



# UWI TODAY

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES • ST AUGUSTINE CAMPUS

SUNDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2024



## Doctor of the Deep



**Dr Diva Amon, renowned marine biologist**, in her preferred setting, on a dive in the Solomon Islands. *"We're just beginning to uncover the mysteries of our deep-sea environment,"* she says. *"It's exciting to be part of that journey, especially with students who are as passionate about marine science as I am."* She has worked with National Geographic, Disney+, and even Hollywood stars like Will Smith. Earlier this year she became a laureate of the Anthony N Sabga Awards for Excellence for her work in the fields of Science and Technology. Currently, she is a Visiting Fellow at The UWI, co-supervising the research of the next generation of marine scientists on the deep waters of the Caribbean. PHOTO: FRANCESCA THYSEN-BORNEMISZA

UWI TODAY NOVEMBER

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## FROM THE EDITOR

# St Augustine comes Roaring Back

**As I write this, the St Augustine campus is perhaps as busy as it has ever been.** We recently concluded our three-day Graduation 2024 ceremonies (full coverage to come in our next issue). Next weekend, our St Augustine Academy of Sport will host The UWI SPEC International Half-Marathon and 5K, one of T&T's most prominent sports/physical activity-related events. That same week we will also host the Principal's Research Awards, the annual celebration of the research contributions of faculty members and students.

In this final week of October, the campus signed a memorandum of understanding with National Flour Mills (NFM) for what is being called "a significant partnership". UWI will work with NFM to advance research into animal feed and nutrition for sustainable agriculture, support training programmes in a number of areas for the food/agriculture sector, commercialise campus-based research, and provide internship and training opportunities for students.

It's a fabulous agreement, and the latest of many partnerships between the university and government, business, or both.

These activities, and many more, are happening while the campus has had an increased intake of students at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level for 2024. The academic year is in full-swing. Researchers are engaged in exciting and promising work across all faculties. Viewed through the lens of a storyteller, UWI St Augustine has come roaring back with much-needed audacious energy after the disruptive effects of COVID-19.

In this issue of UWI TODAY, we look at the university's number one resource for these successes - people. We often use the term "campus community" as a short-hand for those currently at St Augustine, but I would argue that the campus community includes all graduates over the decades, all those who worked for and with the campus, and all close contributors to UWI St Augustine's mission.

Seventeen of them were celebrated this past September by Trinidad and Tobago at the National Awards 2024. In fact, every year, UWI people are recognised for their contribution to the republic at this ceremony. Internally, in collaboration with the Guardian Group, the campus's Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) honoured three of our educators for their work at The UWI/Guardian Group Premium Teaching Awards.



PHOTO: SHEREEN ALI

In October, we hosted the official launch of The UWI/RBL World of Work (WOW) 2024, another of the campus's important and long-standing partnership events. WOW is a comprehensive programme that prepares students for professional life and connects them to employers. This year's launch was extra special because it included an appearance by NASA aerospace engineer Dr Camille Wardrop Alleyne.

Born in T&T, Dr Alleyne has reached the highest heights of rocket science in the US, and now heads her own consulting firm. The students benefitted from her professional wisdom and motivational energy. While she may not be a UWI graduate, we claim her as an honorary member of the campus community.

In this issue, we include profiles of some outstanding achievers in areas such as marine science, art and history, and music. They are very diverse in their professions but all share the drive for success and a commitment to causes beyond themselves - the environment, community, and culture.

Finally, we have a special report on an emerging type of international climate policy - border carbon adjustments (BCA) - and what they could mean for Trinidad and Tobago. BCAs apply a carbon emissions tariff to imported goods from foreign countries. As an exporter of products that produce considerable emissions (for example fertiliser), T&T could be subject to these tariffs, which would increase the cost of our exports and potentially hurt our competitiveness.

UWI was contacted by an international agency to produce a report on the impact of BCAs. This report, *Border Carbon Adjustments: Trinidad and Tobago*, is now complete and available for viewing at <https://www.iisd.org/publications/report/border-carbon-adjustments-trinidad-and-tobago>.

This document is very important in understanding the future of international policy designed to mitigate climate change, how it can impact Trinidad and Tobago, and what we need to do as a hydrocarbon economy to prepare for tomorrow.

This space is usually reserved for the Campus Principal, so on this rare occasion that I can speak to our readers, I invite you to enjoy the latest issue and have a wonderful November.



*Joel Henry*

Joel Henry

Acting Editor, UWI Today



**GIFT OF LIFE:** Ariella Baah, a second year student at the Faculty of Law donates blood at **The UWI Blood Donor Foundation (UWIBDF) Campus Blood Drive**. Held in October at UWI St Augustine's LRC Greens, the event was a collaboration between UWIBDF and the Rotary Club of St Augustine. **For more information on UWIBDF and how to become a blood donor, visit them at <https://www.uwiblood.org/>**

PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM

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## ■ CAMPUS NEWS

# UWI sees 17 National Awardees with university ties

BY JOEL HENRY

**In Trinidad and Tobago, we celebrate Republic Day on September 24.** A republic, the Oxford Dictionary writes, is “a state in which the power rests with the people or their representatives”.

And on Republic Day, Trinidad and Tobago celebrates some of its people, those who use their power for the benefit of society, sometimes making an impact so profound that they have changed its trajectory for the better. Every year, without fail, members of The UWI St Augustine campus community are among these outstanding citizens celebrated at the National Awards. This year was no different.

Seventeen members of the campus community, past and present, were recognised at this year’s awards ceremony at The President’s House. They included artists, academics, businesspeople, attorneys, public servants, activists, and more. Among them are all three recipients of the nation’s highest award, the Order of Trinidad and Tobago (ORTT).

“I feel extremely honored to receive this award,” says **Professor Patrick Hosein ORTT**. Prof Hosein, a professor in the Faculty of Engineering’s Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, has had an incredible career at ICT giants such as Bose Corporation, Bell Laboratories, AT&T Laboratories, Ericsson, and Huawei. He received the award for his contribution to technology, innovation, and engineering.

Among his many contributions to society is his drive to inculcate a culture of research and innovation in technology students.

“I returned to Trinidad with the intention of making a difference in the research culture of our UWI students, developing closer research collaborations with companies, CSOs and the government, and assisting with the development and use of technology throughout Trinidad and Tobago,” he says.

Although he did not achieve everything he set out to do, he has been successful in many areas. He says, “my efforts in providing access to the Internet for The UWI and eventually Trinidad and Tobago back in the 90s, my efforts in having students perform research relevant to local companies, the development of a multi-stakeholder approach to policy creation (especially for the .TT domain), and the development of educational postgraduate programmes for The UWI”.

The award, he says, “confirms that my efforts were worthwhile and my decision to return was the right choice”.

UWI alum and former President of NGC Mark Loquan received the ORTT for National Service (Energy and Steelpan), and former member of The UWI’s University Council and Attorney-at-Law Russell Martineau received the ORTT for Law.

## Hummingbird Medal Winners

**Dr Solaiman Juman**, a senior lecturer in Otorhinolaryngology in the Faculty of Medical Sciences, received the Hummingbird Medal, Gold, in the sphere of Medicine and Research. Dr Juman is a renowned ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgeon, researcher and educator. He has served as president of both the Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association (TTMA) and the Commonwealth Medical Association (CMA).



Dr Solaiman Juman



Professor Patrick Hosein



Professor Sanjay Bahadoorsingh

## The UWI St Augustine Campus Community National Awardees 2024

**Prof Patrick Hosein**, professor in electrical and computer engineering, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

**Mark Loquan**, Alumnus, President of the National Gas Company (NGC) - ORTT for Energy and Steelpan Innovation

**Russell Martineau**, SC, Attorney-at-Law, Former member of University Council – ORTT for Law

**Dr Anne-Marion Osborne**, Founder of the Music Unit of the Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA), Faculty of Humanities and Education and Former Lecturer in Music at the DCFA - Chaconia Medal Gold Posthumously for Music (Piano and Steelpan)

**Christopher Laird**, Honorary Graduate of The UWI, 2009, Former Part-Time Lecturer, Faculty of Humanities & Education and Former Director of Banyan - Chaconia Medal Gold for Film Industry

**Dr Jeffrey Edwards**, Retired Lecturer, Master of Public Health, Faculty of Medical Sciences - Chaconia Medal Gold for Medicine/ Community

**Dr Andrew Dhanoo**, Research Associate with the Faculty of Science and Technology, Chaconia Medal Silver for Health Care and Volunteerism

**Stephen Williams**, Part-Time Lecturer, Department of Behavioural Sciences - Chaconia Medal Silver for National Security and Public Service

**Linda Hewitt**, Former Statistician - Chaconia Medal Silver Posthumously for Statistics and Community Service

**Professor Sanjay Bahadoorsingh**, Professor, Energy Systems, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Hummingbird Medal Gold for Engineering and Education

**Dr Solaiman Juman**, Senior Lecturer, Otorhinolaryngology, Department of Clinical Surgical Sciences, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Hummingbird Medal Gold for Medicine and Research

**Dr Elaine Monica Davis Iton**, Retired Associate Dean, Department of Pre-Medical Sciences, Faculty of Medical Sciences - Hummingbird Medal Gold for Health and Community Development

**Kenwyn Crichlow**, Retired Lecturer in Visual Arts, DCFA, Faculty of Humanities and Education, Hummingbird Medal Gold for Arts

**Dr Ronnie Bhola**, Former Associate Lecturer, Faculty of Medical Sciences - Hummingbird Medal Gold for Medicine

**Michael Bradshaw**, Quality Enhancement Officer, Faculty of Medical Sciences - Hummingbird Medal Silver for Youth Development and Community Service

**Maj (Ret) Edouard Wade**, Retired Part-Time Lecturer, DCFA, Faculty of Humanities and Education, Hummingbird Medal Silver for Music and Culture

**Dr Jennifer Rouse**, Gerontologist and policy analyst – Retired Part time Lecturer, Department of Behavioural Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences - Hummingbird Medal Silver for National Service and Social Work



## ■ CAMPUS NEWS

**Seventeen members of the campus community, past and present, were recognised at this year's awards ceremony at The President's House. Among them are all three recipients of the nation's highest award, the Order of Trinidad and Tobago (ORTT).**



But perhaps Dr Juman's most important contribution is medical care and concern he has provided for many patients throughout T&T.

"Throughout my career, I have tried to perform to the best of my ability and just do the right thing for all concerned - family, community and country," he says of the national recognition.

He points to the three areas of his professional life that have been the most meaningful. The first is the creation of the postgraduate programme in ENT (started in 2012) by him and his colleagues to replace the retiring surgeons with a new generation of professionals.

"We now have 11 excellent graduates who can hold their own with any surgeons in the world to take over the mantle of serving future generations of Trinbagonians and the Caribbean," he says.

The second is his time as President of the CMA and the friendships he formed while representing the Commonwealth internationally. The third is helping his patients.

"The look on a young patient's face who heard sounds for the first time after a cochlear implant was inserted and activated -" he says. "Just precious!!"

**Professor Sanjay Bahadoorsingh**, another Hummingbird Medal, Gold, awardee, describes the experience as "humbling and emotional". Prof Bahadoorsingh, still a young man, is a former head of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and a driving force in the research and development of sustainable and green technologies.

UWI TODAY interviewed him in 2023, and at that time, he was working with his colleagues to guide the Faculty of Engineering into the 21st century in the area of renewables education and research.

"For me," he says, "this honour is less about the individual recognition, but more about the acknowledgement of the collective effort of all the persons who continue to inspire, support and work alongside me."

And the work continues.

"Since we last spoke, progress has been made in evaluating and reinforcing the resilience of energy

infrastructure across the region, which continues to be highly susceptible to extreme weather events. This has highlighted the lack of documented historical information and exposed significant data gaps and inconsistencies that complicate strategic decision-making and investments. Our work continues to be highly relevant, especially as we strive to achieve low carbon energy systems that incorporate a greater share of renewables, dispatchable energy, and electric vehicles."

All three National Award recipients emphasise their relationship with The UWI. Prof Hosein is due to retire next year, however, he will maintain his relationships with students in particular.

"I plan to continue my research activities with students," he says. "However, I am also trying to develop researchers who can continue what I have been doing. This, of course, will take time because of the breadth and depth of the research we do, but I am optimistic."

He adds, "I normally meet with my students online so continuing such research should not be affected by any change in my location, and I do enjoy the challenge of helping students in a field with which I am not familiar. So yes, I will be sticking around until I am no longer needed."

Dr Juman, who has had a busy schedule for many years, plans on continuing.

"I still have a few years left working at UWI. I enjoy interacting with and teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students. They energise me! I look forward to the day when they become better teachers and better surgeons than I am."

For Prof Bahadoorsingh, there are still many kilometres ahead in his career at the university, and his mission to improve society through climate efficient technologies and practices. He looks forward to it.

"I remain dedicated to serving The UWI, Trinidad and Tobago and by extension, CARICOM," he says. "I find deep fulfillment in my work across all areas, and my efforts will continue to be thoughtful, consistent and steadfast."

*Joel Henry is a writer and editor.*

## Scholars take on Food Security in new Book

Once upon a time, the Caribbean was a hub of agriculture. Today, CARICOM is on a mission to reduce the region's high food import bill by 25 percent. Two UWI scholars have written a book that gives a detailed examination of our reliance on foreign food and how to overcome it.

This work, titled *Food Security in the Caribbean: Historical Perspectives, Current Challenges, and Sustainable Solutions*, was launched in October at the Main Salon of the Office of the Campus Principal at UWI St Augustine.

*Food Security in the Caribbean* was written by agricultural economist and Campus Registrar at The UWI Mona campus Dr Donovan Stanberry, and Dr Lystra Fletcher-Paul, a regional agricultural sector expert and former lecturer at UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Food and Agriculture. It is published by Palgrave Macmillan.

The book analyses the state of food security on four pillars: availability, access, utilisation, and stability. Additionally, it offers insights into key trends in food production, consumption, and access while combining data from the CARICOM Secretariat, Ministries of Agriculture, and other relevant institutions.



Dr Lystra Fletcher-Paul, co-author of *Food Security in the Caribbean*, with Faculty of Food and Agriculture Dean Prof Mark Wuddivira. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM



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## ■ UWI IN SOCIETY



# UWI/CAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

gives valuable work experience to students from T&T and the region

BY DIXIE-ANN BELLE

When Judha Marslier was first recruited into The UWI/Caribbean Airlines (CAL) internship programme, he little thought that he would be flying to Curaçao for the first time in his life as part of his work.

"I think everything amazed me," he recalls. "From checking in at the airport, to getting into my hotel room, it was exhilarating. [Through the internship] I've been to places, like resorts, that I had never imagined I'd be."

As part of the same programme, Nicholas Rambally vaguely knew that he would be involved with reservations and customer contact at CAL. However, his expectations were also shaken.

"Here I am one year later. I've had the opportunity to engage in projects that involve stakeholders from all different levels of management, not just in Trinidad." He says. "It's kind of rewarding to know that as a UWI intern, I was able to contribute to projects that impact the entire company."

Their experiences reflect the hopes pinned on this internship programme – the result of a collaboration between CAL and The UWI's Office of Global Affairs (OGA). It began after CAL CEO Garvin Medera approached the OGA in 2022 with a plan to engage students in an internship arrangement.

"CAL is on a growth trajectory, and as such, it is critical to ensure there is a consistent talent pipeline of skilled and educated graduates who will be trained in an aviation specific environment and are ready to meet our future manpower requirements," explains Ms Parmela Jurai, Manager, Talent Management and Employee Experience.

After meetings with the Deputy Principal, representatives from the Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD), the faculties of Engineering and Social Sciences, and Campus Legal, the first cohort of interns began in January 2023. A memorandum of understanding was signed to formalise the regional internship programme in October 2023.

## Over 15 interns from St Augustine, 6 from Cave Hill and Mona

As of October 2024, 15 St Augustine campus students have participated. Six interns have also been engaged from the Cave Hill and Mona campuses, supporting CAL operations teams in Barbados and Jamaica respectively. They have worked in areas such as marketing and revenue management, business optimisation, corporate communications, IT, finance, and in-flight and reservations.

They represent a variety of disciplines including Marketing, Economics, Management, Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, Banking and Finance, Accounting, Communication Studies, Human Resource Management and Project Management.



Senior Representatives of THE UWI and CAL at a signing ceremony for the partnership agreement. The signatories (second and third from left, front row respectively) are CAL CEO Mr Garvin Medera and UWI Vice-Chancellor Prof Sir Hilary Beckles.

"CAL is on a growth trajectory, and as such, it is critical to ensure there is a consistent talent pipeline of skilled and educated graduates who will be trained in an aviation specific environment and are ready to meet our future manpower requirements"

**Ms Parmela Jurai, Manager, Talent Management and Employee Experience**





“Internal collaboration to execute the programme has worked magnificently,” says Ms Lois St Brice, OGA’s Programme Officer. First, she outlines, CAL reaches out to them with specific roles they need filled, detailing the skills and competencies required. Then, the OGA communicates with UWI partners to coordinate the response. The resulting short-list of students then interview with CAL. They are chosen with their potential in customer service, problem solving and teamwork in mind.

St Brice says, “We, of course, are quite pleased that they have that experience under their belt and can build their confidence going into the world of work.”

While she says that the students have learned the technical competence they need in their courses, “in terms of the soft-skills development – in other words, teamwork; communication skills; working with stakeholders; developing emotional intelligence and self-awareness; being able to self-reflect; take feedback and incorporate that in how they move forward – all of these things will help shape them into being more culturally competent, empathetic and effective leaders”.

Both Marslier and Rambally say they learned skills which come best from a real-life work environment.

“I think the importance of soft skill development are what I’ve learned most from this internship,” reflects Marslier. “Whether that be networking, adapting, delegating, time management, prioritising tasks, etiquette, being pleasant and easy to work with.”

Rambally affirms, “This internship has taught me the importance of adaptability and collaboration because I’ve had to engage with stakeholders, not just from Trinidad, from Jamaica, from New York, from Tobago – all across the region.”

As a workplace, the interns find CAL’s environment inspiring. Rambally expresses his admiration for CAL’s emphasis on engagement with employees and making sure there is a positive working environment. Marslier admitted that he had challenges balancing the work and his course load, but resilience and passion carried him through. The fact that the work was fun and interesting also helped a lot, he says.

### CAL pleased with the students’ performance

St Brice recalls that CAL representatives were very clear from the beginning that the students’ work would impact the operations and strategy of CAL.

“So far, they’ve been quite pleased with how the students have performed and the value created for the company,” she said.

Jurai asserts that the addition of the interns “has provided us with new energy and vigour and has supported many of our strategic initiatives, especially in our Marketing and Corporate Communication Department”.

Jurai also notes that CAL sees the programme as a chance to contribute to the education and development of young Caribbean professionals.

The airline hopes to expand their partnerships with The UWI in the future. Plans are already forming for them to sponsor awards to high performing students in the upcoming graduation exercises. Students from all of The UWI’s five campuses will receive awards for degrees like the MSc Electrical and Computer Engineering, BSc Computer Science, BSc Marketing, BSc Statistics and Economics, and MSc Aviation Management.

St Brice describes CAL as a “preferred partner” because “they are doing it right”. She anticipates that other entities will see the benefit of working with the OGA.

“I think the message for industry is they want to have a forward-thinking approach to addressing their workforce needs, reflecting their strategic goals.” She adds, “The best way to do that is to groom your workforce of the future.” She points out, “This is a way not just to meet their own business goals, but also to give back to the society.”

Besides the opportunity for student career development and employment, St Brice says that it also gives them the ability to contribute to the region’s development. “Young people are very much willing and yearning for the opportunity to give back as well.”

Marslier’s advice for future interns? “Be humble, seek to create impact, be guided by continuous improvement, be proactive, look for project opportunities for growth where your skill set can take lead, and build genuine connections.”

St Brice hopes that more opportunities like this programme will arise for UWI students. She says they are looking forward to engaging more entities to provide career training opportunities, including in the growing knowledge process outsourcing (KPO) space. She also looks forward to seeing more opportunities for students in the creative arts and the humanities, as well as for students regionally.

## SCIENCE



PHOTO: BILL STAFFORD

# The Star Catcher

BY DIXIE - ANN BELL

**While many visionaries look at the night sky** and dream of travelling among them, very few actually take steps to grasp these dreams. As a child in Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Camille Wardrop Alleyne was unknowingly building the ladder which would bring her closer to the stars.

“I had a curiosity about the world around me,” she reminisces.

Her parents also encouraged a focus on education. The St Francois Girls alum also attributes her growth to attending an all-girls secondary school.

“That type of environment as a girl really allows you to just know that you could be anything,” she says. “No one there is saying, ‘oh, well, the boys should do math, and the boys should do science, and girls, you go and do home economics’.”

She adds, “We were expected to reach our potential, or be the best we could be. I think all of those ingredients were the foundations for me being successful in my career.”

Dr Alleyne has kept this attitude throughout the illustrious career she crafted in the following years. She left Trinidad and Tobago and pursued her interest in space, designing and developing space and rocket systems – a field where few people looked like her.

“I didn’t have women professors that I could look up to,” she recalls. “I had this innate passion and determination about everything I did in life, and so even though I didn’t have those kinds of role models around me, it was not going to deter me. I was very focused on accomplishing my dream and my passion.”

### Aerospace Engineer and Advocate

This tenacity rocketed her to becoming one of the most-recognised women in aerospace engineering, and one of the few women of colour senior leaders at NASA. She is also the first African American (she has US citizenship) to lead a major human spaceflight programme at the NASA Johnson Space Centre.

In January of this year, after 29 years, Dr Alleyne retired from NASA, but her contribution to technology and innovation is still in orbit. She has been working to ensure opportunities for others in space technology. In 2007, she founded The Brightest Stars Foundation, an organisation which provides mentorship for young women globally, encouraging interest in STEM.

As the featured speaker at the UWI RBL World of Work (WoW) Launch recently, Dr Alleyne was able to inspire students to explore their interests in the field of space technology. WoW is organised by the Department of Careers, Co-curricular and Community Engagement within UWI St Augustine’s Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD). The programme

allowed her to speak to girls from various secondary schools. (Editor’s Note: See coverage of The UWI RBL WoW Launch in this issue).

She advises students to make practical career choices: “When you spend all that time and you invest all that money for your higher education, you want to make sure that it’s in a field in which you can gain employment opportunities, or create opportunities.”

Dr Alleyne was also a panellist at the recent session of the CAF Innovation Series, hosted by The UWI and the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean. As they discussed “Accelerating Innovation-Based Economies in the Caribbean”, she was impressed with the wide variety of sectors represented in the discourse.

### Looking for Satellites

Currently, she is working on her own contributions as CEO and Founder of Arusha Space LLC, where she and her team explore global space solutions, some of which could change the way the Caribbean handles many of its pressing concerns.

“We are focused on using satellite technology or space based technologies for solving problems and for sustainable and socioeconomic development around the world. What that looks like is using satellites to map the earth and analysing the data. We use artificial intelligence and machine learning models to analyse the satellites that could inform us across many different domains.”

She believes that the region could one day have a dedicated satellite. This could help provide complete access to broadband internet, even in rural areas, from a source unaffected by weather conditions. She mentions how valuable satellites would be in agriculture and disaster preparedness. They can also help in the management of oil spills. Arusha Space developed maps for the recent Tobago oil spill.

“The Institute for Marine Affairs has a similar capability,” she explains, “but we are able to bring advanced analytic tools such as machine learning models to processing this satellite data.”

One day, Dr Alleyne hopes that these initiatives could make the Caribbean known for technology and innovation. Noting that the region has a well-deserved reputation for sun and sand, she observes, “But we can also be technologically advanced, and we could also be innovators and inventors.”

She adds, “I would love to see people from outside our region thinking about the Caribbean as technologically advanced and incorporating all these new technologies into our way of life.”

*Dixie-Ann Belle is a freelance writer, editor, and proofreader.*



## RESEARCH

# T&T Set to Face Unprecedented International Carbon Tariffs

## How can we prepare for a more climate-friendly world?

**UWI St Augustine Climate Policy Expert Dr Preeya Mohan leads report on the impact of Border Carbon Adjustment taxes on Trinidad and Tobago**



PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM

In October 2023, the European Union implemented its **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)**, a type of trade policy created to address climate change. And though most of us in T&T are unfamiliar with CBAM, similar policies are being developed all over the world which will have a profound effect on our trade relations, energy sector, and ultimately the economy.

"Trinidad and Tobago's economy could be significantly affected," says Dr Preeya Mohan, a senior research fellow at The UWI's Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES).

Dr Mohan is the lead researcher on a new publication entitled *Border Carbon Adjustments: Trinidad and Tobago Country Report*. The report looks at this emerging type of trade policy and its specific impacts on our society. But what are border carbon adjustments (BCAs), and why are they being implemented?

### The Carbon Footprint of Imports

In general, BCAs are a type of carbon tax that developed countries place on foreign imported goods to level the playing field with their own locally produced goods that are already required to meet their carbon emissions standards.

For example, if German importers bring in a product from the developing world, it would be taxed to reflect the carbon emissions in its production process just as German goods have additional production costs because of their strong national/regional climate policies.

Even more importantly, BCAs are designed to ensure that the fight against climate change is a shared, international effort.

"By making imported goods with high carbon footprints more expensive, BCAs incentivise domestic producers to adopt cleaner technologies and reduce their emissions," says Dr Mohan.

And the EU is just the beginning. The UK, Canada, Japan, and the US are considering implementing similar measures.

But what does that mean for countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, developing nations who export to these developed countries?

The purpose of Dr Mohan's research was to give a detailed analysis on just that. The BCA T&T report is part of a larger initiative by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), a Canada-based think tank. IISD has worked with nations to produce similar reports in Brazil and Vietnam, two other countries that will be affected by BCAs, and Canada and the UK, countries that may implement BCAs.

Dr Mohan explains, "IISD's primary objective was to determine the potential impacts of BCAs and to gather the perspectives of local stakeholders. Collaborating with a local research institution like The UWI was deemed essential to obtain this valuable information, which is crucial for the global report."



Dr Mohan at a stakeholder dialogue for the T&T report with (from left) Head Multilateral Environmental Agreements at the Ministry of Planning and Development Mr Kishan Kumarsingh, journalist Mr Ryan Bachoo, and Chairman of Kenesjay Green Ltd Mr Philip Julien.

### T&T's Carbon Conundrum

When it comes to taxing its carbon emissions, Trinidad and Tobago is in a special, and challenging, position. T&T is a developing, small island state but also a high-income country. Globally, our contribution to emissions is less than 0.1 percent, but our economy is heavily reliant on oil, gas, and petrochemicals. Collectively, the hydrocarbon sector accounts for 37 percent of GDP, 40 percent of government revenue, and a massive 80 percent of exports. That means that even though our portion of global emissions is very low, per capita we are high (over 20 metric tons).

And because T&T is a high-income country, our access to financing for climate friendly technologies and services is limited.

"Despite its high climate vulnerability as a SIDS exposed to sea-level rise and extreme weather events, Trinidad and Tobago faces challenges in accessing international climate finance required for decarbonisation and clean technology adoption," says Dr Mohan. "Limited financial resources and affordability of advanced technologies can hinder the country's ability to reduce its carbon footprint and comply with BCAs."

If the trends in carbon tax policies remain the same, then T&T will have no choice but to comply with BCAs. What that means for our economy will depend on the details of the policies developed by our trading partners in the developed world. Carbon-intensive exports such as ammonia, methanol, and fertilisers, which make up a massive share of our foreign trade business, could jump in price due

to BCA tariffs and become less competitive.

We could lose business, which will hurt the hydrocarbon sector, and likely lead to job losses in extraction, refining, manufacturing, and related sectors.

Dr Mohan adds, "The wider negative economic impacts include reduced foreign exchange earnings, government revenue, investment, and economic growth."

### The Climate Change Policy Era is now

So, how does T&T preserve its export business in the emerging environment? Dr Mohan says that we should not consider BCAs as an attack on developing countries. They are a response to climate change and are being developed and implemented to preserve the natural world from further industrial pollution and degradation.

"We are a high-polluting country, and we need to reduce our greenhouse gases," she says.

What is crucial, however, is for T&T and other developing nations to be closely involved in the creation of BCAs by the developed world to be sure the terms are fair and achievable. That work has already begun.

The country reports such as the ones done in T&T, Brazil, and Vietnam have been a major resource for information on the consequences of BCAs on these economies, and to get the perspectives of the many groups that represent the nation.

The T&T report, which took approximately six months to complete, included the perspectives of industry, government, labour unions, academia, civil society, and the financial sector. In general, the feedback has been mostly positive, as greater sustainability and new opportunities in the green economy are viewed favourably. Some, in fact, see the BCAs as a way to accelerate much-needed change in the measurement and reduction of emissions.

There are, however, some concerns. These include the need to finance the new technologies, training, etc to become compliant with robust national carbon policies, and the potential displacement of workers from the traditional, carbon-heavy industries.

Earlier this year, Dr Mohan and participants from around the world took part in a Global Stakeholder Dialogue hosted by the IISD to discuss BCA's and the way forward. More such meetings are scheduled to be held. The aim is for developing countries to represent their interests and ensure that BCAs properly balance the need for stronger climate policies with their economic survival.

"IISD is holding three stakeholder dialogues between October 24, 2024 and March 2025 to produce a set of principles to guide governments on the design and implementation of BCAs globally," says Dr Mohan. "The aim is to contribute to the development of fair, equitable, and effective BCAs that address the challenges of climate change and international trade."



### Steps T&T should take now

While representatives discuss BCA's in international meetings, there are several steps Trinidad and Tobago should take to prepare for these policies in their export markets.

#### 1. Implement a national measuring, reporting, and verification system (NRVS)

You can't determine how much you will have to pay in a carbon-related tariff or how much you have to reduce your emissions unless you have an accurate measurement of those emissions. T&T does not have an NRVS, which is a crucial first step in developing a national policy. Also, if we don't measure our emissions, countries with BCAs will set emissions values for us, and they will likely be much higher.

#### 2. Establish a domestic carbon pricing scheme

T&T should develop its own emissions tax within our domestic market. Not only will it help to fight pollution, it can be used to secure concessions from the import markets when determining the tariffs we face from their BCAs.

#### 3. Invest in clean technologies and energy efficiency

While this may not be the first step, it is perhaps one of the most important. T&T must shift their technologies and practices towards greater sustainability. Notably, we have already been making advances in areas like green hydrogen.

#### 4. Give workers the skills necessary for a low-carbon economy

There must be a shift in the training available for T&T's workforce. In order to change the sustainability landscape, T&T must have workers who are able to work in this landscape and jobs to accommodate them.

#### 5. Engage with BCA-implementing and BCA-affected countries

This has, as we've seen, already been happening, but apart from helping to design BCA policies, these engagements can also potentially help T&T find ways to fund their carbon reduction initiatives, source technology and training, and even be granted exemptions or delayed implementations on certain tariffs.

#### 6. Diversify the economy

Our dependence on the energy sector has been a persistent economic vulnerability for decades. International policies related to climate change will only intensify the risk of that dependence.

#### ■ To see the full T&T BCA report visit:

<https://www.iisd.org/publications/report/border-carbon-adjustments-trinidad-and-tobago>



**FROM LEFT:** Ms Vianney-Marie Williams - student testimonial speaker, Mrs Wynell Gregorio - Director of UWI St Augustine's Marketing and Communications Office, Ms Michelle Dindial - Branch Sales Manager at RBL UWI, Dr Camille Wardrop-Alleyne - aerospace engineer and space scientist, Ms Kathy-Ann Lewis - Ag Director of the Division of Student Services and Development, and Mr Khamal Georges - Communications Lead for the Caribbean at CAF Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean.

## Rocket Scientist Dr Camille Wardrop Alleyne Prepares Students to Launch their Careers

### UWI RBL World of Work 2024/2025 Programme Takes Off

BY JEANNETTE GAWAI

**Three years is the length of time it took** for UWI St Augustine campus's Careers, Co-curricular and Community Engagement Department (of the Division of Student Services and Development) to land featured speaker Dr Camille Wardrop Alleyne for The UWI RBL World of Work (WOW) Seminar and Launch.

But when Dr Alleyne, a renowned aerospace engineer, space scientist, and entrepreneur, found out that the 2024 theme was "Mission: Planet World of Work: Prepare to Launch", the stars aligned.

Dr Alleyne's presence at the event was made possible by the support of the CAF Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean - and generated much excitement among the audience of students, faculty, and administrators who gathered to discover the history and highlights of the WOW programme. The event, held annually, remains a permanent fixture among The UWI's student engagement activities with the aim of shaping the future professionals with the skills they need to succeed.

As outlined by Deputy Principal Professor Derek Chadee, "This generation can redefine industries, create solutions for burning issues, and develop the technologies that will power the next century. That's why this programme is so crucial. It's not just preparing you for jobs — it's preparing you to be leaders, change-makers, and innovators."

Michelle Joseph-Dindial, Branch Sales Manager, Republic Bank UWI Branch, emphasised that, as WOW's title sponsor, "Republic Bank is here to support you every step of the way, whether in your academic life, your career, or the personal milestones that are part of your unique path to success."

Successful WOW graduands gave testimonies about the way the programme allowed them to adjust to the dynamic nature of the workforce through workshops and seminars in areas such as resume building, interview preparation, LinkedIn optimisation, and developing their personal brand, among others.

After an almost five-minute introduction of her extensive credentials, Dr Alleyne joked that "we would have been here all day!" and talked openly about the trajectory it took for her career to take orbit. She stressed that the key to navigating your career is embracing unpredictability and believing in yourself. From a young age, she let her curiosity and intelligence guide her into distant, unknown spaces, even when faced with rejection.

"Follow your passion," she said. "My passion was space.... I wanted to be an aerospace engineer, and people may look at you sideways, but that didn't deter me. You just



Students listen intently to Dr Wardrop-Alleyne's message.

have to believe in yourself, even when other people around you don't."

This persistence enabled her to chart a path to the top of NASA, where she served as a senior leader for over 29 years. She underscored the need for students to find mentors and reach for the stars, even if the destination is uncharted territory.

"The formula for me is dreaming big dreams, discovering your life's calling, believing in yourself, and your power to manifest your dreams will lead you to reach your fullest potential," she said.

After 23 years, The UWI RBL programme continues to take students' careers into new multiverses because, according to Ag Director of the Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD) Kathy-Ann Lewis, "We have developed a tried-and-proven blueprint for designing interventions that are responsive to the needs of our students and stakeholders."

Access Dr Alleyne's speech as well as other memorable moments from The UWI RBL World of Work 2024/2025 Launch and Seminar at The UWI St. Augustine YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T65O-CbTFY>

For more information on UWI RBL World of Work, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/wow/>





## ■ UWI / GUARDIAN PREMIUM TEACHING AWARDS

“Education is not just about filling minds,” said Professor Brian Cockburn, “it’s about lighting fires.”

The Dean of UWI St Augustine’s Faculty of Science and Technology was speaking in his capacity as Acting Campus Principal at an event created specifically to celebrate those fire starters, the igniters of higher education, who sparked students’ minds.

Held in late September at the St Augustine Campus’s LRC Auditorium, The UWI/Guardian Group Premium Teaching Awards honours faculty members for their excellence as educators. This year’s awardees were Dr Yomica Powder-George, Dr Letetia Addison, and Dr Freddy James.

The ceremony was themed “Empowering Educators, Enriching Learners: The AI Education Era”. Professor Mike Sharples, Emeritus Professor of Educational Technology at UK-based institution The Open University, gave the keynote address, which focused on the impact of artificial intelligence on education.

Ms Samanta Saugh, President of Guardian Life of the Caribbean, said “Artificial intelligence represents one of the greatest opportunities to revolutionise how we work, learn and grow. We must embrace it as a tool for progress, with care, wisdom and integrity.”

Since 2000, the Guardian Group has partnered with The UWI’s Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) to host the Premium Teaching Awards and The UWI/Guardian Group Premium Open Lecture Series. CETL calls the awards an “innovative partnership celebrating teaching excellence at the St Augustine Campus”.

### The Impact of Educators

“For me,” Dr Addison, a Project Officer II at the University Office of Planning, said, “teaching has always been a true vocation and lifelong calling which I treasure deeply.”

Previously featured in UWI TODAY for her work as T&T’s Ambassador to the Women in Data Science Worldwide Conference, she said the Premium Teaching award “is a testament not only to my dedication to advancing Mathematics and Statistics Education but also to the commitment of everyone who has supported me along the way—my colleagues, students, family, and mentors.”

She added, “More than anything, I view this award as a reflection of the impact we can have as educators. It is a sign that the effort we put into creating inclusive, innovative, and meaningful learning environments truly makes a difference in shaping the minds of our students and preparing them for the future.”

Dr Powder-George, a Lecturer in Organic Chemistry at the FST, called the award “a profound honour” and “a testament to the dedication and passion I have for my students and the subject matter I teach”.

She added, “everything I do is for my students, so knowing that my intentional efforts to create inclusive, engaging and supportive learning environments have been recognised in this way is very humbling.”

Dr Powder-George was also proud to be a representative of the Department of Chemistry, and their first Premium Teaching Award winner.

For Dr Freddy James, Deputy Dean of Graduate Studies and Research and Senior Lecturer at UWI St Augustine’s School of Education, it has been a season of accolades. Last year, she was recognised as Most Outstanding Faculty Researcher in the Faculty of Humanities and Education at the Principal’s Research Awards 2023.

In a recent interview, she described one of the innovations she uses in teaching and learning that has the most impact as “a problem-based or lab-based approach” which she learned from a team she partnered with in Finland.

“It is a problem solving approach,” she said, “and using human-centred pedagogy in order to work out solutions. Everything you need to learn in terms of the content of a particular course you bring into play, but it is done with the focus of solving a problem.”



FROM LEFT: Awardees Dr Freddy James, Dr Yomica Powder-George, and Dr Letetia Addison. PHOTO: ADRIEL SALANDY

# ‘Everything I do is for my students’

## St Augustine campus educators recognised for excellence at UWI/Guardian Group Premium teaching Awards

BY JOEL HENRY

This approach, she said, “has helped motivate students to learn. It has really empowered students to want to learn.”

Dr James is currently partnering with the International Forums of Inclusion Practitioners to foster inclusive educational practices globally.

### Student-centred Approach

In her teaching, Dr Powder-George said she uses a student-centred approach, which emphasises the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a blueprint for creation, coupled with a variety of innovative teaching strategies to scaffold learning and make organic chemistry accessible and relevant to her students.

As a researcher focused on applications of plant natural products and their synthetic derivatives, she hopes, she said, “to see and be a part of strengthening regional interdisciplinary collaborations in Natural Products Chemistry through knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and the development of joint research projects with emphasis on the application of research to address regional challenges”.

Dr Addison, who is both a data scientist and advocate for the growth of data science in the Caribbean, said her goal at The UWI is to keep advancing innovative approaches to teaching, particularly by integrating AI and data-driven methods into subjects like Mathematics and Statistics, which can be challenging for many students.

“Beyond The UWI,” she added, “I am eager to expand my work into more international collaborations focused on climate resilience, sustainability, and the role of data in solving global challenges. I also want to continue advocating for gender diversity and inclusivity in STEM.”

### A Special Recognition

The three awardees were not the only ones to receive recognition at the ceremony. CETL Director Dr Leroy Hill and Faculty Development Specialist Dr Justin Zephyrine presented a special award to Professor Indar Ramnarine, the former Deputy Principal of UWI St Augustine. Prof Ramnarine, who recently retired, is a distinguished scientist. He served as Deputy Principal from 2017 to 2024, and in that post he was deeply involved in the provision of student services, and was an advocate for students.

“His leadership and expertise have been instrumental in shaping policies and initiatives that promote sustainable resource management and environmental protection,” said CETL. “As the founding Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology, Professor Ramnarine led a major curriculum revision, introducing innovative programmes in technology and science.”

CETL Director Dr Leroy Hill and Faculty Development Specialist Dr Justin Zephyrine presented a special award to Professor Indar Ramnarine, the former Deputy Principal of UWI St Augustine.

■ To view videos of the UWI/Guardian Group Premium Teaching Award winners, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/@uwistaugustine>

■ For more information on the partnership between The UWI and the Guardian Group, visit: <https://sta.uwi.edu/cetl/>



Premium Teaching Awards 2024



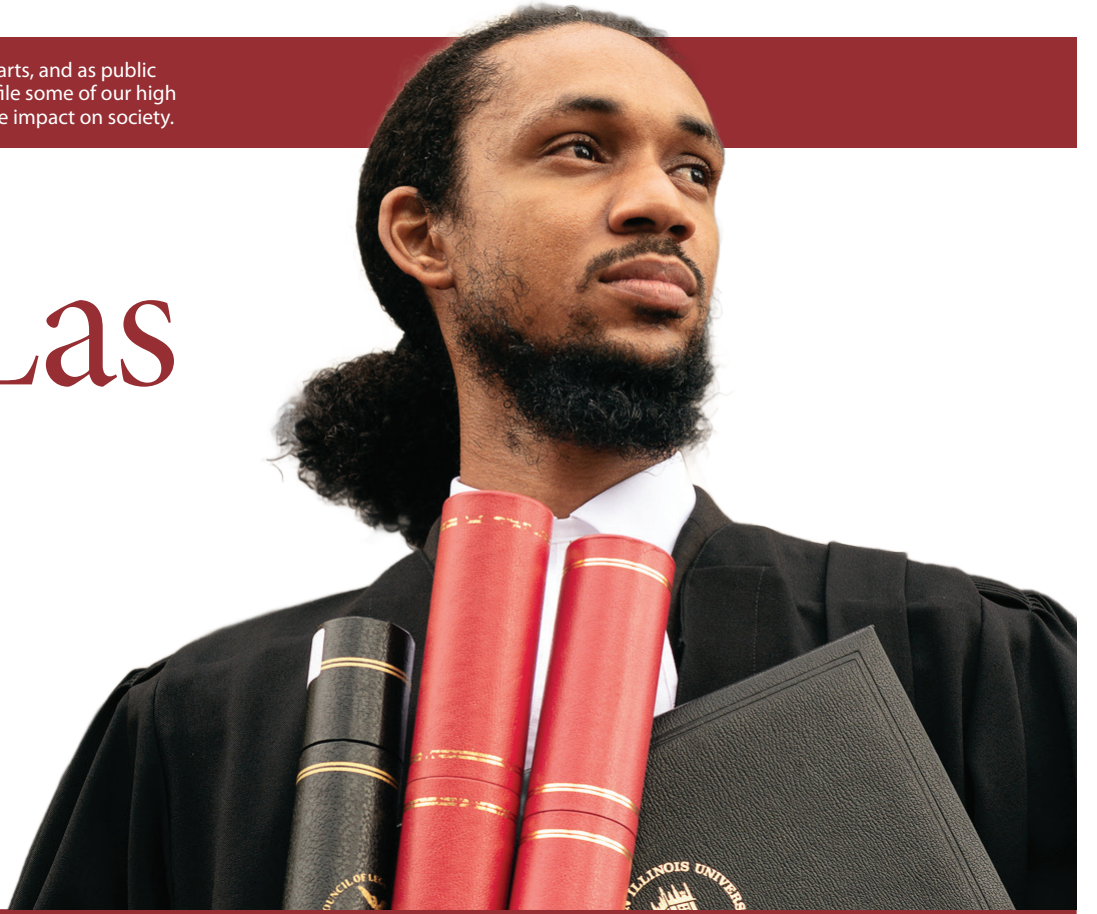
## ■ OUR GRADUATES

**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.

# Khion De Las

## The Student, The Teacher and The Conductor

BY SHEREEN ALI



**Have you ever heard a piece of music that just made you stop in your tracks?** Music notes that are so intoxicating that you have no choice but to stop and surrender? And then, as time passes, you remember exactly where you were and what you were doing when you heard it?

For me, that experience was hearing Affairs of the Heart by Damian “Junior Gong” Marley being played on the steelpan at the installation ceremony for former UWI Chancellor Mr Robert Bermudez in September 2017. When I heard those first few notes of the infectious beat from the popular song, my entire body stopped mid-stride. What was this rendition? What were these notes and tones that were transforming this song that I already loved? And there, on stage, was pannist Khion De Las.

Khion’s performance was transcendent. It blended seamlessly with the background track, and his movements intertwined with the rhythm of the music.

### The Passion and the Goal

He describes music as always being the career that he intended to follow. While acknowledging his interest in studying languages, music was always the passion and the goal. His determination has seen him earn a Bachelor of Arts in Musical Arts and a Masters of Music, and he is currently pursuing a PhD in Cultural Studies at The UWI St Augustine. Surprisingly, Khion also holds a Bachelor of Laws degree, a Postgraduate Certificate in University Teaching and Learning, and a Legal Education Certificate.

With all these letters to his name, he has crafted a well thought-out and interwoven career for himself with two disciplines that seem very different at face value.

“In addition to being an Instructor in Musical Arts,” he proudly explains, “I am also the co-director of The UWI Arts Steel, along with Mr Jessel Murray. I am also the Director of The UWI Arts Jazz Ensemble. I am a performer, arranger, composer, producer and songwriter. Finally, I am an Attorney-at-Law, specialising in Entertainment Law and Intellectual Property.”

Khion has performed the world over, and describes his most memorable performance as being that at the Yeosu International Youth Festival in South Korea, where he played the steelpan in front of 50,000 people.

He describes his musical upbringing as humble, as his first exposure to music was piano lessons at age five. His parents were not able to afford a piano or a keyboard. To encourage the budding musician, his father jumped at the opportunity to purchase “an old, spray painted,

### ■ CONDUCTOR INSIDER INFO



***Have you ever wondered what the hand movements of an orchestra’s conductor means? Here’s what Khion had to say:***

“The hand movements communicate both the time signature the music is being played in as well as the tempo the music is to be played. The conductor keeps the group in sync. Additionally, hand movements also cue various instrument sections as to when they are supposed to play or stop playing even while other sections may continue to play. Each musician has their individual part on the music score in front of them but the conductor has everyone’s part on a full score. The conductor therefore has to read everyone’s parts simultaneously and use one hand to cue various parts, indicate dynamic changes (loud, soft etc) all whilst using the other hand to maintain time signature and tempo.”

slightly rusted tenor pan for the price of \$600”. He fondly recalls returning home from his Saturday morning piano classes and practicing on this tenor pan.

Khion can now play almost an orchestra’s worth of instruments, including guitar, drums, bass and saxophone. He is also a vocalist. And he isn’t stopping there. Currently, he has his eyes set on learning brass instruments like the trombone and the trumpet.

### Many Meaningful Careers in the Arts

So what does the musician himself listen to? He enjoys heavy metal, UK drill music, and local genres Trinidad and Zess, which are actually the focuses of his PhD dissertation. When asked who he would choose to collaborate with if the opportunity presented itself, US hip hop artiste Eminem seems like a surprising choice, but as Khion goes on to describe the fusion of hip hop beats with the notes of the steelpan, it makes one wonder why it hasn’t already been done.

The conductor, teacher, student and lawyer speaks positively about the opportunities that now exist for meaningful careers in the Arts industry. Khion explains that while there was once a time when career options were limited, people who are interested in the industry can now become managers, technicians, sound designers, composers, animators, costume designers and more. He encourages artists and artistes to think outside the box and seek out possibilities for consultancies and partnerships with other industries.

For those hoping to enter the music industry, Khion advises, “Music as an art form is so diverse that a musician can be an artiste, producer and still so much more. Various music skills often complement each other. Therefore, your focus should not only be on being one thing.”

And for anyone who might be doubting the value and benefits of a music education, he reminds them that learning music requires multitasking and is both physically and mentally stimulating, and the skills that one gains in music education can be easily transferred into other aspects of life. Music provides an outlet for self-expression, creativity and self-worth.

*Shereen Ali is a writer, photographer and a storyteller at heart.*



## ■ OUR PEOPLE

# Unlocking the Ocean's Mysteries

## Dr Diva Amon's Journey to Map and Save the World's Deepest Ecosystems

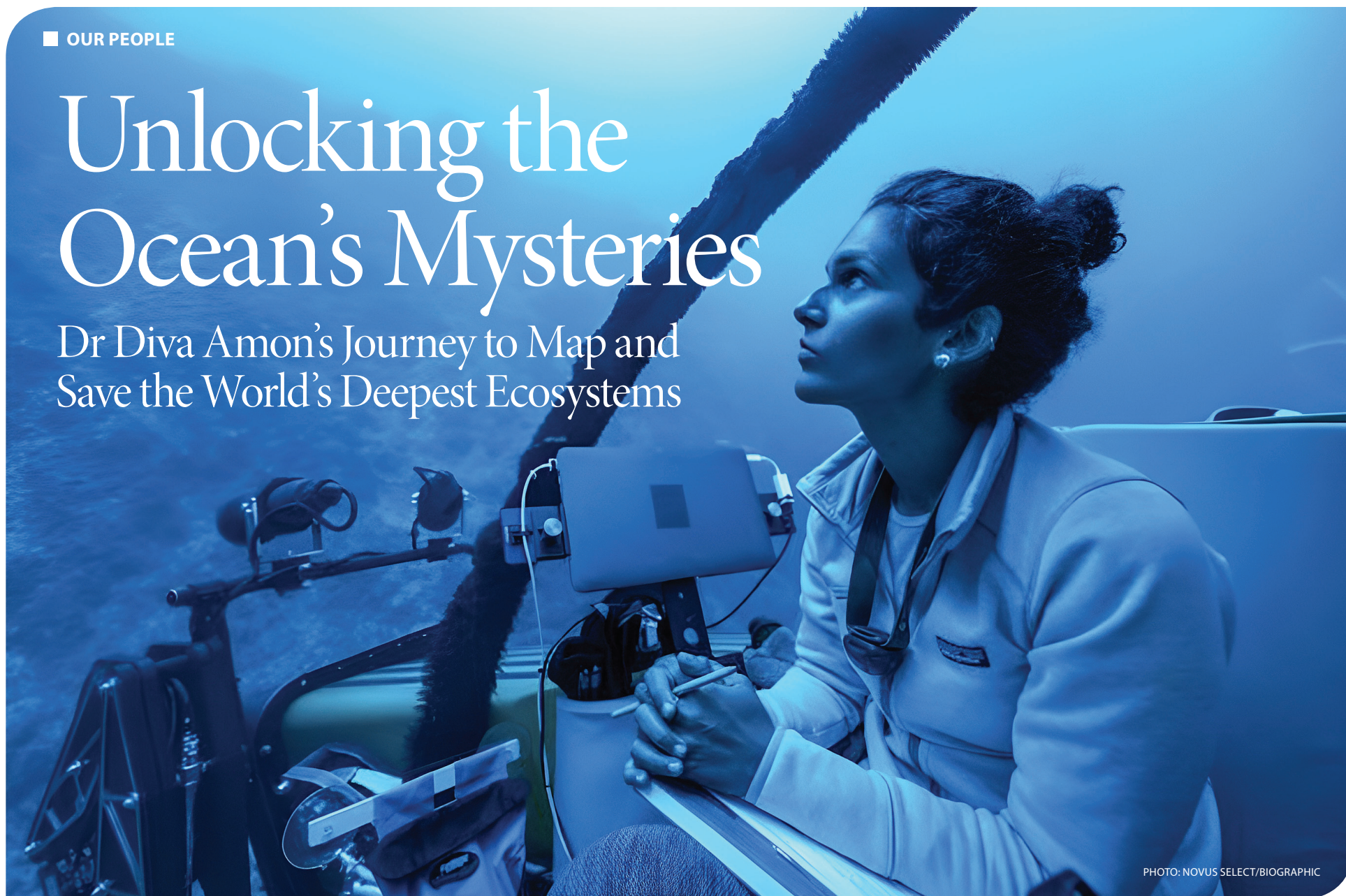


PHOTO: NOVUS SELECT/BIOGRAPHIC

BY KIERAN ANDREW KHAN

**Dr Diva Amon is one of the Caribbean's leading marine biologists**, a critical role that few understand the importance of, and even fewer undertake as a field of study and work. As a species, we have come to view the oceans as a space for enjoyment and leisure or as a trade and transport route. Most of our understanding of the importance of these vast bodies of water is based on what we can see of the sea. What lies beneath is, perhaps, even more remarkable and important. And that's exactly where Dr Amon's story starts.

Growing up on the shores of Trinidad and Tobago, Diva was drawn to the ocean long before she realised just how far her fascination would take her.

"My parents would take me to the beach, and I was always in the water, snorkelling or on a boat," she recalls. "I remember looking down into the water, just wishing I could see all the animals I knew were down there."

Today, Dr Amon is a Visiting Research Fellow at The UWI, combining her love for the ocean with her passion for marine science. She most recently made the news as the winner of the 2024 Anthony N Sabga Award for Excellence in the field of Science and Technology. But her path to becoming a marine biologist wasn't always clear. Like many children in the Caribbean, she initially considered more traditional career routes, influenced by perceived expectations.

"I was strongly considering medicine at one point," she admits, "but my parents encouraged me



Dr Amon with her MPhil students at The UWI.

PHOTO: KYLE FOSTER



## ■ OUR PEOPLE

to think about what I truly loved, and that's when I recognised the ocean and nature were my true passions."

This decision set her on a course of exploration and discovery, one that has taken her from the shores of the Caribbean to some of the most remote and mysterious corners of the planet. After completing her undergraduate studies in the UK, she returned to Trinidad to work at the Institute of Marine Affairs before pursuing a PhD and postdoctoral research, with short stints back at home. In 2014, while at The University of Hawaii at Manoa, Diva learned of a research expedition through Professor Judith Gobin at The UWI, one of the Caribbean's leading marine biologists, with a shared interest in the deep sea.

"Given that I had not done a research cruise in Trinidad and Tobago waters, I knew I had to be part of it," Amon explains. "I had worked around the world, but never in my own deep-sea backyard."

That research is also necessary for the region. Despite our knowledge of the deep sea for oil and gas purposes primarily, we still know so little of the waters that wash every shore of every Caribbean island.

Now back home, as a Visiting Fellow at UWI, Dr Amon is co-supervising three MPhil students. Their research focuses on the largely unexplored deep waters of the Caribbean, an ecosystem that comprises 86 percent of the region's ocean but remains poorly understood.

"We're just beginning to uncover the mysteries of our deep-sea environment," she says. "It's exciting to be part of that journey, especially with students who are as passionate about marine science as I am."

### **Coral is the Canary in the Coal Mine**

Beyond the joys of her field work – that have taken her swimming with manta rays in the Maldives and sperm whales in the Azores, and visiting areas of the ocean that few human beings have ever laid eyes on in Antarctica and the Mariana Trench – is the necessity of better knowing, understanding and valuing our oceans. And while there is hope, there is need for concern and meaningful action.

"The path we are on is a dangerous one – most people will not understand what has already been set into motion across our planet. Having a trained eye, it's been difficult for me to return to scuba diving right here in T&T where I first started. I can see the losses of the coral and the animals dependent on them around our islands. The loss of coral is really just the canary in the coal mine. In the deep ocean, the temperature changes may be even more impactful given that the animals there may only exist in much smaller temperature ranges."

As the oceans become more acidic, less oxygen-rich and warmer, there will be significant losses in other biodiversity and ecosystem services, too. Dr Amon reminds us that the ocean is also our "biggest ally" against climate change, noting that "it is one of the biggest resources for absorbing heat and sequestering carbon", and that as we gradually damage this resource, the vicious cycle that surrounds climate change intensifies.

"It's poignant that there is almost no place on earth that human activity has not affected – we are finding microplastics even in the deep ocean. We live on a planet with finite resources. We need to think about how we live, each of us, the choices we make each day, and push for legislative changes, too," she says.



PHOTO: TBA21-ACADEMY

**Dr Amon is a Visiting Research Fellow at The UWI, combining her love for the ocean with her passion for marine science. She most recently made the news as the winner of the 2024 Anthony N Sabga Award for Excellence in the field of Science and Technology.**



PHOTO: ALICE JONES

### **Developing Capacity Can Lead to Action**

Beyond the classroom, Dr Amon continues to lead deep-sea expeditions and research projects, striving to close the knowledge gap and promote conservation of the world's oceans.

"Marine science is not just about discovering new species or ecosystems," she notes. "It's about using that knowledge to inform the conservation of these areas for future generations."

She believes in both top-down and bottom-up approaches to change, and works with younger minds and decision-makers through education and policy development respectively.

In so doing, she has also become one of the more visible media faces of the deep ocean, most recently collaborating with major media organisations including National Geographic, Disney+ and Curiosity Stream, and working with Hollywood mega stars like Will Smith to get the message out. She is also a National Geographic Explorer and World Economic Forum Friend of Ocean Action.

Recently, Diva also appeared on the globally-acclaimed, Emmy-award winning HBO show, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver to discuss the impacts of deep-sea mining for metals and resources found on nodules that are incredibly valuable for energy transitions away from fossil fuels. Her pioneering work also includes her co-founding role of SpeSeas, an organisation dedicated to marine research, education and advocacy in Trinidad and Tobago.

According to the UN, 40 percent of the world's population lives near the coast, and more than 3 billion people depend on the ocean for their livelihoods. The blue economy, or a sustainable ocean-based economy, is key to the survival and well-being of billions directly and the planet as a whole. Despite the implementation challenges, Dr Amon expresses a deep and genuine hope for the future.

"What gives me hope is the younger generation," she says. "Every time I do a school or university visit, it inspires me how much young people care and how much they want to see a better planet for all, through their own actions and advocacy."

Her work at The UWI, in the media, and literally in the deep waters of the ocean is a testament to the importance of understanding and preserving the status quo of our most indispensable resource, particularly in a region where it is so critical for lives and livelihoods. And for Diva, every dive, every expedition, just like every media appearance, discussion or school visit, is another step towards achieving that goal.



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# Bringing our Stories to Life with Bold Design

BY KIERAN ANDREW KHAN

### A good story can live in any format.

That simple premise is being explored by Jeunanne Alkins, founder and creative director of Everything Slight Pepper, who has been challenging the impact that good design can have across multiple spheres of life.

Creativity runs deep in the Caribbean, where vibrant colours, diverse cultures, and unique stories meld into a unique tapestry. Yet through her unique perspectives on life, Alkins has carved out a space that celebrates the beauty and identity of Caribbean life, wrapped in witty, engaging designs and storytelling that resonate locally and internationally with audiences of all ages.

From her early childhood in Trinidad and Tobago, Alkins was captivated by the world of art and design.

"I was fascinated by the graphic elements of ads like Coca-Cola and their clever designs," she explains. "That's when I realised I was drawn to graphic design."

Dabbling with computers at her parent's business place, Alkins soon realised that she had a knack for design, and soon her mother connected her with soca artiste Denise Belfon, for whom she produced a CD cover.

"Looking back at my earlier work was eye-opening since I have recently gotten into some aspects of design for what I thought was the first time, when in reality I had been dabbling with certain media and formats in design since I was a teenager," Alkins points out.

Her career started taking form with studies at The Caribbean School of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) at UWI Mona, where she explored all multimedia disciplines in 2002.

"That experience at CARIMAC taught me the value of exploring storytelling across various types of media, and left me with an incredible network of media professionals," she says. "One thing that I find very rewarding about my studies at UWI Mona, aside from the programme, is the people who all have this regionalist perspective on what it means to be from the Caribbean. In our own ways, we are all working to bring awareness to what connects us as Caribbean people, rather than what makes us different from each other."

Jeunanne quickly found a home at MACO, one of the leading lifestyle publication brands in the Caribbean, where she honed her design skills. Eventually, she led a graphic design team that worked closely with dozens of other creatives, including photographers, writers, and sales teams, to build that brand into one of the best lifestyle publications to this day.

"One of the best pieces of advice I can give to young or emerging designers – and I do take time to mentor as much as I can – is to work with a design team when you just start out. It helps you to understand the nuances of working in a

team with different personalities, and understand aspects of business before you embark on creating your brand or starting your business," she says.

She did just that.

### The Creation of Everything Slight Pepper

After leaving MACO, and along with her colleague-turned-friend Shelley De Melliack, Alkins immediately dove into several significant projects that veered away from her comfort zone of magazine design. The projects piled on, including work on a beach house publication, one of photographer Noel Norton's books, and eventually, Machel Montano's *Boy Boy and the Magic Drum* children's storybook, the latter of which left an impression. Having explored the design world's potential, Alkins opened one of her many upcoming businesses, starting with her design studio.

The name "Everything Slight Pepper" was inspired by the ubiquitous Trinidadian street food, doubles, and the uniquely Caribbean phrase "slight pepper", a nod to how people order their food with just the right amount of spice. Alkins chose this name not only for its cultural resonance, but for its deeper meaning.

"Doubles is the greatest unifier," she explains. "It's enjoyed by everyone, regardless of race or class, and it's





Her career started taking form with studies at The Caribbean School of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) at UWI Mona, where she explored all multimedia disciplines in 2002.



affordable to all. That's the essence I wanted in my brand – something everyone could connect to."

Launched in December 2009, Everything Slight Pepper quickly became known for its vibrant, clever designs, from consumer goods to children's books to cultural products. By tapping into the stories and traditions of the Caribbean, Alkins has created brand identities that evoke a sense of pride and joy in our heritage.

"For me, it's about capturing the essence of our culture," she says. "The Caribbean is filled with stories, and I want to be a part of preserving and sharing them."

### Embracing Caribbean Stories and Identity

Alkins's designs are far more than aesthetically pleasing—they serve as cultural artifacts that preserve the stories of the Caribbean. From her work on the children's storybook *Boy Boy and the Magic Drum*, she eventually created her own universe of children's storybooks that have appeared almost everywhere in T&T.

"We're living in a time where our culture is being influenced by so many external factors," she notes. "It's important that we create spaces where our stories can thrive, where Caribbean people can see themselves and their experiences reflected in a way that is authentic and celebratory."

Her stories and those she collaborated with others on include *Ready. Set. Hatch!* (about sea turtles that visit our North Coast), *Alex the Awesome and the Crazy Quest for the Golden Pod* (about our Trinitario cocoa) and *The Most Magnificent* (about the Magnificent Seven buildings that grace the Queen's Park Savannah). In October 2024,

she released *Play Ah Mas*, which will reach meaningfully into the stories and characters of Trinbagonian Carnival to reimagine our mysterious and traditional Carnival characters for an entirely new generation of youngsters.

"This is the first in a series in the edtech space where, through the brand Bright Eyed, we are going to make learning fun, and delve into our culture and our stories," she explains. "*Play Ah Mas* is very collaborative, with artwork from Nicholas Huggins and Adira Khan, and also features lyrics by Keron Boodoosingh, and of course, the stories from yours truly. We are basically teaching students in a way that is fresh and eye-catching."

While she does not wax poetic about the creative process, she does highlight an overlooked challenge in education: "Think about why textbooks are boring and story books aren't – it's just a matter of good design."

In November, Bright Eyed will make its global debut as its founder heads to Finland for the Hundred Innovation Summit, where she will showcase the brand's vision for edtech that bridges the gap between cultural education and technology-enabled learning experiences. This summit is an exciting opportunity to present the Caribbean's vibrant storytelling tradition on a global stage.

### Expanding Horizons at UWI St Augustine

Alkins also recently concluded her part-time lecturer position for the Design Lab Level 3 course in the Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA) at UWI St Augustine.

In the classroom, she introduced students to the wide range of possibilities within the design field.

"I wanted to show them that there's more than just 'graphic design' – you can work in branding, product design, even environmental design," she says.

She also brought several real-world practitioners from her network to provide context. Much like her design work, her teaching philosophy emphasises simplicity and cleverness.

"Good design doesn't need to be complicated. It needs to resonate with people."

And though she considers herself more of a 'true true creative' than an outright entrepreneur, she reminds anyone embarking on that journey to remember strong foundations including trademarking, protecting your ideas and IP, and always ensuring that you work with strong systems in place, including financial and legal ones.

### Building a Lasting Legacy

In the fast-changing world of design and creativity, Jeunanne has managed to carve out her unique space, blending her passion for Caribbean culture with her drive for innovation. While her body of work for clients grows, she has also leveraged her design talents to build her own creative initiatives and share her own stories – which are part of our collective stories.

That's how we craft the Caribbean's creative tapestry – one story, one design, one cultural thread at a time, each more vibrant than the last.

You can find Bright Eyed on [wearebrighteyed.com](https://wearebrighteyed.com) and @wearebrighteyed on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.



"It's important that we create spaces where our stories can thrive, where Caribbean people can see themselves and their experiences reflected in a way that is authentic and celebratory."





# The UWI Calendar of Events | November 2024

## Sepsis and AMR in Veterinary Medicine – Implications for Animal and Human November 7

ONLINE

The aim of this webinar is to equip professional and student veterinarians, as well as other healthcare professionals, with the knowledge and skills to identify factors that contribute to antimicrobial resistance among humans and animals. This will enable effective intervention to improve detection, treatment, and reduce transmission between species. Speakers include Dr Sani Muhammad, Veterinary Pharmacology and Toxicology Specialist at UWI St Augustine's School of Veterinary Medicine, and Dr Paul Cadogan, Veterinary Inspector for the Government Veterinary Services Division in Jamaica.

**To register, go to: <https://bit.ly/csa-veterinary-webinar>.  
For more information, visit the School of Veterinary Medicine at <https://sta.uwi.edu/fms/vet/>**

## 2024 National Health Research Conference November 22 Hyatt Regency Trinidad, Port-of-Spain

Join healthcare professionals, researchers, and representatives of government health-related entities for this important conference on ideas, technologies, and the evolution of the health sector in Trinidad and Tobago. Titled "Digital Health Transformation: Leveraging Technology for Better Care", this event – now in its fifth year – is the forum where research findings are shared with the sector to influence decision-making to address the T&T's health priorities. This year's conference will feature 85 research papers on infectious diseases, chronic non-communicable diseases, clinical/laboratory studies, and more.

**To register, visit [www.healthresearchconferencett.com/registration](http://www.healthresearchconferencett.com/registration)  
For more information, go to [www.healthresearchconferencett.com](http://www.healthresearchconferencett.com)  
or email [researchconferencett@gmail.com](mailto:researchconferencett@gmail.com)**

## The UWI SPEC International Half-Marathon and 5k November 10 St Augustine

Put on your running, jogging, and fast-walking shoes and come out to this beloved athletic event. Every year, participants at all levels take part in the half-marathon and 5K races, running for glory, to test the limits of their endurance, or just to have an entertaining outing with friends, colleagues, and other runners. This year, UWI SPEC is partnering with The Dyslexia Association of T&T to raise awareness and raise funds for teacher training and outreach activities.

**For more information on the half-marathon and 5K races,  
and to register, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/spec/marathon>**

**The UWI SPEC International Half-Marathon & 5K**  
18th Edition  
**Sunday 10 November, 2024**  
Half-Marathon: 5:00 am | 5K: 5:15 am  
Get up & Move to raise awareness for Dyslexia  
**PACE YOURSELF TO VICTORY!**



## Principal's Research Awards 2024 November 14 and 15 St Augustine Campus

Breakthroughs in the arts, sciences, engineering, food and agriculture, sports and others will be celebrated yet again this year at the Principal's Research Awards. Researchers whose work has the potential to better communities, support economic development, protect the vulnerable, and help us better understand the mysteries of existence, will have their awards presented on November 14. This year, two new awards have been introduced - the Hurricane and Earthquake Alleviation Research (HEAR) Award and the Most Outstanding Early Career Researcher Award. On November 15, the awardees will be invited to present at the Principal's Research Awards Conference under the theme "Research by All and Research for All". In addition, a process map for developing the Campus Research Agenda for the 2025-2030 five-year period will be rolled out during the conference.

**For more information, visit the official Principal's Research Awards site at <https://sta.uwi.edu/researchawards/>**



## World Cocoa and Chocolate Day Expo 2024 November 29 and 30 Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Cultural Cooperation Mt Hope

Come be a part of the cocoa revolution! Farmers, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, and academics have helped to revitalise T&T's cocoa sector. This event, hosted by UWI St Augustine's Cocoa Research Centre, will showcase the products and services of emerging cocoa and chocolate entrepreneurs, and share their journey on the path to business success. WCCD10 will also feature the products of cocoa producers and cooperatives, as well as the cultural activities of rural communities that have developed traditions around this crop. And for those who love chocolate in its many varieties, the expo will give them ample opportunity to enjoy chocolate goodies and the culinary creations of cocoa innovators.

**For more information, email Ms Antoinette Sankar at [Antoinette.Sankar@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:Antoinette.Sankar@sta.uwi.edu). Or visit the Cocoa Research Centre website at <https://sta.uwi.edu/cru/>**