



This Way to Your Future!



Two students have a playful moment during The UWI Life New Student Orientation held on August 28 at the St Augustine Campus's Sport and Physical Education Centre (SPEC). UWI Life was one of several campus activities created to welcome new students at the start of Academic Year 2026/2027 and familiarise them with their home for higher education. They were also formally welcomed to the campus community at the matriculation ceremony and enjoyed music, games, food, live performances and other activities at Guild Fest. All together, these events aimed to make their transition to campus life as smooth—and enjoyable—as possible. PHOTO: MOOKISH HARRYPOL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS



Welcome PELICANS



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FROM THE PRINCIPAL



At the time of writing, UWI St Augustine is about a week from its 2026 Graduation Ceremonies. A little over a month ago, we welcomed new and returning students to the campus for Academic Year 2026/2027. So, in a relatively small space of

time the campus community is experiencing both ends of our students' academic journey. From new learners (many of them young people just out of secondary school) to graduates.

What could be more motivating and meaningful as an educator than seeing years of effort come to fruition through the teaching and development of their students?

As a region, the Caribbean is characterised by its youthfulness and potential. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that Caribbean people place such an emphasis on education. For us, education is very specifically a tool for both personal development and the development of this regional society.

It's why Eric Williams's "book bags" quote is one of his most cited. It's why The UWI exists. Our focus on development is why the university established the School of Education, projects such as The UWI Sixth Form School and the Continuing and Professional Education (CPE) courses and programmes.

The Importance of Students



Principal Antoine with students at UWI Life. PHOTO: MOOKISH HARRYPOL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

Most recently, we launched The UWI St Augustine Pre-School (see article in this issue of UWI TODAY), an early childhood education centre that offers a specialised curriculum designed to support students' holistic development. The pre-school employs the Blue-Green curriculum approach which uses hands-on activities related to conservation and other forms of environmental stewardship.

As Campus Principal, I championed the establishment of the school to build on St Augustine's proud record as a pioneer in early childhood education.

Besides students and society, there is another beneficiary of education—the educators themselves. I am sure that many of the faculty and staff of this campus will all say that there is no occupation more fulfilling than being an educator. Not only do we get to play a pivotal part in the development of the people who will inherit the society, we also learn from them.

Education is a two-way exchange. Their youth and dynamism, their optimism for the future and embracing of change, keeps us evolving as well. Education must never be static, and higher education must always be at the forefront of new ideas, processes, and technologies. Our students are the crop that renews the soil, and after graduation, when they have bloomed and gone on to nourish society, a fresh crop is planted anew.

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

UWI Expands Early Childhood Development through launch of UWI Pre-School

UWI St Augustine has officially launched The UWI Pre-School, a move, the campus said, that expands "its investment in early childhood development". The school was launched at The UWI Child Learning and Discovery Facility on September 7.

A statement from the campus said the pre-school will provide young children with "structured opportunities to learn, explore and develop through a specialised programme designed to support their holistic development during their formative years".

The school is open to both UWI employees and the wider public.

A distinctive feature of the pre-school is its blue-green curriculum approach, which connects children's learning to terrestrial and aquatic environments. Through hands-on activities, children are introduced to conservation, recycling, composting, water conservation and environmental stewardship.

"This launch is a meaningful expression of our commitment to the well-being of young learners as we have the opportunity to give the children entrusted to our care a strong foundation for learning, discovery and growth," UWI St Augustine Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine said.

Opening the pre-school to the public extends the benefits of the university's early childhood expertise beyond the campus community. The new pre-school provides a specialised two-year programme for children between three and five years old, with a focus on the holistic development of the child. Its curriculum is designed to nurture curious, resilient, compassionate and socially conscious young learners, while developing their communication, creativity and critical thinking skills and positive relationships.



Campus Principal Antoine is joined by children as she plants a tree at the launch of The UWI Child Learning and Discovery Facility.

"The pre-school also builds on The UWI's long-standing commitment to early childhood care and education," the campus statement said.

■ **For the full statement on The UWI Pre-School from UWI St Augustine, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/news-events/>.**

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■ CAMPUS NEWS

The Mighty Sparrow

The UWI Honours Slinger Francisco



FROM THE ARCHIVES: The Mighty Sparrow, Slinger Francisco, seated with members of the university community at The UWI St Augustine graduation ceremony in 1987. He was conferred with an honorary Doctor of Letters (DLitt) degree at the ceremony.

“A phenomenal cultural giant with an extraordinary catalogue of music,” was how UWI St Augustine Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine described Slinger Francisco, The Mighty Sparrow, who passed on September 27, 2026. He was 91.

In a press statement, the campus said it joined the nation, region and international community in mourning the passing of Sparrow, whose extraordinary body of work helped shape Caribbean cultural identity and carried calypso to audiences around the world.

The UWI conferred The Mighty Sparrow with an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree in 1987, recognising him as a cultural icon whose influence extended far beyond the calypso stage.

“Performer, social commentator, storyteller and entrepreneur, The Mighty Sparrow chronicled Caribbean life and politics for generations, using calypso to entertain, challenge, celebrate and give voice to the societies from which his music emerged,” the statement from UWI St Augustine read. “His legacy as a cultural icon will forever be a testament to his indomitable will and resilience.”

Speaking on Sparrow’s passing, Professor Antoine said it represented the loss of one of the Caribbean’s most consequential cultural voices.

“The Mighty Sparrow was a phenomenal cultural giant with an extraordinary catalogue of music,” she commented. “Through his wit, social commentary, storytelling and fearless engagement with the issues of the time, he helped generations of Caribbean people understand ourselves and gave the wider world a window into who we are.

“His voice travelled far beyond Trinidad and Tobago, but it remained unmistakably Caribbean. The UWI was proud to recognise his contribution with the conferral of an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree in 1987. Today, we mourn an extraordinary Caribbean son whose cultural influence will continue to be felt across our region and around the world.”

Professor Antoine said that the university’s recognition of Sparrow extended beyond the conferral of his honorary degree. The UWI also contributed to the scholarship surrounding his life and work, including the writing of Emeritus Professor Professor Gordon Rohlehr. Professor Rohlehr, who died in 2023, published *My Whole Life Is Calypso* in 2015, a tribute to the The Mighty Sparrow. The

book documented and examined Sparrow’s contribution to Caribbean culture.

From Grand Roi to Jean and Dinah

In 2001, Professor Rohlehr gave a tribute to Sparrow for his conferment of the Order of the Caribbean Community (OCC), tracing his life and career: from his birth in Grand Roi Village, Grenada in 1935; his family’s move to Trinidad in 1937; his start as a public performer in church and school; his rise as a nightclub, restaurant and then calypso tent performer in the mid-1950s; and his Calypso King and Road March-winning song Jean and Dinah in 1956.

“From 1956,” the campus statement said, “he would win the Calypso Monarch title seven more times and the Road March on a further seven occasions, as well as the Calypso King of Kings Competition in 1985 and 1988.”

Sparrow’s contribution to Caribbean society, the statement read, included political, cultural and social development; raising the self-esteem of the region; forging a stronger Caribbean identity at home and in the diaspora; and projecting the excellence of Caribbean people on the world scene.

Sparrow’s contributions have been recognised across the Caribbean and internationally. Among his many honours are a Chieftaincy of the City of Lagos, Nigeria in 1977; recognition from governments and cities across the Caribbean and North America; and the Trinidad and Tobago’s Chaconia Medal Gold in 1993 for long and meritorious service.

In its message, the campus said, “From the young Grenadian-born performer who emerged as Calypso King and Road March champion in 1956 to the artist whose music travelled the world, Slinger Francisco leaves a body of work woven into the cultural memory of the Caribbean. The UWI extends its deepest condolences to his family, loved ones, colleagues, the calypso fraternity and the countless people across Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean and the wider world whose lives were touched by his music.”

■ **To view the entire statement from UWI St Augustine on the passing of The Mighty Sparrow, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/news/releases/release.asp?id=23192>.**

UWI and TTFA partner to ADVANCE FOOTBALL



FROM LEFT: Faculty of Sport Dean Dr Roy McCree, Executive Secretary and Acting League CEO of the TTFA Mr Yale Antoine, Faculty of Social Sciences Dean Dr Acolla Lewis-Cameron, and Futsal Association of Trinidad and Tobago President Mr Geoffrey Edwards display the signed MoU.

The UWI St Augustine Campus and the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association (TTFA) have signed a four-year memorandum of understanding (MOU) to strengthen football development, education, research and professional capacity in Trinidad and Tobago.

The MOU, signed on Friday, September 11, establishes a framework for collaboration between The UWI’s Faculty of Sport and Department of Management Studies, and the TTFA’s academies, administration and national teams. The partnership will create opportunities to connect The UWI’s academic and research expertise with the practical needs of the football sector, while expanding opportunities for student development and professional training.

Dr Roy McCree, Dean of The UWI’s Faculty of Sport, welcomed the partnership. “One of our mandates is to develop partnerships with industry to help develop programmes within the sport sector. I welcome this MoU and wish all partners the very best.”

The collaboration will span football, futsal, beach soccer, eFootball, youth football and high-performance programmes. Areas of cooperation will include joint seminars and workshops, coaching education, professional development, technical support and bringing academic expertise and practical experience together across different areas of the game to exchange knowledge.

The agreement will create opportunities for UWI students to gain practical experience in the football sector: internships, practica, electives, research opportunities and match-day volunteering. The TTFA has committed to give UWI students priority consideration for internships and other opportunities.

The partnership will also support training and capacity-building in the administration and development of sports such as sports science, sports management, anti-doping, refereeing, safeguarding, nutrition, ethics, governance, financial management and athlete preparation.

The MOU will also expand access to professional education in sports management. Where feasible, The UWI intends to provide an initial two half-scholarships to eligible participants, while the TTFA has committed to two half-scholarships annually for eligible candidates pursuing The UWI-FIFA/CIES Postgraduate Diploma in Sports Management.

The MOU will remain in effect for four years from the date of signing with specific projects, financial arrangements, intellectual property matters and other detailed activities to be addressed separately between the parties, where required.

■ OUR STUDENTS

Elements of Inspiration

How Danae Johnson and UWI Chemistry are Reimagining Science Outreach

BY LISA OWEN

The thinkers, the builders and the visionaries of tomorrow are sitting in today's classrooms – or, too often, waiting on the margins of them. But to shape a world, one must first understand what it is made of.

For Danae Johnson, an MPhil candidate in the Department of Chemistry at UWI St Augustine, that understanding begins with a core truth: science was never meant to be an abstract, intimidating subject. To her, chemistry is everywhere. It is everything. It is life itself.

"Scientific knowledge, that is just life", Johnson shared. "It really is just about understanding life and understanding who you are. So, it is important for kids early on to be exposed to science, and not for science to be this daunting subject that they start to learn in secondary school."

That philosophy recently earned Johnson a historic accolade. Through the American Chemical Society's (ACS) Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Scholars Recognition Programme, she became the first and only scholar from the Caribbean to receive the award for Leadership in Science Outreach and Engagement—a category introduced for the first time in 2026.

Johnson was among 64 scholars recognised worldwide from ACS student chapters across 112 institutions, scoring highly across all criteria—a landmark moment during the ACS's 150th anniversary year. She was nominated by her supervisor, Senior Lecturer in Biological Chemistry Dr Nigel Jalsa, Organic Chemistry Lecturer Dr Petrea Facey, and Chemistry Department Head Dr Arvind Kumar for her contribution to the UWI ACS Chapter's many outreach projects. Among them were several aimed at people with disabilities.

Breaking Barriers in Non-Traditional Spaces

Preparing for these initiatives required groundwork, including specialised workshops with Dr Jacqueline Huggins, Manager of the campus's Student Life and Development Department (now retired), to sensitise volunteers that a disability or learning impairment should never disqualify anyone from engaging with science.

The chapter established monthly sessions at the Cascade School for the Deaf and specialised outreach at the Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language Impaired, in collaboration with the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST) Dean's Office and the Department of Mathematics.

"What set us apart most was our outreach to students with disabilities," said Jenisa Mungroo, President of The UWI's ACS Student Chapter. "This work is distinctive because it makes chemistry accessible to students who are rarely reached by science programmes".

Beyond specialised institutions, outreach extended across both islands. Members visited Beetham Estate Primary School, conducted a week of engagement in Tobago, and hosted 30 secondary schools for CAPE analytical chemistry demonstrations. Additionally, the department's first National Chemistry Week, themed "The Hidden Life of Spices", reached 300 students and staff, while school science fairs and Guild Fest engaged 600 more.



Danae Johnson giving a demonstration of science in action to students from Speyside Secondary School in Tobago.



Danae with Dr Arvind Kumar, Head of the Department of Chemistry, showing her certificate from the ACS.



Ms Jenisa Mungroo (left), President of The UWI St Augustine American Chemical Society (ACS) Student Chapter, receives the Outstanding ACS Student Communities Award for the 2025-2026 on behalf of the society.

A Historic Double Victory for UWI

The recognition for Johnson did not happen in isolation. In the exact same cycle, The UWI's ACS Student Chapter achieved its own monumental milestone, progressing from a "Commendable" rating in 2024-2025 to being designated an "Outstanding ACS Student Community" on the global stage.

Dr Kumar, noted this was the campus's first time receiving two ACS recognitions in one year, citing it as proof of growing momentum for public engagement.

Describing Johnson as a pleasant, exceptional student who volunteers willingly, Dr Kumar remarked, "Anyone pursuing a higher-level degree has to be passionate about chemistry, otherwise it's difficult. It's not just knowing chemistry; it's how you interact with students and explain it to them."

He added that Johnson not only has the drive to interact, but breaks science down so students truly understand it.

Mungroo echoed this sense of institutional pride saying, "It shows that a newly-founded Caribbean chapter can stand alongside the best student communities in the world. The fact that Danae was recognised as an individual in the same year shows this culture is working at every level. Engagement is part of how the department works, not an add-on".

The Cost of Purpose

Balancing demanding MPhil research with outreach is about knowing where value lies. For Johnson, late laboratory hours, long drives and early mornings are not sacrifices to lament, but investments in something larger than herself. Her fatigue vanishes the moment students arrive.

"I don't know how to describe the feeling. It's like a kind of urgency, but even in that urgency, there is a kind of fulfilment where you feel like bursting with happiness", Johnson reflected adding, "When you're really on the path that is for you, and you get that feeling of fullness from the things that you're doing, then you really know that this is your purpose".

For Johnson, that purpose transcends academic credentials. "The MPhil is for me as a person, but my education is not for me alone", she admitted. "My education is for anybody who will listen... These are the young minds that are going to continue to shape our country. Investing in them... there is no limit to that."

Looking Forward: Touch, Sound and Smell

The UWI ACS Chapter plans to expand its inclusive framework to reach blind and visually impaired students.

"Our work with deaf students taught us to make science visual and hands-on, and we want to do the equivalent for students who cannot see: experiments built around touch, sound and smell, with clear verbal guidance and tactile materials," Mungroo explained.

For Johnson, recognition is simply a by-product of a deeper calling. "Because chemistry really is that bridge," she notes. For her, success isn't a trophy, it is sparking innate "curiosity about life" in a classroom and showing the next generation that "it can be done."

As Mungroo put it, "If a child leaves thinking, 'I could be a scientist', we have done our job."

■ CAMPUS ICONS

The Tireless Life of Rhoda Reddock

BY REBECCA ROBINSON

“Retirement has meant that I have a bit more flexibility in my life to choose what I want to do. But I am still an active academic, writing papers, giving talks and of course, trying to complete book manuscripts.”



A picture of Emerita Professor Rhoda Reddock would probably suffice next to a dictionary definition of the word “tireless”. Since wrapping up a three-decade career at The UWI in the areas of gender, social change and development, Prof Reddock continues to be just as busy.

“Retirement has meant that I have a bit more flexibility in my life to choose what I want to do. But I am still an active academic, writing papers, giving talks and of course, trying to complete book manuscripts.”

She is currently in her second term on the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). She is also serving a second term on the executive committee of the International Sociological Association.

Her contributions are recognised and honoured in several ways. Apart from national awards, in 2012, she was presented with an honorary doctorate from the University of the Western Cape in South Africa, The UWI Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Excellence, and the UWI-NGC Award for Most Impacting Research Project.

Honored in *Small Axe*

A more recent honour is a collection of reflections from her peers on her pioneering place in shaping Caribbean gender studies and social scholarship. They appear in a special section of the academic journal, *Small Axe* (March 2026). Four colleagues: Professor Kamala Kempadoo, Professor Carole Boyce Davies, Professor Jocelyne Guilbault, and Dr Gabrielle Hosein, contemplated their associations.

Kempadoo met Reddock in the Netherlands when she was just beginning doctoral work at the University of Amsterdam.

“I encountered a role model in person—someone who thought and talked about the lives and struggles of working women in the Caribbean from a sociological perspective; [and] who was researching and making sense of the politics and intersections of race, class and gender,” she wrote.

Boyce Davies recalls that she met Reddock at the unlikely place of a funeral in New York in 1993. It was the send-off service for Audre Lorde, whom Reddock knew as a member of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), which she co-founded in 1985. Lorde was an activist academic whose works were part of the mosaic foundation of Caribbean freedom. Boyce Davies wrote of their shared cultural novelty of being female PhDs in small island societies in the 1980s.

Guilbault, a Canadian ethnomusicologist, wrote that what most struck her “is her ability to identify the ‘problem-space’ ...but what became one of the defining characteristics of her writing is her insistence on knowing about history in order to understand the present.”

“Her work, however, has involved not only the creation of archives but also, in many cases, the rewriting of existing archives by remediating the absences (or silencing) of women’s labours.” Accordingly, Reddock’s works in both “the itinerary of discrimination” of women working in agriculture, and in the plantation economy “have clearly intended to re-member Caribbean history.”

Hosein, whose introduction to Reddock came as a graduate student, highlighted that the professor’s praxis included being “one of a few Afro-Caribbean feminist scholars researching Indian indenture history” and experiences in the region. Hosein returns to Reddock’s 1985 work, *Freedom Denied: Indian Women and Indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago, 1845-1917*, each new academic year with her own undergraduate students.

Hosein wrote that Reddock’s historical and sociological works on Indian ethnicity made her feel included, “as if Indo-Caribbean presence was not rendered through absence, marginalization, stereotype or passing mention.” Rather, she has contributed to making Indian ethnicity “visible through attention to indenture and post indenture histories.”

Writing her ‘Own Way’

From a 2026 autobiographical account of her life, “Own Way,” also in *Small Axe*, Reddock recounts a life and career of more than seven decades filled with rich trails, cutting new tracks and crossing paths with other aspirants. Her early exposure to nonfiction books through her maternal grandfather, and library membership, could easily have been the starting point of her love for learning and education, which did not always coincide with the formal systems of examinations. By her own admission, she did not have conventional success at Bishop Anstey High School, nevertheless, its broad curricula and diverse intellectual content at the time, were important learning experiences.

Reddock’s university years covered study at both The UWI St Augustine and Mona campuses, the latter being the place where she came to deeply understand the underpinnings of “radical politics and the beginnings of the feminist movement”.

Returning home in 1975, she was clear on her way ahead. In short order, she became a member of emerging women’s organisations which collaborated with the progressive union movement.

“We critiqued the authoritarianism, hierarchy, centralized power systems, machoism, sexism and resistance to feminist ideas.”

Despite the frenetic pace, in 1978, Reddock left for The Hague to pursue a Master’s degree. After six years in The Netherlands that also covered doctoral work at the University of Amsterdam, she returned home in 1985 and joined ISER (now SALISES).

Her life and career trajectory had prepared her for entering The UWI system and the trials of cutting a path towards institutionalising gender studies, but before this, Reddock spent the early part of the 1990s in the Sociology Department. There, she introduced students to thinking critically about Caribbean society and produced a canonical text, *Caribbean Sociology: An Introductory Reader*, co-edited with Christine Barrow.

Institutionalisation of gender studies at UWI began to shape up in 1993 with Centres for Gender and Development across the three campuses. Peers, Patrica Mohammed was in Mona and Eudine Barriteau at Cave Hill while Reddock was placed at St Augustine in 1994.

Years later, Elsa Leo-Rhynie, Emerita Professor of Gender and Development Studies, would refer to gender studies as “an undisciplined discipline” as she documented the ways in which this programme insistently navigated UWI’s traditional disciplinary and faculty-based structures to “transform rather than conform to its structures.”

After leading the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the St Augustine campus from 1994–2008, Reddock moved into administration as Deputy Principal. This role was a “huge shift” for her, but she used her sociological training to transform and build new structures and systems which bring value to the campus and to the student experience today.

Since leaving all of that behind for so-called retirement, she has yet to ease into a slower pace.

When the CEDAW commitments come to an end, and after missing eight Carnivals from 2019 to 2026, she hopes to resume playing mas, visiting pan yards, calypso tents and attending Panorama.

“I think that the reason why I still do so much is that I enjoy this work, but really, I am going to carefully manage my time soon,” she said with a cheeky smile.

■ MATRICULATION 2026

A Call to Action...and Community

BY DIXIE-ANN BELLE

In keeping with long-standing tradition, hundreds of students clad in black and white gathered in the Sport and Physical Education Centre (SPEC) at UWI St Augustine, officially beginning their academic journey. On Friday, September 18, the annual Matriculation and Welcome Ceremony was held to formally embrace new students of The UWI.

Dr Dawn-Marie De Four-Gill, Campus Registrar, welcomed the assembled students into the folds of the campus community, expounding on the event's theme, "Pelicans Get Ready to Soar".

"It is a call to action, an affirmation and a reminder," she said. "Most of you may already know that the brown pelican is our university's official symbol. But what you may not know, or may not realise, is that the pelican doesn't just float above the sea. It dives with precision, resurfaces with resilience, and flies with purpose. It soars, and it soars not just by itself but with others. So, this afternoon, as you prepare to sign the matriculation register, remember it's a powerful symbol of your readiness to challenge yourself, to grow, and to contribute to our legacy."

'We will give you the tools'

During her address, Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine reminded the new students of The UWI's current status among the top 3 per cent of universities in the world. She painted a picture of the society when the university first came into being.

"Remember that in 1948 when we started, the World War had just ended and there was pain, uncertainty and scarce resources. Sound familiar? However, we found hope to build and to find solutions."

Professor Belle Antoine called on the students to apply the knowledge and experience they gain from The UWI to contribute to social justice.

"We live in uncertain, turbulent and dangerous times," she reflected. "So, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to add to the problems of the world or help to solve them?"

"You have the brilliance," she pointed out. "You have the talent, and you will receive from us the capacity not just to contribute to your family and your society, but to the entire planet. In fact, you must do so. We can no longer sit on our laurels and throw our hands up in the air in despair."

Professor Antoine reminded them of the legacy of past UWI graduates in areas like artificial intelligence, food security, marine affairs, pandemics and economic analysis.



UWI St Augustine Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine addresses the students at the Matriculation and Welcome Ceremony. PHOTOS: MOOKISH HARRYPOL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS



"We will give you the tools. We expect you to use them better than we did ourselves. We expect you to be better prepared—more skilled, more determined and more courageous than we are ourselves."

In his video message to the matriculants, Vice Chancellor Professor Sir Hilary Beckles elaborated on the call for the students to be the impetus for change. He encouraged them to identify community issues and get involved.

"Some of you will say poverty," he suggested. "Some of you will say illiteracy. Some of you will say climate change, public health, reparatory justice, food security.... You will realise that your university is actively participating in the teaching and learning around these issues as well as researching and generating public advocacy around these issues. This is how universities are made vibrant and relevant."

He invited them to embrace their preferred causes and use their university education to help solve problems.

"It is only by participating that you can contribute to the solutions for these challenges facing our people," he stated.

'You belong'

In her greetings, Mrs Arlene Hamblin-Paul, President of The UWI Alumni Association, reminded the students that they would experience moments of self-doubt, but she advised them not to be discouraged.

"You may ask, can I really do this?" she predicted. "When those moments come (and they will), remember you're not here by accident. You belong. You are here because there's something within you that deserves to be developed, challenged, and shared with the world. Do not allow one difficult course, one disappointing grade, or one difficult semester to define your university experience. Learn from your setbacks and keep believing in yourself because one day you will walk across this campus for the last time as a student stepping into that stage of alumni."

As is customary, the attendees read out the academic vow, and the top matriculant formally signed the registrar. This year Joshua Sampath, a graduate of Presentation College, San Fernando, performed this honour. Sampath was recognised for his work as a mentor in his school's Big Brother programme and his participation in several math Olympiads.

The speakers also recognised the supportive friends and family present.

"Carry these persons with you in spirit because this moment isn't only about you," said Dr De Four-Gill. "It is about everyone who poured love and support into your journey."



■ OUR STUDENTS



Top matriculant Joshua Sampath signs the Matriculation Register on behalf of the incoming students while Campus Registrar Dr Dawn-Marie De Four-Gill and Senior Administrative Assistant Mr Garth Jones look on.

What it means to Enter at the Top

BY DARIUS PHILLIP

Matriculation is a sacred ceremony for universities. It's where every new student is formally recognised by the institution. Yet, for this year's top matriculant, Joshua Sampath, being selected from among the many came as a shock.

"It wasn't something I was expecting. I thought that there is better out there," he said, attributing his selection as top matriculant to "hard work, focus, and consistency".

Joshua decided to pursue a BSc in Electrical and Computer Engineering at the Faculty of Engineering due to his passion for computers from a young age. He said that his love for disassembling electronics, programming and problem-solving cemented his decision.

Like many new university students, adapting to an independent, young-adult lifestyle has been challenging. He said when he was still living under his parents' roof, there was always a fallback in the event of an emergency. Living on his own means that he now shoulders more personal responsibility and accountability.

But he is driven by his love for studying and understanding difficult subjects, which fuels his passion for problem-solving in the face of hardship.

"I really enjoy the process of learning as a whole. I like to go back, understand the proofs, understand why that is that."

He competed in this year's Trinidad and Tobago Mathematics Olympiad, where he reached the second round, and he also participated in the Junior category of the 2025 Fermat Mathematical Olympiad (FMO). His enthusiasm also extends to assisting others. He was involved in the Big Brother Programme at his alma mater in San Fernando, Presentation College, tutoring younger students.

Joshua said that his life goals include being involved in the technology sector, where he can contribute to the automation of various sectors in society. He sees himself working with the controls sector; a thematic area of study that involves the management of the flow of devices in areas such as electrical grids or buildings' machinery.

"I'm trying to embrace everything that life has to offer," he said. "This new venture for me, moving to university, has been a different experience. I have a lot more flexibility when it comes to schedules and choices, but I'm trying to remain positive and just navigate through this."

Interviewed before matriculation, Joshua said that he was looking forward to the ceremony and meeting his fellow matriculants. While he may be the top entrant, he was humbled by the thought of meeting his peers when they took part in the symbolic signing of the Academic Registrar.

Darius Phillip is writer, photographer, and public relations professional.



Professor Antoine joins Guild Vice-President Ryan Duncan in the symbolic candle-lighting at the matriculation ceremony.

The Young Vice-President

BY CHERISSE LAUREN BERKELEY

At just 19, Ryan Duncan has already made his mark at UWI St Augustine. Duncan is believed to be one of if not the youngest first-year student to serve on the Guild of Students' Executive. The new Vice-President got 1,260 votes, representing 40.08 per cent of the ballots cast.

He was 18 when he campaigned for office.

The second of three children, Duncan said he came from a humble home. His interest in public service began early and was shaped significantly by his grandmother, whom he considers his main mentor.

Former head prefect and graduate of St Augustine Secondary School, Duncan earned six CXC CSEC passes before continuing his studies at The UWI, completing a Certificate in Public Administration. He is now pursuing a BSc in Public Sector Management with Law for Social Sciences.

His interest in the social sciences is closely tied to his concern for Trinidad and Tobago. As a self-described patriot, Duncan keeps abreast of current affairs and policymaking, which have also informed his involvement in youth development.

He previously worked with the Trinidad and Tobago Youth Ambassadors and the National Youth Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, graduating as an alumnus of its 21st cohort.

Entering student government, however, presented a different challenge.

Duncan said securing support during the campaign required hard work. At times, his age and limited experience were questioned, but he continued to engage with students and make his case.

One of his favourite campaign memories was a Fun Day at the Mt Hope Campus, where he and his slate received a warm welcome and had the opportunity to speak directly with students.

Election night brought a different kind of excitement. As the Returning Officer read out the results, Duncan and his slate waited with bated breath. When victory was announced, the relief and excitement turned into tears of joy.

Now, balancing his responsibilities as Vice-President with his studies and personal life, Duncan credits his committee with helping him manage the demands of office.

"I have a very supportive committee and we work together to ensure the workload is managed," he said.

For other students considering leadership, Duncan has a simple message: "Don't let age or experience discourage you. Think about your ability and capability. Don't be discouraged. It's better to try and fail than not to try at all."

Cherisse Lauren Berkeley is a journalist, activist, mas-maker, and multidisciplinary artist.

■ OUR STUDENTS

After the quiet time between semesters, the St Augustine campus came to vibrant life in September with the beginning of Academic Year 2026-2027. New and returning students shuttled from halls of residence, to the Main Admin Building, the Lloyd Braithwaite Student Administration Building, and classrooms throughout the sprawling campus.

For new students in particular, these early days as university students can be overwhelming. So, the campus and the students' representative body, The UWI St Augustine Students' Guild, made sure that they received a warm introduction to campus life and community.

On August 28, students were invited to UWI Life New Student Orientation, a half-day of activities held at the campus's Sport and Physical Education Centre (SPEC). Billed as a "high-energy welcome experience packed with interactive activities, entertainment, giveaways, campus vibes, and new connections", UWI Life was the casual counterpart to the more formal matriculation ceremony.

Hosted by Jason "JW" Williams and Something Mo', SPEC reverberated with music, including a performance from soca and calypso artist Yung Bredda, who had the students as active on the indoor court as any sporting event. Apart from the performances and games, the event also gave the new students a chance to meet each other, faculty members, and the Guild Council, who would actualise their own plans to welcome the students a few days later.

■ Guild Fest 2026

Titled "One Tribe. One Vibe. One UWI.", Guild Fest brought the action from SPEC to the heart of the campus at the JFK Quadrangle. This annual Guild event was held from September 1 to 3, and included an expo with campus societies, booths, and eats. There were live performances, faith-based activities, music, a multitude of food stalls, and faculty events.

For returning students, it was welcome back, and for new students, it was welcome to your new home, the place where many of them will spend the next three or more years of their lives, preparing them for the professional world and making connections that will last for decades.

PUMP AND CEREMONY



TOP: BREDDAS AND SISTERS: Soca and calypso artist Yung Bredda performs for the students at UWI LIFE 2026. PHOTOS: MOOKISH HARRYPOL/LIFE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

CENTRE: Face-painting and drum-beating at Guild Fest 2026. PHOTOS: ANEEL KARIM

BELOW: MR BIRD-BASTIC, MR FANTASTIC: UWI St Augustine mascot Peli gets the crowd going at UWI Life.

■ OUR STUDENTS

At The UWI St Augustine Campus, student life extends well beyond the lecture theatre.

With more than 90 clubs and associations, sporting opportunities, cultural activities, student support services and a packed calendar of events, there are many ways for students to make their university experience their own.

For the 2026–27 Guild of Students' Council, helping students make the most of those opportunities is a key priority for the academic year.

While the wider Council has a full programme of social, sporting and cultural activities planned, Vice President Ryan Duncan says student welfare will also be a major focus.

Students can expect increased promotion of available services, including financial advice, Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS), peer mentorship and employment opportunities. The Council will also continue promoting campus security measures and emergency hotlines, while developing targeted support drives.

The emphasis on welfare goes alongside student engagement.

"We have over 90 clubs," Duncan said. "UWI is not just about academia. It's about finding yourself and getting out of your comfort zone while making lasting, fond memories."

Duncan would particularly like to see more students explore the financial advisory services offered through the Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD).

"There are many opportunities for assistance, services you can access and even how to make some pocket change," he said.

National Affairs Committee Chairperson Christopher Rocke said, "I wish more students would utilise the CAPS services from DSSD," because it includes counselling and therapy.

The Council is continuing its partnership with DSSD and CAPS, as well as its peer mentorship programme, while also looking at improved concessions and discounts for students.

For International Affairs Committee Chairperson Analeicia Edmund, The UWI website is another valuable resource.

As an international student, Edmund said the website provided important information before she physically arrived at the campus.

"Coming to campus for information was not feasible, but all the information I needed was right on the website," she said.

She would like them to take advantage of the sporting opportunities and available facilities.

The Council's committees have a varied programme planned for the academic year, with opportunities spanning student advocacy, culture, sport, entertainment and community building.

Among the initiatives is the return of Matta Foods, a long-standing tradition of providing students with a meal during the examination period. The National Affairs Committee will also continue advocacy on national issues, alongside debates, competitions, workshops and cultural exhibitions.

The Public Relations Office and Publications Committee will continue the "Chat to Yuh Councillor" series, which began as a virtual Q&A for incoming students seeking information about acceptance and registration. The series will expand to cover a wider range of topics and provide a consistent avenue for students to engage with their representatives.

The International Affairs Committee also introduced Island Blockos in collaboration with the Sir Arthur Lewis Hall. The monthly celebrations will bring students together around regional and international cultures, while giving associations an opportunity to showcase and sell local food and drinks.

An Island Excursion: Toco Edition is planned for October, followed by an Island Games Night ahead of Semester One examinations. Semester Two will bring a



NEW GUILD, BROADER FOCUS

BY CHERISSE LAUREN BERKELEY



Guild President Joshua Jitta (sixth from left) with members of the 2026/2027 Guild Council on stage at UWI Life.



Gaming at Guild Fest.

major Caribbean Integration Season, alongside an inter-island competition still being developed.

The sporting calendar includes GUADIY, the annual Get Up and Do It Yourself Football Tournament in October, as well as a Guild 5K in January and an inter-faculty sports day.

A Christmas celebration is also being planned through a collaboration between the National Affairs, Student Activity and International Affairs Committees.

Guild Fest 2026

The new Council has already had an opportunity to bring its approach to student engagement to life through Guild Fest 2026.

Over three days, students took part in activities celebrating entrepreneurship, regional and international culture, local traditions, food and entertainment.

Day One highlighted student-owned businesses and included a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Day Two focused on regional and international students, as well as students living on the halls of residence, while Day Three celebrated local culture before the closing ceremony.

Among the highlights was the return of the Legendary Pan on the Quad, featuring the Birdsong SteelBand and the Defence Force Steel Orchestra. Taste Trinbago added a culinary dimension, showcasing local dishes and treats, including authentic Tobago sweets.

For Edmund, one of the event's successes was the Council's ability to adapt while keeping its plans on track. "We had a plan and were able to not just follow through but adapt along the way," she said.

For Duncan, Edmund and Rocke, serving on the Guild Council is also an opportunity to learn while taking on the responsibilities of student leadership.

Duncan, a first-year student, identified "adapting and understanding all the different processes" as one of his biggest challenges.

Edmund, a third-year student, said, "It doesn't matter how long you've been in leadership, you don't know everything and there's always something to learn."

Working with different personalities can also be challenging, she added, making the Guild retreat an important opportunity for councillors to learn how to work together.

For Rocke, who is in his final year, balancing Guild responsibilities with his studies is an ongoing challenge.

"Time balance will always be a challenge, there's much to do as well as balancing my studies also," he said.

The three councillors interviewed for this article offered a glimpse into the wider Council's plans, from financial advice and mental health support to employment opportunities, campus safety, peer mentorship and student activities.

RESEARCH

In 2025, a significant historical discovery was revealed at the St Augustine Campus. Evidence was disclosed that the Catalan Capuchin Missions extended protection and spiritual care to the Nepoyo indigenes in Spanish Trinidad, indicating a relationship defined by pastoral concern rather than the oppressive violence historically associated with the Catholic Church.

Melanie Pouchet's PhD research, for which she received high commendation, "The Catalan Capuchin Missions in Spanish Trinidad, 1687 to 1735: A Frontier within a Frontier," challenged established narratives and called for a reinterpretation of this aspect of Caribbean history.

Melanie's ground-breaking study of the Catalan Capuchin Missions was the culmination of her formative experiences and scholarly pursuits.

Her affiliation with history originated in the family home. Her father was a history teacher who provided his children with access to a wide selection of history books and engaged them in intellectually stimulating conversations. The family was devoutly Catholic and so, historical events were often viewed through the lens of the Church.

An early and faithful student

From an early age, Melanie was privy to documents which showed that from the 1300s the Popes had not only denounced slavery, but they also warned of excommunication for any Catholic who participated in this exercise.

But the Spanish Crown, which represented the Catholic Church in exercising authority over ecclesiastical appointments and missionary activity in its colonies, operated in the Indies independently of the Roman Church. It was this dissonance between the doctrine of the Church and enslavement which often perplexed Melanie.

She studied History and Literature at the St Augustine campus and later, Philosophy and Theology in Venezuela, and then Rome. The courses abroad were all in Spanish: lectures, preparation of assignments, examinations and academic discourse. By the time that Melanie accessed the letters which were housed in the General Archive of the Indies in Seville addressed to the Spanish Crown by the Capuchin monks, she was able to interpret them herself. But this was not without painstaking effort.

The letters in the repository were written in "flowery" 17th century and early 18th century Spanish and so the task of understanding the history of the Spanish Empire in Trinidad through this medium was much like reading Shakespeare. This was not her only challenge.

The documents were centuries old, and their authors had used both sides of each page. As a result, the ink from each side had bled into the writing on the reverse side, which added more difficulty to the decoding process. With practice, Melanie became increasingly proficient in extracting meaning.

Poverty, humility and fraternity

As a result of her research, Melanie knew that the Capuchin monks of the Franciscan Order were characterised by poverty, humility and fraternity. During the bubonic plague in Europe, they had exposed themselves to risk and death through their commitment to be of assistance to others. A frontier within the frontier, which framed her research, described the mission society that the Capuchins created to protect the indigenous inhabitants.

The primary frontier colony of Trinidad was characterised by hostility between the Spanish colonial authorities and external forces such as the French and English, who wanted to control the island. But within this frontier colony there was a frontier situation, where the Capuchin missionaries, sanctioned by the colonial authorities and by Royal policy, fought to preserve their own mission society against Spanish planters who ran the encomienda system in the wider Trinidad society on forced labour, and use the indigenes for this purpose.

The system of introducing missionaries to "control" the native population, to convert and acculturate them, was a different approach from the one used in previous centuries by the Spanish Crown, whereby soldiers with the intent to convert, dominate, pacify and exploit the population, had employed brutal methods and lethal violence.

Reinterpreting History

The Capuchin Missions in Spanish Trinidad

BY DR AMINA IBRAHIM-ALI



Dr Melanie Pouchet



From an early age, Melanie was privy to documents which showed that from the 1300s the Popes had not only denounced slavery, but they also warned of excommunication for any Catholic who participated in this exercise.

The Catalan missionaries who came to Trinidad in the late 17th century, on the other hand, approached the project from a purely religious standpoint.

Unlike the soldiers, the Capuchins used no weapons. Instead, they learned the language of the Nepoyo and lived among them, in a way that acknowledged their dignity as human beings. They established a thriving agrarian economy which was dependent on a six-day work week. Cocoa, their staple crop, which the mission cultivated along with cassava, maize and bananas, was often envied by the Spanish planters. While it was mandatory for children to be baptised as Catholics, adults were not required to convert to Catholicism, although religious instruction was provided on Sundays for everyone.

The indigenes themselves realised that they were offered protection in these mission societies. Some who "escaped" to work in the encomienda system, returned to the missions, naked and starving. Melanie's thesis, in fact, disproves historical accounts which describe the well-known Arena massacre of 1699 as fundamentally an attack on the missionaries by the indigenous population who revolted.

The true story of the Arena Massacre

The evidence she unearthed reveals that the massacre took place because the indigenes of the mission at Arena (present-day San Rafael), were convinced by others from the encomienda system in Tacarigua and Arauca that the new Spanish Governor who was coming to visit their mission would do with them what he had done to another group of indigenes, and that was to kill their shaman, and to punish them.

The indigenes from the Arena mission agreed to band together with those from the encomienda system. They ambushed and killed the Governor, those in his party and the missionaries. They then desecrated the Church with its statues, vestments and vessels.

Melanie's research goes on to describe the trial which would later take place and the fact that the rebellious indigenes had been hunted down and captured for trial by the mission indigenes of the Naparima missions run by the Catalan Capuchins, who did so against the instructions of the missionaries.

For these corrections to be made in historical accounts, they would first need to appear in a published book which Melanie is keen to write, once funding becomes available. This will allow her discovery to enter the public domain, and eventually appear in our history books, providing for future generations a more nuanced understanding of the history of the Catholic Church in Trinidad.

Driest of Season?

UWI Geography Department monitors the effects of El Niño on water availability, calls for responsible water use

B Y T Y R E L L G I T T E N S

According to the United Kingdom's National Institute of Health (NIH), water is essential for the survival of all forms of life on earth, including humans. This series provides an in-depth look at the research being done by **The UWI St Augustine Department of Geography and Sustainability Sciences** into the factors that affect the availability and quality of water in Trinidad and Tobago. In part one of the series, Head of the Department and Senior Hydrology Lecturer, **Dr Kegan Farrick**, discusses how **El Niño** shapes water resources in Trinidad and Tobago.



Did you know the weather event called El Niño (Little Boy in Spanish) was first observed in the 1600s by South American fishermen who would often notice years where there was unusually warm water in the Pacific Ocean. In the years since, fishermen would often notice this phenomenon. A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) factsheet stated they observed the event peaking around Christmas time, which led to the fishermen calling it El Niño de Navidad.

After decades of studies, scientists have a better understanding of El Niño.

When it occurs, trade winds that usually blow west over the Pacific Ocean are weakened, slow down and can reverse. This causes the warm water in the Pacific, which is often pushed westwards, to spread to central and eastern areas of the tropical Pacific. As a result, countries across the Americas,

including the Caribbean, face dryer and warmer conditions.

But the effects of El Niño are not only limited to the Americas. It disrupts global weather patterns and can cause everything from extreme drought to intense floods across the world.

Though the event doesn't have a fixed schedule, it has been observed to occur every two to seven years. In a September 2026 alert, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) shared that this year's El Niño event is firmly established and intensifying, and is predicted to persist into February 2027.

This heightened El Niño activity can fuel extreme weather according to the WMO.

Head of the UWI St Augustine Geography and Sustainability Sciences Department and Senior Hydrology Lecturer, Dr Kegan Farrick, told UWI

Today that the department is monitoring how this intensified El Niño will affect water availability at its hydrology research site in the community of Acono, located in the Maracas St Joseph Valley.

By monitoring the effects of El Niño at this site, it can give a snapshot of how the phenomenon is affecting water resources across the country.

Dr Farrick explained, "We have been doing continuous monitoring of the Acono Watershed since 2024, when it was a much wetter rainy season.

"So this year we are continuing with the monitoring in that watershed, and we are using some really neat geochemical tools like stable water isotopes and a radioactive isotope called radon 222."

He added, "What we are trying to measure how the amount of groundwater that flows into the streams changes during El Niño."

RESEARCH



MPhil student Priya Ramjohn collecting stream samples for isotopes.

Dr Farrick shared, 'Based on what we are seeing so far in the streams that we usually work with, **the water levels are really, really low. There are some sections that have actually dried up a bit, and because the water level is so low, the water is now moving underneath the stream bed.**



Stream-gauging in the watershed during a storm.

Dr Farrick said the research team is particularly interested in analysing if a decrease in rainfall due to El Niño causes the Acono watershed to tap into deeper groundwater sources and use that water to supplement the amount of water that flows in the watershed's streams.

To monitor how the streams will change their volume and flow rate in reaction to the environment due to limited rainfall, the research will use computer-modelling techniques.

Dr Farrick shared, "Based on what we are seeing so far in the streams that we usually work with, the water levels are really, really low. There are some sections that have actually dried up a bit, and because the water level is so low, the water is now moving underneath the stream bed.

"What is important for people to understand is that even if El Niño ends in 2027, the effects of the El Niño will be felt probably into 2028."

Dr Farrick said prolonged dry conditions and reduced rainfall will result in the country's streams and groundwater taking longer to replenish and return to volumes of water they held before. As such, he is encouraging everyone in Trinidad and Tobago to use water responsibly and conserve water to assist authorities in managing the decreased water supplies available for domestic consumption.

"Whether that is fixing your leaks, having low-flow toilet systems or just trying to recycle water, there are simple practices that we can all do at home to help conserve water.

"There are ways that as a country and a big community, we could work together to ensure that we aren't using too much of the available water supply."

If anyone needs any more evidence of the effects of an intensified El Niño, experts point to the lack of hurricane formation in the Atlantic for 2026.

On September 12, the 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season set a record for the longest a hurricane season has gone without a storm reaching hurricane strength since the start of modern weather records by the NOAA since at least 1966.

While Dr Farrick said it is common for El Niño years to produce fewer hurricanes, he acknowledges this year's lack of hurricane formation at this point of the year is notable.

However, he is still calling for vigilance and preparedness.

He cautioned, "We are still not in the clear as a hurricane could happen at any time. So it is important for people to understand that even though we expect fewer hurricanes due to El Niño, you can still have hurricanes forming and it is important for the Caribbean to be prepared."

Though he said it cannot be definitively proven that climate change is the cause of this year's intensified El Niño, Dr Farrick said it cannot be ruled out that the effects of climate change are compounding it.

As the country and region continue to navigate the effects of the intensified El Niño, Dr Farrick reminds people to continue being conscious of the importance of water.

"Water plays such an important part in our everyday life, from drinking to showering, cleaning your yard, to bathing your dog and watering your plants. It is a critical part of everyday life, so for me [water conservation] is one of the most important things that we need to understand."

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

■ OUR STUDENTS



Camp at the Click to Start Foundation Nurturing Creators, not just Consumers

BY REBECCA ROBINSON



Hailey Sampson (standing), a UWI Computer Science student and mentor at the Click to Start Foundation's robotics camp, confers with boys from Matura and Toco Secondary schools. The sessions were facilitated by the management and staff of the computer lab at the Faculty of Food and Agriculture during the latter part of July 2026.

The Click to Start Foundation has resumed its Programming for Teenagers project after the COVID-19 pandemic caused it to be moved online.

Abigail Wren, founder and director of the foundation and E-Learning Technical Specialist at UWI St Augustine's Campus IT Services, said that there was a robotics academy in July, and an AI academy in August, targeting students between the ages of 13 and 19 during the school break.

The intention, she said, was to "equip youth with the skills to shrink the gap between new technology and their application," using robotics and artificial intelligence (AI).

Attendees came from different areas of the country. The 17 students at the robotics sessions came from schools in Toco, Matura, Morvant, Brazil, and community facilities, namely, the Heroes Foundation, We Say Yes and Rainbow Rescue. The 15 attending the AI camp came from schools in Moruga, Tableland, Princes Town, Laventille and Morvant.

Course designer and facilitator, Sergio Mathurin said that the robotics camp had two purposes.

"Firstly, it was intended to give a hands-on experience of the technology students are hearing about on the internet and sometimes using without much thought about how it got into their hands. Secondly, and more importantly, the camp was intended to plant the seeds of self-belief that they too can create, not just consume technology."

He said that learners built breadboards, LEDs, sensors, motors and robots they wired and programmed themselves. By the time it ended, they could read Arduino code, debug their circuits and race robot cars they had built themselves.

At Click to Start's AI academy, students were taught Python for machine learning, game design, and designing talking robots.

"Those students were committed," said Mathurin, "and by the camp's end, they had designed five games that were ready to ship to a real arcade. They also accurately answered 79 percent of a 40-question final quiz that covered the whole course."

Feedback included comments that the camp was "very nice" and "enjoyable and interesting." When parents were asked to communicate what they were told, one wrote that "my son wants to learn more" and that "there should be an advanced camp for students leaving school so that these can become viable options for a career."

The robotics camp ran for ten days at the end of July and the AI camp ran for ten days in the first half of August. They had separate corporate sponsorship, with student attendees and trained volunteers who acted as mentors for the daily work expected to be accomplished in each area of focus.

Scotiabank of Trinidad and Tobago fully supported the robotics camp in a first-time effort working with the foundation. Republic Bank, a long-time partner, assisted with the AI camp. For the latter, there were many other costs and the robust outreach arm of the Click to Start team also secured help from co-sponsors, Atlantic LNG, Subway Trinidad and Tobago, and SM Jaleel & Co Ltd.

Wren felt the camps were successful and was grateful to the volunteers, lab facilitators and sponsors who made these events enjoyable for attendees. She encourages more volunteers, and corporate and individual sponsors.

■ **The Click to Start Foundation**
clicktostartfoundation@gmail.com
clicktostart.org

Nights of music, days of golf, years of giving



FROM LEFT: Mr Jessel Murray, Ms Natalia Dopwell, and Professor of Practice Dr Sterling Frost, Chairman of the UWIDEF, at Soprano En Récital.

This September, The UWI Development and Endowment Fund (UWIDEF) hosted two high-profile events to raise funds for student bursaries and scholarships, blending culture with community sport.

On Saturday, September 12, UWIDEF held *Soprano En Récital* at the Residence of Guillaume Pierre, Ambassador of the French Republic. The sold-out second instalment of the Vocal Recital Series featured acclaimed soprano Ms Natalia Dopwell accompanied by collaborative pianist and Senior Lecturer at UWI St Augustine's Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA) Mr Jessel Murray. Culinary offerings were prepared by Chef John Aboud and Aioli Trinidad. *Soprano En Récital* was made possible by Exclusive Sponsor JLeW Signature Events Limited.

Continuing the momentum, on Friday, September 25, UWIDEF hosted its annual Golf Challenge at the St Andrew's Golf Club, bringing together approximately 40 teams. The tournament provided approximately 40 bursaries valued at a total of TT\$200,000, contributing to the roughly TT\$1.15 million the fund distributes annually to prevent financial hardship from barring students from a UWI education. Speaking at the event, UWIDEF Manager Kory Mendez expressed appreciation to participants, noting that event proceeds create opportunities for students in need.

The tournament was fiercely contested, with Navarro's Travel Service Limited—featuring Mr Russell Latapy and Mr Ravi Deonarine—taking first place. Laparkan Trinidad Limited secured second place represented by Mr Peter Jacob and Mr Gerard Darlington, while London Consulting Group finished third represented by Mr Ryan Ali and Mr Kevesh Ramnath. UWIDEF acknowledged the backing of its Silver Sponsors, team sponsors, and product contributors who ensured the day's success.

The UWIDEF Vocal Recital Series will conclude on Saturday, November 21, 2026, with soprano LeAndra.

■ **Persons interested in supporting these initiatives can visit uwidef-sta.org, email sta-uwide@sta.uwi.edu, or call 730-6489**



FROM LEFT: Kory Mendez, Manager of UWIDEF; first place winners Ravi Deonarine and Russell Latapy; and volunteer Adrian Osmond at the Golf Challenge 2026.

■ CULTURE

The Mighty Sparrow did more than entertain. He challenged political power, transformed calypso's commercial landscape, pushed the boundaries of Caribbean language and documented the contradictions of society. His music helped shape the region's cultural identity, establishing calypso as a powerful vehicle for social commentary and artistic expression.

These contributions took centre stage at "The Birdie Sings: Celebrating the Life and Music of The Mighty Sparrow," hosted by UWI St Augustine's Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies on October 9. Held at the Film Programme Building, the event featured Emerita Professor Patricia Mohammed, Mr Omari Ashby, and Mr Zino Obi Constance, with Dr Sue Ann Barratt, Head of the campus's Institute for Gender and Development Studies, as moderator.

'A vocal actor, a dramatic vocalist'

"Sparrow is unique in voice, he spans all the ranges in physicality and literary devices," Mr Constance observed.

Mr Ashby described Sparrow as "a vocal actor, a dramatic vocalist as seen when you compare songs like *Jean and Dinah* to *Congo Man*. He brings the idea of spectacle, of theatre on stage."

Professor Mohammed reflected on his magnetic stage presence, describing his mischievous expressions and laughter as infectious.

"His onstage charisma is authentic," she said, "with a sometimes wicked and mischievous face. When he smiles and laughs, so does the audience. It's a pity the younger generation doesn't have that."

Her observation underscored the importance of introducing younger audiences to not only Sparrow's music, but also the personality and performance that defined it.

Beyond the stage, Sparrow's music chronicled Trinidad and Tobago's political and social realities, earning comparisons to Africa's griots, traditional oral historians and storytellers. Mr Ashby described the griot as a people's newspaper, a role Sparrow fulfilled by documenting and challenging the issues of his time.

His career unfolded alongside the rise of the People's National Movement (PNM). Sparrow both praised and criticised Dr Eric Williams, while his political engagement extended to support for the Organisation for National Reconstruction (ONR).

"You can trace geo and local politics through his discography," Mr Ashby observed.

Sparrow's social commentary also confronted questions of gender, masculinity, and social behaviour. His provocative humour and wordplay brought uncomfortable subjects into public conversation, prompting audiences to consider the contradictions embedded in everyday life.



The Mighty Sparrow

The Voice that Challenged Power and Changed Calypso

BY CHERISSE LAUREN BERKELEY

Professor Mohammed explored these tensions in "Who Taking Advantage of Who?," her contribution to "So Sparrow Say," a 2015 lecture series coordinated by playwright and educator Rawle Gibbons to raise funds for Sparrow's medical expenses. Her presentation examined Lying Excuses, considering its treatment of gender alongside the wit that made Sparrow's lyrics memorable.

His challenges to established conventions extended beyond lyrical content to the business of calypso itself. Mr Constance recalled Sparrow's boycott of the calypso monarch over inadequate prize money, highlighting his determination to secure better financial recognition for performers.

"Sparrow said 'if they could pay \$5 they could pay \$100,'" Mr Constance recalled.

The protest highlighted the need for performers to receive compensation that reflected their art's value, helping advance conversations about the economic standing of calypsonians.

The panellists also discussed Sparrow's collaborations with Byron Lee and the Dragonaires and his influence on contemporary performers, including Machel Montano. Professor Mohammed highlighted the mentorship associated with Kitchener's calypso tent and Sparrow's commitment to establishing calypso as a year-round cultural practice rather than a seasonal genre.

Yet Sparrow's legacy extends beyond his influence on performance and the music industry. Professor Mohammed argued that his contribution to Caribbean language and literature warrants deeper scholarly attention. Comparing his literary significance to that of Geoffrey Chaucer, she highlighted Sparrow's blending of languages, humour, and social observation.

She called for his lyrics to be studied as poetry, recognising Sparrow not merely as a performer, but as a writer whose linguistic creativity helped shape Caribbean expression.

Mr Ashby also commended contemporary artiste Coutain Parris for paying tribute to Sparrow, highlighting the importance of younger performers acknowledging their cultural foundations.

The programme featured steelpan interludes by Joelle Granado, a calypso medley by Marva Newton, and *Remembering the Legends, Music and the Mighty Sparrow*, a short film directed by third-year Computer Science student Lindor Cuffie.

Ultimately, "The Birdie Sings" affirmed Sparrow's significance. His music remains a record of Caribbean political life, a testament to linguistic creativity and a reminder of popular culture's power to challenge authority and transform society.

The Birdie may have sung to generations past, but his voice continues to give the Caribbean reasons to listen.



Dr Sue Ann Barratt with panellists Emerita Professor Patricia Mohammed and Mr Omari Ashby.



Dr Suzanne Burke, Head of the Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies, addresses the gathering.



Pannist Joelle Granado performs for the audience.

The UWI Calendar of Events | October-November 2026



Built to ADAPT. Ready to LEAD.

20 GRADUATION CEREMONIES

ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS
Thursday, October 22, 2026
Friday, October 23, 2026
Saturday, October 24, 2026

10:00 AM | 4:00 PM
Trinidad & Tobago | Eastern Caribbean | AST

9:00 AM | 3:00 PM
Jamaica | Panama

8:00 AM | 2:00 PM
Belize

WATCH ON
UWI GLOBAL

FLOW EVO www.uwivt.global www.facebook.com/uwivt

15 Grenada | 13 Belize (Central) | 100 Curacao, Dominica, Trinidad & Tobago | 100 Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, BVI, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Turks and Caicos | 100 Cayman Islands | 100 Barbados | 100 Jamaica | 100 Belize (Central)

100 Grenada and Trinidad & Tobago | 100 Panamá



Graduation 2026 October 22 to 24 Sport and Physical Education Centre St Augustine Campus

ONLINE

This coming Thursday, join the entire university community for the 2026 Graduation Ceremonies. After years of study, projects, examinations, and research, the class of 2026 will cross the graduation stage and receive their degrees. Graduands, family, and friends can attend in person, while other well-wishers can view this monumental occasion online or on UWITV. Themed “**Built to Adapt, Ready to Lead**”, this year’s ceremonies will include the conferment of honorary degrees to agricultural development expert **Mr Winston Rudder**, senior diplomat **Ambassador Colin Granderson**, and surgeon and educator **Professor Shaneeta Johnson**.

Ceremony Schedule

Thursday, October, 22

9:30 am–12:00 noon

Faculties of **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY** | **FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

3:30 pm–6:00 pm

Faculties of **ENGINEERING** | **LAW**

Friday, October, 23

9:30 am–12:00 noon

Faculty of **SOCIAL SCIENCES**

(A-L Undergraduate graduands and
Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business graduands)

3:30 pm - 6:00 pm

Faculty of **SOCIAL SCIENCES**

(M-Z Undergraduate graduands and Postgraduate graduands)

Saturday, October, 24

9:30 am–12:00 noon

Faculties of **HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION** | **SPORT**

3:30 pm–6:00 pm

Faculty of **MEDICAL SCIENCES**

To view the 2026 Graduation ceremonies go to UWITV channel 102 on Flow or online at <https://uwivt.global>, as well as The UWI St Augustine Facebook page at www.facebook.com/UWISTA/

For more information and updates, visit the Graduation site at <https://sta.uwi.edu/graduation/>

UWI SPEC International Half-Marathon & 5K - 20th Edition October 25

**The UWI Sport and Physical Education Centre
St Augustine Campus**

Celebrate this milestone on the road with runners from T&T and the world at the 20th edition of this renowned athletic event. Hosted by the St Augustine Academy of Sport in The UWI's Faculty of Sport, The UWI SPEC international half-marathon has grown from 300 participants in 2004 to more than 2,000 in 2025, bringing together participants ranging from the international elite to casual runners. This year, both the half-marathon and 5K will focus on obesity awareness. Race Day will feature a comprehensive Health and Wellness Village, offering health screenings, nutritional guidance, wellness resources and interactive booths.

**For more information on The UWI SPEC
International Half-Marathon & 5K, visit the website at
<https://sta.uwi.edu/spec/marathon/>**



20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

**The UWI SPEC
International
Half-Marathon
& 5K**

**Sunday
25th
October
2026**

MAKE YOUR *first* MOVE!



2026 National Health Research Conference November 17 Hyatt Regency Trinidad Port of Spain

Themed “**Building a Healthier Nation Through Innovation, Research and Collaboration**”, this conference brings together health experts, policymakers, government officials, academics, and researchers to highlight high-potential health sector research. The conference is hosted by the Ministry of Health, the Tobago House of Assembly, UWI St Augustine’s Faculty of Medical Sciences, the University of Trinidad and Tobago, the University of the Southern Caribbean, the Regional Health Authorities, and the Trinidad and Tobago National Nursing Association.

**For more information, visit
<https://www.healthresearchconferencett.com/>**