Talia Esnard, Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Behavioural Sciences, noted, "This... celebration is about bringing home a scholar, a sociologist, a man of the soil."

She shared that the idea for the conference was born in conversation between herself and Professor Rhoda Reddock four years before, with the aim of bringing Cox's ideas to the university [and wider community].

"We wish to educate the public and the region about the scope of Cox's work," she said during the conference.

Prof Reddock also spoke during a panel discussion, saying that discovering Cox's Caribbean lineage helped her understand why his ideas seemed so familiar. Although much of his work focused on race and class, she spoke on how he also addressed issues pertaining to gender, although that aspect of his work is not as well known.

In unearthing the depth of Cox's work, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences Dr Acolla Lewis-Cameron



*Although he spent much of his life in the US, Cox's work can be best understood through the lens of his Trinidadian heritage, and how growing up in the Caribbean affected how he viewed the dynamics of race and class.*

lauded the conference as an example of what the faculty wishes to achieve – to be "socially engaged and solutions oriented".

Prof Reddock also noted that "The last four decades of social and economic neoliberalism... have resulted in the devaluing of the social, and the sometimes conscious destruction of social sciences education and practice."

She added, "today, sociology, along with other aspects of the social, is under attack. We hope that our reflections on the work of Oliver Cox can remind us of the power of his analysis, and the potential of socially engaged scholarship and the actions that must result from it."

## The most formidable sociologist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

The featured speaker at the conference, Michigan State University's Professor John H McClendon III, highlighted the importance of the conference. Prof McClendon III, whose areas of study include African American philosophers and philosophical traditions, African philosophy and Marxism, considered Cox to be "the most formidable sociologist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century".

He spoke on Cox's paralysis due to polio, which was instrumental to his decision to pursue sociology instead of law. Perhaps this lived experience of disability was also instrumental in forming his understanding of justice and equality.

The conference, he said was "...not just for the Caribbean, but for the African world. Not just the African world, but the anti-imperialist struggle; not just the anti-imperialist struggle, but the struggle for a new world; a new day, a new future, for oppressed people."

If Cox's body of work has such an enduring value, then why has his name not been more widely exalted? Professor Michael Goldfield of Wayne State University spoke on this during his presentation, noting that Cox was a "radical anti-capitalist" in the 1940s. He suggested that *Caste, Class and Race* was first published when McCarthyism (also known as the *Second Red Scare*) was in full swing, and Cox's ideas were deemed dangerous to the status quo. He wasn't alone.

Prof Goldfield notes, "Even the most prominent of this period, especially Black radicals, were dropped like the proverbial hot potatoes."

As we reflect on Cox's work and on radical Caribbean thinkers who have changed the world, the conference is a reminder of the value of exploring the minds of our past and how their social analysis can help us understand the world around us, how it became what it is, and how we can change it for the better.

■ To view the first day of the Oliver Cromwell Cox Conference, visit UWI St Augustine's YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/@uwistaugustine>



# Carnival: Still for the people, by the people?



## *U(WE) Outside series opens by taking a hard look at the national festival*

BY CHERISSE LAUREN BERKELEY

**“Nobody owns Carnival. As a matter of fact, I refuse to engage the term ‘ownership’. Carnival is inheritance, and we are but mere custodians.”**

So said Wendell Manwarren, member of beloved rapso band 3Canal, at a three-part discussion series on the evolution of T&T’s national festival and the social dynamics around it. Held on April 12, 19, and 26 on the St Augustine campus, it was titled “U(We) Outside: The Carnival Series” (Editor’s note: the entire three-day U(WE) Outside event is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/@DLCCSUWI/streams>).

Manwarren, who as one of the founders of 3Canal has been involved in Carnival since the 1990s – first as creators of a Jouvert band and then as musical performers – said the festival was not static, but “a living, breathing ritual”. Ownership, he said, was a narcissistic notion.

U(WE) Outside was hosted by the Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Education, and held on the campus’s Learning Resource Centre (LRC) Greens. Moderated by Communication Studies lecturer Dr Douglas-Wade Brunton, the inaugural discussion questioned the ownership of Carnival in Trinidad. Its panel included Manwarren, marketing communications consultant Kim CS Kirton, social media influencer Harmony Farrell, and pan arranger Khion De Las.

In her welcome address, Deputy Dean for Distance and Outreach at the Faculty of Humanities and Education Dr Marsha Pearce described the discussion as an inside look at Carnival: “The festival is at a new crossroads, specifically as it relates to the types and levels of participation.”

The growing costs to participate, stark boundaries between traditional and contemporary masquerade, growing rural and urban divide in resource allocation, and growing agglomeration of business activities in all aspects of the festival – with particular emphasis on music and masquerade – all served as the department’s motivation for hosting the panel discussion.



“These factors also impact the Carnival’s capacity to act as a critical site of liberation and justice, arguably one of its main socio-political benefits,” Pearce said.

“We believe it’s important for The UWI to be seen as a vital stakeholder in these ongoing discussions given its role in training and education in the Carnival Arts, as well as its expertise in festival and cultural development,” said Pearce, who is also a Lecturer in Visual Arts.

Kim Kirton, who has worked with several big names in the Carnival space, said her love of the festival came from an interest in tourism. Listing designers, bandleaders, musicians, and the food proprietors as examples of the many participants in the festival, she asked, “How can anyone own anything that is free?”

Admitting that this year was his first experience as a masquerader, Khion De Las said, “Carnival is owned by the people, but is also owned by the power structure. Pan and Monday night mas are surely owned by the people, but mas and soca are owned by capitalism. Onlookers have come to see masqueraders as a symbol of status and elitism.”

Speaking on conspicuous consumption during the season, Dr Brunton asked if the cost is worth participation. De Las complained he only wined on two girls as they all were engrossed in social media selfies, and said, “Having played mas (for the first time), seeing what we got in our goodie bags, I feel it was worth it. But I lacked the connection.”

Harmony Farrell rebutted, “What are we looking at as Carnival?”

She argued there is space for everyone: “We tend to view it as being forced to participate in the top five bands. Conspicuous consumption is fed into social media, and artificial intelligence algorithms regurgitate what they are fed.”

Dr Brunton asked the panel, “What is the return for me when not playing with the ‘top five bands’?”

Mr Manwarren critiqued the new business of Carnival being about being able to move product.

“The Carnival has been hijacked by a bunch of ‘mocking pretenders’, entrepreneurs and others,” he said. “Carnival is not no play thing!”

### **‘Pan is still for the people’**

De Las spoke on the importance of social and political commentary of ole mas and pan celebrations. He said, “Pan is still for the people, there is still opportunities to spectate pan for free. In the panyard for prelims, on the drag for semis and finals, or even being on the road with the band on Monday and Tuesday.”

Giving an opposing view, Ms Farrell spoke on the economics of pan: “They still need corporations to sponsor them.”

She asked, “How do we angle the industries to be so that the running theme is not that of loss?”

In response, Kim Kirton said that collaboration is required to move forward, a sentiment echoed by De Las.

“I believe in the possibility of coming together,” he said.



## The UWI Calendar of Events | June–July 2024

### The UWI Oil and Gas Law Conference 2024

June 28 and 29

Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre  
Port-of-Spain

Globally, the energy sector is the lifeblood of modern society, and in T&T, it remains central to our economy. As the international community seeks green solutions to fossil fuel dependence, a new era of knowledge and expertise has arisen to make that transition.

This conference, now in its fourth year, provides professional training on the fundamentals of T&T and international oil and gas law. Participants will be given essential knowledge on energy transition, energy taxation, jobs and the Just Transition, energy prices and efficiency, energy technology, and new growth opportunities.

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/UWIOGLC4>.**

**For more information, email the Faculty of Law at [law@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:law@sta.uwi.edu)**



### The UWI Five Islands AI Conference

July 8 to 10

Five Islands Campus, Antigua and Barbuda

Come to beautiful Antigua and Barbuda and be a part of the Caribbean's first international conference on artificial intelligence. Join leaders in technology, business, research, and government from around the globe as they explore the potential of AI for regional transformation. Keynote speakers include Dr Danielle Belgrave, VP of Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning at GlaxoSmithKline AI; Dr Bharat N. Anand, Vice Provost for Advances in Learning at Harvard University; Dr Chris Jones, the 2022 Democratic Party nominee for Governor of Arkansas; and Dr Nicholas Fuller, Vice President of IBM Research for Automation and Edge Computing. Mr Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, will deliver a keynote address at the opening of the conference.

**For more information and to register, visit the conference website at [fiveislandsaiconference.com](https://fiveislandsaiconference.com)**



### The Garden Party 2024: La Festa in Giardino

July 7

Campus Greens  
UWI St Augustine

Exquisite cuisine, beautiful music and, most importantly, the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young people seeking to further their education – come join the campus community for La Festa in Giardino, an elegant evening on the lush campus greens for this fundraising event hosted by The UWI Development and Endowment Foundation.

With a taste of Italy and the soul of T&T, all of the proceeds of the garden party go towards providing scholarships and bursaries for deserving students.

**For more information and updates, including ticketing details, visit Facebook at [www.facebook.com/UWIFete/](https://www.facebook.com/UWIFete/) and Instagram at [@uwifetesta](https://www.instagram.com/uwifetesta)**

### Virtual Postgraduate Information Session

June 17

ONLINE

Join UWI St Augustine to explore your future with our postgraduate programmes. This is your opportunity to:

- Understand the application process
- Discover our diverse programme offerings
- Learn what documents and prerequisites are needed to apply

Attendees of this virtual session will hear from UWI St Augustine's Deans, Deputy Deans, Campus Executive Management, Graduate Studies staff, and student representatives.

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/PGInformation>. Please note that registration closes today, Sunday, June 16.**

### The Innovation Engine Room:

Intellectual Property and Innovation Workshop

July 31

Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre, Port-of-Spain

T&T and the region are blessed with artists, inventors, and many others in the creative space that can turn their ideas into commercial opportunities. Their work needs to be protected, for their and the Caribbean's benefit. Attend the Innovation Engine Room, hosted by The UWI St Augustine Faculty of Law, to learn how they can benefit from intellectual property law and their rights as creators. Topics include the value of IP for T&T, protecting and attracting investment using IP rights, innovation and IP tools, and demystifying IP transactions. Featured speakers include Caribbean IP law experts Dr Natalie Corthésy (UWI Mona), Dr Justin Koo and Dr Emma Perot (UWI St Augustine), Mr Regan Asgarali (IP Office of T&T), as well Dr Andres Guadamuz (University of Sussex) from the UK.

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