



# UWI TODAY

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES • ST AUGUSTINE CAMPUS

SUNDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2023

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## From DREAM to REALITY

**RISING:** Erlene Haynes, a graduate of UWI St Augustine's School of Education, smiles after the completion of the graduation ceremony on Saturday, October 28, 2023. These were but the second in-person graduation ceremonies after the years of pandemic restrictions on public gatherings. The students, their loved ones, and the members of the campus community celebrated at six ceremonies over three days at UWI SPEC to recognise their hard work and the completion of their programmes of study. *For more on Graduation 2023, read our eight-page supplement inside this issue.*

PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE

# GRADUATION 2023



ROOTED  
READY  
RISING

# *Congrats*

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ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS

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## FROM THE PRINCIPAL

# A GRAND AND EUPHORIC OCCASION

## *Graduation 2023 Message from the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Campus Principal*

**This past October, The UWI St Augustine campus celebrated Graduation 2023** – our second in-person Graduation since the COVID-19 pandemic. As The UWI celebrates 75 years as a university, it was only fitting that we returned to our beautiful St Augustine campus to hold the ceremonies at the Sports and Physical Education Centre.

Graduation 2023 was a grand and euphoric occasion. Not even the heavy rains that fell could dampen the excitement of our graduates as they crossed the stage and received their canisters, marking the culmination of years of perseverance and dedication. Over the three days, we were fortunate to listen to inspiring messages from our valedictorians. We were even treated to a moving rendition of Nat King Cole's *Smile* by Baroness Floella Benjamin during her graduation address. Baroness Benjamin, Heather Headley and Lawrence Scott were among this year's honorary graduates for their stellar contributions to their fields and Caribbean development.

Although graduation usually signifies new beginnings, for some, it brings anxiety about the next chapter. Unfortunately, it is not just new experiences, such as entering the world of work, that our graduates will encounter. The world they have graduated into is marked by instability and turmoil. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated already existing socio-economic fragilities in the region, which have been further compounded by international conflicts, rising inflation and high food import bills. Additionally, Small Island Developing States like ours experience the worsening effects of climate change and global warming each year. Apart from those external challenges facing the region, we have many social problems plaguing our society today. Suffice it to say, the tasks that lie ahead are not easy, but it gives me great hope that our future lies in the capable hands of our graduates who have left our university with the knowledge, skills and abilities to solve the most pressing challenges ahead.

In fact, there is no shortage of problems that require solutions today, and there are opportunities in every sphere of society for our graduates to make a difference. Our scientists and researchers at The UWI, St Augustine campus are already involved in groundbreaking and transformative work on a local, regional and even international scale. Their work has focused on turning problems into solutions, such as through research on Sargassum, development of climate-resistant products, and research on artificial intelligence and robotics.

However, much more research is needed to solve our many challenges and better understand our society, art and culture. Some of the challenges we face have already begun to adversely affect us in the country and region, such as climate change, food insecurity, and developments in artificial intelligence, to name a few. Although The UWI continues to generate vital research on these key areas, we must do more. Our very survival depends on it.

I encourage our graduates to consider the significant impact that research can have in addressing the numerous challenges faced by society. Research is not only an academic pursuit, but it can



**I encourage our graduates to consider the significant impact that research can have in addressing the numerous challenges faced by society. Research is not only an academic pursuit, but it can also act as a catalyst for innovation and progress in society.**

also act as a catalyst for innovation and progress in society. Therefore, I invite them to take the lead and venture out into their communities, get involved, and become invested in making a difference. This year, I was pleased to see so many graduates of postgraduate programmes from the various faculties. There were 1,607 graduates with postgraduate degrees, and I hope to see more in the near future.

As Campus Principal, it is my mandate to promote the valuable research our campus community is conducting and its impact on communities. In this regard, The UWI St Augustine campus will hold a two-day Research Festival and Principal's Research Awards 2023 on the 22nd – 23rd November at the campus. The festival promises to celebrate 75 years of academic excellence and innovation with the appropriate theme *75 Years of Relevance, Responsiveness and Research Innovation for a Better Life, Environment and Sustainability*. The two main events are the presentation of research findings and ideas, and the presentation of research awards.

We anticipate visitors from schools, tertiary institutions, state agencies, organisations and industry, and the general public at the festival. I also invite our newest brand ambassadors, our graduates, to come out and be inspired as our future researchers and scientists. I look forward to seeing them channel that youth, energy, and idealism into meeting the needs of our communities, in which research plays a vital role.

Once again, on behalf of the entire UWI St Augustine campus, congratulations to all our graduates and their loved ones on this remarkable achievement. The future is now in their hands, and I am confident they will shape it for the better.

*Rose-Marie Antoine*

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

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## ■ CAMPUS NEWS

**Vietnamese diplomat and author Professor Tran Van Dinh** wrote in his work *Communication and Diplomacy in a Changing World*: “Communication is to diplomacy as blood is to the human body. Whenever communication ceases, the body of international politics, the process of diplomacy, is dead, resulting in violent conflict or atrophy.”

And although he was writing in the 1980s, the importance of communication to the relationship between states has never been greater than it is today, with the explosion of information and communications technology in the modern world.

Tran’s statement has also influenced a researcher at The UWI St Augustine’s Institute of International Relations (IIR), Dr Candia James. A recent PhD graduate, James’s exciting research is being called a paradigm shift in diplomacy. Her paper, *Network Diplomacy: A Social Network Analysis of Network Communication in Diplomatic Networks*, is poised to reshape the way we understand and practise diplomacy in our interconnected world, scholars say.

In a world that faces daunting challenges such as climate change, non-communicable diseases, cybersecurity threats, and pandemics, network diplomacy can be a much-needed evolutionary step for navigating relationships between societies for the benefit of everyone.

### The Power of Communication Networks

What is network diplomacy? According to Dr James, “it can be defined as a process that broadens the scope of diplomatic engagement, incorporating a wide array of non-state actors and harnessing modern communication tools and strategies to address complex global challenges.”

Diplomacy, as it is traditionally practised, is the work of diplomats and other agents of a state, operating with the authority of the states they represent. For most of us, it’s a world we encounter usually through news articles, spy novels, and political thriller films. Network diplomacy “extends the circle”, says Dr James.

That circle can include, “non-state entities such as NGOs, multinational corporations, advocacy groups, academic institutions, and individuals” she states.

Dr James points out, however, that network does not supplant traditional diplomacy, but compliments it.

Scholars are excited by the way her research takes advantage of the greater connection between people across the globe.

“In an era characterised by unprecedented connectivity, diplomatic relations have extended beyond traditional state actors to include a vast array of non-state actors and transnational networks,” says Dr Georgina Chami, coordinator of the postgraduate programme and a lecturer at IIR. “Network diplomacy is the key to bridging the gap between these diverse stakeholders.”

Dr Chami, who is also Dr James’s research supervisor, believes that her “ground-breaking findings have not only advanced our understanding of network diplomacy, but also have practical implications for diplomats and policymakers seeking to navigate the complex landscape of modern international relations.”

### Quantitative and qualitative research techniques

In her research, Dr James focuses on the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC), and the Caribbean Youth Environmental Network (CYEN), two organisations deeply enmeshed in diplomatic activities within CARICOM. Employing a blend of quantitative and qualitative research techniques, she gathered empirical data from the HCC and CYEN members. This data served as the foundation for her in-depth analysis of the communication networks that underpin their operations.

“In the quantitative phase,” she explains, “I employed social network analysis (SNA), a methodology that delves into the intricate connections and interactions within a network, providing a valuable lens to unravel relationships, information flow, and influence dynamics.”

Her “research population”, she says, exceeded 300 people.

It was arduous and time consuming work. And, it



## A new, more inclusive approach to the DIALOGUE BETWEEN STATES

*UWI researcher Candia James conducts pioneering research on network diplomacy*

BY JOEL HENRY

has paid off. Not only has Dr James graduated with her PhD, she has also attracted the attention of international scholars in the field. In April 2024, she will be a member of the “Emerging Scholars in Public Diplomacy” panel at the International Studies Association (ISA) Convention in San Francisco, California. She was invited to the panel by Professor Rhonda Zaharna, a scholar in intercultural and international strategic communication at American University in Washington DC.

This achievement is particularly gratifying to Ms James because Professor Zaharna has had a major impact on her research.

“Professor Zaharna had a profound influence on my work, particularly in shaping the methodology and framework of my research on network diplomacy,” she says.

The professor allowed James to not only use, but modify her communications network model to fit the requirements of her research. This collaborative spirit was “instrumental in customising the model to better suit the Caribbean research context I was exploring”, the researcher says.

Dr James, whose academic career began in the field of Communication Studies before moving on to International Relations at IIR, also spoke of Dr Chami’s influence.

“She played a pivotal role in influencing my work by providing valuable guidance and support throughout my academic journey,” she says.

James credits Dr Chami with introducing her to IIR’s research culture, advocating on her behalf with the university, providing her with motivation and encouragement, and helping her project planning, and giving her the freedom to explore and choose her research topic.

### Publishing her work

Looking forward to the International Studies Association conference next year, Candia James says she feels a deep sense of gratitude for her achievements and those that have helped make them possible. She may also have another achievement on the horizon – a book.

“I am excited to share that a well-known publishing house has expressed a keen interest in publishing a book on the same subject matter as my research,” she says. “Currently, I am diligently working on a proposal for this esteemed publishing house, which represents an opportunity to disseminate my research findings to a wider audience.”

She also plans to continue her network diplomacy research, and wants to contribute to academia by teaching and mentoring students. “Sharing knowledge and fostering the intellectual growth of the next generation of scholars and diplomats is a role I am eager to embrace.”

However, just as diplomacy can evolve, she is aware that her life plans can evolve as well.

“I remain open to exploring new opportunities as they arise. The world of diplomacy and academia is ever-changing, and I am prepared to adapt and contribute to this dynamic landscape in meaningful ways.”



### Difference between network diplomacy and traditional diplomacy

#### Communication

**Traditional diplomacy:** relies heavily on government-to-government communication through formal channels such as embassies, consulates, and official correspondence.

**Network diplomacy:** leverages the interconnectedness of the digital age, by utilising social media, online platforms, and other informal channels.

#### Actors

**Traditional diplomacy:** involves interactions between nation-states and their official representatives, such as diplomats, ambassadors, and foreign ministers.

**Network diplomacy:** engages with a wider range of actors – civil society organisations, advocacy groups, NGOs, and other non-state actors.

#### Issues

**Traditional diplomacy:** deals with intergovernmental issues, such as treaties, trade agreements, and security matters.

**Network diplomacy:** tackles complex global challenges that transcend borders and require co-operation among multiple actors, such as climate change, human rights, cybersecurity, and global health.

#### Decision-making

**Traditional diplomacy:** frequently top-down, with government officials making decisions and enforcing regulations on behalf of the state.

**Network diplomacy:** encourages a more inclusive and participatory approach to policy-making.

## CAMPUS NEWS

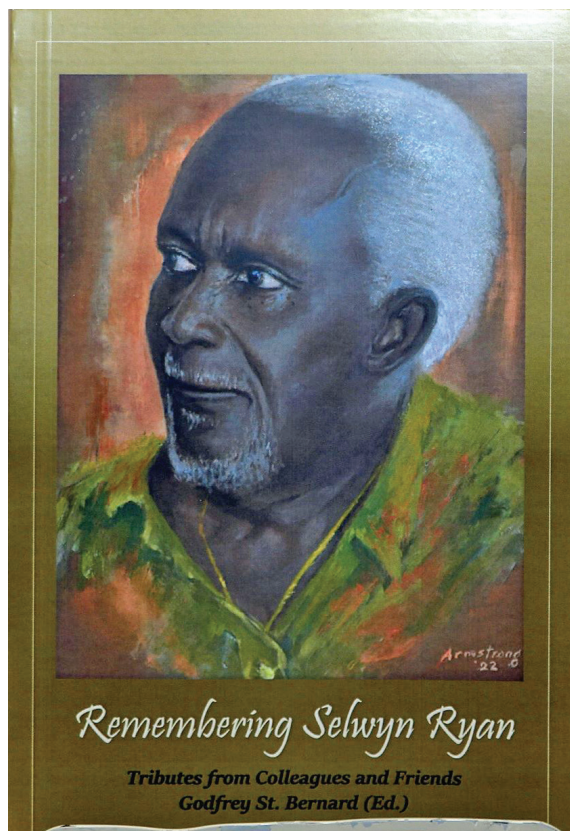


## LAWFUL GOOD

### Saving the world through the law

Justice Vasheist Kokaram, Judge of the Court of Appeal of Trinidad and Tobago, presents the award for Most Outstanding Year 3 to Ms Mariel Garcia at The UWI St Augustine Faculty of Law Evening of Excellence. Held on October 20, 2023, the event, themed “Recognising Excellence: Saving the world through the law”, celebrated the outstanding achievements of its students. Awards were given to students that received first-class honours and LLM with distinction, made it to the Dean’s Honour List, and students in years 1 to 3 and direct entry that were Most Outstanding. There was also a Student’s Choice Award (also received by Ms Garcia).

The Evening of Excellence was held under the leadership of the Faculty of Law’s new Dean, Dr Alicia Elias-Roberts, who was appointed on August 1, 2023.



*Remembering Selwyn Ryan – Tributes from Colleagues and Friends* is available for purchase at leading bookstores. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM

## PROF SELWYN RYAN’S LEGACY

### celebrated in tribute anthology

On Friday, September 29, a commemorative volume celebrating the life and work of the late Emeritus Professor Selwyn Ryan was unveiled at The Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) at UWI St Augustine.

Over 40 colleagues, friends, and mentees whose lives were touched by Professor Ryan’s wisdom, shared their reflections. The narratives were curated by Dr Godfrey St Bernard, the former Acting Director of SALISES at St Augustine.

*Remembering Selwyn Ryan – Tributes from Colleagues and Friends*, the tributes coalesced into a story offering a deeply personal glimpse into Professor Ryan’s life and character. The book aims to immortalise Professor Ryan and his ideas, providing insights into his life, work, and legacy. It is intended for readers of all age groups.

Professor Ryan had a remarkable career spanning several decades, both within the university and in various public roles. During the 1960s and 1970s, he served as a lecturer and Head of the Department of Government at The UWI. In the early 1980s, he took on national roles, including Chairman of the Regulated Industries Commission. However, he returned to The UWI in 1986, where he was appointed as the Director of the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) on the St Augustine campus.

A significant milestone in his career was the merger of ISER and the Consortium School of Graduate Studies and Research in 1999, leading to the establishment of SALISES. Professor Ryan became the first Director of SALISES and also served as the University Director of SALISES Regional, overseeing branches at the Mona, Cave Hill, and St Augustine campuses.



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## ■ UWI IN SOCIETY



# Power of the Bean

*World Cocoa and Chocolate Expo 2023 shows the potential for a thriving cocoa industry, but can that potential be realised?*

BY KANISHA VINCENT

Stepping into the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Cultural Cooperation in Mt Hope, the smell of cocoa and its byproducts is a sensory delight. The sweet, nutty, and fruity notes are luxurious. The space is chocked full of booths displaying various products, swarmed by attendees within minutes of opening. This is the World Cocoa and Chocolate Expo (WCCD) hosted by the Cocoa Research Centre (CRC) at UWI St Augustine.

Standing at the apex of cocoa quality, Trinidad and Tobago boasts cocoa beans that are the most sought after and most expensive worldwide. Local chocolatier Noreen Nunez, who has over 15 years in the chocolate making business at several chocolate hot spots around the world, introduces me to our magnificent cocoa bean. In explaining the structure of the cocoa market, Professor Pathmanathan Umaharan, Director of the CRC, elaborates by differentiating between the bulk cocoa market, which is approximately 90 percent of the world's cocoa, and the fine flavour market, which makes up the remaining 10 percent.

Prof Umaharan – who was recently awarded the nation's highest honour, the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, for his service in the spheres of science and agricultural development – states that “even within that fine flavour sector, we are right at the top”.

As the originator of the famous fine flavour Trinitario strain of cocoa plant, our growing environment and the quality of the cocoa bean (which can fetch up to US\$9,000 per tonne, we are at a comparative advantage. According to writer and research fellow at the CRC Francis Bekele (2019), “Being the ‘cradle’ of Trinitario cacao and cocoa is a very laudable distinction for the twin-island republic of Trinidad and Tobago.”

## University, government, and private sector partnership

The organisers of WCCD recognise this. The event, which started in 2010 as a training opportunity for local chocolatiers, quickly expanded in size and purpose. As it moved from the JFK Auditorium to UWI SPEC to the Hyatt Regency Trinidad and most recently the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, so has it continued to grow. With this year's theme being ‘Experience the Triple Helix’, the government, the university, and the private sector came together in their collective desire to create a new molecule of life in the cocoa industry.

That spirit of partnership was well-represented at booths belonging to ExporTT and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, the International Fine Cocoa Innovation Centre (IFCIC), farmers, chocolatiers, and the National Flour Mills Limited (the event's gold sponsor), just to name a few.

This year, on its opening day, WCCD hosted over 1,200 students from 22 schools. The IFCIC, with its one-of-a-kind fingerprinting and DNA technology, was overrun with visitors. Professor Umaharan hopes that involving the youth will lead to interest in the cocoa industry. Like much of the food and agriculture sector, cocoa has had little growth. In fact, the government's removal of the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board between 2014 and 2016 temporarily prevented its extinction after production dropped from 2,800 tonnes to 500 tonnes between 2000 and 2010.

“Without investment, the [farming] industry has not grown,” says Prof Umaharan. “We have kept it from dying out, but it has not grown.”

Even as production has remained consistent at an average of 500 tonnes per year, local chocolatiers reported inability to access cocoa beans in 2022 due to a shortage.

## Value-added chocolate industry grows in ‘leaps and bounds’

The CRC, however, continues to work around the clock. On the second day of the WCCD, they held the Innovation in Chocolate Cuisine (IICC) competition. Judged by former IICC winners Chef Samara Lezama, Chef Mary, and Kerry Ann Deo, the competition rewards the top three most innovative uses of chocolate/cocoa in cuisine.

Although the value-added chocolate industry has grown in “leaps and bounds” from zero chocolatiers in 2010 to 50-60 in 2023, the entire industry still faces many challenges, from the age of our cocoa trees which reduces yield to the outdated farming practices to, worst of all, the lack of capital.

T&T, however, still has competitive advantages in cocoa. The global cocoa industry is marred with unsustainable social and environmental practices, like the use of child labour and the clearing of protected land to grow cocoa. Our industry is not tainted by these practices. Our farmers earn a living wage; there are fair labour practices; and cocoa provides carbon capture, watershed management, soil conservation, slope stabilisation, and food security as it is grown with other food crops.

Those advantages, as well as the value of our cocoa itself, has helped T&T procure research investments from the likes of Mars Wrigley, Mondelez International, and Cargill.

Professor Umaharan says, “Most countries in the world recognise us as the Noah's Ark for cocoa,” highlighting that our international cocoa gene bank is the largest collection of cocoa varieties in the world.

He adds, “We have a lot going for us,” but we need an industry to propel us forward.

## ■ 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.

When Vashti Guyadeen first began studying History at The UWI, St Augustine, her plans were to eventually study Law. Little did she realise that her path would take a different turn.

Instead of tackling the complexities of the court system, she is now facing the challenges of the Trinidad and Tobago services sector, leading it along a journey to transformation. As CEO of the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services Industries (TTCSI), Guyadeen heads the secretariat of the umbrella board which oversees service sector organisations and associations.

Describing herself as “a proud UWI graduate”, Guyadeen was inspired while studying history under revered UWI scholars like Dr Fitzroy Baptiste, Emeritus Professor Brinsley Samaroo and Emerita Professor Bridget Brereton. During this time, she developed her affinity for research, data and statistics.

She observes that her time at her secondary school, Naparima Girls High School in San Fernando, and The UWI was fundamental to the kind of professional she has become. For 15 years, she worked in academia and the public and private sectors, bolstering her knowledge of research and development, policy design and SME development, as well as global and institutional competitiveness and international relations.

### A services coalition driven by research

Her track record in developing research products that drive policies made her ideal to step into her TTCSI role. She is re-engineering the coalition into an entity driven by research. Guyadeen explains that before the establishment of TTCSI, there was no system in place to advocate for the services structure. Now, the coalition lobbies, channels, and addresses trade with regard to service issues.

It is also extending its objectives. In 2019, under Guyadeen’s guidance, TTCSI made its strategic goals official. One of the most significant ones is to fully embrace CARICOM’s historic decision for free movement for nationals in March 2024.

She is determined that the sectors will benefit from this move: “We have a chance to really get our act in order and see the value of promoting services.”

Her message to entrepreneurs is “The Caribbean is now your market.”

Reflecting on this expanded vista of opportunities, Guyadeen notes, “If we were collectively to go after international projects with the brightest from the region – if we could get a slice of that global market share, it would redound to the benefits of all of us.”

Consultancy alone, she says, is a trillion dollar industry. “In 5 years, we want to grab just 3-5 percent of that global market share.”

She highlights the opportunities for job creation. “Rather than just have a brain drain whereby people look for opportunities outside, we can develop our region.”

Guyadeen emphasises the importance of ensuring that top tier entrepreneurs – among them UWI graduates, of course – have incentives.

“We cannot say that we want people to stay here and not offer them global opportunities,” she says.

### Cementing relationships with UWI

This is one of the plans for TTCSI’s greatest legacy project, the National Services Exporters Portal. It will be a local services hub. Guyadeen predicts it will revolutionise the sector.

Through the portal, stakeholders will have access to international markets, and be able to easily develop market entry strategies. They will also be able to organise trade workshops, and access in-depth market reports. The portal will also provide the opportunity to streamline the exchange of information on international markets and stimulate lower exporter costs.

In keeping with the spirit of collaboration, it will also motivate companies to engage in joint marketing efforts.

Guyadeen is also adamant that the country will tap into the lucrative Latin American market. The coalition is also exploring how the versatility of Trinidad and Tobago products can be used to prepare international foods.



*“We need to cement some relationships with UWI,” she states. She expounds on how, for example, students from the music programme can provide entertainment in related events, and showcase their skills. She wants to also utilise UWI’s language experts to conduct webinars to educate and sensitise stakeholders.*

# The Caribbean is OUR MARKET

*UWI alumna and TTCSI CEO Vashti Guyadeen wants to create opportunities for entrepreneurs and strengthen services industries through research-driven policies*

BY DIXIE - ANN BELLE

When it comes to collaborating with international stakeholders, Guyadeen foresees UWI playing an important part in cultural interactions.

“We need to cement some relationships with UWI,” she states. She expounds on how, for example, students from the music programme can provide entertainment in related events, and showcase their skills. She wants to also utilise UWI’s language experts to conduct webinars to educate and sensitise stakeholders.

### Showcasing the Caribbean’s capabilities

Guyadeen plans to meet with relevant UWI entities in the coming year. No doubt, she will approach this effort to strengthen bonds with the carefully curated research and data-driven

solutions she has brought to her transformative work throughout her career.

She speaks passionately of the value of the Caribbean’s unique aesthetic and resources, and wants to make sure these are integrated into solutions for the services sector.

“We are here to strengthen our regional export competitiveness by showcasing the Caribbean’s capabilities and fostering connections that transcend our borders,” she said during the recent Caribbean Services Exporters Symposium.

Supported by the expert navigation of her crew, Vashti Guyadeen continues to steer TTCSI into becoming a leading coalition of the services industry. She is confident that it will not only make a name for itself regionally, but internationally as well.

## ■ GEOGRAPHY

### Since the first Geography programme at The UWI St Augustine was offered in 2005, with the establishment of a Geography Unit, focus has been placed on building the capacity of the university's human and physical geographers.

For the past ten years, St Augustine's Department of Geography has produced graduates with specialisations in areas including – but not limited to – risk management, geographic information systems (GIS), climate change, social justice, hydrology, meteorology, and policy development.

This cadre of graduates have gone on to do further research in these fields and work with local, regional, and international organisations that are tasked with sustainably managing livelihoods and natural resources.

But in 2013, the unit was restructured into a department with a renewed mandate of producing world class geographers.

In commemoration of its tenth anniversary this year, UWI Today spoke with the Department's Dr Junior Darsan, Dr Melissa Atwell, Dr Kegan Farrick, Dr Gabby Thongs, and current Head of Department (HOD) Dr Arlette Saint Ville.

With the ever-changing characteristics of the region's natural hazards, socio-environmental issues, socio-economic issues and natural resource use challenges, each academic reflected on how the Department has strategically adapted to changing times over its ten-year history.

#### Evolving since the start

In transitioning to a department in 2013, Dr Darsan said many aspects of the unit had to evolve to meet its new mandate, which is focused on adapting to changing times and prioritising global issues like climate change and sustainability.

Joining the former unit in 2012, Dr Darsan is the Department's longest serving staff member, geomorphologist, and a senior lecturer of several physical Geography courses.

He recalled, "When I came on, I was tasked with the responsibility of further building upon the existing physical Geography courses – to match what was being done at the Mona Campus – for the new department.

The idea then was to enable mobility for students across both campuses. Today, cross campus teaching is a reality at The UWI.

"Geography is one of those disciplines that is fundamental globally, so there are no questions about the merits of having a full-fledged department and not a unit."

Proud of the department's growth and expansion of programme offerings over the years, Dr Darsan attributes its success to the camaraderie among academic staff and the shared vision for its future.

#### COVID-19 as defining time for the young department

A lecturer in several physical geography and environmental courses since 2016, Dr Farrick is a hydrologist, and also served as HOD from 2019 to 2022.

Tasked with navigating the department through the COVID-19 pandemic, he told UWI Today that its academic staff leaned on their critical thinking and problem-solving skills as geographers to forge a way forward.

Where possible, hybrid approaches to learning were adopted and maintained.

Final exams were also discontinued for some courses, making them 100 percent coursework.

He explained, "We have substituted final exams for more critical based and problem-solving types of exercises where things are a lot more scenario focused.

"Instead of memory learning, we are really trying to get students to tackle different problems in our classes with this approach."

While reliance on virtual learning has increased since the onset of the pandemic, there are aspects of studying geography which require real-world immersion through field work and face-to-face discussions.

Dr Farrick said the department's annual field course in Tobago is central to achieving this.

For one week, students are exposed to a range of different field skills while undertaking research in Tobago.

#### Changing technologies to match a changing world

The first student of the Department to graduate with an MPhil and PhD, Dr Atwell has also been part of its technical staff since 2008 and currently serves as Head Technician.

Over the years, Atwell said there have been advancements in the Department's equipment to keep up with changing research technologies.

In earlier years, for example, basic surveying equipment like clinometers and compasses were used in



Students of the UWI St. Augustine Department of Geography participate in a coastal field exercise.

## Looking back but Celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> year Geography Department a

BY TYREL

*With the ever-changing characteristics of the region's natural hazards, socio-environmental issues, socio-economic issues and natural resource use challenges, each academic reflected on how the Department has strategically adapted to changing times over its ten-year history.*



In 2023, students of the Department of Geography teamed up with staff of the Institute of Marine Affairs for a field exercise.



Current staff members of the Department of Geography (back row) Dr Kegan Farrick, (front row, from left) Dr Melissa Atwell, Dr Israel Orimoloye and Dr Arlette Saint Ville.



surveying exercise during the Department's 2019 Residential Field School in Tobago.

## Forward-focused UWI St Augustine's adapts to changing times

TYRELL GITTENS

*istics of the region's natural hazards,  
economic issues and natural resource  
lected on how the Department has  
g times over its ten-year history.*

fieldwork to get land measurements. Recently however, the Department obtained a high-tech drone that has the ability to obtain georeferenced images, and has made fieldwork more efficient.

She explained, "We make every effort possible to stay current and up-to-date with the latest equipment.

"We think it's important to invest in up-to-date equipment, and expose our students to cutting edge technology.

"Before, we used conventional techniques to determine soil properties. Now, we have geophysical techniques such as electromagnetic induction that offer the possibility of collecting spatially dense measurements of soil properties."

### Geographers prepared for the changing Caribbean

Throughout her six years at the Department, Dr Thongs has taught a mix of eight different human and physical geography courses.

She is leading a number of regional projects with a strong emphasis on disaster resilience. Most notable is a collaborative project between The UWI and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), which aims to develop a comprehensive community-based disaster risk reduction tool in several Caribbean countries.

Department graduates - living in some of the islands where these projects are ongoing - have been able to contribute to different roles.

Thongs said this is one example of the value of geography students in a region that continues to face increasing vulnerabilities to natural hazards because of climate change.

"In studying Geography, there is the opportunity to utilise a diverse blend of skills.

"It's not just about imparting the knowledge (through lecturing), but also getting to do on-the-ground research that directly improves disaster resilience in the Caribbean.

"I feel a lot of pride when I go to other islands and see former students involved in these projects."

Where needed, Thongs said the department is constantly revising the curriculum of courses to be up-to-date with changing technology and information.

But, recognising that there may be entire areas where there are grounds for new research, they continue to add new programmes, like the recently created minor in GIS and Sustainability.

"There are students who have a love for GIS, and to mix this love with Geography in a way which deals with other subject matters - like land use changes and climate

change - gives them greater certification for this skill and added value to the employer.

"It is our hope to continue empowering the upcoming generations with the skills needed to actually be problem solvers and game changers."

Given the dynamism of studying Geography with the different human and physical components, Thongs added that it is possible for graduates to enter the working world as multi-hyphenates that can easily fit into any role in the expanding environmental field.

### Focus on being more visible

Starting her journey at the department in January 2020 as a Human Geography lecturer, Dr Saint Ville has also been HOD since August 2022.

She told UWI Today that her focus is to continue elevating the department's visibility and relevance by increasing stakeholder engagement using a multipronged approach, which includes collaborating with a range of environmental stakeholders, increasing opportunities for internships, and improving the department's social media presence.

"Another area I am very keen to work on is our connection to the UWI Mona Campus's cadre of geographers who are also doing great work. There is a desire to give students a chance to consider doing one of their courses at Mona and vice versa for students at Mona.

"With this, we can stimulate cross fertilisation of ideas."

Leaning on the Department's existing "Brown Bag" lecture series, Dr Saint Ville said it is an opportunity for renowned global geographers to continue visiting the department to share their experiences and knowledge, engage in discussions about solutions, and learn more about the department.

Strategically, the department's offerings are also being highlighted based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and there are new programmes in the works like an MSc in Environmental Resilience and Sustainability.

**■ Follow the Geography Department on Instagram @uwistageography to keep up to date with all its events and research.**

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



A student diligently collects data during a recent field exercise.



Dr Gabby Thongs (centre, red shirt), sharing insights on sustainable coastal zone management at Manzanilla Beach with students in 2018.



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## ■ OUR PEOPLE

# Dr Raymond Weekes

## Taking Creole centre stage at DCFA

BY AMY LI BAKSH

*'I think Trinidad is a ripe place for a multicultural theatre, because of the diversity that exists here.'*

DR RAYMOND TRAVIS WEEKES



**Caribbean theatre runs in Dr Raymond Travis Weekes's blood.** From a young age, he was deeply entrenched in the theatre scene of St Lucia—following in the footsteps of his father, Allan Weekes.

"My father was a director of the St Lucia Arts Guild," he says. "I grew up with my father for the first nine years of my life, so from very early, I was able to attend a couple of rehearsals happening in Castries. When they would go around the island staging productions, I would also sometimes be part of it—so that's where the influence starts."

The Guild had been established in 1950 by a group including the Walcott twins (Caribbean giants of the arts), Derek and Roderick, and Weekes's father worked closely with Roderick on several creative projects.

Dr Weekes, who has for the past year been the Coordinator of the Theatre Arts Unit at the Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA) at UWI St Augustine, took these childhood opportunities and ran with them. He performed in his primary school end-of-term plays, and by secondary school, he was writing and performing his own work.

### The pull of the creative world

He would go on to study Literature at the St Lucia A-Level College, and then won an OAS fellowship to study Theatre at the Jamaica School of Drama. While in Jamaica, he also got a degree in the Arts at The UWI Mona. All the while, he was writing.

"I worked at the bank for about two years, but I didn't like it," says Dr Weekes. The pull of the creative world was too strong.

"I continued to get more deeply involved in theatre, and in particular, Creole Theatre."

From Jamaica back to St Lucia, he became very active in the local scene, where he was dividing his attention between writing, acting, directing, and producing.

His father had taken on the mission of bringing classical Caribbean drama to Kwéyòl-speaking communities. "He was translating some of Walcott's plays into Kwéyòl—what you call Patois, and staging them; taking them to Martinique and Guadeloupe; and I was joining him."

This interest in celebrating Creole culture through theatre and art would become a defining element of Dr Weekes's work. It would lead him to a central role at the St Lucian Creole Theatre Workshop, to an appointment as Cultural Education Officer at the Folk Research Centre, and then to Barbados, where he pursued his postgrad studies at the Cave Hill campus, focusing on the work of Derek Walcott and how it reflected our Creole culture.

In 2017, he graduated with a PhD in Cultural Studies. By 2018, he made his way to the St Augustine campus, to take up the position of lecturer at DCFA, which has now evolved into his role as coordinator.



Dr Weekes (right, front row in hat) at a Kwéyòl adaptation of *Ti Jean and His Brothers* at Alliance Française. Seated, centre, is Nobel laureate Derek Walcott.

### A reflection of our culture and history

So, what defines "Creole Theatre", and why has it been such a deep preoccupation in Dr Weekes's work?

"We're using the Creole languages—and that doesn't necessarily mean French Creole. It could be English Creole languages. We're using elements from the Creole culture, Creole cultural forms. The indigenous forms of the Caribbean," he says. "So, for example, where I am from in St Lucia, we have what we call the 'Kont'... It is a wake tradition, but it encompasses dance, storytelling, jokes, drumming, singing."

Across the Caribbean, traditions like this reflect our shared history and culture, and Creole Theatre aims to utilise these art forms "with an intent to liberate us from the traumas of our history," he says.

"By using the cultural forms and the language, we go into the history with a view of psychological liberation and creating spaces for catharsis."

Having immersed himself into cultural art forms across the region, he brings these sensibilities to his work at DCFA.

"I think Trinidad is a ripe place for a multicultural theatre, because of the diversity that exists here," he says. "Multicultural theatre meaning not just that we employ

forms and practices from the various ethnicities in the society, but... we have to look at form. Calypso, for example, can provide a frame as well as so much material, themes, characters, settings. So, I think Calypso can work as a real solid frame for creating a form for multicultural theatre in Trinidad."

Some of this work has already been happening, both in the local theatre community and at DCFA itself since its inception, and Dr Weekes hopes to help students further this project in using these cultural forms to create what he calls "powerful theatre".

"What DCFA is doing is right up my street," he says, "because it is part of a Caribbean initiative."

As his tenure as coordinator continues, he would like to see that work pushed forward even more at DCFA, as well as strengthening their bonds with The UWI Film Unit, which he says already happens naturally due to the closeness of the two art forms. It is clear that his priorities involve building a closer-knit Caribbean creative community, where we can look to our arts and culture as a means of helping our wider societies understand where we come from and what our futures hold.

## ■ THE UWI/GUARDIAN PREMIUM OPEN LECTURE 2023

Since the time when hunters took the adolescent members of their tribe on the first hunt, education has been evolving. The knowledge and skills required of a young learner in agrarian societies differ from students in industrial ones. Yet in post-industrial society, in island economies such as ours, and in a globalised and technology-rich world, have our education systems kept pace with the needs of the modern student? And what about the students of the future?

“Education is the key to our future,” said Professor Pedro Antonio Noguera. “That means that our youth need an education that provides them with the problem-solving ability, resourcefulness, creativity, and critical thinking to confront these problems.”

Professor Noguera was speaking at the 2023 UWI/Guardian Life Premium Open Lecture on September 29 at UWI St Augustine’s Daaga Auditorium. In his lecture, titled “Redefining Educational Success: Post-Pandemic Challenges and Opportunities”, the guest speaker, Dean of the University of Southern California’s Rossier School of Education, looked at ways of shaping teaching and learning for future generations.

### Students’ needs not being met

“When we looked at the students who were not thriving in our schools,” Prof Noguera told the audience of educators, education policymakers, and researchers at the UWI/Guardian Life lecture, “we always saw that basic needs were not being met.”

To redefine success, he said, “we needed a strategy for addressing those needs. If we wanted to see more young people enter adulthood equipped with the skills to support themselves, their families, and contribute to their communities and societies, they needed a different kind of education.”

What does that education look like? Prof Noguera believes that universities must foster creativity and critical thinking. They should, he said, give students the ability to “imagine new possibilities”.

A celebrated author and researcher who specialises in the ways in which schools are influenced by social and economic conditions, Prof Noguera also advises educational policymakers in the US in New Mexico, Washington, Oregon, and Nevada. He gave a bit of that policy advice to T&T’s planners at the lecture, proposing the creation of several schools to meet the needs of students and, by extension, the society.

These included:

- A Beryl McBurnie school of the arts in Woodbrook that builds on the culture, captures the imagination of young people, and inspires them to dream.
- A Naipaul-Lovelace school of creative writing at Tranquillity Government Secondary School to hone young people’s expressive skills.
- An ecotourism school in Tobago’s nature reserve to address environmental concerns and adapt to climate change, or a school of marine biology.
- A school focused on telecommunications.
- A school of wellness and health in Mount Hope.

### Rethinking our paradigms

Education Minister Dr Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, speaking at the event, said, “Our educational landscape is evolving, the needs of our students, our young citizens, the needs of the nation and the region are changing, and we collectively must transform along with it. We must redefine and rethink our paradigms.”

UWI St Augustine’s Deputy Principal, Professor Indar Ramnarine, spoke on how teaching and learning was forced to evolve during the pandemic. Students, particularly the marginalised, were at a serious disadvantage because they had limited (and sometimes no) access to the necessary tech tools and mental health resources. The campus, he explained, responded with technology training, counselling, and even provided devices for students to attend classes remotely, complete assignments, and take exams.

But the kind of transformation that Prof Noguera is advocating goes beyond meeting the immediate needs of students. He wants future-oriented students with the capability to imagine and shape tomorrow.

### Insights from great educators

Hosted by The UWI St Augustine Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) and Guardian Life of the Caribbean, the UWI/Guardian Life Premium Open Lecture brings internationally renowned educators like Prof Noguera to share their insights and expertise with the region.

They “embrace technology, reimagine their teaching methods, and in doing so have opened the door to a new era of educational opportunities”, said Mr Gregg Mannette, Head of Sales at Guardian Life.

■ The open lecture is available for viewing on The UWI St Augustine YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/sqrBxA0feP0>

■ For more information on the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/cetl/>

# Tomorrow People

*Education researcher Professor Pedro Antonio Noguera advocates for future-oriented teaching and learning to prepare students for an uncertain world*

BY JOEL HENRY



Dean and Distinguished Professor Pedro Antonio Noguera.  
PHOTO: FREDRIC DUBRAY

## CAMPUS NEWS

For 17 years now, The UWI and Republic Bank Limited (RBL) have partnered to bridge the gap between academia and industry to empower the next generation with the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to succeed in the ever-evolving world of work.

In October, they collaborated to host the Seminar and Launch of The UWI/RBL World of Work (WOW) 2023/2024 for final-year students at the Daaga Auditorium on the St Augustine campus.

WOW, a programme of UWI St Augustine's Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD), is a comprehensive initiative designed to guide final-year students through the career-building process and provide participants with practical insights and hands-on experience that will give them an edge in the job market.

"Seventeen years of partnership with The UWI," said guest speaker Ms Michelle Dindial, Branch Sales Manager at RBL's UWI Branch, "and we still believe WOW is one of the best and most comprehensive career and personal development programmes in the country and the region."

Ms Dindial emphasised the importance of WOW to the students. She encouraged them to seize every opportunity to learn and to ask questions, believing that WOW holds the potential to become one of the most memorable and useful experiences of their university life.

RBL's commitment to WOW goes beyond financial backing, as the programme is about fostering a culture of curiosity, learning, and growth.

The WOW programme was started more than 25 years ago, and helps students to develop important skills in areas such as communications and negotiations, adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are increasingly becoming differentiators in career success. These skills not only enhance employability, but also empower individuals to navigate the complexities of the modern workplace with confidence.

This year's WOW programme will include a corporate fashion initiative that provides students with access to complimentary business attire, but also aims to give them a deeper understanding of corporate branding, personal presentation, and the importance of professional image in the world of business.

Featured speaker, sustainability and climate change expert and Director of Advisors Next Door Limited Mr Ryan Assiu, told the participating students that "The difference between a highly successful person and someone who achieves the most in their career is a slight difference in thinking. As Gen Z students, it's important to push aside the noise and understand that for you, the distinction between success and failure is your perception and informed thinking."

He encouraged them to develop their connections and focus their time and energy on mastering the basics, such as crafting a strong resume, writing professional emails, and honing high-value skills in their chosen field.

As industry demands evolve, soft skills have emerged as a crucial component of professional readiness. WOW, with the backing of RBL, recognises this paradigm shift and places a strong emphasis on cultivating those skills alongside academic knowledge. Through workshops, mentorship, and practical experience, participating students not only gain a deeper understanding of their chosen fields but also refine their abilities to communicate effectively, collaborate, and adapt to unforeseen challenges.

**To learn more about WOW,** visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/dssd/world-work-programme>

# UWI/REPUBLIC BANK WORLD OF WORK 2023

*Celebrates 17-year partnership  
preparing students for professional life*



From left: Director of Advisors Next Door Limited Mr Ryan Assiu, RBL UWI Branch Sales Manager Ms Michelle Dindial, UWI St Augustine Deputy Principal Professor Indar Ramnarine, Manager of Careers, Co-Curricular and Community Engagement at DSSD Ms Kathy-Ann Lewis, RBL Brand Specialist, Sponsorship and Events Execution Mr Christopher Aird, Director of DSSD Dr Deirdre Charles, and RBL Senior Officer, CSR Management and Strategic Support Ms Natalie Burnette-Alfred at the launch of WOW 2023. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM

## WAND entrusts archive of 25-years of women-led charitable works to ALMA JORDAN LIBRARY'S SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Women in Action for the Needy and Destitute (WAND) Foundation, an NGO made up of professional women dedicated to improving the lives of those in need, has entrusted their archives to UWI St Augustine's Alma Jordan Library (AJL).

"This generous contribution not only celebrates the preservation of historical treasures but also inspires the broader community to safeguard and share their own pieces of history," a statement from the St Augustine campus said.

The materials chronicle the work of the organisation for the last 25 years and its acquisition is significant because of its uniqueness and potential for high level research.

"Historical and contemporary resources on women and their role in the development of our society are critical as they illuminate areas which have been understudied or represent unique perspectives," said the campus statement. "Over the years, WAND has undertaken transformative work and, through their efforts, this valuable addition will enhance the library's extensive collection of rare Caribbean materials, benefiting researchers and society as a whole."

Mr Frank Soodeen, Campus Librarian, said, "The WAND Special Collection is not only immensely significant due to its distinctive



Representatives of UWI St Augustine and WAND at the hand-over ceremony. In the back row (from left) are Ms Leah Fletcher (Director, WAND), Ms Allison Dolland (Deputy Campus Librarian, AJL), Ms Lorraine Nero, (Head, WISC), Dr Karen Eccles (historian and Librarian, WISC). Seated are former board members of the first generation ladies of WAND - Ms Gloria Nelson, Ms Jan Bocas-Ryan, Ms Mona Khan, Ms Wendy Voss, and Ms Dawn Seepersad.

nature, but also serves as a catalyst for in-depth research on NGOs as dynamic agents of positive change."

He added, "NGOs like WAND, through their staunch dedication, contribute to advancing humanity toward a more equitable, just, and sustainable world."

WAND board members Mrs Jan Bocas and Mrs Mona Khan expressed their gratitude to The UWI for hosting the collection and making the information accessible to the public.

The AJL's Special Collections are a separate category of materials within the library's West Indiana and Special Collections Division. It holds over 172 other distinguished special collections of rare Caribbean materials, some dating back to the 1600s. These collections hold immense historical value and The UWI preserves them in a secure space as well as allows researchers from around the world to access them through their online archives.

**To learn more about the Alma Jordan Library,** visit <https://libraries.sta.uwi.edu/ajl/>  
To access their online archives, go to <https://archivespace.sta.uwi.edu/repositories/2/resources>

THE UWI ST AUGUSTINE

# Graduation Ceremonies 2023

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TIMES...**



**Graduation is a family affair.** It is a moment not only for the graduate, but for the people closest to them. In his closing remarks at Graduation 2023, **UWI Chancellor Robert Bermudez** said to the graduating class:

*“Your family and your friends, your parents, have played a huge role and supported you in the difficult times, and rejoiced in the good times.”*

He told them, *“Many of them are here in the hall this morning. And I would like you to turn to your family and friends and show how much you appreciate what they’ve done to get you so far.”*

The applause was thunderous.

PHOTOS: MOOKISH HARRYPOL / LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS / ANEEL KARIM / ATIBA CUDJOE





*...rejoiced in the*  
**GOOD TIMES!**



# The UWI Calendar of Events | November 2023



## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights November 20 Noor Hassanali Auditorium St Augustine Campus

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognised that governance oriented toward promoting and protecting human rights is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. In commemoration of this moment, UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Law is collaborating with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's (UNRC) Office to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration with a panel discussion.

Titled **"Reaching substantive equality and reframing narratives"**, the panel discussion will include:

Remarks:

- **Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine**, UWI St Augustine Campus Principal
- **Ms Joanna Kazana**, UN Resident Coordinator

Panel:

- **Ms Denise Pitcher**, Executive Director of the Caribbean Centre for Human Rights
- **Mr Eden Charles**, Former Ambassador for Trinidad and Tobago to the UN in New York; and Lecturer at the Faculty of Law
- **Justice Nalini Singh**, High Court Judge

Moderator:

- **Dr Timothy Affonso**, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Law

For more information, email [law@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:law@sta.uwi.edu)



## UWI Research Festival and Principal's Research Awards November 23 9 am to 6 pm JFK Quadrangle St Augustine Campus

In commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of The University of the West Indies, the St Augustine

campus will showcase the exciting research activities of its eight diverse faculties in one mega event. This research festival, based on the theme "75 Years of Relevance, Responsiveness, and Research Innovation for A Better Life, Environment, and Sustainability", will reflect the past and present innovations of the campus while setting the research agenda for the future. All are invited to attend the Research Festival.

For more information, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/researchawards/> or contact the Director of Graduate Studies and Research at [STA-research.awards@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:STA-research.awards@sta.uwi.edu). To register, use the link <https://uwi.jotform.com/233093143965055>



## The Early Childhood Caravan Concert - Keep your Dreams Alive November 25 School of Education Auditorium St Augustine Campus

The Early Childhood Caravan, a project of The UWI St Augustine School of Education, invites all to join them for their sixth concert titled "Keep Your Dreams Alive" in celebration of Universal Children's Day. This free event showcases the talents of performers aged 5 to 17, promising a diverse array of entertainment. Performances will include the harmonies of The Lydian's Junior Choir, vibrant

Indian dances, a soul-stirring duet, poetic expressions, a captivating steelpan solo, and a special performance by the UWI FDCRC students.

To accommodate the high demand and limited seating, be sure to collect your tickets in advance and get ready for an evening filled with door prizes, treats for the kids, and the joyous celebration of youthful dreams. All are welcome to attend this free event.

The Early Childhood Caravan is an initiative made up of past and present UWI students, lecturers, and others who believe that children are the foundation upon which a nation is built. For more information on the concert and the Caravan, as well as to make donations to support the event, email **Sabeerah Abdul-Majied** at [sabeerah.abdul-majied@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:sabeerah.abdul-majied@sta.uwi.edu)



## CARIBBEAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES 23RD BIENNIAL CONFERENCE HOST COUNTRY/CHAPTER: TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO CHAPTER



## Caribbean Academy of Sciences 23<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Conference 2023 November 24 and 25 Block 13, Faculty of Engineering St Augustine Campus

The Caribbean Academy of Sciences in collaboration with UWI St Augustine, through the Faculty of Engineering, presents The CAS Biennial Conference. This year's conference will feature a two-day summit of talks, activities, and workshops surrounding the theme, "The Sustainability and Development Initiatives of the Caribbean".

CAS 23 will include sessions with 100 presentations and posters from local, regional and international delegates, distinguished guest speakers, panels, mentoring workshops, networking reception, dinner and awards ceremony, and the UNESCO/L'Oréal Women in Science Awards.

For more information, including registration fees, visit the conference websites at [www.caswi.org](http://www.caswi.org) and [www.CAS2023.uwi.edu](http://www.CAS2023.uwi.edu)



# Graduation Ceremonies 2023



**Karena Seetaldass**, a graduate of the Department of Geography in UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Food and Agriculture, smiles after receiving her canister at the graduation ceremony on Thursday, October 26, 2023 at The UWI SPEC. Over 2,800 students took part in the 2023 graduation ceremonies held from October 26 to 28 on the St Augustine campus alone. Ceremonies were also held for The UWI's other campuses (Five Islands, Cave Hill, Mona, and the Global Campus) in the Caribbean. This year was extra special because the ceremonies coincided with the university's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary under the theme *Rooted. Ready. Rising.* PHOTO: MOOKISH HARRYPAL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

## Another Chapter in our Caribbean Story

BY JOEL HENRY

On Saturday, October 28, UWI St Augustine held the third and final day of the 2023 graduation ceremonies. That morning, taking my seat among the anxious and expectant crowd of family and friends, I saw an old acquaintance from my own days as a UWI student.

I remember him as a limer, a footballer competent in the mid-field, a card player, and a book-beater. That day at the UWI SPEC graduation ceremony, he was a very proud parent. And so the wheel turns. And so a new chapter is written.

Years ago, it was our parents in that audience, and one

day, God willing, his daughter will be in that happy gathering in the stands waiting for a special graduate to cross the stage.

We talk about legacy often on the St Augustine campus. This year, the 75 years since the birth of The University of the West Indies, legacy is like a meditation for the campus community. Over 250,000 graduates have passed through The UWI's campuses throughout the region. They make up our leaders, our artists, our thinkers, and our doers. That's a breathtaking legacy.

But as we celebrate the grand achievements, we shouldn't forget the personal connections. Those hundreds of thousands also make up our

families, our mentors, and our friends, the people that have made positive impacts on our lives.

In this way, UWI is like an extended family, a family based on the need to develop our people, explore ideas, solve society's problems, and build our nation and region. And graduation day is when the newest family members leave the nest, ready to advance themselves and play their part.

What a fine 75-year tradition! What an enthralling Caribbean story. Congratulations, Graduating Class of 2023. We look forward to seeing your story unfold.



PHOTO: MOOKISH HARRYPAL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS



PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM



PHOTO: MOOKISH HARRYPAL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

THE UWI ST AUGUSTINE

## Graduation Ceremonies 2023



## Dressed for the occasion

At UWI St Augustine, all undergraduate and postgraduate robes (with the exception of doctoral candidates) are blue while doctoral robes are red. Certificate and pre-bachelor graduands wear calf-length scarlet gowns. Undergraduate and postgraduate graduands also wear hoods that use different colours to represent their degree programmes.

PHOTO: MOOKISH HARRYPAIL  
/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS



In October, UWI St Augustine is buzzing with the excitement of graduation. But what goes into executing the annual ceremonies, a highly anticipated and successful string of events?

The campus hosts six graduation ceremonies over a three-day period. It is the most graduation ceremonies held by any one UWI campus. Senior Assistant Registrar in the Office of the St Augustine Campus Registrar, Student Affairs Examinations Division, Ms Nardia Thomas-Allain, said almost 3,000 students attended graduation ceremonies at the campus this year.

"Though 2,856 graduands attended the ceremony," she says, "the average graduating class is between 3,500 and 3,800. Graduands who do not attend the ceremony are still conferred as graduates once certificates, degrees, and diplomas are printed."

Ms Thomas-Allain went on to say the graduation ceremonies' success is due to several departments across the region and within each campus. She highlighted the hard work of the Examinations Division along with the Registrar and Marketing and Communication offices of both The UWI and the St Augustine campus. They began planning in February 2023 to make this year's graduation exercise a success.

On the selection of theme for this year, she said, "As The UWI proudly celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the 2022-2023 academic year, it seemed only fitting for that to be this year's graduation theme across the region."

The UWI's regional graduation planning committee selects themes by taking a look at what is being celebrated at the different campuses and throughout the region. This guides the University Marketing and Communications Office in selecting an appropriate theme.

The graduation ceremonies are held in October to accommodate students who wish to pursue courses offered during the third semester to keep on track or fast track their programmes.

When it comes to accommodating persons with disabilities, graduands are given the option during the application process to request special accommodation for themselves or their guests which the planning committee, with the help of various departments and collaborators, do the utmost to provide to make the ceremony a celebratory success for all graduates.

## Months of planning for UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

BY CHERISSE LAUREN BERKELEY



*The campus hosts six graduation ceremonies over a three day period. It is the most graduation ceremonies held by any one UWI campus...almost 3,000 students attended graduation ceremonies at the campus this year.*

THE UWI ST AUGUSTINE

# Graduation Ceremonies 2023

## A Promise of greater things to come...



Today, we celebrate your achievements and the promise of even greater things to come. We look forward to your continued involvement with this noble institution which has nurtured so many and has placed you on a path to success.

**Mr Robert Bermudez,  
Chancellor of The UWI**



Your achievement today is not simply the scroll in your hand, but it is the combination of your entire experience here — knowledge, yes, but also the skills and abilities you acquired along the way.

**Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal  
Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine**



Your success is our success, and your university is grateful to you for staying the course and demonstrating that in the face of challenges, by working together, we can achieve our goals.

**Professor Sir Hilary Beckles  
Vice-Chancellor of The UWI**



THE UWI ST AUGUSTINE

## Graduation Ceremonies 2023

In his classic calypso **Forward Home**, the late Andre Tanker sings, “I went away. I leave and I forward home. I forward to stay. I must see meh way.” This chorus is a statement on return migration and indigenous development. In many ways, the three recipients of honorary doctorates at this year’s UWI St Augustine graduation ceremonies are also forwarding home.

Baroness Floella Benjamin, actress and singer Heather Headley, and writer Lawrence Scott are all Trinidad-born, but have made strides abroad. These honours are a doorway to the many possibilities of returning home.

### A Sweet Honour

Headley, who was conferred a Doctor of Letters (DLitt), was unable to attend the graduation physically, but gave her acceptance speech via video. Although she was upset about not being there in person, she dedicated the degree to the family members who represented her, including her cousin, Folade Ifouma Quamina, who graduated from UWI Cave Hill’s Faculty of Law in 2020, and accepted on Headley’s behalf. It was a touching moment as Quamina’s graduating class never crossed the stage due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Quamina is just one of Headley’s relatives with ties to The UWI – she has another relative who is an alumnus employed at the St Augustine campus. According to Headley, The UWI was an aspirational institution in her childhood consciousness.

“I think for all my life I have always looked to what is the best. So if I get to Broadway, what is the highest that I can go? You can get a Tony. If you do movies or television, you can get an Emmy. So, I was very aware that the best in the Caribbean, the best that I could do in Trinidad, was go to UWI, and so it was in my head that the people who went to UWI were very established and smart people, and that’s what you did after you left school, if you could,” shares the Tony and Grammy award-winning performer.

Headley described the honour as simply sweet. “I do believe it’s sweeter because it’s Trinidad; and it’s sweeter because it’s the Caribbean; and sweeter because it’s home. To some extent, this is the foundation of who I am. I am incredibly honoured and blessed that I would have such recognition.”

She wants up-and-coming local artists to know that Trinidad is just as viable a place to practise and perform as anywhere else. “A lot of times we think, ‘well, I’m in Trinidad, on this small island. I need to be in the States.’ But you don’t. You can become amazing there, and grow your craft there, and start your work there.”

Headley is planning to host a concert in Trinidad within the coming year and is open to working with theatre students during her time here.

### A Climax of Recognition

Although Lawrence Scott is based in England, he’s no stranger to The UWI St Augustine. In 2004, he served as Writer in Residence for the MFA Creative Writing programme, and has since then returned to lecture in the programme and serve as an external examiner. He’s participated in numerous events, such as Campus Literature Week, and his archive is currently being deposited in the Alma Jordan Library.

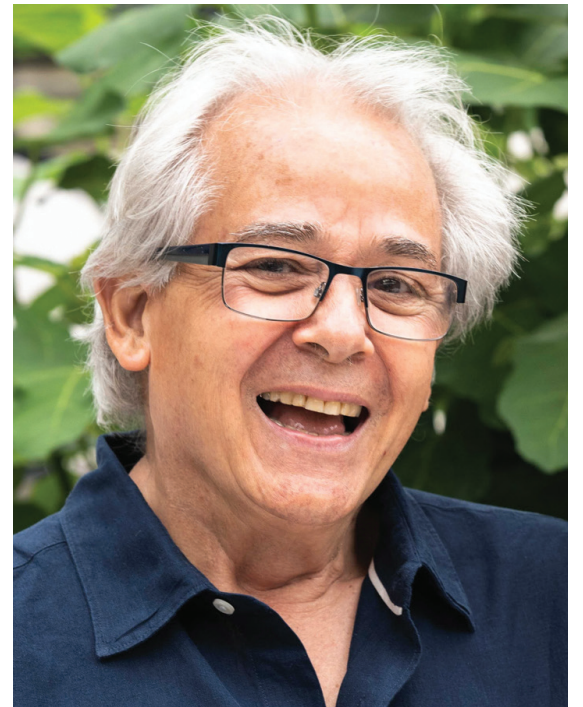
PHOTOS: MOOKISH HARRYPOL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

## A Way Home: 2023 Honorary Graduands’ Symbolic Return

BY ZAHRA GORDON



Actress and singer Heather Headley



Writer Lawrence Scott PHOTO: WILLIAM HEARLE

Despite this long-standing relationship, Scott says the Doctor of Letters (DLitt) was a surprise. “I feel very privileged. I have had a long association with UWI, so this feels like a climax of recognition, particularly if you live abroad as a writer. My work is about Trinidad and about the Caribbean, so it feels good to be given that recognition at home. It is a warm embrace,” Scott tells UWI TODAY.

Scott, who has taught in the UK and has won international awards, including the Commonwealth Writers Prize, says he did not consider housing his archive overseas. “This is the natural place for my archive, this is the place where it should be. It is home. It would be very enriching for me to know of young

Trinidadians looking at that work and the processes I’ve used for writing and engaging with that.”

As a child, Scott spent a sizable amount of time in the St Augustine neighbourhood with relatives, and even attended high school at Mt St Benedict. He says of the award that “even the landscape has resonance”.

He adds: “This award is really pleasing. It doesn’t come with money, but that’s not the central thing that pleases me. What pleases me is that my work has been captured. Your work sometimes can be awarded abroad, but you can feel they don’t really get to the knob of what you’re saying. This is my best award because it comes with the background of having been at UWI and having the essence of my work truly captured.”



THE UWI ST AUGUSTINE

## Graduation Ceremonies 2023



**You'd be forgiven if, by assessing Baroness Floella Benjamin** by her gentle manner and empowering words of positivity, you fail to recognise the extraordinary impact she has made as an entertainer, an educator, and an advocate for diversity and inclusion.

"I believe childhood lasts a lifetime," she says, and she addressed those in attendance at the graduation ceremony for the Faculties of Engineering and Law on October 28 like a nurturing parent.

"I want you to act with morality and integrity, and be the person others can trust," she told the graduands. More than most people, Baroness Benjamin is well-placed to make such demands. It's how she has lived her own life.

She has worked for the betterment of others with a supernatural dedication, both as a policy-maker and through charitable activities. For that commitment, she has received numerous awards in the UK. In 2010, she was elevated to the peerage, and in 2020 damehood. Most recently, she received the Order of Merit in 2022, making her the first woman born in the Caribbean to receive one of the UK's highest awards.

# 'We must protect the world and nurture it before it is too late'

## Baroness Floella Benjamin

BY JOEL HENRY

She has also received many honorary degrees. Yet still, she said the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from The UWI "is amongst my highest accolades, as it comes from my birth land, and to be recognised this way goes to the depth of my soul. I now feel complete."

In her career, she was a presenter for the incredibly popular BBC children's shows *Playschool* and *PlayAway*. A young black woman from the Caribbean, for many years, she helped educate children about history and the treatment of immigrants.

Originally from Marabella in South Trinidad, she left T&T when she was only 10 years old. However, "my heart remained rooted in the Caribbean, my spiritual home," she said.

And in her speech to the graduands, Baroness Benjamin sought to give the young citizens of her spiritual home a message of empowerment.

"Graduates," she said, "everything you do must focus on the outcomes of future generations. You're going to go out and touch the world with the knowledge you have gained. Education should be used to improve the lives of others. We must protect the world and nurture it before it's too late."



PHOTO: MOOKISH HARRYPAL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

## Speaking on our Behalf

A new face, and voice, was on the graduation stage at this year's ceremonies. For the first time, Dr Suzanne Burke, Head of the Department, Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Education, served as UWI St Augustine's Public Orator.

"It was a very fulfilling experience," she says, "and of course a lot of hard work."

The Public Orator acts as the voice of the university during public occasions. At the graduation ceremonies they write the citations for the honorary graduands and presents them to The UWI Chancellor.

Dr Burke has to interview, research, write, and then present at the ceremonies. It was, she says, an insightful experience.

"In talking to these people who have contributed so much, not just in Trinidad and the Caribbean, but of course globally, it was an insightful way of gaining an understanding about being Caribbean in the world," she recalls. "They all talked about the way Trinidad, and to a larger extent the Caribbean, shaped them."

PHOTOS: MOOKISH HARRYPAL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS



THE UWI ST AUGUSTINE

## Graduation Ceremonies 2023

## Valedictory Words of Wisdom

B Y S E R A H A C H A M

UWI St Augustine's 2023 valedictorians belong to a unique cohort. Among the first students to have had a mostly virtual university experience, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they've learnt resilience. They found community and connection through screens and keyboards, and found strength in the people around them. They now all hold a firm understanding of community and their place in it, and already know how they want to contribute to our region and the world. Here, they tell us about their passions, hopes and dreams, and share words of wisdom.



PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE

*Celeste Samuel*

**Faculties of Science and Technology and Food and Agriculture**  
**Major: Human Nutrition and Dietetics**

Celeste always had a knack for learning. "School was my thing," she says, sharing that she always wanted to be a teacher. Yet, when she was introduced to food and nutrition in Form 3, she was captivated. "To research and learn about food was really eye-opening," she asserted, and the fact that she could instantly apply what she learned was particularly appealing. So, when she applied to UWI, her field of study was clear.

Three years later, the CAPE scholarship winner is graduating as the valedictorian of the Faculties of Science and Technology and Food and Agriculture. "It's really an honour to even be considered... to have my voice be heard and valued," she says.

She credits her parents for giving her the "confidence to take more risks" and encouraging her to do her best, and she advises current students to "find true and genuine people who will believe in you and want to see you succeed".

*Ronaldo Thomas*

**Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**Major: Management**

That Ronaldo is graduating as one of the Faculty of Social Sciences' valedictorians should come as no surprise. His strategy was clear. He worked hard, managed his time, set goals, and sought advice from his lecturers. Yet, he never expected to become valedictorian. His goal was simply to excel.

To him, being valedictorian means that "the sky really is the limit. There is nothing you cannot do as long as you give your all and continue to be persistent."

Now, as the first member of his family to attend university, Ronaldo has made them proud. And, as a former student of a secondary school that may not have been considered of the highest calibre, he is happy to be a reflection of how "you could aim for the stars" and excel in "anything you put your mind to, especially when you put in the work".

Ronaldo's Management major is the first step on his path to a career in Human Resources (HR), and he has goals of changing the perception of HR for employees within organisations nationwide.



PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE

*Kyle Bisnath*

**Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**Specialisation: International Relations**  
**Minor: Social Development Policy and Planning**

Kyle has a big vision for the Caribbean – to make it a community. "I really believe, as Caribbean people, we should have the accessibility and freedom to move and interact within the region as a singular people."

Kyle fell in love with International Relations from the beginning of his degree. "I've always been fascinated by the way the world works... You often hear about things going on in the world and the Caribbean is not always included in that."

Initially, the former Student Guild Vice President admits that he was terrified about applying to UWI, but as the first person from his family to attend university, he was grateful for the opportunity, and drew on the wealth of support he found in his friends to pull through.

Three years later, as one of the Faculty of Social Sciences' valedictorians, his role is as a champion: "for my parents... the things that they aspired to that they couldn't do, the people in my family who have had to make hard decisions and put their aspirations on the back burner, for the people who didn't have the opportunity, and for so many people that have helped me".



PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE

## THE UWI ST AUGUSTINE

## Graduation Ceremonies 2023



PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM

### Marsha Lee-Carrington

**Faculty of Medical Sciences  
Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS)**

As a wife and mother with a part-time job, Marsha's road was tough. Yet, with her family by her side, she persevered and emerged as the Faculty of Medical Sciences' (FMS) 2023 valedictorian.

"My husband and my children, they are so supportive," she says, "[their] excitement when I have my own little adventures, it's just rewarding in itself. So, I feel compelled to do things to make them proud."

Marsha also credits her classmates for pushing her to apply for the title of valedictorian, so she is excited to represent them. Being valedictorian, she says, makes her feel like a role model, and she is elated.

Having been drawn to medicine by her compassion and care for others, Marsha's heart is set on family medicine, working in a health centre where she can spend time with her patients and give them the attention they need.

She advises FMS students to be compassionate and to "be their brothers' keepers, because it's a competitive faculty, and we need to lift everybody up. We'll all get there."



PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM

### Shaienne St Hilaire

**Faculties of Humanities and Education and Sport  
Major: Communication Studies**

A bubbly young lady with a love of people and helping, and a particular talent for grasping opportunity, a career in Communications seems fitting for Shaienne. "I realised that I could have seen myself... liking that discipline for the rest of my life," she says, "because above all else, I wanted to prioritise my happiness."

Her drive to find happiness and connection set her on a trajectory to success. Determined to meet people and enjoy a full campus life despite the virtual world of 2020, she reached out to classmates and took advantage of one of UWI's greatest resources, the Student Guild, whose president encouraged her to become her faculty's representative. She said yes and "everything just started unfolding for me. I met lots of new people, got involved in a lot of other extracurricular activities, and took advantage of all UWI had to offer. I was applying my purpose."

As the 2023 valedictorian of the Faculties of Humanities and Education and Sport, she recognises the value of "saying yes and taking chances" and advises students to embrace the university's resources and "know that you're not on the journey alone."



PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM

### Lane Amichan

**Faculties of Engineering and Law  
Major: Electrical and Computer Engineering**

Lane's love for maths knows no bounds, yet he wanted a more dynamic career. "I wanted something where I could apply what I learnt and do something that was meaningful to me," he shares.

So, when UWI enrolment came round in 2019 and he had to pick his degree programme, the Faculty of Engineering was perfect. He also had an affinity for science and technology, and his chosen major in Electrical and Computer Engineering gave him the opportunity to combine all his favourite subjects. Then, he found his passion, Communications Systems, the facilitator of the virtual world in which we find connection, entertainment and education.

Today, the valedictorian for the Faculties of Engineering and Law is reaping the rewards of following his instinct and not giving up on his first love. His advice to students? "You must do what you love and love what you do. Select that degree that aligns with what you want to be in the future. Make sure it's something you are passionate about."

From childhood visits to the home of his family's roots in Palo Seco, playing football in the field next door, to graduating with an MSc in Sport Management and setting up his own business— Cadena Sport Management Services— Hillan Morean has taken his love for sports and turned it into a thriving livelihood.

What he didn't expect coming into The UWI was that he would also have taken on the role of President of the Student Guild for three terms and go on to hold public office after graduating from his undergrad studies. Morean is one of The UWI's all-rounder graduates— taking full advantage of the wide range of skills to be learned while on campus, whether in the classroom or on the field.

"I got involved with the Guild first as a volunteer, then as the elected Sports representative with the Games Committee, and then three terms as the President of the Guild," says Morean. "So, I had quite an active undergrad."

At the time, he was spending almost 16 hours a day studying, at classes and playing sports on campus. "The best memories I have are really the opportunities to not just meet and interact with students from all over the world... but also, through the Guild experience, getting into positions of leadership that allowed me to learn and grow."

## Hillan Morean, an all-rounder GRADUATE

B Y A M Y L I B A K S H



Hillan Morean and his daughter Arisa on graduation day.

These leadership skills would serve him well in the years following his tenure as Student Guild President. In addition to running his own business, he also took on the role of councilor in 2013, and then became deputy mayor of the Port-of-Spain City Corporation in 2016. "Going into local government was not my intention, but because of the learnings I had at The UWI— the confidence and other skillsets obtained in leadership there— it was an easier transition to go in and try my best to be a change-maker," says Morean.

These days, Morean has stepped back from public service to focus in on his personal goals and family. After returning to The UWI to complete his graduate degree, and having completed an undergrad programme in law, he is taking the necessary steps to be called to the bar and incorporating law into his gamut of skills. "I think law will help to supplement my focus in sport management," he says, "because the Caribbean has a lot of untapped potential for its sport industry."

For the cohort of graduates coming out of The UWI, Morean's advice would be flexibility.

"It's important that they are as flexible as possible in their mindsets. Even if you have a dream or a goal, sometimes the opportunity that you want is not what you might get right away. UWI is training you so that you can not only be an academic, but you can be as resilient as possible— so you can find yourself qualified and capable even in spaces that you may not have aimed for."

THE UWI ST AUGUSTINE

## Graduation Ceremonies 2023



## Behind the Blue Jackets

PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE

BY DIXIE - ANN BELLE

There's a saying that not all heroes wear capes, but there's no wisdom which states that they can't wear chic blue jackets. Many who attend UWI events have seen them adorning the student ushers who suit up to ensure proceedings run smoothly.

They form a part of a 20-year UWI tradition. Over the years, the system has evolved. The original cohort was about 20 students. Now roughly 300 are available to don their signature blue jackets when needed.

Nandi Mitchell, Senior Student Services Assistant, Careers, Co-curricular and Community Engagement at the Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD) who trains the ushers, explains that the jackets began with a simple print of the UWI crest. Now the crests are embroidered, and the jackets have an elegant lapel.

"That's sort of like a reflection of how it's grown over the years," she says. "Because the vision always was to have them be recognised as a resource for official campus events."

Students are recruited at the beginning of the academic year. Prior experience is not required, but they must go through training. Mitchell says the role is a great opportunity to acquire work experience and build important skills.

"I became a student usher because I've never worked before," says Michael Kelly, who performed his duties in six graduations. "I've been in school my entire life. I wanted to experience what it was like to work with people and to also build a network to help me with future work experiences."

While networking is valuable, Sabrina Mohammed, who got to see her cousin graduate while she worked, appreciates the heartwarming moments as well.

"Witnessing my people cross the stage filled my heart with great joy," she recalls. "Simply being in the space allowed for a certain excitement and gratitude for everything in the journey thus far. This experience was quite the full circle moment for me, as I ushered in my first year and now in my final year."

*They form a part of a 20-year UWI tradition. Over the years, the system has evolved. The original cohort was about 20 students. Now roughly 300 are available to don their signature blue jackets when needed.*



PHOTO: MOOKISH HARRYPOL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS



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PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE